

Mr Deputy Speaker Conlan took the Chair at 10 am.

**STATEMENT BY CLERK
Absence of Speaker**

The CLERK: Honourable members, I advise, pursuant to Standing Order 9, of the absence of Madam Speaker today and tomorrow. The Chair will be taken by the Deputy Speaker.

**STATEMENT BY SPEAKER
Permission to Film in Chamber**

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I remind you that Madam Speaker has given permission for Channel 9, the *NT News*, the ABC and the Chief Minister's photographer to film with sound and take photos of the Leader of the Opposition's budget response.

**MOTION
Reorder of Business**

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that following the routine of business be reordered so that after the Opposition Leader's budget response the Assembly considers government Business, Notices no. 1. We can then go back to the budget debate.

Motion agreed to.

**MOTION
Standing Orders Committee –
Change of Membership**

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the following committee membership changes be adopted: the member for Fannie Bay be discharged and the member for Nightcliff be appointed to the Standing Orders Committee.

Motion agreed to.

**APPROPRIATION (2015-2016) BILL
(Serial 121)**

Continued from 28 April 2015.

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, today I speak on behalf of the thousands of Territorians who know they deserve a better government. Territorians deserve a government with integrity, a Chief Minister they can trust, a government that understands education is the key to unlocking the potential we all share, and has a plan to create and secure safe high-wage jobs for all Territorians. Territorians deserve a government that invests in delivering health services across the Territory because it is the fair

and decent thing to do, and trusts and respects local decision-making.

Labor is the party of jobs, growth, health and education. We share the confidence of Territorians about our future and the determination to tackle the many challenges that lie ahead. Today I will outline the values that underpin the Labor government I want to lead and begin to shape some of the key policies we will develop with Territorians over the next 16 months. These values will underpin Labor budgets.

We will listen to the aspirations of Territorians and channel their ingenuity and creativity into strong policies for good government. We look forward to having this mature conversation.

Territorians want and deserve a government they can trust. An open, accountable and transparent government is essential for this trust to exist. Without confidence in the integrity of public officials and in government processes, it will not be possible for the Territory to meet the considerable challenges we face or to grasp the opportunities we share.

Not only is open government the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. Open government and the trust it builds is the bedrock for the partnerships and collaboration we need as a community to improve the lives of all Territorians. It is the only way we can take advantage of modern technology and find new ways of connecting, engaging and organising government. Open and accountable government is a core Labor value. That is why we passed the Territory's first ever freedom of information laws and introduced the first budget estimates process. When the CLP came into power in 2012, it inherited the most open and transparent system of government in the Territory's history. It has trashed it every day since.

Territorians do not trust this Chief Minister or this government, and they hold little faith in the political institutions which are supposed to serve them. Trust is critical in this budget. It was framed by the Chief Minister and the Treasurer, and they are asking Territorians to trust them to deliver the services they need. But they cannot.

There is a trust deficit between this government and Territorians, and between the Chief Minister and his colleagues. The member for Araluen said:

I have no faith in a government led by Adam Giles. I have stated publicly that I believe Adam Giles has no integrity. I stand by that statement. That alone is enough to mean he should not hold a position of community leadership.

She went on to say:

In addition to having no faith in the Chief Minister, I have no faith in the Treasurer, nor do I believe he is an appropriate person to be a leader in our community.

Removing the stain the lack of integrity has left across our body politic requires a new approach to governing in the Territory which restores integrity, shines light on the processes of the government and regains community trust in our public officials and government.

Labor has begun to outline how we will introduce an independent body to deal with allegations of corruption at arm's length from politicians and public officials. It will be the Northern Territory anti-corruption commission. This body will be structured to suit Territory circumstances. My colleagues and I will seek input from Territorians into its shape and practice. A body such as this is now an important feature of jurisdictions around the country, except the Northern Territory. This is a situation that should not continue.

I have publicly outlined reforms to overseas travel by ministers. To restore public trust in ministerial travel, a Labor government will ensure that all travel undergoes evaluation by the public and private sectors regarding the benefit of the travel to the Northern Territory. These assessments will be made available to the public. Prior to departure, the minister's itinerary will be published, removing the ability to sneak off on secret junkets. On return from overseas travel, a full report to parliament on the trip will be provided by the minister and will be made available to the public. Costs associated with the minister's trip will be made available to the public. This is a basic set of rules that any government committed to accountability should undertake. Only a government allergic to accountability would object to these rules.

The community must have confidence that all Territorians are treated without fear or favour by government and the resources of government are always employed in the public interest. They have the right to know that their dollars are being spent properly. We will have more to say in the coming months about how we intend to restore integrity to government. We look forward to discussing and refining our plans with Territorians.

Labor believes that education and training are the most important keys to changing people's lives. Unlike the CLP we will invest in the knowledge, creativity and ingenuity of Territorians. This is the best insurance we can

have in a complex, uncertain and volatile world. It is the only way we can hope to fill our potential as a community.

My government will create a world-class education system. It will be planned in consultation with education experts and the community as a whole. It will be long journey which will take time. We acknowledge there are no quick fixes in education. We will ensure good evaluation processes are also in place. Investing in education today requires patience to see the results but we will make that investment. The focus of our investment will be in our schools.

This government has made many mistakes but none have been graver or more damaging to the future of our economy and community than the attack on Territory schools. I see it at every school council, assembly and event I attend. My colleagues and I hear it in the anxiety expressed to us by parents, teachers and principals. Schools feel battered. Educators feel they have borne the main brunt of every cut the government has made. The CLP has ripped \$82m in real terms from government education since 2012. The latest CLP budget cuts are \$7.5m from preschools and \$12m from primary schools. This must stop.

I will detail Labor's plans for investment in schools over the coming months. I will do so in consultation with educators, students and parents.

In addition to investing in our schools, Labor will be investing in knowledge, science and creativity across the community as well as all stages of people's lives: before school, preschool, primary school, secondary school, university, training and lifelong learning.

I intend to define the next Labor government by its commitment to the children of the Northern Territory. The years between birth and four years of age are the most crucial in determining future educational, health and social achievements. Get it wrong in these years and the impact can be lifelong. Get it right and the impact will be lifelong. I intend to lead a government that will heavily invest in our youngest Territorians. Just as our government, public service, non-government organisations and communities come together to meet challenges such as cyclones, I will bring the Territory together to address the future of our children. It will be done collaboratively, in partnership with parents, educators, non-government organisations and service providers. It will be done through engaging the Australian government.

Labor will have a detailed, integrated, whole-of-government policy that drives our support for children. This early childhood policy will have the goal of ensuring that on day one of Term 1 of Year 1 at every school, every child will be able and ready to learn and be given the chance to unlock their potential.

This policy will work to support all children across the Territory. It will ensure that those children who begin life behind others due to social circumstances will be picked up and supported. We will ensure those who do not reach the benchmarks by age four continue to get the support they need in the following early years. It will also ensure that those who begin life comfortable, loved, protected and supported have the support to excel.

Investing in this stage of Territorians' lives is the only way we will turn around the crime figures, educational disengagement, poor health, antisocial behaviour and substance abuse that confronts our community. It is not just an investment in the future of those children, it is an investment in the future harmony, cohesion and productivity of our society. It is a long-term challenge. It will be hard but it is the right thing to do and Labor will do it.

This package will form the centrepiece of our policy work over the next 12 months. Among many other things, it will see increased investment in Families as First Teachers, another Labor success story. It will ensure that all government agencies act together collaboratively. It will remove the silos between health and education and will focus on the child and its needs. We will work seamlessly with all levels of government. I look forward to detailing the elements of this policy in the future.

The right to be healthy and able to access quality health services is a core Labor value. Labor in the Northern Territory and federally has a strong track record of delivering better health services, from delivering Medicare and saving it from attacks at the Commonwealth level to building the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre, securing funding for Palmerston hospital and expanding health services in the bush. Labor stands for healthier Territorians. Investing in healthier Territorians is also the cornerstone of a smarter, more prosperous and more harmonious community.

Budget 2015-16 fails the health test. We know health costs rise higher than inflation. You need to put in about 7% extra every year just to keep pace. Last year the government spent \$70m on primary healthcare, this year it has budgeted \$64m. Our Top End hospital budgets have been cut by \$4m. When you combine this budget with the proposed slashing of federal funding to this

critical area, there must be alarm about the support for health services.

The federal government shift in hospital funding to an activity-based model that recognises the reality of health needs across the Territory to a population-based model with funding determined by numbers is a bad decision, especially for the Territory.

I have outlined Labor's approach to shifting the long-term effort by investing in Territory children. We must tackle the causes of ill-health before it reaches our health clinics and hospitals. In the meantime, I expect the government to get on with the job of providing decent health services and building the Palmerston hospital, which would have been well under way by now under a Labor government. The CLP has missed every deadline for the Palmerston hospital.

Labor wants the government to get on with its promise of an upgrade to the existing children's ward. We have seen little progress on this front. Similarly, we have seen no progress on the development of a new private hospital in Alice Spring, as promised by the CLP. There has been no progress in securing new funding for additional aged-care beds, especially in Darwin, to help provide adequate services for our ageing population and reduce bed-block at Royal Darwin Hospital. There has been no movement on the CLP promise of a new Katherine hospital, and no progress on improving morgue facilities in the bush. We see continuing delays in the CLP accepting \$10m in new federal funding for the support of renal patients in the bush.

There have been five Health ministers, and this constant rotation and distraction has removed the tension from the work required to get the health job done. The CLP needs to get on with the job. The most vulnerable Territorians deserve much better from their government.

How we empower people living in the bush is an important decision for government. Labor has listened to Territorians living in the bush, and in government we will restore local decision-making to people on the ground. A Labor government will work with community members, the Chief Magistrates and the legal profession to allow local courts to hold community courts where appropriate. Under this model, senior local community members will be invited to assist the court with sentencing. This will help empower community members to participate fully in the justice system.

This will be a significant formal advancement on the informal arrangements some magistrates and community leaders already have, which properly recognises the importance of traditional leadership

and decision-making. We recognise every community is different, and any move to change current arrangements will be done through careful consultation with communities. In the coming months we will make further announcements regarding restoring local decision-making to Territorians living in the bush.

Securing safe, well-paying jobs has been the Labor ethos for the 124 years of our existence. Ensuring our economy is strong and providing jobs that people are skilled in and ready to take on is the core of Labor values. We have a solid record of driving training and job creation.

We have delivered major projects against the odds. We delivered large infrastructure budgets focused on supporting small- and medium-size businesses, as well as large projects because we recognise and acknowledge that they are the lifeblood of jobs across the Territory. However, investing in infrastructure alone is not enough.

Governments need to invest in training so Territorians can reap the benefits of the jobs created. One of the most important jobs a government can undertake is the transition of a student from school to a job, or an unemployed person from unemployment to work. In government, Labor will reintroduce job plans that focus on strategies to provide strong jobs growth and set clear jobs and training targets. That plan will be developed in consultation and partnership with industry, unions, investors and the community. However, critically, that plan will be backed up by a training plan that develops and skills Territorians from school age throughout life.

The development of the Northern Territory will be hampered if we do not invest in training. Labor will train Territorians to take on the jobs created by economic growth. Territorians must benefit from the riches produced by growth. Our priority will be to ensure that local people, as much as possible, benefit from the available jobs.

I went to school and university and got a job in the Territory, and I want other Territory kids to have the same opportunity. To achieve this, Labor will invest in vocational learning, education and training in our schools. At the end of their 12 years of education 70% of Territory students transition from school to a job or further training. We will ensure that all young people are supported by providing the opportunity for them to gain the skills they need. We will bring our schools, industry and business together to ensure these pathways to the workforce and into the economy are clear and supported.

I believe that planning is essential for the Territory economy post-INPEX construction. We have already seen the effects of this reality. In its

budget yesterday the government sought to diversify the economy. I support this approach. A sensible plan created with the business community is required and must be clearly articulated to Territorians. The Chief Minister has to give up his addiction to thought-bubble policies and quick-fix deals.

The future economic growth of the Territory depends on proper planning. I know there are jobs to be created in the pastoral and rural industries. There is no doubt that the efforts of successive governments in creating a strong overseas live cattle trade, as well as the growth in demand for meat by the growing middle class of Asia, provides a shining opportunity for our beef industry. Government must continue to cultivate those markets, and I support the efforts of the Deputy Chief Minister to do so. Importantly, government must have the infrastructure in place to ensure the beef industry can get its product to markets through better roads and improved port infrastructure.

Roads are vital to all areas of the economy and continued investment in roads will have a strong push from a Labor government. However, unlike the CLP we will not be driving expansion of the port by selling it or selling a lease. Our recent study of ports shows there is an alternative approach.

Beyond the beef industry, the rural sector in general provides strong opportunities. I understand significant work has been done to develop horticulture in Central Australia. This is particularly the case with new industries such as almonds. Work is also being done in the west of the Territory linking us to the Ord project.

Labor supports the work being done by the people engaged with the developing the north program. This combined public sector and industry approach is a good one. Strengthening the tourism sector, developing the relationship with Asia, supporting the expansion of the mining industry and ensuring that red tape is not a hindrance to development has been a bipartisan approach for decades. This will not change. We may disagree from time to time about some of the elements, but Labor believes in jobs and development, which it clearly demonstrated in government.

In looking at these larger industries, we cannot ignore smaller industries, including important micro-industry developments in Indigenous communities. Labor supports the work being done to develop a community-based fisheries industry across the Top End.

Territory Labor also has a strong record of protecting and looking after workers through

appropriate conditions and safeguards, including a fair and decent workers compensation scheme. Territorians who are injured and incapacitated deserve fair and just compensation. It is the fair thing to do; it is the decent thing to do; it is the Labor thing to do. The efforts of the CLP to water down this legislation through changes to the Territory's workers compensation scheme passed just weeks ago will be repealed by a Labor government.

Yesterday's budget, especially the fiscal position of the government, is not the result of planned economic management by the Country Liberals. It is about spending the returns achieved by selling TIO. This is the same approach the government will take to other Territory assets, and it is not supported by the Labor Party. Selling the silverware has never worked as a strategy for proper economic management. It does not get to the underlying issues Territorians struggle with every day.

The government's fiscal position going forward is also predicated on GST figures that are best described as vulnerable. Should Western Australia get its way, or the national mood on the GST carve-up change, then those very minimal surplus figures are unlikely to be achieved. Budget 2015-16 indicates our GST position shifting negatively due to population decreases. Population growth is predicted to be slow. This will damage our fiscal position over time and tells me the government needs to have a strategy in place to attract more people to live and work in the Territory as a matter of urgency.

One of the key underlying reasons we are losing population is because of the cost of living, especially the cost of power. This budget has failed to address this. It has failed to reduce crime by 10% every year and has failed to provide the promised infrastructure in bush communities. It lacks the innovation required to address the growing public housing waiting lists.

This all stands in stark contrast to the push by CLP ministers to travel in high class around the world. The Minister for Health spent \$45 000 in six weeks in the United States while the child protection system crumbles. The Minister for Education jetted between London, New York and Honolulu at a time when he has cut school budgets. The Minister for Housing has spent \$50 000 at the Waldorf Astoria in New York while the Territory's housing stock is depleted and she has broken her commitment to deliver housing in remote communities. Nothing could paint a clearer picture of the CLP government's priorities than this waste of taxpayers' money. Territorians know they deserve better.

The Territory has a bright future. We have incredible opportunity, but we also face many challenges. Only a government with the right values and priorities can work with Territorians to meet these challenges and opportunities. Territorians cannot afford an arrogant and untrustworthy CLP focused on itself and more interested in overseas junkets than investment in jobs, health and education.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Labor can restore trust in government. Labor will invest in Territory children. Labor will invest in jobs, health and education. We will listen and consult as we develop policies Territorians want and the Territory needs. We look forward to continuing this conversation with Territorians as we work together to build a better future for all.

Debate adjourned.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of apprentices from the Department of Business. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you and hope you enjoy your visit to Parliament House today.

Members: Hear, hear!

REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 123)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I propose that we go on with the next item of business on the Notice Paper while we recover the second reading speech.

Debate suspended.

GAMING AND LIQUOR LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 125)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr STYLES (Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill deals with electronic gaming machines, which have been in the Northern Territory community since the 1990s. Appropriately licensed clubs and hotels provide electronic gaming machines as an entertainment option for

their clientele and an alternative revenue resource. Revenue from electronic gaming machines is returned to the community through hotels' contributions to the Community Benefit Fund and the contributions of clubs to their local communities.

This government is committed to modern legislation that establishes the right regime for electronic gaming machines. This will ensure the right level of regulation for the community and business. In late 2014 this government announced policy changes to the regulation of electronic gaming machines in the community. The arbitrary Territory-wide cap was abolished in favour of a rigorous community impact assessment process for new electronic gaming machines. Changes to individual venue caps to be implemented through legislative amendments were announced. The government also agreed to implement a levy for new electronic gaming machines.

In the Northern Territory all clubs and hotels must apply for a licence to operate electronic gaming machines. The *Gaming Machine Act* does not provide for the transfer of an electronic gaming machine licence to a new entity or venue. This created a legislative problem for any hotel business owner wanting to transfer an electronic gaming machine following the sale of the business or as part of a corporate restructure. The gaming machine licence not being able to be substituted to a new venue was also a problem if a hotel or club was forced to move to new premises. In the past, the Northern Territory Licensing Commission implemented an administrative procedure where a hotel business was being sold or a hotel or club was forced to move to new premises. The holder of existing electronic gaming machine licences would hand back the existing licences.

In addition to the amendments to the *Gaming Machine Act*, this bill will amend the *Liquor Act* to give effect to this and former governments' policies to not allow stores to trade takeaway liquor on Sundays. A new application would be submitted by the new business owner if the business was being sold, or for the new venue if the hotel or club was forced to move to new premises. As there was no levy for an electronic gaming machine, this was an acceptable workaround for licences.

With the announcement of the introduction of the new gaming machine levy, this administrative procedure is no longer available without paying the levy. For a hotel business the levy for an electronic gaming machine is \$50 000. Existing hotel business can have up to 10 electronic gaming machines, and in the future hotel businesses may be eligible to apply for up to 20 electronic gaming machines. This implementation

of the levy meant that hotel businesses seeking to sell their business or restructure would lose the value of their existing electronic gaming machine licences.

Since the announcement of the changes to the regulation of electronic gaming machines, we have listened to our clubs and the business community. Our hotel business owners have explained the impact of the introduction of the levy on their ability to sell their businesses. Our licensees have also explained the impact of the levy and prohibition on substitution of licences if they forced to change venues. This government understands the impact on these clubs and the business community, and we have proposed legislative changes to address these concerns. The details of these changes to the *Gaming Machine Act* proposed in this bill are as follows.

Electronic gaming machines can only be operated under a Category 1 (hotel/tavern) or Category 2 (club) gaming machine licence issued by the Director-General of Licensing. A gaming machine licence can only be issued in conjunction with a full liquor licence; it cannot be issued on its own.

The *Liquor Act* provides a mechanism to transfer a liquor licence from one entity to another. The *Liquor Act* provides another mechanism to substitute a liquor licence from one premise to other premises. The proposed amendments will align the *Gaming Machine Act* with the *Liquor Act*. Under the proposed amendments a Category 1 (hotel/tavern) electronic gaming machine licence holder will be able to apply to transfer their licence to a different entity. This will usually be upon sale of the business or a corporate restructuring.

The proposed amendments will replicate the assessment requirements for the new licensee as they relate to personal and financial probity. The entity that is proposed to receive the electronic gaming machine licence will have to pass existing probity, business acumen and financial security requirements.

Under the proposed amendments a Category 1 (hotel/tavern) or Category 2 (club) electronic gaming machine licence holder will be able to apply to substitute their licence. This will usually be upon a requirement for the licence holder to move to new premises; for example, at the termination of the lease or destruction of premises.

The proposed amendments will not waive the normal assessment requirements to ensure the new venue is suitable for electronic gaming machines, including the preparation of a community impact analysis.

The inability to transfer a licence or substitute a venue has caused unnecessary red tape and cost for licensees selling or restructuring their businesses. These businesses have lost value and this is a cost to the Territory and the business community. Clubs have no option but to pay the new levy if they have to move to a new venue.

In addition to amending the *Gaming Machine Act*, this bill will amend the *Liquor Act* to enshrine in legislation this government's policy about Sunday trade of takeaway liquor from stores. Since 1999 it has been successive governments' policy that stores could not trade takeaway liquor on Sundays. The amendments to the *Liquor Act* remove any ambiguity as to the hours of trade for stores to sell takeaway liquor.

The bill before the House will reduce red tape and unnecessary cost for licensees. The bill provides protection for the community and a streamlined system for licensees.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the House and table the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 123)

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill puts in place a package of revenue, savings and miscellaneous administrative measures as part of the government's Budget 2015-16. The primary measures contained in this bill focus on strengthening the integrity of the Territory's revenue legislation to ensure the Territory's taxes and concessions operate efficiently, fairly and in the best interest of all Territorians. This is achieved by making a range of amendments to the *Stamp Duty Act*, *Taxation Administration Act*, *First Home Owner Grant Act*, *Gaming Control Act* and the *Payroll Tax Act*.

I will turn to the first of those measures, which provides additional relief to seniors, pensioners and carers. Since 2012 this government has demonstrated its commitment to supporting Territorians with a diversity of housing choices. This commitment is seen through the introduction of the Real Housing for Growth initiative and reform of the Territory's home incentive schemes to provide targeted assistance to Territory homebuyers.

The changes in this bill build on this reform by increasing the senior, pensioner and carer stamp duty concession to provide greater tax relief to

senior Territorians, pensioners and carers. From yesterday, the senior, pensioner and carer stamp duty concession will be increased from \$8500 to \$10 000. This will help make housing more affordable for Territorians most in need. It also reduces a barrier for senior Territorians downsizing or finding more appropriate homes at this stage in their lives.

The bill also makes a minor amendment to the Territory's home incentive scheme rules to improve their fairness and flexibility.

The Territory has a diverse workforce with many Territorians in industries which keep them from home on a regular basis, including fly-in fly-out and remote workers. These conditions can make it difficult for families to meet the current resident requirements for a First Home Owner Grant, Principal Place of Residence Rebate or the senior, pensioner and carer concessions. In order to better cater for these circumstance, the bill amends the resident requirements so that where property is purchased by co-owners, only one owner will be required to live in the property. This simple reform reduces red tape and makes the Territory's home incentive schemes fairer and more flexible without compromising integrity.

I now turn to the payroll tax measures contained in the bill. This government is committed to providing meaningful assistance to employers who take on apprentices and trainees. This recognises the valuable opportunities that apprenticeships and traineeships provide to young Territorians, and the importance of maintaining a skilled workforce in the Territory.

A significant part of this assistance is the payroll tax exemption for wages paid to trainees or apprentices. This exemption was introduced to encourage businesses to employ apprentices and trainees. However, the way in which the exemption operates makes it inefficient and open to widespread misuse. One of the main problems with the current tax exemption is that it is available on enrolment rather than completion of the apprentice training course. This means the tax exemption is not results driven, and employers can obtain an annual payroll tax saving even where staff are in training programs year after year without ever completing the course. The exemption is also untargeted and not focused on sectors where there are job opportunities or skill shortages.

The payroll tax exemption also does not benefit small business. Many small businesses want to take on apprentices but the cost of training might be considered to outweigh the benefits to the employer. These small employers do not benefit from the payroll tax exemption since their wages are below the \$1.5m payroll tax threshold.

To address these inefficiencies and inequalities the bill abolishes the payroll tax exemption for apprentices and trainees, with the savings to be passed on to employers through direct assistance programs. Direct assistance programs such as the new Training for the Future program deliver assistance to all Territory businesses and not just those large employers who have a payroll tax liability. The Training for the Future program is also linked to course completion, ensuring that taxpayers' money is directed to programs that deliver real results and cannot be exploited by those seeking to minimise their tax liabilities. This reform ensures the effective use of taxpayers' money to provide real assistance to employers and continues to encourage apprenticeships and traineeships in the Territory.

The bill also makes significant reforms to the charities exemption under the *Payroll Tax Act*. Currently, charitable entities can access a payroll tax exemption in recognition of the valuable work they do in our communities. However, recent developments in interstate courts have widened the exemption beyond its intended scope. It now applies broadly, including to non-charitable work conducted by the not-for-profit sector. In particular, the exemption can be available for investment activities and the operation of commercial for-profit businesses which have no direct relationship to the charitable purpose of a charity.

Several other court decisions have also allowed organisations that have not historically been regarded as charitable to receive the payroll tax exemption, including chambers of commerce, industry lobby groups, trade organisations and professional associations. These court decisions have widened the payroll tax charities exemption beyond its intended scope and it is now necessary to refocus the exemption to ensure it remains open only to appropriate charitable organisations and actual charity work.

The bill makes two key amendments to the payroll tax charities exemption. First, the exemption is removed for any commercial work or work performed in competition with the private sector. This will ensure that where a charity owns and operates a for-profit commercial business, that for-profit business will be subject to the same taxation rules as every other business conducting the same work. For example, where a charity owns and runs a for-profit hotel, that hotel should be taxed in the same way as other hotels in the Territory. This is consistent with the policy that businesses should be taxed according to the work they perform and that taxation should not distort the open market by providing an unfair advantage to one type of business over other similar businesses.

In addition, these amendments also serve to address tax avoidance schemes that have been encountered where businesses use charities to artificially minimise their payroll tax liabilities without necessarily doing any actual charity work.

Second, the bill ensures that bodies which promote trade, industry or commerce and professional associations cannot receive the charities exemption, regardless of whether or not those organisations might be called a charity under common law. This reform is necessary as common law definition of a charity is so wide that trade and commerce groups have been successful in receiving tax exemptions interstate, even where they have large fee-paying membership bases.

These reforms leverage off similar reforms interstate and contain safeguards to ensure that the amendments do not affect traditional charities which have a sole or dominant purpose of the relief of poverty, advancement of education or the advancement of religion.

The bill also provides the Commissioner of Territory Revenue with flexibility in administering the new exemption to ensure it is appropriately targeted to professional associations and organisations that promote trade, industry or commerce without affecting other charities that benefit the community.

I now turn to the reforms to the *Gaming Control Act*, which help to equalise the playing field when it comes to gambling taxation and ensure that casinos are giving back to the community by supporting gambling amelioration programs through contributions to the Community Benefit Fund.

Currently, pubs and local hotels are required to pay a levy of 10% of profits received from gaming machines into the Community Benefit Fund. Levies paid into the Community Benefit Fund are reinvested into the community through community grants and research into the social and economic impact gambling has on individuals, families and the community.

Until now the Territory's casinos have not been required to contribute to the Community Benefit Fund. However, government believes casinos should contribute to the community in the same way that other for-profit gaming venues do, and as such this bill expands the community benefit levy to apply to gaming machines in casinos from 1 July 2015. This ensures casinos make appropriate contributions to the community and provide support for problem gamblers.

The bill complements this casino tax reform with a minor amendment to the *Gaming Control Act* to

allow licence fees to be imposed on Territory casinos in addition to any payments required under the casino operator's agreements. This ensures that licence fees can be created under the existing legislation. No new fees are being implemented at this time.

I now turn to the key amendments to the *Stamp Duty Act*. The government is committed to reducing the cost of living for Territorians. This bill delivers on that commitment by abolishing stamp duty on life insurance from 1 July 2015. Stamp duty on life insurance is an inefficient tax that increases the cost of taking out life insurance. Removing this duty burden will serve to reduce the cost of living for Territorians and help make these insurance policies more affordable.

As a result of the abolition of life insurance duty, the bill makes a consequential amendment to clarify the tax treatment of life insurance riders. Life insurance riders are policies that are packaged with life insurance and provide additional cover for further specified events and contingencies such as accident, trauma, illness or income protection policies. The new definition of a life insurance rider sets out clear rules for when a policy will be a taxable rider policy and when it will be an exempt life insurance policy. This clarifies the law surrounding life insurance policies and ensures that insurers lodge correct tax returns for bundled products.

Finally, government is continuing to deliver on its promise to cut red tape and make the job of doing business easier for all Territorians. To achieve this the bill provides a number of minor reform measures which will reduce red tape, improve transparency in the Territory's revenue laws and ensure those laws are operating as intended.

The bill ensures that the Territory's *Payroll Tax Act* remains harmonised with other Australian jurisdictions by amending the act's relevant contract provisions to remove the exclusions for insurance sellers and door-to-door salespersons from 1 July 2015. These exclusions are not utilised in the Territory and were only inserted for harmonisation purposes. As the provisions are outdated and are being removed interstate, it is appropriate to also remove these provisions in the Territory.

The bill also amends the owner-driver relevant contract exclusion in response to a recent New South Wales court decision which identified technical deficiencies in the wording of the provision. These amendments ensure the Territory's owner-driver exemption continues to be harmonised with the equivalent legislation interstate where similar amendments have been made. As the owner-driver exclusion is generally not relied upon by Territory taxpayers, these

amendments will have little practical application, but they are necessary as part of the Territory's commitment that its payroll tax legislation is harmonised nationally.

Minor amendments are also made to the *Stamp Duty Act* to rectify the number of irregularities in the legislation which have arisen from time to time. Currently there is an exemption from stamp duty on gifts of motor vehicles between parents and children, but an anomaly in its wording means the exemption does not extend to the gifts of motor vehicles between parents and stepchildren. The bill fixes this issue by clarifying that the exemption includes stepchildren.

The bill also clarifies that the mandatory residential building insurance or fidelity certificates taken out under the *Building Act* are not subject to stamp duty. This resolves an unintended interaction between the two acts to ensure the duty is not paid on these mandatory policies.

The bill also introduces a new stamp duty exemption for the creation of trusts for sale or trusts for partition under the *Law of Property Act*. This removes a barrier to the use of these trusts where there has been a relationship breakdown between co-owners of properties.

Similarly, the bill also establishes a pro-rata stamp duty exemption if property held under a trust for sale is transferred from the trustee to one of the original owners. This ensures that each owner's original share of the property is recognised for stamp duty purposes if they re-acquire part or whole of the property under trust.

The bill also clarifies an anti-avoidance provision in the *Stamp Duty Act* to ensure it relates only to cases of actual duty avoidance rather than more broadly as currently drafted. The provision in question is intended to prevent stamp duty avoidance schemes that artificially reduce the value of land, for example, by using below market leases. However, the current wording of the provision means it can also unintentionally apply to legitimate commercial arrangements. To prevent this, the bill refocuses the avoidance provision to ensure it only targets duty avoidance schemes and not legitimate commercial agreements.

The bill also makes minor amendments to the definition of 'health insurance' to ensure that overseas student and temporary visa health insurance contracts are covered by the health insurance stamp duty exemption, as intended.

The bill also makes minor amendments to the *Taxation Administration Act* to clarify the provisions which allow the Commissioner for Territory Revenue to obtain a valuation of a

property for the purposes of assessing Territory taxes. The bill removes ambiguous wording, clarifies the types of costs the commissioner may recover from a taxpayer in matters involving valuations of property and provides that the commissioner can rely on valuations prepared from any source, not just one prepared for tax purposes. These amendments are minor and clarify ambiguities that have arisen in recent taxation disputes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members and table a copy of the associated explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

PAIRING ARRANGEMENT Members for Goyder and Karama

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received an update with regard to pairs. From 29 April to 30 April 2015 the member for Goyder is paired with the member for Karama. It is signed by the Government Whip and the Opposition Whip.

APPROPRIATION (2015-2016) BILL (Serial 121)

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I contribute to debate about the delivery of the budget which the CLP government is saying makes life simpler, safer and smarter. After one goes through the budget papers one struggles to understand why the government chose those tag lines, given the content of the budget simply does not match them.

What is clear in the budget is it is the start of the government's efforts to pork barrel in order to get back in the good books of those who have lost faith in them. We are almost at the three-year mark of the CLP government, and so far they have been a disaster and are well known as the worst government in the history of the Northern Territory. The Treasurer has been unashamed in saying, as part of the budget sell, that this is a budget that has been funded by the sale of TIO. The sale of TIO has given the CLP the cash grab it wanted so it can try to get back in the good books of so many who have lost faith in it due to its broken promises and chaotic performance as a government.

However, Territorians do not have short memories; they can see through the spin in this budget. They are cynical about the timing of sweeteners as they know we are just over a year away from the next Territory election. Territorians have gone through almost three years of cost-of-

living increases, instability and chaos in government and have seen important services cut back. They fully understand where the CLP is in the election cycle, so they know pork barrelling when they see it. No one thinks this is a budget that makes them safer, their life simpler or makes them smarter.

As for my shadow portfolio area of education, make no mistake, education is vital to the future of the Northern Territory. I and my colleagues fundamentally believe every child, no matter where they are from or how much their parents earn, deserves a great education.

We believe government plays a vital role in the delivery of education. It should be a top priority for the Territory government. But we have seen that education is not one of the CLP's top priorities through their actions. We have seen continued cuts to education and reforms driven by ideologies and the desire to save money.

In this education budget you should not be fooled by headline figures. You need to look at what is happening in our public schools. Under the CLP government they have felt the full brunt of significant cuts to teacher and support staff numbers and programs, and have bigger class sizes. We have seen a disastrous rollout of global school budgets which constitutes more cuts by stealth. The government is pushing responsibility for the hard decisions schools are having to make with less money on to principals and school councils.

Yesterday in this House the Education minister said over 700 enrolments have been lost from our public schools. What a disgrace. What a terrible legacy this CLP government is leaving us. It is a disgrace to hear 700 enrolments have been lost under their watch. The government trying to blame the opposition, the teacher's union, COGSO and parents for this decline is wrong. It is another indication this government has lost touch with reality and what Territorians elected the government to do. Your cuts have caused this. Stripping back investment in education and cutting teacher numbers has caused some people to lose faith, something you should be ashamed of.

We now see \$12m has been stripped out of government education in this budget. This is another disgraceful episode of this government. If you look at the last Labor government budget in 2012 you will see it was \$686m, \$23m more than this year's budget. This does not even take into account indexation, so that amount would be more substantial. Looking at what has been cut from public schools since the 2012 Labor budget, it is about \$82m in real terms.

Yesterday in this House I raised concerns about \$12m being cut from primary education in public schools. I appreciate the minister tried to reassure me that this is the result of cessation of some federal agreements and other cutbacks. That did not stack up. We are still seeing \$12m less in public primary schools, a critical time in a child's education.

The Leader of the Opposition has been very clear about the priority a Labor government would give education and the health, education and wellbeing of children before they enter school. We know it makes a huge difference to their future life outcomes. However, we hear in some remote parts of Central Australia there is less access to early childhood support and development for children before school. Schools are grappling with a new range of challenges under global school budgets.

I note in the Education minister's response to the budget he said \$40m in transitional funding is available, which includes \$23m over four years to help cover the shortfalls and the transitions due to global school budgets. Global school budgets have caused chaos in schools, which have had to make more cuts as a result.

Despite the upfront promise that no school would be worse off, many schools are. The admission of the requirement of an extra \$23m shows that the government got it wrong and had to put that extra money towards softening the transition to global school budgets.

We also hear from schools that they have extra administrative burdens, when they should be focused on the day-to-day education of children. When removing an additional \$40m of transitional funding as a result of global school budgets, you would then see even greater cuts to public education. It is a disgrace.

The Australian Education Union also raised a raft of concerns yesterday, including how much worse the \$12m cut is, after taking into account teachers' pay increases and inflation factors. These cuts are deep and they will hurt public education.

In my visits to schools and through conversations with people deeply committed to education in the Territory, I continue to hear about overworked teachers and staff in schools. I see classes packed to capacity. The Territory has the highest proportion of children with learning deficits, English as a second language, challenging behaviour, special needs and challenging home conditions. Despite this, we still see the government making cuts to education.

This is a sad reality and fact of life in the Territory. When education is a pathway for empowerment to

a life of opportunity, why is the government cutting it? To help these children you need more support, not less. While there are many children with learning challenges, there are also many children at the other end of the spectrum who thrive at school in their education, and we must ensure they get the support they need to reach their full potential.

As a government the CLP has made it very clear that education is not a priority and saving money in public education is. It is a shame. The infrastructure spend in the education budget may look impressive, but it is important to note that of the \$119m in that budget \$72m is revoked, that is, a re-announcement of commitments which have already been made. The repairs and maintenance budget has been reduced by almost \$2m from last year, but it remains at the same levels as 2012. Many schools are not getting any younger so it is hard to see how they are making that money go further.

On a positive note about the infrastructure budget for the Education department, I am thrilled to see money committed to Henbury School. That is a good decision by the CLP government. I am glad it matched Labor's commitment to do that and it listened to the hard-working parents of the Henbury School community who lobbied hard to make that decision. It is a move in the electorate welcomed by the Henbury School community. It is something you should be proud of which will deliver good outcomes for those families.

I am also happy to see progress in the long-delayed Bellamack special school which was announced in 2010. I am glad that after almost three years in government, you are finally getting on with it. That will be of huge benefit to many families with children with special needs in the Palmerston area.

It is also great to see investment in school infrastructure at Larapinta Primary School, Braitling Primary School, Bees Creek Preschool, Anula Primary School and Wulagi Primary School. I note that all these schools are within CLP electorates, but appreciate they need upgrades, which will be welcomed by the school communities. It would have been nice to see more schools benefit from similar upgrades.

Overall I have many concerns about public education under this CLP government. It is clear that schools will continue to suffer from cuts at the hands of this government and public education is not one of its priorities. This budget does not deliver brighter hope for any of the teachers and support staff working hard in schools. We know schools are under incredible strain at the moment. Fortunately, we have a wonderful, passionate workforce of teachers, principals, staff and parents

who take time out to be on school councils and are doing everything they can to ensure children receive the best education possible. They will continue, despite knowing that education has suffered significant cuts to funding under the CLP government.

I will now turn to my shadow portfolio area of Essential Services. This year will be the first year of the full operation of the new government owned corporations: the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation. Last year they were unable to complete full Statements of Corporate Intent so we will be looking forward to seeing those in full this year. I understand they have been working very hard behind the scenes preparing them. We look forward to asking about the performance of the new government owned corporations and the Power and Water Corporation during estimates to see what the structural separation has meant for them so far.

I note, however, that in the budget papers the repairs and maintenance budget for the Power and Water Corporation is finally at the level it was in 2012. Since the CLP came to government we have seen cuts to repairs and maintenance budgets for Power and Water. In the mini-budget it went down to \$76m, in the 2014-15 budget it reduced to \$81m and finally, the repairs and maintenance budget of Power and Water is back at the level it was in 2012.

Capital works are down \$100m since 2012 levels. I appreciate and acknowledge that the Labor Party did a great amount of heavy lifting in its time in government to build the infrastructure capacity and help address decades' worth of issues from ageing infrastructure at the Power and Water Corporation, which required a huge investment in capital works.

The EBAs are currently being negotiation at Power and Water. There is some angst amongst the workforce about how that will conclude and whether or not their pay and conditions will still be at the levels they were prior to structural separation. We will see.

We have heard this government over the last few sittings finally showing a bit of love and commitment to Power and Water employees, after some fairly horrendous things said about them in the past. In one media interview the Treasurer said he thought there were far too many of them and they had far too much equipment. I was very happy that after their previous remarks we heard the Treasurer and Essential Services minister saying they value Power and Water staff. They should. Let us see how much you do in your commitments to the pay and conditions of our very hard-working workforce at the Power and Water

Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation.

I turn to my new shadow portfolio responsibility of Defence Support. It is a portfolio I am delighted to have, because we know Defence makes a huge contribution to our community and our country. We appreciate Defence personnel for the duty they perform for this nation, as well as what they do for our community. I have a very large proportion of Defence personnel in my electorate, particularly in Lyons and Muirhead, and it is wonderful to see the involvement of those families in our local community and schools. They make a wonderful contribution and are very valued. The Territory has a large proportion of Defence personnel and we are home to almost one-tenth of them. They do a wonderful job.

We can see there are some huge projects earmarked for the future which leave the Territory well poised to make the most of the economic development opportunities they present. We have plenty of work coming to the Territory with changes to the Darwin RAAF Base and at Tindal with the Joint Strike Fighter program and more housing developments, to name a couple. These activities can support local jobs.

Much hard work occurred under the Labor government in Defence support and I am glad to hear this government's continued commitment to efforts in that area.

I turn to Parks and Wildlife, another portfolio I am delighted to have. Our parks are truly spectacular. We have some wonderful parks which are beautiful, natural assets. They play a part in our lifestyle, but also present some fantastic tourism and economic development opportunities from the top to the bottom of the Territory. We must work to preserve and protect our parks, but we also need to ensure we strike the right balance between protecting the environment, our flora and fauna, and tourism and economic development. The parks are magnificent and people come from all parts of the world to see them.

We welcome the infrastructure investments announced in the budget. The Casuarina Coastal Reserve spend is something I am looking forward to. We are keen to ensure the government consults with the community about the changes and the community gets real value for money from the spend. Sometimes you hear big numbers announced but what is delivered is hard to equate with that. We want to see value for money in the upgrades.

Looking at the budget for Parks and Wildlife it appears there has not been much movement from last year, but I am glad to see some additional

investment in infrastructure. It is important to ensure we continue to see investment in parks. I welcome the increase to heritage conservation of \$300 000 to \$2.4m.

I turn now to my electorate of Wanguri and some announcements in the budget. I welcome the continued duplication of Vanderlin Drive, following Labor's duplication past the water park up to the boundaries of Karama. It will be good to see that extend all the way to the Peter McAulay Centre.

We know that fishing is extremely popular in the community and seeing commitment to the Buffalo Creek area is good.

I have a few questions regarding the work being done on Royal Darwin Hospital. People in the Wanguri electorate, like those in Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area, are completely dependent on RDH as the primary hospital, given it is the only public hospital. I welcome enhancements to the hospital, but we need to know if they will have any effect on bed-block and waiting times.

I also have some questions about the present situation with the paid parking system. This time last year we had some important questions about what was happening with that system, trying to find out where the money from it goes. It is about as clear as mud. Also, how much does Wilson Contracting receive for that paid parking system? We have heard commitments from the government about making changes, but we have not seen anything happen. We are keen to see if there will be further work on that paid parking system, which is very unpopular and frustrating. It is an extremely confusing system for many people.

I also want to know about the release of the beds at the medi-hotel. This created many problems over the last few years with regard to bed-block at RDH, because there had been nowhere to place people who required a bed. They may have come to town for medical treatment and did not require a bed within the hospital, but needed to be in a suitable bed to have their medical conditions attended to. After taking those beds out of the system for use in the mandatory alcohol rehabilitation, finally government saw sense and released them. How is that tackling bed-block?

People also want to see Palmerston hospital finally built. This has dragged out under this government and we have seen repeated delays. The government will struggle to open it in 2018 at this rate because it is taking a very long time. People want the Palmerston hospital open to take pressure off Royal Darwin Hospital.

There are also questions about home ownership opportunities for Territorians, particularly with the changes this government initiated to the First Home Owners Grant regarding the purchase of an existing dwelling. It is good to see there is a First Home Owners Grant available for people wanting to buy a newly-built residential property, however, for many people buying a brand spanking new house is not their pathway into home ownership. For many people to get a foot in the door they buy a one- or two-bedroom older style unit or townhouse or an older style three-bedroom, one-bathroom house in the suburbs to live with their family in a home of their own.

To cut the First Home Owners Grant for people wishing to purchase existing dwellings in the Territory was a huge mistake by this government. It has made it so much harder for long-term Territorians who want to live their life here but want to get out of the rental market and into a family home ...

Mr Elferink: Have you seen the effect it has had on unit prices?

Ms MANISON: Okay. It is making it harder for them to get into the housing market.

With the government's desire to sell or redevelop some of the ageing public housing stock complexes, it is forgetting to put public housing stock back into the market. It is selling it and not replacing it. Under this government, we have seen blowouts in the public housing wait lists for people desperate to get into housing.

A constituent with medical conditions came to me last week and told me her latest advice with regard to priority housing wait time – these are people with the most desperate need to be housed as they are homeless, have medical conditions and need a roof over their heads – was that the wait list is now four years for her style of accommodation. Last year a person had been told three years, but it seems the priority housing wait list is still blowing out.

For somebody to get a public housing dwelling in the Darwin or Casuarina region, the wait time for a one-bedroom unit is now 92 months or seven-and-a-half years, a two-bedroom dwelling is 69 months and a three-bedroom dwelling is 75 months.

Seniors were keen to see if there would be any reprieve in the budget to changes to the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme that came into place last year to help support more seniors and stop more people leaving the Territory. We have seen changes to the stamp duty concession for seniors by about \$1500. When they want to downsize and go into another residence this gives them some financial relief, but

that is about all we have seen in this budget to support seniors who also have to foot the extremely high cost of living in the Northern Territory. They do not have as much capacity for earning given their working lives are mostly behind him.

A major concern that continues to come up in my electorate is work around tackling property crime, antisocial behaviour and alcohol issues. We have seen a steep increase in those areas in the electorate. They are concerns that are raised with me often. People want to feel safer, which is one of your tag lines in the budget. They deserve to feel safe in their homes and community.

However, under this government we have seen spiralling property crime, motor vehicle theft, alcohol issues and antisocial behaviour. There is more work to do if you are truly to deliver a safer community as you promised in the budget.

Our police do an amazing, extremely challenging job. I take my hat off to them. The things they see and do are things that most people never see in their lives. They are extremely hard-working, committed and dedicated but they need to be resourced properly to be able to do their work. At the moment they have great difficulties with their resourcing.

I have been quite clear in my concerns about education and this government's determination to cut public education. Under the CLP government it has been disgraceful to see the cuts to teacher and support staff numbers in our public schools. Government does not seem to be making education a priority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Treasurer made it clear that TIO funded this budget. We can see through some of the sweeteners announced which are targeted at key electorates. Much work is being done by this government to regain favour from Territorians who have lost faith in it after almost three years of a chaotic dysfunctional government which has cut services important to the future of the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Treasurer for the budget. I will push rewind and go back a few steps. I remind members the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and the Treasurer's Mid-Year Report have been buried deep in the Notice Paper by this government. It is quite obvious they were not interested in debating those important fiscal markers along the way. They fill in the gaps in the story of why the CLP suddenly has so much pork on the fork and how it will deliver the amazing infrastructure spend it has sold to the media and which the public is now rejoicing. However, we have an opposition in the Northern Territory

because it will fill in the gaps and provide Territorians with the read-between-the-lines space so the reality is revealed.

Let us look at the two major fiscal markers that have been buried in the Notice Paper by this government which is reluctant to debate them in the House and tell Territorians the story. The CLP has set itself up as the highest-taxing government in the history of the Territory. In the last fiscal period coming in to Budget 2015-16 we saw an \$81.8m increase in taxation, a \$22.9m increase in GST revenue – a great windfall for the Treasurer – increased mining royalties of \$37.2m – a great windfall for the Treasurer – and a \$22m undisclosed settlement for an asset which is in Alice Springs and relates to health.

If anyone wants to go into that, it was a CLP project which went horribly wrong and was being sorted out by Labor before we lost government, which eventually delivered a \$22m settlement, a nice windfall for the Northern Territory. As the minister responsible for construction and infrastructure, I was working on that.

There was a \$3.7m sale of public housing and we wonder why the waiting lists have spiralled out of control. There were savings of \$30m because of changes to home ownership assistance schemes in the Northern Territory. The member for Wanguri outlined why that is so important and should be reintroduced. The CLP has stuffed \$30m into the coffers in the last financial year, keeping young Territory families out of a home. The CLP members then have the hide to crow about the cost of living and what they are doing in housing Territorians. The government took \$30m and stuffed it into its wallet while Territory families are paying rents and are denied housing.

There was an extra \$230m gained through the public non-financial corporation sector. That is quite a windfall. How did that happen? It obviously relates to the escalating tariffs in power, water and sewerage. There has been \$70m in savage hikes hitting Territory families – power by 30%, water by 40%, sewerage by 25%, and the last 5% increase in January 2015 has not hit the books yet. The Treasurer has raked that directly out of Territory families' and businesses' pockets, and there is still more to come. We see that this CLP government improving the balance sheet is sending Territorians broke.

The strategy it used also included cuts. Net capital spending was reduced by \$822.4m and there was a \$98m cut from the infrastructure program. You wonder why the roads are degraded, and I continue to talk about high-productivity roads to support projects you bring to this House. When we saw \$98m cut from that

program we saw the serious degradation of Territory roads, which will continue.

There was a \$12m cut to police. That was ripped out of community safety and stuffed into the Treasurer's wallet, with this predictable plan to come forward in 2015-16 saying, 'We love you; we want you to love us at the ballot box'. How predictable!

There was the handover of the Darwin Correctional Precinct, with \$521m shifted off the books. Territorians need to know how that works. There was the efficiency dividend demanded by the Chief Minister across the board, where we saw cuts to health, education, child protection and youth services to name a few.

The Leader of the Opposition outlined very clearly today why Labor is different to the Liberals. We value education and health and will not compromise the health of Territorians. We have a fiscal plan. We had a fiscal plan in 2012 but we lost the election, so it became the Renewable Management Board – the million dollar men – who kicked the ball off for the CLP in the Northern Territory with cut, cut, cut. Nobody was safe.

We then saw the next era of the sale of public assets. Everybody in the public and the media wants to talk about TIO. It is not just about TIO. Government buses, the Government Printing Office and TIO were sold off. This Chief Minister lacks serious credibility and the issue for you guys in selling this pork-on-the-fork budget is that nobody trusts him or listens to him. He is your major liability. Nobody trusts the member for Braitling, Adam Giles. They do not trust what he says ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! He knows full well of the requirement to address members exclusively by their electorate name.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, the member for Barkly knows full well. Member for Barkly, if you could please comply with that standing order.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the member for Port Darwin for his tutorial.

Let us get back to the mistruths being spread by the Chief Minister about the major public asset sale. The sale of TIO only generated about \$278m because the other hand of the Chief Minister was in the till of the motor accident compensation fund which looks after Territorians who are injured or killed on Territory roads. There was about \$141m – maybe more – that was ripped out of the till of the motor accident compensation fund. That story needs to be told as it shows the mercenary approach and the

combination of this other fiscal management that has not been debated in this House which the public needs to know about when they read their newspapers and listen to the radio broadcasters who are now talking about the big ticket CLP budget.

I challenge the pork-on-the-fork budget and the content of what ministers are delivering in this House. I will start with the Palmerston hospital. The Chief Minister has come to this House on numerous occasions assuring Territorians that Palmerston hospital is on track. The Treasurer has put a figure on that and set an appropriation of \$20m. I want to tell Territorians I believe the money from the federal government is off the table. It requires \$151m to build the Palmerston hospital and I believe with the chaotic revolving doors of CLP ministers there is a serious ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I invite the honourable member to put that in a media release and I will laugh at him publicly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is clearly not a point of order.

Mr ELFERINK: I am sorry. It is an abuse of process, I appreciate, and I withdraw.

Mr McCARTHY: I thank the member for Port Darwin for his tutorial.

The CLP needs to come clean and tell Territorians the whole story. I believe the money is off the table. They have failed in the benchmarks and the chronology the federal government demanded for an investment of \$151m.

We saw the opportunity to develop this hospital on serviced land in Palmerston in the health precinct. The CLP moved it to unserviced vacant Crown land. The first thing they used as a smokescreen was the need to upgrade the Temple Terrace and Stuart Highway intersection. This was their smokescreen to hide their failure to meet the time line of the hospital.

What does \$20m deliver? It delivers head services. As the previous Minister for Lands and Planning, I was very privileged to be part of a fantastic team that was delivering all the land in Palmerston that the CLP now claims. There was one budget allocation of \$20m to deliver head services for the new suburb of Johnston. We are seeing a road intersection and now we will see a rising sewer main because that is all that will be delivered on the eastern side of the Stuart Highway. There will be no Palmerston hospital; it will be a rising sewer main. It will be a benefit for the Territory since it will open up new land.

However, we are not being told the truth about the Palmerston hospital. It is about the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. This government continues to spin stories year after year.

The bridges over the Roper and Wilton Rivers are major road transport infrastructure. When the member for Arnhem was a member of the CLP we heard that story. When the member for Arnhem left the CLP we stopped hearing it. Suddenly we hear the story again of a \$40m investment. These are major revoted infrastructure spends that are basically promises and numbers on a page. We need to see the details. For Territorians, that is what estimates provides. That is where we can drill in and prosecute where these numbers are heading or whether they are a big furphy from a Chief Minister who is unbelievable.

One example is the bridge over Light Creek on Emungalan Road in Katherine, with a \$2.7m appropriation. The member for Katherine told over 12 months ago in the last budget process lambasted me as the Labor minister who refused to deliver this for the good people of Katherine. He ignored the traffic data study reports and the advice from the department about how many road closures there were in relation to that area being flooded. After the last significant rain event, when I left Darwin to drive home I took a detour to the Douglas Daly to visit a park, and another detour down Emungalan Road in Katherine to see the new bridge. I saw a flooded creek, cars parked and a boat being used to ferry constituents back and forward. I asked the constituent, 'What happened to the bridge?' He was most uncomplimentary about the member for Katherine. I told him I had been lambasted by the member for Katherine 12 months earlier. Here we are again with the bridge over Light Creek, a \$2.7m investment for the people of Katherine. Once again, this is the story where you subtract some of the numbers from the infrastructure spend and get a sense of reality.

The revote in this infrastructure program goes beyond the normal procedures of a government because the guys of that side always have something to hide and are fronted by a Chief Minister who is unbelievable in the public arena. You know it, we know it, and that is your legacy to any pork barrelling exercise in the future.

We need to raise the argument from Territorians in the field regarding infrastructure. That is about the investment into high-productivity assets.

I have had no joy in attracting investment to the Sandover Highway. The Plenty Highway deal was between the feds and the Territory government in relation to the Outback Way. It is about tourism, and a very small component is a dollar-for-dollar

match on the Plenty Highway. There is no talk of the Buchanan, Buntine, Barkly, Victoria or Stuart Highways. However, I give credit to the minister for Primary Industry, the member for Katherine, because I have witnessed heavy vehicle movements over those road networks in Wet and Dry Seasons. I have never before witnessed so much movement in live cattle from the new AACo abattoir across those road networks, delivering in excess of \$600m per annum into the beef industry in the Territory. It is a high-productivity industry which needs to be supported by investment into high-productivity roads.

That is what growing northern Australia is all about, yet I come to this House time after time to get this message across. We have seen a complete shift. You are not just ignoring me, you are ignoring the cattle producers, the agricultural sector and the minerals, resources and energy sector, which now share those networks. They are putting enormous pressure on those networks. Off the back of a \$98m infrastructure cut, those networks are seriously degraded. They need serious attention to be developed.

This government has gone off on another track because the pork on the fork is designed for Darwin and Alice Springs. It will only seriously look at those two areas because it cannot face the reality that it has failed the people in the bush. The CLP members made the promises, gained government, then abandoned those in the bush and broke promises one after another. This is a desperation attempt from a Chief Minister nobody believes.

Let us look at a couple of areas specifically relating to budget appropriation. Land resource management and water resources – what an interesting area. The granting of water licences started almost on day one of the CLP government in 2012, when a very high-profile CLP member and candidate was granted a mega water licence.

This area is very interesting in relation to the budget appropriation with an increase of \$261 000. Talking about growing northern Australia and the priceless allocation of water to support the development of northern Australia and the Northern Territory economy, it is a meagre increase of \$261 000. That needs to be said as it is a reality check.

Budget Paper No 3 says:

Developing a water resource strategy and associated policies to drive economic development while maintaining healthy water dependent ecosystems.

The most recent comments from traditional owners about the disgraceful attack on the

strategic Indigenous reserve is now joined by agriculturalists who have concerns about the way the CLP is allocating water across the Douglas Daly, the Roper gulf and now into Central Australia. The Amateur Fishermen's Association is now seriously concerned about the data sets pushed out by this government and is questioning whether they are real or honest. They are coming from a Chief Minister who is completely unbelievable in the community. These stakeholders are important in the Northern Territory. They need to be listened to and to be in partnership with any government.

It is a meagre appropriation with a big statement and a highlight that says \$2m for this appropriation will be for a new water resource investigation drilling rig. So in real terms we have seen a reduction in that budget. You have to be straight. If it is buying a new asset in a drilling rig, good. That is great; it will do a good job. However, when you are talking about developing northern Australia and protecting the future of our children and future generations of Territorians by making sure we do not get this wrong, then the budget allocation does not really cut through.

The minister for Primary Industry has a smattering of small allocations of \$1m, \$1.2m, \$600 000 and \$700 000. It is the style of this appropriation that concerns me as it creates red tape and bureaucracy which will not deliver results on the ground.

You guys do not believe me. You do not want to hear from me so let me quote from the ABC Rural site where a horticulturalist was interviewed in relation to the Northern Territory budget. I quote from that site, ABC Rural, *NT Country Hour* on Tuesday 28 April 2015 at 3.11 pm:

The horticulture sector in Central Australia will be given a \$1.2m helping hand to tap into new markets and advance the industry across the region.

Over two years, a project advisory team will conduct 'targeted market analysis and research, engage with agribusiness and test market opportunities to de-risk investment and development of projects'.

Let us go to the word on the street from a Territorian who knows what they are doing.

But a co-owner of the biggest table grape farm in the Northern Territory says the Government's Budget announcement to support horticultural development is likely to be a waste of money.

Bevan Ball who farms near Ti Tree, said the Government needs to talk more to Red

Centre growers and better promote the Territory as a great place to grow things like grapes and onions.

'We're the guys who are on the ground, we know what's going on around the place, we don't need a consultant to put a paper together,' said Mr Ball.

He believes \$1.2 million won't go far.

'I figure it'll pay four consultants to drive around, take a few notes, make a paper and then nothing happens in the next two years,' he said.

That needs to be taken as a positive. I get to talk to horticulturalists in the Barkly as well. I recently discussed with the owner of a successful stock fodder project and one of the most successful watermelon farms in northern Australia a traditional pivot irrigation system. These growers say the same thing: this government needs to listen.

If you throw all of these dollars around – \$1.2m here, \$700 000 here and \$600 000 there – I question whether Territorians will get value for money and if this will support the industry. Pull back, take a breath and make sure the people in the sector are right beside you. It is not rocket science.

In regard to the environment, there will be a memorable occasion in the Territory because as of 1 July 2015 the Environment Centre NT will receive no funding. That is a cut of \$185 000 which will knock that centre out. Why would a government want to knock out the Environment Centre? We have been told it is because there is an independent EPA. We have seen that rolling out over the last 18 months. We believe the Environment Centre is a very important body. It is a collective within the community that can do some analysis and advise government.

What are you frightened of? Why are you concerned? It is because you do not want anybody challenging the CLP way. The CLP was born to rule, as stated in this House by a previous CLP government member. The Environment Centre needs to be funded and heard; it is completely independent.

I have had the pleasure of working with the centre over seven years in the Muckaty campaign to make sure Australians get the best result and the storage and disposal of nuclear waste is done with good science, not cheap politics. Thank you, Environment Centre.

I am disgusted that this government would cut the funding completely. However, word on the street

says it will continue with donations and volunteers and will continue to hold this government to account.

There has been an increase of just over \$1m for the NT Environment Protection Authority. As an opposition we acknowledge that. Part of the work will be a storm water strategy for Darwin Harbour. If you go to Budget Paper No 4 and look at the infrastructure of Darwin port, you see a massive revote: total infrastructure program of \$13.531m with a revote of \$6.37m. We are really talking about an infrastructure program of \$7.161m, with \$526 000 of that for a wash down area.

Darwin port is being debated at the moment. I would like the member for Blain to note that one of the important jobs Labor was doing when in charge of Darwin port was a storm water management system. We put considerable money into that because it was built by the CLP as failing infrastructure where the storm water flowed straight into the harbour off an industrial port. Whoever within the CLP administration let that go through was cutting corners, cutting costs or just not aware of best practice infrastructure and engineering. Labor had to address this major flaw in the port.

I do not see any budget appropriation for the continuation of that. The member for Blain is busy trying to flog the port to a new buyer but is he telling the buyer the truth? Does the purchaser of Darwin port realise the storm water management system has not been completed and is a major deficit in the environment and health of Darwin Harbour and the associated tributaries across northern Australia.

I go to another area the member for Blain might not know about. I did not see any appropriation for the continued replacement of tie rods that hold the structure together. This engineering adopted and implemented by the CLP government when it built the port is the same engineering that failed at Cullen Bay. The previous Labor government had to spend in excess of \$3.8m to redo the slipway at Cullen Bay as the walls were coming away and would have completely destroyed the entry and exit to Cullen Bay. The lock had to be reengineered. It was an amazing body of work I was privileged to be a part of.

The port has the same problem. We were working through that not only with compensation from the original contractor, but with the Darwin Port Corporation. I do not see any appropriation for that. Has the member for Blain told a new customer about the tie rod story at the Darwin Port Corporation? The Darwin Port Corporation knows what it is doing. It addressed this in each stage where that engineering spec failed. That is something I picked up from reading through

budget papers, and I wondered why there is no appropriation. That could be a serious legacy issue for the CLP which could fold into the point that the CLP cannot be trusted.

Let us now go to the Department of Business. It has seen a budget increase of \$366 000, which is very good. It is nice to see increases. It is rather a meagre increase when we hear so much talk about businesses. Let us be very clear about the pork-on-the-fork budget, because the austerity measures from 2012 caused 340 Territory businesses to close, 120 of which were in Alice Springs. If you want to see a business sector doing it tough, come to Tennant Creek. With 340 businesses closed, we now see a meagre appropriation increase of \$366 000.

I am interested in the training side of that which is not realised in the NT, which is talked about by the government and needs to be in place. One of the most critical factors in growing our economy, as outlined by the Opposition Leader today – Labor invests in people as the foundation stones of our society to ensure they are front and centre as part of development. There is a small increase in that appropriation and I welcome that.

In perusing the budget papers I was concerned about the number of apprenticeship and trainee commencements listed for 2015-16, which was 2800; however, completions were 1200, so there is more than a 50% dropout rate, which is concerning. The government is talking this area up, which they should. It is appropriating significant funds to deliver it, yet already we are seeing a prediction that there will be more than half of the apprenticeship intake drop out. Why is that?

Ms WALKER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move an extension of time for my colleague.

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy.

I was talking about this more than half dropout rate which is of great concern. No doubt the government will be able to provide plenty of information at estimates about how it is addressing that. Let us face it, I have spent more than half my life supporting kids into apprenticeships. I would hate to see more than half dropping out along the way and completely destroying a significant budget appropriation from the CLP. They expect that more than half the apprentices will drop out ...

Mr Styles interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: Member for Sanderson, does this relate to the number of people packing up and leaving the Northern Territory? I believe it could. I know the removal companies are making a motza and people are talking about it because they do not trust this Chief Minister. Is that why the apprenticeship rate is predicted to be more than half dropout? Let us to go estimates and talk about that because I want to prosecute the argument of how we can help our apprentices. Let us look at your budget appropriations to see if they are supporting that accordingly.

Local Government and Community Services is one of my favourite areas. In Indigenous Essential Services there is an increase of \$1.894m. The minister read that in her prepared speech, no doubt. I then looked through the budget papers to see the appropriation. It would match up with some significant projects, one of which is at Ali Curung where the sewerage system will be upgraded. So it should because it is failing; it has broken down a number of times. The community needs that infrastructure so I welcome that budget appropriation. Hopefully that will spin off into local jobs, matching people with industry and community partnerships – the way to go, CLP.

The remote infrastructure coordination area of Local Government and Community Services has seen a decrease of \$14.517m in this budget. That is alarming. The member for Port Darwin will be ready to jump out of his seat and claim I am masking mischief. However, when you read the budget it talks about why there had been a significant variation which relates to Ipiye-Ipiye, one of the Alice Springs town community living areas. It is a significant investment in normalising that.

This minister reads off the prepared script and does not take note of what she is reading because of the schoolboy rhetoric that comes down from the spin doctors on the fifth floor that Labor did nothing and Labor did not do this, blah, blah, blah! Well, let us talk about the \$98m investment in the Alice Spring's community living areas. Let us talk about the combination ...

Members interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: The minister is speaking from the heart and is free styling, there is no prepared script ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister Price! Attorney-General! Order! Member for Barkly, continue. You have a minute to go before the luncheon suspension – not before time.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. It went over the \$100m to normalise Alice Springs town community living areas delivered by Labor ...

Mr Elferink: You spent \$100m and you have a bunch of squalid town camps. Well done!

Mr McCARTHY: We are talking infrastructure, member for Port Darwin. We did an incredible job and the minister has continued that, reflecting the significant variation.

For homelands, outstations and town camps there is a decrease of \$4.013m. This shows the minister is being bullied in Cabinet. It shows why the minister cannot stand up and deliver for Indigenous Territorians. We need to support this minister because she has been rolled in the Cabinet room by the member for Braitling. This minister has not delivered, she has been rolled. We see the trade-off in an office for Aboriginal affairs.

The member for Namatjira, who is an insider in this – she worked with you guys and was a minister in your government – knows how the Cabinet room works. Her comment was, 'This will be another office and jobs for the boys'. I was completely disturbed by that comment thinking how important Indigenous affairs is. The Minister for Local Government and Community Services has been rolled in Cabinet, taken out by her colleagues, and has suffered a reduction for the people living on homelands and outstations of over \$4m in this budget ...

Mrs Price interjecting.

Mr McCARTHY: Minister, I challenge you! Could you see the state of housing at Mungkarta from the Waldorf Astoria in New York ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! For the sake of the honourable member's blood pressure and flirting with a heart attack, I suggest we adjourn for lunch so he might calm down.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Port Darwin, for all of us the luncheon suspension will be welcome.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Use of Despatch Boxes

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I sent an e-mail to the respective Whips over the luncheon break. I am not sure who has received it. For today and tomorrow only, as a trial, you

can use the Despatch Boxes to ask and answer questions. If you feel that will be beneficial to you to ask or answer a question, by all means the Despatch Boxes are available.

PETITION

Petition No 46 – Mobile Phone Coverage

Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 1523 petitioners relating to mobile phone coverage on a major Australian highway. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

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 communications between travellers and local residents in emergency events.

APPROPRIATION (2015-2016) BILL (Serial 121)

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, it was great to hear in Question Time that the members of government have been listening to my positive contribution to debate with the offering of alternatives. I have a few minutes left.

I have established quite clearly that it is very difficult to oversee Aboriginal outstations and homelands from the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York. However, I reserve the rest of my questions for the estimates process where we will conduct a thorough prosecution of the minister, who will answer all the questions in detail for all Territorians.

I move to local government and regions with the Budget 2015-16 decrease of \$535 000 for local government, which is very disappointing to hear. We know how important the grassroots level of governance is in the Northern Territory. We know that both sides of this House were working diligently to ensure that level of governance throughout the Territory was supported. Both sides share the development of local authorities – local boards under Labor and when we did not win the election and the CLP gained government, it turned that into local authorities. We acknowledge that.

It is very disappointing that this minister has not delivered the increases in budget appropriations so desperately needed in the local government

sector. It again points to a minister who is not up to speed in the Cabinet process or who is dominated by other colleagues in the Cabinet room. I call on the minister to go back to the drawing board. The local government sector is in serious need of financial sustainability. The Deloitte report outlined very clearly what those needs are. The minister can read those recommendations. To see a budget decrease is very disappointing not just to me as a regional member but to those local authorities who have been striving to deliver services across regions and the bush.

This is an issue that was pivotal in the election in 2012 when the CLP came to government in an historic sense with support from the bush. To see how they have been neglected in the pork-on-the-fork budget is very disappointing.

I ask those Cabinet members opposite if they could support the member for Stuart. If she needs help in Cabinet, if there are areas where she can be empowered, then help her because representing the people from the regions through this appropriation sector is important. We cannot afford to go backwards. We need priority investment.

Just like my story about high-productivity assets and recognising the needs of primary industries, mining and energy sectors are all resourced off basic transport infrastructure, the local government sector is about people and service delivery which needs support.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am glad I got that off my chest.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Assembly is too, member for Barkly.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Treasurer for his response to my questions. Yes, I apologise, I read the budget paper as the last quarter of 2016. It is obviously the last quarter of April 2016. These things bring you back to earth occasionally and that is life.

I am disturbed about the issue I raised. The government has held no discussions with me, and I do not know if they have held discussions with Litchfield Council about a \$4.2m sewerage pumping station and rising main in the rural area. This has come out of the blue. I do not accept some of the arguments the Treasurer has given in relation to this. The Howard Springs activity centre is quite a long way from the school ...

Mr Chandler: The school has been complaining.

Mr WOOD: It is a considerable distance. The NT Planning Commission is talking about the forestry

land. I know that people who live around the forestry land do not want a suburb at their back door.

How is this government announcing a budget item when the greater Darwin plan has not been approved? There is no Howard Springs activity centre at present. The government has said it will spend money on something that has not been approved and people in the rural area do not want, preferring rural development.

I take exception to the Treasurer, who obviously likes to bait me about being anti-development. Unless you are pro-development the way the Treasurer wants – he being a black-and-white person when it comes to these debates – he believes if you do not support what he says you must be against him. It is very difficult to argue with that simplistic, nearly childish approach to development of the rural area. I have constantly supported development although not the way the Treasurer believes the world should be cut up.

It is disappointing for the Treasurer to not even explain where this has come from, where it will be built or who it has been discussed with. Is that the way you treat a member of parliament, or am I regarded as being irrelevant because I am not in government? Some people probably say that anyway. The point is we work here as members of parliament and should treat one another with a level of dignity, especially when it comes to major changes to a member's electorate. The minister thinks it is funny, but it is a serious matter. The people of Howard Springs have not been involved in any of these discussions.

I want to go through a few things, in line with the way ministers spoke last night. It was interesting. Many times in this parliament the minister for racing, the member for Sanderson, has shown us his little graphs and pointed out the dire straits of the economy. He still has them under his desk. It is probably not permitted to show us, but he has them there just in case. He showed them to us about two months ago, in February ...

Mr Styles: I showed them yesterday. Look at that.

Mr WOOD: I know. The economy has taken a sudden nose dive. It is amazing, the doom and gloom stories I hear in this parliament about not having any money to spend. The, whoopee! This year we have a bit extra from the GST and a pile of money from the TIO. Does that not make a difference to the way this budget is talked up?

When delivering his speech yesterday the Treasurer did not need a microphone because he was so loud. He had a smile on his face as wide as the Cheshire Cat's, because he loves what is

being introduced in this budget. Fair enough, there are many good things in this budget. I am amazed that the government members were saying just a few months ago that they could not spend any money and the world was coming to an end. Now they have a bit of money in their hands from the sale of TIO, they have a totally different attitude to life. Their budget management has not been the main driver, there simply happens to be a windfall from the GST and the sale of TIO.

In my own electorate, besides a drainage and sewerage system, there is a bit of money for the Bees Creek Preschool and some spending left over from last year with a little added to it to do drainage works in the Humpty Doo District Centre, which I support. I do not think it has ever been called the Humpty Doo activity centre, a name which is totally irrelevant to most people. If someone asks, 'Where do you live?' and you answer, 'I live in the Humpty Doo activity centre', they will think you live in the gym. It is a crazy name the planners dreamed up that has no relationship with the people who live in the rural area. It is a dopey name. Will we call parts of Palmerston activity centres? I bet the people will think you have gone off the deep end. The Moulden activity centre – yah! The whole idea of activity centres needs to be revisited.

I originally thought to start this speech with what we received for sporting infrastructure in the rural area. That is it, you have it right – nothing! Not a razoo! The government can spend something like \$57m on sporting and infrastructure yet the largest sporting facility in the Northern Territory, which is Freds Pass Reserve, got nothing – not a penny! Yet there are just as many, if not more, sporting clubs operating from that centre than any other similar facility in the Northern Territory.

We even have two local members in the CLP who cover that area. What is the point in being in the party if you cannot get money for your own recreation reserve? The minister for Sport announced there could be a pool. There could be a pool, yes, but that is not in this year's budget and that does not help. Those sporting groups are struggling because of the increased fees the Freds Pass Management Board is now applying to them. Some of those clubs will be struggling to exist if the fees continue to rise. Yet, nothing! I am amazed there is no recognition in this budget that we exist.

What happened to the cycle path? There was supposed to be money for the cycle path. The member for Sanderson told me. The cycle path looks exactly as it has for the last two-and-a-half years. I do not know what happened to that.

There are some good things. The minister mentioned funds for weed management of

\$500 000. That is where we have to go. We have major weed problems in the NT which affect not only good pastures. I was at the Douglas Daly field day where bellyache bush is on the banks of the Daly River as well as rat-tail grass, a serious weed that gets into the pastures there.

When you leave the pastoral areas gamba grass is a major pest, especially with fires, in the more built-up 5-acre and 20-acre areas of Howard Springs, Batchelor and Coomalie.

Improvement to boat ramps is fantastic.

There was a note about \$42m for flood mitigation. I would like more detail about that. That money, I presume, has been taken out of the TIO fund. My understanding is there are many questions about the feasibility of putting a levee bank in the Katherine area. It would be good for the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the progress the government has made in designing that levee. Is it feasible? I believe it was one of those ideas thrown around during the debate to convince members and the public that it was a good idea to get money from the TIO sale and use it for things like flood mitigation. Beswick may have been included in this as well as funds for rural development. However, the key funding in this budget is for \$42m for flood mitigation. Most of that is set for Katherine. Is this a pie-in-the-sky project, or something that will become reality one day?

The minister also mentioned, as did the Chief Minister, the idea of increasing Indigenous employment in the public service or through Indigenous business tender support programs. I have heard all this before. I heard it when the Commonwealth was making the same moves with SIHIP, or NPARIH as it is called now, the Aboriginal housing program. They wanted X number of Indigenous people to be employed.

One of the concerns I had, which is the same concern I have now, is if this is not carefully managed you will not get results. You can have many people employed but they may only work one or two days in the entire project. You will have a great number of people who have worked and get 20%. What you need is people who have worked the entire project. That is where the Commonwealth failed when it tried to convince people it had employed and trained many Aboriginal people under SIHIP. When you checked the statistics you discovered few people worked for longer than six months. If we have this program let it not be just a tick and flick, let us see if it did what you said it would.

The Minister for Racing, Gaming and Licensing mentioned \$14.7m towards horse racing, including the tunnel. Does the government have any

alternative ideas on a tunnel? This tunnel is for one day a year, the Darwin Cup. The government will spend heaps of money on a tunnel. I could not get the bicycle path which goes past the new hospital site to go under the new road because it was too expensive. However, the government has enough money to put in a tunnel ...

Mr Styles: The result of a coronial.

Mr WOOD: Excuse me. Yes, and the coronial mentioned whether or not there had been a mark on the track. There are possibly other ways to avoid having a mark on a track for one day a year ...

Mr Styles: Not one day.

Mr WOOD: That is the day the problem occurred. What other day do they cross the track?

Mr Styles: Every time they race.

Mr WOOD: That is when they cross the track? There are plenty of other courses in Australia which have tracks across them. Look at the races on Sky and see the number of tracks. One I used to work on is Kilmore, which has a track where the tractors go across. I wonder if there are cheaper alternatives to a tunnel which could do the job. I am not saying we do not try to avoid that tragic situation which occurred, I simply wonder if this expenditure could achieve the same outcome and be cheaper than putting in a tunnel for one day in a year.

The minister also spoke about increasing the amount of money from the pokies in casinos. I will probably hear all about this tomorrow. The end does not always justify the means. Just because you have a great deal of money to hand out to sporting groups, it does not mean having more pokies is fine. The casinos should be paying their fair share. I congratulate the government for going down that path, but that is not an argument to say that pokies are fantastic. The argument is that if we have pokies, everyone pays their fair share of tax and that money should go to community benefit programs.

The minister for Police spoke about the 120 additional police. I am sure Vince Kelly has a completely different view about that. The Northern Territory Police Association does not agree with this because the commitment to 120 extra police has not been realised. I will not go into too much detail, but listen to Vince Kelly and he will tell you that is not the case.

It would be great to see more ACPOs. I go to the graduation marches for police every now and then, but I have not seen one for ACPOs for a while. If the government is putting more emphasis

on them, that is good. One of the issues often raised is keeping ACPOs in the job for a long period and giving them a route to becoming fully-fledged police officers at a later stage.

I am interested to know more about police at bottle shops, as I am not sure if there has been an increase in funding. That is an expensive exercise. Again, the Police Association has issues with it, as do I. I am interested to know if the government has held any discussions with the Australian Hotels Association or the clubs, because questions should be asked about where people will be drinking before going into licensed premises or after. If you ask them beforehand, they will not get the business. If you ask them after they buy the alcohol, the business has the sales and the person does not get to drink it. Is that fair?

I am interested to know whether the government has a policy in relation to the question being asked before the person goes in so they keep their money, or when they go out. How much is it costing? If the government thinks this is a fantastic idea, is there money in the budget? If it needs to be expanded, where is it in the budget?

I have a question about the Pickertaramoor Road. I worked on Bathurst Island for a long time and I have struggled with this question. Is Pickertaramoor Road a public road? You are giving money to, I presume, the council. I am not sure where it is going but councils maintain roads. I hope it gets the contract. How can the government legally give money for a road that is not gazetted or a public road? This whole area needs more work. Central Arnhem Road is a classic. Part of that road requires a permit in theory. We spend money on it. You cannot spend money on my driveway. You cannot now spend money on a pastoral property road. You used to but you do not do it now. This is an issue that has to be sorted. You either spend public money on public roads and if people have roads which are regarded as private, then they have to find their own money for them. How that works in reality I do not know.

The Litchfield loop road is a terrific idea. That will be a great improvement for tourism. I have said many times that by bituminising that road you will encourage more people to visit the Berry Springs Territory Wildlife Park. Also, having a bridge over the Finniss River will make that an all-weather road. I have a conflict of interest because some of my family live at the mouth of the Daly River. It will cut the time spent to get there by a considerable amount, especially in the Wet Season because you will not have to go via Batchelor.

The important thing is people will now have a choice of going to Litchfield National Park either from the Berry Springs or Batchelor ends, which will open more opportunities for businesses in that area. Whether it is in Berry Springs at the wildlife park or at the reserve, that will be good. There may be opportunities because there is Aboriginal land there for some of the Indigenous groups to look at some facilities for people going through the area, which can create jobs. I welcome the government's move to do that.

The Mereenie loop road has been happening since I came into parliament. It has been nibbled at for years and years. Like the Litchfield loop road, it is being done bit by bit. It will be great to see the Mereenie loop road finished.

I do not have the member for Arnhem next to me, but I notice the government wants to put money into the Roper River Road on the Fitzer Creek to Ngukurr section. I travelled there a year ago and some of the road needed work done on it. If that brings Ngukurr closer to having bitumen all the way to the Sturt Highway that would be great for the people living there. If the mines open I do not know if some of that money could go to widening the road.

The previous Minister for Infrastructure said there was \$300 000 set aside to take the cycle path from Howard Springs to Coolalinga. There is nothing in this budget about that, which is sad.

It is great to see \$42 000 for the Royal Darwin Hospital. It obviously needs some work done; it is an old hospital. What will the money be used for? The Minister for Health has not given his statement yet. Perhaps he could expand on what that money will be used for.

Richardson Park – interesting. I was talking to someone with a great knowledge of rugby league. Where did this come from? There is \$20m for Richardson Park. Last we heard it was too costly to run. If you put \$20m into it, what will that solve if the place is costly to run and the rugby people are finding it difficult to maintain financially? Could the minister provide information about the communication he has had with NT rugby in relation to this \$20m? What will it do? What is the future of rugby headquarters in Darwin? How will he make sure NT rugby does not get into a position where, again, it has to leave Richardson Park because it is not financially viable. These are questions the minister needs to answer.

Hidden Valley receives \$8m. All right, rev heads. I do not mind going there once in a while but I see nothing for Freds Pass. How come? I have seen stacks of money poured into Hidden Valley over the years from both sides. The bitumen companies must love the government. We always

seem to be laying down new bitumen on something, but there is not a penny for Freds Pass Reserve.

The Chan Building is interesting. I thought the plans was to knock it down. The government has decided to put a lot of money into it. I would like to know what consultation it has had with the arts people. Some people tried to use it before for other galleries. How did it reach the point of becoming a public gallery? We will spend a lot of money on it so what were the processes involved in reaching that decision and who was consulted?

It is good to see some money for heritage sites down the highway. The last time any money was spent on a heritage site on the highway was Strauss Airstrip and that was about 10 years ago. I hope the government can put some money into protecting those World War II sites, not only the ones on the highway but the ones on the way to the Douglas Daly. There is MacDonald Airstrip close to Katherine, and other World War II airstrips which should have more signage and be protected because they are great tourism facilities in the Territory. They are not just a reminder of World War II. It is fantastic that those facilities are maintained and preserved. That is what makes the Northern Territory heritage special. Where else in Australia do you have an opportunity to see places which were bombed or where planes took off to fight the Japanese in Timor and Ambon? We should ensure that heritage is not left to go to wrack and ruin. The amount of \$3m is not huge, but it is something, and at least it has been recognised.

The minister for Local Government spoke about new councils. Could the minister give us an update on the cost of the split of the Victoria Daly Shire? It was a political split and that is the way things go, but there was no viability study of the cost. How much has been put in to keeping the West Daly Shire going and where is it in relation to infrastructure such as council facilities, etcetera? What effect has it had on the remaining part of the Victoria Daly Shire? Has it struggled now it has lost part of its rate base? I have not had a report. I was on the committee that looked at splitting the shire. It would be great to get a response from the minister.

Something I had not heard of before was the Family Safe Environment Fund. I understand it has about \$3.25m. I was involved in getting a skateboard, BMX and scooter track up and running in the Howard Springs area. We have a policy of no graffiti. We know how much it costs to get rid of graffiti. Thankfully people are getting used to nice, clean concrete being much better than concrete covered in graffiti, not only because it looks good, but it is safer for those using it. There is some money available through this

Family Safe Environment Fund which groups may be able to access and use to buy materials to get rid of graffiti, as they are not cheap. That sounded like a good project.

I would like to have a more detailed discussion and report from the minister about the funding for homelands. I note in her budget speech she said:

An amount of \$7.3m will also be spent on providing housing repairs and maintenance to homelands, outstations and town camps. Included in the homelands and outstations funding is an amount of \$4m for municipal essential services special purpose grants for the purchase of major capital items ...

I do not know if that \$4m is part of the \$7.3m, or whether it is \$11.3m in total. The minister also talked about \$6m for housing repairs and maintenance for eligible homelands dwellings through the NT government's Homelands Extra Allowance. Again, I am interested to get a report on which homelands have been upgraded and where the money is going.

One issue in relation to homelands is those close to town. In my electorate there is 15 Mile and Knuckey Lagoon. About two years ago I asked the government to set up a task force to look at the future, governance, maintenance and land ownership of those communities. I wanted to get the people together and work through some of these issues. When I asked a question about it, I was told some of it had gone to the minister for Lands and some to the minister for Community Services, and I have not heard a thing since.

Nothing has changed in those communities. Many people visit. People from government departments and other organisations come and go but has anything really changed? We still have the same issues. I asked the government two years ago to do something about it and it set up a task force, but that was it. I do not know what has happened, but it seems to me that bureaucracy has buried it. Unfortunately, people in those communities need assistance from the government. The government needs to make some decisions about the future of those communities.

The Minister for Transport spoke about \$2.96m to provide a public bus service on the Tiwi Islands. Fantastic! The member for Arafura will be very happy. I am not so happy, not because he is getting a bus service, but I have been trying to get a bus service going from INPEX to the prison and up to Howard Springs Nature Reserve ...

A member: Batchelor.

Mr WOOD: Batchelor would be good too. I cannot get anywhere. It is as if they will not expand bus services. Even though the population is growing and there is more need for it, we cannot get anything, yet there is \$2.96m for a public service on the Tiwi Islands. It is great for the Tiwi Islands, but there is nothing for the rural area.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, it is a mixed bag. I thank the Treasurer for bringing down the budget. There are some good things in it, but from a rural point of view there is – I nearly said bugger all. I will say that. There is nothing except a sewer main and a pumping station. I hope the next budget can do a lot better than that.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for his budget reply this morning. I will echo some of the strong sentiments and commitments he has placed on the record today about the need for Territorians to have a government they can trust, which has integrity and the very best interests of Territorians at heart, not the untrustworthy, self-interested, arrogant and chaotic CLP government we have witnessed over the last two-and-a-half years, perhaps with the exception of the member for Daly.

Mr Higgins: Thank you.

Ms WALKER: The government fails the test of openness and transparency time and time again. It has betrayed Territorians with empty promises delivered at the last election and has hurt Territorians with savage cuts over the last two-and-a-half years, and despite two years of pain at budget time still managed to find about \$30m last year for the Chief Minister's special budget, which delivered little more than spin. Government members come into this parliament with hands on hearts pledging to work for the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory, an undertaking which does not match the reality of what this CLP government actually does.

Concerned about their re-election prospects in August 2016, they are now fattening the pig with money to splash, courtesy of the sale of TIO and the hefty tariff impositions forced upon Territorians for power and water, and motor vehicle registration. Territorians thought they had voted for a government which promised to reduce the cost of living but it has done the opposite.

Territorians are not fools; they recognise where the CLP is going. Those who live out bush in particular know where the CLP is going, and hopefully that is to see them out of the door.

The editorial in today's *Katherine Times* speaks volumes about the fact that Territorians are awake

to the CLP government. I will read this editorial, entitled 'Government sleight of hand sours local budget positives' on to the record':

The Northern Territory government is spruiking its 2015-16 budget as 'simpler, safe and smarter' but, when it comes to the Katherine region's slice of the pie, the alliteration needs to be continued with a fourth word: sneaky.

Born-again Treasurer Dave Tollner may believe the government including \$7.6m in the budget to move Katherine's paramedics out of a flood zone demonstrates its 'unwavering' commitment to safety, but what it really represents is the recycling of a funding promise that has surpassed its use-by date.

The funding to relocate the ambulance station to the existing emergency services precinct was part of a questionable \$25m sweetener dangled in front of the Katherine community in November in the midst of the sale of insurer TIO.

Now, the menagerie of muppets on the fifth floor is trying to pass it off as an additional windfall for the town by neglecting to mention it and TIO in the same sentence.

Even in a safe Country Liberal Party seat like Katherine, voters are unlikely to fall for such an amateur sleight of hand.

There are numerous elements of the budget that will pay big dividends for Katherine residents and those of surrounding communities, like the \$6.36m for Kintore Street School and Katherine School of the Air that will ensure neither special needs nor geography will prohibit students from reaching their educational potential.

Unfortunately, there are other aspects that suggest the Giles government thinks Katherinites have the attention spans of goldfish and will fail to recognise a carrot that bears a striking resemblance to one paraded less than six months ago to justify the unpopular sell-off of a Territory asset.

That is quite a slap from the *Katherine Times* to the CLP, and perhaps even to the local member, who did his darndest to listen to his community when the battle to sell TIO was on. He attended meetings and stood by his community, then he sided with the government. One cannot help but wonder what deal was done to get the member for Katherine's support knowing that it was risky for his community. The community is a wakeup to the

CLP government, and it also sends a strong message to the local member.

As for Budget 2015-16 handed down yesterday by the Treasurer, the pre-budget announcements spoke volumes about where this government's priorities lie. There is nothing wrong with supporting the great Territory lifestyle. It is important to invest in that and boost the tourism sector as an important contributor to the economy. There is nothing wrong with boosting sport and recreation, a very important part of our lifestyle. Clearly, the most important areas of government service delivery of health and education have taken a back seat to everything else in what was announced pre-budget and in the budget itself.

This government fails to recognise what is most important to everyday Territorians. It is education which gives kids the best start in life to build lifelong learning and capacity and put them on a pathway to success and independence. It is the cornerstone to our collective social, economic and community wellbeing. Hand in hand with that is the health and wellbeing of Territorians.

I now turn to some of my shadow responsibilities and will start with the most important one, Health. As the Opposition Leader said, the right to be healthy and the ability to access quality health services are core Labor values. Territorians have a right to access those services no matter where they live.

While the Treasurer spruiked infrastructure spend he failed to mention there are mean-spirited cuts to critical service delivery. He has the balance wrong and health services for Territorians will suffer as a result of this budget. We need a health system where we shift and increase the focus of the Territory health system on wellness and prevention rather than on sickness, while still providing the very best quality hospital and primary health services for those who fall ill. The budget fails that premise when it cuts the budget line Territory-wide for primary healthcare by a whopping \$6m and disease prevention and health protection by \$3m.

I note that Royal Darwin Hospital receives a significant spend for a facelift of the premises, which will no doubt deliver benefits for patients and staff but will not deliver any extra beds, reduce bed-block, and reduce wait times and double-bunking in the emergency department for those who surely work in one of the busiest EDs in the country.

I note that the \$8.9m to refurbish paediatric wards to improve paediatric services at RDH in the budget papers is simply revoted from the 2014-15 budget. Clearly that project has gone nowhere.

We should not forget that the children's wing at RDH received some \$38m from the Commonwealth for a separate children's wing of entirely different design – not a refurbishment, but an entirely separate wing. It was committed to under Labor and is something we took to the 2012 election. It would have been a state-of-the-art facility for children, and would have freed up the existing paediatric ward – of which there are a couple because one is an isolation ward – for expansion into other services at the hospital. Importantly, under Labor construction would have been well under way by now.

All the while Palmerston Regional Hospital faces further delays, thanks, in part, to a revolving door of Health ministers over the last two-and-a-half years. They have in their wisdom swapped the site identified by Labor for an unserved site. They have earned a wrist slap from their federal counterparts for failing to meet funding milestones under the Commonwealth agreement for the total sum of \$150m.

The reality is that in its last term of government, Labor had started works towards the construction of a hospital to benefit the people of Palmerston and the regional area. In this year's budget we see revoted works for planning and construction of the Palmerston hospital, which is way behind schedule as the government is dragging its feet. We also see some glossy brochures going out, stating that in late 2016 the main building works will commence. They were supposed to commence this year under the CLP's commitment. If they remain on the track they are on, we will not see the Palmerston hospital opened until 2018. There is yet another election commitment blown by the CLP.

While we wait for the Palmerston Regional Hospital to be built, there is no relief for the pressures on all the hard-working staff and the patients needing care at RDH. There is no relief for the Royal Darwin Hospital's emergency department and bed-block in wards.

Let us not forget the Chief Minister's shameful reaction to nursing staff who lodged a petition in this parliament through the member for Karama last year about their very dangerous working conditions in ED where double-bunking is standard procedure. What did the Chief Minister do? He laughed at those 75 or so nurses who were signatories to that petition, which was a clear sign of the contempt in which the Chief Minister holds the staff in the emergency department at Royal Darwin Hospital.

The people of Palmerston and the rural area will continue to make a longer journey for health services and will now wonder how much it will cost them to seek health services under what we now

know will be a privately built, delivered and operated service. Whilst there have been broad statements and announcements made about this model of design, construct and operate, there is no detail of exactly how it will work.

While the CLP spruiks its infrastructure spend in this budget, the reality is it is hopeless and has a shameful track record when it comes to delivering infrastructure projects, as seen by the Palmerston hospital, and the revoted works for the refurbished children's ward – not a new children's ward but a refurbished one. It is small wonder Territorians have no confidence in the CLP's ability to deliver health services.

While those particular examples I have given are a case in point, so too is the \$50m budget, again delivered under federal Labor in the 2012-13 budget, dedicated to upgrading and replacing numerous primary healthcare clinics in remote areas across the Northern Territory. Two weeks ago I was at the clinic at Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt where the level of amenity is evidence of why money needs to be spent on that clinic. The current level of the amenity is dilapidated and unworkable for all of those hard-working nurses, doctors and health workers. Clinics are entirely inappropriate in their physical layout in meeting not only the clinical needs of those who are trying to deliver medical services but the cultural needs of the men, women and children who attend that clinic. That is just the Umbakumba clinic. The good news when we were there, even though it is belated news, is that works are to commence next month. Next week is when May comes around and it cannot happen soon enough.

Similarly, in my electorate the Ngalkanbuy clinic run by the Aboriginal medical service Miwatj on Elcho Island has not seen any movement for their new clinic servicing a community of more than 2500 people.

That is just two clinics I have mentioned. There are several others awaiting replacement or upgrade. While these upgrades or replacements are delayed, people are working or being treated in substandard conditions. It is time the CLP delivered on these commitments with the funding secured for them by Labor. They did not have to do any work in that regard.

I am also concerned about funding for other Aboriginal medical services, such as Danila Dilba, Sunrise, Miwatj, Wurlu-Wurlinjang, Katherine West and those in Central Australia, including Congress. We know the Commonwealth government has slashed the budget; the budget papers indicate a reduction of at least \$7m of Commonwealth money in the Territory budget. The budget papers do not provide the level of detail on where those cuts will fall, but without a

doubt they will fall to service provision, which is deeply concerning.

If primary healthcare providers, especially those in remote locations, are not supported to provide the services their clients need, those clients are more likely to end up in hospital. That is not good enough.

I am disappointed to see in the key performance indicators that under Territory-wide primary healthcare, the oral health care occasions – the number of treatments – in this budget will be reduced by almost 3000. In the next financial year there will be 3000 fewer oral health care occasions in primary healthcare, which is deeply concerning. We know poor oral healthcare is a direct link to other significant health issues, particularly amongst our Indigenous community.

I will have many questions for the Health minister at the estimates hearings as we drill down into the detail of the Health budget.

I note the increase in spend on Alcohol and Other Drugs which will continue the costly alcohol mandatory treatment program. It has seen some improvements insofar as what was originally poorly-planned legislation which criminalised chronic alcoholics has at least been amended so these people are treated by the health system rather than the criminal system. That, in itself, is a major step forward. Of course the government would not listen at the start, when it was introducing to alcohol mandatory treatment legislation, that it was wrong to criminalise it. It took more than a year of beating the government over the head, and not only by the opposition but perhaps more so by those who advocate, including health experts, legal experts, social justice advocates – this is obviously amusing to you, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker ...

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I must apologise.

Ms WALKER: Okay. ... and community leaders and everyday Territorians who were outraged at the criminalisation of people with chronic alcohol issues.

However, the reality is we still have a costly system, and nobody knows, with any real certainty, whether it is driving value for the very hefty health dollar investment which comes at the expense of other health services. That is because the CLP government has refused to release any meaningful data about how alcohol mandatory treatment is delivering results.

The CLP has also rejected the call from the opposition and the health sector to allow for a full independent audit and assessment in order to

undertake a detailed analysis of the AMT model and the results it is delivering, both qualitative and quantitative. It is unacceptable that such a huge investment of taxpayer dollars is only measured by short reports distributed every six months or so from the government along with some anecdotes about how person X has managed to turn their life around.

I note a recent announcement that Katherine no longer needs the \$6m or so allocated for a new AOD facility to deliver AMT services, thanks, I daresay, to police on TBLs. It would seem in Katherine they no longer need a \$6m AOD facility because they have TBLs and therefore alcohol-related social issues have resolved the problems of chronic alcoholism. It is remarkable. I look forward to the announcement from the Police minister that TBLs are to become PBLs – permanent beat locations – and that our hard-working professional police have a new duty added to their duty statements that might read, 'bouncer at bottle shops'. It highlights a lack of clear and consistent policy direction from the CLP, which refuses to recognise that AMT, and more so TBLs, are a very costly and unsustainable use of police resources.

This government has failed miserably in meeting the increased demand for renal dialysis, letting \$10m of federal money sit idle when we have people in Central Australia and the Top End suffering from chronic renal disease, in the knowledge that numbers of people with renal disease are on the increase. To have that money sitting there and not invested in renal chairs is absolutely shameful, so I hope we see some movement on that soon.

Gove District Hospital is older than Royal Darwin Hospital, but I do not see anything in the budget to deliver the long-awaited and much-needed upgrades to the emergency department, despite \$13m funded by federal Labor in 2012-13. I do not see it appear in the budget paper as revoted works; it is missing. The budget paper is silent on it. There had been much debate with the change of government as to whether the CLP would proceed with the new ED – a \$13m spend given the downturn in Nhulunbuy, thanks to the Chief Minister axing the gas to Gove deal which saw Rio Tinto close the refinery, along with the loss of 1000 jobs. Every Rio Tinto employee left with their spouses and took their children out of schools, leaving a much smaller community.

In November 2013, God love him, there was the Chief Minister in the only newsletter he has ever issued in Nhulunbuy, 'Government stands firm on gas to Gove'. So much for that. If you turn the page, it says, '\$13m emergency department on track'. Not only is it not on track, it has been derailed and has disappeared. There was a

further media release in time for Budget 2013-14 from the former Health minister – I cannot remember if she was the first or second one – who also said the ED was on track. I am sure she also said that we deserved it, but apparently we do not. If I have this all wrong, I am sure the Health minister, when he addresses the House in this debate, will set the record straight.

To add to that, I was briefed in the minister's office a few weeks ago and advised that the budget is a little over \$7m, even though it does not appear in the budget papers, and it should be going out to tender very soon. I do not see it listed in the Budget Highlights on page 151 of Budget Paper No 3, nor does it appear in the Regional Highlights, even though other revoted works do.

I note there is \$7.9m listed for Alice Springs to expand its AOD services so I am feeling a little toey about what is happening with Gove hospital. I am sure the Health minister will put my mind at ease. It is not just about me, it is about all those people who live and work in Nhulunbuy and greatly value the service that Gove hospital and its brilliant staff provide. They would very much like to see modern facilities for what is surely one of the oldest hospitals in the Northern Territory.

I briefly go to other shadow responsibilities I have before I move to budget impacts for my electorate of Nhulunbuy. I recognise tourism is a very important part of the Northern Territory economy. I note the Treasurer talked about increasing the tourism budget and expanding tourism to help strengthen the Territory's tourism industry and boost visitor numbers. Good; that is what government should be doing. The Territory has so much to offer tourists. It is a very unique part of not only the country but the world – a very special place indeed.

Amongst those things that have been budgeted for, I was pleased to see on page 9 of the Treasurer's speech:

... government is investing a further \$8m for continued enhancement of the Darwin Waterfront, including new facilities for the cruise ship industry.

I reflect on to the incredible vision of the former Labor government under Clare Martin, which took the bold step of redeveloping the waterfront to the beautiful development we have there now, with a world-class convention centre, high-rise apartment buildings, retail, restaurants and cafés, and the wonderful wave pool. All of this was bagged mercilessly by the CLP. I had only recently become a member of the House in 2008 when the development was starting to open.

Part of that development was the new wharf facilities to encourage and increase the number of cruise ships visiting Darwin. Those cruise ships contribute significantly to our economy, as do other visitors who use the waterfront precinct. I am delighted to see the CLP take the opportunity to invest \$8m and build further on the Labor government's vision of all those years ago.

Things are a bit relative – I heard the member for Nelson mention it, as have others. Our eyes popped out at the prospect of \$200m to be invested into Richardson Park ...

Mr Elferink: \$200m?

Ms WALKER: \$20m, sorry. Thank you, member for, Port Darwin. It is \$20m, not \$200m. Forgive me.

That is a lot of money, and only \$4.75m is being invested in tourism infrastructure for regional areas across the Territory. Out of a budget of \$50.4m for tourism infrastructure, only \$4.75m is going into those with a regional, remote and Indigenous focus. That will not go very far. That does not sound like a government committed to boosting tourism and jobs in remote communities.

I place on the record my disappointment – and I am not alone – in the disaster of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy funding under Senator Nigel Scullion. Lirwi Tourism in my electorate – an incredible organisation that is boosting tourism and growing jobs from a grassroots level, promoting a successful eco-cultural tourism model and getting people into homelands and communities for unique experiences – received almost nothing out of IAS. They are tearing their hair out to decide how they can move forward without the support of IAS grants.

Thank goodness there is an inquiry in the Senate into the IAS grant process, which we know was a basket case, because it is impacting negatively on these communities that want to grow tourism and jobs.

I recently received my incoming brief into Public Employment, which now sits with the Deputy Chief Minister, at a meeting with the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. My initial meeting was planned for February but was cancelled because that was the day the CLP was in meltdown and experiencing a coup. I was only able to reschedule recently. I thank the commissioner for his time. I am pleased to see there are ambitious targets for Indigenous employment in the public employment sector and I support that.

I am disappointed to see there is no money in the budget papers and no announcements about

outstanding EBAs. The EBA for our hard-working firefighters – men and women, volunteers and those in paid employment – is well overdue and it is time it was settled. We hope to see some movement on that.

Whilst the Health minister would like to say the EBA for St John Ambulance has nothing to do with him and it is all St John, the reality is with an injection of \$300 000 the paramedics' EBA could be resolved. St John simply does not have that money. It is a contracted service provider to government. Government has closed the doors saying, 'Nothing to do with us, you get it sorted'. That is shameful. It is a pity the new Commissioner for Public Employment is not able to step in because I believe he could resolve it. Sadly the Health minister, who was the former OCPE minister, will not have a bar of it ...

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I request an extension of time for my colleague.

Motion agreed to.

Ms WALKER: I also have responsibility for Women's Policy and know that in the scheme of things it is a small budget line. It is not so much about the money attached to it. Women's Policy is an important part of government service delivery, particularly to do with domestic violence and instigating strategies for that. Far too many women die as a result of family and domestic violence and/or are seriously injured. We know that violence can come in a number of ways and does not just have to be physical. We know Indigenous women are overrepresented in the statistics of family and domestic violence.

I will wait for an opportunity at estimates to ask the minister, but I was disappointed with the way she responded in Question Time today. She was far too defensive. She needs to be across her portfolio and able to answer reasonable questions asked of her, including about findings from a \$50 000 fact mission to an international conference with the United Nations in New York. What came out of that conference? What did she learn? What is she delivering for Indigenous woman, and all women, in the Northern Territory in that sphere of domestic violence? I will have plenty of questions for the minister at estimates.

What does this budget deliver for my electorate? Not a great deal. It appears there are many eggs in one basket – about \$20m worth – with the construction of a boarding facility in Nhulunbuy. This will come as a big surprise to many people. I am sure many bureaucrats know about it, and there may be people who attend meetings in Nhulunbuy to which I am not invited who know

about it. The high school council and other local schools know about it.

I am concerned that people from outlying communities such as Gapuwiyak, Ramingining and the Marthakal and Laynhapuy homelands do not know about this boarding facility or that senior secondary education courses for the NTCET will be withdrawn from their schools, including Yirrkala. This is done with the intention of a new model delivering secondary education, and Nhulunbuy will be the regional hub for that.

Children will still be able to go back to – and this is a dreadful term from the days of old with the CLP – post-primary education. I have fears that this \$20m for a boarding facility in Nhulunbuy has the potential to be a white elephant and to not be a success, in the same way Tiwi College was when it was first built, because people were not on board with it.

People in these homelands and communities – while the boarding facility is for Indigenous and non-Indigenous, let us be real, the target group is predominantly Indigenous kids – will be alarmed at the prospect of their children having to go to Nhulunbuy for school. While all the work in the world might go to designing a beautiful facility – and I thank the minister's office for providing a thorough briefing the week before last – I am not confident about the model of education at neighbouring Nhulunbuy High School. It historically has not had many Indigenous students. I know this because I used to teach there.

Whilst their numbers are growing, much work needs to be done. Families need to be convinced that this is a safe and good place for their children. People are concerned. There are already families who opt to send their children to boarding schools, but the fear is that when children go away they grow away. I will watch with great interest to see how this progresses.

I pushed the point in my recent briefing in the minister's office that there needs to be much broader consultation as to what is happening. It is all very well to rattle off the names of a couple of well-known local leaders in Nhulunbuy, who are good individuals, attend these meetings and are supportive, but that does not mean you consulted across the homelands, not by any stretch of the imagination. I do not believe that the old Gawirrin woman at Gan Gan would be supportive of this. I wonder what the senior man at Blue Mud Bay (Banyala), Mr Djambawa Marawili, would have to say about this boarding facility. We will see what happens.

The breach of trust between the people of Nhulunbuy and the CLP government runs deep

and dates back to the Chief Minister pulling the gas deal, which has seen 1000 workers leave the community and left hundreds of houses vacant. In fact, 250 units of accommodation were given over to the new entity developing East Arnhem Land, and out of the 250 maybe 70 or 80 have been allocated.

There seems to be no will on the part of the government, and least of all the Housing minister, to take up some of that housing to make it available to eligible tenants, be they Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Here is the Minister for Housing's opportunity to reduce the longest waiting list in the Territory for public housing, but there seems to be no interest in seizing the opportunity. She seems to think it is not her responsibility; that it is all mine. She would know that I have lobbied hard on this issue, including the former Housing minister and Rio Tinto.

It is simply wrong that we have all of this vacant housing sitting there. There has never been so many vacant houses. There has been a crisis in finding affordable housing and now we have it there, it is sitting vacant. It is shameful that the opportunity is missed and the government does not see, in any way, it has a responsibility to step in and say, 'We will take on and lease a handful of those houses' – whatever they might choose. Fifteen per cent of 250 would be good. There seems to be no will on the part of the government to do that.

That does not give me much faith in seeing the Housing minister oversee what will be a \$50m-plus housing rebuild program at Galiwinku where there are more than 300 displaced people, as a result of two cyclones in the space of a month, who have been told they will be waiting up to four years for a replacement house. This is not any normal housing replacement program; this is a crisis situation. This is an emergency and it requires a fitting response to ensure people are rehoused. The government has a responsibility to move on that quickly.

There is little else in the budget for East Arnhem Land. There is the recurrent funding that any government provides to fund our schools, roads and hospital.

I note there is \$3.6m to provide a 50-bed low-security prisoner camp. That means the minister has obviously decided he will close the sobering-up shelter so he can obtain the remaining 20 beds he needs, having sneakily obtained the old AOD residential facility that had 30 beds where we now have prisoners in the Djatala Work Camp. We do not have a permanent facility for people who were booted out of that AOD centre, and anyone who needs residential rehab – what do you know? – has to fly to Darwin. Even though there has been

consultation about the future of the sobering-up shelter, those beds will close or be moved somewhere so we can accommodate more prisoners.

There is mention of \$5.3m for the construction of a new remote health centre at Galiwinku. That is the revoted works out of the pool of \$50m. Some \$5m to continue fire safety rectification works at Gove District Hospital is revoted works as well, which has been there for a couple of years. There is \$4m for transport access into Gapuwiyak, Galiwinku and Ramingining. I am not sure if that refers to the barge landings, but the money we put aside for the barge landings in those communities was dumped a couple of years ago, except for Wurrumiyanga. The member opposite was successful in obtaining funding for his electorate.

This budget will come as a great disappointment to people in my electorate, who have been abandoned by this government which, like its federal counterpart, is content to adopt an 'out of sight, out of mind' approach.

We have seen this government spend thousands and thousands of taxpayer dollars on overseas travel, with very little knowledge of the purpose of the trip and very little benefit, if any, for Territorians who foot the bill. The ministers have a travel budget. When the Treasurer delivered his first budget, I invited him to attend a function in Nhulunbuy to present the budget. He said he could not because the government did not have any money to do it.

I am asking the Treasurer to come to Nhulunbuy. I place on the record that he needs to present the budget to interested members of the community, and importantly answer questions. We are not satisfied with a DVD ...

Do you have a problem there, minister? Do you have a twitch?

Mrs Price interjecting.

Ms WALKER: The Treasurer needs to come to Nhulunbuy. If it is good enough to present the budget in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine, then he can do it in Nhulunbuy. Perhaps he could bring the Minister for Housing with him, and she can explain to the community why she thinks they do not deserve to have additional public housing ...

Mrs Price interjecting.

Ms WALKER: They know I have worked hard for them.

A return airfare for the Treasurer would be \$800. That would be money well invested ...

Mrs Price interjecting.

Ms WALKER: This budget has very little to offer ...

Mrs Price interjecting.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Stuart, if you could let the member finish her speech.

Ms WALKER: ... just like the Housing minister, and I look forward to parliamentary estimates.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I love the Territory. I was born here, grew up here and now I am raising my children here. I love the rich, vibrant community and the fact that our Indigenous people have the oldest surviving culture in the world. I love the vibrant mix of cultures that together create a community where people feel welcome.

It saddens me to see the CLP government show such blatant disregard for Territorians. In the past two-and-a-half years it has transformed our rich, vibrant community into a political plaything which it is operating independently of the social conscience, and is refusing to listen to Territorians.

How can we trust this CLP government? It has turned its back on the cloak of transparency, openly defied Territorians by selling TIO, and now is attempting to buy back voters by splashing around the money from the sale, hoping somehow we forget how it got its hands on it. We are not fooled. I speak for Territorians when I say we have had enough underhanded dealings, failures in education and health, and self-interested governance.

This year's budget is an obvious attempt to win back votes after what has been a tumultuous two-and-a-half years of the CLP government. Let us not forget where this money came from. It was the sale of TIO that provided the government with the funds it is hoping will woo Territorians. But Territorians will not be fooled. Again the CLP government members are putting themselves first and Territorians second.

Since the CLP came to government we have seen savage cuts to education funding with the loss of more than 125 teacher and 60 support positions in our schools. This budget means recurrent spending in government education will fall by \$12m next year. Every dollar lost is impacting on our classrooms, our teachers and the ability of our students to learn.

However, this is not all we have lost. The funding for teacher salary increases and the extra funding

for independent schools has been set aside, so in reality the dollar figure for each student in a government school significantly decreases. We have always seen this with the CLP government. It has blurred the lines on education cuts. We know it has cut teacher and support staff numbers, and funding. Teachers, parents and students tell us that. They have fewer subject choices. We know it from estimates figures.

We have seen further cuts with blurred lines. When will this CLP government stop, listen and learn that the only way of developing a strong and sustainable economy is to invest in education right through from the early years to vocational and tertiary training? An investment in our young people is an investment in a strong Territory.

My colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, this morning outlined our plans for a strong Territory. This CLP government has attacked our schools. Teacher numbers have been decimated, which means bigger classes and less teacher time for each student. Labor knows the value of education and that the only way to build a better future is to empower our young people, invest in them and give them an opportunity.

This CLP has attacked students with \$80m in real-terms cuts since 2012 when it came to government. Our schools have had enough. We ask why you continually attack our schools and ask them to do more with less. If you will not listen to me or the people of the Territory, perhaps your government could take the advice of the great Nelson Mandela who said:

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

We have seen this government announce in its budget this year the same as last year: to build the Palmerston hospital and upgrade the children's ward at RDH. The Territory desperately needs both but we just get revotes from the government. These were promised in last year's budget. Territorians are sick and tired of hearing the rhetoric. They are sick of it rehashing its old failures to deliver and want it to start delivering on these critical projects. How many sod turnings have we had at the Palmerston hospital site? Territorians are sick and tired of having to endure second-class health facilities. They are sick of emergency and surgery waiting times blowing out. The government needs to deliver real improvements and developments, instead of trying to pass off old budget announcements as new.

We have a Chief Minister who laughs at our ED nurses, and a Health minister who said in Question Time today that you cannot trust things in these budget papers to actually happen ...

Mr Elferink: That is not true.

Ms FYLES: That is what you said.

Child protection is the responsibility of the whole community and needs to be led by a government that recognises the need for investment in frontline services and resources to allow people to do their jobs and protect the most vulnerable people in our community. This is the government's responsibility. Every report needs to be followed through. Every child needs to be looked after. The government is letting us down time and time again. With predictions that more cases of child protection than ever before will be referred, this government has failed to allocate the increased funds to ensure they are investigated. You have failed to protect the most precious and vulnerable people in our community with this budget.

This budget has failed the people outside of Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs. This government has failed to provide them with support. I received an e-mail this morning from a resident at Freds Pass frustrated that there was no funding for sport and recreation at Freds Pass. The government has failed to deliver the necessary funding to help these communities continue to grow and thrive. We need sport funding in these areas to keep members of your own party happy. Rural and remote areas need strategic long-term planning and acknowledgement that people in these areas are as much a part of the Territory as those in urban areas.

Concerns have been raised by the member for Nelson about the rugby league funding. I remember attending a rugby league game at Richardson Park in the early 1990s. We saw that facility shut down. It is being given a \$20m upgrade, which took people by surprise. We need to ensure there is the recurrent funding to operate and maintain that facility.

When will the government release the final Greater Darwin Land Use Plan? With the current debacle in the rural area causing friction within your own party, Chief Minister, when will you give Territorians a chance to see your vision for the Territory? Or do you not have one? At the moment people are frustrated that they are spending their hard-earned money to establish themselves and enjoy a quality of life in the rural area, yet you are making planning decisions that are impacting on this. In your arrogance you will not even listen to one of your own members about the precedent being set and how it will be the demise of the rural area.

This government is failing to plan for growth in our urban areas and remote regions. It is not just

planning for infrastructure growth, it is also the associated services. This government has abandoned good planning principles that are in place to protect Territorians and our environment. It has not delivered on a development plan, but clearly has an agenda. Why will you not share this with Territorians?

People are sick and tired of what appear to be backroom deals. We all want new housing options that are affordable for Territorians, but the growth should be planned and structured around rural villages and the new city of Weddell, not ad hoc subdivisions that defy planning principles and disregard local residents' views.

This government needs to stop and listen. How can the people of the Territory trust this government when it has failed people in such a consistent manner? It has failed to listen, provide for and lead Territorians, with a lack of transparency and the arrogance of repeatedly ignoring them.

We saw it with TIO sale; you rammed it through. Now you are hoping we will forget it and enjoy the cash flash you seem to be throwing around. People will not be fooled by your budget sweeteners, your undisguised attempts to win votes with money from the TIO sale. I urge you to stop treating Territorians like fools.

You are in desperate need of a real and strategic plan for alcohol policy. It is a serious problem facing our society. Those affected by dependency are in desperate need of support. The issue needs to be addressed on the three fronts of supply, consumption and rehabilitation. We need to draw a line in the sand. This government needs to take responsibility.

We should have seen funds in this budget to bring back the Banned Drinker Register to ensure alcohol supply is monitored and people suffering from addiction have restricted access. Even people who were sceptical of it say the BDR would be the first step. As I move around my community that is what people call for. The TBLs are expensive and unsustainable. We want police to have the ability and flexibility to make operational decisions, but at the moment as soon as they step away from the bottle shops there are no measures. We need the support the BDR provided. We need to resource police to make operational decisions.

As important as managing consumption in how much and where it is consumed is, we need to make sure we have a strategic approach to combat public drunkenness and antisocial behaviours. Families and businesses are frustrated. The crime statistics were released a couple of weeks ago. In Palmerston, commercial

break-ins rose by 100% and residential break-ins have risen dramatically. People in my community have been saying they do not remember it being this bad. There are different stories. We need to get on top of these issues.

I have repeatedly requested that CCTV cameras be installed in the Nightcliff business village and other areas of Nightcliff. I wrote to the Chief Minister ahead of this budget requesting CCTV cameras and that the Nightcliff Police Station be reopened. I reminded him it was a CLP election commitment to make the Nightcliff Police Station a 24/7 police station. Instead, in last year's budget funding was withdrawn and our police station was closed on 1 July last year. I wrote to him some time ago reminding him of his commitment and that he needs to ensure this budget has funding to open that police station, but there was nothing in the budget.

It was interesting to see there is an allocation of funding for extra CCTV in Palmerston. I agree that Palmerston is worthy of further CCTV – I understand there is CCTV in place there already – but so is Nightcliff. We have high crime rates and police are called on regularly to deal with antisocial behaviour. Why will you not fund CCTV in Nightcliff? You have ignored the elected member, community concern, business owners, residents and visitors. One must start to question if it is purely because it is a Labor electorate.

We have many antisocial behaviour issues in our community. We feel we have been abandoned by this government. Not only have we not had the request for CCTV cameras filled – I do not think I have had a response to that letter – but we have also seen the police station closed. It was the current Chief Minister who closed the police station. I questioned Terry Mills very early in my term as an elected representative and he said he would honour his commitment. Chief Minister, I am extremely disappointed this budget did not include funding to reopen the Nightcliff Police Station. Police are trying their best to serve our community with limited resources. With Nightcliff and Rapid Creek having the foreshore area and being between the hospital and the airport, we need that support. I urge you to reconsider.

It is interesting that more than half of the Department of Infrastructure's budget allocation is revotes. These projects should have already been delivered. It is interesting you are trying to mask your inability to meet deadlines as new spending. Almost half the budget announcements for the Department of Transport are revotes. Of the \$7.8m in capital expenditure for police, \$6m is a revote. One must question what the CLP delivered last year apart from a few more Cabinet changes and a midnight coup. You are passing off infrastructure and transport funding as new.

Coming off the back of the TIO sale, it highlights your lack of credibility. Territorians are sick and tired of it.

I understand every deadline for the Palmerston hospital has been missed. Does that not highlight your inability to deliver? When will you deliver something other than a sod turning?

I cannot reiterate enough that people are still angry about TIO being sold. We heard today that 47 jobs are being shifted around. I did not quite catch the detail from the Treasurer in Question Time. TIO belonged to Territorians. You rammed through the sale without a mandate and now you are trying to fool Territorians that we have all this money and it is good. When the money is gone, it is gone. You seem determined to defy the people. Territorians are extremely frustrated with the budget. They would like to see you deliver something rather than re-announce old spending and plans.

I hope the Treasurer has the decency to listen; we need faith in government to be restored. We need a transparent and accountable government. There has been so much trust broken.

Labor has committed to a style of ICAC – something the Northern Territory is the last jurisdiction to have – because we need a body which holds government to account. We need to make sure government resources are appropriately accounted for and the people of the Northern Territory know where their hard-earned tax dollars are being spent. Above all, it lets Territorians work in conjunction with the government to decide on spending.

People are frustrated. They are suffering under the high cost of living and are not seeing things happen, yet they are seeing newspaper headline after headline about \$50 000 trips here and \$40 000 trips there. It gets to the point where it is almost insulting to some people.

One group I believe has been forgotten in this budget is our seniors. Along with our children, our seniors are amongst the most vulnerable in our community. It is wonderful that so many senior Territorians decide to stay in the Territory. Only 15 or 20 years ago, if people had not already left the Territory by retirement, they left then. Now more people are staying. It is wonderful to have grandparents here; it is a new dimension to our magnificent culture.

However, our seniors have been forgotten by this CLP government. We have seen power and water tariff increases, motor vehicle registration increases, cuts to the free public bus transport seniors and pensioners were entitled to, reduced entitlements to seniors' travel and the overall cost

of living increased under your government. It has had a huge impact on our community, particularly our seniors. They have worked hard for a long time, have contributed to our community and are often forced to rely on low incomes. We need to recognise the valuable contributions they have made to our society and our community. They have worked hard and provided much of the opportunity and development that exists today and are dismayed at being treated with such disregard.

The Treasurer said the government is committed to reducing the cost of living for Territorians. Treasurer, actions speak louder than words; they have seen nothing from you. The cost of living is increasing and there was one housing entitlement for seniors in this budget. We need much more support for our seniors so they stay here. I was reading online recently about a Territory grandma who is looking at leaving after having lived here since Cyclone Tracy. Her family and grandchildren are here and she does not want to leave but cannot afford to stay.

The Treasurer was almost mean-spirited on the eve of the budget in indicating that power and water tariffs might come down, yet there has been no further announcement. It is not a play thing. People are struggling with the cost of living and do not have extra dollars to pay the increased power and water tariffs or increased rego. This budget has not delivered for Territorians. Families and seniors would like to see some action that shows the CLP government appreciates them.

With regard to the public housing wait list, the CLP government promised to refurbish over 400 houses yet only about 90 have been completed. An amount of \$133m has been revoted to carry out the backlog, but why were 400 refurbishments not carried out?

People are in desperate need of housing and are being forced to wait while houses sit empty, while the government get its act together. In my community public housing properties are sitting empty and have been for quite some time. The government has completely dropped the ball on refurbishments and on making sure public housing stock is growing.

Labor knows the value of protecting and supporting our most vulnerable people, whether it is our seniors or children. We urge the CLP government to acknowledge it has failed those most at risk and do something about it: seniors, children, people on low incomes or people with a disability. The priority public housing wait list in the Darwin region is close to seven years. These people, for whatever reason, desperately need this accommodation.

One of the big issues facing us and future generations is climate change. Australians have been horrified to see any real attempts to combat climate change have been undermined by the federal government. If the CLP is not willing to stand up for future generations what real hope do we have? It would be great to see the Territory leading the way in this, but no.

To add insult to injury, the CLP government has cut funding to the Environment Centre. One must question that. It is a community organisation providing a voice and supporting our community as we tackle environmental issues. Is it because you do not want your own views challenged? Is it purely that if you do not agree with someone's view, you silence them? Territorians will not be silenced. The Environment Centre is fighting on and is being funded from donations. The Environment Centre provided huge support to our community on the proposed Nightcliff island project. They are experts and we need that knowledge. It should not be that because you do not agree with their view you cut their funding and silence them. I find it extremely disappointing to see no funding for the Environment Centre in this budget.

Your failure to take action on the issue of climate change will cost future generations. You can put your head in the sand, but it does not change the science. You are more worried about handing out sweeteners and staying in power than putting in the hard work to ensure a future for our young people. As well as cutting the funding to the Environment Centre, it would be remiss of me not to mention that you have not lobbied the federal government about huge cuts to the Environmental Defender's Offices. That organisation has provided support on environmental issues across the Territory and independent legal advice that not everyone can access, and was there for our community.

It is appalling that those cuts were made and this budget offers nothing for our environment. Without an environment there will be no infrastructure. We will not have development, transport, health or education and there will be no economy. The NT is a natural wonderland and we have an opportunity not to make the same mistakes that have been made in other states and territories, and overseas. We have such a pristine environment from the ocean and the tropical north through to the desert. We should be leading the way and setting an example with our pristine environment. We should have sound policy. We should not be putting it off until next year. We need a strong environmental focus so we can get things right and create balance with development without destroying our environment. The CLP government's approach of having its head in the sand is extremely disappointing, and we need to

address that issue sooner rather than later before it is too late.

Territorians are appalled by the Chief Minister. Far from being able to deliver the necessary resources to our communities, he is unable to keep his own budget under control. Last year the Chief Minister's office was allocated \$44.5m funding for advice and coordination, and he spent \$78m. That is a \$35.5m blowout for extra advice and coordination. Many Territorians want to know what that huge blowout was for. How can Territorians trust your government to deliver a budget for the people when you cannot even control such a huge blowout in your office?

The Chief Minister spent close to \$80m on advice but laughed at our ED nurses when they petitioned him for better support. It shows how out of touch with real Territorians he is. After spending close to \$80m on advice, surely someone could have given him the hint that you do not laugh at ED nurses?

We have repeatedly seen this government's credibility eroded through blatant disregard for our community, a self-interest method of governing, and an inability to deliver critical resources and infrastructure for the Territory which we desperately need. Each day as I move around the community, people show their dismay at the direction of the government. Chief Minister, when will you and your team finally start listening to the people of the Northern Territory and deliver a real, positive change for everyone?

I was fortunate to be raised here; it is a wonderful place. I love the Territory. I would love the opportunity to be in government and invest in healthcare and education. Instead we see fumbling around with no direction. The amount of revotes in the budget is huge, so there is just no real direction. You hope with the cash splash somehow we will not notice that you sold TIO. That is a one-off cash splash but Territorians will not have a lasting benefit.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is a bad budget; it adds to the long list of failures. Extra funding from the one-off sale of an asset has not provided the direction and support Territorians need. I apologise to Territorians that this CLP government does not have the ability or fortitude to listen. I hope it is the last budget they deliver. I urge the government to look at some of the measures I spoke about, particularly about our environment, safety and my community. It is not too late to fund those things. That is what we should be focused on; instead we see overspends of huge amounts in the Chief Minister's office. There needs to be some explanation to Territorians. Territorians want many more answers from this government about this budget.

Mr BARRETT (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have had the misfortune of hearing several of these speeches in a row from the Labor Party members today and I am disappointed. Fundamentally I believe some things have to be done right. Economics has to be done right. A solid economy underpins business and service delivery.

It is easy for the opposition to talk about how poor our service delivery is, how we are not achieving any standards and how everybody in their community is so disgusted with everything we are doing. Yet they put our economy into a situation where it was so weak it needed a lot of work, some tough budgets and hard decisions. They put us in this place and then said we cut spending. Hello! Money does not grow on trees! It is not as if we can create 150% of our revenue in debt and it will all magically pay for itself somehow in the ether. That was what Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal thought and look where they are now. Look at the dramas which have unfolded. Argentina had a mass collapse because it took on too much debt and there was too much spending.

We can talk about these things they keep banging on about on the other side of the House, but at the end of the day we are looking at priorities. They can say this and that should be given priority, and many times they are right, but at the end of the day we need to make decisions based on priorities. We cannot fund everything. The fundamental problem of economics is that resources are finite and limited. The opposition believes we magically create these things, and I felt I had to stand and talk about a few of those things.

It is absurd that a government had a debt trajectory that would have taken the Northern Territory towards unsustainable debt levels, and a Power and Water Corporation that was heading towards insolvency. According to the member for Barkly, the Labor government spent \$3.8m fixing some tie rods but we had to fix a couple of billions dollars of debt. Goodness me! Member for Barkly, if our legacy was \$3.8m in working out how some tie rods would hold a wall on – jeez, I would be pretty happy with that as a legacy. This government has had to take on a couple of billion dollars' worth of debt – that starts with a 'b' and not an 'm'. It seems the members opposite take zeros off when they are talking about these issues.

I find it absurd that those opposite feel they are entitled to even comment on many of these things. We have an opposition that has not really said much about most departments. I can only assume it is because they are happy with the budget. We have heard a bit about education. This is the only area they have focused on, and

their data on what they are addressing is dubious at best.

I also speak to principals, parents, teachers and school councils in my electorate and the rest of Palmerston. What opposition members say in this Chamber does not match my experience of students doing well, teachers producing results, principals excited about the future under the global budgeting program that has been put together, parents coming on board and contributing positively and boards being constructive and making their concerns known in an appropriate way and working with government for outcomes. Clearly that is not their experience. All the information they are providing is less than good.

This budget will assist industry now in plan, design and build phases because the assets are focused on infrastructure that generates revenue. That is important to note. It is not just spending money on things from which we get nothing back, it is about putting money where it needs to go to develop business into the future. This will underpin a strong economy; this helps us get our service delivery at higher standards.

All that is coming across the floor is that we should be spending on this and that. If we did not have a debt to pay off we probably would.

We need to free our pastoral lands from constraint and open up the Northern Territory for tourism.

Apart from the opposition trying to preach about how ashamed we should all be of our performance, there is not much in the way of alternatives. I refute the comments coming across the floor. I am not ashamed of this government's economic performance. This government has gone to the heart of the big issues and worked hard to solve them where Labor has failed.

It is easy to throw words around this room but real financials speak volumes. Net debt is down. Power and Water reforms are correcting their issues. Our record with community safety on the whole is outstanding.

I heard opposite members mock us about the Palmerston hospital, which will deliver better health outcomes. It always makes me cranky when they start this. They talk about how many turnings of the sod we had. The reality is they did nothing. What disturbs me most is this is needed by the Palmerston and rural areas as they grow. The opposition completely dismissed that and did not put in the work that was needed. Since day one of our governance they have tried to flog us for not doing it. I look forward to the day when I can get the member for Barkly to eat his words that it would never happen, because I know it is

happening and moving forward. I would love to see him at the opening. But guess what? He will not be cutting that ribbon!

They talk a lot but their time was marked with an inability to deal with issues. Let me raise fuel prices. It is a bit of an elephant in the room. They never speak about it. We just heard the member for Nightcliff bang on about cost of living and how we do nothing. Let us talk about this. The real effect of bringing fuel prices into line is to create a supply side benefit.

Those opposite who take the time to study economics would understand the difference between demand side economics and supply side economics. Supply side economics is a tricky one. It brings an increase in gross domestic product and a net deflationary effect. You get better productivity for a lower price. That is fantastic. This is what bringing the fuel price into line with the rest of the country has done.

The real effect of this is the plumber who employs several other plumbers, each with vehicles, can now employ another apprentice. That is work that was not done before. That is an ability to have a better bottom line that was not there before. The electrical company is making more money and can spend in the community and invest in new equipment. This all adds to gross state product. Every time they buy another drill, another vehicle, more equipment, more buildings and more sheds it all adds to the gross state product and means jobs and flow-on effects for many people earning incomes in the Northern Territory. Supply side economics is the hardest to achieve. It is this government that has been able to achieve a supply side boom through the decrease in fuel prices.

We have seen housing and rent prices stall. We heard the member for Nightcliff tell us everyone is struggling under the cost of living. I am appalled because when they were in power they presided over 11% increases in housing prices per year. It is this government that has brought that under control. It is this government that has presided over the housing stall by increasing supply. I am proud of that because many of my friends cannot afford to get into housing, that cannot afford to rent. They are dealing with this problem on a day-to-day basis.

It is easy to throw rocks from the other side of the fence, but give credit where credit is due. This government has stalled it, not the guys on the other side. They can talk about how ashamed we need to be of ourselves, how disgusted they are of all of us and say, to quote the member for Nightcliff, 'this is a terrible budget'. This is a fantastic budget, because it cuts to the heart of

the big issues in the Northern Territory. We deal with the big problems and they did not.

The member for Nightcliff said the Chief Minister has no vision for the Northern Territory. The Chief Minister and I have had our disagreements, but when I listen to him talk about Indigenous policy I am proud to be in this government. Why? Whenever we are dealing with economic development in the Northern Territory, the elephant in the room is the health and education expenditure and the resources that go to communities to work with the welfare dependency problem, trying to get some development in these regional areas. Adam Giles has a plan and is working to that plan.

I will talk about the Community Champions program he has developed. Why do I love this plan so much? Because it fundamentally understands the basis of a microcosm of an economy. You cannot create an economy if you do not have important building blocks in that economy and if businesses cannot form and trade money with each other. In Economics 101 we start from the process of people needing goods and businesses which open to supply goods. We create demand and supply.

The demand is there but to date it has been hard to create supply. Through his Indigenous policy the Chief Minister is trying to achieve people getting jobs, starting businesses and business moving to these areas doing the small things you do not think have an impact.

If you want to see this work, go to any small town in other states. I think of the one where many of my wife's relatives are from called Boonah. It has one main drag through the middle of town but it has a bakery, a coffee shop, a bank, a post office, a tyre place, a mechanic, a plumber and an electrician. It has all the service providers. We are not talking about government-funded service providers doing sundry things; we are talking about individuals within the community who keep the community alive by working in it. It is providing for the demand of the community from within itself.

This creates a circular flow of income. That means the plumber buys bread from the baker, then goes to the greengrocer and then to the butcher. The work the plumber, the butcher, the greengrocer and the mechanic are doing all tie in together. The money gets traded around that economy and starts to lift it because it creates wealth. It is how every economy fundamentally works. It is what is missing when we look at these communities.

I went to Indigenous communities and saw in the past they had brick kilns, forestry projects, bakeries and butchers ...

Mr Elferink: They had market gardens, carpentry workshops, tanning ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, Attorney-General.

Mr BARRETT: Yes. They had carpenters and all these things were operational. Somehow, through some not fantastic policy that has come down through time we ended up with a situation where nobody is doing those things. These things need to be brought back to life.

The Community Champions program will be focused on these things because if you do not have a plumber there you will not be able to get an apprentice. We need to get these apprenticeships finished to the standard where they can take on apprentices, where people are teaching their kids how to be a carpenter or saying to them, 'You will be the community's plumber. Watch dad do this. You go to school because I need you to read and write because when you go to Darwin to do your trade certificate you have to do the maths.' It starts to lift everything and answer our education problems where people are trying to learn but are hitting brick walls all the time. The Indigenous policy created here is ground-breaking because it looks at how to create an economy and puts the building blocks in place.

The people on the other side of the floor would have us believe this is the worst budget in the world and the Country Liberal government has no idea – we do not know what we are doing or where we are going and we have no plans, purpose or structure. That is all rubbish. I am proud of what we are doing, of the budget and of what the Treasurer has brought forward today. I am sick and tired of hearing ridiculous comments and tripe from the other side of the floor.

I do not know everything, but I know a few things well. When I hear some of the members opposite talk about things I know about, they are either making it up as they go along or are trying to deceive. If either is the case, they do not have the right to comment. I know the information coming across the floor on a subject I know a fair bit about is awful. Others on this side might know about the issues I do not. I can extrapolate from that that most of what comes across the floor is rubbish. I am sick of hearing rubbish and I am waiting to hear something positive from the other side. They could acknowledge that certain things are good and say, 'We would do this differently and address this problem in this manner'.

Their comments seem shallow and flawed and built around a five-second grab for telly with some dumb anecdote or dumbed-down version of something in an article. They are completely bereft of anything with depth. They are bereft of a plan. They cry across the floor that we are leaderless and have no plan, but there are no alternatives coming from the other side. There is nothing of substance coming from them, and quite frankly I am disgusted at the level of debate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I look forward to hearing a summation from the Chief Minister.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak to the release of the 2015 budget that purports to paint a clear picture of the CLP government's vision for the future.

The Leader of the Opposition should be commended on his speech to the House on Labor's vision going forward. I am proud to be part of a team that is deeply rooted in its values and so deeply committed to getting the foundations right for the future of the Northern Territory. We are passionate about ensuring access to quality education, healthcare and job opportunities for Territorians who want to live and thrive in our beautiful Territory.

Labor values fairness and wants to see that all Territory children get the best start in life and education, and have possibilities open to them. Labor acknowledges the opportunities they will open for themselves. We value the contribution of those who have come before us to build the identity we enjoy and aim to protect today. We want a Northern Territory that punches above its weight nationally and to take our stories to the world.

Labor will continue to fight for all these things and more, because it is a privilege and an honour to serve Territorians, and it is what they expect from their representatives. On top of a strong plan for the Northern Territory's children and getting it right for those critical first years of zero to eight years old in education and health, I will also ensure we have a solid plan for the Territory's young people which shows that their contribution in the community is valued and they will continue to build their skills and knowledge in the Northern Territory.

Labor wants our young Territorians to stay in the Territory, not to leave, and to have the opportunities many of us have enjoyed, such as quality education and job opportunities. Labor will refocus the attention on young people to ensure they are truly considered as part of our economic policies, not just a problem, because the Territory's deserves it and its future will be better for it. The success of the next Labor government

will be defined by our commitment to education and the wellbeing of the Territory's children and young people.

Territorians want to see a government that acts with integrity and says and does what it says it will, and that can be trusted. The *NT News* this morning dubbed this budget 'the TIO budget', and as raised by my colleagues, we know this to be true. The CLP government sold TIO against the will of Territorians, and they will not forget it. While we are talking about it, our public assets are finite resources.

It is no secret that I am passionate about youth affairs. It is an area I have lived and breathed, professionally and personally, for a long time. I am incredibly proud to hold the shadow portfolios for Young Territorians, and Children and Families.

It is heartbreaking to watch the way in which this government approaches youth affairs and the future of our children. Education is our most important resource for the future of the Northern Territory. As my colleagues have raised in their responses today, schools are bearing the brunt of cuts by the CLP government. There is \$12m less in education that is coming from our primary schools and massive cuts to preschool education. The feedback we are receiving is from the conversations we are having in our electorates with mums, dads, school councils and local teachers.

I also commend the government on its continued commitment to the new Henbury School which will be built on the Dripstone site in my electorate. I commend those who lobbied the government hard for it. It is an incredibly important development and it is welcomed. Quality education will continue to be a priority of a Labor government, as it has been for past Labor governments. We also value fairness in this regard.

In 2012 when the CLP government came into office it made hasty and poorly-planned decisions in the name of making savings. Young people at risk have continued to drop down the list of priorities, as the youth sector was one of those which was cut deeply. At this juncture I will talk about the youth sector and how strong it has been. It is not just cuts from the CLP government it has faced in the last two-and-a-half years; it also faced huge cuts under the IAS funding, which the member for Nhulunbuy also raised. It has been through the wringer. I am watching a youth sector that continues to come back stronger every time and take on each challenge as it comes. It is doing an incredible job.

The Territory lost cost-effective services with positive relationships with young people, and we continue to see at-risk youth lose out despite

recommendations in reports such as the bipartisan *Gone too Soon: A Report into Youth Suicides in the Northern Territory* that recommended such programs continue and be expanded. You cannot put a dollar figure on how important those relationships are. You could go anywhere and talk to people in youth services across the Northern Territory and they will tell you how important trust and relationship building with young people is if you want to make a difference to them.

I welcome any funding aimed to improve outcomes for young people in this budget, including money for the Alice Springs Youth Centre. The Shack has also received funding again to relaunch in the northern suburbs in my electorate of Casuarina. It is a much-needed resource which was greatly missed in the time it was not open. I am glad to see it open again.

I received previously the media release on the update on youth issues in Alice Springs, which let us know that \$1.25m in funding announced for Alice Springs will indeed go to the night-time services that have been called for by the youth sector in Alice Springs for a long time. It must be noted that the \$1.42m announced earlier this year does not cover what was cut from youth services previously. The sector had been quite clear for a long time about the impact of poor decisions. I believe we have seen those impacts. We have seen exactly what the youth sector said we would see.

The youth and community sectors have been through the wringer with this government and the federal government, and they continue to support vulnerable people in our community to build brighter futures.

The member for Araluen has spoken out against the CLP government's cuts to Alice Springs youth services. It would appear the Chief Minister has finally conceded that Alice Springs is indeed in need of after-hours youth services. However, I feel it is a bit rich for the Chief Minister to talk about these night services and the need for integrated services when they existed and were cut by the CLP government. The youth sector condemns those cuts, as we do. Now we are expected to give the government a pat on the back because it has realised it was a mistake to cut them in the first place. 'Maybe we should listen to evidence. Maybe we should listen to the people on the ground. Let us put it back and announce it in the budget and hopefully people will be happy with us.' Some of the damage has been done.

Some of the lobbying, particularly by the member for Araluen, has occurred only in the last week or two. I quote from the ABC on 23 April:

Former Deputy Chief Minister Robyn Lambley, who was booted from the front bench after a failed coup attempt against Chief Minister Adam Giles, said she wanted to see funding for youth services in Alice Springs tripled.

'We've stopped providing all these youth services and thus we've seen the escalation of youth anti-social behaviour in our streets – there's a direct correlation between this,' she said.

From speaking to the sector it is clear the \$4.2m announced to go back into the youth sector in February is yet to hit the ground. In fact many services are telling me they have not heard anything about how they apply for that money.

We still await details of the night services the CLP government is proposing and when it will happen. The CLP government at that time expressed early intervention and prevention were important; however, this budget does not reflect that. This budget does not send a message that the government has listened.

I congratulate the Minister for Young Territorians on the \$1.2m for his neighbourhood activity centre at Sanderson High School, knowing this is something he has lobbied for. However, I do so with caution, having not yet seen the detail about how this concept has progressed. It is not for lack of trying. I have wanted that extra information for the entirety of my term. I have heard about it many times, as others have. To be honest I have reservations about it, especially given how much youth at risk miss out in this budget. I have reservations because the concept does not reflect the conversations I have been involved in with young people in the sector, locally or nationally over the years. However, I will reserve judgment until I have seen the detail and the evidence base.

There is a lot of pressure on the performance of this concept, given that the investment equates to more than a quarter of what was offered for youth initiatives across the whole of the Northern Territory. It is about three times as much as is being put back into youth services in Darwin and Palmerston.

I hope young people are actively involved in the further development and implementation of the neighbourhood activity centre and that it truly engages those who need to be engaged. With the focus of the CLP government on young Territorians and antisocial behaviour it is difficult to see the translation in the budget for those at risk.

I welcome the additional funding in mental health services and look forward to the detail about

where this funding will go and what the new initiatives are in relation to mental health broadly, mental illness and suicide prevention.

In the bipartisan *Gone too Soon: A Report into Youth Suicides in the Northern Territory*, the recommendations included youth-specific infrastructure for mental health services in Katherine and Tennant Creek. This is not something that can be seen in Budget 2015-16 or in the suicide prevention plan, which is a shame for a budget that is big on infrastructure.

On my recent trip to Katherine it was clear that young people there are still lobbying hard for a youth-specific mental health service. I hope they get the opportunity to talk to the government about that and the government looks at how it can allocate resources into what is clearly needed and agreed on by both sides of this House through the *Gone too Soon* report.

Remote service delivery is a priority in relation to the mental health portfolio. I stand with stakeholders in hoping to see more detail about priorities and time frames for actions already stated in the suicide prevention strategy and on how the government intends to improve service delivery for Territorians outside our urban centres. Labor welcomes any additional investment in mental health in the Northern Territory and I commend the government on this.

It is important when we look at mental health that we look at other portfolio areas such as Housing and Education, and do not consider mental health in isolation. Housing was a very important factor in the National Review of Mental Health Programs and Services that was released recently. The summary document has a powerful quote in the front cover from a Victorian with lived experience:

I just want to emphasise that people with mental health issues are a part of the community and that our lives matter. Not only that, but by denying people like me the chance to have a stable life, with stable housing and a reduction in poverty-related stress, you are also denying our kids and loved ones relief from these stresses.

That is incredibly powerful and important. I hope with the additional investment we see a greater voice for consumers of mental health services on our way forward.

I move to my new portfolio of Public and Affordable Housing. The Northern Territory has seen a decrease in public housing stock of 76 dwellings, which includes 53 dwellings in the bush. Only 90 of the promised 418 public houses due for construction in this budget have been built.

The waiting times are blowing out and \$133m has been revoted to deal with the backlog created.

The member for Nhulunbuy is passionate about this issue. Houses lie empty in her community which could be used to address a significant need for struggling Territory families. With approximately 70 houses already allocated and 180 remaining empty, we could be looking at a portion of these to put a roof over the head of Territory families who need it the most.

Those on the waiting list in Nhulunbuy can wait 13 years to get a look in. Putting that into perspective, a family with a baby could be on that waiting list for as long as it takes that child to enter middle school. We heard today that the CLP government seems to be doing very little to seize opportunities that could ease the struggle of Territorians in Nhulunbuy. I commend the member for advocating so hard for better outcomes for people in her electorate when it comes to public housing.

These wait lists are reflected and inflating across the Northern Territory. I am hopeful we will hear articulated soon how the CLP government will address the decrease in public housing stock and get people into essential housing.

This morning the Leader of the Opposition mentioned there had been no progress on securing funding for additional aged-care beds greatly needed by seniors in our community. It would also benefit our hospital, which is struggling with resources. I hope we see that. Housing is raised by seniors I talk to on a very regular basis. It is the number one issue they raise with me.

In my shadow area of Child Protection we see a system with increasing notifications and rapidly increasing numbers of children whose cases within the system go unresolved within the mandated 28-day time frame, now up to 1347. The numbers we see under the CLP government are significantly increased from when Labor was in government. However, we are not seeing the allocation of resources to address this growing need. We have seen some money put back into child protection. Much like youth services, we have seen massive cuts and then some put back. In fact \$8m is the amount that was cut.

The investment in out-of-home care is important, especially with projected increases in that area. However, we are seeing resources for child protection services lost to those who respond and investigate notifications. We are yet to hear from the minister and the government on how they intend to address the growing number of unresolved cases raised in this House over the last six or seven months since the release of the Children's Commissioner's annual report last year.

In fact, Wendy Morton of NTCOSS spoke to the ABC last night and said, 'If we take into account population growth and CPI increases there is actually quite a significant drop in funding towards the Department of Children and Families. We know they are predicting a 30% increase in the number of children entering the out-of-home care system next year yet there has been no extra allocation towards that. That is really concerning as well as the fact there is no extra allocation towards early intervention and prevention. It means more children will be entering the system, and we should be doing more to focus on preventing that from happening.'

We also know there are families who come into contact with the system who have very complex needs and it is not simply cut and dried. This is about listening to those on the ground and responding to filling the gaps and targeting resources towards initiatives and programs based on needs.

The minister for child protection has spoken in relation to other portfolios about being guided by those who know what works and what does not, which is a very sound approach. Child protection should be no different. In my conversations with stakeholders, people reflect on the immense work done through the board of inquiry.

We need to see investment in early intervention, prevention and family support. Quite frankly, if the government continues to give the line that they are simply the ambulance they will need another fleet. What happens when the ambulance does not arrive?

There is a huge need for leadership in this area. It is not about assigning blame or responsibility; it is about taking leadership. There is a need for investment in consistent family support, not just intermittent visits from child protection workers, who do an incredible job. We know they are under a great deal of pressure and are reliant on police.

We need to recognise the complexity of many cases in the Northern Territory where we come across issues of addiction, widespread substance misuse and generations of parents affected by FASD. We have families who require that additional support.

The Northern Territory also has many families who are only just coping, with children with exceptionally complex needs and vulnerabilities, and families with little access to the tools that can assist them with coping. It is clear that blame and shame, no matter how easy it is to dish out, will not help us as a community to protect those children and help build strong families.

In my electorate we continue to see the impacts of rising rates of property crime and the effects of problem drinking. We await the 120 extra police that continue to be promised. Volatile substance abuse is an issue I turn my focus to with some local retailers. I regularly see the remnants of this activity around my office location, and I hear more and more anecdotal accounts of those working within our retail precinct.

In the northern suburbs we are experiencing increases in antisocial behaviour, as was raised in this House by many of my colleagues in the March sittings. When it comes to alcohol, temporary beat locations are just that – temporary. They are incredibly resource intensive, putting our experienced frontline police officers, of whom we do not have enough, outside bottle shops. That is not to say there is no place for temporary beat locations, or for them not to be considered in situations that require additional response; however, we need a sustainable response and a plan that gets to the root of these issues.

I welcome the focus from the CLP government on the Casuarina Coastal Reserve. I look forward to taking the plan of management to my constituents when it is released for public comment – which I was told would be very soon – and hearing what they say about the extension of roads and paths. Labor pushed for maintenance and preservation at the reserve, including upgrade of toilet and barbecue facilities, resourcing for rangers in their much-appreciated work towards weed, fire and erosion management and working with local user groups, including cyclists, on maintenance of non-bituminised trails, of which there are many. I am pleased to see many of these things have been included in the announcement. However, we will await further detail. Local residents will want to see this detail and are vocal about the reserve.

It was very disappointing that the minister took the opportunity to talk down our beautiful local reserve, which is hugely important to local people and those further flung. I disagree that the reserve is run down. It is in need of maintenance, preservation and upgrade of facilities, yes, but please do not talk down our reserve. It is not one of the most visited reserves in the Northern Territory for nothing, and its beauty, ecological value and recreational value is of incredible importance to those who use it.

That is one conversation I have regularly with my constituents. Many, like me, learnt to drive there, or are teaching their kids to drive around the loop at Casuarina Coastal Reserve. Some remember going there with their families when they were young, or maybe – again, like me – planning for their future with their partners and have seen that eventuate. It is incredibly sentimental and important to people. When a minister issues a

media release which talks down something so important to us, it is not a very good look.

It is noted that the investment for the implementation of the safety recommendations on our public transport system has been included. Labor continues to welcome this after pushing for the report to be released last year. However, the member for Johnston – the shadow minister for Transport – and I continue to wait for a response in relation to which recommendations are outstanding, and the time frame in which we can expect to see them implemented. We are calling for the establishment of a working group to address antisocial behaviour. I am hopeful we will receive this advice soon.

The Royal Darwin Hospital is also in my electorate. My colleagues have raised points about the investment of \$40m in Royal Darwin Hospital. As pointed out by the member for Nhulunbuy, it will undoubtedly have benefits for workers at the hospital. However, it does nothing to reduce the double-bunking and bed-block issues that have been occurring at the hospital for some time and does not provide any further beds. I have many nurses and doctors in my electorate who raise these issues with me all the time. They require attention.

It should be noted that the CLP government also put money into fixing what the member for Araluen called 'mistakes' in September last year with hospital parking. I visited a couple of weeks ago. It is hard to put your finger on what has changed; it is still a mess.

I will briefly touch on travel. Territorians are taking notice. I held a mobile office in Casuarina Village on Sunday. The number one issue people were talking about was the front page of the *NT News*. It is a bit of a joke when Territorians are struggling. They want to see the outcomes of these trips, and Territorians deserve that level of accountability. They deserve to know where their money is going and to see the outcomes of those trips.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while there are indeed many winners in this budget, there is no doubt that education and health are not winners. Those who provide essential and valued services to our most vulnerable, including young people and families, are not winners. It is clear the government needs to start listening and I hope that happens soon.

Debate suspended.

MOTION

Open and Accountable Ministerial Travel

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that to ensure all ministerial

travel is undertaken in the interests of the Territory and is open and accountable to Territorians, the following measures be introduced by the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly immediately:

- all ministerial travel will undergo evaluation from the public and private sectors regarding the benefit of the travel to the Northern Territory
- these assessments will be made available to the public
- prior to departure, the minister's itinerary will be published, removing the ability to sneak off on secret junkets
- on return from overseas travel a full parliamentary report on the trip will be provided by the minister and will be made available to the public
- costs associated with the minister's trip will be made available to the public.

I say up front that when we are in government, when we travel it will be in the Territory's best interests, so we are happy to be open and transparent. All this motion guarantees is openness and transparency. We believe if you are open and transparent you will make better, smarter decisions. It guarantees that travel will be in the Territory's best interests.

The opposition knows from when we were in government that travel is important. There are certain things you need to and must do overseas. But we believe if you explain to Territorians up front where and why you go, what you do while you are there and that it is in the Territory's best interests, Territorians will agree and there will be no problem. That is the guarantee of openness and transparency.

Why do we need to be open and transparent? Unfortunately during this term of government a trust deficit has emerged between government and the people which has, in my opinion, tainted all politicians. There will be a demand for the next government the Territory has from August 2016 – and we hope we are that government – to operate to a higher standard and meet community expectations on a range of issues. One of those will be ministerial travel. Territorians need a government they trust and open, accountable and transparent government is essential to build that trust again.

Labor, as a party, has a proud record of delivering important reforms when it comes to transparency. We passed freedom of information laws and brought in the budget estimates process, and we

will be open and transparent if we return to government in August 2016.

Part of the reforms we will introduce from August 2016 is reform for ministerial travel. Concerns have emerged from the community about what happens when people go overseas. We will provide a guarantee because we think from August 2016 the next government will have to operate to an extremely high standard to restore trust. The measures we had in place when we were in government were pretty good. We will formalise and structure our travel policy and have it in place from August 2016 to ensure complete openness and transparency. If you are travelling in the best interests of the Territory and you explain where you go, what you will do and why you are doing it and you are very clear with Territorians up front, they will give the trip a tick. We know that from when we were last in government.

At the time we had support for our international trade strategy from the member for Port Darwin, who said:

I am absolutely delighted to see the Chief Minister gets into aeroplanes and goes into South-East Asia. In my opinion he does not do it often enough, nor do other ministers. It is about dressage; how it looks.

Both sides have an agreement and acceptance that there is a certain amount of work you have to and should be doing overseas. This side has never attacked trade missions. In fact in my budget reply this morning I congratulated the Deputy Chief Minister on the work he is doing. This government is doing good work, just like the previous Labor government, in engaging with Asia and with trade markets overseas. There is a body of work that must be done overseas.

We had a five-year strategic plan that informed people of our travel and what we did. It was public, up front and open, and outlined clearly what we thought the priorities were. We developed it in consultation with the import/export industry in the Territory with stakeholders and our international partners. We worked out what we needed to do over five years and we did it. The plan recognised, 'New trade does not happen overnight; it is a result of a continued presence and a building of relationships at the political, business, cultural and sporting levels that lay the foundation for achieving real trade outcomes'.

We had to make sure we were in our trading partners' countries developing strong relationships. I quote from the plan again, 'The Northern Territory's strong people-to-people links in Australia's overseas diplomatic and trade

networks will continue to play an important role in providing the opportunities for government, business and industry who engage international markets’.

Both sides over a period of time have developed these people-to-people links. We recognise the importance of travel, and if you are open and transparent with people about travel, they will accept that it is important for the Territory.

Right now with the trust deficit that exists, we think we have to take a more formalised approach to how we are open and transparent to guarantee what we do and how we do it in order to restore the confidence in government that has been lost. That is why we will adopt these measures if we are returned to government in August 2016. We ask the current government to adopt these measures now to restore trust and confidence in government. These measures do nothing but provide openness and transparency, and there is no reason for them not to be adopted, which is important.

This executive summary went into a range of specific actions in Part 3. I am sure the Chief Minister is aware of it. He spoke today about important travel undertaken by our side according to a strategic plan.

One of the things he talked about was Aberdeen. We said quite clearly in our five-year strategic plan that we need to establish strategic business links with one of the world’s leading petroleum services, supply and education centres in Aberdeen, Scotland, to further develop investment opportunities in the Territory.

After travelling overseas to get a massive multibillion dollar gas project, we knew we had to work out how to maximise the benefits for Darwin. One of the best ways of doing that was to go to an existing supply, service and education hub to determine what they did, how they did it and how we could do it here, and perhaps do it better.

The oil and gas service industry has started in Darwin and we have the oil and gas and research facility at Charles Darwin University. A range of investments and good work has been done by the previous Labor government and been picked up and carried forward by the government to make sure we benefit from the INPEX Ichthys project.

Travel is important. You have to travel but for the right reasons. We have concerns that taxpayer dollars are not spent wisely. We and the public do not like junkets. The public has a low opinion of politicians, and you only make it worse when you go overseas and it looks like you have not been doing it for the Territory’s best interests.

If you adopt these measures that will stop. It will be impossible to travel overseas unless it is for the best interests of the Northern Territory. These recommendations go to ministerial travel because we recognise a government can control ministerial travel.

As the Chief Minister said on Tuesday, there is an independent statutory authority to cover local member travel. I recognise the independence of the statutory authority and what conditions it sets.

However, as Leader of the Opposition I guarantee when I travel overseas I will be using these policies. If I travel overseas at any time between now and August 2016 – if there is a trade mission I need to go on or something I believe is in the best interests of the Territory – I will adopt these measures and be open and transparent with Territorians about why I go, what I will do there and where I will sleep. I will tell them where I go and be completely up front about the whole trip.

It will meet the test of the public, the front page of the *NT News*, Channel Nine, the ABC, Mix FM or whichever media station you refer to. It will meet the community test because I will be talking to them before I go about where I am going and what I will do while I am there. If you are open and transparent you will make better and smarter decisions.

It is critical to adopt these measures because there has been erosion of trust; a trust deficit has emerged between this government and the Territory people. It is unfortunate and has not happened just because of travel. Travel is salt in the wound in many respects. The trust deficit emerged almost from day one when the CLP said one thing before the election and did another thing after. From the moment it broke its election promises there has been a trust deficit in this government. They broke the promise to cut the cost of living and instead raised power, water and sewerage tariffs by 30% for power, 40% for water and 25% for sewerage. When they raised those tariffs and broke that election promise they broke faith with the Territory people and have not repaired it.

There has been a series of mistakes since then which made the relationship worse between the CLP and Territorians. They sold TIO without a mandate, they employed and looked after mates, they awarded water licences, and – this is important – the Chief Minister scrapped an independent inquiry into political donations which he agreed to. He made the decision to cancel that inquiry. Foundation 51 has now been referred to police by the Electoral Commission. We would have had an open and transparent investigation into that situation if the independent inquiry had been allowed to proceed. That has led to a trust

deficit between this government and Territory people.

The government refused to conduct a judicial inquiry into alleged police action, which left an undeserved smear on police. The Chief Minister said he would have a judicial inquiry then changed his mind and that left a smear. It was unfortunate and should not have happened. It was a bad moment for the Chief Minister. Issues need to be investigated as we need openness and transparency. Unfortunately the Chief Minister scrapped that judicial inquiry and the independent inquiry into political donations and broke election promises. The government has caused a trust deficit with Territorians, a consequence of which is they lose faith and stop believing you.

A body of work now needs to be done by all politicians to restore confidence and trust in government and our public services. One way we can do that is by how we address ministerial travel. A number of trips have been taken by CLP members which have caused concern.

These proposed initiatives should also be adopted by members – I do not believe we can force this on members – in their approach to overseas travel. I will be adopting these measures for overseas travel.

It is critical that we are open and transparent, and that we restore the trust of Territorians. We do not want to stop travel; we just want to ensure we are open and transparent in how we do it. Travel is important; this five-year strategy showed that.

Clare Martin and Paul Henderson did a great deal of work to deliver the Ichthys project, launch the China Minerals Investment Strategy – Mr Vatskalis was heavily involved in that – and support the live beef trade to Indonesia and Vietnam. We invested in infrastructure at East Arm Port and Darwin Business Park, helped establish Timor-Leste and established the Northern Territory ministerial council to develop the Northern Territory's Asian gateway strategy. We also promoted Indonesian art and created education, sporting and cultural links with our Asia Pacific neighbours.

Damage has been done. Cancelling the Arafura Games caused the Territory damage. The leadership change while Terry Mills was in Japan caused damage to our international relationships. We did not support the decision to put the former Chief Minister into Indonesia and had concerns about the way that happened, but the way he lost his job while there also caused damage to our relationship with Indonesia.

These countries are priorities for our jurisdiction. Japan, China and Indonesia are the Territory's

key targets which have been identified in our strategy. The five emerging markets in that strategy were Vietnam, India, Malaysia, Philippines and Timor-Leste. However, our links with two of our major trading targets have been damaged through how we have handled domestic politics. That was not smart. We have seen the outcome of the damage done in Japan and Indonesia, which is unfortunate. We have a trust deficit with Territory people.

We need to take a smarter, better approach to ministerial travel. We believe these measures get us there; they involve being open and transparent, but do not stop travel. They mean you must explain to Territorians before you go why you will go, what you will do and how much it will cost. Then you will report back on your trip so it is all above board.

The member for Nelson might not follow this formal structure but he follows a very similar structure with his travel. He is open to the public, has a very well-considered itinerary and engages in the best interests of the Territory.

We must do this. Unfortunately it needs to occur because of the trust deficit over the last three years between the CLP and Territorians. We do not believe recent trips by CLP members have been in the best interests of the Territory – or have not been demonstrated to be in the best interests of the Territory. We must give Territorians reassurance that future overseas travel is in their interests. That is why we believe the Assembly should support these reforms which mean all ministerial travel will undergo evaluation from public and private sectors in advance to determine the benefit to the Territory. That is smart.

Depending on where we went and why, we used to engage a range of stakeholders – whether it was cattlemen, meat and livestock exporters, or the Chamber – in advance. Sometimes they would even come with us. We talked about what we would do at the other end and what benefits it could bring to the Territory.

It is good, commonsense behaviour we are now formalising. Talk properly to the private sector and always engage the public sector before you go. Get an evaluation so you know why you go and what you can bring back for the Territory from that trip, and make it public. Release the itinerary prior to departure. In our experience – and I am sure from trips the CLP members have taken as well – the itinerary you have at the other end is usually flat strap. When the media goes on these trips, as they can do, they always remark on how busy the minister's itinerary is. We do not see a problem in releasing the itinerary and showing Territorians you are working hard and trying to

bring back something for the Territory. We see no problems with being open and transparent.

On your return you must report about it and explain to Territorians how it went. We do not think there is any problem with that either. Again, you make that public, including the costs. The costs can become public through the estimates process. We see no reason why you cannot be open and transparent with Territorians about what you did, why you did it, where you went, how it went and what it cost. Tell them. We believe that if you are open and transparent you will make smarter and better decisions. You can explain to Territorians why you have done certain things.

There can be quirks to overseas travel and requirements placed on you by an Australian Embassy. Explain to Territorians up front what those requirements are. Just tell them! Trust them. If you trust them they might trust you. Have that conversation with Territorians before you leave. We cannot see how these measures of engaging with the public on overseas travel can do anything other than deliver openness and transparency and return trust. You would have to be allergic to accountability to have a problem with these measures.

We do not oppose travel, we only oppose junkets. We believe you have to demonstrate to the public that you are getting value for money for your trip and you are acting in Territorians' best interests. It is a clear work requirement for a minister. I am not a minister, but as Leader of the Opposition if I travel overseas I will work to these sound principles to show Territorians what I am doing, how I am doing it and why it is in their best interests.

We have reached a point in the body politic where all politicians have to start proving to Territorians – as a result of the CLP's actions over the last three years – that they can trust us and we are trying to work for their best interests. That is why we bring this motion to the House, why we will do it when we are in government, and why I will adopt these principles for any overseas travel I undertake. I will be open and transparent with Territorians about where and why I go.

The work done on this international trade strategy was excellent. It delivered some great returns to the Territory and showed the Territory has an eye for Asia, as we have had for a long time ahead of other parts of Australia. We have a good relationship with our overseas partners. We have worked hard to get that.

Cancelling the Arafura Games was a backward step. We need to engage, and in some areas reengage, with the region and return our relationship to where it was.

We have done good work overseas and brought back a multibillion dollar gas project from which Darwin and the Territory have benefitted. Charles Darwin University has also benefitted. We have seen Territorians trained for participating in that industry. We have worked hard as a result of that travel to work out how we can maximise the benefits to the Territory.

We have export industries in the Territory and we have had to work overseas. We support that travel and believe if you tell Territorians up front exactly what you do it will be okay. This international trade document, having a strategy and implementing that strategy proves that. Say up front that you will go to Aberdeen and why you go. Explain to Territorians why and what you do and they will trust you, if you trust them.

That is the conversation you need to have. That is why I brought this motion to the House. If we are given the faith of the people on August 2016 to be government, we are trying to set a very high standard in what we do and how we behave because we think Territorians will expect a much higher standard from the next government of the Northern Territory. We will, between now and August 2016, explain to them, through a number of policies, how we will restore the trust and confidence in our elected officials and our public officials. This is one of the first measures we are proposing. It has happened in response to the trust deficit the CLP has created and some of the decisions it made that do not seem to be in Territorians' best interests.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as a measure to restore trust and confidence in government the CLP should adopt these measures now and be open and transparent with Territorians because that is what they are asking for. This motion helps get us there.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, my question in relation to the announcement by the Leader of the Opposition is when you undertake your next travel, who will be overseeing your travel from the private sector? I have not heard any names offered. Who from the public ...

Mr Gunner: It depends where you go and who you engage with.

Mr ELFERINK: No, hang on. 'It depends where you go and who you engage with' is the interjection. It is funny that after the very first question I asked about this proposal I already heard qualification by way of interjection. This is not being open, honest and accountable with Territorians when you start qualifying your own promise within moments of making it.

Without announcing who from the private sector will oversee this travel the Leader of the Opposition will take, who from the public will be overlooking it? Could you please name them for us? Do you have the panel or board already arranged? Or is it the case that you expect government to create a panel or board to oversight this travel?

I notice it is all ministerial travel. I travel once a week. I travel to Alice Springs and across the Territory. I have been to Sydney and Melbourne in the last two weeks. I travel on a regular basis. I often speak to journalists on the telephone while I am in these places and tell them what I am doing, so it is hardly being furtive. If the member is suggesting his motion restricts it to overseas travel, he is wrong.

Only the first bullet point makes any reference to a report on overseas travel:

all ministerial travel will undergo evaluation from the public and private sectors regarding the benefit of travel to the Northern Territory.

That means every member opposite who travels – well, that is not true; it is ministerial and he counts himself. Every time he goes to Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy or wherever else, he will have a panel of people from the private sector – yet to be identified – and members of the public – yet to be identified – who will assess the benefit of that travel to the people of the Northern Territory.

I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition has travelled since becoming the Leader of the Opposition. I suspect he has. If he has not, fine. When will he travel next and why has he not submitted his travel intentions – even if it is intra-Territory – to this panel of people which does not exist as far as this House knows.

these assessments will be made available to the public.

By what mechanism? Media release? From whom?

prior to departure, the minister's itinerary ...

and Leader of the Opposition's itinerary I presume:

will be published, removing the ability to sneak off on secret junkets.

Okay. I am wondering by what mechanism the itinerary should be published. By media release? I am more than happy to tell journalists I am moving around.

You only get to the point of overseas travel:

on return from overseas travel a full parliamentary report on the trip will be provided by the minister and will be made available to the public.

We are seeing a tissue-thin attempt to buy into a bit of fun – no, that is the wrong word – mischief being made by some tabloid journalists in the Northern Territory.

What he is trying to do, and we heard in his debate today, is drive the 'trust deficit' as he describes it. The fact is you could only describe his intent in relation to this as disingenuous at best. At the heart of the mischief made by these media outlets is they want to show the people of the Northern Territory how awful it is that these politicians are creaming off their toils and labours with taxpayer-funded trips and it is all one big junket.

The opening statement by the Leader of the Opposition is that it is all about trying to avoid junkets. He immediately said travel is important to politicians and is what politicians do. Yes, that is correct; politicians do travel.

This is a race to the bottom of the barrel. That is all the Leader of the Opposition is engaged in. The Leader of the Opposition has decided to hitch his wagon to the engine of public opinion as represented by organs such as the *NT News*. In doing so he continues the attitude that somehow he can majestically be nobler and lay other levels of accountability over us.

I cannot think of a more accountable profession in the Northern Territory than the one we are engaged in. The levels of accountability are genuinely unparalleled for the members of this House already. I travel as a condition of my membership of this parliament, as I did over the Christmas period. The opposition was salivating in its desire to let the *NT News* know I had gone on a trip. Of course they had heard about the trip; I made no secret of it. The assumption is that travel will be supported by Territorians. Unfortunately some of the more mischievous outlets will say the travel is just a junket no matter what you do, where you go and who you speak to. Of course that is not ministerial travel, which is not a distinction the Leader of the Opposition cares to make in the public domain but does here.

It was an honour for the Minister for Women's Policy, Bess Price, to be asked to attend the 58th Commission on the Status of Women held in New York on behalf of the Northern Territory. Minister Price attended as part of the Australian government delegation alongside Senator Hon Michaelia Cash, the Minister Assisting the Prime

Minister for Women. I have heard no comment or criticism in relation to her and the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls, Natasha Stott Despoja AM. Liz Broderick, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, also attended. It turns out the Minister for Women's Policy in the Northern Territory was not travelling alone but was in the company of some of Australia's luminaries.

The Northern Territory needs to participate on the global scene and we do not resilite from that – neither does the Leader of the Opposition it would appear. He says we have to travel. My word, we have to travel. When I was in opposition I chided ministers for not moving enough, as was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition. I was not suggesting we should saddle ministers with some mythical committee from the private sector – yet to be named, paid for by whom – and some people from the public.

How do we get these people from the public to sit in judgment of this travel? Do we create a committee? Is there a per diem or sitting fee paid as they go through travel? They will be engaged in damn near a full-time job; they will be assessing a lot of travel, because the reality is we travel. Politicians, particularly ministers, travel and I make no apologies for that because it is part of my job.

Let us say I chose not to travel to Melbourne last week because I wanted to be at the Anzac Day ceremony in Darwin. In that process I would have abandoned my responsibility as Minister for Disability Services to look out for the interests of Territorians at the national ministerial council dealing with the roll-out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme which threatens the Territory if it is rolled out in the way they intend to roll it out in Sydney or Melbourne. Because I might be afraid of being criticised for that travel, perhaps people in remote communities would not get wheelchairs because they have not been classified under the National Disability Insurance Scheme as they have fallen through the cracks. The minister, Senator Mitch Fifield, was somewhat disappointed to discover that of the 103 people in the Barkly trial where the National Disability Scheme was being tested, 56 did not qualify for the scheme. Yet, you can criticise me for travelling to Melbourne. I may not have made that meeting because somebody on the committee which this Leader of the Opposition will create, overseeing my travel, may be unwell that day.

When it comes to health funding, which was rightly pointed out by the shadow Health minister, there are issues with funding on an activity-based funding model which has been changed by the federal government. Perhaps I should not have gone to the ministerial council in Sydney a week-and-a-half ago because of the criticism about

ministers' travel. Here is the truth of it: there is a threat to our budgetary position to the value of \$60m a year if the federal government continues to press on with changes to activity-based funding. I have to travel to be in those places. I am well over the joy of travel as a politician. I become quite jaded about it because I run my relationship with my children as a part-time dad.

It is an easy hit for the Leader of the Opposition to press on with these sorts of attacks. He is trying to create a wedge between us, the government and the pub test. However, he has inadvertently created an environment for himself which he described at the outset. What will happen is a pox on both your houses. The Leader of the Opposition is attempting to build his case on that pox, because he says his travel is noble and government's travel is naughty.

If the motion before us is only focused on overseas travel then that is not what it says. As a consequence of that this motion is, in its authorship, unsupportable. If this motion is intended to bring about the consequences the Leader of the Opposition asserts it should, it is unsupportable because it is unworkable.

There is one other component the Leader of the Opposition has clearly forgotten: from time to time it is necessary for a minister of the Crown to travel under the radar for various reasons. When government is trying to engage with certain investors, there are good commercial reasons those investors may not want the public to know they are interested in a specific area of governance or paying attention to the Northern Territory. That will render that important capacity impossible by virtue of the fact you have to make publically known, according to this plan, where you go and who you speak to. I wonder if the INPEX arrangements would have come into existence if all ministerial travel had become well known to other operators, such as ConocoPhillips, prior to any ink being dry on any contracts or any arrangements being put in place at all.

Sometimes in the executive arm of government it is necessary to be discreet about what you do in an effort to bring about a benefit to the people of the Northern Territory. It is impossible under these arrangements to adhere to that discretion. I am disappointed there is not a clause which considers that truth in this motion. As ministers of the Crown, especially in the development of business and investment in the Northern Territory, we sometimes have to do things discreetly before we bring them into the public domain to make the arrangements work.

A number of matters have been dealt with in this House; we have talked about the position of the ports. I imagine if there are further negotiations at

some point in the future about that, you want to nail those things down before advertising to the world that certain things have occurred. It is not because you are trying to hide something; it is because sometimes discretion means you keep a commercial advantage. From time to time that commercial advantage is good for the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory.

There was no consideration given to that or the mechanisms of this because this is not a well-considered motion. It was hastily drafted. I presume it was supposed to cover international travel exclusively, but that is not what the motion says. The only qualification in relation to international travel is that if a minister travels internationally they will report back to the parliament. Is that what it says? I will make sure. They will report back to the parliament on what they did and that will be made public. So it is all ministerial travel.

I travel to Alice Springs so regularly I feel like a tennis ball in the world's largest tennis court. I will now have to go through this public process. These assessments will be made available to the public, so every time I go to Alice Springs to speak to public servants I have to then say which public servants. Do I have to identify them under this proposal? Name them individually?

This is not a well-considered motion because it is not proposing what the Leader of the Opposition is in pursuit of, which is trying to create this image about politicians.

That then draws me to a second and important component of what I will talk about today, which is what we do strategically in garnishing points. Because of our adversarial system we are always throwing rocks at each other, so we choose to collect our rocks from any number of places. More often than not – *Gott sei dank!* – those rocks come from the policy domain. I am happy to have that discussion in the policy domain. All too often from all members of this House, but particularly members opposite, it is any advantage to be leveraged on any turf whatsoever.

You then effectively create the race to the bottom I have described. There is a reason politicians are held in low esteem. It is because politicians keep telling the public that politicians should be held in low esteem. With an all-too-eager media to report conflict and suggest impropriety at every turn, it is an easy way to feed the machine. Yes, you will get a headline out of it. Bully for you! But at the end of day you end up making the concessions the Leader of the Opposition is now saying he will abide by.

At the end of that process we then start doing things like saying we will get rid of certain systems

we have and make them more accountable or more difficult to use in the way they are intended to be used. At the end of that process this job becomes unattractive. This job of representing your community is so unattractive that you start to ask why people would volunteer for it.

I will do a little honest assessment about this Chamber. Where are the doctors? Where are the captains of industry who have chosen to set aside their captaincy of industry to serve the people of the Northern Territory? Where are the senior public servants who spent their lives engaged in policy development – guys at the executive director level, deputy CEO level or even CEO level saying, 'We will abandon our jobs and come and work for the people of the Northern Territory'? They are not putting up their hands anymore.

Unfortunately, all too often people applying for positions in this House are those who are looking for this job as some form of promotion. Here is an honest assessment which I suspect will raise a couple of eyebrows. Of the five police officers I am aware of who have come into this House over the years, not one was from a commissioned rank. In fact, when I think about it, not one was above the rank of Sergeant, me included. Why? Why would we not have Assistant Commissioners saying, 'I want to do that job and represent the people of the Northern Territory'?

The skills of the member for Johnston for hitting a ball with a stick are legendary. He is the only man from the Territory who has lobbed Joel Garner over the top of his head. But why does that qualify him to be a community leader? What experience do we all bring to this place?

What we do in diminishing ourselves in this process is let down the people of the Northern Territory and this job becomes less attractive over time. There was a time when this place did have a couple of doctors in it. Dr Toyne and Dr Lim are two I can think of.

This race to the bottom the Leader of the Opposition is engaged in does nothing more than achieve the thing he says we should be trying to avoid: the diminution of our esteem in the public imagination. Find a better way to do it. Of all the criticisms you can make of government, this is it?

We just dropped a \$6.5bn budget on the table and it is the pub test in relation to travel you are trying to convince us is important? We have to accept that sometimes we will fail the pub test because the pub test will never be passable. Whatever travel I do as a minister somebody sitting in Malak will say is bad. If we were to ask the pub how much should be set aside for ministerial travel what do you think the answer would be? You would not get one. Some people would say, 'All

travel is wrong'. If we went into the pubs tomorrow and said, 'What do you think the wages for a member of parliament would be', half the answers you would get would be some smart-alec answer, 'You should not be paid', because that is the tradition we are creating in the public imagination.

The question we have before us is not about ministerial travel; it is that we cannot argue matters of policy because we will go to the pub test. Here is the truth of the pub test. It is difficult to describe and deal with something as complex as health policy, child protection policy or building policies because you are dealing in figures that the average punter does not often get their head around – hundreds of millions of dollars. But my God, they understand \$45 000 or \$50 000. They understand all of that.

The only response left to government is the response you saw from the Chief Minister today when he pointed out that the former Labor member for Casuarina spent \$197 000 in his last year of travel.

The only defence we have is to point out that former minister Rob Knight took his family on two occasions on joy flights to Croker Island and Goulbourn Island and also to Ngiuu at taxpayers' expense.

What about the member for Nightcliff who was an adviser to minister Hampton? How can you rack up \$1000 in accommodation for one night in Alice Springs and a three-day trip to Hong Kong for \$12 364. Mr Vowles went to Noumea, Hong Kong, Hangzhou, Hanoi – five days in China for \$14 536. There you go. See? It is in the public domain. That is the defence. Tomorrow the story in the newspaper will be Labor spends as much as these guys, and these guys spend as much as these guys and these guys are all rotten. We all fail the pub test. You give us no choice; of course, when you point the finger at us, we check what you did.

A bloke once told me every time you point the finger you must remember there are three of the buggers pointing back at you. I quite like that. It is simple and homespun, but it is right.

Let us collectively focus on the things such as the billions of dollars' worth of decisions we have to make going forward that matter to the people of the Northern Territory. Let us focus on the things that deal with huge volumes of money.

I applaud the decision the Minister for Women's Policy took because she is using her skills, talent and background as a member of the Northern Territory community to place us on the world stage.

Yes, my study tour cost \$45 000. Do you know why it cost \$45 000? Because I was able to save \$30 000 over two years and by taking it over the Christmas period another \$15 000 clicked in. I wanted to see a raft of things, and I saw them. My report to the Assembly on that trip, which was tabled today, was 34 pages long. A number of action items have arisen out of that trip and have already led to me being directly influenced by Jackie Lacey, District Attorney of Los Angeles, to put clinicians into the courts of the Northern Territory. That is two jobs worth several hundred thousand dollars.

That trip has also led to a number of other action items that will be followed through, including the study of the HOPE program in Hawaii under Judge Alm. I intend to send a number of public servants over to look at what is happening there.

I also went to Cape Canaveral to see what was happening there because about 15 years ago Darwin was considered for launching rockets. Are you laughing? I pick up on the laughter.

A member: I am not laughing at you, I am talking to him.

Mr ELFERINK: I took the opportunity while I was there to examine the possibility yet again. Just imagine if we set our sights high enough to believe we could go after something like that. How cool would that be?

In Orlando I spoke to the Navy tactical systems people who do training for the F-35 Raptor. They also do all the technical work on that aircraft. Those aircraft will be flying over Darwin and I wanted to reassure myself that the training and capacity of those pilots was up to speed.

I did a raft of things there and I am not embarrassed about taking that trip. Of course I have to be because a journalist decided I needed to be. A journalist assiduously avoided hearing anything from me in relation to the other things I did because he had his story, 'He went to Cape Canaveral. That put him on the front page.' Fine, I get that. That is how it works; it is open slather. However, the last thing we should do as a parliament is buy into that and add fuel to it, because ultimately you end up making the job so unattractive with the effluxion of time that nobody will want to do it or the people who put their hands up will not be the best pick.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want the electorate to go to the next Territory election and not see average people. I want them to see great people who will provide better outcomes for the people of the Northern Territory. Whilst we continue to be embarrassed about who we are and what we do we will not make this job attractive to the people of

the Northern Territory. This is precisely the sort of ill-drafted, ill-considered motion that plays into that diminution of quality. There will be no captains of industry, doctors, brain surgeons, rocket scientists or senior public servants standing for election the next time around. We collectively can do better than that.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for moving this motion. I listened carefully to what the member for Port Darwin said. I agree that we should travel but I put some provisos on that.

We are using taxpayers' money and should be frugal. That means we travel economy where we can. I am not saying everyone should travel economy all the time. We should try to stay at hotels and motels that are not at the top of the range. There are times when you may have to do that, because people stay at the hotel where the conference is held.

We need to remember we are here because Territorians elected us, and they put trust in us that we will not waste taxpayers' money. It does not mean if the budget is in the billions of dollars our travel is irrelevant. Everything we do should be done with a basic philosophy that we are being trusted by Territorians not to waste money, use the resources we have been given as members of parliament frugally, make sure we do not go on trips that are irrelevant and justify in an open and transparent way what we have done.

For example, I took a trip to Portland before we formed a committee. I explained why I went and wrote a report on it. I am not bragging about it; I am saying it makes good sense because I need to tell my electorate why I am not in the office. I was not on the Gold Coast lying on the beach; I was doing work I hope they expect me to do. I am saying to my electorate that when I go on these trips I am becoming a better politician because I am being educated.

Yes, we do have to travel, whether it is interstate or overseas, because otherwise you become stuck in the mud. We need to make sure we are stimulating our knowledge of what is happening in Australia and at times – in my case it is not very often – in other countries. People know – I have said it on the radio and there will be more on it – that I will go to Canada to sit at the two parliaments of Nunavut and Northwest Territories at the end of May and the end of June to look at a form of government I am attracted to, which is consensus government. It is a type of government that does not involve political parties. I am sure you will be interested in a report I will give to this parliament when I return.

This motion is not the best motion in the world. I must admit I do not think it has been well constructed, but I understand why the Leader of the Opposition has proposed it. We have to look at ourselves and say, 'The money I am spending is not mine, it is the money Territorians have given me through taxes, and it is my duty to make sure I use it correctly and wisely, and not be extravagant'.

We can sit here in this glorious House and put titles on our names – we have the honourable this and the honourable that, and the minister for this and the minister for that. We look after 228 000 people. Compare that 228 000 people with China, India, the United States or Russia. We are a drop in the bucket. That is not to say we do not have important roles, of course we do, but we need to keep our level of importance where it should be and not think we are Obamas or Putins on the world stage. Obviously we can contribute to the world, but we are people who have been elected to look after a relatively small number of people in the world. We need to make sure we do not overdo ourselves.

We have responsibilities to make sure we govern the Northern Territory properly. I am giving a philosophy of how we should use money, and if that applies to travel that is what we should do as well.

I have seen cases, on both sides, where people should not have been travelling business class but economy. I do not think there is any reason people should spend that amount of money. Obviously ministers going on important trips have to work; they need to rest or talk to their advisers. There are good reasons for people having to travel in business class at times, and staying at 5-star-and-plus hotels. As long as that is reasonable and people can see that was the right thing to do and can be justified, I do not have any problem.

Of course, every time a politician does something, even if they ask for a pay rise, they are dead in the water. You have to somehow make sure you are not drowned – which is easy – by an agenda of the media. I have been guilty of that. Sometimes I will speak up about something that I would not have because someone rang me and asked me for my opinion on the subject. I would rather have let it go. You have to be careful you do not react all the time to a headline. As I said, I am guilty of that but that happens sometimes.

Getting back to the motion, I will look at the negative part. I listened to the member for Port Darwin. There are some practical problems with the two first dot points about all ministerial travel – I understand the Leader of the Opposition said it was meant to be overseas travel – having to

undergo evaluation from the public and private sectors regarding the benefit of the travel to the Northern Territory, with assessments made available to the public.

I was trying to see how it would work in reality. I use the minister for Primary Industry as an example. He has his advisers. If he travels to Vietnam to look at opening more markets, normally it would be automatic that he talks to the industry because he would not be going to Vietnam without the backing of that industry. It is more important that the minister comes back and says where he went, who he went with and why he went.

The member for Port Darwin raised a good point that there may be times when, because of the sensitive nature of something, which could be about contracts for the port, the minister cannot say he went to such-and-such a country to discuss such-and-such an issue in an open forum because then some of the companies in Adelaide might find out and not be pleased. But there may be a way around that. The minister may be able to word his report in a way that says he went on a trip recently to do with some negotiations that were confidential or sensitive which he cannot report on.

The real crux of the matter comes in the last three dot points which, without the bit of politics about the junkets, are reasonable.

prior to departure the ministers itinerary will be published ...

It does not have to be a broad itinerary. It can just say he is visiting such-and-such ...

Mr Giles: It is not a security issue at all.

Mr WOOD: That is right. On return, you report back to the parliament what you did and the associated costs. I do not know how it works. I was trying to look up the web page on the Chief Minister's site. Is there a set of guidelines for ministerial travel? I could not find one.

For my travel I have to, first of all, issue an itinerary. Sorry, before that I have to ask Madam Speaker if I am allowed to go. I have to tell her why and when I want to go. If she gives me approval then I must have an itinerary. I have to say where I am travelling, where I am staying and I have to give them to my good friend Diem, the CFO, who will make sure I include all those things. Then when I come back, I write a report. It has to be in within 90 days. If it is not within 90 days, I get a letter like I did the other day. I had not finished my report on Portland and Adelaide, probably because I went back again and I was so busy. But I have written that report.

We have a system. I am not sure whether that applies to ministerial travel or how it works. I am interested to know what the process for ministerial travel is. Is that process on the website? Are the guidelines for ministerial travel on the website? I am not sure. I looked for them when this motion came forward and I could not find them. That is not to say it is not there; on some webpages it is pretty difficult to find anything.

I support the sentiment of what the Opposition Leader is proposing. As the member for Port Darwin said, in the way it is written there are some practical issues which will not work. This is probably an ideal thing for one of our committees to look at.

If both sides are throwing rocks at one another, as the member for Port Darwin said, it is time for the people throwing rocks to put them down and sit down together and determine how we make sure we are doing the right thing by Territorians. How will this parliament make sure people know what we do, how much money we spend and why we spent it so we can demonstrate we are open and transparent in what we do?

We need to recognise members of parliament need to travel to become better members. It is not about going to Hawaii on a six-day trip to measure the height of the surf; it is about doing things you can bring back to the Territory that will make you a better member of parliament and add something to the Territory, either through legislation, policies or changes in your local area. We need to travel and we should do it judiciously. We should not go off every now and then for the sake of it. If we have a good reason to do something we should not be ashamed to declare the reason for going overseas or down south and let everyone know what is happening. We should try to do it in a way that is not extravagant and try to keep our costs down.

People who are finding the cost of living pretty high hope members of parliament are mindful of the fact not everybody is finding it easy in these times. The cost of living is high and some people probably never get a trip overseas or struggle to get a trip interstate. We are lucky we are able to do those things at taxpayers' expense.

I will not support this motion. It is good that it has been presented for debate. There is some politics involved but it gives us a chance to talk about the issue of how we perform in parliament and the way we spend taxpayers' money.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my suggestion is that the opposition and the government get together, possibly using an existing committee – I cannot think of which one it would be at present – to discuss practical guidelines. Bring those back to

parliament and we can have a discussion about them. Territorians would realise the guidelines have been established by a good process through the committee system of this parliament.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome this motion from the Leader of the Opposition. He has presented to parliament some very sensible measures for improving the processes of ministerial travel. This motion is not saying ministers should not be travelling, far from it. Ministers need to travel overseas on behalf of the Territory to promote it and build important relationships and ties which ultimately benefit Territorians.

We have seen a great deal of work in that regard within tourism, mining and exports of cattle. For example, the Chief Minister went to Japan to speak to INPEX. Important trade delegations have gone overseas. It is something ministers should be doing in order to benefit the Northern Territory. We are not saying we are anti-travel. Part of a minister's role is to travel.

We believe Territorians want to see more accountability for that travel. They want to feel confident in their government, knowing when ministers go on overseas trips to represent the best interests of the Northern Territory they are getting value for money, their government representatives are working hard and ultimately the purpose of the trip is to ensure the Northern Territory benefits from it in some way.

The Leader of the Opposition's motion is very sensible. It is about building more trust with Territorians on what is traditionally a controversial subject which comes up from time to time. We have seen it raised again most recently with some ministerial trips reported in the media and some questions asked about them. This has happened many times.

For example, I have an article – I am sure the Chief Minister will remember this – from 2010 where some of his travel was brought into question. By today's standards it seems an extremely frugal trip where he spent \$13 000 to go to Britain to do some work. In this article, the Chief Minister says he felt it was important for politicians to travel where benefits flowed through to the Northern Territory. We all see that. We do not say travel should not occur but this issue is raised repeatedly. Overseas travel by ministers is something Territorians scrutinise. They would like to see more accountability and have more confidence in government that ministers' overseas trips ensure they get value for money.

The Leader of the Opposition has put forward sensible measures to look at this issue to give Territorians more confidence and trust in their

government about overseas trips at a ministerial level, ensuring the Territory is getting appropriate value for money from them.

I listened carefully to the Leader of Government Business and the concerns he raised about this motion before parliament. He has concerns about always having to be accountable to the pub test, as he calls it, and that he often feels frustration when trying to do his job. I have a great deal of respect for him and fully appreciate how hard he works as a minister.

Even with best intentions of ministers and politicians, people still want to have trust that when they are overseas representing the Northern Territory the trips will benefit the Northern Territory. In any relationship trust takes a while to develop. It would be fair to say that Territorians' view of and level of trust in politicians is probably at an all-time low. Some very serious questions were raised recently about ministerial travel overseas.

The motion contains sensible measures to effectively give Territorians more trust and confidence in the government that when they travel overseas they can be sure the Territory taxpayer is getting value for money out of those trips. This is a very sensible step forward.

It is clear from what the Leader of Government Business said that government will not support this motion. I do not think a case has been presented tonight to justify not introducing more accountability measures for ministerial travel. It would not be hard to introduce more measures of accountability and scrutiny for ministerial trips. The measures proposed go some way in giving people more confidence about overseas travel taken by ministers.

For example, in the first measure the Leader of the Opposition suggested, all ministerial travel must undergo evaluation from the public and private sectors regarding the benefit of the travel to the Northern Territory. The Leader of Government Business was being a bit cute in saying the word 'overseas' is not in there. We would be happy to amend this motion to include the word 'overseas' if that would get them to agree to it. However, the intent is very clear that this is in regard to ministers travelling overseas for official business on behalf of the Northern Territory.

He questioned who would do this public and private sector evaluation of the travel before the trip takes place. We would be more than willing to speak further to the government about it. It is not hard when you have a legitimate and valid trip that should take place to benefit the Northern Territory, to get some form of assessment from the public

sector on why it needs to be done and its importance. Also, talking to important stakeholders from the private sector to get their views on why this trip would be in the best interests of the Northern Territory would not be hard. It means picking up the phone, sending a few e-mails and further building on the relationships a minister should already have with key stakeholders in their portfolio areas. I cannot see why that would be such a hard measure for the government to put in place to add a bit more scrutiny for ministerial overseas trips.

The second point to the Leader of the Opposition's motion was these assessments will be made available to the public. Again, I cannot see how that would be such a difficult process, given the vast Northern Territory government resources available online. We have a well-resourced Department of the Chief Minister. I cannot see how it would be difficult to have these assessments made available to the public so they can see why their minister believes it is good value going overseas and a third-party endorsement supporting that trip.

The third point of the motion was that prior to the departure the minister's itinerary will be published, removing the ability to sneak off on secret junkets. I cannot see any problem with this. Ministerial overseas trips are generally very busy, well planned and a lot of work goes into them. There are many people involved in putting together a minister's itinerary of their meetings and who they will see. A good government, and anyone signing off and approving those trips prior to departure, would want to see a pretty solid itinerary in the first place to ensure they see a hard-working minister going overseas and getting value for money for the Territory.

I cannot see why there would be a great problem with a minister making their itinerary available to the public for all to see what they have planned. I see it as an advantage to a minister in being able to further promote the benefits of their trip before they go overseas. That would help with regard to those pub tests. It would help the media gain a better understanding of why they are going on these trips and why they feel there is a benefit to the Northern Territory.

The fourth point is:

on return from overseas travel a full parliamentary report on the trip will be provided by the minister and will be made available to the public.

Again, I cannot see why this would be a problem. I appreciate that more time would need to be taken post-trip to produce this report. There is no doubt that a ministerial office is an extremely busy

environment to work in. However, people want to have trust in their government. They want to know that when a minister has gone overseas to promote the best interest of the Northern Territory they have stuck to their plans.

I am sure from time to time there will be trips where the itinerary does not go to plan or changes are needed at the last minute. They might have made a new contact with which a meeting would benefit the Territory, or some plan may have fallen through on that trip. People would like to see more transparency around what was planned and what eventuated on that trip. That would help Territorians, the media and the people at the pub have more faith that when a minister travels overseas representing the Territory at the cost of the Territory taxpayer, they are getting value for money.

The last point is:

costs associated with the minister's trip will be made available to the public.

It is another measure that will help put people's minds at ease about aiming for value for money from these trips. It will also make that office look a bit more carefully at the expenditure on that trip prior to it taking place.

Territorians want to have their Territory government representatives and ministers at their peak when they travel overseas, ready to serve the Territory to the very best of their ability. They can understand why they need to fly business class sometimes and why spouses need to accompany them; they are a very important part of these business delegations and building those relationships and ties when representing the Northern Territory. We are not saying that flying business class or taking spouses should be banned. We are saying we need more transparency and government needs to articulate the reasons for the expenditure on that trip a lot better than it is at present. It is very clear there are concerns about ministerial travel overseas, and some serious questions with regard to whether or not the Territory is getting full value out of those trips.

It also goes to the heart of the issue of many people having simply lost faith in this government. Trust is a real issue at the moment and is something I hear about loudly and clearly from my constituents, because since 2012 when the CLP came to government, they have been faced with so many broken promises. What this government says one day does not translate into reality the next.

We heard in this place today about some pretty firm promises about TIO and the future of jobs for

its staff, and now 43-odd staff are having to accept redeployment. That is not exactly being able to keep the job they had at TIO. The sale of TIO was something the government rammed through at a cracking pace, neither confirming nor denying it for many months in the lead-up to it, but then pushing forward with the sale with very poor consultation with Territorians as they knew too well Territorians did not want TIO sold.

We saw them break promises about the cost of living made at the last Territory election. The first action they undertook as a government was to raise power and water prices through the roof. We also saw them break the promise about publishing travel online, which was something they took to the 2012 election.

Territorians have lost faith in this government. We have very serious questions about the allocations of water licences. We have serious questions about Foundation 51, about which there has been much debate. The police are now looking into matters regarding Foundation 51. This Chamber passed a motion for an inquiry into political donations which the government then backflipped on. A report into political donations was tabled here at about 9 pm last night.

We still have serious questions about this government's commitment to a judicial inquiry into the matters surrounding the former Police Commissioner, John McRoberts, vacating that job.

It is little wonder Territorians do not trust this government. When they see big figures for ministerial overseas trips in the media, they ask serious questions about whether or not it was value for money or a junket. People cannot trust much of what this government says because it has broken promises for two-and-a-half years.

All this motion before the House is trying to do is start building trust with Territorians so they know when their minister travels overseas on business representing the Northern Territory it is travel to drive benefits for the Territory, build relationships to benefit the Territory and ensure the taxpayer is getting best value for money, and the travel is not a junket. These are sensible measures. They will help build public trust about politicians going on their ministerial trips overseas.

I cannot see why the government cannot at least agree to look more closely at these measures to help build more trust with Territorians. They clearly want to see it; that has come through loud and clear from the media. This has been an ongoing issue. When ministers go overseas it often attracts a lot of criticism about the purpose of the trip, because people are cynical and they often think it is a junket.

Putting more robust processes in place for travel before it takes place, and reporting back after the trip has taken place – about the itinerary, the outcomes and what was spent – will help restore some trust and take away some of the cynicism we so often hear across the Northern Territory.

I support the motion the Leader of the Opposition has brought before parliament this evening. The government should look at ways to improve accountability and transparency for ministerial travel because some very serious questions have been raised of late.

There is no doubt there are some real benefits from our ministers travelling overseas: the ties they build with international neighbours, the economic development opportunities and the trade opportunities. There is a need for travel. At the moment there are too many questions about whether or not value for money is achieved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, by agreeing to this motion tonight the government will go a long way toward regaining some trust from Territorians. They will have more faith that when ministers travel overseas to represent the Territory, taxpayers are getting value for money from that travel.

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, a couple of questions were raised during this debate. One from the member for Port Darwin was whether this was for overseas travel or all travel. I assure the member for Port Darwin this was about overseas travel.

I and this side recognise the amount of travel a minister should take around the country and within the Territory is such that these measures would be impractical and unworkable. There is a significant body of work that ministers need to do within our nation that would make this impracticable at a state and territory level. Ministers should be travelling to Alice Springs and attending ministerial councils. There is work they should be doing all the time around the country and we recognise that. I assure the member for Port Darwin – who thought this was confusing and my opening comments were not clear enough – this applies to overseas travel.

The second point I am happy to take on came from both the members for Port Darwin and Nelson about all ministerial travel undergoing evaluation from the public and private sectors regarding its benefit to the Northern Territory. From the work done and from talking to ministers from our side when we were in government, we know work should be carried out before travelling overseas. If you went overseas for a particular purpose, say the cattle trade, you would work with relevant stakeholders in the Territory and at the other end beforehand, and with the public sector

to make that trip happen. We are talking about formalising that process.

We are happy to take advice on how to formalise and evaluate it and publish that evaluation. The important thing is the evaluation occurs and is made public. We believe when you travel overseas you should be genuinely doing that work in advance if it is a proper trip in the Territory's best interests. It only becomes a problem if it is not. Before you go on an overseas trip in the Territory's best interests you will be working with stakeholders both here and overseas, and with the public sector. We are formalising what should be an existing process. We do not think that should be an issue.

They were the two main issues and we think we can work through both of those. We think this would go a long way to restoring some of the trust of the body politic around how we approach travel and what we do in the Territory's best interests. That is why we have proposed this. The two concerns raised can be addressed. This is clearly about overseas travel and how we evaluate it. It is quite practical in how ministerial travel is planned already when it occurs for a genuine reason. When international trade strategies are published it makes it easy to work out how and what you evaluate the trip against and who you are working with for that evaluation. The most important thing is about making that public and engaging the public early in the conversation, putting trust in them to then have them trust you in what you are doing.

Unlike the member for Port Darwin, who believes every trip would fail that test, we genuinely believe if you are up front with people and have confidence in them, they will support you. As long as you can explain what you are doing is in the Territory's best interests you will be able to travel overseas.

That is why we have brought this motion to the House. We think this motion would be a practical way to restore confidence and trust. We could engage the public and private sectors before we went. That is what should already be happening. If you are taking genuine trips it is about formalising that approach.

The member for Nelson thinks we need to tighten how we describe that and I am happy to take advice on that. The member for Nelson thought having a parliamentary oversight committee ...

Mr Wood: Use a committee we have.

Mr GUNNER: We are happy to take those things on board for consideration. The important thing is you have a proper evaluation and you publish it and are open with the public. That is the most

important step. Then you report back on what happened so you can explain to Territorians how the trip went. It is essentially about being open and transparent with the public. That is the intent of the motion. I am happy to take advice.

The member for Nelson suggested a tripartisan agreement. We can restore trust and confidence if we can get a tripartisan agreement to be open and transparent, properly evaluate our trips and explain that evaluation publicly, be open with the public about what we do and where we go and report back in a formal way. We have community standards we need to meet because the community felt let down. We think this gets us there and that is why we are supporting the motion today.

However, we also acknowledge the comments from the member for Nelson in particular, and the concerns of the member for Port Darwin. We think those things can be managed. It is important to say to the public. 'We will trust you to trust us'. All we need do is explain exactly where we are going and why.

The international trade strategy – five years on the table – explains up front where we were going and why, as well as what we were hoping to achieve, with clear benchmarks, aspirations, goals and targets. It goes a long way towards the public understanding the work you do, the importance of the work and what you can deliver from that work. You can track it and it is a good, simple, commonsense approach to government.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, we think this motion gets us there and will help build confidence. That is why we are supporting this motion and are happy to put the motion to the House.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 7

Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker

Noes 13

Mr Barrett
Mr Chandler
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mr Kurrupuwu
Mrs Price
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe
Mr Wood

Motion negated.

MOTION
Amendment of NT Planning Scheme

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I move that the Chief Minister instruct the Minister for Lands and Planning to revoke his recent decision to amend the NT Planning Scheme (amendment No 359) on Lowther Road Bees Creek and that any revised proposal must not include blocks below 1 ha.

I understand since I gave notice of this motion on Tuesday there have been some discussions in the government departments about this particular matter.

I have tempered my comments to some extent. I will use this debate to highlight a couple of things. I tell the government and the member for Fong Lim, the Minister for Lands and Planning, that I am categorically not against development. Without sounding like a worn record, all the time I was on the Litchfield Council we supported many subdivisions in the rural area. I also supported the development of Coolalinga. I come in for a bit of flack for that because units have been built there. But I supported it and many of the developments we have in the rural area ...

Mr Tollner interjecting.

Mr WOOD: The member for Fong Lim will say he does it to stir me up, and he does. But as long as he stirs me up I will respond, because he will not get away with it.

The reality is I support orderly planning. The CLP is the party that put in the order on which Litchfield is based. You are the party that brought out the Greater Darwin Plan. You set up the idea of having district centres which could be developed throughout the rural area to service the people living in the rural area.

The strange thing is when I debate I am supporting the plan you have put in place. It is disappointing for me to see, in the case of this development on Bees Creek Road – because I know there is maybe some hope this decision will be revoked – that you have potentially damaged the plan. I need to go down the path. The minister might know all these things as he was a rural person. That is why I have great hope he will understand that the rural area needs to be developed and retained. That is, we need to keep developing more of the rural lifestyle and develop the urban lifestyle in appropriate places. In this case, this is not the appropriate place.

There are three zones in the rural area: Rural, Rural Living and Rural Residential. The area proposed for development is on Lowther Road Bees Creek and is Zone RL, with a minimum lot

size of 2 ha. It is surrounded by 2 ha blocks. This plan is for an historical section of land that is bigger than 2 ha. There are some 8 ha blocks. Some have a funny shape because the water pipeline from Manton Dam to Darwin went through this parcel of land. They are slightly skew whiff. All the blocks of land in the area are 2 ha. The whole area is zoned RL.

There is also another zone which is relatively recent. When I say recent, it is about the last 10 years or so, maybe a bit more. It is called the Rural Residential zone and the minimum lot zone is 1 ha. I will give a little of the history. I do not know whether the minister knows this. He probably does as he is the minister for Planning ...

Ms Fyles: Do not assume too much.

Mr WOOD: Sorry. Outside Litchfield the minimum lot size for the RR zone is 0.4 ha. Litchfield people got together, put a petition to the government and said they do not accept 0.4 ha as rural; it is too small a block. It could be called large urban or suburban – call it what you like.

The minimum rural block size in Litchfield is 1 ha. If you read the Litchfield Land Use Objectives it states that urban size blocks, which is what is in this development plan, should be in district centres.

We are not saying there should not be 0.4 ha blocks, but they should be in the appropriate place such as a district centre. We already have 1 ha rural residential subdivisions in Whitewood Park, Howard River Park, The Grange, which is a more recent one, and in what I think is called Sattler Heights, off Sayer Road in the McMinns area. They are all very successful 1 ha subdivisions. These subdivisions have a 2 ha buffer, although some of the original ones do not have that because they were there before the plan was released.

We have had a push from certain developers who want to line up Litchfield with the rest of the Northern Territory; that is they want to break down the 1 ha minimum size for rural residential blocks to 0.4 ha.

There was an application some time ago for development of land at Noonamah. When that application went to the planning authority there was a clear statement from Earl James & Associates that they believed it was time the rural residential subdivision minimum size was scrapped and the land around Noonamah developed into 0.4 ha blocks. Thankfully the government said no. The argument Earl James & Associates used was that government officials or some unknown people have been pushing for this.

That might be the case, but people in the rural area have not been pushing for it. They want to retain that minimum lot size. Why do they want to retain that minimum lot size? Have you ever tried to keep a horse on a 0.4 ha block? Try to gallop on it; you will crash into the house and the garden shed at the back. If you want to keep a bit of bush you do not keep it on a 0.4 ha block. Most people have a reason for wanting a rural block.

You have to remember 1 ha is half the size of land zoned Rural Living, which was 2 ha. People wanted 2 ha so they could keep a couple of horses and had a separation between the bore and the septic, which was an important issue. Subdivisions with 1 ha blocks must have town water as they are not supposed to have bores. That is why you can come down to that size.

There are many reasons why 1 ha is the ideal minimum lot size. You can put a nice house on it. If you visit one of the areas I did not mention – Hicks Road at the far end of Howard Springs – you will see some of the houses that have been built there on 1 ha blocks. They are fantastic because they have some space around them – people are able to run their quad bike around them – are nicely set out and some people have horses.

There is a range of 1 ha blocks in the Churcher subdivision. I regard Churcher as one of our best developers. He has always done the right thing. I will give you a classic example, minister. You might not remember as you probably were not in parliament at the time Jack Ah Kit was the minister. Churcher developed the first part of what is called Girraween Estate. When he obtained permission to develop it the department said there was an 80% or 90% chance of people getting water. Some people got water and some did not. I know one person has a golf course. On the ninth hole he got water by borrowing some land from the neighbour. Churcher stepped in and put town water right through that subdivision. He did not have to, but he got approval and gave it to them at a very cheap price – about \$4000. He is a good developer and he has shown that you can put in rural subdivisions of 1 ha which help promote the rural area as a great place to live.

What has happened in Bees Creek is a mystery to me. There was an application for 63 1 ha blocks, which is not permitted normally. Any developer can ask the government to do certain things. There is nothing wrong with that and this discussion is not about the developer. I can ask to put 20 blocks on mine. Can I cut my block up? The government can tell me to go away.

The issue is it is the responsibility of the government to have orderly planning and to stick by the rules. If someone has something which is

disorderly and not sticking by the rules my opinion is, 'Sorry, you do not get a look in'.

This person came with this number of blocks, and this is well outside the 2 ha minimum. I thank the previous minister for Planning who said he notified the developer that the plan was rejected. He was interested in a revised plan. That is the only message I received. I was not an objector. I did not get any of this information. Many of us said, 'Terrific'.

We heard there was a meeting. In fact, a friend of mine who lives in Bees Creek and takes a great interest in local issues said she went looking for this meeting and found a rope across so she could not get in. She heard it from someone else so there is a grey area about what happened.

I have heard there was another meeting. There might have been another meeting at the member for Goyder's office but I was not invited to that either. What concerns me is that regardless of what happened there – and what happened worries me – if there was a new plan it should have been readvertised, or if it was not readvertised it should have been a requirement that it goes back to the DCA.

Minister, I have some doubts about the number of people who supported it. I have been to many DCA meetings about subdivisions. The numbers of people attending who support it – and it is not because people are not interested – is rarely 60. I do not think there has ever been 60. I would love to know where these 60 people came from in the area where I had constant e-mails, phone calls, and people discussing it in the area saying, 'Go away'.

I had in my recommendations that there needed to be, if this went ahead, an audit of those people. If they did not want to have their names made public the Auditor-General could assess the people who signed for and against to keep a balance and see where they came from. If they happened to be aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters of people from Tennant Creek they are not true objectors.

That area disappeared for some reason. All of a sudden, minister, I saw a paper saying it had all been approved. I nearly fell over, not because I am necessarily against that land being divided down to 1 ha, which still gives the developer quite a lot of blocks. I did some sums, and from memory if he had a 2 ha buffer he would get 32 1 ha blocks. The average price of a 1 ha block using the Churcher estate as a guide – Churcher has 1 ha blocks for sale at Girraween Lagoon right now for \$432 000. I imagine a fair piece of that is profit because you do not have kerbing, guttering or sewerage. Churcher knows how to make sure the market price stays right. He releases 10

blocks, 10 blocks then 10 blocks, and they all do that. But that is the market price at the moment.

We are not saying a developer should not develop, but there were a number of things about the approval that worried me if it goes ahead. You would have allowed 0.4 ha blocks to be put on this parcel of land. You would have allowed them to have the title of Rural Residential, which is a minimum lot size of 1 ha. You would have then set up a precedent that any other developer could say, 'If you can do that here I should have a fair chance of doing it on my block'. You also set up exactly what Earl James & Associates wanted to happen, which was to break down the minimum lot size from 1 ha to 0.4 ha. You might not have done it deliberately, but it would have been the beginning of the end. Once you have done it, that is it.

The other hassle you have is that you will always then have people saying, 'How come you gave him a chance to make more money out of his land than I can make out of mine, because you have changed the rules?' I always think – and I am not saying it directly to you – government has to be very clear in what it does and makes sure it sticks to the rules, because you will always be accused of favouritism to someone. We have a set of rules; stick by them and nobody can say they received any special treatment.

Whether this development should go ahead or not will obviously be something for the government to decide. I ask the government that it seriously takes it back to square one and readvertises it. As you can see from my motion I am asking that you do not take it below 1 ha and that you ask the people in the area if they want to go to small blocks. I have a letter on my table, and there must be some people who did not want it to go below 2 ha. Fair enough, it is actually zoned 2 ha now and they are saying it should stay as 2 ha.

I have always argued that where a person has a large block of land and it does not necessarily interfere with the neighbours – I will give you the classic example of The Grange, which is a Fraser Henry subdivision. It backs on to a lot of 2 ha blocks. It is a beautiful, top-class estate. It has not interfered with the people next door, and it has been done well. I am not against it being cut up into smaller blocks but you must have consultation with the people who live close by.

Technically you should have a buffer of 2 ha. That is in the rules. I would be happy to discuss whether that buffer makes a lot of sense, but it is in the rules. In the plan you approved it said clearly that there is no buffer required. It broke the rules that exist in the Northern Territory Planning Scheme that you had to have a buffer

and because it went below the minimum rural lot size to 0.4 ha, which should go in a district centre.

I thank the Chief Minister for talking to me today. I hope you will make a decision sometime saying you will redo it. Obviously you have been having discussions. It is a burning issue which has been around for the last few days.

I will put something positive to you. The government owns land about 2 km up the road. It is the Freds Pass District Centre which was identified on day one. It has land that is zoned as Residential. It is next to the Bees Creek Primary School. It could be used for a retirement village or perhaps for some of the 0.4 ha blocks to go round the edge so you have buffer. It is close to Coolalinga and Freds Pass Reserve. It needs some infrastructure, but Coolalinga developed with its own infrastructure. With schools there you might be able to combine waste water infrastructure for the whole lot. Maybe that water can be used at Freds Pass. I am promoting development in the right place. This is not the right place to put blocks of 0.4 ha, but about 2 km up the road you have a perfectly good district centre which your government said should be developed, and it has not been.

There is also Humpty Doo. One person from the department said, 'We do not have the infrastructure'. You have land in the middle of Humpty Doo which is residential. It is behind Pater Place, behind the shops. Norbuilt built units there 20 years ago, and we could probably do with some more because they are always full. As soon as one is up for sale it is gone like hot cakes.

There is a whole heap of land between there and St Francis of Assisi back out to Spencely Road which is all residential land owned by the government. The word is government does not want it developed. Why can it not either sell it – I am not always keen on that – or get a developer in to develop it then sell it. It still creates jobs for people putting the sewerage, water and electricity in. A few years ago the sewerage at Humpty Doo was doubled in size. I thought that was so we could develop it.

There is land, that has been sitting there for years and years that could be developed for what you say. I totally agree that the Labor Party, at one stage – I said this in parliament – let go of their housing section, from memory, of the Department of Lands and Planning. There was a period when they said, 'We are doing fine'. They closed that section of the department and got behind in their housing releases. Obviously it made it very difficult to catch up, because developing housing can sometimes take four years.

I am saying as part of your plan to have more housing choice – I am not sure that is the right word; it should be more land size choice. I do not think it matters what size block you have for a house. You can have a bark hut on a little block or a bark hut on a big block. It is more land size choice which is important.

There is the opportunity for the government to do what it believes in without affecting the rural area. Developers, like anyone else, are entitled to say to the government, 'Give me a special case, I can do this'. However, 99% of the time, unless there is some great reason for changing the rules, you tell them, 'Sorry, mate, your land is this. We might allow some deviation' – as I said a 1 ha block – 'but that is it'.

The other side of the equation is people live in the rural area because they expect that rural area to stay as it is. They expected the government to stick to the plan it had to build Weddell and the district centres. That is why they came to live in the rural area and why they do not live at Coolalinga or inside Humpty Doo. They live out further because they enjoy that rural lifestyle.

I could get into aggressive mode and say the government should have done this and that. I do not want to do that. I know there are some negotiations. I would like the government to revoke this. No matter what plan comes back in what form, all I am asking is can I get a guarantee it will not go below 1 ha? At least we retain the block sizes that are permitted with a rezoning change, and we stick to the plan. We do not leave you open to having to argue the case with another developer that comes and says, 'I want to do the same'. Then I have to argue the same old case again. It can wear me out.

The strange thing is I have always supported the government's plans, from way back when I first started on the council. I studied horticultural science in Melbourne before I came to the Northern Territory. I am not a doctor, member for Port Darwin, sorry about that. I did town planning because that was part of the course. I have a passion for town planning. Would you believe there was a town plan that the government drew up for Bathurst Island in 1974. I worked for the council on Bathurst Island in Nguuu, whose new name is Wurrumiyanga. The council had just started. I used their town plan to help develop that little community. That was a government town plan and sewerage was put in according to the town plan.

Town plans have existed for a long time. I have supported this rural plan the government issued since 1990. It revised it just before the election. The Labor Party issued something similar. I did not agree with all they had. What I am trying to

say, minister, is I support the plan your government originally put out, which rural people expect you will stick to. It is not a discussion about being anti-development; it is talking about orderly development in the right place, with no favourites, not changing the rules unless there is an exceptional reason and developing government land.

Freds Pass has a lot of land that is ready to be developed, as has Humpty Doo. I know of a second-hand sewer rising main and pumping station you could probably put at Freds Pass District Centre right now. I have a plan for you, minister! I reckon that would be a great place to put it; there is no doubt about it. People would put a plaque on it, minister, and call it the Dave Tollner sewer rising main and pumping station. You should be proud of that. Then they can tell you that you are a load of – oh, no, they would not say that, minister.

I am saying not to go running off to the Howard Springs activity centre; that is only for people to keep fit. Use the existing land you have and develop that. Do not develop land that is not suitable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I ask the minister to please revoke the decision, go back to square one, stick to the rules and leave people in the Bees Creek area to live a happy rural life without having a little suburb stuck in the middle of them.

Mr TOLLNER (Lands and Planning): Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot help thinking the member for Nelson is sometimes a bit like the boy who screamed wolf. He got his kicks from screaming wolf and then when the wolf turned up no one believed he saw it. The member for Nelson says he is development focused and wants development, but he screamed against pretty well most developments in the past about which most people do not have that view.

As much as you like to suggest that you are on the record in supporting developments – and I have no doubt that you are – you have probably given people in the community the impression you are anti-development. I am sorry if I rib you about that sort of stuff but, mate, the word on the street is that Gerry Wood does not want development in the rural area.

Having said that, this is an interesting matter and I will go through it. I have a briefing note:

On 6 June 2014 Master Plan NT lodged an application for rezoning. The purpose was to facilitate the development of a rural residential subdivision with a minimum lot size of 4000 m² on Lowther Road in Bees Creek. The proposal was placed on public exhibition for a period of 28 days in

accordance with the requirements of the act. The exhibition commenced on the 4 July 2014, by virtue of publication in the NT News, and closed on 1 August 2014.

You do not have to take notes, member for Nelson, I will give you this once I have finished with it.

The proposal was subject to significant community interest during the public exhibition period.

On 15 August 2014 the Litchfield division of the DCA, acting as a reporting body, conducted a public hearing to consider the matters raised during the exhibition period. Submitters were provided the opportunity to elaborate on their submissions at the hearing ...

I am told the members for Nelson and Goyder both spoke in opposition to that proposal at that meeting.

There was considerable concern that the application would set a widespread precedent throughout the rural area. Access, amenity, character and the environment were also raised as concerns.

Following consideration of the reporting body report on this matter, my predecessor deferred the application pending the receipt of a revised specific use zone for the land that includes the creation of larger lots as a buffer to the neighbouring lots within the zone Rural Living.

The proponents met with my predecessor on 2 February 2015 and at this meeting a subdivision plan for the land was tabled which reflected a proposal for revised specific use zone provisions.

This proposal was developed following discussion with a number of adjoining owners on the east and west boundaries which indicated that 1 ha boundary lots to provide a single neighbouring lot only to each existing subdivided Rural Living lot was an acceptable compromise. The proposal was positively received and was seen as achieving the objectives of the required modifications.

The proponents then met with the member for Goyder on 6 February 2015 where they provided an overview of the proposed revisions to the plan which I am advised was received quite positively by the member for Goyder.

On 24 March 2015 the proponents submitted a revised proposal incorporating a buffer of larger lots on the western and eastern boundaries.

Alterations to the proposal were not sufficiently extensive that it required re-exhibition. The community was provided with the opportunity to comment on the proposal during the initial exhibition period and the issues raised at that time were taken into account. Re-exhibition of the proposal would not identify any new matters for consideration and my predecessor requested that a buffer of 2 ha lots be provided to adjoining properties.

Within the context of further consultation done by the proponent I considered this alteration provided the appropriate transition between the proposed development and the established lots and approved the amendments to the scheme. Submitters to the proposal were notified of my decision on 23 April 2015.

That is where we are at the moment. It has not officially been done. The rezoning would need to be advertised. As the member for Nelson is aware, we are very keen to have some discussion with the member for Goyder in relation to objections she, and evidently a number of her constituents, have. Until the member for Goyder returns from wherever she is we cannot have those discussions. This rezoning will not be advertised at this stage and therefore cannot go ahead. That is the story in a nutshell.

I will speak more generally about this whole situation. I had a look at that block and the member for Nelson is right, there are a number of 4000 m² blocks in the development. My understanding is that a number of the people who were in favour of it are looking to purchase those 4000 m² blocks. I am not too sure where they come from, but somebody who wants to buy a block in any subdivision should have a right to comment positively or negatively on a subdivision. If you plan to live in the area you should be able to have a say and it should be taken into consideration.

I know developers who complain all the time about people who turn up at Development Consent Authority meetings from places remote from where those developments are occurring. Most times those people turn up to oppose a development. On the odd occasion they turn up to support the development. I am informed that in this particular development the situation was that before any of the changes had taken place there were 88 people objecting and 68 people in favour of it.

One would have thought that demonstrated there was some merit in it, given there was a strong level of support for it. Bear in mind very few developments get much community support these days. There are more people generally opposing any development than people in favour of it. I am informed that not only were there people very keen to purchase 4000 m² blocks of land, but the development itself will open up access to a range of blocks which are currently land locked and inaccessible because there is no road access to them.

The school is out on this issue. I am keen to discuss this further with the members for Goyder and Nelson, and anybody else who wants to chat about it.

I have had some concerns about how our planning system works for quite some time. The department is looking at how we can change the planning process. The development consent stage is the wrong time for the public to have input into the process. It is my strong view that the public should be involved right from the get-go, as soon as town plans are being drawn up, not after when some developer turns up and wants to put some type of building or change in place. That is generally a bit too late. I want to see the public involvement moved to the NT Planning Commission, as opposed to the DCA.

In this case the public has not been involved. I recall a conversation with the member for Nelson only a few weeks ago where he said no one was interested in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan. I apologise, it was not the member for Nelson; I remember who it was. I will not say their name, but a person of significance in the community told me that no one took much interest in that plan until it hit the DCA. That is where the community turned up. There was a lot of feedback and information about the desire of people in the community and residents across the Territory.

It is part of our culture that we take more interest in the development consent stage because that is the part the public gets involved in. I want to change that culture and see us, as a government, put more emphasis on the planning stage as opposed to the development consent stage.

This development still has to go through the development consent process. Even if this rezoning ultimately is approved, it is at the subdivision stage where people will come out of the woodwork to make submissions of one nature or another. In my mind, we put the cart a bit before the horse when it comes to planning and development. It is at the planning stage that the public should have input.

There is not much more I have to say on the matter. I thank the member for Nelson for bringing the matter forward. I do not think the government will support it because school is out. We do not have a position on it at this stage. I am heartened to see that the member for Nelson has toned down his language on this development. A couple of days ago he was calling for a Royal Commission. I do not know whether that is still on your agenda; it might throw up some interesting stories, although I do not know if any crimes have been committed.

My strong view is that a Royal Commission is not required into this matter. I appreciate the member for Nelson's interest. He has had a long association with the rural area, and some very firm views on how it should be developed. In my mind, a block of 4000 m², equivalent of about an acre, is still a pretty big block. In my mind it is Rural Residential. I know it is not in the member for Nelson's mind or probably in law ...

Mr Wood: No, in Litchfield.

Mr TOLLNER: That is right. But in my mind, as I said, a one acre block is a pretty damn big block. We grew up when we were kids in a city on a quarter-acre block where you could play cricket in the back yard, you could have a vegie garden, chickens and a range of things. Admittedly, you could not gallop around a horse on a quarter acre ...

Mr Wood interjecting.

Mr TOLLNER: I do not know that the member for Nelson is galloping around too much on a horse these days. Maybe he is on weekends. I know he has a couple, but I reckon they are probably a bit long in the tooth and grey around the muzzle ...

Mr Wood: Who? Me or the horses? I will tell the neighbours. They are their horses.

Ms Fyles: Do not be offensive to the horses.

Mr TOLLNER: No, I am not being offensive at all, member for Nightcliff.

Mr Wood: I am used to it.

Mr TOLLNER: The fact is not everybody wants a horse. There are enormous numbers of people who want to live on a one-acre block – a 1 ha block is good as well and a big block. In a lot of people's minds, not necessarily my mind, whether you are on one acre or 20 acres, people will say it is too bloody small to do anything decent with and it is too big to look after. Try to mow a one-acre block. No one even considers mowing a one-acre block with a push mower. You would generally

get on a ride-on these days. In any case a one-acre block is a fairly substantial block.

We were on 17 acres where I was, which was a big reduction from the 14 000 acres I had moved from. I felt quite squeezed moving into Humpty Doo, then moving into Stuart Park. You might as well be living in a unit after spending more than a decade in the rural area of the Territory. I loved the lifestyle; I still miss it. Unfortunately, with this job it is too difficult ...

Ms Fyles: You could not mow the lawn?

Mr TOLLNER: I could not mow the lawn. That is right, member for Nightcliff. I will take your interjection. I was elected to the federal parliament, then the Bushfire Council started writing to me saying they would fine me unless I slashed the fire break. Prior to getting into politics I was working a four-day week. It was fantastic – a three-day weekend almost every weekend. We had a couple of pigs, cows, all that sort of stuff, and plenty of time on my hands. Working seven days a week, there was no way known I could even consider doing menial tasks like slashing the fenceline.

It is a lifestyle choice, there is no doubt about it. You need plenty of time on your hands if you have a five-acre or 20-acre block. It takes a lot of effort. I look at people out there and the member for Nelson is right. There are some magnificent dwellings in the rural area. My God, I cannot understand how people can afford to manicure their gardens so well or keep their lawns so well mown. They must have a lot of time on their hands. They must be retirees who set themselves up. I cannot imagine how you could possibly have such well-kept places and still find time to go to work, unless they are extraordinarily wealthy and they can employ gardeners ...

Ms Fyles: Maybe their kids do it.

Mr TOLLNER: Maybe their kids do it. That is right. I am flat out getting my kids out of bed in the morning, but I am sure most kids do their fair share. It does not seem to happen in my household.

In any case, thank you, member for Nelson, for raising this. Planning is an important issue. I would like to see the public input into the process a lot sooner. If that was the case, developments like these would not be so controversial. There would be an avenue for these things to be discussed. I am not suggesting they would be passed, but people would know a lot earlier where they stand on issues. Even if my approval to allow this rezoning occurs there is still a long road ahead for the developer before he can contemplate a subdivision of his block.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): It is always good to have a planning debate with the minister. It is interesting that Tinker Bell did not come out tonight. All members of this Assembly support ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FYLES: The member for Fong Lim wants to continue speaking.

All members of this Assembly support affordable housing initiatives for Territory families. There are substantial social and economic benefits from housing developments and we all know housing is a basic requirement. It provides somewhere to live, stability, cohesion, a family home. It is one of our most important issues.

But developments must be undertaken with due consideration to the environmental impacts, effects on rural and urban amenity, availability of services and the views of local residents. All of these issues are vitally relevant to the subdivision proposal at Bees Creek we are debating today. I thank the member for Nelson for bringing this debate to the house.

I am very passionate about the area I represent and the seaside tropical living we are afforded, and nobody in this House would disagree that the member for Nelson is passionate about the rural area.

In no way in this debate are we being critical of the developer. They are entitled to put forward a subdivision and development proposals for consideration by the community and the Development Consent Authority.

This is not an anti-development debate, which the member for Nelson also pointed out. This is about the responsibility of government to have plans and to stick by them. The opposition members and I, along with the members for Nelson and Goyder, have serious concerns about this proposal. Surely the residents of Bees Creek and adjoining areas are entitled to raise concerns and have their views heard on the project, which I understand will be 62 blocks of 4000 m² in the rural area, which does not fit with the current zoning.

What is wrong with a sensible dialogue between those who support the project and those who do not? The member for Nelson raised some good points; there are people who are supportive of this project, but we are unclear who they are. The communications the members for Goyder and Nelson have shown there is a large degree of angst in the community.

This project was the subject of a *NT News* article last week, titled: 'Purick may pack it all in. Outraged over Tollner's Bees Creek turnaround'.

Country Liberals' member for Goyder Kezia Purick is considering leaving the party after Lands and Planning Minister Dave Tollner overturned a decision to allow rezoning near Bees Creek for urbandensity development.

She went on to say Mr Tollner was underhanded in making the decision and did not consult with her or the residents before backing a plan that was essentially killed by the former minister. She talked about her lack of trust and asked how the residents can trust him.

As I have already stated, the project is for 62 blocks of 4000 m² blocks, much smaller than the current five-acre blocks and smaller than the current zoning allows in the rural area of Litchfield. The development was stopped by Mr Chandler with assurances any future proposal would have to go through a new process, including public consultation and submissions. That is the key point from this article and in this debate. It is about consultation.

In my community of Nightcliff an island was proposed and we did not, and still have not, had any consultation with the government. There is still a lease in place, without any consultation. It is about making sure you bring the community with you, because if you do not you will anger the community. This is just one example.

There is concern about this proposal, and I note the minister's recent comments that he is still considering the proposal, that he is waiting on the member for Goyder to return from her CPA trip.

It raises concerns that there may have been secret deals behind closed doors. We have seen this with other CLP development approvals. It is not acceptable to the community. There is no point in asking local residents for their views unless you are prepared to listen to them. The CLP government has made it quite clear that they have stopped listening. We have had numerous rezonings in my electorate where local members have been quite vocal in their opposition. We have had different community and government organisations express concern and objection to development proposals. The previous minister was sympathetic with that concern and objection but the next week it was rezoned. The CLP has clearly stopped listening and it is most concerning.

It is interesting to go back a few months when the member for Katherine was Chief Minister for the day. He had a new-found public consultation approach and said:

'If you look at the results of the Queensland election, government there was punished because the people of Queensland thought they had lost touch with real people ...

'Certainly that's the feeling that a number of my colleagues were getting across the Northern Territory as well.

They didn't want to be put in the same position as Campbell Newman was put in just a few days ago.

The Chief Minister, in recognition of growing public anger, also promised to change the way he did business and embark on a new era of consultation with the community on important issues that impact on their daily lives.

The Chief Minister's reinstated Treasurer, now Lands and Planning minister – who I should mention has acknowledged on the public record that he operates on a cash-for-access basis – does not seem to have embraced this new age of consultation with the community. The members for Nelson and Goyder have experienced this over the past few weeks. They are advocating strongly for the legitimate interest of their constituents, which we should all be doing in this House. That is unlike the Chief Minister and Treasurer, who are not listening to their communities. They represent the whole of the Territory and I wonder why they will not listen.

The member for Nelson has put his comments on the record. He is hoping in good faith that the minister has not made a final decision and will listen to comment. It is important to put some of the comments from the local community on this issue into *Hansard*. One *NT News* commentator posted a comment on an article online that said, 'Mr Tollner should have never been allowed back in with the full backing of Giles. Both have the view that the general public can get stuffed. Pity they both don't appear to understand it's the same public that vote.'

It is important that the government listens on these planning issues. This is not the first time we have spoken in this House about the lack of consultation and listening. In his comments to date the member for Nelson has not held back. I hope he does not mind me quoting from his media release of a few days ago which said:

Gerry says that the Minister has made a mockery of good governance, of orderly planning and given rural people and the local member the one finger salute and told them they are irrelevant. This is because King Dave now rules the People's Republic of Tollnerville where unfettered

developments reign supreme and dissent from residents is not to be tolerated.

That was written in good humour but with frustration, and it highlights how people across the Territory feel. Planning is at the heart of everything. Housing and being able to have a home is essential to families, couples and individuals. Based around that is good planned communities. Planning is a science not just how you are feeling on one day. We are lucky in the Top End where we have, particularly in the northern suburbs of Darwin and Palmerston, planned cities. Obviously the inner city area and the suburbs of Fannie Bay, Parap, Nightcliff and Rapid Creek were built earlier, but Rapid Creek is where planning started.

After Cyclone Tracy there was discussion about planning the inner suburbs and literally putting roads where someone's block was and putting a block where there might have been a school. Obviously the community did not tolerate that. Further out we have planned suburbs where you have a school and a small shopping centre, streets designed environmentally to slow traffic down and have good communal living. As you stretch further out you have the rural area, which is designed to offer people a different choice of lifestyle.

The Top End was designed to have Darwin, Palmerston, Weddell and satellite cities around our harbour so we would have this beautiful harbour which would offer population growth of up to a million people. The CLP scrapped the plan for Weddell and now they are trying to find land. In the wake of scrapping Weddell and the need for land, they are now throwing good planning principals out the window.

Residents and community members are now having to continually fight rezoning applications. They will have to live with bad planning decisions. I will give you an example. Where Coles and Target is in Palmerston was all meant to be commercial, but across the road where Woolworths is was rezoned from medium-density housing to commercial. There is now the issue of safety ...

Mr Wood: Who owned the land?

Ms FYLES: I was not going there, member for Nelson. It shows that when you go against the science of planning – planners have a very important role; they design and shape our cities. It is not just availability of land, they make things safer with their design. When we rezone it ad hoc we end up with impacts we had not thought about.

In this instance in the rural area, these small blocks need a certain space between septic and bore water. How will that be addressed?

These issues come up. It might be okay for the member for Fong Lim, who does not like to mow his lawns so he wants to live on a small block, and thinks you can cut 1 ha, 2 ha or 4 ha blocks down because it is still acceptable living. He does not understand the community concern and what they want for their area. Litchfield has a plan and does not want to change that. We have to respect that. Then there are the environmental impacts such as septic and bore water being mixed. When you go against these planners, these are the issues we have.

We do not have a final outcome on this issue, but it is time the CLP government takes this planning seriously. I was concerned one night in debate when the previous minister for Planning questioned, hand on heart, whether or not he had made decisions he did not need to. He could not say that.

He missed the point as planning is a science. He needs to look at the impact, because if you rezone an urban block and say someone can put a tower of units there, it then impacts on the people who back onto that block. Then they decide to rezone their own block and you have a domino effect.

The government has not listened in the urban areas of Darwin and we are still fighting to have master plans and preserve tropical blocks where we can have higher density layered down to medium density and keep some of our big blocks. We now have the same issue in the rural area where the rural folk are fighting to preserve their blocks. It has already dropped in some areas from 2 ha down to 1 ha, but it is going too far.

There is a challenge for the Chief Minister and his reinstated Treasurer and new Lands and Planning minister. I urge him to be extremely cautious when he makes comments on the public record that cash opens his doors. That is not what Territorians want to hear. They want to know that the Planning minister is making decisions that are in the best interests of the current community and the future shape of the community.

I am not sure if I will ever become a rural area person, but you never know. I might decide one day on the option to move to the rural area. I have friends who live rural and absolutely love having five acres. We need to make sure that in this change we do not lose the plans and structures of our cities of Darwin and Palmerston. Canberra is a city I am sure everyone in this room has been to; it is a beautiful and liveable city ...

Mr Elferink: I am not sure about that; do you know where it is? Goodness gracious me; I almost believed you.

Mr Higgins: It is a cemetery with the lights turned on.

Ms FYLES: I did not realise they all disliked Canberra so much.

It is a very liveable city. It has the main city area and satellite city suburbs of over 100 000 people each, with good link roads. It is a well-planned, well-designed city, which makes it liveable. That is what we are potentially losing in the Top End. We need to stick with the plans. As I have said previously, it is a science, not just how you feel – that one day you decide rural living is 4000 m and the next day it is 1 ha. Areas have zoning for a reason.

The minister has indicated tonight that he is awaiting the member for Goyder's return from her CPA trip. I encourage him not to ignore the elected representatives of those communities and those communities' members. It was interesting that he felt it had not quite changed enough that they should go back to the community. That is concerning. It is still a big change. I hope by the member for Nelson bringing this motion into the House tonight, if the Planning minister was not aware of the strong community concern, he is now. He must listen to that concern.

The member for Nelson indicated there were meetings he was not sure of, and residents tried to go to meetings but there were ropes across roads. It is not about making secret decisions, it is about being open and transparent so you are taking the community along with you.

There is another issue in planning I take the opportunity to raise in tonight's debate. It is about the group of young families and residents in the Brennan electorate who are feeling they have been deeply betrayed by this current government on a planning issue. They are people who have worked hard to purchase some land and build their dream homes. The member for Fong Lim has a vision in his head of what a dream home is, but everyone's dream home is different. These residents had initial concerns about the proposed seniors village on Angel Road in Palmerston. Then it was replaced with an affordable housing complex without proper consultation with the community.

We are starting to get a bit of a pattern here. I know how my community has felt about the issues of rezoning and the proposed island. There have been rezoning issues in the member for Fannie Bay's community. We have spoken of the issues around the rural area we are debating tonight.

This is another sector of the community which has deep concern about ad hoc planning decisions, the densification in their suburb and the adverse neighbourhood impacts it will have on road safety and amenity. We are starting to see a pattern and we need to use every opportunity to remind the government – particularly the Minister for Lands and Planning, who is delegated with so much responsibility which is not just the responsibility of being the minister now. The shape of our cities and our communities forever is in his hands. When we hear comments that cash helps open doors, I do not think that gives the community much confidence.

I again urge the government to talk to these young families about their concerns about the lack of services to support this densification strategy, and the impacts it will have on their community when it was not planned for that. They bought their blocks thinking it would be one thing and now it is changing. How powerless that makes people feel.

It is not just the financial value that it may have on someone's home. Most people like to know their home has value, but your home is your home and you want to know that your amenity and quality of lifestyle will not be changed overnight simply because a Planning minister in Parliament House ticks off on a proposal the community has not been consulted on and has not had fair discussion about. I urge the government against its ad hoc approach to planning.

The minister spoke tonight about the Greater Darwin Land Use Plan. A good question is at what stage is that final plan? We have seen them scrap good planning principles. We have seen Weddell scrapped. I remind the House that Weddell was not a Labor idea. When you were elected in 2012 ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order Mr Deputy Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FYLES: Thank you.

Weddell was not a Labor idea. You threw a lot of things out because they were Labor and they were not what you wanted to see, but the plan for the Top End region was not a Labor plan. It was well before our time in government.

It saddens me that this issue tonight of one block changing the rural area around Bees Creek and the other examples I have spoken of are changing the face of our cities forever. It is important we have open and transparent debate, community concerns are listened to and we do not have a minister who makes sure doors are open if you

have cash but if you are a concerned community member it is a little harder to get to him.

It would be good if the minister could table all the documentation in relation to this case. It would be interesting to see the documentation of numerous other cases where ministers have overridden or ignored the recommendations of the Development Consent Authority and strong community concerns.

It comes back to the community forever fighting these fights. The minister thinks there is a group of people who are so bored they have a little group list and go around saying no to proposals. It is not like that. I am not against development; I love a good plan and planned development. There are spots in my community where there could be a lot done. There are spots across Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area where good plans with community consultation can see that development.

It is the ad hoc rezoning where community concern and planning principles are not taken into account that is so concerning to the community. In the debate tonight there are still many unanswered questions.

The members for Nelson and Goyder will not let up on this issue. I imagine that in the next few weeks we may hear a little more. We will be back in this House in the not-too-distant future when we can continue to provide scrutiny to these planning decisions.

The community is at the point where it has had enough and wants to make sure – particularly in these cases where ministers override or ignore DCA recommendations – that documents are tabled and it is explained to the community so it is not left in the dark with people wondering what is happening.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Nelson for bringing this debate to the Chamber. I look forward to following this proposal to where it ends. There are probably many unanswered questions; we are indicating that. The minister has indicated that he will talk further. It would be good to see that documentation, whatever the outcome is.

You should never underestimate the community, particularly people who are passionate about a certain way of life, which you see in the rural area. I look forward to this debate continuing with a positive outcome for the residents of the rural area.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I came here hoping there would be a little more light on what the government would do in relation to this subdivision. I did not get the feeling that the

minister would change much of what he already agreed to but had put on hold. That concerns me because I do not believe the minister understands what planning is about, especially in the rural area.

There is land now available for 4000 m² blocks. I have said before the minister should look at Freds Pass District Centre and Humpty Doo District Centre. I do not know whether the minister has read the Litchfield Land Use Objectives, one of the documents the planning of Litchfield is based on. I hope he has read this:

3.1. Residential

The concepts for future residential development in Litchfield Shire accommodate future population growth, maintain minimum lot sizes within existing subdivision in established rural living areas and create opportunities to cater for various aspirations in relation to rural lifestyle. The concepts incorporate:

- *continuation of 2 ha subdivision predominantly for residential purposes generally in the Howard Springs, Bees Creek and Humpty Doo locality ...*

...

- *further provision of urban sized lots within appropriately serviced district centres.*

The minister is saying he does not like the minimum lot of 1 ha and thinks rural should be 0.4 ha, yet the document he signed off on – which is signing off on 0.4 ha blocks – says part of what he has agreed to is:

Specifically, this rezoning is suitable because:

- *the rezoning will facilitate development of a transitional scale between urban sized blocks and rural acreages ...*

He says that 0.4 ha blocks are urban sized blocks. I repeat from the Litchfield Land Use Objectives:

- *further provision of urban sized lots within an appropriately serviced district centres.*

This is not a district centre, this is a rural subdivision with minimum lot size of 2 ha. The minister might have his opinion of what rural is, but that is not the opinion of the NT Planning Scheme nor of many rural people.

He said I should listen to the 66 people who supported it because he has heard there was a lot of interest in buying those blocks. There is a difference between listening to the people and meaning, 'We can do what we like'. It is the government's job to stick up for the plan. Developers will try to break that plan down. I have heard the argument many times, 'We need smaller blocks because they are more affordable. We will go down to 300 m² blocks in Palmerston because they are more affordable.' That is not necessarily the way to do good planning. Good planning is to set aside areas of land which will cater for those variations and lot sizes.

The Litchfield plan already has land available for those variations in lot size. Freds Pass District Centre, Coolalinga, Humpty Doo and Berry Springs all have land set aside for urban sized lots. Why would you want to destroy that plan?

The minister is allowing a developer to get something between three and four times as many blocks as he would normally be allowed just because he thinks there has been some popular support for it.

I challenge that there are 60 people who agree. I will doorknock that area. I have not done it before because it is in the member for Goyder's electorate, but I will find out whether people are supportive of 0.4 ha blocks. Even if they are the government still has a responsibility to hold up the plan otherwise you get higgledy-piggledy planning. What I see with this development is a classic example of what I call higgledy-piggledy planning like some of the planning you see in Queensland.

I travelled between Brisbane and Maryborough as I had a friend at Maryborough. Part of the reason I went there was to see – I use the terrible term the planners use – the peri-urban development happening in that area. Talk about a shemuzzle in some of those places! The one-acre block with a horse on it with hardly a piece of grass to eat, the chook shed shoved in one corner and the house taking up half the block is not really rural. It is what some developers call country style. They will sell it in glossy brochures. It is not country; it is just a way of making a buck – get as many blocks from the block of land as you possibly can.

We have an opportunity to develop in a more reasoned way. It is disappointing if the minister thinks that 0.4 ha blocks are appropriate. He is saying he does not agree with the rural people or with the NT Planning Scheme, which clearly states that the minimum lot size in the rural area is 1 ha. That is what worries me. He now has the opinion that rural living – and this is a bloke from Stuart Park – needs smaller blocks. Take that to the people and ask what they think. I bet people

do not want 0.4 ha blocks all over the place. They wanted 0.4 ha and smaller in appropriate district cities, as your plan says.

This document about what should be put in the Humpty Doo, Howard Springs and Bees Creek areas was originally written by Tim Baldwin who was the Minister for Lands and Planning. The portfolio was taken over by the next minister for Planning, Mr Kon Vatskalis. This is a document the CLP wrote, not a document I wrote. Yet you know see pressures and ministers starting to waver.

That is why this motion specifically says not to allow any subdivision of this area below 1 ha. Even that is giving in, to some extent, to what the plan originally said.

The minister said a couple of other things in his discussion; one was that you have a second chance. The development stage is wrong. You will not have a second chance to stop 0.4 ha blocks. I do not know whether the minister has heard of planning appeals. I have the document that the minister could approve – hopefully he will not. The minister stated in this document he was basically agreeing to this:

Development shall be in accordance with Clause 5.18 and Part 5 as if the land were located in the Rural Residential Zone, except to the extent of any conflict with the following conditions:

(a) the minimum lot size ... shall be 4000 square meters;

The minister has now made an exemption to the minimum lot size of 1 ha. If the developer goes to a planning meeting and is knocked back at the Development Consent Authority stage, unless there is extremely good reason, the developer will take the DCA to the tribunal, because the minister has allowed him to have 4000 m² blocks. If he has everything that fits the RR zone – that is, he has water and has complied with the conditions of what the minister has put here – you cannot stop him from putting in 4000 m² blocks, no matter what the minister says. It is out of his hands; it is in the hands of the DCA.

If the DCA rejects it and the developer says, 'Just because you do not like me having 4000 m² blocks you will reject this because people did not like it', will not hold up. He will go to the tribunal, make his appeal and it will be done on purely planning principles. I bet these 4000 m² blocks will go through. The only guaranteed way of stopping these blocks from occurring is for the minister not to allow anything below 1 ha.

That is why I have this in the motion. From my point of view, it is a compromise going down to 1 ha. I want to ask the people, block by block in that area, what they think. I am not comfortable that 66 people supported it. I can get people to support little blocks in Howard Springs if you want, but that land was not meant to be that size. It should be as stated in the Litchfield plan:

- *further provision of urban sized lots within an appropriately serviced district centres.*

That is the document that was originally written by your party, and I have always supported that.

The other issue is the minister said there will not have to be a buffer. So ...

Mr Tollner: I did say there will be a buffer – 1 ha blocks.

Mr WOOD: Excuse me, minister, if you read the planning scheme – and I advise you to – it states clearly that for any RR subdivision that backs onto an RL subdivision you must have a 2 ha buffer. The Grange has a 2 ha buffer. If you have an RR subdivision here, you are meant to have a 2 ha buffer. My understanding from what was put in here is that clause was not required. I am trying to find where it is, but that was my understanding of what happened. If I am wrong, I will say I am wrong:

Here it is:

- (b) *a minimum lot size of 1 hectare shall apply to lots to be created on eastern and western boundaries of the subject land;*
- (c) *clause 11.4.5 Subdivision of Land Zoned RR ... is not applicable to the subdivision of the land;*

My understanding is that clause says no buffer. There are two rules that have been ...

Mr Tollner: Fundamentally, a buffer of 1 ha blocks.

Mr WOOD: I am not saying – hang on ...

Mr Tollner: You are suggesting they have to be 2 ha.

Mr WOOD: No, I am not suggesting it. Hang on!

Mr Tollner: The planning scheme is.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr WOOD: That is right. Minister, I said in my speech that is worthy of some discussion. I have always felt it is a bit weird. But it happens to be the planning scheme and that is what you are supposed to stick up for. If you want it changed, I am happy to have a discussion. But it is in here and you have said it does not apply. You have reduced the 1 ha minimum to 4000 m². Minister, I am concerned.

You raised an interesting couple of issues about the DCA and the feedback on the Darwin regional plan. Many people came to the DCA meeting because they saw that as the last chance to have a say. They thought the DCA might change some of those things. People came about Manton Dam, for instance. It was the one and only opportunity for many people to come to a public gathering where they could vent their views, because the NT Planning Commission never did it.

The consultation process for the Darwin regional plan was woeful. It was done according to some new process which some people said was consultation. But I am afraid, in this day and age, we try to make public consultation all about computers, Facebook and all that. We are not willing to talk to people, give them options and ideas, listen to what they have to say, and educate people in the sense they have some understanding of what is being proposed. That does not mean you have to tell them what you think, but you give them some knowledge and viewpoints on developing this way or that way. If you ask people to comment on a plan that is nearly the entire size of Darwin Harbour, the average person will not be able to do that because they do not have the ability or the education to do it. That is not putting them down. If you ask people to comment, then you need to work in a friendly way with people and give them options.

That Darwin regional plan was issued by the Planning Commission, people commented, and another plan was issued by the Planning Commission, which was worse. Then it went to the government and they brought out their version of the Darwin regional plan. It did not have any changes at all so it was a waste of time for the people who commented.

I am not so sure about sending ideas to the Planning Commission first. I am not sure where it will get you. I am not overly worried about the DCA. The Planning Commission is not representative of people in particular areas, where the Development Consent Authority has two people from each area. I am not sure if there is one in Tennant Creek, but there is one in Katherine which has representatives from Katherine. There is one each in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs. I think there is one in Batchelor for certain a part of Coomalie. They

retain some of that local ownership, whereas the Planning Commission is a high-level body which I do not think should be dealing with whether you can put an independent dwelling on a block. That level is too high for that. The Planning Commission should be dealing with the higher-level issues and allowing the plan to operate as it should.

The minister spoke about road access. He said this development will provide road access. It would provide road access if it was 2 ha blocks, because that would be a requirement of the planning development decision. For any development with an adjoining development next to it, access to that development would be required. It is standard through any development process. If it was a 2 ha subdivision, next door would have access.

By the way, those blocks do have access through an access easement. I looked at these when I was on the council because there were sometimes complaints about who could shut the gate and who could leave it open. They have access easements along the pipeline. It is not as though the access does not exist. It would be sorted out between the developer, the council and the DCA.

Minister, you mentioned I did not have to take notes because you would supply me with your notes. I am interested in that.

I reiterate it is not that we do not want 4000 m² blocks. You have already planned for that land to be available. Do not stick it somewhere so we have a higgledy-piggledy planning system where something looks like a good idea, so 'she'll be right' or 'that looks like a good idea we will put some there'. You have a plan; Freds Pass District Centre up the road is ideal.

If you are saying people want some of these small blocks, that is fantastic. Get them to buy them in the district centre. What is wrong with that? It is your district centre. Do not use the development of rural land to satisfy a few people who might want a small block. Put your small blocks in the right place and they are satisfied; put the larger blocks where they are supposed to be and retain the rural area.

In the case of your lawn mowing, minister, most educated people retain the bush on their block ...

Mr Tollner interjecting.

Mr WOOD: No. You will find most people do not grow five acres of mangoes anymore. Some have horses which keep the grass down ...

Ms Fyles: Get a horse!

Mr WOOD: Yes, get a horse. The sensible people today retain their bush. I know you might not think this is the greatest thing, but one of the best ways to retain some of our native vegetation is to keep the rural area. Look at how many people have 'Land for Wildlife' signs. There are many of those people there. It does not mean everyone has 'Land for Wildlife'. My neighbour has five acres of mangoes. I know what they smell like during the Dry Season when he sprays them. My block was a vegetable and hay block; it had horses on it. The block next door has about two trees on it but the block over the road is totally covered in bush. It sold for an enormous price. There was a block recently that was totally covered in bush which I think sold for \$0.5m. There is high value on retaining the bush on your block so sensible people mow their fire breaks and leave the birds and animals in the bush. They do not have to do much work at all.

Do not put 0.4 ha blocks in the rural area; they do not work, especially in a tropical area where there is a Wet Season and a Dry Season. If you class those little blocks as RR, if you have animals on them, technically the requirements of the zone apply to the small blocks as well as the larger blocks. The zone might have limitations specific for that size block. If you allow small blocks the owner can do the same things. The danger of changing to a smaller sized block is that things can occur which are not suitable as they were never designed to occur on that size block.

There are other issues as well such as the amount of infrastructure, water and electricity ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, your time has expired.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 10

Noes 12

Ms Anderson
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Ms Lee
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker
Mr Wood

Mr Barrett
Mr Chandler
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mr Kurrupuwu
Mrs Price
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Teachers, Health, Police and EBA Outcomes

Continued from 20 August 2014.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, this GBD item was introduced by the opposition on 20 August 2014. Whilst elements of that motion have been resolved regarding EBAs, this motion remains current because two sectors of our public service have an EBA yet to be resolved. That is our hard-working paramedics and firefighters ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Paramedics are not public servants.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of Government Business, that is hardly a point of order. Member for Nhulunbuy, you have the call.

Ms WALKER: They are hard-working individuals who provide a contracted service to the government. Given that the government provides funding for a service for paramedic activities which is not a grant but a fee for service, they are as good as public servants. This highlights why the paramedics are feeling so poorly dealt with by the government.

Mr Tollner: What about Serco? We pay them to do a service. Are we responsible for their employment?

Ms WALKER: The member for Fong Lim can respond in this debate if he likes, but I believe he has already spoken in this debate so he can just shoosh right up. I will have my time, thank you very much.

Let us be realistic. Paramedics are providing a critical frontline service to Territorians in some of the most dire circumstances. It is a contracted service to government. Government pays St John Ambulance under a fee-for-service arrangement to run an ambulance service. St John Ambulance service, I should add, does extraordinary work in the Northern Territory with such different geographic locations and incredible hazards. I place on the record how much I appreciate their service in Nhulunbuy because without the volunteer arm of St John Ambulance – I appreciate the volunteer arm has nothing to do with this EBA, but the reality is the volunteer arm of St John Ambulance provides an incredible service.

It is shameful that our paramedics have been left hanging with an EBA that expired in July 2013. In a little over two months' time that EBA will be two years out of date. We are talking about 115 employees. It is not like the teachers' EBA with many more teachers. I know not all teachers are

members of the AEUNT, but we are talking about 115 paramedics.

I recognise that St John is their employer contracted under government and there is a responsibility for St John to negotiate that EBA. The complication is that St John Ambulance has had growing demands on its service. When I met with the service in late January it had experienced a 20% growth over three years. It does not have access to additional funds.

This government's budget today delivers infrastructure and other things because of the opportunity from the extra cash as a result of the sale of TIO.

The shortfall that would resolve the paramedics dispute with St John Ambulance is \$300 000. That is not a huge sum of money. Mr Deputy Speaker, that is what your golf club in Alice Springs was granted a couple of years ago. If we look at some of the money that has been splashed around in the budget handed down by the Treasurer yesterday, in the scheme of things \$300 000 is not much. The government has the capacity to resolve this issue.

We do not want to lose our paramedics, who will resign and work for other services. We can resolve this but will the government do it? Will it step in? No. 'Nothing to do with us', said the Health minister. 'Nothing to do with us', said the Minister for Public Employment. 'That is entirely their responsibility.' This is not good enough. St John Ambulance is saying it cannot afford to do it in its contract arrangement and the government is saying it has to.

We heard the most disastrous analogy from the Minister for Health who said we do not step into Bunnings and tell them how to run their EBA with their employees. Last time I looked Bunnings was not contracted to provide a government service. However, St John Ambulance is contracted by this government to run the ambulance service. Through that service it employs many people, including 115 paramedics who have an EBA that has been outstanding since July 2013 and could be resolved, as I said, for wont of \$300 000 – not a lot of money.

I implore the Health minister and the Minister for Public Employment – given that the Health minister is no longer the Minister for Public Employment, I appeal to the member for Katherine. I am sure he has a good working relationship with St John Ambulance in his electorate. I am sure they are delighted that TIO is delivering to St John in Katherine a new facility away from the Katherine River and the threatened dangers of flood. I implore both of those ministers to put their heads down, talk with St John

Ambulance and renegotiate that contract so they can find \$300 000 to resolve the paramedics' EBA.

These are people who work on the front line to save people's lives and put their own lives on the line to save the lives of others. They work hard, and work relentless hours. When I was recently in Alice Springs there were paramedics who – despite TBLs and the government's claim that they have driven down crime and alcohol-related issues have all but disappeared – on a recent Friday night worked nine hours straight without a break. I heard this directly from two paramedics. When I asked them what sort of issues they were dealing with and whether they noticed there was less alcohol they laughed and said, 'For nine hours we were just about swimming in alcohol and blood'. This is the work our paramedics do, and this government is not prepared to step in and intervene.

Our firefighters also have an outstanding EBA. Their EBA expired in September 2013. Again, this is a group of individuals who put their lives on the line day in day out to save the lives of others – frontline workers. Their issues have yet to be resolved. They have missed two wage increases while these protracted negotiations have been carried on and it is high time this issue was resolved as well.

I suggest that the relatively new Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services might be called in to help resolve it. It was he who stepped in and resolved the firefighters' cancer legislation. He met with United Voice representatives at the eleventh hour, a day or so before the legislation came back before the House for the second reading debate, and agreed to backdate the retrospectivity of cancer claims. It was so cruel and mean that firies who had contracted cancer on the job would only be eligible for compensation claims if their cancer was diagnosed after the 2012 election date. Thankfully the member for Brennan stepped in and agreed that all those firefighters – all four of them – who had contracted cancer in the workplace prior to that date would be recognised under that legislation.

This is all it takes: someone with a bit of a heart and compassion to step in and get something resolved. I also add that because that cancer legislation was dragged out for more than two years, despite two private members' bills offered from this side by the member for Fannie Bay, two firefighters passed away and their families have no access and no entitlement to compensation. That is shameful.

I am calling on the government to get its act together and get these EBAs resolved. It is simply not good enough. The member for Brennan has a

heart and the compassion to get the firefighters' EBA resolved, given he is the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

The union that represents both of these work groups – the paramedics and the firefighters – is United Voice. I know the CLP, in their DNA, do not like unions. However, what you have to recognise is these people fight for people's rights. They deal reasonably. As the member for Brennan knows, because he had that discussion with United Voice around the cancer legislation for firefighters at the eleventh hour, it is possible to get something resolved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, given that time is upon us, I will leave my comments there. As this motion states, some of these EBAs have been wrapped up, thank goodness, but there are two outstanding. I implore the government to support this motion to have these outstanding EBAs resolved. They are the ones who have the power to move forward on this.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 9

Noes 12

Ms Anderson
Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Ms Lee
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Ms Moss
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker

Mr Barrett
Mr Chandler
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Mrs Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mr Kurrupuwu
Mrs Price
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Motion negatived.

**APPROPRIATION (2015-2016) BILL
(Serial 121)**

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr VOWLES (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on Budget 2015-16 handed down by the Treasurer yesterday. This is the third budget of the Country Liberal Party after more than two-and-a-half years of revolving ministers, failed promises, uncertainty, chaotic government, tears from Territorians and for long-suffering Territorians, missed opportunities.

I am especially concerned about the government disarray and the impact of that confused and chaotic state on progress in work that we started while in government in company with local Indigenous leaders to build and implement clear

and transparent plans to develop our communities in the bush. I am thinking in particular of the local implementation plans designed around local needs and priorities. These were important road maps for community development that quietly lapsed under the CLP government. It is another kick in the guts for local people who committed to that work and believed in government staying true to its word and steadily implementing those plans.

This is a government with no plans of its own, which carried out shadowy work through COAG to attack the foundation principles of the Land Rights Act. This government proclaims the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* and native title rights as barriers to investment. The Chief Minister saw no need for an Indigenous Affairs portfolio and stood by while activity in that space lost its way. He later realised the error of that decision, now clumsily remedied in this budget.

After two-and-a-half years of wasted opportunities this government has failed to deliver its election promises in the bush and, instead, cut services to our bush communities. The government has cut outreach services for youth and parents, and family support, retreating instead to a punitive approach after the damage was done.

This government stood by while Canberra slashed funding for primary healthcare and preventative health programs such as tackling Indigenous smoking, one of the key ways we can work to improve Indigenous health outcomes.

The government crows about promoting Indigenous home ownership but cannot run a functioning remote housing maintenance program. This government dumped a remote housing and maintenance program that worked and was supporting improved training and work opportunities for the local people and replaced it with a new program that has taken us backwards.

This budget is big on infrastructure spending built on the back of the sale of TIO and GST windfalls, but is light on improved services for Territory families.

The centrepiece of the new Indigenous affairs policy appears to target work to access more Aboriginal land for economic development and a new focus on building government connections with landowners outside the land councils through the Community Champions program. It will be telling to see over the next three years how much of that funding goes to more consultancy reports and aspirational business ideas. Sadly, I fear history will repeat itself with more government coming and going, endless charters for government employees and little progress in improving well-considered and locally-supported development projects.

My fear is that the chaos and instability of this government, with open conflict and ideological wars amongst ministers, will trickle down and corrupt the good intentions of the new, overdue investment in the office of Indigenous affairs and support of local development opportunities. I am concerned about the propensity for this government to reject anything but its own ideas, as witnessed by the rejection of Indigenous strategic water reserves for Indigenous business development and preferential water allocations to mates and speculators rather than targeted support for the development of local Indigenous enterprise.

The feedback from my travels through the bush has also alerted me to the real concerns in the bush about the reality of winners and losers under this CLP government. Favoured communities are showered with support while other communities are left to fend for themselves. The seat of Arafura is a good example. The Tiwi Islands are clearly a priority for this government. Tiwi Islanders have many great ideas for economic development and they deserve the support of this government, but the other end of Arafura in Maningrida, one of our biggest growth towns, withers on the vine with little more than a promise of a new and welcoming landscape at the local airport. To rub salt in the wound, an important sewerage infrastructure project at Maningrida was awarded to an interstate contractor with little scope for local employment benefits.

Too often well-constructed and locally developed business concepts are ignored by this government because they do not align with the government's financial supporters' ideas. What is needed from this government is real listening – not gammon listening – responsiveness, coordination of investments and work flows across government, and the correct sequencing of work. The budget is big on infrastructure commitments, but many projects may be long-term given this government's poor record on delivering specific projects, whether that is the Palmerston hospital or remote health clinics.

It is easy to commit to new infrastructure after the sale of a public asset like TIO. The real test will be the capacity of this government to maximise the benefit of new investments for local families, as well as the capacity or willingness to provide necessary services catering for our growing population. In many of our remote communities over 50% of the population is under 25. That is the key challenge: the need for planning and investment supporting their development and the established long foundations for their future and wellbeing, investments in services and opportunities out bush, education, community safety, health and economic opportunities.

As the new shadow minister for Central Australia, a new portfolio which I am very pleased to be given by the Leader of the Opposition, the problem is the apparent lack of any coherent economic development plan beyond transfer of government functions to Alice Springs, and appropriation by this government of local peoples' plans for a cultural centre.

The \$25m for Mereenie roadworks should be a boost for tourism, but I have yet to see how this government plans to take advantage of that investment and build new tourism opportunities off the back of it. We welcome the \$2.5m for sealing the Lajamanu road, and we will be keen to see if any local businesses benefit from that contract.

Where are the new investments in Central Australian parks and reserves? The government budget paper on natural assets proudly listed 12 new park development projects, but they are all in the Top End. How and when will this government invest in our Central Australian parks to support environmental management and growth in tourism?

While the people of Alice Springs no doubt welcome this government's history of successive announcements of investments in sport and recreation, including \$5m for motor sports, others must despair at the continued attacks on funding for youth services which are necessary to help address antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs. What new funding there is for youth services does little more than replace funding taken away in the early days of this government.

I will read Alice Springs Town Councillor Chansey Paech's media release, which was issued yesterday:

Alice Springs Town Councillor Chansey Paech said he was disappointed the NT government had not allocated funding for afterhours youth services in Alice Springs in this week's budget.

Mr Paech said he had hoped the NT government would prioritise after hours services given the recent focus on issues around young people on the streets at night.

'While investments in some infrastructure projects in town are always welcome, I'm very disappointed there is not a cent allocated for afterhours services for young people in this budget', he said.

'The Chief Minister and the Minister for Children and Families have been talking tough about kids out late at night but sadly

they haven't put their money where their mouth is.

'Putting resources into services such as the former Youth Street Outreach Service and Youth Hub would have helped enormously in having an integrated approach from youth sector agencies in making sure kids at risk were targeted and families supported.'

Mr Paech said he was interested to see the NT government was giving another \$2.7m to the Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre in this budget. The ASYCC received \$2.5m from the NT government in 2014 for new and refurbished facilities, including a new gymnasium which replaced the old government gym in the Greatorex Building.

'I congratulate the ASYCC on securing this funding and look forward to learning how this \$2.7m injection of funds will assist them in targeting and delivering much needed services to the large cohort of young people in Alice Springs who desperately need afterhours activities and services', Mr Paech said.

'I am very interested in learning about the ASYCC's programs that may be aimed at engaging young people on the streets at night and during school holiday periods, when most of the current problems are occurring.'

Mr Paech said he was also interested in finding out from the NT government why no money for the sale of TIO had been allocated to flood mitigation works in Alice Springs, as had been promised in Darwin and Katherine.

'As council has pointed out, flood mitigation works are a priority in Alice Springs and we don't want to be waiting until it's too late. I will be asking what has happened to the \$2m allocated in last year's budget to a boardwalk linking the golf course area to the CBD. This has not been built but doesn't seem to be mentioned in this year's budget.'

Similarly we know that domestic and family violence is a stinker across the Territory, yet the government could only find \$3m for new work in this important area.

When will the Chief Minister deliver on his promise to make an agreement with the federal government on the \$10m of federal funding still waiting to be applied to support our renal patients in Central Australia? When will the federal

government give up on the wrong priorities of this CLP government and withdraw that opportunity?

To mining. The budget books suggest that the Department of Mines and Energy continues to struggle in attracting new government support for continuing development of the mining sector. Indeed the total budget for the department has declined by around \$1.5m. Perhaps the government takes the view that with a downturn in many commodities there is an opportunity to take the foot off the pedal. A contrary view is that the need is now as great as ever to support the further development of the mining sector in the Northern Territory and not rely on the hope of a boom in Northern Territory onshore gas exploration and production.

Just like mining, the oil and gas sector has its own market issues to deal with and we have to realise that potentially there is a long way to go with widespread and continuing concern about fracking through which many look to realise that oil and gas potential.

The big issue is public confidence in the environmental and regulatory management arrangements. We have yet to see this government recognise that and respond appropriately. There is a pressing need to boost the environmental management capacity of the Department of Mines and Energy, an issue now well known as a consequence of the work of the EPA both in legacy mines and currently operating mines, as well as the Hawke inquiry into hydraulic fracturing. There is little in this budget to suggest that a boost in funding in that area is part of the CLP's plans.

In respect of mining I note with regret the Northern Territory, under the Country Liberals government, continues to fall in its annual rating by the Fraser Institute Survey of Mining Companies as a jurisdiction favoured for mining exploration. The question needs to be asked: what is this government and this minister doing to arrest that decline in the status?

On to primary industries. There is only a small boost in funds for the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, but the budget book shows that most new funding is that allocated for product integrity, code for biosecurity issues relating to banana freckle, and dealing with the cucumber green mottle mosaic virus. In regard to the banana freckle eradication program, I cannot talk about the Primary Industry budget without mentioning the growing concerns and desperation of people's rights to grow healthy bananas in their back yards, to sell at the local markets like the Rapid Creek Markets on a Sunday in the electorate of Johnston, for which I am very lucky to be the local member.

We discussed the banana freckle eradication program through the sittings this year. In the debate the minister for Primary Industry said that the local governments of Darwin, Litchfield, Daly River and Palmerston are also actively supporting this eradication program with services and on-the-ground resources.

I have been informed that this statement by the minister is not entirely correct. I have been informed that the Litchfield Council is adamant there was substantial opposition within the council to banana eradication and the council did not want to get involved. The Palmerston City Council has not, to my knowledge, moved any motion to support the banana freckle eradication program. The Darwin Lord Mayor, Katrina Fong Lim, was very clear on talkback radio recently in saying the Darwin City Council has no policies and has not moved a motion to support the eradication program as the minister stated in this House.

There have been a couple of protests by the Rural Residents' Rights Group. It is, and will remain, a strong advocate for peoples' rights to have their voices heard. There is a homegrown banana eradication resistance Facebook site that is very active, with many members voicing concerns and raising legitimate questions about the banana freckle eradication program in the red zone, which is in the last weeks for all bananas to be destroyed.

The minister knows there are numerous people within those groups who have and continue to lock the gate and will not let the eradication team on their properties. I see that fines will be issued, but what will happen to those people when they refuse to pay the fines and still refuse entry? Will we see forced entry by the police on to these properties? I look forward to the minister's response to the comments I have raised today. They are legitimate concerns and questions people have requested I ask you.

I had the opportunity this month to travel with the member for Barkly, visiting parts of Tennant Creek and the melon farm at Ali Curung to see the great work it is doing. We discussed that the department perhaps trial three areas for produce: one to learn how to grow in the tropical area, which is in the Top End, the second in the sub-tropical area of the Katherine region, and the third in the desert area of Tennant Creek, Ali Curung and the surrounds. The focus on each trial would be the potential to have five different crops for future industries and opportunities, which they thought was not happening and there was no planning for the future of our primary industries and what we could grow at certain times across the Northern Territory. I support the \$1.2m

initiative for development of a new market for horticulture production.

On to fishing, the CLP keeps promising to deliver on its election promise regarding \$4.5m for the Dundee Beach boat ramp and \$2m for Shady Camp ramp. But fishers at AFANT's AGM remained concerned and sceptical that the government is not making this a real priority.

While we welcome investments in fisheries research and monitoring to underpin a sustainable recreational and commercial fishery, there is concern about the level of support and attention this government provides to environmental management issues impacting on our fresh water and marine environments. This is especially the case given the need to address legacy mine issues and potential issues like the CLP's aggressive land development agenda.

I am pleased to see the \$250 000 commitment to a new marine ranger training program based in Nhulunbuy. I hope ranger groups across the Territory can benefit from this initiative and we will see the same kind of support for land management activities, especially given the current federal government's attacks on ranger programs supported by the land councils, a clear part of the federal and NT CLP strategy to weaken the work of the land councils.

On to Asian Relations and Trade, a new portfolio I have been lucky to get. In consultation with business, industry, government agencies, NGOs and our multicultural communities, we developed a five-year international trade strategy which positioned the Northern Territory for a bright future. That focused on three key international markets of Japan, China and Indonesia, and five emerging markets of Vietnam, India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Timor-Leste.

When in government we delivered the \$20bn Ichthys project, launched the China Minerals Investment Strategy, supported the live beef trade to Indonesia and Vietnam and made substantial investment in infrastructure such as East Arm port and the Darwin Business Park. We established the Timor-Leste Northern Territory Ministerial Council. We developed the Tourism NT Asian Gateway Strategy. We promoted Indigenous art, education and sporting and cultural links to our Asia-Pacific neighbours. There has been increased business built off that work.

Under the CLP all we have seen is lots of travel with no substantial outcomes in international trade or engagement. Despite being in office for over two years, the CLP has not developed a new medium-term international trade strategy. In this budget there is a reduction in funding. The

commitment does not match the rhetoric unless there is an overseas trip in the offering.

The budget was \$3.75m and now it is down to \$3.5m. Perhaps the difference in saving is the salary now Terry Mills' services have been terminated. We have been advised his salary is commercial-in-confidence, but we know his accommodation cost nearly \$70 000 per year.

This is another budget of contradictions. There is less for primary healthcare, less for education, \$820 000 for the member for Katherine's golf club, not enough money for youth services, stripping funding, creating a crisis, especially in Alice Springs, and trying to fool everyone you have the solution by putting some of the money back into the problem.

Mr Deputy Speaker, a Labor government will do what we said: govern for all Territorians. We will be open and transparent, exactly what the CLP promised they would do. We will do it proudly.

Ms LEE (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Giles government has missed the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of those in remote communities. Funding within the regional budget affects my electorate, which consists of a small part in the Katherine region with the majority in the East Arnhem region.

This budget has had a boost from the GST and the sale of TIO which deeply affects my electorate, especially the sale of TIO. What line of insurance do my people now have in the bush? Has the government been consulting with the people in the bush about what insurance they can have?

What will these big companies offer people in the bush when they are so remote? They do not even understand the situation in the bush. How will the government interpret that to the people in the bush? Instead of trying to make life better for people in the bush you intend to make life even harder for them.

When it came to car insurance, house insurance, house contents insurance and life insurance the TIO office in Katherine was the hub for most Indigenous people, including me. For flood insurance TIO was the hub for most of us, especially those in my electorate, as flood affects the Stuart electorate, the community I live in at Barunga and my neighbouring communities of Beswick, Ngukurr and Urapunga. Now those people have to speak to somebody on the phone who does not understand Yolngu Matha or Kriol or the settings of remote areas. They find it hard enough talking to people over the phone about banking issues. It will be hard for them now.

The sale of TIO has crippled the bush 10 times more than anything. I do not think any of you realise that. You just wanted to get rid of it so you can pay off the debt. You have not thought about the ramifications it will cause to the people in the bush. That is on your hands and the bush will hold you accountable. That is something they are already looking at.

I am sure the members for Stuart and Arafura know that because a lot of us relied on TIO. We now have to consider other options for car insurance. I have a private car and furniture at home.

What you never considered is consulting with the people for the best option for Territorians. Those in the bush are Territorians too. They have a brain, like everybody else in this House. They have a say about their futures, just like everybody in this House. But nobody considered listening to those people in my electorate – my family, my relatives.

The sale of TIO gave the opportunity to invest in the most disadvantaged areas, yet this CLP government has missed that and managed to spill the funding bucket a little heavier over the Arafura electorate.

I feel sorry for the people of Maningrida; they did not get much out of this budget. The member for Arafura will recall me talking in parliament before about cuts made to the recreational centre there. I have not seen him once sharing on Facebook or supporting the recreation centre which had almost 80% cut. They had to contact me, another member for another electorate nearby, to help them and try to get their voice out to Scullion to reimburse it.

I ask you to consider what you are doing for people in the bush. Think about it. They voted for you too; they are in your electorate. Will you leave them behind? I will tell them what I am saying today, because they are nearby. They are only 100 km from Ramingining. When I make my next trip I am going to Maningrida. You probably do not realise I have as many relatives in Maningrida as I do in any other electorate.

Within East Arnhem, other than the allocation of a combined \$920 000 to business development networks and offices, the government has not funded or formed any projects on the ground. This allocated funding is to cover the two large electorates of Arnhem and Nhulunbuy. The Arnhem electorate has a rising concern about employment opportunities. How will people make a difference in their community and their lives without job opportunities being made available to them, other than the bludging Work for the Dole

RJCP project, which is giving minimal opportunities to move into full-time work?

Young community members are working up to 55 hours per fortnight for minimum wages. I came back from Groote Eylandt recently. I have been at Bickerton Island. They have 10 guys waking up every morning to go to their job under the RJCP program. They have business opportunities and ideas they want to make happen on that island which will generate money to them and get them full-time jobs. The only person there who is paid is the RJCP coordinator. The rest of the fellows have to work on the dole. I congratulate the RJCP coordinator; he is trying his best to try to get real money for these 10 fellows who are working. They get up every day and look forward to wood chipping, because that is the only opportunity they have on the island. They are eager to work, but what is the government creating in remote areas for them to work? Nothing.

You talk about business opportunities – that is what that Chief Minister keeps rambling on about. What business opportunities? You have not even heard half of the business opportunities out there. That is appalling and disgusting.

They have so many ideas out there they want to progress but there is no support from the government to even help them get their foot through the door. Yet you say that is your core business. Well, I have not seen you on Bickerton Island to even help get them started. I am the one who is working between them and the ALC to try to get something going, from their own money. Yet this government and the federal government gets 87% out of ABA off Groote Eylandt alone. Where does that money go? It sure is not helping that island to boost jobs for Aboriginal people. That is the most appalling part of their story.

You can say your pretty words, go out there with your pretty flags and whatever, but at the end of the day they know I will go back out there and tell them exactly what they need to know. If you do not think I already know half the games you have playing – I already do. One thing you do not know is those on the ground tell me what it is going on. I get a call every time you go out there.

There are nowhere near enough jobs in the community, and they are forcing people to leave their homelands to seek work and support their families. The majority of them are now moving into Darwin and Katherine just for work because they cannot survive out there. If they are under the RJCP scheme and they do not turn up to work, they do not get paid by Centrelink for two months. In that duration of time, especially on Groote Eylandt, kids are starving in their parent's house because they are not given any money. You wonder at the rates of breaking in, stealing,

vandalising and everything on that Island. It comes from the legislation that is made here and federally. These kids are starving. You are far from the truth sitting in here; you have no idea what is really happening on the ground. I knew this would go downhill, but I did not expect my own electorate kids to be starving. Every night they have to steal to eat. We already have third-world country conditions and that is supposed to be one of the richest islands in the Northern Territory, yet they still have to steal to eat. What kind of example are we setting for our future generations?

You can all fly around the world talking about business opportunities, spending money, but you cannot even look after your own back yard. I am not that old, but I am getting older by the minute because I am sick and tired of listening to the same rhetoric over and over. You are not recognising what is really happening on the ground.

I am pleased to know that there are many young people coming up behind me who are looking to the fight ahead of them. They know at the end of the day they only have themselves. That is one thing we have given them hope for.

Instead of investing more into grassroots job opportunities, \$40 000 is to be spent to provide new generation geoscience to investigate shale gas and mineral potential. Yet the people are left to believe that the government is caring and thinking in the best interests of the people of Arnhem. This government seems to be preparing to exploit the local people for the rich minerals within their area, and in other areas to watch large mining companies take over.

We all know that is why you invested so much money in checking the water table because you want opportunities to see whether there are minerals there, whether you can make big deals with big mining companies to rip our lands up and make everybody else and the government rich. Forget about the people. We are all land rich but still dirt poor, yet our own people still sit in this House representing a party line and being led by the nose. That is what is more depressing as I stand here every day. It is not what is in your heart, it is the party that leads you.

We have our own chief, our own masters and our own people. Where are those old people? Where are our elders speaking from? They do not even get the opportunity to get their foot through this door. The government says they are working with them. I do not see that happening. Our own are led to believe they are here fighting for their people, yet I cannot even hear it. One walks out the door and does not even want to know about it.

A personal concern of mine is that in the Regional Highlights section of the budget there is more funding to remote areas within the Katherine and East Arnhem regions for police stations, prisoner work camps and community-based client monitoring services than there is for early education.

Within the East Arnhem region there are up to 12 schools just in my electorate. As we all know, the early years of schooling are the most important. I am sure I would have the support of the member for Nhulunbuy in saying many in our communities are already in a disadvantaged position. This is not even close to what is needed for a smart and healthy start to life for Indigenous children. There is a total of \$2.2m of funding for school transport, distance education assistance and Back to School payments. East Arnhem has some of the most remote land in the country. With the cost of living remote and the distance for outstation children to travel to school, \$2.2m would not be near enough to get my young constituents prepared for schooling and a brighter future.

Health is another sector within my electorate I am concerned about. It is said that \$17.8m is to be allocated to primary health services in urban and remote areas in the East Arnhem budget. How are the people in the majority of my electorate to believe that this will be followed through? You have told the people in remote areas before that these vital health centres would be built with funding allocated, but we are yet to see these new clinics. Again in the Regional Budget highlights you have allocated money to continue the construction of a new remote health centre in Numbulwar. Continue? Construction has not even started. You need to change your wording there. We are still waiting on the clinic the government promised to build at Umbakumba. That has not even started. I hope the government holds to its word this time instead of leading those in communities to believe that you care about health services in their towns when truly you do not. We all know that.

There is \$920 000 Territory-wide for the Pathways to Community Control programs that support Indigenous control of health and care within their communities. Self-run community-based employment and businesses are exactly what those in the bush want. For years they have wanted to take more control of their homelands community issues, to be proud owners of business and be in firm and full-time employment. I do not know how many times we have to say this. Still there is no action, only words.

As I have said before and will say over and over again until you get sick of me, we need to invest from the grassroots up. If we want results, we

have to start on the ground. If this pathway program is to be successful, it will need much more funding to begin with at the grassroots level. As we all know, the majority of money does not even hit the ground as it is. That is the saddest part.

Aboriginal people are not even given the opportunity to have businesses in remote areas to be in control of the contracting that needs to be done in their regions. You are not creating business opportunities; you are giving them to everybody else. That has taken all the money out of these communities and you wonder why it is a false economy. We need to assist our Indigenous Territorians to get a strong and stable footing for a strong and stable future.

Housing is a topic that strikes anger in my constituents ...

Mr Tollner: They don't want housing.

Ms LEE: Tollner, what do they want then?

Mr Tollner: You tell me. They do not want housing because it makes them angry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Through the Chair please, honourable members. Member for Arnhem, you have the call.

Ms LEE: They love their communities and want nothing more than to stay in their traditional homelands close to country and culture. Ours, unlike yours, is pretty unique and we still practice it every day. We have our own law not the laws applied to this House.

The Infrastructure Highlights states that \$147m is being allocated to remote Indigenous housing. As a number it is a great contribution to the housing of Indigenous people in the bush, but this has all been said time and time again and we have been told that money is there to get the job done. However, like many times before, no action is taken to construct new housing or repair and maintain existing housing.

Everywhere I go there is anger and heartache because families are forced to live in crowded houses. The government offers things like this and none or minimal work is done. The majority of our houses still have asbestos. We still live in them. There are only repairs to minimise the risk of asbestos in these houses; they still stand.

Mr Tollner: My house has it.

Ms LEE: You live in the city, Tollner. We live in the bush. There is a difference.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Arnhem, I asked that you address your comments through the Chair and do not refer to members by their name. You know that and I ask that you cease that please.

Ms LEE: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Much of the allocated spending in this budget for the bush seems greater on paper but the budget is yet to be acted on over the next financial year. With this being the last budget you will deliver before the next election, believe me the Indigenous community within the Territory has had enough of your empty promises. I will be watching and I will be sure to tell constituents in my electorate and other bush areas to watch closely to see if the CLP is serving Territorians with true words and sticks to spending the money allocated in the 2015-16 budget.

Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira): Mr Deputy Speaker, I contribute briefly to the Appropriation Bill to say what a waste of an opportunity to pay back the people who elected the County Liberal Party two years ago. It quite clearly indicates and shows to them that the Country Liberal Party does not care. They will be paying you back in the next 14 months. They can really see what is going on.

The Chief Minister issued a media release saying the inner Mereenie loop will be sealed. People said, 'That is fine, that is really good', but in his media release he got it wrong. He said pastoralists will have access to that road. There are no stations around the inner Mereenie loop. There is only a bit of road between Hermannsburg to the edge of Gosse Bluff, but no stations all the way to Areyonga and Kings Canyon. There will be no pastoralists accessing that road only a few tourists.

We are very appreciative and grateful, Chief Minister, that the inner Mereenie loop is being sealed. It is good for the Territory economy. The former member for Macdonnell, the Attorney-General, knows that road very well. That is good for the groups of people who live in the outstations between Hermannsburg and Areyonga. It will make their travels a lot better. It is a lost opportunity.

I quote from the conclusion of the Treasurer's speech:

We have cut Government waste and debt.

Treasurer, I do not think you understand very well the advice you are given by Treasury. I have heard many comments today that you do not understand your budget papers. I had the pleasure of asking small businesses in Darwin today what they thought of your budget. I need to

pass this message to you from a small business in Darwin. I do not represent these people; you do. They asked me to pass the message on that it is a load of manure. They are closing shops in the mall and are struggling with rents.

We take our job seriously, because we want to represent all Territorians. My colleague, the member for Arnhem, and I have coffee and ask people what happens in the Northern Territory. These people are struggling. This shop owner owns two shops and she has to close one.

The Chief Minister, the minister for Central Australia, might be interested to know that there are a few shops in Alice Springs closing too. A hairdresser and a florist are closing, so how can the Territory be good? How can the Territory be rolling and united when you have a group of vigilantes threatening Aboriginal people in Alice Springs?

I have not seen the Chief Minister, as the minister for Central Australia, asking the minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Prime Minister or the Police Commissioner to arrest these people for threatening Aboriginal people. This is a vigilante group. You have kept silent on it. These are the traditional owners of this country. You have not issued one media release to say to your Police Commissioner, 'I want you to arrest these people'.

You, the media and everyone knows what they have been putting on social media about Aboriginal people. These are the people who have welcomed all the boat people into this country. This is the thanks we get. We get no response from the minister for Central Australia, the Chief Minister, about protecting people.

There is such a thing as terrorism legislation across Australia, is there not? We are all Australians. I call on the Prime Minister to make sure he comes in over the Northern Territory government and arrests these people under the terrorism laws. They are terrorising and threatening Aboriginal people, saying they should be hung up and burnt. This is not good for the Territory and it is not bringing people together. This is dividing us and making us go in two different directions.

This is saying that we have a group of people you, as a government, your Police Commissioner and your police force are not do anything about. I would like you, as Chief Minister and minister for Central Australia, to say in a media release tomorrow that these people have been arrested for putting all of those comments up about Aboriginal people.

This is not bringing Territorians together. When we talk about the Territory, we talk about uniting

people, bringing people together, equality and educating our kids. You spoke passionately about getting Indigenous employment into the public sector.

I received a letter which I will speak about in adjournment tonight, where long-serving police officer Phillip Alice, because of his illness, has been asked to stand down. He is a model for that community. The police asked him to go to Ti Tree during the riots. They asked him to go to Yuendumu. He has the language skills and is a real model for Aboriginal people across the Northern Territory. Just because a person is on renal dialysis does that mean we ask him to stand down? We should be still using him, Chief Minister. I urge you and the Police minister sitting in the Chamber tonight to make sure we reinstate this man who has given everything to this job over 20 years. He is a father of three. He has been an ACPO at Santa Teresa. They have called him for all sorts of things in Alice Springs where people have been killed. He has been their interpreter. We need to fix all these problems. If we are talking about increasing the Indigenous level in the public sector, he is one of them we need to put back into a job. We need to make sure we do things properly.

This budget has missed the mark to pay back and reward the very people who put you into government two years ago. Do you know what? These people do not forget. They will be waiting at the polling booth for you in 14 months' time. It does not matter what you do between now and then, they will remember you.

Economic development does not mean you repatriate or ask for the repatriation of the Land Rights Act to the Territory government. It does not mean you take their land from them. It means true partnership. It means that you sit down and talk to people. It means you ask them. Can every Aboriginal community have economic opportunities? Of course they do not and will not. It does not mean that you steal their land because you want economic opportunities and development.

This is what we have in the Northern Territory. It means that under the CLP we are on a collision course for ugliness and no hope. There is no hope for Aboriginal people. You have had a windfall in GST. All the money you have is from the sale of TIO and the GST windfall. Someone said you have the majority of Western Australia's GST that has gone to a shire council, which is the Northern Territory. That is what people are talking about. A shire council is how they referred to the Northern Territory government. We are only a shire council taking everybody's money and not putting it in the right areas of Aboriginal disadvantage.

You are putting it in because you are trying to buy your votes because you know you will lose the next election in the northern suburbs of Darwin. You will use disadvantaged people to pay for the northern suburbs to elect you. I hope to God you guys sit on this side in 14 months' time, if any of you dare to win.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will let all of that go through to the keeper. If in doubt, if you have no capacity to do any research, do not want to read a budget paper and do not want to give a real critique, pull out the racist card. 'Everybody is a racist', is how you do the business. It is a convenient, useful tool but it is somewhat jaded. The people of our own electorates deserve better than just whip out the race card every time you do not like what the Northern Territory government does. It is tedious, boring and does not help anybody. It does not help this House or anybody in your electorates. People are over it.

You might be right; we may well lose the next election in the bush. We may lose the next election, we may not. That is a matter for the people of the Northern Territory to decide. But what I am seriously over is politicians in this place not being capable of doing any hard research, reading the documents in front of them or even trying, and using the appropriation debate to have a quick spray around the room to say how horrible everything is.

I have listened to this debate today with great care. I have heard a number of assertions from the members opposite. I reckon without spending too much time running a ruler over it, I have heard the members opposite spend several hundred million dollars during the course of today.

The member for Nhulunbuy would have us buy every house in Nhulunbuy so we can deal with our housing problems, but does not offer how much it will cost.

We have heard a number of complaints about services that exist or do not exist, and we have heard a number of people simply misrepresent what is in this book. That is what we are used to. We heard it in Question Time from day one; people deliberately misrepresenting what was in this book or alternatively, and more importantly, not understanding what was in this book and blindly reading out something that had been written for them upstairs.

Once again, the true member for Johnston delivered a good speech. I wonder who the true member for Johnston is, because they did some research and raised a number of issues which I think are fairly important.

I note the observations in relation to the \$10m for renal services. All I can say at this time is it is being worked on, and we are looking forward to some results in that area, we hope. I also point out to whoever read the budget papers on the fourth floor and wrote the speech for the member for Johnston, somebody has finally picked up on the impact the Commonwealth has brought to bear on the health budget. In deference to that person – whoever you are – who did that work, I note page 158 of Budget Paper No 3 is probably the source of your information.

In answer to this, as you prepare the member for Johnston for estimates, most of those little minus signs are indeed the product of Commonwealth arrangements. One of the problems we have in the Northern Territory is that those IGAs are under negotiation, so unfortunately they cannot turn up on our books because of the complaints last time about our budgets landing on the same day. Because our budget is now coming out earlier than the Commonwealth budget we do not have a guarantee those IGAs will be settled or announced prior to the announcement of the Commonwealth budget. So, they appear in the budget papers on page 158 largely as minus signs.

The truth of the matter is in every likelihood those IGAs will be settled and those minus signs will disappear. However, at the time of the printing of this budget and at the time the Treasurer of the Northern Territory brought this budget forward, the effect is they have to appear as Commonwealth cuts. We do not know what the situation is at the moment. We look forward to the Commonwealth settling those IGAs, and those numbers in effect disappearing over time.

The health budget of \$1.42bn is the largest for any Territory government department. The funding has increased \$24.8m from this year's estimate, so the final estimate for the year, which you will find on page 149 of Budget Paper No 3, is a substantial increase from last year's budget of 2014-15. Some of that money is not on the budget bottom line, as described in page 149 of the budget, because a lot of money is coming to health via other means, including the infrastructure budget. That is where you will find the \$40m upgrade for the hospital.

We have a substantial increase in the infrastructure budget across the Northern Territory. I pick up on the borderline inane suggestions from the member for Barkly about the Commonwealth money for the Palmerston hospital. Wrong! That money is still there. It is part of an agreement; it is been bedded down and the \$150m is intact. I do not know where you are getting your information from.

By the way, I encourage the member for Barkly to read the budget book because it is \$25m for infrastructure build on Palmerston hospital. Yes, you are right. It deals with components to do with the headworks, such as getting plumbing, sewerage, slabs poured and all those things. I am pressing on with all of that and ambitiously suggest you will see concrete heading out of the ground hopefully by the second quarter. In fact, by the second quarter of next year you will see concrete heading north into space.

I am looking forward to being ambitious, but I am continuing to put pressure on the public servants across the varying departments who have carriage of this issue to make sure we can speed this process up. I am being fairly relentless about it. I apologise to those senior public servants, but they get paid more than I do – so tough!

Mr McCarthy: We will both be able to boast we gave birth to a rising sewer main.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr ELFERINK: Perhaps that is true. I will look forward to the rising sewer main, the water going out, and all those little babies that will eventually be born in Palmerston hospital who can push things down the rising sewer main.

I am also pressing on with, as a matter of policy, the Top End Health Board and the Central Australian Health Board. I have met just with their board chairman on a couple occasions or the whole board on one occasion each. I described to them what I expect from them going forward. They understand what we expect as a government, and they will press on with it. As time passes I expect they will take up more of their roles as the local health boards and take more and more of the work of health service delivery away from government. That includes ultimately transitioning RDH, Palmerston hospital and Alice Springs Hospital into their care. In fact, they already have them.

This process of having the boards in place means they will look like GOCs in nature and we will expect them to moperate as GOCs. They will be independent boards. We will ultimately get to a point where they will send us a bill. They will deliver the service on behalf of government and do so effectively and efficiently. I am waiting with bated breath as we press forward with this.

I also point out that despite all the misgivings of the members opposite, the health sector in the Northern Territory, in relation to the boards and the Health department, will see a staff increase of 3% in this budget.

The total infrastructure spend across the Health portfolio exceeds \$200m, with \$40m announced for the 35-year-old RDH. There is \$4m in addition to the \$11.9m from the Commonwealth to refurbish the paediatric ward – the ward the shadow minister was so concerned about during Question Time today. There is also \$3.9m to operate the 12-bed extended emergency medicine unit, or EMU, which I am pleased to say is up and running; I was there the other day. There is \$200 000 for scenography.

A total of \$7.6m has been allocated to relocate the ambulance centre in Katherine and \$44.2m for remediation works and other upgrades to Alice Springs Hospital. There is \$7.9m to continue the construction of the purpose-built alcohol mandatory treatment unit and secure care assessment centre and for the expansion of services in the region. There is \$720 000 to continue running and expand the Hospitals in the Home service. This is a convenient service that is being managed to increase bed capacity at Alice Springs Hospital by 10%.

Construction will commence this year on the new \$5m training and teaching facility aiming to increase the number of homegrown medical practitioners. The new training building will include a 100-seat theatre as well as a clinical skills training room and two 25-seat tutorial training rooms. We continue to press on in a number of areas.

In the area of disability, we continue to increase our spending; we will spend \$88m. However, I am concerned about the operation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Northern Territory. I will reflect briefly my concerns in relation to it. If you consider that the government's insurance premium paid under the NDIS is \$99m, when we currently spend \$87m to cover the field, it immediately raises in my mind's eye this had better be a pretty good service if we pay the extras.

The Barkly trial became operational. We have the added complication of knowing in advance that about \$20m of the service we already provide will not be picked up by the NDIS, even before looking at the Barkly trial. That is complicated. It means that for \$119m we will get what we hope will be the same service in the current financial year's \$87m disability services structure. I am concerned because we are paying more for somebody else to run a service we already provide for less than the premium itself, and we miss out on \$20m worth of service delivery.

To add to the complication, the Barkly trial was a matter of some concern to me, because we offered up to the NDIS the 103 people we currently provide services to in the Barkly area,

and they knocked out 56 of them. Essentially more than half of the people currently serviced by Northern Territory Disability Services will not get a service as a result of the operation of the NDIS. It is unbelievable that you could run the NDIS with the proposed system in the Northern Territory. I have raised this issue twice with Mitch Fifield.

I am also concerned that the NDIA, the agency that oversees the NDIS scheme, has now announced – despite the fact the NDIS was supposed to sidestep all of the state jurisdictions – that the states may deliver services as a service provider of last resort. In the Territory context, that is the provider of only resort. We would be the only people who provide services in these remote communities.

Here is the picture as it currently stands. We currently spend \$87m to provide services to people across the Northern Territory. If we use the Barkly trial as a measure, we will pay \$99m in insurance premiums to get somebody else to deliver a service to less than half of the people we will service for \$88m. I do not think that is a sound way to move forward. I have spoken to Mitch Fifield and stated the position of the Northern Territory. We are happy for the NDIS to run in Sydney and Melbourne. If we were Sydney or Melbourne we would embrace the NDIS, I do not doubt. However, the model is a square peg in a round hole in this jurisdiction.

For that reason I went to Melbourne last week – I announced my travel – had this conversation and asked the federal minister to effectively treat the Territory as a separate entity in relation to how the scheme runs in the rest of the country. I know that other jurisdictions such as Western Australia and Queensland are running into similar problems. The Heads of Government under COAG have determined that a second trial site needs to be explored in the Northern Territory, which should be fully funded by the federal government ...

Mr Barrett: Based on the WA model.

Mr ELFERINK: Based on the Western Australian model, the My Way model, which is essentially what we do now. The Western Australian model is pretty much what the Northern Territory government does now for \$88m.

What I expect will come out of this process is an acknowledgment that the NDIS will be a square peg in a round hole in certain parts of this country, and that we will be able to come to some sort of bilateral arrangement with the federal government to deal with all of these component issues so we can move forward. I said to the federal government that it must operate on a no-detriment basis. The Territory must be no worse off under

the NDIS than it is today. These are matters of some concern to me.

I can assure the member for Barkly that the services the NDIS passed over have been maintained for those people in his electorate. I think the member for Barkly can understand my concerns and I expect the shadow Health minister to understand them as well.

I continue with Indigenous advancement in my portfolio area of Health, where \$920 000 will be used to create a framework that supports Indigenous community control and planning, development and management of primary healthcare and community healthcare services, and \$1.17m to boost the number of Indigenous practitioners in the workforce. I am chairing the Back on Track committee to make sure we are achieving proper results in those areas. More than \$20m is being invested in equipment, technology and systems upgrades.

In mental health, an additional \$3m is a direct result of my lobbying with my colleagues. I am grateful to my parliamentary colleagues in the Cabinet process, where I said to the Chief Minister, 'If you do this properly we need to seriously respond'. As a consequence of that, we see \$3m worth of improved services, part of which involves the placement of clinicians in court houses. This is particularly telling because the issue of the intersection between the criminal justice system and the mental health system was something I explored in Phoenix, as well as during my discussion with Jackie Lacey, the District Attorney of Los Angeles. In fact she influenced my opinion substantially on the intersection between the criminal justice system and mental health issues. It is a matter she is quite passionate about. The question was put to me not so long ago, 'How many jobs arose out of your trip to the United States?' Here is the answer: two at least. There are two clinicians in court houses, one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs.

We will also be attending to mental health issues in the primary healthcare sector. We just launched the suicide policy, which I will be keeping a very close eye on, and we are ramping up primary mental health services in remote and regional areas as part of the policy. The other component of mental health services we will fund is a position for somebody whose job it will be to essentially lobby for housing for people with mental health issues.

One of the problems I have described in the past in this House in relation to mental health issues was the gap between outpatient services such as Tamarin Centre and inpatient services like the Cowdy Ward. Unfortunately those two organisations or systems do not sit next to each

other; they sit quite apart from each other, and there is not a great deal in between. Alice Springs has some very good sub-acute services but in places like Darwin there are a handful of beds at the Papaya Centre and a few other places, but it is a pretty poor gap.

Rather than simply saying we will chuck a couple of million bucks into houses and hand over a handful of houses, I would like to approach it differently and get a paid lobbyist whose function is to place people with mental health challenges into housing, and see if we can use a smaller amount of money to get that lobbying work across both the private and the public sectors to see if we can land even more people who need supported accommodation. That will enable a certain flexibility to moving forward.

On to Correctional Services. I suspect I will not get across all my portfolio areas this evening ...

Mr Tollner: I will get you an extension.

Mr ELFERINK: No, I am mindful of the time and I will not torture people to death. However, I will also cover off Correctional Services. Clearly the budget this year has jumped enormously, but that is to pay back the rental arrangements. We have made some savings on the rental arrangements because of the handover issues with the new gaol. It has not been as smooth as we would have hoped, and as a consequence of that we have not started paying the rent back until recently. I will double check that.

In any instance there have been some savings in that space that have enabled us to return some money to the Central Holding Authority for the Treasurer, who was feeling particularly uncharitable about that. That has also enabled us an opportunity to pay for our domestic violence policy. I still believe the family safety policy is the benchmark for this country. I am very proud of the work Jo Sangster has done. I am particularly proud of the policy itself, and I look forward to pressing on.

Sentenced to a Job continues to work. I note, however – I will not say with irritation but some frustration – in Budget Paper No 3 we only have 76 people in jobs at the moment, when the ambition was 150 for the last financial year. Because of the formulaic structure of that, we have said we will only get 70 jobs this year and that is not good enough. We will set our targets much higher than that.

Having made that observation, part of the reason we have not been able to focus as directly on Sentenced to a Job at this stage is the transition to the new gaol site. Now we are in and generally bedded down, with a few teething problems, we

look forward to ramping up pressure on Sentenced to a Job because it has not yet reached the targets I believe it should be aiming for. I will continue to press on in that area.

There is \$6.59m for the continued operation of the low-security prisoner arrangements in Tennant Creek and Nhulunbuy. We will be looking at what we can do with the camp that has been freed up in Nhulunbuy and possibly even the Borroloola area – without any guarantees. It would be useful to see another camp in the Borroloola area if we can manage it. It is a case of 'suck it and see', and looking at the resources on the ground.

I am delighted to note we will have our first permanently established boot camp, in partnership with Operation Flinders, at a cattle station in the Central Australian area. It will be run on the Flinders model. There may also be an opportunity to run post-conviction boot camps for juveniles. The Flinders model tends to be a pre-conviction environment where a kid is a little off-track and needing a little guidance. We have a number of kids locked in prisons who could do with some boot camp time outside the prison where they are challenged in ways they cannot be inside the prison system.

I have not forgotten the Vita report. The juvenile environment has thrown up a number of challenges this year; I make no secret of that. It is frustrating. These juveniles are presenting in a way which is quite new. Commissioner Middlebrook, a man I have enormous respect and regard for, says in all his years of involvement in the corrections system he has not encountered juvenile offenders of this nature.

We are focused on youth offending. I hope to make an announcement in the not-so-distant future about youth courts, particularly in Darwin. I look forward to pressing on in that space.

Much has been made of child protection in the last few days. I appreciate there will always be much made about child protection because it is an emotive issue. I understand that people care and I do not doubt for one second the members opposite also care about child protection issues. I do not know if I agree that the welfare approach so often advocated by members opposite – an approach that does not in any way challenge parents – is the correct approach.

At a media conference in Alice Springs recently I suggested to CAAMA, amongst other media outlets, that kids walking around the streets at 2 am were kids who may well be neglected by their parents. We made it pretty clear we would be picking these kids up and assessing them, if necessary, for their child protection needs.

I was advised by CAAMA that when they went back to the studio they replayed the whole of the media conference. It went through the community like wildfire. On the night of the media conference we found 77 kids on the streets. The next night, after I did further interviews on CAAMA radio, I was advised the message had been resoundingly understood. We picked up 29 kids, from memory, and the town has quietened down enormously since then.

It bothers me that we have to wave the big stick in that fashion. However, there has to be an element of stick. I understand you cannot keep waving sticks; there has to be elements of family support. You will see that reflected in policies going forward. You will certainly see that support for families reflected in the domestic violence policy I referred to earlier. We continue to press on.

Yes, there is much more money budgeted this year than last year. It is a sad reality of the job we are doing that we are taking more and more kids into care in the circumstances that they are less likely to go back to their families. I am not happy about it, but it is a sad fact. The truth is, if I look at some of the families these kids have come from, how can we return them to them?

I know the Northern Territory government has a duty to intervene and try to protect these kids. The fact is that unless we do something about a passive welfare system that just continues to corrode these parents' interest in their own children, we will continue to struggle no matter who is in power, whether it is the Labor Party or us. I am concerned that people seem to think if we take a child off a neglectful parent – and 95% of all kids in care are neglected, only 4% are abused and 1% sexually abused – a disengaged, disinterested parent with no pressure on them from any quarters will take up their role of being parents.

When I applied that pressure in Alice Springs a few weeks ago it seems they became vitally interested very quickly. It saddens me that there are so many parents who will only respond with their parental responsibilities when they are threatened rather than encouraged. That is the sad fact and is what happened in Alice Springs a week ago. We threatened rather than encouraged and all of a sudden these kids started disappearing off the streets.

I am frustrated by what continues to go on in the child protection space. I continue to encourage all my child protection workers to work diligently and hard. There were matters that had to be sorted out with a police reporting regime which seem to be sorted. I look forward to tracking those numbers into the future.

It shall not be long before Dr Bath is replaced. I look forward to some announcement in the future. I encourage whoever replaces Dr Bath to take an approach where they see their role as assisting government in every way they can rather than pointing out the obvious which we can all see on a daily basis on our streets.

The breakup of child protection spending is there for all to see in Budget Paper No 3, but I want to focus on a couple of items. An amount of \$88.6m is allocated to support and protect the increasing number of kids in out-of-home care. This is \$9m more than promised last year. We have done that this year simply because we have more kids in care.

We have cleaned up a lot of those contracts. When I took over I found some contracts were outrageous. We have cleaned up many of those contracts. Nevertheless, the bill keeps going up despite the cleanup because of the volume of contracts we have. I am very concerned that will continue rising. There is \$33.7m in child protection services and the government will invest another \$40.4m for family and parent support services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, several members have offered me extra time. I shall not ask for it simply because the estimates process is just around the corner and I notice some members are yawning and I feel for them. We still have a bit of work to do tonight and I would like to get on with it. I look forward to the estimates process and to demonstrating to Territorians that they have a sound government, and I hope in me a sound minister, able to do the job for their true welfare.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members who have contributed to this debate. I have not followed every presentation but I know that a majority of people have contributed and I am very grateful for that. I look forward to going through the *Hansard* and reading all the comments at another stage.

It has been an interesting debate to listen to. There have been some good points made by all members in this Chamber. I was enthralled listening to the Leader of the Opposition deliver his budget reply speech. All of us on this side of the Chamber are keen to see how the member for Fannie Bay steps up to the plate and delivers a speech. He combed his hair this morning and looked very dapper when he went to the Dispatch Box and delivered his speech.

Unfortunately, member for Fannie Bay, I have to be a bit critical of what you said because you now carry the message of the opposition. Whilst it is good to cut you a little slack as it is your first budget reply and not an easy thing to get your

head across after a week in the job, there is much going on and you can be forgiven for being uninformed and caught on the run when it comes to giving a reply. In that regard I do not think it is worthwhile being overly critical.

However, I will be critical of the direction not just the opposition has taken, but also some of the – I do not know whether you call them PUPs anymore – and the Independent. It was very light on words about financial management for a budget.

It is one thing to say, 'We need more money for education, health and childcare services'. Of course we do; that goes without saying. It would be wonderful to have a magic pudding that keeps on giving and to not worry about where money comes from. Unfortunately ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, honourable members! The Treasurer is responding to the Appropriation Bill. Please will you afford him some respect?

Mr Wood: I will try to respect him.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, please. The Treasurer will respond to a number of items related to your electorate. I thought you would be interested in hearing that. I am not asking you to respond, I am simply asking if you can please offer the Treasurer the respect of listening to the budget reply in silence.

Mr TOLLNER: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not too fussed if there is a little yelling and screaming across the Chamber. It does not bother me a great deal.

What stood out to me from the opposition was this whining, complaining rhetoric that continually comes about more money needing to be spent in all these areas. I agree; more money needs to be spent. It would be wonderful to have \$5bn to devote to Health. It would be wonderful to have \$2bn or \$3bn for Education and another \$2bn thrown in for Police. At the end of the day, the spending we are talking about is not from an endless supply of money. It is money from taxpayers of today – or in the way Labor previously ran budgets, taxpayers of the future – paying for things today.

Something we on this side of the House take very seriously is how you manage the books. Unfortunately putting together a budget, as some members – such as the member for Barkly, who has been through the process, sat in Cabinet meetings for the budget and has argued hard for the Barkly region – well understand, there is only

so much money to go around. You would not have known it with the previous Labor Treasurer. It did not seem that money was ever a problem. She just kept dipping into that borrowing can, racking up debt to the point where she created almost intergenerational debt.

It takes a government like this Giles government, which has some real capacity and intestinal fortitude, to make some tough decisions and big calls to try to get the books back in order.

Member for Fannie Bay, I implore you in future budget responses to take a far more mature view. You like to talk about mature debates. How about getting a little mature and understanding there is no such thing as a magic pudding or an endless supply of money, and ultimately someone has to pay. Not many people like paying. They like a lot of benefits, there is no doubt about that, but not many people want to pay more in tax. There are not many people who like going into debt for things that seem to be frivolous at times.

That is what will give you credibility and the tag of a potentially good economic manager, a person who knows how to balance the books and the budget. Those things are important. Your speech this morning did not have any of the words 'debt', 'deficit' or 'savings'. There was a whole lot of spending commitments.

Mind you, there was a desire to play a bit of politics as well with the area of members' travel. The Chief Minister did a pretty damn good job today in Question Time of showing Labor governments up for what they are and the way they travel. Putting travel aside, there was not too much focus anywhere on saving money, and no plan at all about how you would balance a budget and remove the fiscal imbalance your predecessors left behind for us to clean up.

I do not intend to be on my feet for too long, apart from giving a little gratuitous advice to the Opposition Leader and to thank all members for speaking. Obviously I thank my colleagues, in particular my ministerial colleagues, who worked so hard on this budget and have been through some long and arduous days sitting in meeting rooms and nutting all of this out.

Mr Deputy Speaker, given that there is not much more to say, I move that the bill be now read a second time

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the committee stage be taken later.

Motion agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION
Note Paper – Port of Darwin Select
Committee Report on the
Port of Darwin Lease Model

Continued from 28 April 2015.

Mr GUNNER (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is important to say up front that our consistent position on the port has been that port assets should not be leased or privatised without a mandate from the people at the next Territory election. I make it very clear that although we support the amendments to the bills recommended in the select committee's report, it should not be inferred that we support passage of the bills before the next election, because we do not.

We are aware that the government may want to use its numbers to rush this legislation through the parliament. Our view is that the amendments recommended by the select committee improve the bill that is currently drafted, and should be supported. That is why we support the amendments but not the bills. That is why the work of the committee was so important, why we took the work of the committee so seriously. The people on the committee did a very thorough job. I thank the members for Drysdale, Blain and Nelson for the work we did in quite a short time frame on the Port of Darwin Select Committee.

We travelled around the country looking at a range of ports to gain an understanding of the pressures on them and make a series of recommendations on how we can handle the Port of Darwin. The strong body of work of the committee helps ensure a decision on the port is not rushed. There are a number of recommendations that lend credence to that. Recommendation 8 places an emphasis on doing better work. It says:

The Committee recommends that, prior to entering any lease arrangements, the Government implement a community information and stakeholder consultation strategy to:

- a) *identify further improvements to the leasing proposal including:*
 - i) *what parts of the harbour should be included or excluded from the lease; and*
 - ii) *how competition could be improved; and*

- b) *communicate what is being proposed so affected businesses can plan accordingly.*

There are a number of recommendations about taking time and getting it right – if you choose to go down the path of selling a lease – which should be communicated to the people of the Territory and taken to the next election.

There are a number of good recommendations that require work and recognise the good work the committee has done. We support the amendments to the bill but we do not support the bill. That is important to note up front.

We believe the Territory has a bright future. Our natural endowments, valuable resources, pristine environments, unique culture, spirit of endeavour and productive workforces have driven our success. Geographically we are uniquely positioned on the Australian mainland in proximity to the fastest growing economies in the world. That is why future investment, management and operation of the Darwin port and other Territory ports is critically important to our social and economic development and why leasing the Port of Darwin should not be rushed. It is important that it is not rushed at the expense of public interest. We should not rush a lease of the port to suit a political or one-off economic agenda.

I believe the work of this committee and the committee's report strongly supports taking the time to consider properly what is in the best long-term interests of the port and the Northern Territory. While the CLP and Labor argue about many things, it can be said that in government we have had a common focus on the Territory's destiny as a link between Australia and Asia. A key driving part of this vision has been the trade links supported by the Port of Darwin and its connection to the southern capitals by rail.

I give credit to previous CLP governments for pursuing this strategy and achieving the construction of the railway as a partnership between the private and public sectors, and for developing the port at the railhead for important strategic reasons. We all know the railway came before its time economically and this was overcome by government investment.

We agree on the strategic value of the trade link provided by the port and the railway. That is why in government we made substantial investments in vital port infrastructure and initiatives such as the Darwin Business Park.

We probably agree that the port suffers from a lack of economy of scale but has a critical role in the Territory's development and has a big future. Because of its lack of economy of scale and

subsequent higher costs it is caught in a chicken-and-egg conundrum: how to increase volume to lower the rates before the rates are more attractive.

While I do not encourage large-scale subsidy of the port, the government needs to keep its hands on a strategic asset that helps underpin the Territory's economic future. If the port is sold then control goes to a private company with profit as its main objective. This could mean chasing new business – and I hope it would – but it could mean targeting profitable customers, possibly to the exclusion of marginal customers who might become industries of the future.

By selling the port the government will be taking its hands off one of the strategic levers of development before it was ready to stand alone. This could be a big mistake for the Territory and should be put before Territorians at an election.

In Western Australia a similar question was asked and the Western Australian Liberal government made the decision to keep control of its strategic assets and its ports, but found a different way to get private capital into its ports. It is exploring a way of getting private investment and specific assets within a port, but keep a hold of the strategic control of the port and the dividends that flow from the port.

We recognise the importance of getting private capital into the port but we think there are other ways of doing this. There are ways of having public private partnerships that do not mean you lose strategic control of the port or lose dividends from the port.

Based on these considerations we do not support enactment of the Port of Darwin Bill or the Ports Management Bill, which were central to the select committee's inquiry. Our consistent position is port assets should never be leased or privatised without a mandate from the people at the next Territory election. Our position has been very clear: we would be worried about taking our hands off one of the strategic levers of the Territory.

It is particularly the case given the value of the port's assets and the profound implications of the bills across a range of strategic issues identified in the select committee's report. I will turn to some of those issues shortly, but will make some general points about the report and the implications of the bills the select committee has inquired into.

Given the strategic implication of the bills and the impact on port users, consumers and the wider community, there is no need to rush their enactment through this Assembly. We need time

for considered debate informed by the views of all legitimate stakeholders, the community and expert advice across a range of disciplines.

There is very real concern in the community that privatisation of port assets is part of a wider CLP strategy to build a taxpayer-funded war chest to support unsustainable promises during next year's general election. Under this scenario the legitimate interests of stakeholders, consumers and the wider community are subservient to the government's political agenda. The privatisation of TIO without proper community consultation illustrated a CLP agenda of privatise first and avoid scrutiny later. This is not a good omen for the future of our ports. We urge caution and say if you go down this path do it properly. There is more work to be done and more conversations to have with Territorians. The action the CLP took around TIO is why there is a widely-held view in the community that the CLP cannot be trusted with public assets. Secret deals cannot be done behind closed doors.

The select committee's report makes a number of sensible amendments which improve the draft bills. This brings into focus the haste in which the bills were rushed to parliament without community or stakeholder consultation. We think it was only due to the pressure from the opposition and the member for Nelson that we finally got a select committee inquiry into the measures outlined in the port bills.

The Chair and other committee members took the work of the port committee seriously. We have written a pretty good report. We support the amendments to the bills recommended in the select committee's report, but it should not be inferred that because we support these recommendations we support passage of the bills before the next election, because we do not.

We think it is important that if you choose to go down that path against advice, that you do it as best you can. This committee report can inform you in that direction. We urge you again, be cautious. Do not lose strategic control of an important asset. The Western Australian Liberal government made some very big decisions about keeping control of their strategic assets and the dividends but found a different way to get private capital into those ports.

This report covers a wide range of complex issues fundamental to proper consideration of the bills and any lease model for the Port of Darwin. We have stated consistently there must be proper consultation with the Territory community, stakeholders, port users and consumers, and the select committee's report reinforces this.

Although the Productivity Commission generally supports privatisation of large ports, a number of its observations about the importance of public consultation are cited in the select committee's report. Page 23 of the report quotes from the *Public Infrastructure, Productivity Commission Inquiry Report*.

Properly conducted cost-benefit studies of large projects, and their disclosure to the public, is an important starting point for ... improving the transparency of decision making.

The fundamental need for public consultation and a properly conducted cost-benefit analysis of the leasing arrangements for the Port of Darwin and other Territory ports cannot be overstated. We need a proper starting point for this conversation. The select committee report is very helpful, but a proper cost-benefit analysis, as identified by the Productivity Commission, is crucial to a starting point for a conversation with the public and stakeholders.

Recent experience has not been encouraging in how the CLP approached these things. In common with the sale of TIO, Territorians have not yet seen the supported starting point – disclosure of a transparent cost-benefit analysis of a port leasing model, including the various assumptions and projects that underpin the analysis. This is what has been recommended by the Productivity Commission in the public interest, and the Chief Minister should follow this advice. To reinforce this significant public interest consideration, the select committee's report stated on page 24:

Similarly, the Productivity Commission's 2014 inquiry report into Public Infrastructure recommends that:

Privatisation should be subject to appropriate processes to ensure that the public interest is protected.

If undertaken appropriately, it is in the public interest to privatise ... major ports. The transition to privatisation involves a range of activities, including effective communication with the community, that require careful management and leadership.

If you go down this path you need to make sure you do the work up front, and we have not seen that. That was with respect to major ports.

Chief Minister, we need effective communication. Where is the careful management and leadership as identified?

Page 24 of the select committee report makes further observations about the lack of consultation:

Lack of consultation regarding the proposal was also raised. The Committee was concerned to learn that, in many instances, key stakeholders had not been formally consulted or approached by the Government prior to being invited to appear before the Committee. Recognising the potential benefits of the proposal, it was evident that they were keen to participate in its development. As Warwick Sommer, General Manager Commercial and Business Development, Asciano Group, noted, in addition to considering the needs of potential stakeholders and those looking to develop opportunities, the Government also needs to consider the:

group of existing port users and making sure that they have a sense of comfort as to what this proposal may deliver – so no massive disruption in tenure nor any immediate concerns about large rate increases or the like.

We have not been talking or working with the people in and around the port about what might happen with the future of the port. That important early work has not been done. If you go down this path there is still a whole body of work that needs to be done with the users of the port: the key stakeholders who have not been formatively consulted or approached, and whose first opportunity to provide any meaningful feedback was to our committee. It is important that we do not rush down a path when this work needs to be done, as has been identified through this port committee report.

Based on lack of consultation alone, there is compelling justification to defer consideration of the port bills. That is very important. There is a significant argument in this committee report to defer consideration of the port bills until this work has been done.

The select committee has identified some very substantial issues in relation to optimism bias regarding the potential of Darwin's port. In its 2014 inquiry report the Productivity Commission defied optimism bias as:

A demonstrated, systemic, tendency for project appraisers to be overly optimistic ... to overstate benefits, and understate timings and costs, both capital and operational.

This is another important reason for public consultation and the release of the cost-benefit

analysis as a starting point for that conversation. We should hear from the Chief Minister about releasing that detail and making sure we protect the public interest as recommended by the Productivity Commission.

On pages 23 and 24 of this report the select committee cited some examples of optimism bias which reinforced the need for more public scrutiny of the lease model arrangements for the Port of Darwin and the underlying assumptions:

Overall, the Committee found that key stakeholders were generally supportive of the objects of the proposal. However, the associated 'optimism bias' regarding the port's potential, particularly in the short to medium term, and the absence of a publicly available cost-benefit analysis was noted.

...

For example, in relation to live cattle exports the Steering Committee advised the Committee that:

We know the Asians ... are very keen on working with the Territory to increase the number of live cattle exported from two million to three million.

However, later we heard from the NT Livestock Export Association which advised the committee that, subject to the necessary upgrades in berthing space and accessibility, the rate and methodology of loading livestock and fodder and heavy vehicle access, reaching their target of one million head by 2025 was achievable. That is a big difference in numbers.

Similarly, the viability of the Government's goal to 'make the Port of Darwin a cost-effective alternative to southern ports which are becoming congested and have serious transport logistics issues' was brought into question. As highlighted in the submission from the Maritime Union of Australia ... and confirmed by the DPC during the Committee's site visit to the Port of Darwin, 'shipping is a far cheaper way to transport goods per tonne-kilometre than road or rail, particularly when they are containerised'. Moreover, apart from the significant level of investment in port infrastructure and container handling equipment that would be required, a commensurate level of investment would also be needed for associated intrastate landside infrastructure.

There is concern about the potential benefits being overly emphasised, which is optimism bias.

We heard directly about a significant difference in numbers and what could happen in the future between what the livestock exporters and the steering committee were saying, as well as the potential to see goods broken down at the Port of Darwin and shipped by road or rail versus continuing on by sea. We have to be very careful about optimism bias.

The essential point made in these extracts from the select committee's report is that both the Darwin Port Corporation and MUA have drawn the government's attention to the need for proper analysis of the projected capacity, utilisation and infrastructure requirements for the port to underpin sensible investment decisions and support, and to consider that the one-size-fits-all approach is not consistent with the unique challenges for the future development of Darwin's port.

In this context, I draw the attention of the Assembly to the chart on the status of port privatisation on page 28 of the select committee's report. You will note that of the 20 ports listed, Darwin's annual volume of 4.2 million tonnes is the lowest in Australia, and substantial declines in the iron ore price and closure of mines in the Territory will impact on tonnage into the future. The submission from the Darwin select committee on behalf of the government refers to the substantial decline as a hiatus. It is one of the many factors which require careful consideration in the government's deliberation on the future of the port.

We need to understand what the future projections for iron ore exports and other commodities are and work out if these projections are included in the cost-benefit analysis yet to be released by the Chief Minister, which should underpin the starting point of a conversation with stakeholders and the public.

Pricing and monopoly rates were major issues raised with the select committee in submissions and during its deliberations. On page 45, we note at 5.5:

In light of the recent experiences of port users at the Port of Brisbane where charges have risen significantly post privatisation, the main concern raised with the Committee regarding the proposed lease model for the Port of Darwin were price rises. There were two aspects of this concern. The first was that a private operator would set pricing on a purely commercial basis. The second was that a private operator would use its market power to set prices on a monopoly basis.

There are recommendations that go to these areas. This theme is reinforced on page 46:

Amongst port users that gave evidence there was a general acceptance that charging commercial rates was appropriate in today's economy. However, in light of the recent price rises, many expressed their concern regarding the impact further increases as a result of privatisation may have on the viability of their businesses and potential impact on consumers. As Jared Chng: Chief Financial Officer, Vopak Australia pointed out:

A lot of our concern will be the cost factor, along with other participants I have heard so far ... Some of it we can charge to our consumers, who are oil retailers, and in turn to protect their margins they would have to increase the petroleum prices. Some of it we have to bear, so that eats into our margins ... We just had a rental review of our land lease rates and we had a 40% to 50% increase in our original land lease rates. So this is quite a big increase, it is a big component that we have to bear in terms of our margins.

On the question of excessive charges, on page 47 the select committee has also invoked the terms of the ACCC in the following terms:

However, it was also clear from talking to port users that some considered that they were charged in excess of a fair rate. The Committee notes that the ACCC has expressed concerns that ports have been enjoying a very high rate of return over extended periods that are consistent with monopoly pricing and has the view that price monitoring has failed to adequately control pricing in ports:

Leases to operate ports may fetch high prices when sold by governments if bidders anticipate the ability to earn monopoly profits from the asset and recover the price paid from port users, or favour downstream businesses.

Obviously this is a major concern to us when we have a very strategic asset we are trying to develop that is currently underutilised. We want to use it as part of our gateway to Asia so we do not suddenly have monopoly prices come into effect, or commercial prices at a rate that impair what may be viewed currently as niche industries but may become our industries of the future ...

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I seek an extension of time for my colleague.

Motion agreed to.

Mr GUNNER: I appreciate the enthusiasm.

Territory businesses and families have reasonable expectations that an increase in port charges not drive up the cost of the building as well. They have these concerns about pricing out niche industries that we want to grow and the impact on the cost of living in the Territory. We have a government that has had a poor record during this term on the cost of living despite an election promise to cut it.

There are a number of thoughtful submissions received by the select committee to inform our deliberations on the Port of Darwin lease model and related issues. I thank the NT Livestock Exporters Association, the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, the NT Government Steering Committee, the Maritime Union of Australia and other organisations for their submissions.

I note that the MUA is very concerned about the potential casualization of the stevedoring workforce under this privatisation agenda. That is something we need to think about. There are Territory jobs at the port. People have been employed under certain conditions and we do not want those conditions to go backwards. We do not want people to lose their jobs. We have seen an impact on Territorians' jobs from the sale of TIO. We do not want to see a similar outcome at the port. We are concerned about what will happen in that instance.

Caution and care needs to be given to a strategic asset in the Territory government's control to ensure we do not lose control of it. We think there are other ways to get private capital into the port that do not mean selling or leasing it. Those things need to be considered; they are good options. Western Australia, a very successful state, has taken that option. The Western Australia Liberal government went down that path and it is a legitimate choice we should consider.

My colleagues will have more to say about the issues raised in the submissions received by the select committee when we talk to this debate on the port bills. We again emphasise there is no need to rush these bills through these sittings. This is a well-researched report produced in a short period of time which provides a reasonable excuse to defer the port bills while a body of work is completed so everyone understands what the government will do. The select committee chair and the member for Drysdale deserve the respect to have that work completed.

We do not believe there is a mandate to lease the port or sell the assets, and this major policy will

have significant implications for Territory families, businesses, consumers and employees. If the government goes down this path this should be taken to an election.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the select committee secretariat and all those who contributed to the committee report: the witnesses; the port people around the country who took time out to brief us and take us on tours of their port; and the users of ports and other places around Australia who took time out to take us through their concerns and experiences. I again thank my colleagues on the port committee. We did good work in a short period of time. I do not believe there is any need to rush the passage of these bills through the Assembly. We need to be cautious with a very strategic asset of the Territory.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been an interesting journey for 11 weeks to come back to this parliament with a report about whether or not we should privatise our port.

Whilst I sympathise with the Leader of the Opposition and I have said it would be good if the question could go back to the public, if the government genuinely and adequately consults with the people it then has some mandate to make a decision over the future of the port. But I stress it has to be genuine consultation. That was not the case with TIO. That should have taught the government some lessons about proper consultation and that it needs to go down that path.

There is no doubt this is a difficult issue even for the public. If you went to South Australia you would find nearly every port is privatised. Is the South Australian public complaining? Is South Australian industry complaining? I did not get the feeling that was the case.

However, in the case of Portland, yes they are complaining. So even within the privatised models you can have some issues. I visited Portland twice. I went down of my own accord when this legislation was first brought before parliament because I believed I had to investigate how private ports existed. I went to Portland and Adelaide port, which is run by Flinders Ports.

Portland is different to what the government is looking at. It is totally owned by a private company; it is not leased. The Victorian government sold it holus-bolus. It is owned by a number of companies which are representatives of superannuation investment companies, which run the whole show. I had discussions with the management, a representative of the woodchip industry, the mineral sands industry, one of the stevedoring companies, Qube, and one of the shipping agencies, Inchcape. The impression I

obtained from those people outside the Port of Portland's management was they were being held to ransom over pricing. The reason is much of the materials that go through Portland are high-volume low-value products such as woodchip, timber and mineral sands. They said that prices had increased about 10% to 12% per year over the last few years.

There is no control over that pricing except the company will increase its prices as much as it can until a point where it realises it may not have any more business because people may not be able to ship out of Portland. Portland customers do not have any option. You cannot take woodchip to Adelaide or Geelong because it is too far. It is similar to Darwin in the sense that if you have to rely on Portland you have to live with whatever charges that company imposes.

I spoke to a company called One Forty One which is based in Mt Gambier. The company is part of a conglomerate of timber companies which have now got together to try to put some pressure on the Port of Portland to put a hold on the prices over the wharf. That is one of the extremes when it comes to private ownership.

Adelaide is regulated and that is one of the differences between Portland and Adelaide. Portland has what we call the Utilities Commission but they have a slightly different name for it. The job of that commission is to make sure the prices being charged by Flinders Ports are not much more or about the same as the CPI. Portland does not have a Utilities Commission. There was one about five or six years ago but it does not apply to Portland now.

If the government wants to put a case that it is a good idea to privatise the port, one of the key factors is to show the people, and more so the businesses that would use the port, that they will not be held to ransom by monopoly pricing. The way to make sure monopoly pricing cannot occur in a detrimental way is to have a strong regulatory program through legislation which would be administered by the Utilities Commission. A proper regulatory program is important.

I have a document I have had for some time from the ACCC. They gave a presentation at a biennial ports seminar. In that document they clearly state that you have to make sure you constrain monopoly power, and one way is through proper regulation. They admit private ports are sometimes more efficient, but on the other hand you have to make sure that monopoly does not cause exorbitant prices for exporters, which is what we have to watch.

The government also needs to convince people that there are other options. If they think this is

the best option they need to show the people it is. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the Western Australian model where tenders at Fremantle were given out for stevedoring. They were looking at part privatisation of the ports, where the government still had a fair bit of input into the ownership of that port.

One of the other issues is that the government needs to show that by losing the revenue it would get – I will give you an example. At the moment, the port makes roughly \$15m a year. Over the next 20 years it would make about \$300m. If the government sells the port for \$200m – and please do not say that is the price, because I would not have a clue – it technically has lost \$100m in revenue it would have received over 20 years.

There are more complicated factors that come into play, as the member for Blain has told me. However, the government has a duty to show people that if we sell the port, yes, we lose revenue; there is no doubt about it. It is up to the government to show the public that loss of revenue will be offset by selling the port, better efficiencies and better economy, etcetera. It is beholden on the government to show that.

At the moment the port makes money. It will be a little less while we are not exporting iron ore, but I am sure those things will pick up in time. In the consultation process it is up to the government to show the benefits of privatisation as opposed to hanging on to a public port.

The government also has a duty to make sure workers are looked after. We have owned the port for a long time and there are many people who work on that port. Some of them are getting close to retirement. It is fair to ensure those workers have either a future if the port is privatised with the new company or, as it says under item 6.56 in the committee report:

The Committee considers it essential that workers be treated fairly. It understands that their conditions of employment will continue under their current enterprise agreement until its expiry and then a new agreement will need to be negotiated under the Fair Work Act.

It goes on to say in 6.57:

The Committee anticipates that there may be instances, such as long-term workers close to retirement, where involuntary moving from the public sector could create an unfair disadvantage. The Committee considers that options such as transfer to other employment in the public sector or redundancies should be available in

circumstances where it would create an unfair disadvantage not to do so.

If the government has made the decision to no longer be the owner of the port, it has a responsibility to make sure those workers who were expecting to spend their working lives in the port are fairly treated, be it with new jobs, protection in the job they have so they can retain their existing benefits, or a fair redundancy package which represents the amount of time they have worked in the port. That is another area that needs to be looked at.

I have a couple of other issues regarding consultation with the public. It came to our attention that some of the people from the companies who were interviewed had not been consulted. I heard that the port authority had been talking to all the people who use the port. I do not know whether there has been a misunderstanding. We asked those businesses if they had been consulted about the process, from the government's point of view, about the change it is intending to make.

I will just read an item here. Item 6.3 under Consultation said:

A number of stakeholders informed the Committee that its inquiry was the first time they had been asked to comment on the proposal and were concerned that particular issues be adequately considered. For example, the Northern Territory Livestock Exporters Association were concerned that they had not been consulted on the proposal and were wanting to be more involved in decisionmaking around the port with a view to removing bottlenecks and furthering their target of getting one million head of cattle out of the port by the year 2025.

They were not against the port being privatised, but they were saying that before you do this they would like to put their hand up. They were not the only people to say that. Bhagwan Marine also had some concerns.

There are two sides to the consultation. There is the public consultation which must go ahead. My understanding is the government is already setting a program in place. However, it needs to ensure that the people who are using the port have had reasonable time to discuss this issue as well.

Again, I emphasise that the key for me, if the government wants my support to privatise the port, is to ensure there is genuine consultation with the community. I want no smooth selling of the port, but some of the issues I have raised need to be relayed to the people to make clear

some of the factors the government has considered which led it to think it is the better way to go because of this, this and this. That has to happen. Treat people as if they can understand what is going on. If you convince people this is a good idea and your arguments stack up, people will support you.

It is obvious there are some downsides to public ports. That was emphasised as we visited them, even in ports that were owned by the government. For instance, nearly every port, privatised or not, said the downside can be that the minister has a say in the running of the port.

If I am Joe Blow selling potatoes to China and the port is charging me too much money to get them there for a reasonable price, I go to the minister and say, 'Minister, I cannot get my potatoes over there'. The minister then interferes in the running of the port. He can tell the port that this is unfair on Joe Blow and the port might then be required to make a decision based more on political rather than economic reasoning. It might not be feasible for the company to ship potatoes out of that port and make a loss doing it. That is one of the downsides.

Of course having a minister involved can be an upside. The government wants to make a profit, and our port already makes a profit. It is a facility which makes money for the government, so from a ministerial point of view it is good if he can show people the port is making money. One of the downsides is that a company can make a decision now, whereas when a port is making big decisions it has to go through that bureaucratic process which can make it less efficient than a private operator.

I raised the issue of foreign ownership during discussions. I am one of those who believes there should be at least 51% Australian ownership. Ports are the centre of the economic development of the area. Most products are moved by ship in the world, not by rail or road. The Port of Darwin is the gateway to the Northern Territory. We need to ensure that whoever owns the port is an Australian company. It does not mean it cannot have foreign investment, but I do not think majority foreign ownership is a good idea when it comes to a monopoly facility which has control, to some extent, over the economy of the Northern Territory.

The other issue I raised, and the member for Blain also mentioned, was that if a foreign company owns the port, that company might come from a country with a different political opinion to some of the people who use the port; that may not be good either. We have in our recommendations a matter which will cover that:

The Committee recommends that in the case of foreign investment in a lease over the Port of Darwin:

a) a component of the lease be kept in the control of an Australian entity ...

I say that should be at least 51%:

... and

b) the Government consult with the Foreign Investment Review Board and the Department of Defence regarding security or strategic risks that a proposed partner may present.

That reflects the fact that we get war ships from all different countries in and out of our port. We have Defence exercises regularly in the Northern Territory, so that has to be taken into account seriously. I hope the government looks at that. I am not sure it necessary agrees with me, but I still think Australia ownership should be at least 51%.

One of the other issues raised was, if we do privatise through a lease arrangement, the length of the lease. Here we basically say it should be no more than 99 years. That is pretty normal. The issue is if you have it under 50 years you run into some taxation implications. You also need to give people some certainty as to their control over the port.

In relation to that, the government needs to make it clear where it stands with any future port, because in the greater Darwin plan there are two ports mentioned: Taranaki in the West Arm and Glyde Point to the north. There is no way that a company wanting to take over our existing port would want to take it over if it knew the government will start up another port in competition. That would make it impossible to sell our port. One of the ideas mentioned to me was that you put in an option to say the present port owner would be given the first chance to build a new port if that is what the government was proposing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are many other issues, but it is late so I will not extend the time. I thank everybody who was involved: the members for Blain and Drysdale, the Opposition Leader and all the staff. They did a tremendous amount of work. We travelled many miles, we had lots of discussions, and we enjoyed ourselves. I even saw on Facebook the members for Blain and Drysdale, and the Leader of the Opposition on the news. What a wonderful group we were. It was enjoyable, but it was hard work, and we came up with a good committee report.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Mr Deputy Speaker, as mentioned by my colleagues, the port committee was made up of me as a general member, the members for Nelson and Fannie Bay, and was chaired by the member for Blain.

We had the opportunity to visit ports around the country that were a real mix. We visited ports that were government owned and operated, completely private and had been sold by government, government owned leased ports and government owned with private components. The member for Nelson ran over those nicely.

I thank all of the port operators at the ports we visited. We took up a lot of people's time. They were very generous with their time and information, so I thank all of them for accommodating us. It is a bit random to have a handful of politicians from the Northern Territory visiting places like Geraldton, Fremantle and Portland. They were not expecting our visit, but welcomed it and embraced us, and were extremely generous with their time and information.

I also thank the public and the stakeholder groups who provided submissions and came before our committee during our two days of public hearings. We tried very hard to make this an open, transparent and public process. When we were on the road we were constantly issuing media releases about our day and keeping people up to date with notices in the paper and things like that. We held two days of public hearings in Darwin and 10 stakeholders appeared before our committee hearings. That was fantastic. Thank you to the people who took the time to meet with us. That was publicly broadcast over the live stream. We also received five written submissions. Thank you to those stakeholders who took the time to contribute to our research and information. It was all very valuable and added to our knowledge, as did the trip.

It is very topical talking about trips today and their value. I learnt a lot on our respective port trips and we could not have put together the report we did without having made them.

Ports worldwide are facing a challenge to continue to invest and attract shipping routes and compete with each other. Darwin port is in a position where it needs to increase various elements of its port – this is not surprising information – such as dry bulk stockpiles. Ideally it would have a looped rail, which many ports we visited did not. They all wished they had a rail looped around rather than having to reverse in and out. This requires significant investment to ensure it is ready and able to attract port users.

As an example, we heard from the NT Live Exporters Association, a significant port user of the Port of Darwin, that they have aspirations to increase their head of cattle over the wharf from 540 000-odd to one million head of cattle by 2025. In their words it is a completely achievable target. Over time there will be an ever greater demand for our port. For the live exporters to achieve their export goals and objectives they would require greater access to the port, better loading technology and methodology, and things like that.

The member for Fannie Bay talked about the chicken and the egg. My interpretation of what I heard loud and clear from port operators at the ports we visited was you have to prepare your port for the opportunities that may be coming. You cannot attract new opportunities or seize opportunities if you do not have the infrastructure in place. You need to plan and prepare early, and generating from that, the work will come.

The committee understands that the port provides both public and private functions so both interests need to be managed. Our report deals with each of those interests. There are the private functions of the port users and a port operator – they are all businesses and need to be working with one another and generating their own revenue for their own businesses at all levels of port interaction. Then there is the private interest, and that is that we need ports to be open. We all said it is a major piece of strategic infrastructure and is critical to bringing down the cost of living and ensuring we have access to resources and our exporters can compete on the international stage.

When we set out as a committee – this is my opinion, but I am sure my committee colleagues will agree – we initially expected to hear from all the port users around the country we visited that there would be clear, definitive, best port ownership models and we would be repeatedly told, 'This is the best. What you need is this.' That was not the case and we learnt that very quickly.

After the first couple of ports we learnt there is no one model that fits all. There is no one best model in the country. We learnt that the various models have their place in their specific context, and the context of the port is important. All ports are different geographically, in what they trade and in how they are connected intrastate, which is very significant.

We originally set out to achieve the best recommendation to government, but were able to put to government a better product in the sense that we put forward a series of recommendations which highlight a broad range of issues that either have arisen in various ports or other privatisation contexts interstate, or that could foreseeably arise

in those other models explored. Our recommendations take into consideration a much broader range of scenarios. We picked the best from everything we learnt and presented it to government to be mindful of when making decisions.

In total the committee unanimously agreed to 18 recommendations which now sit with government to consider and act responsibly upon. I will not speak to each of the recommendations, as there are 18 and my colleagues have spoken to many of them. That detail is available in the report, but I want to highlight a couple.

Our first recommendation went straight to the core of consultation. It became apparent to the committee during our public hearings that port users expected a greater level of involvement in this process, so that is something we put at the front. I know it is a core point in the member for Nelson's mind. The added layer on that is the public consultation, but when we held our public hearings and were engaging with stakeholders they wanted to have a greater level of involvement in the process, so that was our number one recommendation in the report.

The second recommendation I will highlight is port access. Managing port access is critical to the success of the Port of Darwin into the future. That was something which came up repeatedly, albeit in different contexts of ports visited. Port access was a huge concern to stakeholders and something port operators raised with us. Government needs to be mindful of the need for safeguards so ships have fair access to load and unload, and that wharf users are not squeezed out of using infrastructure due to monopoly access and pricing. Access was a huge part of what we looked at, and it was a recurring theme no matter what the context of privatisation or government ownership.

The third recommendation I will cover is price monitoring – which goes hand in hand with access – not just to the port operator, but through to the third-party operators. That is critical to ensure monopoly pricing does not strangle the growth and use of the port. We saw various examples and various scenarios of how this could come about were explained.

The bill before the House already has a Utilities Commission, which is fantastic. Our recommendation is that the commission's powers are extended to third-party users so all prices go through the commission to be assessed for fairness and their application to port users. We do not want to see, for example, a stevedoring company price gouging for the use of critical infrastructure on the port and abusing its ownership of that infrastructure.

The fourth recommendation was the need for a robust legal team and a sophisticated negotiation team looking after any lease or otherwise of the port. The committee recognised the importance of having a strong legal team to ensure the requirements and aspirations of government are enshrined in the legal documentation and that those aspirations and requirements of government are enforceable under the contract and are watertight.

We learnt of many examples where attention to detail had not been paid and a number of unforeseen scenarios had cropped up with instances of governments being outplayed by private operators. We do not want to see that in the Northern Territory. It can be avoided when you have the right people poring over the details. That was an important recommendation; if government has certain requirements and aspirations, and wants certain things to be recognised by any new port operator, should it go down that path, then they should be enshrined in the legal documentation as much as possible to avoid any surprises down the track.

The committee's recommendations strike a balance between what port users require in respect to access, price monitoring and safety, and what port operators require, such as a lengthy lease term so they can get a return on the capital investments they might make at the port. I hope many of the stakeholders and user groups who wrote submissions to the committee will see that we heard their concerns loud and clear and they have been reflected in a large number of the recommendations.

The recommendation about near-retiring port workers came from some close work with one of the groups which made submissions to us.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, thank you to everyone who participated. Thank you to the members for Fannie Bay, Nelson and Blain. It was wonderful working in such close quarters for long hours squished up together in vehicle back seats. We produced a report that is fair and balanced, has the best interests of Territorians at its heart and put forward 18 solid recommendations to government that should assist it no matter what way, shape or form any privatisation of the port takes place.

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, we have seen in this debate a very good example of the parliamentary process in action. It highlights good governance. Bills come before the House and we set a parliamentary committee to review them. The parliamentary committee has reported back and the report has been widely accepted as a good report. Well done to the

parliament for that process, but also well done to you as the chair.

I begin my remarks by thanking the members of the Port of Darwin Select Committee for 10 weeks of hard work which has resulted in the tabling of its report in this Assembly. As members will recall, there was a unanimous agreement in the February sittings to the formation of a select committee to inquire into and report on the Port of Darwin lease model to ensure any private partner has a vision for the growth and development of the Port of Darwin which is aligned to that of the NT government, is required to charge realistic and competitive pricing that promotes business and economic development, and has work practices and processes which represent international best practice in the areas of safety, the environment and operational efficiency.

I understand the select committee visited a number of ports interstate to talk to the operators and users of those ports about their experiences following private sector investment. Four written submissions were received by the select committee and 12 organisations gave evidence at the hearings held on Tuesday 31 March and Wednesday 1 April. The select committee has considered all the information it gathered, and based on the knowledge obtained has made 18 recommendations in its 76-page report.

The select committee inquiry has been a valuable and worthwhile process, as it allowed interested parties to discuss important issues concerning my government's proposal to seek private investment in the Port of Darwin to support economic growth into the future, particularly as INPEX tapers off and our economy diversifies.

There appeared to be a general consensus from witnesses giving evidence at the hearings that investment is necessary to address immediate and future Port of Darwin infrastructure needs. It also is required to position the port to be a more efficient and effective contributor to the Northern Territory economy.

All in this Chamber recognise that private investment is critical to enable this investment to occur. The Territory government has no magic pudding and we simply cannot afford to fund the necessary strategic infrastructure without compromising capacity to invest in other projects such as health and education services or road investment across the Territory. Most organisations giving evidence indicated they were not opposed to private investment per se, provided an appropriate regulatory framework with adequate checks and balances is in place. The Port of Darwin is a valuable economic enabler for the Northern Territory and it is crucial that we harness the opportunities it presents. Private

investment will increase the commercial productivity of the port and will ensure it is best placed to grow and develop in line with our expanding economy.

We are pushing forward with this as the current market conditions are optimal for investors to expand the capacity of our port and meet the needs of a growing northern Australia. The strong private sector interest in infrastructure assets is being led by excess market liquidity, low debt costs and new entrants to the traditional infrastructure market.

In Australia our political and economic stability and strength provide investors with attractive investment opportunities. We must not delay and see the current favourable investor market erode. Factors such as a slow-down in the Australian economy and the US Federal Reserve signalling higher government bond rates may have an adverse market effect. It is important that private sector investment proceeds in a timely fashion in light of the real potential for erosion in current market conditions in the short term.

Taking advantage of the current market, a partnership with the private sector will help drive economic growth and development to grow the port and establish Darwin as the real port of choice of northern Australia. It will provide access to strong private sector experience and expertise in operating ports. It will also reduce the Territory's reliance on the Commonwealth government by increasing our capacity to generate our own revenue, with a long-term view of reducing our GST receipts from Canberra as we increase our performance as an economy. This will in turn enable greater spending discretion for the Territory to invest in new social and economic infrastructure which government cannot otherwise afford to make.

The key is to ensure we pick the right investor who shares the government's aspirations and vision for the future economic growth and development of the Territory. I want to make this clear. It is not about price or obtaining the highest price for government coffers. This is about the best partner to support an expansion of our port, strategic infrastructure and our economy, and at the end of the day support jobs for Territorians.

We also need robust regulatory, lease and contractual arrangements to be put in place to ensure the highest level of safety is maintained, that access and price regulation structures provide certainty to investors and port users, and that port operators and government continue to consult with port users on important matters.

Making sure Territorians understand what we are trying to achieve through private investment in the

port is of utmost importance. I would like Territorians to understand we are not selling an asset which is vital to the development of the Territory; we are looking for a partner who shares in our vision and our plan for the Northern Territory's future, and is willing to invest in our port to develop it in line with our growing current and future economy.

In parallel with our process to test the market for possible partners, we will consult with Territorians so they understand our objective. We will listen to and keep abreast of Territorians' conversations in regard to the development of the project as it progresses.

Let me make it clear that our objective is to find the right partner to operate the port, not necessarily the partner who is willing to put the most money up front, but one who is willing to invest in and grow the port in the near-term and over the longer term of the lease.

Let me emphasise that what we are doing now is setting ourselves up so we can test the market to see if the right partner exists and is interested in partnering with the Territory over the long term. That is in line with the strong regulatory environment we will put in place. We will not make any decisions about the right partner for our port until around September this year.

I again congratulate the Port of Darwin select committee on its report and its 18 recommendations. The select committee's 18th and final recommendation is that government provides a formal response to the committee's recommendations by the June 2015 sittings of the Assembly.

Given the importance of this project to the future of the Northern Territory, my government has in the last 24 hours already spent considerable time analysing the recommendations of the select committee. After tabling of the report yesterday I convened a Cabinet meeting late yesterday to consider the recommendations. I am pleased to advise the Assembly that my government supports all the principles contained in the recommendations made by the select committee.

I want to say that in a different way. This Chamber fully endorsed this bill going to a select committee. The select committee had four members who fundamentally agreed with all 18 recommendations. It has come back into the Chamber today and we are debating the port select committee report. Government, as I just said, fully supports, in principle, every single recommendation.

We will ensure that the recommendations are implemented in a manner which achieves the

intended objectives and addresses concerns without compromising the integrity and efficacy of current and proposed legislative policies and structures. In fact, I am proposing we as a government go even further than the recommendations contained within this report. I will explain my additional recommendations after I go through each and every one of the 18 select committee recommendations to provide clarity and my government's more detailed response to each.

Recommendation 1

... that the Ports Management Bill be amended to require the port authority to consult with all persons directly affected by port operations in the preparation of its port safety plans.

Response: my government agrees that port operators must consult with all persons directly affected by port operations in the preparation of port safety plans. The Ports Management Bill already envisages a need for consultation in the preparation of the port safety plan through clause 32(1)(e) and implementation of the plan through clause 28(1)(e). I am proposing that the requirement to consult will be included in the Port Safety Plan Guidelines issued by the regional Harbourmaster. These guidelines will clearly set out the processes for consultation with affected persons. As the regional Harbourmaster is also responsible for approving port safety plans, he will be able to ensure that consultation has been undertaken in compliance with the guidelines and will not approve a safety plan if adequate consultation has not occurred.

Finally, I will direct that other marine safety procedures issued by the Northern Territory government will likewise include provision for stakeholder consultation as applicable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek a point of clarification. Is it possible at the end of this debate to have an additional 10 minutes if requested by a colleague, or is this subject to 20 minutes only? I need to know how fast I need to talk.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will ask the Clerk. There is an additional 10 minutes with the pleasure of the House. I remind you it is 11.45 pm.

Mr GILES: Thank you, I will speak quickly.

Recommendation 2

... that the Ports Management Bill be amended to include offences for failing to comply with a port safety plan and that the maximum penalties for these offences be no less than those for failure to comply with

a work safety duty under the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act.

The response by the government is, as we accept in principle, penalties need to be consistent within an offence, and safety and environmental protection are absolutely paramount. Safety is covered under the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act* and the same penalties will apply. Similarly, environmental liabilities are covered in the *Marine Pollution Act* and the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, and the same penalties will apply for breaches.

My government will ensure that the liabilities and offences which currently exist under existing specific legislation remain in force and are not inadvertently overwritten by the Ports Management Bill. Clauses 29(1) and 33(1) of the Ports Management Bill require that the operator must have, and implement, a port safety plan. In implementing a plan, the operator will be required to advise all third parties, through lease arrangements, that failure to comply with the plan will potentially lead to penalties being applied through other relevant legislation.

Before I go on to recommendation 3, we accept every recommendation in principle. I put the clarifier 'in principle' because some of these recommendations are for a change to legislation, but they do not require that to be implemented. They require a change in regulation or guidelines. Others are in legislation. We will accept them all, but we will implement them in different ways, which is why the 'in principle' component is there. I will explain all of these.

Recommendation 3

... that the Ports Management Bill be amended so the port safety plans also cover risks reasonably likely to cause serious damage to the environment.

Response: the Ports Management Bill already contemplates the scope of safety management plans being sufficiently broad to cover environmental matters. However, as an additional assurance, the regional Harbourmaster's guidelines will be drafted to clearly require port safety plans to cover environmental risks and measures to eliminate or reduce those risks.

Recommendation 4(a) says:

the Government remain vigilant against monopoly pricing ...

There was commentary about monopoly pricing:

... and ensure the adequate enforcement of the access and pricing provisions of the Ports Management Bill, including ongoing consultation with port users regarding the adequacy of the regulations made under the Bill ...

Government's response is that my government agrees we must be vigilant against inappropriate pricing and access to the Port of Darwin. It is for this reason we are proposing that the Utilities Commission regulates access and pricing at the port. Provision relating to access and pricing will be prescribed comprehensively, and regulations will be issued under the legislation and supported by the determinations issued by the Utilities Commission. Consistent with good regulatory practice, the Utilities Commission will be required to consult with the relevant stakeholders, including port users.

I propose that the regulations be strengthened to require that in addition to the matters specified in section 20(1) of the *Utilities Commission Act*, when making a pricing determination the regulator will also take into account the cyclical nature of the Northern Territory economy and the need to avoid significant price shocks for port users.

The regulations will also require that port operators review the operation of the access policy every five years, including seeking submissions from stakeholders and the regulator. The port operator can propose amendments to its access policy if it considers it appropriate, and the regulator is to consult with and consider any submissions made by specified persons on a draft price determination, and send a copy of the price determination to specified persons and publish it on the regulator's website.

Recommendation 4(b) says:

the Ports Management Bill be amended to require the Regulator to report annually to the Assembly on compliance with the Bill's access and pricing principles.

The response is that the committee stage amendments will require the regulator to report annually no later than 30 September each year to the minister on material instances of non-compliance with the operator's access policy. The regulator must then report on the contents of that report to the minister by 1 December each year. The minister will be required to table the report in the Legislative Assembly within seven sitting days after receiving it.

Recommendation 4(b) is one of those examples where that will be a legislative requirement rather than a guideline or otherwise.

Recommendation 5(a) says:

the Ports Management Bill be amended to apply its access and pricing provisions to prescribed services provided by third party operators ...

Recommendation 5(b) says:

the Government give further consideration to how best to ensure fair pricing and access behaviour by third party operators at ports.

I respond by saying third-party operators are currently regulated under state and Commonwealth legislation, and affected parties will have redress through the national and Northern Territory competition and consumer protection laws as well as common law. This position will not change under a port lease arrangement. However, the government acknowledges a concern the select committee has in relation to third-party operators, and we will impose, through the port lease or other transactional documentation, obligations on the port operator to include in all contracts with third-party facility operators using the port a requirement that the operator provide access to their facilities to port users on reasonable commercial terms.

Recommendation 6

... that the Ports Management Bill be amended to provide an alternative mechanism to taking legal action for resolving access and passing disputes.

The government agrees that resolving pricing and access issues is of paramount importance. Given the select committee's recommendations, the requirements for access policies will now be prescribed comprehensively in regulations rather than in guidelines published by the Utilities Commission as intended previously.

In this regard a negotiate/arbitrate regime will be incorporated into regulations. The regime will involve a mechanism for users to raise a dispute by providing written notice to the operator, with an obligation on the operator to negotiate in good faith to resolve the dispute. If parties are unable to resolve the dispute a mechanism for mediation or conciliation will be introduced. Where this still does not work an independent arbitrator will be appointed with an appropriate mechanism for apportioning costs ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr GILES: The regulator has to approve the access policy. To create more rigour and process certainty, requirements will be expanded with the Ports Management Bill through committee stage amendments to more comprehensively deal with the situation where the regulator does not approve a draft policy.

Recommendations 7(a) says:

the Ports Management Bill be amended so that the Minister may not issue or renew a stevedoring licence to a port operator or a related entity of a port operator unless the Regulator certifies that to do so will not lessen competition in upstream and downstream markets ...

The committee stage amendments to the Ports Management Bill will ensure that the minister takes into account whether grant or renewal of the licence would lessen effective competition in upstream or downstream markets either within or outside the designated port.

Recommendation 7(b) says:

the Government consider other limitations on a port operator and its related entities owning businesses that may reduce competition in upstream and downstream markets.

While the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission actively enforces this area through merger control provisions of the *Competition and Consumer Act*, it is the most appropriate entity to assess the competitive impact of such acquisitions. Imposing parallel obligations under the Northern Territory legislation or the port lease would be unnecessary and duplicative.

However, to ensure the risk of competition being reduced is addressed, the port lease will include a requirement that the port operator either obtain the consent of the minister or gain ACCC clearance if the port operator or related entity proposes to acquire an interest in the port supply chain. The minister's consent will not be withheld if the minister is satisfied there will be no adverse effects on competition in upstream or downstream markets.

Recommendation 8

... that, prior to entering any lease arrangements, the Government implement a community information and stakeholder consultation strategy to:

- a) *identify further improvements to the leasing proposal,*
 - i) *including what parts of the harbour should be included or excluded from the lease; and*
 - ii) *how competition could be improved; and*
- b) *communicate what is being proposed so affected businesses can plan accordingly.*

In response my government will implement a targeted and comprehensive community information stakeholder strategy on the Port of Darwin project. We will ensure information on the project is broadly disseminated and all relevant parties understand that it is government's intention to partner with a private operator with a vision for growth and development of the Port of Darwin which is in line with the government's broader economic objectives for the Territory. That investment in the port will attract new private sector capital into the Territory economy designed to address immediate and future infrastructure needs and improve productivity and efficiency of operations. The capital realised from the private sector investment in the port will be channelled into new infrastructure which will help enhance economic development and growth.

The communications program will involve public port tours, virtual tours made accessible over the Internet, a dedicated webpage with detailed information on the project, as well as continued updates on the progress of the former marketing progress, recognising of course the need to maintain probity and commercial confidentiality at all times.

Recommendation 9

... that terms be included in any lease of the port to protect the Government's ability to deny consent to any future transfer of the lease to a lessee that does not share the Government's vision for the development of the port.

I have already said it is my government's intention to partner with a private sector organisation which shares the government's aspiration and vision for the future economic growth and development of the Territory. Instruments supporting the transaction will acknowledge the commercial drivers for private operator decision-making and clearly set out the matters which the Northern Territory government will consider in determining whether it will approve a transfer of the lease. These matters will be consistent with government

objectives and considerations in the initial issue of the lease.

Recommendation 10

... that, prior to entering any lease agreement, the Government consult with port users to identify any minimum service requirements or development needs that, in the public, interest should be set in the lease of the port.

In response, the government will include a set of minimum service requirements in the lease documentation.

Recommendation 11

... that any proposed lease be subject to rigorous independent, highly-qualified expert review in addition to being drafted by highly-qualified experts.

The port lease will be prepared by Minter Ellison with input from NT government experts in the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment, and the Solicitor for the Northern Territory. Given the significance of the lease to future Territorians I have directed that the port steering committee ensure that the proposed lease is also reviewed by technical experts.

Recommendation 12

... that the Ports Management Bill be amended to require public reporting of the general terms and ongoing performance of port operating agreements, subject to any requirements for commercial confidentiality.

In response, a requirement for an annual report card will be incorporated into contractual documentation supporting the long-term lease of the Port of Darwin. This will ensure a continuing obligation to report against agreed performance benchmarks.

Recommendation 13

... that port workers approaching retirement be given the options other than continuing under their enterprise agreement with any new port operator in the case where circumstances would create a material disadvantage to their retirement plan.

I can confirm that all transfers will be on the basis of existing entitlements and EBA. A no-worse-off test will be used to ensure there are no adverse impacts for employees, including in terms of retirement planning.

Recommendation 14

... that the Assembly not amend the requirement in the Port of Darwin Bill that a lease for the port not exceed 99 years.

Government supports this recommendation as it provides the maximum flexibility when negotiating the terms of any lease with prospective bidders.

Recommendation 15

... that in the case of foreign investment in a lease over the Port of Darwin:

- a) *component of the lease be kept in the control of an Australian entity; and*
- b) *the Government consult with the Foreign Investment Review Board and the Department of Defence regarding security or strategic risks that a proposed partner may present.*

Government supports the principle that Australian equity is kept in any private consortium which will operate the Port of Darwin in the future.

I propose to go further than the select committee recommendation and require that where international bidders are involved there is, within the winning bidding consortium, a meaningful level of Australian equity. This requirement will be reflected in the evaluation criteria used to assess the final binding bids and will also be grandfathered in transaction documentation for the term of the lease. Foreign Investment Review Board and Australian Competition and Consumer Commission approvals will also be required prior to the submission of binding bids.

Recommendation 16

... that the Government maintains priority on maximising the long-term economic benefits for the Northern Territory when making any decisions around the terms or timing of any lease for the Port of Darwin.

In response, as I have said before, my government's primary objective is to secure a port operator which shares the government's aspirations and vision for the future economic growth and development of the Territory.

The case for proceeding with a transaction at this time is compelling, and the lease term reflective of maximising incentives for the port operator to invest, build capacity and grow alongside the Territory.

Recommendation 17

... that the headings of clauses 41 and 42 of the Ports Management Bill be amended

to more accurately reflect the provisions of the clauses.

Amendments to clarify headings will be made as committee stage amendments to the Ports Management Bill.

I have already dealt with Recommendation 18.

The select committee process has been thorough and robust. The recommendations will contribute to ensuring we have the best lease model, and regulatory and contractual agreements will be put in place when seeking a private investor in the Port of Darwin. However, as indicated before, we will go even further to ensure the arrangements are in the best interests of Territorians, both now and into the future.

In addition to the proposed requirements around a meaningful level of Australian equity, I am proposing that governance structures established for the private operations of the port reserve a place on the governing board for a Northern Territory representative. This is aimed at securing the Northern Territory government's interest in ensuring continual investment in the Port of Darwin and the Northern Territory.

I appreciate that the government is not proposing to contribute equity and the representative will more than likely be a non-voting member. However, this position will be an important conduit between government and the management team for a privately-operated port and will be critical to ensuring the Northern Territory interests are at the forefront of board deliberations. This requirement will be captured in documentation giving effect to the long-term lease arrangements.

I also propose an additional step of the establishment of a vehicle akin to the Australasia Railway Corporation which will include representation from both the Northern Territory government and the private operator. This will provide a framework for the government to continue its share in meeting the long-term strategic aspirations with the operator and secure port investment outcomes which align with the expectations of a long-term partnership.

I have asked the Coordinator-General to ensure that the assessment and evaluation process reflects my government's desire to identify a partner which shares the aspirations of our government.

I now table an advance copy of the amendments which I will seek to put forward in the committee stage tomorrow. I also have a number of copies of the Port of Darwin Select Committee recommendations and the government response on each. There are at least 25 copies here for

each member to have a copy overnight and read it before the port legislation comes before the House tomorrow.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I again thank the parliamentary select committee for its deliberations. I maintain that the port is not for sale. We are seeking to lease it and provide a private sector finance partner in the long-term interests of growing our infrastructure strategically, supporting growth in our economy and creating jobs for all Territorians.

Mr BARRETT (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, in summation – wow! It is fantastic to see the government has chosen to accept this report and all its recommendations, in some cases going even further than we would have hoped and committing not just to accept those recommendations and the principle in which they were written, but also to find various ways of implementing them through changing the Port of Darwin Bill through amendments to create a more robust framework and regulatory environment in which this lease can sit.

If the recommendations are accepted by this House then it should follow that the bill is accepted. I understand that the opposition needs to create a point of difference and I accept that their threshold position remains that the port not be leased until more work is done. That shows me there is an interesting point of clarification in that I believe the opposition would accept this will be a very good bill with these recommendations implemented. Therefore, should they oppose the bill it would only be on the grounds that they fundamentally oppose a lease as opposed to if this takes place, the lease will be the best way of doing it.

This represents the best practise model for Darwin. One of the things we learnt in our studies during this time was no two ports ran the same. We knew we needed to put together what would be right for the Port of Darwin and a regulatory framework that would fit our exporters, importers, third-party users and environment.

I am amazed and stunned that we got so far with so much unanimous agreement on something that could have been so tricky. I am very proud of the work the committee has done. I said that in my first speech. Again I convey my thanks to the members for Drysdale, Fannie Bay and Nelson, as well as the committee people working in the Legislative Assembly, for the hard work they have done.

A few issues were raised by the members for Fannie Bay and Nelson. I will talk of those for a moment. First, casualisation of the workforce was raised. This has been seen as an issue. If there

are too many operators in the stevedoring space, the amount of work that exists means there is not enough work across different entities to provide full-time work. It effectively means more casual workers on the waterfront. That was raised by the Maritime Union of Australia.

The recommendations we have put in place have some protection in regard to the way stevedoring licences will be handed out. Should a lease be put in place, it will not be in the hands of the leaseholder so the leaseholder can award a stevedoring licence to another party if it makes competition or anything on the port worse.

Losing strategic control was raised. The Chief Minister was talking earlier about holding a board seat. In the regulatory framework we have come up with we maintain a fairly significant amount of control. I will admit there is a lessening of the control going from a government owned corporation to a lease model, but the level of control evident in this bill – if it implements all of the recommendations we unanimously agreed to as a committee – will provide the necessary strategic control.

Concerns about workers were raised by the members for Fannie Bay and Nelson. Today I was contacted by phone by the MUA in relation to a meeting they held. I am happy to see that the recommendation is looking after the superannuation and retirement benefits of workers approaching retirement, and there will be other options for those people. It is fantastic that we are thinking about the individuals involved and their circumstances.

The member for Nelson talked about getting it right. We have seen many places where they got things wrong. We have seen errors and we are not keen to repeat those, hence the regulatory framework we came up with together which addresses things that went wrong. I thank the government for coming on board and saying it will accept and implement all of these recommendations. Hopefully that will avoid the pitfalls many others have found in other places.

Monopolistic pricing was raised, as well as the need to protect ourselves against it. It is great to see that in the acceptance of these recommendations within the bill we do not have to lie awake at night worrying about whether it will be upheld or not. It will be put in very strongly and those regulatory frameworks will ensure that the pricing models are fair, just and equitable in a commercial sense. That protects everybody, including our very important live cattle exporters' trade, which at times is marginal and does not need extra impost.

The member for Nelson talked about the cost of revenue lost through lease as opposed to what benefit arises through funds. This was discussed in the committee and goes to the heart of saying, 'If we get \$100 now, why would we do that when we could have \$150 over X number of years'. That is assuming you will not do anything with the \$100 in the first place, that you will not invest that \$100 to create the extra \$50 of value. When we talk about opportunity cost over multiple decades, the visibility on it becomes tenuous at best, and completely clouded. I hope, should a lease take place, that the funding which comes from this will be put to something of great use, which should allay the member for Nelson's concerns in that area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, government support for all recommendations is huge. Our recommendations represent best practice and are unique in that they fit our unique circumstances. I thank the Giles government for accepting those recommendations hands down, often going further to provide the robustness necessary to ensure safe operation, and that whoever should take a lease in the future will stay in line with the vision of the Northern Territory and what would benefit the people in the Northern Territory. All in all it is a fantastic outcome.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I have a planned opportunity of using adjournment to speak about the budget for Arts and Museums in the Appropriation Bill 2015-16.

I draw attention to a media release from the Minister for Arts and Museums today, particularly to note an apology to the hard-working staff who were forced to write this absolute rubbish which was put across the networks to represent cheap politics, a mean, punitive spirit and a classic low shot of trying to play wedge politics. My apologies go to the staff who produced that rubbish on behalf of the minister.

I have a request for the minister. In future, please use my name in the media release because I have great acceptance in the arts community across the Northern Territory. I will very much welcome the promotion, so please take licence next time and drop my name in it. I engage regularly with the arts community across the Northern Territory. I relish the opportunities to revisit our cultural institutions, mixing with the arts crowds in all

shapes, sizes and forms, including artistic practice.

I will comment on a couple of challenges I see in the Appropriation Bill. For 2015-16 we see a very moderate budget increase of \$209 000, which we welcome. All money is welcome in our cultural institutions and practices. However, I caution the minister because in the appropriation for 2015-16 we see a significant decrease in the appropriation to scientific and cultural collections of \$220 000. This represents an integral part of the Northern Territory's cultural collections. If you take the time to look across the Northern Territory at our scientific and cultural collections you will see that they are world-class.

Associated with that are the people who manage those cultural and scientific collections. We have seen a loss in curators and Museum and Art Gallery staff under the CLP government. We are not seeing this important area of the Museum and Art Gallery as being valued in the Northern Territory. We are seeing a budget decrease again. It is an area that I encourage the minister to look into; meet those incredible Territorians – the curators, scientists and people who maintain those collections – and find the will and opportunity to promote them. They are the jewels in the crown of the Northern Territory. They are acknowledged in a global perspective. I immediately challenge you; this is more important than a cheap-shot media release.

I will go straight to the wedge politics you are trying to play in the media release. It relates to the announcement of an upgrade to the Chan building of \$18.3m. Associated with that is the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. You called it air conditioning, but I will call it the climate control system. There is \$1.3m appropriated to upgrade and address that system, which is extremely important money spent. However, let us go back to the wedge politics you are trying to play with the Chan Building. That \$18.3m is a significant investment.

I was an infants' primary teacher for more than half my life, and being an artist I put on the performance of my life every day for those children.

Let us look at the infrastructure. You are dealing with a built form with major constraints. One of those constraints is rather abstract. The building has the Northern Territory government's servers for its IT hardware support network in the basement. It is very tricky business in the base of that building. I know that because, as a previous Labor government, we had a contemporary art space there which has been very popular. I commend the CLP government for continuing that

Labor initiative. That building has significant constraints.

I draw your attention to another Labor project that put the signature on the 70th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin commemoration when the Labor government delivered the Defence of Darwin experience, an acknowledged world-class initiative. It is a cultural institution in the Northern Territory that has attracted not only national tourists but the international tourist trade that follows the war time pathways and historical research. That building was purpose-built and has the latest high-tech features. It was completed for an appropriation of just over \$15m. That is a brand-new building, built from the ground up.

I will make a quick reference to the minister for corrections. We had prisoners working on that project every day over about 18 months in teams of six which increased to eight. They were sweeping the red carpet before the Governor-General walked down it to open that incredible cultural institution.

Minister, with an \$18.3m appropriation you have a serious wad of cash in your back pocket. I draw your attention to what you could get in a new built form to represent a cultural institution you desire on behalf of Northern Territorians. It would be debatable about the best way to approach this appropriation. I am offering you a clear alternative.

I quickly hark back to my budget delivery today and the request for government to seriously consider investment in high-productivity infrastructure, particularly in the road transport area. I tell you straight up, \$18.3m in tough fiscal times – taking a leaf out of the Treasurer's book – is probably not money we have to spend on refurbishment of an existing building in the Darwin CBD. However, if you appropriate that cash into Arts and Museums, good luck to you. I celebrate that and draw your attention to the opportunities around a new innovative purpose-built form.

I will tell you a quick story because you are in a tough spot. Your Liberal colleagues in Canberra are changing the whole game plan around our arts and cultural sector with considerable cuts in funding through the Australia Council for the Arts. There is considerable change in the ideology, which is backed up with significant funding cuts.

In the federal arena again, under the federal Liberal Coalition, the Indigenous Visual Arts strategy, which is delivered through the Attorney-General's department specifically dealing with justice, offering people opportunities to stay out of the justice system and gaol, is also experiencing significant cuts.

The Northern Territory government has made it quite clear it plans to return Arts and Museums funding in the Northern Territory back to 2010 levels. We have seen a very moderate increase in the budget in this round. Following that statement we have not really seen any commitment. What we risk is the grassroots industry on the ground collapsing and closing. If you go ahead with a built form, with an institution, you risk not having Territory artists and the Territory community enhancing their cultural and artistic practices to fill your gallery with Northern Territory product. It is a real tension.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the \$18.3m expenditure could be directed back into supporting those regional and remote art centres, artists in our community, arts in education and arts on the ground. You need to look at that seriously before we suffer these massive federal cuts and our whole cultural sector is challenged, possibly beyond repair.

Mrs PRICE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker. I am proud to continue voicing my support for Budget 2015-16, and will continue from where I left off last night.

As the Treasurer and others have said, it is a budget to make life simpler, safer and smarter. I will continue to talk about how the CLP government and my Parks and Wildlife Commission are investing money to improve the Central Australia region and improve the lives of Territorians.

In the Alice region, Budget 2015-16 provides \$200 000 for the ongoing management of the Olive Pink Botanic Garden. The 16 ha area that is now the Olive Pink Botanic Garden was first gazetted in 1956 as the Australia Arid Regions Flora Reserve. The garden is a not-for-profit organisation run by a voluntary board of trustees which employs a curator to manage the expanding plantings and visitor experience of the reserve.

Budget 2015-16 also provides for our great parks and reserves with over \$5m for repairs and maintenance of existing commission assets including walking tracks, fencing, signage, lighting and buildings, and \$1.8m for lease payments to Aboriginal land trusts for Aboriginal-owned jointly managed parks. These funds benefit Aboriginal people in regional and remote areas.

There is \$120 000 to both the Central Land Council and the Northern Land Council to support joint management of parks and reserves throughout the Northern Territory; and \$200 000 for the flexible employment program which provides employment of traditional owners, joint management partners and casual Indigenous employees for on-ground projects throughout the Northern Territory.

There is \$150 000 in grant funding for the Land for Wildlife programs in Alice Springs and Darwin. Land for Wildlife is a voluntary program that encourages and assists landholders to provide habitat for wildlife on their properties. There is \$50 000 for grant funding to wildlife carer organisations for the collection, care and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned wildlife in regional centres throughout the Territory. This service includes provision of a collection service for the local community, therefore ensuring the protection and humane treatment of injured native animals.

There is \$410 000 for the management of saltwater crocodiles across the Top End, including Darwin Harbour, increasing community safety in and around our waterways; and \$100 000 for the successful Be Crocwise community education and awareness-raising program to promote safe and enjoyable experiences in our Top End waters.

Let us not forget the Territory Wildlife Park in Berry Springs and its counterpart, The Alice Springs Desert Park. Budget 2015-16 provides \$12.704m to continue providing visitors with unique experiences such as bird shows and getting close to emus, dingoes, wallabies and other local wildlife at these two parks.

Last, I pay tribute to the wonderful Parks and Wildlife Commission rangers, officers and staff, who do a great job making sure our parks, reserves and other natural attractions they manage always look great and are safe for locals and tourists. Whether it be the crocodile management team led by Tom Nichols keeping Darwin Harbour and other Top End waters safe from crocodile attacks, or rangers at Litchfield and other parks helping tourists change a tyre, they all do a wonderful job and are always happy to help.

I remind everyone in the House and those listening to this broadcast that the annual Northern Territory Ranger Awards will be held on World Ranger Day, 31 July. People have until 30 June to nominate a ranger, and I encourage everyone to do so. These awards are not just for Northern Territory rangers, but all rangers who work towards protecting and enhancing our unique flora and fauna anywhere in the Northern Territory.

Budget 2015-16 shows we not only have a plan for the Territory, but we can fund and deliver our plan. This contrasts to those opposite, whose only plan is deficit and denial. We have worked very hard to slash government waste and debt. Through our hard work the private sector has grown, making our economy one of the fastest growing in Australia.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our plan looks ahead by making deliberate decisions. Every decision we

make is targeted at growing and supporting Territorians, our economy and jobs. Our plan binds our society into a more sustainable economy while protecting our lifestyle and social fabric. It benefits all Territorians. Our plan is careful in management of our wealth and is about making our lives simpler, safer and smarter. I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.