

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

ABSENCE OF MEMBER FOR ARAFURA

Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I advise of the absence for the morning of the member for Arafura, who is attending a funeral.

MOTION

Proposed Censure of Chief Minister

Mr McCarthy (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I move that this House censure the Chief Minister for:

- lying to this parliament and lying to Territorians about his knowledge of the CLP slush fund, Foundation 51
- lying to this parliament and lying to Territorians about the relationship between the CLP and Foundation 51
- refusing to come clean about his knowledge and involvement in the CLP slush fund, Foundation 51, despite clear evidence of numerous conversations with one of the funds directors, Graeme Lewis
- attempting to cover up his lies by refusing to have a full and public inquiry into the activities of the CLP slush fund, Foundation 51
- arrogantly refusing to send a referral to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to find the best way to establish a corruption commission to ensure transparency in the political donation system in the Northern Territory.

This censure is about integrity, honesty and the truth. It saddens me to say that the Chief Minister has failed on all three counts. We are the ones who make the laws in the Northern Territory. We are the ones who make the rules in this special place. It is contemptible that the case I am about to paint shows a CLP so hell-bent on power that it circumvented the electoral laws this House passed.

Let us look at what a slush fund is. I have found an apt definition:

... in the context of corrupt dealings, such as those by governments ... a slush fund can have particular connotations of illegality, illegitimacy, or secrecy in regard to the use of this money and the means by which the funds were acquired.

Chief Minister, it ticks your box.

Political dealings with slush funds tend to create suspicions of quid pro quo (buying political favours) ...

Again, Chief Minister, it ticks your box.

... and can be viewed on the surface as corrupt and subversive of the democratic process.

Chief Minister, that also ticks the box.

How is this good for Territorians? We offer a clear alternative. This is subversive of the democratic process, what has been going on in this parliament and what the Chief Minister has been leading and denying. It is something not to be proud of, CLP members.

We all know how Foundation 51 came to be. It was the creation of James Lantry, sitting in then Opposition Leader Terry Mills' office in 2009. For those new to this parliament on the other side of the House, Foundation 51 was created by your former leader's chief of staff, James Lantry, on the fourth floor of this building.

Why was it created? Let us go back to the definition, 'subversive of the democratic process'. In this House in Question Time at the start of this week, it was almost as though the Chief Minister had never heard of Foundation 51. 'It was a private company', he said. 'It must relate to a private conversation', he has denied. He chose his words carefully. 'There was no legal connection between Foundation 51 and the CLP', he said. 'It is like any old company, like BHP, Coca Cola Amatil, or Rio Tinto.' That is what the Chief Minister wants you to believe on that side, the opposition to believe on this side, the Independents of this House to believe and, essentially, wants Territorians to believe.

It is a charade; it is unprofessional and it is not right, which is why the opposition has brought this censure to the House. It is rubbish, what has been going on this week. It is a concoction of lies. How do we know these are lies and complete untruths? The CLP cannot help themselves; it is in their DNA to rush in to print, especially when they know someone is on their tail.

In this case, the Chief Minister has been condemned by the plethora of e-mails his party president and the principal of Foundation 51 have shared with each other. On 26 March, Graham Lewis, who has longstanding fundraising form going back to the 1990s, rushed into print an e-mail to CLP party president, Ross Connolly. A clearly angry Mr Lewis threatened to wind up Foundation 51 after too many enquiries by the then deputy treasurer of the CLP, Eli Melky.

The intent of Mr Melky to further canvass issues of the Foundation at future meetings causes me to actively consider disposing of the whole concept, refund the monies in hand, and forfeit the opportunities that have been built in past years, to assist in the political spectrum of the Northern Territory.

Mr Lewis goes on in the e-mail:

I have made the Chief Minister aware of this probability, much to his concern. He and I have on many occasions discussed the matter of the Foundation, and he is well disposed to having the Foundation continue its activity, with the wall between the entities currently, fixed in place.

Chief Minister, you know what Foundation 51 is because you speak frequently to its director, Mr Lewis, and you know it is too valuable to the CLP to be shut down. Why is this, Chief Minister? What is the true value of Foundation 51 to the CLP, its membership and the party wing?

Mr Lewis goes on to say in his e-mail:

... I have to question how many garage sales and golf days will be needed to produce the many millions of dollars that will be required before the end of the year 2016.

Chief Minister, Foundation 51 raises many millions of dollars. What does it do with those millions? Where do they go? You have to admit that is an awful lot of research. Then there is that special date, 2016. What is special about that date, Chief Minister? How does it relate to this purported research? Is it all just a coincidence? You have the opportunity to explain.

By that stage, Mr Lewis is on a roll in his e-mail and obviously cannot help himself. He is clearly pleased with the work he does for the CLP, but is also a little guarded. He writes:

The Foundation has already contributed significantly towards the activities of the Blain by-election.

That is a very interesting statement which completely contradicts what the Chief Minister has said all week in this House, the House of the people, the House of integrity and democracy. We are offering you the chance to clear the record.

When you read this correspondence you see it is obvious that Mr Lewis realises the dangers of admitting that. His next line in the e-mail is:

In retrospect – not clever in view of this current interrogation!

In other words, we cannot allow Mr Melky to find out what is really going on.

It is as though Mr Lewis has started to realise the trouble brewing. His e-mail is one of genuine fear that things are starting to unravel. He writes:

The horse may well have bolted already, and the more public discussion that takes place, the more I personally with others, are vulnerable ...

Chief Minister, please explain why anybody would be vulnerable. Why would Mr Lewis be vulnerable? If this is all above board, what is there for him to be worried about? He is not the only one who is vulnerable.

You, Chief Minister, the first minister of the Territory, are in diabolical trouble because of your words and statements in this House this week. What have you got to hide? You have brought the spotlight on yourself. This is a matter the Northern Territory public needs clarified.

There are serious questions about Foundation 51, and the Territory opposition, as the voice of the people, brings those questions to the House. Your answers in this House have been nothing but slippery and evasive all week. As the e-mails reveal, you have been up to your neck in the affairs of Foundation 51. You know what it does, you know why it does what it does, you know it raises money for the CLP and you know where that money goes. What do you have to hide?

It is why you gave a resounding no in this House yesterday when we asked you, quite rightly, to refer a request to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to find the best way to set up an LCAC-style committee to investigate this issue.

Chief Minister, you set a very low bar with the Stella kangaroo court. Now that you have something that really needs an inquiry, you run a country mile. This is shameful, and this House must censure you. The opposition has brought the most important motion to the House, a censure motion, and we do it with the intent of allowing you to clear your name.

We have offered a clear alternative. The clear alternative is to refer this matter to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee to find the best way to set up an LCAC-style committee to investigate these allegations. It is a clear alternative and pragmatic alternative, yet the Chief Minister denies any knowledge; he denies any action towards making this matter clear, transparent and accountable.

We have seen the Stella Maris inquiry, and that is a good benchmark. I am sure the Chief Minister could use Commissioner Lawler. He could bring Commissioner Lawler back to the Northern Territory, but Chief Minister, it is not a cheap exercise. Territory taxpayers have paid over \$455 000 for the Stella Maris inquiry, and the meter is still running. Having participated in that inquiry, telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth, I can assure you it is a process of cleansing.

It is a process where the investigation sets a course and people can be vindicated of any allegations. Let us face it, when the Stella Maris inquiry was launched, the Chief Minister was ducking and weaving, denying any responsibility to 3500 constituents in Nhulunbuy.

The possibility of 1500 of them losing their jobs — can you imagine, Chief Minister, the impact that is having on families in Nhulunbuy? On this side, the member for Nhulunbuy was leading the charge and demanding action from the government, demanding that we look after our constituency and our families, those Territory workers, those amazing life-changing experiences that are going on. Funnily, it coincided with the Chief Minister's Stella Maris inquiry, and we said, 'Bring it on'. Now the opposition, the Independents and many people in the Northern Territory are asking the same question.

Chief Minister, you are an architect of inquiries, then let us set up another inquiry. But I get the feeling this inquiry could be a bit more expensive, because, essentially, at the Stella Maris inquiry nothing ever happened. The Cabinet documents were opened for the first time in Westminster history by the CLP government. Cabinet confidentiality was breached. We supported those documents being opened; we had nothing to hide. In those Cabinet documents we discovered that the CLP overturned the granting of a Crown lease Community Land Grant to Unions NT, and now they sit on the last of the eminent heritage sites in the CBD of Darwin. That is now completely vulnerable to be bulldozed, a hole dug and a 90 m tower established.

So nothing ever happened. Under the Community Land Grant process it was perfectly legal. The Chief Minister, upon the CLP coming to government, orchestrated a number of senior public servants trawling through the records — great use of taxpayers' money — to find something that could be a diversion from the Nhulunbuy issue.

Chief Minister, we are calling for an inquiry, but this is an inquiry into the CLP. This is an inquiry into Foundation 51. It is a very pragmatic and logical request from the opposition and Territorians which you can deliver. You can clear

the record. You can lead. We need a statesman. The Chief Minister, as the first minister in the Northern Territory, should be the statesman, should be open, transparent and accountable, and should be honest with all Territorians.

We have asked rationally and logically, and the Chief Minister continues to deny. This is the third day we have conducted this rational campaign, and the third day the Chief Minister has denied any responsibility. Come clean, Chief Minister. An inquiry will provide that process. What do you have to hide? The longer you duck, weave and sidestep this issue of the CLP slush fund, Foundation 51, the more harshly you will be judged in the court of public opinion. You know how that translates into political capital or, in this case, the lack of political capital. The CLP members of this government need this matter settled. You are all labelled with this issue. The parliamentary wing, the party wing and the membership across the regions are all important people of the Northern Territory who need this matter cleared up. As a government you have the ability to do it. You have the cheque book. You have already racked up nearly \$0.5m and the meter is still running. I have advised you this inquiry needs to happen. It will not be cheap, but it delivers transparency and accountability, and, Chief Minister, what price can you put on that?

The opposition brings the most important motion to this House, the censure motion, offers the Chief Minister a clear policy framework of how to deal with this, and represents the people of the Northern Territory who also want this matter cleared up. This matter is now a national agenda and is badged with big 'L' Liberals nationally. It has now come to the Northern Territory and it is the government's responsibility to deal with it honestly and openly.

We call on the Chief Minister to lead that as the first minister of the Northern Territory. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr TOLLNER (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I put on the record my disappointment with the opposition and the three Independents, the member for Namatjira in particular. It seems the opposition is going as hard as it can in a race to the bottom. The actions of the opposition and the Independent members over the last couple of days have been nothing more than trying to slur and trash individuals' reputations. Consequently, they are bringing this parliament into disrepute.

I listened to the member for Barkly, and this has to be one of the most flimsy censure motions I have ever heard. It is more of an explanation of their actions in relation to Stella Maris and what they have been through in relation to allegations of corruption than an attack on the Country Liberal

Party, Foundation 51, the Chief Minister and the MLAs in this House.

I will explain so the relationship between Foundation 51, the Country Liberal Party and MLAs who are elected to this place is beyond doubt.

I am not sure exactly when Foundation 51 was set up, but it was shortly after the 2008 election. It was set up to provide valuable services to its members, who are predominantly business people: services such as providing a forum for networking; an organisation to develop research which is seen as valuable to those members; and providing a forum in which members can receive education and knowledge about what is happening in the Northern Territory business community.

It is not associated with the Country Liberal Party, although the Country Liberal Party members are involved in it. It is a separate organisation in its entirety. It does not provide funds to the Country Liberal Party and, to my knowledge, has never provided money to the Country Liberal Party.

The Country Liberal Party will often raise money or receive donations from members of Foundation 51. They do not donate that money as members of Foundation 51, but as independent business people in the community. Without a doubt, Foundation 51 has held a number of functions over the years, and Country Liberal Party members have attended some of those functions. I would rather not go into what functions they were, because I am not a member of Foundation 51, and I am pretty certain no other MLA in this parliament is a member. It is solely there for business people to join.

For those people who do not understand the relationship between these types of organisations – it could be considered similar to the Menzies Research Centre, which I think is coming up to its 50th anniversary this year. I have been invited to attend in Melbourne later this year. It is a conservative, right wing research organisation, set up to provide the same services to its members as Foundation 51, that is, networking, providing valuable research, informing its members and providing them with valuable education and knowledge about what is going on in their areas of interest. Foundation 51 is no different, in my view, to the Menzies Research Centre, which is a well-known organisation around the country.

The Chief Minister hit the nail on the head; any MLA would be foolish to handle cash from donors. That is a tenet of the Country Liberal Party and has been for a long time. It is not encouraged in any particular way. There are clear delineations throughout the system. As I said, Foundation 51

is a business organisation that has a clear separation from the Country Liberal Party.

The Country Liberal Party raises money and runs elections. Again, there is a clear separation between MLAs. The electoral system we have in the Northern Territory somewhat recognises this because it receives returns from political parties, as well as returns from individual members of parliament who must provide returns when they receive donations, understandably, as not all members in this place are part of political parties, but they are still required to run election campaigns. They have supporters, and people are entitled to know who those supporters are and about the financial donations they provide to individual MLAs. In the main, when you are part of a political party, you are not encouraged to handle money or be involved with money, and you to try to keep delineation between the party and the parliament.

I am particularly concerned about the way these allegations are being raised. They are being raised at a time when we have seen the defection of a number of members from the Country Liberal Party. Three bush MLAs have defected – rebel or rogue MLAs, as I think they are referred to – and a couple of high-profile party members have resigned.

One is the Alice Springs town councillor, Eli Melky, who is a former deputy treasurer of the party. I am aware that Mr Melky had some grievances with Mr Lewis because he refused to show Mr Melky the books of Foundation 51.

It is quite obvious to see where this line of questioning is coming from. It is not coming from the member for Namatjira or members of the Labor Party, it is coming from Mr Melky, who still feels a bit battered and bruised because he was not allowed to look at the books of Foundation 51. As he was informed, Foundation 51 is a not an entity of the Country Liberal Party, but it seems that Mr Melky could not get that concept through his thick head.

Mr Melky continued to run a campaign against Mr Lewis to determine exactly what Foundation 51 was up to. If he wanted to know, he should have become a member of Foundation 51. I am sure as a member of Foundation 51 he would have had access to all the records of that organisation.

Quite rightly, Mr Lewis could not show someone who was not involved in Foundation 51 the records of that organisation. It would have been wrong and a breach, I would imagine, of a law somewhere.

Mr Elferink: Corporation law.

Mr TOLLNER: The Attorney-General informs me it more than likely would have breached corporation law. That is where this is coming from; it is sour grapes.

Knowing that, it is not hard to understand what is happening on the other side of this parliament. We have a Labor Party which ran around prior to the Blain by-election, saying, 'Oh, no, we will not do a deal with Alison Anderson, we do not want a bar of her. She walked away from us. She is a poisonous, treacherous character.' About one week after, we now see the Labor Party back in bed and in business with the member for Namatjira.

They are still smarting over the Stella Maris inquiry, and they have nothing but retribution on their minds. In the last few weeks we have heard wild allegations of racism. I heard there was an interview yesterday or the day before with the member for Namatjira where she alleged that people openly talk about coons, niggers and monkeys in the Country Liberal Party management committee meetings. This is appalling.

For a start, the member for Namatjira has never been a member of the management committee of the Country Liberal Party, so how the hell she would know what was going on in their committee meetings is beyond me. To just drop this out there and say this is what is happening, then yesterday the Attorney-General spoke about something shiny and noisy in the corner of this parliament, and instantly the member for Namatjira jumped up, screaming allegations of racism, saying 'Oh no, you are not allowed to say that'. Then last night, as part of General Business Day, the Leader of the Opposition coincidentally decided to jump up with a motion on the *Racial Vilification Act*.

All of a sudden, not only do we have the member for Namatjira in bed with the Labor Party, but running the policy agenda for the Labor Party. That is exactly what is happening.

I sat here listening to this line of questioning. I looked up in the gallery and saw Eli Melky and Braedon Earley conspiring with the member for Namatjira, the two others and the Labor Party, all intently interested in what would come out today in Question Time, because they are the ones loading your gun. They are the ones who drag you into this place with motions about racial vilification, this and that, jumping up and down accusing everyone of being racist, talking about niggers, coons and monkeys. This is the Labor Party at work.

Is there a shred of decency amongst any of you people? Is there any way you can say, 'Oh no, we are not associated with the member for Namatjira.

We do not think the Attorney-General talking about someone who is shiny and noisy in the corner is a racist comment.' You do not do that; you trot in here with a bill for General Business Day. You are up to your ears in this collusion with three rogue MLAs. That is exactly what this is about.

I noticed one little thing that has been thrown in here: the slurring of magistrate, Peter Maley. He has done something wrong because he was giving out how-to-vote cards at the Blain by-election. Well guess what! Mr Maley has been up front about his association with the Country Liberal Party for quite some time, to the point where he feels completely comfortable walking to a polling booth and handing out how-to-vote cards. We all know what his political allegiances are. He was a member of this House.

We also know there is a range of magistrates and judges who have associations with the Labor Party. Are you guys seriously suggesting we sack every magistrate and judge who has an association with a political party?

Mr Gunner: It is about how you conduct yourself after you have been appointed, Dave.

Mr TOLLNER: How you conduct yourself – it is all right provided no one knows about it. If he did not hand out how-to-vote cards, that would have been fine. As long as he lay low, that would have been fine. It is far better that no one knows he has an allegiance with the Country Liberal Party. You would have been happy with that. Is the Labor Party seriously suggesting we should sack Jenny Blokland as a judge because her husband works for Nova Peris and previously was Chief of Staff for the former Chief Minister?

Mr Gunner: She has not handed out how-to-vote cards or donated.

Mr TOLLNER: No, but her husband has. Her husband stands at nearly every polling booth every time there is an election.

Goodness me, do you really want to go down this path? If we go down this path and start sacking magistrates and judges because of their political allegiance, I do not know how many we would be left with. You might have killed off a Country Liberal Party one, but the rest of them, generally, would be Labor people. Is it so offensive to you guys that one magistrate openly declares he is a member of and supports the Country Liberal Party?

We put John Reeves into the federal court. Judges all around the country have been members of political parties.

Ms Walker: You just do not get it!

Mr TOLLNER: The member for Nhulunbuy says we do not get it. Of course we do not get it. You are digging the bottom of the barrel. This is appalling behaviour. You are bringing us all into disrepute with your nonsense.

In Question Time the member for Namatjira asked what money I had received. I wanted to answer that question because not one cracker has gone into my bank account from any business person I am associated with in this job, here, overseas or anywhere. I am happy to deny that allegation outright.

But the allegation has now been thrown out there, like the allegation last night against the member for Blain. You people do not seem to care how you slur the reputation of individuals inside and outside this House. It does not matter to you because you are all in bed together. You guys, your former minister, the member for Namatjira, and two other bush MLAs are all in bed together running a filthy, dirty, nasty campaign based on nothing but rumour, innuendo and racism. That is all it is based on. The Chief Minister makes a point that we come into this House ...

Mr Vowles interjecting.

Ms Walker: They are an independent party. You are so dirty on them.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nhulunbuy, you are on a warning. I am sick and tired of the interjecting by everyone. Thank you.

Mr TOLLNER: These people are prepared to trash reputations and do anything it takes to drag the lot of us into the mud. We know some dodgy deals were done with Stella Maris. Anyone trying to cover that up and suggest – this is the most blatant piece of nonsense going. Trying to gift the trade unions and Harold Nelson Holdings a free block of land for the next 20 years, who would honestly believe that you could get away with something like that?

Last night they were all het up and ready to run a motion on racial vilification. Again, we know what it was about. It was about poking fingers at us saying, 'We know you are all a pack of racists because the member for Namatjira says someone told her', someone who could not identify the person saying it, 'someone said something about coons, niggers and monkeys'. I think it was in a management committee meeting of the Country Liberal Party which, by the way, the federal Indigenous Affairs minister was a party to. For goodness sake, someone holding the mantle of federal Indigenous Affairs minister, you have to

believe, could not possibly let those comments go without responding to them.

Mr Elferink: Because they did not happen.

Mr TOLLNER: That is exactly right. The Attorney-General has just said it; those things never happened.

Mr Elferink: They are a fabrication.

Mr TOLLNER: They are a complete and utter fabrication, much like the allegations against the member for Blain last night, made by the member for Namatjira. The allegation made in Question Time this morning that I had been receiving donations from business people in secret bank accounts overseas is also a fabrication. What a load of codswallop and nonsense. All of these things are fabrications. It is a fabrication to think there is something wrong with Foundation 51, which is set up in the same vein as the Menzies Research Centre. It provides a valuable service to business people, and I am proud to say I have been to a number of its functions.

I am also proud to say a number of people who have gone to those functions have, coincidentally, contributed money to the election of the Country Liberal party. Why? Because they believe the best interests of the Northern Territory are served by having a Country Liberal government. That is a wonderful aspiration. For people on the other side to start making allegations that there is something untoward going on - we have a very robust system of democracy in this country.

You put the slur on the Northern Territory Electoral Commission to say somehow it is tied up in all of this and donations are being hidden away, and Bill Shepherd has somehow covered things up to the point where the Labor Party cannot see it.

Goodness me, we know how Labor operates. There is an inquiry going on around the country into union practices where the unions are taking the big licks of money from businesses and forking it out to the Labor Party – no disclosure and no mention, it is a union donation. That is not how Foundation 51 operates, because it does not provide cash donations to the Country Liberal Party, but the unions do to the Labor Party.

If you want to go down this slope, let us go down it, but as Tony Abbott said on the weekend, we have to ask the question: do we want taxpayer-funded elections? Is it a good use of taxpayer money? Maybe that is a debate we must have somewhere down the track. But let us not have a debate where we have to slur people. You are attacking the Chief Minister in this censure motion.

Why? Because you have one e-mail from Adam Giles to Graeme Lewis.

Mr Giles: I am not on the e-mail.

Mr TOLLNER: Oh, you are not even on the e-mail? I have not seen this supposed e-mail.

You have an e-mail which talks about someone having had a conversation with the Chief Minister, assuring him there is no association between Foundation 51 and the Country Liberal Party. What is going on here?

Mr McCarthy: Answer the question, what is going on here?

Mr TOLLNER: That is right, 'Answer the question. We have all accused you of being racist, now get up and explain yourself; tell everyone why you are racist.'

Mr McCarthy: I am not a racist.

Mr TOLLNER: No, it is what you are accusing us of. You are accusing us of racism, corruption and improper dealings. You make the accusation and say, 'Now get up and prove it'. Step outside and make the accusation and we will have it proven one way or the other. You and the member for Namatjira are prepared to do this in coward's castle. Walk onto the front steps, grab a couple of media guys, make the allegation, put a couple of names to it and let us have it tested! Here is a challenge for you, member for Barkly: get outside, make the accusations all these people are making and see if we can get these things tested.

Ms Lawrie: Inquiry.

Mr TOLLNER: We will have an inquiry, do not worry. Step out the door and make these accusations and there will be a proper, fulsome inquiry. You will have to front up with something a bit more than a flimsy e-mail from someone to someone else.

Mr McCarthy: What have you got to hide?

Mr TOLLNER: I have absolutely nothing to hide. That is why I say go outside and make the allegation. You will not. You sit here like a coward, cuddled up with the member for Namatjira, running her agenda, moving motions about racial discrimination, vilification and that sort of nonsense, suggesting we are a pack of racists in the CLP.

You have no idea how offensive that is to some of us, but you sit there ...

Mr McCarthy: I never said that.

Mr TOLLNER: Your motion was going to say that last night, and we know where the debate would have gone. We would have had the member for Namatjira saying, 'You over there, you racist people, you do not understand that it is now time black people took over this place – the poorest people in the world'. That is the sort of person you have cuddled up to.

Mr McCarthy: Are you calling me a racist?

Mr TOLLNER: I am not calling you anything.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Treasurer and everyone else in the Chamber, please direct your comments through the Chair. Member for Barkly, I would like to see you at the energy meeting after 12 pm, so remember you are on a warning. Thank you.

Mr TOLLNER: I will not say anymore, apart from put up or shut up. Get out the front, make some concrete allegations and we will have them tested. We will have the inquiry you so desperately desire.

Mr VOWLES (Johnston): Mr Deputy Speaker, this censure motion is about leadership. It is about trust, ethics and accountability.

Over the last week we have witnessed a Chief Minister lacking in the maturity, integrity and, now, trust to be the leader of the Northern Territory. Territorians have the right to expect their Chief Minister to tell the truth. It is clear the Chief Minister and his crooked CLP government have set out to deliberately mislead this parliament and have deliberately lied to Territorians. The Chief Minister has stood here this week, hand on heart, to say:

In relation to Foundation 51 and any directorship Peter Maley may or may not have, I am not aware of how that works, nor do I know about Foundation 51. There is no connection between Foundation 51 and the CLP as a legal body.

We now know from Graham Lewis, Foundation 51 director and CLP management committee member, that – I quote from his e-mail to CLP president Ross Connolly:

I have made the Chief Minister aware of this probability, much to his concern. He and I have on many occasions discussed the matter of the Foundation, and he is well disposed to having the foundation continue its activity, with the wall between the entities currently, fixed in place.

Deceit does not get more brazen than this. The Chief Minister has clearly known about the nature and activities of this CLP slush fund for a very

long time. Not only has he known about it all along, not only has he lied to Territorians about his knowledge, but he has actively encouraged the CLP and the slush fund directors to operate in the clandestine way they do.

He has actively sought to hide how the CLP and its slush funds raise funds from Territorians. How can Territorians trust anything that comes out of this man's mouth ever again? How can any of us have any confidence he is telling the truth in this Assembly?

His actions fall far below the ethical behaviour we all have a right to expect from our Chief Minister. Territorians have the right to expect that the actions of their elected representatives will be in the best interests of the Territory and its people. It is abundantly clear the only thing that concerns this Chief Minister, and the government he leads, is his own political skin.

We heard some very serious allegations in this place last night about how the Blain by-election campaign was conducted. We have heard allegations that funds from the Foundation 51 slush fund were used to campaign for the now member for Blain. We also also heard the Chief Minister yesterday state:

There is no direct connection ... between Foundation 51 and the party. How the Blain by-election was funded is a matter for the party.

The Chief Minister's statement lacks credibility, and Graham Lewis, who sits on the CLP management committee with the Chief Minister, has confirmed involvement of Foundation 51 in the Blain by-election:

The Foundation has already contributed significantly towards the activities of the Blain by-election. In retrospect – not clever in view of this current interrogation!

Given the Chief Minister lied to this House this week, how would anyone believe he has no knowledge of how the campaign for the Blain by-election was funded? Does he really expect Territorians to believe him now? Does he really expect us to believe he took so little interest in a by-election at which the fate of this government would be decided?

It is well beyond time for this Chief Minister and his rotten CLP government to be held to account.

I want to draw the attention of honourable members to another deception involving Foundation 51 and the CLP. The problem with the internet, Chief Minister, is that once something

is on it, it can never be removed. I seek leave to table the document.

Leave granted.

Mr VOWLES: This document proves conclusively that from 2009 until last month the web domain for Foundation 51 was owned by the Country Liberal Party. Then something happened. Your former deputy treasurer started asking awkward questions about its legality and accounts, and, bingo, on 18 April the ownership of the Foundation 51 web domain changed hands to Graham Lewis. It is a cover up. This is a smoking gun which shows the link between Foundation 51 and the very top of the CLP. The CLP has its finger prints all over Foundation 51 and its illicit operations. It is time to come clean, Chief Minister. It is beyond time for the Chief Minister to explain to Territorians his full knowledge of Foundation 51, its operations and its purpose.

What Territorians have witnessed this week is a complete lack of leadership. Not only has the Chief Minister lied, not only did he seek to hide the truth at every turn, when he was confronted with a serious allegation in this House and the overwhelming evidence now before us, what did he do? Did he call an inquiry to get to the bottom of it? No, he did not. Did he accept that Territorians need confidence that their government is beyond reproach and agree to set up an inquiry into Foundation 51? No, he did not.

This Chief Minister has failed even the most basic standard of leadership. Everyone on that side of the House, every member of the CLP and everyone in the community knows that the Chief Minister lacks the maturity, leadership and integrity required in a true leader and head of government. He has done everything he can to reduce the standing of his CLP government in the eyes of Territorians. The Chief Minister's failure of leadership has been exposed by Graham Lewis. The e-mail from Graham Lewis not only exposes deep divisions in the CLP party machine, it shines a light on deceptive and questionable arrangements on the management of donations received by the CLP slush fund, Foundation 51.

Foundation 51 is a front company set up and deliberately designed to avoid disclosure of donations as required by both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth electoral law. There are very close parallels between Foundation 51 and the murky entity Eight by Five, established by the Liberal Party in New South Wales.

Damning revelations made by ICAC have exposed Eight by Five as a front company set up to channel unlawful donations into the Liberal Party in the run up to the 2000 election. In the words of Geoffrey Watson QC:

This was about a giant money machine: a magical process that took prohibited money ... and left it all squeaky clean political donations.

Mr Watson was speaking about the sham Liberal entity Eight by Five, but his remarks are equally applicable to CLP front company Foundation 51. The similarities between Eight by Five and the CLP's front company, Foundation 51, are striking. What is the Chief Minister's response? The Sergeant Schultz defence, 'I know nothing'.

But this does not ring true, because the e-mail from Graeme Lewis confirms not only that he had discussed the murky Foundation 51 with the Chief Minister on many occasions, but that Foundation 51 contributed significantly to the CLP campaign in the recent by-election.

The Chief Minister's denials that he knows anything about Foundation 51 are implausible. The Chief Minister and Mr Lewis are members of the CLP management committee, and we know Foundation 51 was discussed at meetings of that committee. Who else is on the CLP management committee with the Chief Minister and Graeme Lewis? I will mention a few management committee members who might be able to shed some light on the operations of Foundation 51: Hon Dave Tollner MLA, member for Fong Lim, Northern Territory Treasurer and Deputy Leader of the CLP; Mrs Natasha Griggs MP, federal member for Solomon; and Senator Hon Nigel Scullion, federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs. Will they too, along with the Chief Minister, adopt the sergeant Schultz defence? If the Chief Minister lacks the courage and integrity to clean up the CLP, will anyone else step up to the plate?

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is beyond doubt that the Chief Minister lied to this parliament and to all Territorians. He and his CLP government have actively sought to hide the truth from Territorians. Never has the Territory had a more arrogant, out of touch Chief Minister and government than we unfortunately have today. This Chief Minister deserves the censure of this parliament.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I welcome this censure motion because it gives us an opportunity to talk about several of the allegations made today.

Before I go down that path, it is important to describe how legal entities work. I am a legal entity, as is every other living human being. If you are an adult human being you are criminally responsible for certain conduct and civilly responsible for certain conduct, but as legal entities you have certain rights to protection and certain other rights.

An associated body is a legal entity, a corporation is a legal entity and a political party is a legal entity. Organisations such as Emily's List, which donate money directly to Labor women, is a legal entity. I note one of the members of EMILY's List is Nova Peris, a legal entity in her own right receiving donations from EMILY's List, which is a separate legal entity.

I have read this e-mail in question very carefully whilst listening to the debate. It is important to not just cherry-pick the issues cherry-picked by the members opposite, but to read larger sections to put some of the comments they have cherry-picked from into context, bearing in mind this is an e-mail from Graeme Lewis to Ross Connolly. Graeme Lewis, for the purpose of this discussion is, I presume, representing Foundation 51, and Ross Connolly is President of the Country Liberal Party. He says:

Ross you did advise me of the discussions this morning regarding Foundation 51, and I thank you for that. Out of that discussion came two issues that may well be breaches in the wall that must rightly exist between the Party and the Foundation.

Clearly, a conversation is happening between the President of the Country Liberal Party and the representative from Foundation 51, who is already articulating that a wall must exist between the two legal entities. It goes on to say:

One of those issues was remedied within days of it occurring several years ago, but I am well aware of that item remaining on Google pages to this day.

I am curious as to the matter which has just been tabled by the member for Johnston, talking about the domain history, when clearly there is a reference – I presume, looking at this e-mail - that the matter had been remedied within days several years ago, but the item remains on Google pages to this day.

Whilst the member for Johnston traipses in here and says this is an issue which was dealt with recently, there is suggestion it is not the case. This e-mail goes on to say:

Perhaps Daniel knows how to deal with that too. The matter has long ago been addressed with the Australian Electoral Commission, and is no longer an issue.

I recall something about Foundation 51 coming under scrutiny by the Australian Electoral Commission about four or five years ago. The matter was dealt with - ancient history, it is gone. I presume the head of Foundation 51 is making reference to the matter which was investigated by

the Australian Electoral Commission some years ago:

The matter has long ago been addressed within the Australian Electoral Commission, and is no longer an issue.

Then it goes on, and maybe this is what the member for Johnston is referring to:

The other matter – that of the domain address and ownership – you brought to my attention just today.

I presume this is what the member for Johnston is referring to.

It is quite disappointing that this has in fact been known to members of the team even for years, but was never ever advised to me as a member of the team. The position will now be remedied as quickly as possible.

The head of Foundation 51, a legal entity, who is also a member of the Country Liberals team, a separate legal entity - you can be a member of a number of boards so long as you keep those walls in place – has identified a couple of issues which go to the quality of the wall between the two organisations. What has happened? One, it was investigated a number of years ago and has been settled. The second issue - I presume this is what the member for Johnston is referring to - was remedied as soon as it came to the attention of the head of Foundation 51.

There is no doubt Foundation 51 has shared information with the Country Liberal Party in the past. It has been well-established and is on the record; it is a matter of public knowledge. There is no secret about any of this. These organisations exist in other political parties. EMILY's List I have referred to. I wonder if the members opposite want to talk to us about Harold Nelson Holdings, which makes contributions to the Labor Party. Perhaps we want to talk about those. We are not screaming from the rafters saying it is all naughty for you guys to have Harold Nelson Holdings. You guys want to paint something over here which is very similar to what you have over there. You want to paint it as some sort of black thing over here, but over there it is all right to have your own organisations and legal entities - but not us, we are not allowed to.

What about the Chifley Research Centre? There is another one. Has the Chifley Research Centre ever had anything to do with the Labor Party? If you go to the website, it tells you it has almost everything to do with the Labor Party. It is an organisation which sits separately from the Labor Party, raises funds and does research which is shared, I imagine, with the Labor Party before the

Liberal Party. There is this idea that you can take a thing like Foundation 51, isolate it, and build some form of suggestion that it is improper. These organisations exist in variant forms across the political spectrum.

If I am not mistaken, I am aware of one function Foundation 51 held and Clive Palmer was involved with it. I could be wrong because ...

Mr Vatskalis: When he was still a member of the Liberal Party.

Mr ELFERINK: This is what I am trying to point out. These organisations are not unknown in the Australian political spectrum. What I see from this is that there is a clear delineation in Graham Lewis' mind between his functions for Foundation 51, one legal institution, and his relationship with the Country Liberals', another legal institution. Mr Melky is attempting, in some way, to mix the two up and suggest it would be entirely proper for Mr Lewis to provide information about the internal structures of Foundation 51.

I do not know the internal structures of Foundation 51. I have known of its existence for a number of years, but I do not know what its books are or anything like that. Mr Melky could just as easily, I suspect, have become a member of Foundation 51, paid his dues and gone in through the front door. He would then have been, subject to its constitutional arrangements, able to see its financial structures. Mr Melky clearly cannot make that distinction in his mind's eye, and that is where this nonsense comes from. His failure to make the distinction between the two legal entities makes him assume that, in some way, Mr Lewis is responsible for disclosing information about Foundation 51 to the Country Liberals. Mr Lewis, quite rightly, said, 'No, and, by the way, thank you for pointing out two issues. We were aware of one many years ago and it has been resolved. The matter of the domain name I have attended to immediately.' He has created those structures.

Let us go further into this e-mail. This is a very important quote being used by members opposite, and I am surprised they do not understand what it means. It says:

I have made the Chief Minister aware of this probability, much to his concern. He and I have on many occasions discussed the matter of the Foundation, and he is well disposed to having the Foundation continue its activity, with the wall being between the entities currently, fixed in place.

This is exactly what should be occurring.

I do not think I have ever heard the Chief Minister say he did not know Foundation 51 existed. Of

course he knew it existed; he has said as much, but he also understands there are walls that must exist between organisations. The Chief Minister is several steps removed from Foundation 51. That does not prevent him from talking to board members of Foundation 51, a separate legal entity, and discussing the sorts of things it does.

Nothing prevents the Chief Minister or anybody else talking to the head of a corporation anywhere about what that corporation does. It is up to the corporation to protect any confidential information it seeks to protect because of its constitution or construct. I could walk into the National bank and say, 'Tell us about your operation and show us your books'. The National bank would then have the choice, depending on its constitution or construction, of saying, 'Yes, we will tell you all how we do our business', or, 'Naff off, it is none of your business', because it wants to create walls between itself and other organisations. That is how legal entities work; they separate themselves out. The Chief Minister says, 'Make sure the walls are in tact'.

I will say it again so it is clear.

... much to his concern. He and I have on many occasions discussed the matter of the Foundation ...

That is fine:

... and he is well disposed to having the Foundation continue its activity ...

I am certain members of the Labor Party are well-disposed to EMILY's List and the Chifley Research Centre continuing their activity:

... with the wall between the entities currently, fixed in place.

So there are separations.

If you remove all of the noise and bluster from what we have heard today, what have we heard that actually suggests any form of impropriety? I have heard the allegations, but what evidence has been tabled? The evidence comes in the form of an e-mail from the head of Foundation 51 to the head of the Country Liberals as a party, and clearly demonstrates that the head of Foundation 51 is anxious to make certain that the walls are in place, intact and impervious to lines being crossed. Because Mr Melky, the Assistant Treasurer of the Country Liberals, who is unable to understand the distinction between two legal entities, finds the resistance of Mr Lewis in some way offensive, he says it cannot be right, it is all wrong. That is not how it works. It is a failure on Mr Melky's part and, dare I say, a failure on the

Labor Party's part to understand those important distinctions which is at the heart of this.

Of course, what is also at the heart of this is that three members of the Country Liberal Party decided to sit on the crossbenches and take with them several members of the Country Liberals organisation. There is a motive behind this which is not just about being able to make certain that these numbers are sorted out. The motive behind this is that we can then try to nobble the Country Liberals. That is what this is now all about. It descends, with the increasingly cosy relationship between the member for Namatjira and the Leader of the Opposition, into an environment where they work in tandem. If the newly Independent members wanted to pursue this, why is it coming from the Labor Party? Because they are completely and utterly in bed with each other. That is exactly what is happening.

I remind honourable members of the Stella Maris inquiry. The contribution from the member for Barkly leading this censure motion was, in its lion's part, about the Stella Maris inquiry.

Mr McCarthy: Rubbish.

Mr ELFERINK: It was. You go back and read it. You spoke more about the Stella Maris inquiry because the evidence that you suggest is so flimsy, so tissue-thin, that it cannot even be sustained by reason.

Mr McCARTHY: Test it.

Mr ELFERINK: I am testing it now and it is failing. As far as I am concerned they have proven and demonstrated nothing in this House today, other than the fact they are in bed with the very people they disavowed themselves from but a few months ago.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 9

Ms Anderson
Mr Gunner
Ms Lawrie
Ms Lee
Mr McCarthy
Ms Manison
Mr Vatskalis
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker

Noes 12

Mr Barrett
Mr Chandler
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Ms Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mrs Lambley
Mrs Price
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Motion negatived.

**HEALTH SERVICES BILL
(Serial 74)**

Continued from 27 March 2014.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, I speak to the government's new Health Services Bill which establishes new governance and administrative arrangements for this government's headline initiative in the health area, the development of the Top End and Central Australian health services.

I acknowledge that the government has been open about its plans for the health sector, releasing a discussion plan in November 2012 regarding its plans for our health services, to help inform the community discussion and debate, and Minister Lambley released the bill for consultation in October 2013. I commend her for that process. It is in stark contrast to other legislation we have seen brought into this House by this government lately. I am referring to the Power and Water bills that have been rammed through.

Today we will debate this bill to create a new health system which the minister said in her media release of October 2013 would deliver more local input into health services, break down silos within the health system and ensure services are shaped to meet local community needs. More specifically, the bill sets out that the key objectives of this legislation include improving transparency and accountability, and balancing local service provision and local decision-making with a Territory-wide approach, focusing on strategic system-wide management.

We will not be opposing this bill today, but I have many questions about what the real health benefits and improvements will equate to on the ground, and what transparency and accountability Territorians really get to see within their own health system as a result of this bill. The bill says the object of the legislation is to establish a health system that provides high-quality health services to Territorians, having regard to the nationally agreed principles and objectives of Australia's health system.

I will return later to this reference to these nationally agreed principles and how this bill advances that objective, particularly to highlight some continuing concerns the opposition and health stakeholders we have consulted with have about the implementation of the new health service arrangements and the extent to which regard to national principles will be met by this government.

Providing efficient and effective healthcare support to its citizens is one of the most fundamental functions of government, and it is an

expensive undertaking. One of the greatest things about our nation is the fact we have a health system in place, for now that is, that aims to be accessible and affordable for all, that we work on the principle that if you get sick in this country, no matter who you are and how much you earn, you will be taken care of.

Although I am hugely concerned at the moves of the Abbott government and its Commission of Audit to make healthcare less affordable and accessible to everyday Australians and what that means for the future, I think for a long time we have had the right principles and values in place in this country when it comes to healthcare.

In the NT our Health department's budget is \$1.36bn, with over half of that funding our five public hospitals and other acute health services. I remind Territorians that the current health budget includes at least \$35m just for the operation and management of this government's mandatory alcohol treatment program, a program driven by an ideological desire to remove the Banned Drinker Register that limited access to alcohol for problem drinkers and replace that supply control measure with clumsy attempts to lock up problem drinkers, another policy decision of this government rammed through without sound evidence to back it up.

There is no doubt that delivering quality health services across the Territory, not just access to acute care in our clinics and hospitals, is a major challenge. We are under no illusions, and we know we have big health deficits in the Territory. There are challenges related to geography and major challenges linked to Indigenous disadvantage and delivering health services to remote communities.

A key challenge is addressing the high burden of disease and poor health of many Indigenous Territorians, noting, as the Health department does in its annual report, that it is attributable to continuing low educational attainment, high unemployment, over-crowded housing and other risk factors like smoking, poor nutrition and, for too many Territorians, high levels of alcohol consumption.

In 2012-13, 70% of our hospital patients were Indigenous Territorians, and over half of all Indigenous Territorians live in very remote areas of the Territory. We are fortunate to have many dedicated, knowledgeable and hardworking health practitioners, as well as health administrators, working hard to deliver quality services to Territorians.

On our watch, we saw improvements, as reported in the COAG performance reports and our Health department's annual reports, including

improvements to emergency department wait times, now at risk as a consequence of this government's alcohol management policies and the bed block we are seeing; improvements to elective surgery wait times; and expansion of health services, education and research based in the Territory.

Between 2007 and 2011, death rates in the NT reduced by 18.6%, compared to 6.2% nationally. We gained a 23% reduction in potentially avoidable deaths, deaths which have been deferred or delayed with earlier detection and treatment. In other jurisdictions, the reduction has been less than 10%; and a reduction of 26% in Aboriginal death rates since 2000, noting we are the only jurisdiction on track to close the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal death rates by the Closing the Gap target date of 2031.

Infant mortality greatly improved with Aboriginal infant mortality reducing from 17 deaths per 1000 births in 2001 to 13 per 1000 live births in 2009-10. It is still not good enough; in many of these categories the efforts must continue to address and overcome the issues, but we have worked hard to head in the right direction.

As we would all agree, good healthcare is not just about acute health services - somewhere to go when you are sick or injured. A good health system and whole-of-government approach also focuses on the issues determining whether we are well or sick in the first place, and putting strategies in place for early detection and, even better, prevention entirely.

As our Chief Medical Officer has said, good health is not only about health services. As important as hospitals, health centres and healthcare professionals are, there are more important factors in determining whether we are well in the first place. These are: having a decent education; a job; a clean and safe place to live without discrimination; having a balanced and nutritious diet; and limiting the use of things like junk food, alcohol or tobacco. This is a very good point.

We will have increasing demands on our health system, linked to our continuing economic growth and ageing population. It is a hard reality across Australia that government health spending is growing as our population increases and ages. There are major challenges and we need to ensure we have the best management system in place so we can help build on the health gains we have won in recent years and make further progress in prevention, and early detection and treatment of disease.

We want to see the best possible investment for every dollar in health and see funds going directly

to prevention, detection and treatment, not chewed up by administration and bureaucracy.

The bill before us provides for the establishment of a new health administrative structure of the Top End and Central Australian health services, statutory bodies with their own management boards. This legislation establishes the architecture of these new arrangements, but we have yet to see how health improvements in health services will be delivered and how the proposed new administrative arrangements will make a difference on the ground, as claimed by the government, especially in primary healthcare.

The CLP government has crowed that these reforms will lead to more local control of health services, but the bill before us still arms the government with a raft of mechanisms for intervention and control of priorities and activities of health services.

The government has already announced the membership of its health service boards, with an interesting array of some political appointments amongst the community, as well as health service professional representatives.

This legislation sets out the administrative arrangements to support boards in their work. In line with national health reform agreements, service delivery agreements are to be developed and agreed to by the health services and the Department of Health. Service level agreements will be agreed upon for services to be delivered, as well as standards and performance measures. Again, in line with national health reform agreements, those service agreements are to be published and available for public scrutiny.

The bill provides for the appointment of a chief operating officer, also known as the COO, who will be responsible to both health services boards and the department CEO – also known as the system manager – for the day-to-day management of the health service. However, the legislation also clearly provides that where there is conflict between the direction of the board and the CEO of the Department of Health, the directions of the department CEO, as system manager, rather than those of the board, will prevail.

The bill also provides for ministerial direction to the boards so the minister remains quite a powerful figure in the decisions and operations of the two health services. The legislation allows the minister to give directions that may be inconsistent with a service delivery agreement – a contract the board has with the Department of Health for provisions of service. The bill requires that in such circumstances the board must comply with those ministerial directions, despite any inconsistency with the service delivery agreement.

Whilst the government talks about the devolution of decision-making and connecting with local communities, the reality is the government and the minister will maintain a firm hand on health service decision-making. It is appropriate that the bill requires any ministerial directions to be in writing. Openness and accountability of this government, a core election commitment, would have been enhanced if there was also a statutory requirement that such directions, and reasons for them, be published for the information of taxpayers funding our public health system.

The bill sets out layers of reporting requirements and opportunities for intervention, including quarterly health service reports to the department, annual reports, performance audits, performance improvement plans, powers for the department to order an inquiry into the operation of a service, and, ultimately, the power of the minister to dissolve a board and appoint an administrator for a health service.

There is a need for checks and balances in how health services are delivering and conducting business. The delivery of health services is fundamentally central to the work of government, and Territorians will want confidence that the appropriate standards will be maintained. There is concern among many in the health sector that these new arrangements, unless implemented sensibly, will create a monster of bureaucratic reporting and the duplication of management functions. There is a risk that these administrative arrangements could become a debilitating drain on the resources of health services and a distraction from their core business of delivering services and providing frontline healthcare to Territory families.

Separately, the legislation also allows the board to delegate any of its powers and functions to the COO of the health service, who, in turn, also has the power to sub-delegate that power to other employees. Lines of responsibility and accountability could quickly become very blurred.

How much of this reporting and transparency around decision-making by the minister and the new health services will Territorians see? Will the minutes of meetings be available? Will we see quarterly reports to the minister or will we just see some updates in annual reports? We know the information exists, so how much will we see? At estimates, who will be available from the health services to answer questions we will have about the progress and operations of the new health services and the running of hospitals?

The real test of the new administrative structures set out in the bill will be if the machinery works and achieves the stated purpose of better services and more local decision-making guided by local

priorities and the professional advice of local clinicians, people on the front line.

The level of independence the board has to determine its own priorities and spending is also not clear.

Another key issue raised in consultations over the bill was what checks and balances will be in place to ensure we do not see a health privatisation agenda implemented by stealth under the new arrangements? We know this government and that in Canberra are working hard to reduce government spending in all areas of government services, and that they find appeal in privatising services and shifting the cost burden to individual families.

We are seeing that already with delays in the development of the new Palmerston hospital. We have seen the desire of the government to maximise private health services at that new hospital. We have now seen the project delayed by years, based on the government saying the slow movement is because it is going over the scoping, consultation and design process, for the second time over, again, rather than getting on with the job. Granted, they want private sector investment. This could have been done at the same time without creating the massive delays we have seen around the Palmerston and rural area hospital. This has also placed more pressure on RDH, along with the alcohol-related admissions and the bed block driven largely by the 100 beds being used for mandatory alcohol rehabilitation rather than RDH patients.

One has to wonder what services within the hospitals may be privatised under the new system as well. For example, we know they have things like laundries and catering. What private health sector companies can they get in to manage health services currently delivered by management within the Department of Health and the hospitals? If the hospital boards are already operating, or the Department of Health is already looking at privatising and outsourcing any services within the hospitals, now would be an appropriate opportunity to let Territorians know.

We must never forget that in the Territory we have some of the most disadvantaged families in the country. The government has continually claimed that this reform is about more community control, but community control means more than the appointment of community representatives to the board, particularly a board exposed to high levels of control and influence by the Department of Health and the minister. The government has also spoken of how they want to devolve local decision-making, particularly to senior clinicians. A worthy objective, but in our consultations we have detected real concern amongst some of the

health sector that we need to ensure this does not mean a shift of focus or investment to the acute side of the health system. We must ensure we strike the right balance between investments in primary healthcare to keep people out of hospital, as well as acute care for when people are sick or injured.

How will Territory-wide services, disability services, remote health, environmental health and community health be properly integrated with the new health services, ensuring that each supports and builds on each other's work? Already I hear concerns that some Territory health workers, particularly in areas of health promotion, feel vulnerable, that their work will be lost in the wash, that we will see new layers of bureaucracy to manage the new arrangements at the expense of frontline workers. What measures are in place to ensure we build on the good work of the community-controlled health sector through AMSANT and other bodies? Will we see a commitment to open negotiations with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum and further development of its health framework?

It is also telling that one major concern raised in consultations on this bill was that many clinicians on the front line, particularly nurses in our remote health services, are not clear on how the reform affects them and their work. One of the most important things in any reform of this scale is to stay engaged with your frontline workers and ensure they stay connected to help inform the change. There seems to be deficiencies in this area, and I urge the minister and senior officials to address that communication issue.

The government has said the new arrangements will foster innovation and efficiencies in healthcare, but it is not clear how innovation will be rewarded or incentivised and how any savings will stay with and benefit local regions or specific health services. I welcome more explanation from the minister on that point.

We also need to hear from the minister that as part of these changes efficiency does not equate to a reduction in the health workforce. As part of the changes to the Department of Health and the health services, we need to know whether there will be job losses in the restructures. We have heard in briefings that job losses would be managed through a process of natural attrition, but we need to know how many jobs this really means. I have heard real concerns about the risk that the implementation of the new arrangements will become a major impediment to fixing existing health service issues.

We know we have some vital projects in the space of health that need to be addressed and must be made a priority. This includes getting on with the

Palmerston hospital. It was clear in the Blain by-election that people are sick of waiting and sick of the delays. They are extremely disappointed that work on the hospital will not start for another two years.

We need to see the completion of the federally-funded work to build new health remote clinics so we do not lose those funds and the opportunity to improve facilities and services in the bush. Delivering the new emergency department at Gove hospital – having visited Gove hospital recently I have seen firsthand that the facilities need to be upgraded. The funding is there. The community wants and needs a good ED. We need to see this done.

Addressing the hospital-based accommodation needs of patients from remote areas and using the Commonwealth-funded medi-hostel facilities for their intended purpose and fixing the problem of bed block at RDH: the sooner the medi-hostel at RDH is used for its intended purpose the better. We need suitable accommodation to help move people out of RDH into appropriate care facilities after they leave hospital.

Medicos and nurses, the clinicians the government should be listening to, continue to be outraged at having to treat patients double-bunked in our accident and emergency departments. I note that the federally funded ED short stay unit is under way. I am sure everybody is looking forward to seeing that finished as soon as possible.

Tackling the implications of federally-driven changes to our health system and protecting funding for health services in the Territory appears to be one of the greatest fights we have ahead. The Abbott government is determined to make health services less affordable and accessible to Australians, and this is such a shame.

In the case of RDH, we have seen the department has struggled to get its new paid parking arrangements right. The parking system there has not been without its issues. I was glad I was well prepared when I had to visit the hospital and made sure my registration number was down and ready to go, and made sure I put the extra money in, in case my appointment ran over. As a local member, I have had many complaints. I was at a barbecue on the weekend and people were quite concerned, as patients, about the system in place. When they are waiting at the hospital it is creating a fair bit of anxiety, particularly when their appointments have run over. It has not been the greatest system.

I have also received complaints from staff at the hospital, particularly regarding shift change. They are going to the designated spots for staff and

finding they are unable to get a parking space. They go to work and wait for other staff to leave then go to repark their car to find they have a ticket. Quite a bit of frustration has been expressed to me from staff impacted on by those changes.

I also note that yesterday the minister announced that the paediatric ward will be getting \$11.9m of Commonwealth-funded investment for a refurbishment. I welcome that. We all want to see a fantastic paediatric ward to help sick kids. Nobody wants to see children sick in hospital. However, it is a real shame we missed a huge opportunity going into the last election. The Labor government planned to build a new state-of-the-art children's wing at Royal Darwin Hospital. I quote from the policy document:

... because we understand that nothing is more important than the health and wellbeing of our kids.

The new wing will use modern, tropical design principles and feature contemporary health practices for the best care for children, mothers and families.

...

The new children's wing will free up much needed space within the current tower block for expanded services.

The key features of that wing were to include: children inpatient wards co-located; more than 50 beds; extra doctors, nurses and support staff; secure and easy access for parents and visiting relatives; outdoor and interactive play area; interactive classroom facilities; expanded maternity and nursery services; parents facilities; and additional car parking.

At that time the then government had managed to secure \$48.1m of federal funding commitments. I see the government has managed to maintain \$11.9m of those funding commitments. It is real; we had an opportunity there. As I said, I welcome the upgrade to the hospital and the paediatric ward. We want to see the best possible facilities for children, but we have missed an opportunity.

Another question through talking to my colleagues was about local representation on the health service boards. The Top End health service covers Gove hospital, RDH and Katherine Hospital. Having membership from those regions on those boards - and the Central Australian board having Tennant Creek Hospital included - is something I am keen to hear a bit more about from the minister. How are the hospitals, that might not have people from those regions on the hospital boards, consulting with people?

Minister, there is a raft of issues under your watch. There will always be much work to do in the health space, but the issues I have highlighted are areas we need action on sooner rather than later. People want to see the government focused on fixing and improving the health system and not just talking about change.

I mentioned earlier that this bill says the object of the legislation is to establish a public health system that provides high-quality health services to Territorians, having regard to the nationally agreed principles and objectives of Australia's health system.

These principles are that the Australian health system should be shaped around the health needs of individual patients, their families and communities; focus on the prevention of disease and injury and the maintenance of health, and not simply the treatment of illness; support an integrated approach to the provision of health, lifestyles, prevention of illness and injury, and diagnoses and treatment of illness across the continuum of care; and provide all Australians with timely access to quality health services based on their needs, not their ability to pay, regardless of where they live in this country.

It is good that the bill acknowledges these principles and references to them are included in it, because, fundamentally, they remind us of our national obligations and our objective in delivering health services independent of a citizen's ability to pay, and that Territorians can have equitable access to health services no matter where they live.

We are yet to see what the new Commonwealth government's budget has in store for us in access to healthcare and funding for Territory health services; for example, what is the future of Medicare Local in the N, an organisation established and funded to identify our health needs, identify gaps, formulate responses and increase support to health practitioners?

We are yet to see whether the recommendations of the Coalition's Commission of Audit will be adopted, like co-payments for treatment in our A&E rooms and changes to Commonwealth Territory funding arrangements, and what this will mean for our ability to deliver health services for Territorians.

At first glance, many of the Commission of Audit recommendations in health will have direct and undermining impacts on our ability to deliver health services and reduce the burden of disease and health disadvantage in the Territory.

It will take a strong Territory Health minister, Treasurer and Chief Minister to protect and grow

the Territory's interests in this area. The minister needs to get on with the job. Complete this administrative reform as quickly and cleanly as possible so you can get on with fixing blockages to the front line of health services; deliver your promises on new health services; make a real commitment to the Palmerston hospital; make some real change in addressing the social detriments of health; give Territorians some confidence you and the government are focused on continual improvement to our health system, especially primary healthcare, and that you can and will deliver on this core business of government.

Thank you to the organisations, health professionals and advocates we consulted with about this legislation. Thank you to Ms Christine Dennis and Candy MacLean for briefing us. I appreciate Christine giving me two briefings on this; it was greatly appreciated. To your departing senior advisor, Mr Alex Bruce – I wish all ministerial offices had staff like him. He has been fantastic to deal with, very professional and always prompt with his service. I have grown quite fond of you, Alex and, I am sure the minister has as well, so it is a shame to see you go.

Madam Speaker, I will have more questions during the committee stage.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I should say a couple of things to the member for Wanguri. It will be the Palmerston and regional hospital. It will not be the Palmerston regional hospital. We will get the 'and' in there one day, because we are not part of Palmerston. It is in the rural electorate so it should reflect that, unless the minister has ideas of expanding the boundary of Palmerston. I do not think the member for Goyder or her mother would be too pleased with that.

I will also say a few words about this bill. I only had a briefing the other day, so my comments will not go to the depth of the member for Wanguri's, especially in relation to other issues of policy.

I thank the people who gave me a briefing the other day, especially Alex Bruce, who is very professional. He has been to my office a number of times and certainly knows his job. I have never had any qualms about his approach to any matters he has brought forward on behalf of the minister. He has been very professional, and it will be the Territory's loss when he goes home. I wish I could convince him that Cash for Containers is a good scheme and it should operate in New South Wales. I hope he heard that.

Mrs Lambley: He will have.

Mr WOOD: That is right.

I also congratulate the new CEO, Mr Len Notaras. I have had a long relationship with him as a local member. He is the ultimate professional when it comes to Health in the Northern Territory. I do not need to go through the history of what he has done, but he is someone I have always been able to contact with issues people have come to me about as a local member. One hundred per cent of those issues have been quickly resolved in some way or other.

He is the ideal person to be CEO in my personal opinion; others might have different opinions. He brings a lot of local and international knowledge to the department, because – I am not sure whether he still is, but he was in charge of the trauma unit at Royal Darwin Hospital. He is a very approachable person and very much a people person. Even though he has a position with high responsibility, he is still very much a person you can talk to about matters you may be concerned with. Even if someone has a complaint because they felt they were not properly looked after at the hospital, he will make sure it is investigated.

Knowing he was able to do those things when he was not in this position looks good for the Department of Health, because if he is able to take on and care for people who have issues, you might say at the bottom of the priority pile, and he makes sure those issues are important to him, he will take that same approach to the much bigger picture which he now has to take charge of. It is certainly a good decision.

I have some matters I would like to raise about the boards. We are replacing the *Hospital Networks Governing Councils Act 2012* and going to a new process of having Top End and Central boards to look after our hospitals.

That might be fine. I have noticed that the new government has swept things away and wants to put its own brand on thing. That is fine. I notice the government is still advertising for people to comment on the future of the Northern Territory. It seems only yesterday that we were spending quite a bit of money on the 2030 documents. Will we ask the same group of people the same thing: what is the future of the Northern Territory? I hate to see that we are wasting money.

I have nothing against the government moving in the direction it wants to and replacing the old boards with this new system, but there is an onus on the government to show us that these changes will be effective. It is nice to put labels on things and say 'that is our label now', but this label will cost a bit of money. These boards obviously will cost a reasonable amount of money to run. I gather they are on a reasonable allowance. I think I was told they are on directors' fees; I am not sure what amount that is but possibly it is

more than the previous board received. Obviously they will be travelling everywhere and there are a fair number of people on the board. So there is a cost and a change. The onus is on the government to show, through reporting, that this change has meant improvements in the Health system. That is the area I would like to investigate a bit more thoroughly in my contribution this afternoon.

I would like the minister to understand where I am coming from. In the first part of the bill under 'Principles and objectives of the unified Australian health system', clause 3(b) has the Australian health system principles, and clause 3(c) states the long-term objectives for the Australia health system. I will just put that to one side.

Then you go to Division 3 clause 21, which is about health service boards and the establishment of the boards. Clause 22 talks about the functions of the board, and says:

- (1) *The principle function of a Board is to govern the Service for which the Board is established and ensure the Service is managed efficiently and effectively.*

Then it talks about the strategic functions of the board. Division 3 clause 23 says:

In providing strategic direction as mentioned in section 22(3)(a), the Board for a Service must:

- (a) *develop, and oversee the implementation of, a business plan with a health improvement focus, including the development of vision, values and goals for the Service; and*
- (b) *regularly review and update the business plan; and*
- (c) *encourage innovation to improve health outcomes; and*
- (d) *undertake annual budget reviews and planning; and*
- (e) *develop long-term budget priorities, including master planning and capital budget planning; and*
- (f) *develop, and oversee the implementation of, strategies to improve the transition of patients between primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare providers.*

Clause 24 talks about the community leadership functions of the board:

- (a) *promoting ethical behaviour in accordance with standards applicable to health consumer needs; and*
- (b) *promoting appropriate culture and values of the Service; and*
- (c) *leading community engagement with and by the Service, including as an interface between the Service and its stakeholders; and*
- (d) *understanding the physical, cultural and health needs of the Service's community and seeking to ensure equity of access to health services provided by the Service; and*
- (e) *leading systemic improvements in communication between the Service and its community.*

It goes on to say there are other functions of the board:

The Board for a Service must also:

- (a) *monitor the performance of the service and ensure it performs its functions effectively and appropriately; and*
- (b) *ensure the Service complies with its obligations under this Act or any other law in force in the Territory; and*
- (c) *ensure the Service provides effective and safe health services; and*
- (d) *ensure the efficient and economic operation of the Service; and*
- (e) *monitor the Service's performance against the SDA for the Service to ensure the Service complies with the requirements of the SDA; and*
- (f) *ensure the Service complies with any Health Service Directive issued to the Service; and*
- (g) *develop and implement policies, plans and initiatives for the operation of the Service, consistent with the SDA for the Service and any Health Service Directives issued to the Service; and*
- (h) *undertake repairs and maintenance of the Service's assets; and*
- (i) *endorse reports on behalf of the Service.*

I know that was longwinded but I did it on purpose. We have now developed a strategy that the board must follow. That is its job. Going back to what I said before, if you are changing the system you are changing it because you think you will get better outcomes.

What I do not see in this legislation is a way that every one of those items will be reported on. I cannot see a requirement for the board to report back in some sort of public fashion, maybe to the Legislative Assembly, where it is at. It has just started. It should have a tick like the control point when you are doing an experiment. We have not done anything yet; we will start at this point. What do we grade these things at? What is our base line to show we have improved? Is there a base line on all the things the board is meant to look at? Will there be a reporting system on a regular basis – it could be six or 12 months – to show some of these functions have happened? They may not have to be valued from zero to 10, but just to make sure things they were supposed to do – did they monitor the performance of the service? ‘Yes, we have monitored it and here is the process’.

One key concern for me is that the bill says the board is to:

... ensure the Service provides effective and safe health services

‘Effective’ is a really good lawyer’s word. How will you measure whether it will be effective? What will your guidelines be? How will you benchmark it? That word always reminds me of the kitchen, but it is often used to monitor if something is above or below standard?

There is something missing here. I ask the minister how, as a member of parliament whose job it is to look at these things, I can find out if all the functions of the board have been looked at, are looked at regularly and are reported back so I can see what is happening.

Also, I am not sure what the role of the health service board is in relation to the health system principles I mentioned before. Do they have a role, because obviously the unified Australian health system would not be written in the bill if it was not part of the responsibility of the Department of Health or the board? Otherwise we would not really need it here.

We have objectives and principles. Clause 3(b) of the bill relates to the Australian health system principles:

(b) the Australian health system principles – Australia’s health system should:

- (i) be shaped around the health needs of individual patients, their families and communities; and*
- (ii) focus on the prevention of disease and injury and the maintenance of health and not simply on the treatment of illness; and*
- (iii) support an integrated approach to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, prevention of illness and injury, and diagnosis and treatment of illness across the continuum of care; and*
- (iv) provide all Australians with timely access to quality health services based on their needs, not their ability to pay, regardless of where they live in the country; and*

(c) the following long-term objectives for Australia’s health system:

- (i) prevention – Australians are born and remain healthy;*
- (ii) primary and community health – Australians receive appropriate high quality and affordable primary and community health services;*
- (iii) hospital and related care – Australians receive appropriate high quality and affordable hospital and hospital-related care;*
- (iv) aged care – Australians receive appropriate high quality and affordable health and aged care services;*
- (v) patient experience – Australians have positive health and aged care experiences that take account of individual circumstances and care needs;*
- (vi) social inclusion and Indigenous health – Australia’s health system promotes social inclusion and reduces disadvantage, especially for Indigenous Australians;*

(vii) *sustainability – Australians have a sustainable health system.*

Minister, the bill says:

The principal function of a board is to govern the Service for which the Board is established and ensure the service is managed efficiently and effectively.

Is it a responsibility of a health service board, when it is doing its job, to keep in mind the hospital has requirements it has to abide by under its agreement with the Commonwealth? For example, the bill says a board has some responsibility to make sure Australians are receiving appropriate high quality and affordable health and aged care. Will this board be able to go to aged care and say, 'Sorry department, you are not sticking within the guidelines you signed up to'. Is that part of their role, or do we purely have the section dealing with strategic functions, community leadership and other functions? Do they have a broader role to play in making sure the department is looking at the high-level principles in this act? If it does, what is the reporting basis?

We will have an annual report, but we have a new board which has been set up to make sure the governance of the hospital is running correctly. We have a Systems Manager – I will call him a CEO, I will stay old fashioned; I gather we have changed the name to fit in with Commonwealth legislation. The CEO has a large amount of responsibility as well, but the board has some functions it has to look at. Where is the process for reporting back to make sure those things are happening, and does it have a broader function under the umbrella of governance where it must check whether the hospital is fitting in with some of those broad principles required under the ...

A member: More time?

Mr WOOD: No, I will finish there.

They are my questions. I have dealt with pretty much everything else. Minister, if you could answer some of those questions in your summing up, it would be appreciated. Thank you.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister and the minister's administrative staff, and the staff of the Territory health sector, who have brought this legislative reform to the House. My contribution comes in the form of a request. The minister probably remembers my correspondence about getting a representative from Tennant Creek on the board. The response was reasonable, and I thank the minister for saying that, in time, as the board is

created and established in Central Australia, a Tennant Creek representative will be brought onto it.

In relation to efficiencies, at the moment we have a committee of about eight people in Tennant Creek which consults with the board. The board chair and a number of members travel from Alice Springs to Tennant Creek regularly, which we acknowledge. It is now time to get the Tennant Creek representative onto the board. I have one other request. When dealing with Central Australia, it is always good policy to have a representative from the pastoral sector, definitely a representative from Tennant Creek, and an Indigenous representative. I am sure Central Australian representatives will cover off most of those categories, but the representative from Tennant Creek is vital, and there are many good people interested in the position. Thank you.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Health): Madam Speaker, I was expecting to go to committee. I thought we were warming up for that, but this is fine. I can address many of the questions raised by my colleagues across the Chamber in my closing speech.

It has been a long and interesting journey from the inception of this idea to reform the health system in the Northern Territory to where we are now. It was my colleague - the former Minister for Health, now the Treasurer - who brought this idea to Cabinet and then to the parliament of the Northern Territory. He had a vision which is consistent with our vision of the world from a Country Liberal Party perspective: health services should be regionalised and representative of the communities in which they exist.

When we came to government less than two years ago we found ourselves with a centralised health system. We felt it was consistent with our policy and idea of how health services should function that we put some reforms in place, which is how we came to this new Health Services Bill 2014. We have consulted very widely in the process of getting the bill to this stage of debate in parliament.

The former Minister for Health, the member for Fong Lim, consulted extensively in those early months of government. He set up a roadshow and set about speaking to people across the Northern Territory. It was received very well. The time was right for change within the Northern Territory health system, and from those early consultations we came up with our new health services framework. It will be a model whereby we have two health services, a Top End health service and a Central Australian health service, and a Territory-wide services section which will look after just that, Territory-wide services.

It was quite difficult to come up with a hybrid model to suit the Northern Territory. In the process of developing this model we looked at models across Australia, and there is a wide spectrum. Ours current model is similar to some and very different from others, but the continuum is about a centralised approach to the delivery of public healthcare services, as opposed to a regionalised approach. This model is certainly towards a regionalised approach, not as regionalised as some, but far more so than other jurisdictions across Australia.

We felt it was a good mix. The difference between the Northern Territory and other jurisdictions is that – this is said time and time again – we have an extraordinarily large geographical area with a very small population. Unlike other jurisdictions, Victoria, for example, where there are dozens of health services, we will have only two, but we felt that was more than enough to break down the centralisation of the health system as we found it.

I thank her for her contribution to this debate, which was very well-thought out and well-considered. She made some very interesting points about the model we have used. As I said, it is based on a type of hybrid from what we saw, as well as research from interstate.

The member for Wanguri's concern about the loss of workers in these reforms is probably one of the greatest concerns for all Territorians in this climate of change. The federal government is giving signals there will not be much money available for any public services into the future. That is yet to be clarified and will be defined next week. However, if we believe what we hear from the media there will not be much extra cash about. That impacts on every part of government. Eighty per cent of our revenue in the Northern Territory comes from the federal government, so that plays a big part in any vision for the future when it comes to public services. In this case, I am very pleased to say that health services in the Northern Territory will continue to grow, despite financial restrictions and limitations.

This model does not mean a lesser service. It will affect approximately 20 positions across the Northern Territory. None of those positions are on the front line. They are primarily middle management positions that are, because of the division between the Top End and Central Australian regions, no longer required. This was not an exercise in how to save money. It was an exercise in how to change the way we do the business of providing health services.

I do put on the public record that approximately 20 positions will be lost, and we will make every effort to find other positions for people affected by those

changes. We do not want to lose any health professionals from the Northern Territory. They are extremely valued members of our society, hard to get, hard to keep, and we certainly hope we can find alternative positions for those people affected.

There will inevitably be an increase in frontline workers throughout the Northern Territory health system. That is just the way the world is going. The demand for health services grows very consistently at a rate of around 9%, and we do not have much control over that.

The challenge for us is to provide a good quality health system within a reasonable budget. We do not have any control over the demand. The discussion at a federal level about co-payments may or may not have some effect on stemming demand, but from what I have read and what I understand, we just have to do the best we can, and stretch those services, given our limited resources.

The member for Wanguri talked about the priorities of this government in where we have put resources, which has not particularly aligned with the Labor Party's position. The example she gave was the use of the medi-hotel to provide our new alcohol mandatory treatment program. That was an obvious decision at the time. The medi-hotel was vacant and, even though it was a grand and wonderful new facility that we were gifted as we came to government, there was not a penny left or allocated within the budget to run it. It was an interesting decision at the time. We did not have any money to run it as a medi-hotel, but we did have money allocated to run our alcohol mandatory treatment system. That was the decision at the time and, as the member for Wanguri understands, we are moving out of there at the very first opportunity.

The bed block situation was something we inherited from the former Labor government. There was a bed block problem when Labor was in, there is a bed block problem now. I do not think that can be lumped completely within the realms of our full responsibility. We are moving to address those problems, and it remains a constant challenge for us.

The member for Wanguri was concerned about how we would implement the changes in the bill and how they would improve services on the ground for people. I think that is the main gist of what you were asking.

The member for Nelson mentioned briefly that these things are cyclical within the health system. When I first came to the Territory, the health system was embarking on a regionalisation process. That was during a CLP era, and over

time it centralised again; now we are regionalising again.

There are obviously cases for and against, but in such a unique part of the world as the Northern Territory with its dispersed population, a regionalised approach to the delivery of health services makes more sense.

You mentioned concerns about the delivery of health services in remote communities. This model will directly enhance the provision of health services within remote communities. At the moment this centralised approach is very siloed with remote health services which concentrate just on that. This devolved way of managing with less of the silo effect means there will be more integration between primary healthcare services, remote services and the acute services. There will be less separation. That is the ideology behind this new model. The silos will be less distinct, and integration is the key word. Some of these middle management positions are disappearing because there is less of a need to have the management at those different points within the silo model. It is less management and more about integration, if that makes sense.

Local decision-making means the boards representing local communities in the Top End and Central Australia will be, theoretically, and hopefully in practice, much more closely connected to the communities they represent. I take on board the comment from the member for Barkly, who expressed concern that we do not have a representative from the Barkly on the Central Australian board. I see that as an issue. In the first instance, my main priority was to make sure those boards consisted of people with the skills, expertise and experience we need to run them.

These boards have a huge amount of responsibility. They, as the member for Nelson read from the bill, have enormous responsibility in managing the finances of the health services and overseeing the operations of these health services. They are, indeed, well paid for what they do, and probably not paid enough in some respects because of the enormous responsibilities they have. We wanted to attract the best, and that does not mean there is no one from Tennant Creek with those skills, but I did not choose anyone on the basis of where they lived, their political affiliations or anything like that. I picked the people I thought were the best applicants for the positions. I am happy with the range of expertise we have.

Those positions will rotate. We have set up a system where every 12 months we will have two vacant positions and we will backfill them as people move on. We want to see a range of

people come through those boards so they are truly representative of the communities they serve.

It is good to hear the Central Australian board has visited the Barkly several times now and is meeting with an advisory committee. That was their initiative. It was an idea put to them and they decided what form it would take and how they would manage the process. The boards are embracing this opportunity to get to the grass roots of the regions they serve to try to understand what people think are the priorities.

This is the difference between the health system we have – a centralised system – and a decentralised system, which this new health services model will be. Listening to the clinicians – they are the critical stakeholders in all this, which the member for Wanguri highlighted. It is essential we listen to the nurses in ED and the paediatric ward, and the doctors throughout the health system, the clinicians, the aids and the people who work in remote areas. We need to understand what their challenges and needs are. From an operational point of view - a strategic policy point of view - we need to respond to those people. For too long, the separation between people on the ground and the management of the health system has been too vast, empty and devoid of true communication.

This is how I envisage this health system will work and, like any change, you need people to come on board. You need to embrace the goodwill of people to try to make this work, and although there are concerns and hesitations, I think most people can see this could make a difference. People working within this large bureaucracy could have a bigger say in how things work and how we provide health services to people in the Northern Territory. It gives people a bit more incentive to get out bed and go to work in the morning.

The Department of Health is the biggest agency in the Northern Territory public service. It is full of amazing people with all sorts of expertise, but so often people feel they are marginalised and do not get a say. These boards know it is a part of their task to engage with and listen to people, the community responsibility the member for Nelson picked up on that they do have a role to talk to people. We all access health services and these boards will become - like in the old days of health service provision - an important part of our community.

Where I grew up in Grafton in New South Wales, the boards of the Grafton hospital were seen as a distinguished part of our community, and they networked and took their job very seriously. We have gone full circle in many ways, from my perspective, having lived in regional areas for

most of my life. It is encouraging to know some things have not been lost in the essence of time and change, with things becoming far more technical and different.

At the end of the day, within health it is about relationships, networks, working together and providing services.

I want to reflect on a few more points raised by my colleagues. The members for Nelson and Wanguri talked about how we would measure the outcomes and performance of the health services and the boards. The answer to this is a bit hidden, but is in the legislation.

The service delivery agreements which the health services - managed by the boards - will sign outline the expectation of what they will do, how they will do it and how they will report. I think the way it is outlined in the act is sufficient. The reporting requirements are in line with other jurisdictions.

The COO, the Chief Operating Officer, is the employed delegate of the board. They report on a regular basis to the Service Manager, or the CE, and it flows up to me as the minister. We have that reasonably set out within the legislation.

I think the member for Wanguri asked a question about participation in the estimates process. Within estimates, as the opposition and people on that committee, you can ask for who you want to answer questions. I have a role in the estimates process, as well as the CE, or System Manager, and the Chief Operating Officer who represents the boards, but if you wish to engage with the chair of the boards, I would not see that as a problem. As I said, the COO is the representative of the board, so I think it would be their responsibility to be at estimates and available for questions from the Independents and the opposition.

Some of these finer details will be teased out in the implementation of this new model. The boards have been quite anxious about aspects of how we will work together. I have also been a little anxious about aspects of it because you are essentially bringing a new layer of management to what we have at the moment. We need to be clear on our boundaries. If we are not clear we need to talk about it.

Much of how this will roll out and work is dependent on the goodwill of people in those positions. We can only write so much into the legislation and regulations. The rest is about interpretation and getting on with the job. There will be problems, like we have experienced in other new initiatives within Health. Alcohol mandatory treatment is a classic example. There

will be teething problems, and people may not like the changes, but that is part of the process, managing change, bringing people along with the changes and the new framework.

I spoke to a Department of Health executive earlier. Sixty people were given letters some months ago advising them their positions may change. We have been as open and transparent as possible with these changes. We know some people's lives will be dramatically affected by them, and that is not something we feel comfortable with. However, with any change you have to wear that, offer people alternatives and try to be as helpful and empathetic as possible. We have advised the 60 people who will be most profoundly affected by these changes, and the most recent conclusion was there will be 20 positions affected. That is not good news for those people, but as I said in the early part of my speech, we hope to find alternative situations for them; we do not want to lose them.

This has already been a positive process within the Department of Health. I do not agree with change for change's sake, but the Department of Health in the Northern Territory was ready to embrace a different way of going about its business. There are differences between the Top End of the Northern Territory and the Centre. Like it or lump it, there are changes and this gives both regions an opportunity to shine and be truly representative of the people they serve. Whilst maintaining the strong structure of the Department of Health, we can all coexist. There will be stresses and strains between the different layers of management, the different positions: the CE's position with the Chief Operating Officer, the relationships between the boards and the Chief Operating Officer, and all those positions must have a relationship with me too. As I said, with some goodwill, some sensible decision-making and a positive approach, I think we can overcome what may be a challenging situation.

I thank the Department of Health for the enormous amount of work done in this space: Christine Dennis; the legal team that has been backing us all the way; parliamentary counsel, which has been drafting this legislation and amending bits of it as we have gone along; my team; and Alex Bruce, an outstanding young man who I am extremely sad to lose. He is moving on to bigger and better things. Who knows, we might see his name in lights somewhere in the future. I think he is one of those types of people.

Mr Wood: Lights in New South Wales are not always good.

Mrs LAMBLEY: That is right, the lights of the city.

It has been a wonderful experience for me as a fairly new Health minister. I look forward to bringing you all on the next stage of this ride, the next chapter of the implementation of this new model, and I look forward to hearing any feedback you may receive along the way from people who are affected by this bill in a positive or negative way. I embrace this opportunity to remodel the health services of the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Ms MANISON: Minister, given the requirement for the service agreements and linkages with the Commonwealth healthcare funding arrangements, what level of independence will the boards have to determine their own priorities and spending?

Mrs LAMBLEY: The boards sign a service delivery agreement which reflects the policies and priorities of the Northern Territory government, but it also reflects the national health commitments we have signed up to. There is a considerable amount of latitude in how you provide health services. Having said that, there is a framework and expectations within that.

We currently, as a public health service, have to comply with commitments, for example, on elective surgery. We have those targets we are trying to meet for waiting times in the emergency department. The requirements we have, we pass on to the health services within the service delivery agreements.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, minister. I raised the issue in my response to the second reading about the hospitals and potential for privatisation of services within hospitals. To what extent will boards be able to privatise health services under the new model?

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is all about the delivery of public health services. If at some point in the future we decided to privatise, for example, Tennant Creek Hospital – that will not happen, I assure you – a private provider would work within that space. However, given that is encapsulated by the Central Australian health service, it would oversee that operation with the Territory-wide service. Because it is not happening at the moment, it is difficult to foresee how that would work. At the moment we have Darwin Private Hospital, which is not included in the public health system, but if we were to privatise aspects of the public health service, those responsibilities to oversee those contracts would fall within the various health services spectrum.

We already have private contracts, for example, cardiology and radiology services. The health

services would just take over responsibility of overseeing those contracts and making sure the private providers comply with the terms of the contract.

Ms MANISON: I want to go back to some aspects of remote health and how these reforms will affect that. In October last year you told the Assembly that about 25% of all remote clinics in the NT are community-run by the non-government sector. You said you want to see communities run and operate their own clinics. How would you see this new health service framework help you meet that objective? Do you have any targets or communities in mind or any time frames around that?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am committed to enhancing community control and participation within community health services on remote communities. I have two communities I am looking at now. I have not really thought through how this new model would affect that, suffice to say if communities are ready, able and willing to take control of their clinics it would be a policy of government that we enable them to do so. As a policy of government, the health services would be on board with that. It would be interesting to see how that plays out. I cannot see why there would be any resistance to that by the health service if that is the policy of this government.

Ms MANISON: Do you have any measures in place to ensure there is no shift or loss of focus on primary healthcare with the changes and more of a shift to the acute? How do you see the right balance being struck?

Mrs LAMBLEY: As you know, it is always a difficult balance to maintain. The cost of delivering acute health services far outweighs that of primary healthcare. Once again, it is about a policy of government, the strategy employed by the health services to maintain that balance, and meeting the Commonwealth health commitments. The federal government is the primary funder of primary health care, so if the Commonwealth funds us to provide primary healthcare services, that is how we use the money; it is not negotiable. I do not see it as a different problem to what it is now. I agree with you, we must prioritise primary healthcare; it makes sense. Ultimately it will save us money, but our hospitals are what drain us of funds and it is a constant struggle. I do not think it will change much under this system, but as the minister, I will insist that we continue to work towards striking that balance.

It is about a collaborative approach between all parts of the health system. As I said before, it is not everyone working in silos, it is about collaboration and integration, and hopefully the

hospital will be attuned to what is happening in the primary healthcare space and vice versa.

Ms MANISON: With your staff on the front line, do you have any formal bodies or processes established to help manage the change, but more so to capture any issues which may arise within the changes so you can look at addressing them as they pop up within the new health services?

Mrs LAMBLEY: We have employed primary healthcare managers who meet with their staff on a weekly basis, to not just look at team and service level challenges or problems, but also problems at an individual level. The Department of Health has worked hard and could be criticised for not working hard enough, but from my perspective it has worked very hard to engage with staff and inform them regularly through various means. It is an enormous change process we are undergoing and managers have been tasked with informing their staff and keeping everyone abreast of what is going on. It has been done in quite a planned and structured way.

Ms MANISON: The new boards will meet on a regular basis, as boards do, to oversee the running of the health services. The legislation does not have any requirement to have minutes of board meetings, for example, placed on the public record. Would you see that as being constructive? Should they be available so people can see how the board is progressing over time, in the spirit of transparency and accountability?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I agree with you. In the spirit of transparency and accountability it is a good idea to put the minutes of the board meetings into a public forum. It was discussed a few months ago, but it was a little premature. The boards were not ready to expose themselves in that way and I was not keen for them to be exposed. Whilst they are developing their understanding of their roles, it is still a little unclear in some ways as to what they should prioritise. I would consider this occurring in the future; in other jurisdictions it happens. It is also about taking minutes and getting them right; it is about a developmental process. I would consider it happening in the future.

I have just been informed that boards have been developing their practices around this. They are required to keep minutes of their meetings in a very strict form. The Central Australian Health Services board has been providing a synopsis to the public of its meetings. They are not complete minutes, but a synopsis, which is getting close.

Ms MANISON: I would like to talk about part 4, clause 16 on delegations of System Manager powers and functions. What arrangements will be made to ensure information about the delegation of any powers and functions of the System

Manager – for example, to the COO of the health service – will be publicly available, or will that be kept in-house?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Despite the change to the structure of the Department of Health, we are still bound by *PSEMA* and the *Financial Management Act*, so we cannot provide information beyond what those acts allow. Does that answer your question?

Ms MANISON: I will have to look at the acts, minister. I have another question to do with part 4, section 23. The strategic functions of the board include developing business plans with a health improvement function. Noting that local government councils in the Territory are required to make their business plans available on their websites, will health services be required to make their business plans available to the public?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Both boards have been extremely enthusiastic in this space and have started work on developing their strategic plans. I do not think they will have too much of a problem providing those publicly. I am very happy to put it to them. I do not see that being a problem. It is an indication of how committed and professional they are for the world to see, so that is good.

Ms MANISON: I will move on to part 4, clause 27, which covers when you, as the minister, can give directions to the board. If you must go to the point of giving ministerial directions to the board – these have to be written directions, as seen within the legislation – will there be any requirement around publication? Would they be published in annual reports? I am advised that is common in other jurisdictions.

Mrs LAMBLEY: There are essentially two reasons why I would give directions: to give clarity to a health service on Northern Territory government policy; or if there is an urgent issue that needs to be resolved. I imagine most of my directions – I envisage they will be few and far between – would be around policy issues. I hope there will not be too many urgent issues or serious problems I need to address through giving a direction. My role is to provide the policy framework and allow boards to get on and operate their health services.

Ms MANISON: The COO is a very critical position within the new health services framework. The draft bill circulated in October provided that the COO of the service was appointed by the minister on recommendation of the board of the service. That has now changed and the appointment is made by the department's CEO with agreement of the board. What role would you anticipate the board will play in selecting the Chief Operating Officer as part of that process?

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is about the CE and the board working together to select someone who meets both their interests. In practice, you would probably have the CE and a couple of members of the board on a selection panel, making sure the interests of the whole public health service are represented, as well as the specific health service itself. It is about a balance.

Ms MANISON: You touched on this in the second reading speech – I have to apologise, minister; I was pulled that way and had a few other conversations when you were going back to it in your wrap. Part 4 clause 24 about community leadership functions of the board includes that the board will lead:

... community engagement with and by the Service, including as an interface between the Service and its stakeholders.

Can you outline how you would expect this to work in a practical sense? How will board members engage effectively with stakeholders in remote parts of the Territory? What resources will they have available for that purpose?

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is an aspect of the role the boards have embraced quite well. In the consultations we had with the boards leading up to this final bill coming through, they insisted this was an important role they should undertake, speaking to people across their regions. As I said, the Central Australian health service has visited the Barkly, and both boards have plans to visit remote health services. The Top End health service recently went to Gove and has gone to a few communities across the Top End.

Both boards have a fund they can access to pay for their travel. I cannot tell you how much is in it; I honestly do not know. It will have enough money for them to fulfil that part of their role satisfactorily. They enjoy it, and an essential part of how this model will work is talking to people on the ground.

Ms MANISON: Going to part 6, clause 46 about the health services reporting to the System Manager, what form will the quarterly reports of the board to the System Manager take? Will they be substantial reports indicating the progress of the health programs or simply a brief overview of activities? Will these quarterly reports be publicly available?

Mrs LAMBLEY: The quarterly reports will be very important. The content of what the CE requires within those reports will be specified within the service delivery agreement. Within that report there will be a financial report. They will also report on how the health service is performing in specified indicators and performance requirements. It will all be defined in the service

delivery agreement, which will be a public document, so people will understand what they will be reporting on. They will be supported by the Corporate Services Bureau, a Territory-wide service, which will assist them in producing that report and meeting the requirements in the SDA.

Ms MANISON: For clarification, minister, will that quarterly report be publicly available?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes, it will. It is the same as the annual report. The quarterly report will be publicly available.

Ms MANISON: Thank you, minister. You will be happy to hear that this will be my last question. Part 2 clause 9 is about affiliated health organisations. What arrangements will be in place to consult with the Aboriginal controlled health sector before there is a *Gazette* notice declaring them an affiliated health organisation?

Clause 11(3)(d) provides for the issuing of binding health service directives to services, including affiliated health organisations determined to be part of the public health system. Can you outline the kind of circumstances where such a direction may be made by the System Manager and the measures available to ensure compliance with any such direction?

Mrs LAMBLEY: The System Manager is responsible for working with the affiliated health service organisations. These organisations will include CareFlight, RFDS – the non-government organisations we deal with it at the moment. The System Manager will issue health service directives.

As an example of a health service directive, if there is an outbreak of measles, like we had earlier this year, the affiliated health service organisations would be asked to step up and fill that health need.

It is not meant to be punitive, it is not meant to be any different to what we have now. They are just different terms with a slightly different arrangement. A directive sounds a bit forceful, a bit powerful, but it is really a formal term asking them to step up and meet a need.

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Health): I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT
(PRESUMPTION OF JOINT TRIALS) BILL
(Serial 75)**

Continued from 27 March 2014.

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, we will be supporting this bill. We believe this bill has the potential to reduce trauma for victims. In short, the bill essentially provides sexual assault trials involving more than one victim to have the presumption of being heard jointly. Currently, such a trial can be held jointly or separately of common law, leading to presumption of separate trials. This bill provides for the presumption of joint trials.

There are several reasons why we support this bill. The primary reason is the potential to reduce trauma on victims, especially child victims. If there is a joint trial rather than multiple trials, victims and witnesses will only have to give evidence or be cross-examined once. It is a reality that any victim of a sexual assault could find appearing before a court to provide evidence, and being cross-examined by the defence, traumatic. Not only do they need to relive the horrible experience, but the defence is entitled to question and scrutinise their version of events, which you can imagine can be unpleasant. People's motives and actions are questioned, which is the purpose of the trial.

There is already protection for children and other vulnerable witnesses in these situations, but clearly, regardless of the situation, having a child victim of sexual assault only having to appear once is preferable. We have a very low rate of conviction for sexual assault, a problem that is not confined to the Northern Territory. It is clear that one of the reasons for this is the common reluctance of victims or witnesses to testify. Anything which can be done to encourage an increase in this should be implemented.

There are other reasons why joint trials can be considered a better option. One joint trial, rather than separate trials, saves money. This is not a cost-saving bill, but that is benefit of joint trials. A joint trial involves evidence being provided in multiple cases of sexual assault, which can help provide a jury with a full picture. The reform results from the recommendations of several reports, including the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2010 report. Several jurisdictions have introduced similar reforms, some are still under consideration. The reforms in this bill are based on the Victorian model. I am aware joint trials are still being assessed by the national uniform evidence working group. It could be argued that it is better to wait until the outcomes of this report are considered; however, I am comfortable the department of Justice can

continue to monitor the progress of this group and, if required, amendments can be made when it is finalised. We are comfortable with this bill and support it.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the honourable members opposite for their support. The source of this bill was a Tasmanian Law Reform Commission report which I read a short time after becoming the Attorney-General. It turned up in an envelope and I was sitting in my office, not focused on what I was doing, so I packed up and read the interesting report on this issue. I was so taken by the Tasmanian Law Reform Commission's report that I flicked it off to the department and said, 'Let's do something about this'. The department came back with a Cabinet submission and took it into Cabinet. My colleagues in Cabinet looked at it and said, 'That makes sense', because it is eminently sensible. Finally, through the normal processes, it was brought in here only to have the opposition say, 'Yes, that makes sense, it is eminently sensible'.

I heard a comment the shadow Attorney-General made about how we could wait and see how it operates in other jurisdictions and make a determination. We could, but we could also wait for Greenland to reach the tropics.

Mr Gunner: We agree with you in doing it, but you could wait.

Mr ELFERINK: This is not a criticism, so do not take it as one. I know how these things work; I would say they are like glaciers except that would be to insult glaciers in terms of the speed they move. I am prepared, and I am glad to see other members of this House are prepared, to say, 'Let's take this massive leap of faith, go down this path and do this thing, because it looks like it is a good thing to do'.

If we put it under the electron microscope of our scrutiny for ever and a day, we would be wasting our time as representatives of the people of the Northern Territory. Once you remove all the legal gumph surrounding this and bury into tendency and coincidence evidence and all the other whatnots, it comes down to a simple observation. What does the average punter think about this? What does the man on the Clapham bus or the Bondi tram think about this, to use a yardstick? I will tell you. Will a trial be inherently unfair because 10 people complain about one person, and that person has to face one jury in one trial?

At first blush you may think it would be simple common sense that the person would be accountable in front of one jury for all of their sins, because that way the jury could find out what they were like. That is tendency and coincidence, and

is the sort of evidence I do not think it is inherently unfair for a jury to hear all the matters at once, so long as the instructions by the judge to the jury at the end of the trial make certain each charge is made out on its own merits.

You come to a point, when pursuing fairness in a trial, where you must ask yourself if this will take us to a place of such rarefied beauty that we will be gasping for breath, well outside the troposphere of normal experience. The short answer is that it should not. A trial should still reflect a fair procedure and the expectations of the community to which that court belongs. The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory works because it has the endorsement of the people of the Northern Territory. A court system would collapse unless there was an acceptance amongst the people that court system served that it had their authority. That is why courts are so jealous and possessive in protecting their authority. If you then, in pursuing the concept of fairness, make it so fair that an accusation is unprovable, you have gone from the sublime to the ridiculous. That is something you can easily do in these sorts of environments.

The approach that existed in the past was that there were multiple people making allegations and a single accused person in the Supreme Court, so we had multiple trials. There will now be a presumption in favour of having multiple accusers and one trial. If there is some inherent unfairness arising from this, because of the peculiarities of the case in question, that is fine and easy to deal with. We have left the capacity for a just judge, upon weighing the probity or value of those issues, the appropriate latitude to make a ruling that trials should be separated for the sake of justice. There is already good and established case law as to what that should be.

However, you cannot argue that mere tendency or coincidence is sufficient to that end. We are saying there has to be a demonstrable injustice involved before these trials will be broken up. That is the intent of this legislation. It is reassuring Territorians that a justice system serves their interests and the interests of justice, not just the interest of an accused person.

Justice is about balance. There are good reasons why scales find their way into most academic tomes and art about the justice system, because the whole justice system is about the concept of striking a balance. This legislation strikes a balance which I think the average man or woman in the street would accept as a proper balance. This is a balance that makes sense. I think most people would look at it and say, 'Why would you not do this?' I agree and the Labor party agrees; I have heard not a single dissenting voice.

I thank the Labor Party and other members of this House, as well as the various organisations we have consulted with, the department, the legislative drafters and all those involved in making this simple but important legislative change possible.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Recovery of the Northern Territory Live Export Market

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, today I update the House on the status of the Northern Territory's live cattle and buffalo export markets.

In recent years the northern Australian pastoral industry has gone through some tough times. While many businesses are still recovering from the events of 2011, and the vagaries of drought, flooding rains and short Wet Seasons are ever present, there are positive indications to show the cattle industry is turning the corner.

However, as minister for Primary Industry it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that the cattle industry is still not clear of a most challenging period of coping with reduced profit margins, difficult market conditions and depressed property values. While there are some positive signs of the industry recovering, it is still a matter of treading carefully, moving forward slowly and cautiously.

The Country Liberals government is a proud supporter of the Northern Territory's pastoralists, and we have worked hard to help restore and rebuild this iconic industry. The pastoral industry and associated businesses make up a significant portion of the Territory's economy, contributing over \$330m in 2012-13, with indications showing that this figure will continue to grow.

The Northern Territory's pastoral industry supports around two million cattle and every year is able to turn off or sell around half-a-million cattle. Around half of all cattle turned off go to live export, with the vast majority sold to Indonesia. However, in the past two years Vietnam has risen from being one of Australia's smallest markets for live cattle to become its third largest. Live cattle exports to Vietnam grew from 3500 head in 2012 to almost 67 000 head in 2013.

This is truly exciting news for Territory producers. Recent live export sales of both cattle and buffalo

to Vietnam indicate the real possibility of a new long-term live export market being established. This new market, in conjunction with the recently increased live cattle quotas from the Indonesian government, provides confidence and encouraging indicators for the industry's recovery.

There were several mitigating factors that occurred within a close time period that really rocked the Territory's live export and pastoral industries. In early 2010, Indonesia commenced strictly enforcing the 350 kg weight protocol and reduced import quotas, in line with their program to achieve self-sufficiency in beef by 2014. In June 2011, the Australian government suspended live trade to Indonesia until new export regulations could be introduced to ensure the welfare of Australian cattle. These factors, combined with poor rainfall across much of the Northern Territory – indeed, there has been drought across much of Australia for the past several years – brought the industry almost to its knees.

As I said before, there are signs of a strong recovery. Since coming to government the Country Liberals have worked with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association and the Northern Territory Livestock Exporters Association, as well as directly with industry, to develop a collaborative strategy for restoring and increasing our live export industry.

To create diversity and greater opportunity for Territory pastoralists and increase focus on emerging markets, the Country Liberals government provided funding of \$300 000 to my Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries to establish a live animal export market development unit.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries has been involved with the development of new markets for Northern Territory cattle and buffalo across Southeast Asia over many years. Without a doubt, the success story this year is the growth of the live trade to Vietnam. My department has worked in collaboration with the Department of the Chief Minister, Meat & Livestock Australia, the NT Cattlemen's Association and the NT Live Exporters Association to develop this market and provide Vietnamese importers with technical support and assistance with the implementation of the Exporter Supplier Chain Assurance System or ESCAS. This is the system put in place by the Australia government in 2011 which makes exporters accountable for animal welfare.

Recent market analysis by the US Meat Export Federation showed that while Vietnam consumed a record amount of imported red beef in 2013, all indicators are showing these figures will be surpassed in 2014.

I have travelled to Vietnam twice now, in May 2013 and again in March this year, and met with Vietnamese government and industry representatives, and saw firsthand the operations where officers from my department have provided technical assistance and training.

Vietnam, currently the second-largest importer of NT cattle behind Indonesia, represents a genuine opportunity for the live cattle export industry to diversify its customer base. Last year's high number of NT live cattle exported can, in part, be attributed to the growing Vietnamese market receiving a total of 67 000 head of Australian cattle, with 32 806 of those coming from the NT.

Vietnam's per capita meat consumption, not including seafood, is around 40 kg per annum. Around 5% to 8% of this is beef, around 80% is pork, while chicken accounts for the remaining 12% to 15%. Domestic demand for protein will rise in line with growing incomes, and there is a significant potential for Northern Territory cattle and buffalo live trade with Vietnam to help meet this demand. However, Indonesia remains the Northern Territory's largest live export market.

In 2013, 454 000 head of Australian cattle were exported to Indonesia. While this was more than 279 000 sold in 2012, it is still well short of the numbers that went to Indonesia prior to 2011. However, commencing in 2014, the Indonesia government replaced the meat and live cattle importation quota system with a price-based system. It is understood the number of import permits released is determined by the price of beef in Indonesia.

Under this scheme, recent reports indicate the Indonesian government plans to import up to 750 000 beef cattle in 2014. Indeed, at the end of March this year, Indonesia released its 2014 second quarter permits for around 270 000 head. This alone is more than all the cattle exported from the Northern Territory to Indonesia in 2013. While this is positive news for the live cattle export industry and the northern producers, it must be recognised that it will be a challenge to meet this demand.

In May 2013 the Northern Territory government became aware of the potential to develop additional diversification into the live export market and, in so doing, grow jobs and opportunities in Aboriginal communities in the Top End. This was the beginning of our work to establish a live export market for buffalo into Vietnam. While Territory buffalo had previously been exported live to Southeast Asia destinations, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines, the market has been in steady decline and issues around implementation of the new ESCAS saw the trade all but cease.

Then, in January this year, a health protocol for the importation of feeder and slaughter buffalo to Vietnam was finalised between the Vietnamese and Australian governments, allowing shipments of Territory buffalo to begin.

To date, 614 head have been imported to Vietnam this year, with the first shipment of 214 buffalo leaving the Port of Darwin on 11 February 2014. The Chief Minister was fortunate enough to be in Vietnam to witness the unloading of this inaugural shipment of buffalo.

Department staff were also on hand in Vietnam to provide technical advice and assistance in animal handling, nutrition and feedlot management pre- and post-arrival of the first shipment.

The second shipment of 400 head arrived in Vietnam on 15 March, and I was personally on hand to inspect the newly-arrived buffalo in feedlots while there with a Northern Territory buffalo industry delegation. There is confidence these shipments will be the first of many and that this is the start of an important trade relationship.

It is unknown what the exact population of buffalo is in the Territory; however, a conservative estimate is the Territory buffalo industry could initially supply around 1000 head per month to live export, drawing from an estimated 100 000 animals in the wild and about 10 000 domesticated animals.

My departments of Primary Industry and Fisheries, and Land Resource Management, together with the NT Buffalo Industry Council are looking at options to get more accurate estimates of buffalo numbers.

A potential market of 60 000 head of buffalo per annum into Vietnam has been suggested in the media; however, exporting this number of buffalo per annum would require access to a total herd of at least 300 000 animals and an increased level of management.

While the suggested demand is very positive for the industry, it will take them time and effort to grow the NT herd to a level which could sustain such an off-take. This is also good news for a number of Indigenous communities around the Top End and Arnhem Land, as the many wild harvest buffalos located on Indigenous lands will be required to meet this demand.

There are also areas of Indigenous land throughout the Northern Territory suitable for grazing cattle. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries is a partner in the Indigenous pastoral program, together with the Northern and Central Land Councils, the Northern Territory Cattleman's Association, the Australian

government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Indigenous Land Corporation.

The program aims to increase cattle numbers, and land in production, on Aboriginal land and to increase Indigenous participation in the Northern Territory pastoral industry. This is the third round of the Indigenous Pastoral Program which began in 2011 and will run until 2016.

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries, with co-funding from the Indigenous Land Corporation and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, has a pastoral development officers located in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin to provide extension services, support and enterprise development support for established and emerging Indigenous pastoral enterprises.

The live export trade represents a good partnership between efficient cattle breeding operations in northern Australia and labour-intensive feedlots in Southeast Asia. The lack of an abattoir in the Northern Territory means, for the most part, the pastoral industry has had to rely on the live export market solely.

However, this is set to change with the Australian Agricultural Company's new \$90m beef processing facility near Noonamah, which will begin processing in September this year. This is a strategic and complimentary investment which will provide a market for livestock not suited for live export and may provide an alternative market in the advent of future disruptions to the live cattle trade.

By providing an outlet for older cattle, the welfare risks associated with transporting older animals over long distances will be reduced. Easier access to a market for older cows will also encourage producers to reduce the age of their herds, which will lead to the opportunity for faster genetic improvement and better herd performance.

It also provides an opportunity for the diversification of the northern herd, over time, to supply cattle more suited to prime beef processing. I also understand the new beef processing facility will be prepared to process buffalo if there are sufficient numbers available. While I am confident of the long-term future of the live cattle trade, I also recognise there will be trade issues from time to time. This processing facility investment is strategic, because along with increased demand for fresh meat in Asia that is processed through the traditional methods of local wet markets which can only be supplied through the live cattle trade, there is an increase in the demand for boxed beef. I do not think it will be the case of one market or the other, as all indications

show an increased market demand for both. This will build diversity into the market.

I said earlier that the rebuilding of the live export trade is an area in which we must move carefully. Consistent numbers and quality of cattle and buffalo, backed up with sound management and logistics, are essential to ensure a viable and sustainable market. We must not over-promise and under-deliver in quality and quantity for short-term advantage. There are real concerns that new markets will go elsewhere to meet demand if we cannot deliver. This will be a real shame, considering the time and effort spent in establishing new markets.

At the recent Northern Agriculture Ministers beef roundtable in Broome I was joined by my counterparts from Western Australia and Queensland, as well as the honourable Barnaby Joyce, the Australian government Minister for Agriculture. All four Agriculture ministers gave an undertaking to work closely together to further grow and develop the successes of the north Australian cattle industry in particular, and agriculture in general. As noted by several producers at that event, there has never been a time when there has been such a clear common purpose between the three northern jurisdictions, along with the Australian government. A strong feature of the fourth beef roundtable was the level of engagement of key northern industry representatives, the involvement of Indonesian representatives and the strength of the relationship and support of the four Agriculture ministers in attendance.

The Country Liberals government has had the foresight and courage to enact changes that will have a positive and profound effect on the Northern Territory's pastoral industry. The Northern Territory government's Framing the Future blueprint outlines how we can maximise new and evolving opportunities within the Territory, northern Australia and with our Asian neighbours to foster industry growth. These measures include reducing red tape, assisting to increase exports to our Asian neighbours, enabling increased flexibility for land use on pastoral leases and facilitating an increase in the availability of land for primary production.

The Northern Territory government is committed to investing in remote and regional Australia, particularly in improving infrastructure to help industries such as the live export and pastoral industries. To this end, we have started a program of works to upgrade regional roads which are a lifeline to people living in remote communities, and for the pastoral industry to transport its cattle. The restrictive load limits that exist on some roads have implications for road trains and cattle movements. These upgrades to

roads such as the Buntine Highway, the Plenty Highway, the Santa Teresa Road and the Tanami Road, to name a few, will make it easier for pastoralists to transport cattle to Darwin for live export to Southeast Asia.

The future of the iconic pastoral industry in the Northern Territory is optimistic, and the live export of large numbers of both cattle and buffalo into the future is promising. Future priorities for this government for the Northern Territory's live export and pastoral industries are threefold:

1. maintain efforts in Indonesia
2. build on emerging markets for both cattle and buffalo, including Vietnam
3. identify and develop new live trade opportunities in the Asian region.

The Country Liberals government will do this by strengthening communication and relationships with government and industry through trade delegations and high-level visits, and targeted technical support.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this statement to the House and for the opportunity to be able to talk about what the minister terms the 'iconic' Northern Territory pastoral industry. The minister calls this statement the Recovery of the Northern Territory Live Export Market and, at a high level, identifies some of the challenges within that scope.

It does make me smile though. I have been reading this for a couple of days and it certainly would be good to take this sort of statement into the field to some stations and talk to some iconic Northern Territory cattlemen, cattlemen and their kid and have them discuss this it, because I am sure the minister would get fantastic feedback. It would be iconic Australian feedback where there would be far more questions posed than answers. But this statement is at political level. This is for debate in this House, and out of this we really need to drive some outcomes.

The minister spoke about establishing a live animal market development unit, and I was first aware of that in February 2013. The minister did talk about an appropriation of \$300 000 that had been invested in that office, and in a media release he talked about teams and resources to focus on emerging markets and seek out foreign opportunity. That was established in February. I am interested in some of the outcomes of that office and its work that I thought would have been

in this statement; but not as yet. An appropriation of \$300 000 is good. At estimates we will definitely be prosecuting how that money was allocated and the outcomes that office has achieved. We would be keen to see further investments in the government's Budget 2014-15.

The minister no doubt talked about the high-level work he has been doing. Good on you, minister. We are all aware of how important that is and the relationship building. I liked the part where you talked about how you were present at an off-loading; I would like to hear some stories about whether you were in the backyard pushing up beasts or you were working a slide gate on the crush. It would have been good to get down to the grass roots and hear about how this takes place, what it looks like, what it feels like and what infrastructure they are using in Southeast Asia.

I remember through the whole challenge around the live export ban what I interpreted as a very pragmatic position that Australia could adopt is in using Australian cattle handling infrastructure, and I have seen some pictures and media the government has put out. When you are handling Australian cattle, or now Australian buffalo, those great innovative pieces of equipment and infrastructure to manage those animals is what we need in that Southeast Asian processing market. It would be good to hear about that and any initiatives the Northern Territory government is involved in.

There is talk of Vietnam's growing demand, and that is great because the previous minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries in the previous Labor government has briefed me about the work he did with the same lobbying, the same relationship building and chasing markets for northern Australian stock. It has to be noted, as the minister did attend to in his statement, that the challenge will be demand. I have been talking to some cattlemen and families recently. They are certainly focused on the new initiatives; there is no doubt about that. They are focused on what the Northern Territory government is doing. There is that hesitation about supply and demand. There has been a lot of media and talk, and now it really will come down to those animals on the ground: what is ready, what can go to fulfil those quotas and any risk management around the shortfall in supply. The minister touched on that, and no doubt the department will be focused and working in partnership with the producers.

The government's own Primary Industry and Fisheries Industry Development Plan 2013-17 identifies key actions, including improving production and environment management through innovation and continued work to optimise sustainable and productive use of NT rangelands. It is good to see it is documented in a plan, and I

am keen to hear from the minister how that is rolling out on the ground and about the risk management around supply. We wish everybody the best opportunities in what is a major global emerging market.

The minister has not really provided any detail around that. I look forward to any opportunities where he can provide more detail on the government's solution to those challenges, as the pastoralists in our northern jurisdiction are definitely focused on the opportunities and, as the minister says, Asia is hungry for beef and northern Australian produce.

I recently attended the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association Conference. I only attended the conference for the day, which was a fantastic opportunity to listen to some inspiring keynote speakers. I enjoyed that they really challenged the audience, a traditional pastoral community. The keynote speakers really put it out there and threw the challenges up one after the other, and it was inspiring. I noticed the crowd was really focused on that knowledge and those initiatives. There was lots of focus on solutions as opposed to problems, and it was a great day. I did not go to the dinner and sip red wine. I got in the Toyota and headed back bush, but that workshop side of the conference for me was excellent.

The conference celebrated 30 years, and the theme was promising signs of recovery and improved seasonal market conditions. The NTCA 2014 conference focused on looking forward to challenges and opportunities for the ongoing viability of industry.

As I said, inspiring keynote speakers addressed conference delegates from across the NT, across Australia and overseas, with confronting, progressive and critical thinking reflecting a global perspective on industry roles and responsibilities. Keynote speakers represented banking, trading, marketing, international standards and industry, sharing a common theme of future potential for Northern Territory beef. The conference challenged industry growth, moving beyond traditional values and practices toward increasing market expectations of national and global consumers, and instilling confidence and support across the community.

The concept of social licence dealing with industry social, political and environmental sensitivities focusing on the entire supply chain from paddock to plate called beef producers to monitor every stage of production for reducing conflict. The Australian live cattle ban to Indonesia became the yardstick for assessing the concept of social licence and beef exporters ensuring total supply chain certainty, the new challenge for stability.

Keynote speakers reinforced the need for Australian primary producers to think globally in relation to supply chain logistics, as best practice industry standards at home can be destroyed by substandard animal welfare practices abroad. Act local think global reflected the advice by experts providing case studies of general industry conflict needing significant investment in recovering their social licence to operate after suffering national and international consumer outrage. The concept of the Asian century for primary producers echoed throughout the conference; however, Australia as the food bowl for Asia was initially disputed on logistics of insufficient capacity for supply.

However, Australia becoming the Asian delicatessen was established encouraging beef producers to reset the export parameters to order premium product targeting an emerging new market of global consumers.

Primary production targeting the Asian delicatessen makes sense in terms of the new opportunities for meat-processing industries and manufacturing in northern Australia, complimenting the live export trade and value-adding to our world-class product.

A wise old cattleman advised me that if you have something for sale that people can eat, you have sustainable sales. Why not new market thinking, focusing on the northern Australian story? I was looking through this statement to see whether the minister had entered this new realm, because the cattle producers and their families were challenged at the conference. I was interested to assess the vibrations in the room - a big room and many people - when these keynote speakers were throwing it out there about the live cattle export bans.

There was no politics played. It was about this new global concept of social licence and holistic supply chain management. I touched briefly on the possibility of Australian cattle-handling infrastructure in Southeast Asia, possibly adding economic opportunities for the production and sale of equipment to our Asian neighbours and what the government is doing in this space, if anything at all. From here on in, the minister would want to take the message from the conference that there is a new world order in this industry, and there are new challenges in managing the total supply chain.

It is not enough anymore to produce a prime Northern Territory steer, put it on a truck, wave it goodbye, then absolve yourself of any more responsibility. You must follow it through the supply chain and make sure at no stage is there any opportunity for community outrage. Some of the keynote speakers provided examples of this community outrage in other industries.

A good example I learnt from was Qantas and British Airways discovering that the headsets in their aircraft, had been produced in Chinese prisons. When the link was made through modern ICT telecommunications, websites and other information technology readily available to people, there was community outrage, and those global airlines felt there was no responsibility. But the community demanded they be in control of their total supply chain logistics.

The conference was a great day and a great opportunity to see, hear and witness the higher level of challenge for our traditional industry. I am keen to hear from the minister about this and about the department's reactions, because there were many representatives in the room and it is a strong challenge, state-wide, Territory-wide and federally. It would be interesting to hear from the minister about how we are working with the federal government, because it is the millennium of northern Australia. We are developing the north. These markets are real, they are coming online and we need to be in the post-modern space of managing supply chain logistics.

It was good to hear the minister talk about buffalo. In his statement he started to lay out numbers of buffalo. I have been following these media releases and this conversation within the community, but I have the impression that all I am hearing from the government is what represents a harvesting strategy. It takes me back to the early 1980s and the BTEC program. I want to hear what the sustainable strategies are. What are the developments? Where will we start to work this industry? If we have lined up live exports of buffalo and there is a good future for this great product out of northern Australia, what are the government's plans for the sustainability of the industry, not slipping into what could be a simple harvesting operation? If we are serious about buffalo, they bring some unique challenges to the Northern Territory environment, as well as pastoral stock management practices.

I am always amazed when we pick up buffalo in musters on Wollongorang Station, Calvert Hills or Robinson River. I used to talk to my kids, and anybody else who wanted to listen, and provide images of how far those buffalo had travelled, particularly the bulls, from the Top End to the Gulf country. I showed how many stations they had crossed, how many fences they had walked through and how they got onto that country where they were picked up in traditional first and second round musters with cattle, and then how difficult they were to manage in the yards. Amongst beef cattle they were almost impossible. They were extremely dangerous animals for us working in the yards. They had to be drafted very quickly, because they would wreak havoc for any drafting and processing operations.

These are unique, very specific animals. There are many experienced people in the Territory who can handle them. For the minister, I will throw on the public record some of the challenges in relation to the working and natural environments when you talk about 300 000 animals.

I will quote from the Department of Land Resource Management's website, which provides this advice. It is one of the departments you have the privilege of working with. The website says:

Feral buffaloes are a large herbivore weighing between 450 to 1200 kg and can cause extensive environmental damage, related primarily to their movements and feeding.

The most obvious signs of buffalo damage are disturbance of soils and vegetation owing to overgrazing and wallowing in mud. Buffaloes have also been implicated in the spread of weeds, particularly Mimosa pigra on floodplain habitats.

On inundated floodplain habitats, buffaloes undertake regular movements along pathways called 'swim channels'. The movement of buffaloes along these channels destroys vegetation and erodes the soil creating new drainage channels. The alteration of floodplain hydrology by swim channels has been implicated in the landward expansion of sea water, termed saltwater intrusion, on the floodplains of the Mary River. Saltwater intrusion has been implicated in the loss of extensive areas of paperbark forest on the Mary River flood plains.

Habitat modification by feral buffaloes has been observed to reduce the nesting activities of magpie geese. This reduction in nesting activity has major management implications as magpie geese are an important resource for subsistence and recreational hunters. There is anecdotal evidence that grazing by buffalo may also reduce nesting activity in crocodiles, which has impacts on wild crocodile populations, as well as commercial crocodile enterprises. It is likely that buffalo may have major impacts on other flora and fauna but these impacts have not been documented.

Feral buffalo are of concern to agricultural and defence interests owing to their potential as reservoirs and vectors for disease. In particular, there is concern that buffalo have the potential to carry and spread foot and mouth disease, brucellosis and tuberculosis.

That is a real challenge for the Northern Territory and for industry. It would be good to hear from the minister, as we move down the pathway of fulfilling these new orders and markets, how this industry will be managed.

There is no doubt that the export of wild-harvest buffalo will support improved environmental conditions, but I am interested to hear about plans for the sustainability of that industry and the domestication of buffalo.

I am sure the member for Nhulunbuy will participate in this debate because there are many opportunities in that part of the Territory where she lives, raises a family and represents all those constituents. Having gone to Gove with the member for Nhulunbuy on a number of occasions, I am very aware of the challenges around the changes in logistics to Rio Tinto's operation, the loss of jobs, the exodus of families and this incredible challenge before us as parliamentarians, particularly for the government's side of the House.

The minister has talked about the opportunities on radio. I will not quote from the media statements I have here, but the Chief Minister has also talked about it. It would be interesting to hear from the member for Nhulunbuy about what is being said there. Has any of this rhetoric been followed up? Are there any tangible outcomes on the ground?

On one of my trips I was at an economic development committee meeting and I cringed a little when the Chief Minister was outlining some fairly high-level rhetoric around plans to develop new industry bases. He talked about sealing the Central Arnhem Road and developing the buffalo industry. He mentioned the opportunities for a muster of about 1000 head. My cause for cringing was we had 1400 workers unemployed, so we would have a yard draft and 1000 head with 1400 stockmen.

The efficiencies in that would not be very good, so I am keen to hear what the government is doing in matching up those opportunities, especially now we are in a critical time to support Nhulunbuy and the community of northeast Arnhem land, remembering there are port facilities there; there are opportunities to commence in this wild harvest stage, and there were ample opportunities to start to look at domestication of animals there.

It would be good to hear from the minister about that, and from the Chief Minister; it would be good to hear what further plans he has.

There is also a point that came out in the statement where the minister indicated that droughts and flooding rains are a challenge for pastoralists. That is correct, minister, they

certainly are, and for any others who live in regional and remote areas. There are definitely challenges that the weather brought last year. The Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association found that in 2013 the Northern Territory sweltered through the hottest Dry Season on record. The mean temperature for the NT this Dry Season was 28.1 °C which is 1.9 °C higher than the long term average of 26.2 °C. This passes the previous mean temperature record of 27.8 °C set in 1998. That is from the NTCA *Cattle News* November 2013.

In the Barkly we were very lucky to get late rain, but it was still marginal rain in certain areas. In my travels to a southeast block just before coming to parliament it was quite obvious that the country is drying out quickly. We have seen the result of areas that received very little rain this year and almost no rain the previous year. Major flood country like the Frew River, for instance, did not see a run this year. This is quite challenging. These are climatic challenges, and our resilient pastoral community deals with this on a daily basis, a weekly basis and a monthly basis, year in and year out.

It is important to recognise this. It links to the bigger picture of climate change and what that forward planning is, because when, in a bipartisan sense, we are focused on development of northern Australia, Mother Nature will be one of our biggest challenges.

It would be good to hear from the minister and those departments what research and development is going into this area. What are the forward estimates and planning to deal with these challenges that could seriously take out our supply logistics – as the minister said, they could lead to unfulfilled contracts – and the possibility of this very important Southeast Asian block shifting its focus to India, Africa and South America for the supplies of protein they need.

It is a challenge for government, and the government needs to work collaboratively with industry. It is an exciting time, and there is no doubt it is a challenging time. The minister is in a very exciting portfolio. Recovery, I suppose, is one way to look at it, but now we have to adopt this new global perspective of managing total supply chain logistics. It is really important that we focus the industry on the concept of social licence to operate. It would be interesting to hear what work is going on in the Departments of Land Resource Management, and Primary Industry and Fisheries, focusing on not only education and awareness within the pastoral sector, but also with government's plans and priorities as we move forward to develop northern Australia.

Thank you, minister, for bringing the statement to the House. Thanks for the opportunity to talk about it. I look forward to getting back to the bush to follow the season, the industry and, wherever possible, be part of that industry where you get down on the ground, possibly back in the yards, get your hands dirty and understand from the grass roots how this whole industry works, functions and operates. You learn that by standing shoulder to shoulder with the incredible people who make this industry, and that relates to an incredible and fascinating pastoral history within the Northern Territory that we should never forget and that we should continue to acknowledge and celebrate.

Ms LEE (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I also contribute to the minister's statement.

Minister, if I can draw your attention to the fourth paragraph of your statement to the House:

However, as minister for Primary Industry, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that the cattle industry is still not clear of a most challenging period of coping with reduced profit margins, difficult market conditions and depressed property values.

Having said that, you must know how hard the cattle industry is doing it. We all do. We have seen it happen with the live cattle ban. So what you do is create another industry without any research whatsoever. Neither you nor any of the limited number of stakeholders you named really knows exactly how many feral buffaloes there are in the Northern Territory. There are many in my area, especially in east Arnhem Land and north Arnhem Land.

Wait, it gets better. You then promote that primary producers take you seriously when you say, 'We have created another market which can now compete in our crippled cattle industry'. The catch is, you want primary producers to domesticate wild herds of buffalo on pastoral leases traditionally put aside for cattle. You want primary producers to take you seriously and breed buffalo and receive approximately \$1.50 per kilogram for export buffalo, compared to \$2.30 currently being achieved for live cattle. That makes sense probably to you only. Unfortunately, it means fewer cents per kilogram for buffalo compared to cattle going to our primary producers who have little, if no, infrastructure for the same.

Let us compare domesticating and breeding buffalo and cattle. Existing infrastructure for breeding, maintaining and exporting cattle includes roads, fencing, transport networks, feed supplements, cattle health and welfare standards, federal legislation, cattle breeding and weaning strategies and experienced cattlemen and

cattlemen, who exist in the industry today; many of them are Indigenous people. With all this in place, our cattle industry still struggles. With all this capital expenditure, not to forget the millions of hours our people in the rural industry have spent - mostly unpaid - you advocate a new industry has been established which has very little, if any, knowledge. Minister, you cannot expect us to take the statement seriously. It lacks research and financial modelling, does not touch on the changes required in legislation in the Northern Territory, does not clearly identify where the proposed jobs are, and does not cost the infrastructure required to make the statement a reality.

I went to Arnhem Land last year before Christmas. There was this idea of getting Indigenous people together. The buffalo industry was one of the areas being looked at to create jobs for Aboriginal people. Since then, I have been there and said, 'This is what the government proposes. They want to talk to you countrymen about what your ideas are.' The countrymen were pretty excited, but they wondered how it would all start off. Where is the money to build it? When all we hear is that the government is in a great deal of debt, where will all this stuff come from?

There is hardly anything there. If there is anywhere it is Gulin Gulin, which is near Conway station, Mountain Valley. It is the only infrastructure currently in place in the East Arnhem region. Going there, making promises and making my people believe this will benefit them and spread jobs out in the community is far beyond that. I would like to see it happen, but I do not think we are in a position to make promises which will probably never happen, not in the next 10 years. It puts me down to go there, spread news and messages from the government of the day and come back to look at the reality, which is it will never happen. It is only the words and promises that have always been put out, from every side of politics, not just one.

Minister, the lack of understanding in the statement is so great regarding the proposed buffalo industry, and its potential to establish a sustainable export market is such that it smacks the last of the great Country Liberal Party into Primary Industry in the late 1980s. I speak of BTEC, which destroyed the better part of the cattle industry in the Northern Territory. It destroyed the capacity for small family holdings to exist, many of them around the Katherine region. It destroyed commercial viability for many small abattoirs which existed at the time. I remember one at Oenpelli - Mudginberri - when I was a kid; my grandmother is from there. Most of the people employed there were Indigenous.

Mr Tollner interjecting.

Ms LEE: That is right, and now there is nothing.

It was a Country Liberal government that increased the export quota of boxed beef to the United States. Minister, can you tell us how much boxed beef is currently being sent to the United States? Let me give you a hint: it is zero, thanks to the Country Liberal Party. It is interesting to note that the same people who were ministers at the time of the BTEC are advisors in the current government. Minister, the BTEC engineered by the Country Liberal government was administered and executed by the same government proposing this initiative. But do not believe me; let us assume you know. Let us look at your numbers in the second last paragraph on page seven:

It is unknown what the exact population of buffalo is in the Territory; however, a conservative estimate is the Territory buffalo industry could initially supply around 1000 head per month to live export, drawing from an estimated 100 000 animals in the wild and about 10 000 domesticated animals.

There are a couple of things you might like to know about buffalo. Apart from the fact the female breeds later in life than female cattle, and apart from the fact buffalo are unlike cattle and require country which is seen as less desirable to that used for cattle breeding, commonly known as wetlands, the most important fact remains as follows. In a herd of 110 000, the herd would look much like this: 50% would be breeding females; approximately 30% would be breeding males; and 20% would be young animals at foot. These are rough estimates of a feral herd.

After the first year, using your figures, from a herd of 110 000 you would have exported 12 000 head. This would leave a total of 98 000. The capture of this feral herd would take in excess of 12 months. That is effectively two Dry Seasons of mustering, exporting and everything else that goes with that.

Of the remaining 98 000 head of buffalo, the Territory will export another 1000 head per month. From the 98 000 we will export another 12 000 in the second year, all without financial modelling and knowing the exact number of the herd.

As much as I would like to tell my people this is the way to go, if there was any infrastructure in place it was destroyed in the past 20 years. I do not know if we will be able to bring that back with the situation the Northern Territory government is in.

People in Arnhem Land are eager for the jobs and the buffalo industry. They have been talking about it, and are looking forward to it. We have been talking with a few people to get this initiative

up and running. They are eager to work with Aboriginal people where the government has not even considered walking through the security gates, regardless of how many times they have tried to ask for meetings. We look forward to that, and as a member I will continue to work hard for my mob.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Northern Territory Government's
Achievements and Current Efforts in Central
Australia to Date

Mr CONLAN (Central Australia): Madam Speaker, as a sign of the times I am in, at Christmas time, my eyes went; so I am now wearing glasses. I normally do not wear them, but I have 6000 words to get through so I might need a bit of assistance.

I cannot see a thing over there, which is a pretty good thing. It is quite blurry so I might wear them more often, but they are fantastic close up.

I will update the House on the Northern Territory government's achievements in Central Australia. As you would be aware, Framing the Future sets out clearly the Northern Territory government's plan for the Territory. We are focused and committed to ensuring Central Australia is an invaluable part of the Northern Territory that enjoys a prosperous and robust economy, a strong and resilient society that manages a balanced environment, and celebrates an engaged and connected community defining the unique culture of the Central Australia area. The Central Australia region is three times the size of Victoria, and a place where state boundaries come together. It serves up to 40 000 people throughout the area.

Our government has been working closely with community representatives, residents and members of the business community to ensure economic development opportunities are there for all Territorians, specifically Territorians in our Central Australia region, who missed out throughout the 11 long years of Labor, as we have articulated over a number of parliamentary sittings since coming to government.

We have focused upon reinvigorating our tourism industry in Central Australia, and have prioritised increased government investment in major developments and the private sector.

Recently the Northern Territory hosted their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, at Uluru. This was attended by up to about 180 local, national and international media, once again providing Central Australia and the

Territory with optimal exposure globally and domestically.

This was a great opportunity to highlight our beautiful and unique landscape, and the oldest living culture in the world. I will detail more about tourism soon, and this government's commitment to tourism. The Northern Territory government is committed to improving opportunities for economic and social development for all Territorians through increased access to affordable housing and accommodation, additional land release for residential and commercial use, a focus on the safety of all community members and ensuring we are open to innovative local solutions to address skilled staff shortages.

There is plenty of good news with housing in the Central Australian region also, and I will go through that soon too.

Let us look at northern Australia development. The federal government is developing its white paper on developing northern Australia, and this will serve as a blueprint for northern development. The government has made a submission to the federal government's Joint Select Committee Inquiry in to the Development of northern Australia. In our submission we stress that the focus has to be about the whole of the Northern Territory, that all of the Territory's regions have to be involved in the accelerated development of northern Australia.

This matter was again taken up when the Chief Minister successfully lobbied the Prime Minister, the Hon Tony Abbott MP, to include Alice Springs as part of the northern Australia development agenda. This is the beginning of a bold nation-building exercise in which Central Australia has an important role to play. Central Australia is a key part of northern Australian development and requires increased and improved infrastructure to maximise the region's output.

Central Australia has enormous potential to engage with an increasingly wealthy Asia through its position as an important road, rail and air link to greatly increase its contribution to Australia's export of goods and services, and its status as a tourism icon.

Residents of Central Australia will also be given a great opportunity to contribute to the northern development agenda when the federal government's Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia holds a public hearing in Alice Springs on 19 May this year.

Mining and exploration: our government is committed to turning our resources into wealth for the Territory and is working closely with the mining, oil and gas industry to explore and

progress opportunities throughout the region. To accelerate exploration activity, the government is supporting the development of infrastructure and improving and speeding up approvals for land access. The APA Group, which is a major gas transportation business, recently announced a \$2m feasibility study to investigate linking the Territory gas network with the east coast gas grid. This link to the eastern seaboard would increase the Territory access to these markets and provide greater energy security for Australia. The Chief Minister recently wrote to the Premier of New South Wales to offer the construction of a pipeline as a solution for New South Wales' energy needs.

A production licence was recently granted to Central Petroleum for the development of its Surprise oil field in Western Amadeus Basin. This is the first new onshore production licence to be granted in the Territory in more than 30 years. It is a 25-year licence to start the production phase of their operations located to the west of Alice Springs. The company has reported that early production is already exceeding expectations, and the Surprise No 1 Well released more than 700 barrels of high-grade tapis crude in its first day of production, well above the expectation of 400 barrels per day – a fantastic outcome.

An application for a production licence has also been submitted over the Dingo gas field for development of the field and construction of a pipeline to the south of Alice Springs. These new developments, along with Santos' current drilling project to further appraise and develop tight oil resources in the Mereenie field, suggest increasing production from Central Australian petroleum fields over the coming years. It is understood that there have been some early encouraging results also from the Mereenie program.

The projected expenditure on oil and gas exploration on granted tenements in the Northern Territory over the next five years exceeds \$200m. There is every indication that this figure will grow as more tenements are granted. This is great news for the Northern Territory and great for Territory business.

During 2014 we expect to see continued high-level onshore petroleum exploration, driven in part by major companies such as Santos and Statoil which have jointly ventured into projects in the Amadeus, McArthur and Georgina Basins. A clear indication of the high level of confidence the companies have in the results of survey findings across the Territory is that current work programs show that up to 25 exploration wells could be drilled within the next 12 months.

The Central Australian Regional Mining Seminar and Annual Geoscience Exploration Seminar were

held in Alice Springs this year on 17 to 19 March. These events provided opportunities to link local suppliers with mining and exploration companies to increase sales for local businesses, thereby boosting the opportunity for business growth and local jobs, once again showcasing that the Territory is open for business.

Let us look at infrastructure. Our government anticipates spending \$272m in Central Australia, that is the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek regions, encompassing capital works, minor works and repairs and maintenance programs of which \$148m is projected to be spent this financial year to support economic activity and the development of Central Australia. Labor simply dislikes Central Australia. In Labor's last budget, the 2012-13 budget, the central region received just \$40m in capital works from a potential \$1.3bn infrastructure spend across the Northern Territory that year.

In that year the current shadow minister for Central Australia and the then Treasurer gave the central region just 3% of the overall NT spend on capital works. The Opposition Leader, the member for Karama, described this spending as a huge \$1.3bn infrastructure investment across the emergency services, education, health, roads, corrections and housing sectors.

However, Central Australia received just \$40m from the \$1.3bn in new capital works. What a farce! The Labor government's failure to rein in record levels of debt was never a windfall of spending for Central Australia. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Alice Springs and Tennant Creek nose-dived under the previous Labor government.

We are building the Centre with works that include the refurbishment of remote health centres, air strips, expansions of facilities and road improvements. The NT government is committed to improving regional infrastructure. This investment includes \$1m for the widening of the Plenty Highway, \$10m for the sealing and improvement of the Santa Teresa Road, upgrades to and sealing of various sections of the Plenty Highway, support and development of the Outback Way, and ensuring the Tanami Road is an Infrastructure Australia priority at the federal level.

These improvements will help unlock the potential of these regions. Bringing forward minor new works and maintenance will support and stimulate local industry and contribute further economic development to the region. Here is a snapshot of what we are doing:

- expansion of the Alice Springs Police facilities to the tune of \$9m

- Utopia Police Station – \$9m
- Yuendumu Police Station – \$8m
- increase courts capacity – \$5m
- Docker River Health Centre upgrade – \$2.8m
- Titjikala Health Clinic upgrade – \$1.75m
- Papunya Health Clinic upgrade – \$1.75m
- the Stuart Highway rail overpass – \$18m
- Santa Teresa Road upgrade, floodway and sealing – \$5m to \$10m
- Luritja Road upgrade Kings Creek intersection – \$500 000

Transport planning is also a key priority for the Northern Territory government, and an integrated transport planning and investment road map is being developed. This transport road map will provide a plan to develop the Territory's transport infrastructure and services to ensure transport provides the necessary foundations to drive economic growth across the Territory and, in this case, Central Australia.

The road map includes a number of focused strategies, plans, reviews and reforms covering freight and logistics industry requirements, road and bridge infrastructure provision, motor vehicle registry services, passenger transport services and infrastructure needs including aviation, public transport and commercial passenger vehicle requirements.

The initial stakeholder feedback from meetings held in Alice Springs in relation to transport planning has been positive, and we will continue to drive this strategy and reform, involving the community and relevant agencies.

The Chief Minister and I were also delighted to open two significant facilities in Alice Springs earlier this year to be enjoyed by the whole community. This included the new and improved \$2.5m Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre. The Alice Springs Youth and Community Centre received a major upgrade and has become a comprehensive youth precinct for Alice Springs youth and the local community. The upgrade to the facility involved a number of key projects, including an integrated sprung floor and extending the current gymnastics facilities, to a new administration office located on the lower level of the building. Local construction company, Scope, did a fantastic job as well.

Then there is the \$3.3m newly developed ANZAC Oval that includes new grandstands to seat 500

spectators, a kiosk, a VIP area, a refurbished club house, change rooms and an administration centre.

The Country Liberals government is making sure Territorians have access to top-quality sporting events in first-class sporting venues. It was an honour to open the facility in February, with the Chief Minister, just before the Parramatta Eels and West Tigers preseason game, which attracted 3500 spectators. Centralians are proud of the facility, and it is just another election commitment we have completed.

Let us turn our attention to business. The government is focused on ...

Mr McCarthy: Did you get my letter? You did not finish the back. It is a bloody disgrace with all that building waste and rubbish.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly!

Mr CONLAN: He does not like Central Australia, Madam Speaker. It is pretty clear. He never liked it and still does not like it. This is why he is no longer the shadow minister for Central Australia. He was hopeless when he was the minister and we know he hates Central Australia.

Let us look at the business.

Mr McCarthy interjecting.

Mr CONLAN: Oh, it is a pleasure to give it to you any time you like.

Let us look at the business sector. The government is focused on doing business more effectively and efficiently across Central Australia. In October 2013, the Department of Business relocated to new premises in Alice Springs, providing a dynamic one-stop shop for business, including the provision of a new director focused on supporting businesses.

This government continues to assist business development through up-skilling workshops, tourism enhancement funding, skilled migration workshops, funding feasibility studies such as project costing of Central Australia branded beef and the Digital Activation Kick-Starter program. It is worth noting that in Alice Springs during October business month there were 22 events attracting 767 attendees in 2012 and 21 events in 2013, which attracted 1274 attendees, an increase of over 500.

As well as supporting business, the government is keen to grow business through assistance programs specifically structured to meet the unique needs of the Northern Territory. These programs provide strong support and assistance

through access to business consultants to carry out business diagnostics and planning.

Through our innovative Territory business growth programs there are currently 31 businesses receiving assistance, along with 317 business owners and managers utilising the programs to discuss business opportunities in the current and emerging economic climates.

In November 2012, the Northern Territory government announced the doubling of the ecoBiz NT program's grant funding to assist businesses to reduce their exposure to the utility price increases. The program assists small to medium enterprises to adopt resource efficient practices which are good for their financial bottom line and great for the environment.

We turn our attention to Indigenous business. The Indigenous Business Development Program, IBDP, is a \$600 000 program designed to assist Indigenous people to enter commercial businesses or expand existing businesses which will create employment and/or wealth creation opportunities. From September 2012 to 28 February 2014, 55 Indigenous people with a business idea, wanting to start a business or already in a business and wanting to expand in Central Australia have been assisted. It is a great outcome. Two Indigenous people have entered into a new commercial business operation, with a further three existing Indigenous businesses receiving assistance to expand commercial opportunities. Ten Indigenous businesses have been assisted with the development of business capability statements.

The Northern Territory government is also undertaking a range of procurement reforms in 2014 to reduce red tape and make government procurement simpler, more streamlined and transparent for business. The initiatives contained in the procurement reforms will broadly benefit Central Australian businesses by reducing red tape, simplifying these processes, improving decision-making time frames and assisting businesses to better understand the policy intent and how to address it in the tender responses.

To help further drive business growth and attract investment to the Northern Territory, the NT government established the Regional Economic Development Committees in 2013 to assist in identifying opportunities to grow the economic base of the regions.

In Central Australia, the Alice Springs and the Tennant Creek Regional Economic Development Committees comprise members drawn from the private business sector, relevant regulatory bodies, such as local government, business associations and local community representatives.

These committees are actively working to identify and prioritise economic development opportunities as well as identifying barriers and providing solutions to support regional economic growth.

A focus on developing international education services is being actively pursued as a key potential growth opportunity in Central Australia, particularly in Alice Springs.

Recently the Chief Minister visited Vietnam with key educational stakeholders to highlight and promote what Alice Springs can offer. Following on from this initiative, Charles Darwin University continues to progress the opportunity.

Increasing the skilled labour workforce in Central Australia is also a vital part of building a flourishing economy. The government is supporting employment and training through a number of programs, the Indigenous Workforce Participation Initiative Program supports business with other organisations to increase the number of Aboriginal people entering and staying in employment and progressing their careers. The program currently supports eight projects, either based in or benefiting Central Australia. To date, these projects include 52 successful outcomes in the form of career pathway planning, development training, mentoring and industry support.

Central Australian sectors supported through the program include health, cattle, manufacturing, hospitality, business, finance and community arts. Under the local jobs package the Department of Business provides employment support to organisations and businesses employing and retaining Indigenous trainees in remote towns and communities.

There are currently seven employees and 25 local Indigenous Territorians in employment, based in traineeships across Central Australia. Central Australian businesses which have won remote jobs on community program contracts have the opportunity to utilise a new community workforce plan, incorporating a planning guide and tools to assist businesses to meet their contractual obligations with the Commonwealth for Indigenous workforce strategies.

In 2013 Training NT allocated more than \$21m in Territory and Commonwealth funds for Charles Darwin University, the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and other providers to deliver qualifications to Territorians in the Central Australian and Barkly regions to help develop new skills or build on existing skills for employment opportunities. It is anticipated a similar amount of training funding will be allocated in the 2014 training calendar year.

Between September 2012 and February 2014, 13 training programs were funded under the Indigenous Responsive Program, involving 137 Indigenous participants in the Alice Springs region.

In 2013 \$148 000 was allocated for community-based training in Alice Springs, Ntaria, Yuendumu, Finke, Papunya, Santa Teresa and Areyonga.

Indigenous participants employed under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, NPARIH, completed two training programs at Yuendumu in 2013, and further training is scheduled in 2014 to support ongoing employment on that project.

Training NT manages and administers scholarships across the Territory for students who commenced study in 2013 or 2014 to undertake higher education and vocational education and training. In 2013, four of the 40 successful higher education scholarship winners and three of the 12 VET scholarship winners were from Alice Springs, which is a fantastic outcome.

Between September 2012 and February 2014 there were 500 apprentice or trainee commencements in Alice Springs. These figures represent 17% of total NT commencements for the same period. Forty one per cent, or 205, of the Alice Springs commencements identified were Indigenous.

The NT government is committed to developing and recognising key skill areas in the NT through programs such as Try'a Skill and the NT Training Awards.

As part of Framing the Future, we turn to a strong and resilient society. Alice Springs and the surrounding region offer a diverse multicultural environment with a rich Indigenous culture, heritage and connection. In Alice Springs and Tennant Creek the government is working collaboratively with the new non-government sector to leverage and strengthen services to improve social services across the region, including improved school attendance and family responsibility programs, family and domestic violence responses, additional police support and enhanced social services, such as mandatory alcohol rehabilitation programs.

The Northern Territory government is committed to providing quality education, increasing school attendance across the region and the Northern Territory. All schools in Central Australia are participating in Visible Learning, a world-class evidence-based professional learning program for teachers and school leaders. The program focuses on developing a culture of improvement for all schools, success for all students in their

literacy and numeracy outcomes, and multilevel engagement and capacity building.

The approach builds teacher capacity and capability to more effectively deliver student learning programs based on world-renowned educational expert John Hattie's research and the principles of visible learning and teaching. Regional senior attendance and truancy officers work with schools to develop a strategic approach to re-engage students.

The attendance and truancy programs have developed positive partnerships with the Australian government and its Remote School Attendance Strategy, RSAS. Other key educational programs include Kids in Town Engaged in Schooling, the Parent Engagement Program, Targeting Health Improving Engagement and the Mobile Preschool Program. In addition, the Vocational Education and Training in Schools program aims to expand opportunities and pathways for secondary students by offering accredited training leading to a vocational qualification which meets the need of industry and/or community while contributing to the Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training, further education and employment.

The Department of Education's registered training office currently employs seven VETiS trainers across the following schools: Ntaria, Harts Range, Tennant Creek, Centralian Senior College and Centralian Middle School. New trainer positions are to be filled in 2014 at Yuendumu and Centralian Middle School.

Housing and land release, and essential services, across the centre are very important too. The government is committed to putting in place the building blocks for sustainable regional growth. This will be supported by increased access to affordable housing, additional land release and improved essential services.

In Alice Springs the new Kilgariff subdivision has released 33 blocks for sale with a total of 80 lots being made available in two stages, with average lot prices between \$160 000 and \$180 000. Further homes are becoming available through the refurbishment of public housing accommodation for sale as part of the Real Housing for Growth Plan. This includes the refurbishment of houses on Elliott Street.

Ten of the 30 refurbished units have been set aside to meet the demands for affordable accommodation for our seniors. Another ten of the units will be sold by ballot to eligible low- to middle-income households. The remaining ten units will be leased to the market at 30% below market rate.

The old Alice Springs Bowling Club site of 1.1 ha has also been sold and is ready for the development of over 60 dwellings by local business AsBuild. Probuild NT Pty Ltd has commenced a new 25-unit development in Alice Springs, supported by the government's Real Housing for Growth head lease program.

We are helping to create and enable construction in the Centre. The growth of regional areas surrounding Alice Springs is important, and the government is committed to building the capacity of all regions. .

To the north of Alice Springs, a new renewable energy power station was commissioned at Ti Tree this year. The power station was completed with funding from private equity, the Australian government's Renewable Remote Power Generation Program and the Northern Territory government.

Other projects near completion throughout Central Australia also include a major upgrade to the Hermannsburg water supply, with works including new bores, new water storage tanks and a new rising main. The additional infrastructure will provide the capacity required to support infrastructure planned for construction at Hermannsburg, including a new health centre, a new multipurpose youth facility and an upgrade of the school, including VET facilities.

A new 91 kW high-voltage power line has been constructed to connect Hermannsburg to the Alice Springs electricity grid. Connection to the Alice Springs grid will ensure that Hermannsburg is provided with a secure and reliable electricity supply to support housing and community infrastructure.

Advance water treatment plants have been constructed at Kintore and Yuelamu through Northern Territory funding to the tune of \$8.25m. The facilities are in the commissioning phase and will ensure the quality of water supplied to residents in these communities is in line with Australian drinking water guidelines.

Ms Lawrie: Made under Labor.

Improving Alice Springs – I know you are finding it a bit boring, yawning at anything to do with Central Australia! For the record, the shadow minister for Central Australia was yawning at a 6000-word statement about Central Australia.

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I did not yawn; I said those were decisions made under Labor.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, Opposition Leader. Minister, refrain from commenting in that way and withdraw please.

Mr CONLAN: Okay, I will withdraw. I am sure I heard it, but I will withdraw. It would not surprise me anyway.

They do not like Central Australia. It is remarkable. Why should we be surprised?

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The convention in the Chamber is to read the statement.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister is reading a statement. It is not a point of order. Minister, you have the call.

Mr CONLAN: Precisely, it is only a convention.

The Northern Territory and Australian governments continue to work together to improve the social services and the accommodation of Alice Springs town camps.

Projects for the remainder of 2014 include a \$10.6m redevelopment of Ilpiye-Ilpiye which will develop it into a regular suburb of Alice Springs where residents will have home ownership opportunities.

Town camp community safety infrastructure upgrades include fencing and street lighting, and ongoing specialist social support services in the areas of domestic and family violence, family support and substance abuse management.

There are many significant investments and advances in the way the government is working on positive health outcomes in Central Australia. The government reached agreement with the Commonwealth for the Barkly region to be a trial site for the National Disability Insurance Scheme from July this year. The Barkly was chosen to be a pilot site because of the mix of remote, regional and urban communities, meaning we will get a full understanding of how to implement the NDIS right across the Northern Territory. One-hundred-and-three people with a disability in their families will participate in the three-year trial.

Last year the Alcohol Assessment Service was established in Alice Springs as part of the alcohol mandatory treatment program. In the first six months of operation, 206 people were referred to the system, steering people away from the revolving door of protective custody and sobering-up shelters and placing problem drinkers in a safe environment in which to address their serious alcohol addiction.

We recently announced the commencement of alcohol mandatory treatment in Tennant Creek with a 12-bed facility, and plans are under way to expand AMT in Alice Springs from 20 to 40 beds. Alcohol mandatory treatment is giving people a chance to get off the grog and get the healthcare they so desperately need. It will also provide respite to the families and the community as a whole, and provide the individual with a real opportunity to change their lives.

The Territory government is serious about connecting with our community. This is being demonstrated through regular forums between the Chief Minister and non-government organisations to build capacity in the regions and deliver enhanced community outcomes. The government recently launched a new pilot program designed to support non-government organisations with business support so they are viable in the future and can continue to provide critical services in our community.

A great example of partnerships in action is the Department of Children and Families in conjunction with key agencies in the NGO sector. They have successfully come together to co-produce the collaborative practice guidelines. These guidelines are an interactive and evolving framework that forms the basis of commitment to work together and promote best practice in supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people, their families and the community.

Additionally, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice, the Northern Territory Police and the NGO sector have been working tirelessly together to implement the Alice Springs Integrated Response to Family and Domestic Violence Project.

This approach aims to increase the safety of women and children and increase the accountability of perpetrators of family and domestic violence. In the first 18 months of operation over 100 referrals have been made to the family safety framework, which targets victims of domestic and family violence. The Territory government is serious about tackling domestic violence, and in July 2013 the government committed \$1.1m over three years to two non-government providers in Alice Springs and Darwin for the delivery of domestic and family violence legal services. In Alice Springs the service level agreement is in place with the Central Australian Women's Legal Service.

The Alice Springs and Tennant Creek communities have been empowered to develop their own alcohol strategies with the formation of Alcohol Reference Groups. Other measures

undertaken to crack down on alcohol-related antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs include an additional 28 police officers in Alice Springs and the broader Central Australia region since 2012, and a higher police presence around town through the Temporary Beat Locations or TBLs.

The NT Police are also working closely with service providers to support early intervention and engage in various community specific operations, many of which have already been highlighted, that aim to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community is maintained. Once again highlighting the importance of Alice Springs, the government appointed a new Assistant Commissioner Regional Operations based in Alice Springs.

The police continue their focus on unlawful consumption of alcohol in restricted and alcohol protected areas through the use of TBLs right across licenced takeaway premises in the Centre. Targeting takeaway outlets has shown a significant reduction in alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in Alice Springs, and we heard some of those statistics today.

Police have maintained a focus on safety in town camps through the activities of the Community Engagement Team. From 1 December 2013 to 25 February 2014, 183 referrals have been made by this team to external support agencies to assist town camp residents. Throughout the past 12 months the police have focused their efforts to reduce unlawful property entry in Alice Springs, and this has resulted in a four-year low of unlawful property entry offences, another fantastic result. It is also worth highlighting that total property offences are down some 31% in Alice Springs, which is the lowest level for a calendar year since 2006.

Another initiative showcasing success is the Alice Springs SupportLink trial which has now been extended. SupportLink is a central electronic referral service for victims of domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol dependence, and homelessness. The system has seen an increase in referrals by NT Police of 175 offences linking almost 2000 people with assistance appropriate to their individual needs. Up to 70% of referrals were for victims who were previously unknown to support agencies. The trial success has prompted the government to extend the trial in Alice Springs until March 2015. So far it is working very well.

Alcohol Protection Orders have been in operation since Christmas 2013. These orders ban people from buying, possessing or even consuming alcohol, as well as attending licenced premises. There are over 200 people on the orders in Alice Springs and more than 150 in the Barkly.

Whilst the protection and safety of the community is a priority for the government, it is equally important to implement rehabilitation plans for people incarcerated. The current Sentenced to a Job scheme, undertaken by the Alice Springs Correctional Centre and the Barkly Work Camp, is increasing its prisoner paid and volunteer employment. Since September 2012 there have been 66 participants in paid employment and 119 participants in volunteer employment, another great outcome. In Alice Springs there were 12 prisoners working on the Department of Housing's affordable housing project in Elliott Street.

The Alice Springs Correctional Centre also played a huge role with its community support program, which provides significant input into the number of community events through the work of prisoner crews in the set-up and pull-down of infrastructure required at events around the place. The previous Labor government's so-called new era of correctional services left the Northern Territory with the highest prison numbers in our history and the highest recidivism rates anywhere. The CLP government does not accept the fatalism of Labor's failed new era policy. We want offenders to be sentenced to a job and to contribute meaningfully to society.

The CLP is also using offenders in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek for community work to clean up the town. As of December last year, offenders have completed almost \$4m in community work in the Northern Territory, ensuring they begin to repay their debts to the community they offended against.

Next time any member of the opposition bothers to go to Alice Springs they will see work crews around the place: South Terrace; the Alice Springs Waste Facility; Barrett Drive; Northside; Gillen; Araluen; Larapinta; town camps; local parks; and roadside stops. They are all there, cleaning up the streets.

In Tennant Creek, the Barkly Work Camp crews are assisting clean-up projects in Patterson Street, Jubilee Park, the memorial reserve and various town camps. Offenders under the Country Liberals in Central Australia are cleaning up rubbish, mowing lawns – important tidy-up works, unheralded good use of offenders, an unthinkable notion under 11 long years of Labor.

These offenders continue to provide a valuable labour source for the community and other not-for-profit organisations which would otherwise not be able to afford to have those works completed. Grounds maintenance, painting and minor construction are only some of the jobs offenders work on every day. Prisoners who display a desire to learn and work are able to be considered for the Sentenced to a Job program where

prisoners are taken from their cell blocks into paid contracts. Again, unthinkable under Labor, but it is happening under this government in the Centre and all over the Northern Territory.

Let us look at tourism and major events. Central Australia is being opened up to the rest of the world. Finally, after eleven long years of Labor, Central Australia is on the map. We have world attractions, high-profile conferences, sporting events and other major events hitting the Centre. In 2013 the English Eleven versus the Chairman's Eleven cricket match was held in Alice Springs. We had the Ashes in the Centre. It attracted national and international coverage.

The Darwin Symphony Orchestra played a key performance at Uluru and in Alice Springs – unprecedented, a world first to have a symphony orchestra play at the rock.

The sixth Indigenous Economic Development Forum was held in Alice Springs on 20 to 22 October 2013, attracting 270 delegates, including 134 Indigenous people in businesses or considering starting a business.

This year a partnership was signed with the NRL Club, Parramatta Eels, which resulted in Alice Springs hosting a preseason rugby league game, which attracted about 3500 people at the brand new Anzac Oval Stadium, and includes other training opportunities and a premiership game in Darwin in August this year.

Alice Springs hosted the annual NAB AFL Cup between the Melbourne Demons and Geelong Cats. We have another first, another history-making event in the Centre come 31 May when we will see Melbourne take on Port Adelaide for premiership points at Traeger Park— fantastic stuff.

In addition, 40 Indigenous cricket teams from across the country took part in the annual Imparja Cup, which is going from strength to strength.

Recently the flagship Annual Geoscience Exploration Seminar, or AGIS, was held in Alice Springs, and later this year Alice Springs will host the national Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia conference.

In 2014 there is more to come with the Ulysses Club holding its 2014 annual general meeting in Alice Springs – they are just about on our doorstep – which is estimated to bring 3500 members, riding their Harleys and the like through the streets of Alice Springs. Plus there is the Finke Desert Race, the Masters Games in October, the Ingkerreke Mountain Bike Enduro, and the Alice Springs Cup Carnival, which we have just had. We had 2500 people through the

gates at Pioneer Park. That is a huge success, and hats off to the TRNT and Des Frederick, who did a fantastic job in just a few months, taking over the helm of the Alice Springs Cup Carnival.

Tourism NT has reinvigorated tourism in Central Australia through a strong domestic market focus, which will see the conversion of interest in our destination to actual visitation through a range of core marketing activities. This includes a refreshed NT brand strategy that is experience led, reflects our natural and cultural positioning, talks to our target audience, with focused communication on reducing the perceived barriers to travel, such as accessibility, time, costs and available infrastructure. Another win for Central Australia is the announcement by Jetstar of a new route from Melbourne to Ayers Rock. This will operate four times a week, beginning from 29 June. These extra services equate to 4000 seats a week to Uluru, more than doubling the current capacity.

You will be pleased to hear Tennant Creek has not been forgotten either by this government, member for Barkly. It features strongly in our marketing campaigns, unlike under the previous government; Tennant Creek and the Barkly feature front and centre

I suggest you look at travelnt.com, member for Barkly, and you will see Tennant Creek and the Barkly region in all their glory. They are highlighted on our home page, showing potential visitors how to discover culture through the art gallery, explore the Davenport Ranges, learn about the history of the area at the Battery Hill Museum and Aboriginal mythology at Karlu Karlu, the Devils Marbles. Suggested itineraries and accommodation options are also there for visitors to explore.

Tennant Creek has been promoted heavily to over one million readers in Sydney and Melbourne as part of the 'how to Do the NT' campaign. A full page was dedicated to Tennant Creek as part of our 16-page booklet, and it featured in the events section of the booklet. Tennant Creek is a feature in our www.adventurealltheway.com.au drive campaign with Britz, a great partnership between Tourism NT and Britz. This included integrating Tennant Creek into the key drive itineraries for the NT, giving it a high profile and highlighting things to do in the region with printable and downloadable PDFs. Tennant is included in our \$200 000 cooperative campaigns. An example is with Virgin Australia where the region is shown as part of possible Central Australia activity and experiences.

Tourism NT is working with key stakeholders in Tennant Creek on a pilot of a new local tourism advisory committee, LTAC. The member for

Barkly may be aware of this. The call for expressions of interest was well-received, with seven members of the regional tourism industry joining the initial committee and the potential for additional members to be appointed. LTAC was scheduled to hit the ground from 1 July. However, I am pleased to advise we are well ahead of schedule, and the first meeting was held on 28 April. LTAC will be involved in developing an annual marketing plan for the region, including influencing media buy and a calendar of marketing activity aligned with the marketing strategy of the Northern Territory designed to deliver the Tourism Vision 2020 targets. Branding, including the local visitor information centre, is also part of its job, and a review of other key consumer touch points in the town.

This government is part of all of Central Australia and does not shy away from promoting great attractions in the Barkly region with the support of a more publicised Uluru and Alice Springs experience as well. The three go hand in glove.

Today I have outlined the considerable focus and investment into the Central Australia region. As mentioned previously, we are committed to ensuring Central Australia enjoys a prosperous and robust economy, a strong and resilient society, manages a balanced environment and celebrates an engaged and connected community that defines the unique culture of Central Australia.

Through the Northern Territory government's plan, Framing the Future, we will all work together to bring this commitment to fruition. Throughout the development of northern Australia and the invaluable inclusion of the Central Australia region, we are set for an even bigger and better opportunity that only a CLP government can deliver. This message is clear. Central Australia is well and truly open for business, and I am delighted and proud to be the Minister for Central Australia.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Ms LAWRIE: (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I wish the minister had stuck to the convention of the Chamber. It would have been a far more engaging contribution. Instead we had the flashes of red hot anger. Clearly you have not gone on an anger management program. You need to have good look at that because this is a House of debate and all we get from you when you stray off script is horrible vitriol which is demeaning of a minister of the Crown.

We got what was often described, when the CLP was in opposition, as a puff piece. A bit of a challenge would be to talk about both aspects of

what is occurring in Central Australia. There are many great things occurring in Central Australia, and there are aspects within this statement which highlight all of the good things. What you shied away from dealing with and naming, and suggesting how you would deal with in the future, was the challenges. Challenges exist right across our communities, and Central Australia is not without challenges.

I am disappointed there is still not quite the maturity there in understanding the balance you can strike, recognising the fantastic and vibrant aspects of what is occurring in Central Australia and the challenges as well.

Towards the end there was a classic moment for me when the minister was talking about the Jetstar flights, and what a great thing they are. Of course, he would not mention the fact that Tiger has just stopped flying there. Put your head in the sand and ignore that rather than tip your hat to the fact Tiger is not flying anymore, talking about what you will do and whether you will aggressively go after cheap carrier airlines or have further talks with Qantas.

There is a great deal of interest in the tourism sector in Central Australia around the connectivity with the flights, and there is no doubt there is a real vibe as a result of the royal visit. It was fantastic. It was such a showcase for Uluru. That vibe was tangible when I visited Alice Springs recently, listening to people talk about that visit was fantastic and a real coup for Central Australia.

I was hearing from the local reporters who were at Uluru in the media pack that something like 150 media were there. You cannot buy that kind of promotion, as we know. That was a fantastic opportunity, and I am looking forward to seeing, in the promotion of Central Australia, the opportunities of that boosting tourism numbers. As we know, it is all about connectivity, and the decision by Tiger is a blow to what is occurring with connectivity. I am interested to hear in your wrap, minister, what you see as the low-hanging fruit in the carriers you are pursuing and what incentives there are in marketing.

It presents a real marketing opportunity in tourism of Central Australia. Something we could perhaps get a particular promotion around is Indigenous art. When I was in Central Australia just a couple of weeks ago, in Alice Springs, touching base with businesses up and down the mall, I noticed a consistent theme of the promotion of Indigenous art; come to Alice Springs for the real opportunities for Indigenous art purchases. There is a niche promotion and market there, and there is an opportunity, off the back of the royal visit, to do that domestic marketing.

They were talking domestic. They were not talking about the big markets overseas. We have inspirational artists in Central Australia who go to the big exhibitions in New York and right through Europe. I heard a lot about that, but one of the things that came through consistently in listening to people about a promotion in tourism opportunities was about a domestic promotion of Indigenous art. They think that to a large extent the global art market is starting to be dealt with, and people saw that an opportunity existed in the Australian domestic market for promoting Indigenous art.

It is incredible artwork. You can go to Alice Springs, get into those galleries and purchase artwork at a price you would not get anywhere else. It is phenomenal. It blows you away, me particularly, having seen the art market. I am such a novice at it. I do not really understand it, but I am seeing a dramatic change in the types of things people are making. It has become this incredible range of products. It does not matter what your interest is in art, it is being created. It is not your classic paintings, which are spectacularly mind blowing and different depending on where they come from in Central Australia, but the other art products: the woven art, the jewellery being created; it is all there at such an affordable price.

Minister, I am interested in hearing your response about whether there is any opportunity in tourism marketing to really work with people in the Indigenous art industry in Alice Springs and say, 'If you had some suggestions to give us around the domestic marketing program, what would that look like?' There is nothing wrong with listening to people's ideas sometimes, rather than beating the chest about how it is all fantastic and away you go with your puff piece. That is one small suggestion I put on the table as a result of listening to people in Alice Springs about how they felt it could revitalise the mall.

That raises an issue I want to put to you, minister. Even though you like to think Labor never invested a cent in Central Australia in 11 years, which makes you appear like a fool, put the rhetoric aside. The \$5m revitalisation of the mall only dealt with what people call the northern end of the mall. If you go into the mall you can see the number of businesses that are closed, not just shops, but restaurants too. It is pretty tough there. You can put the puff spin on it, but it is really tough for those small businesses operating in the mall. I am not coating that, because people are saying they are seeing an earlier tourism market into Alice Springs than what they saw last year, for example. The drive market is definitely there and healthy, but it is not translating to healthy business in the mall.

I know the Chief Minister and the Treasurer meet with the Alice Springs Town Council, which had some grave concerns about what was occurring in the CBD. I know the discussions went to many of the juvenile crime concerns the council had. One of the things they really pursued was that businesses are suffering. That does not appear in your puff piece. This is not something Labor is saying, not something the member for Karama is saying, Alice Springs Town Council says businesses are suffering, people are leaving, and there is a growing issue with crime and antisocial behaviour. You can dismiss it if you like, but this is what the elected aldermen of Alice Springs Town Council are saying.

The local council, I am advised, put a series of ideas for development and stimulus on the table at the meeting with the Chief Minister and the Treasurer. Did the Chief Minister and the Treasurer take what the councillors, these grassroots community representatives, said seriously? Did they give consideration to the community-driven ideas and potential areas for government in enabling a result in Alice Springs? No, they did not. The local councillors were told by the Chief Minister and the Treasurer that it was not the role of government to invest in projects that would provide an economic stimulus for Alice Springs. Seriously! I cannot believe they said that, but they did. They said this was instead the role of private investors and the councillors should be looking to the private sector, not the government, to generate investment in the town to create jobs and a future.

Minister, I am not sure whether you would agree with the sentiment of your Chief Minister and Treasurer. I look forward to hearing, in your wrap, your response to that. Where do you see the role of government investment in economic stimulus in a large regional service hub like Alice Springs? The message the Alice Springs Town Council got loud and clear from the Chief Minister and Treasurer was, 'Don't look at us; go to the private sector.'

In those discussions, the Alice Springs Town Council was hoping the Northern Territory government would support a residential and commercial development in the Todd Mall - you would be aware of the one I am referring to - which the council believes would help regenerate the CBD and provide, through the construction phase, an economic boost into the mall. The project would have been a partnership with the town council and the Uniting Church for the development of 70 units and commercial space in the middle of Todd Mall. The project had significant social and economic community benefit, but did the Chief Minister, the Treasurer or the Minister for Central Australia get behind the

project? No, this project is not being supported by the government.

The investment the Alice Springs Town Council was hoping for was less than \$4m, I am advised - less than the \$4m spent on the police standing outside the bottle shops. It is interesting where you see your priorities when the CBD is in desperate need of a boost. As I said, in the mall a few weeks ago, going in and out of the shops, I was surprised at the number of empty shopfronts in the mall. I had not seen it that bad.

Mr Conlan: Because you never go there.

Ms LAWRIE: I pick up on the interjection, 'Because you never go there'. Rubbish! I visit Alice Springs and have since the 1970s. When did you first get there? Which decade?

Mr Conlan: That does not make any difference.

Ms LAWRIE: I have been visiting Alice Springs since the 1970s. I do go there and I am in a position to say I have not seen that many empty shopfronts in the mall for years. It is unbelievable. Because I happen to live in Darwin, just dismiss out of hand everything I say. Bury your head in the sand by all means, minister.

There is an ever-growing list of businesses closing their doors, and they are not being replaced by new enterprises. This is the worry; they are staying as vacant shopfronts. Many of the businesses had been in town for many years. Businesses like Don Thomas Stockman Outfitters, Bojangles just off the mall, cafes, clothing shops - all closed. The southern part of the mall is desperate for revitalising. As I said, we put a \$5m investment into revitalisation of the northern part of the mall, a decision made through the master plan created by Alice Springs Town Council.

It is time for you to step up. Put your money where your mouth is and invest in the heart of the CBD, the southern part of the mall, which is in desperate need of that investment. There is a partnership on the table with the Uniting Church and the town council. I suggest it is time you put your money where your mouth is and step up.

One of the businesses I called into during my last visit to Alice Springs was the Gem Cave. It is such a beautiful jewellery shop, run by long-term Alice Springs residents, Nick and Sheila Hill. Like many other businesses though, as well as dealing with an economic downturn, they have to cope with the rise in crime and antisocial behaviour. Recently Nick was attacked in his shop, highlighting the unacceptable situation with rising youth issues.

The CLP chose to close down the Alice Springs Youth Hub and pull out the youth workers who were working with the kids on the street at night under the YSOS program. It scrapped the entire coordinated approach to youth at risk, which was working. Instead, you arrogantly claim there is not a juvenile issue in Alice Springs. The rise in antisocial behaviour and numbers of young people on the street at night has nothing to do with the scrapping of the Youth Hub or the Youth Street Outreach Service. It is incredible.

We are starting to see, worryingly, an increase in sniffing in Alice Springs. Youth workers say they have not seen the problem this bad in many years. It is at the point where retailers have voluntarily pulled cans of aerosol deodorant off the shelves, yet you still deny there is a problem. It is extraordinary. The empty supermarket shelves point to a deeper underlying issue, and what has the response been from the government to this? Nothing. Inaction.

Labor invested more than \$15m in the Alice Springs Youth Action Plan. This included setting up the coordinated approach to dealing with young people in the streets, the No School, No Service initiative, the Youth Street Outreach Service and the ANZAC Hill Youth Hub. Your government brags about a \$2m investment in the Alice Springs Youth Centre, which, sadly, did not open its doors for programs during the Christmas school holidays. Sort out your priorities.

Speaking of the school holidays, Labor supported a range of holiday activities over the years. The mid-year break is coming up soon, member for Greatorex. What will you do to support holiday activity programs for young people during the break? I will not go through the list of activities we supported, but as well as providing coordination support, we also provided funding to assist in running events, activities and safe transport. You might want to look at what we did and get a few ideas.

For example, you may want to allocate some funding to support events at the Alice Springs Aquatic and Leisure Centre, which was built under Labor with \$8m support from the Territory Labor government. How about youth sporting activities at Traeger Park? Again, this was built with more than \$5m of investment from the Territory Labor government. We are enormously proud of the investments we made in Central Australia, particularly Alice Springs. It deserved every cent.

The list is too long to go through, but under Labor, \$150m was invested in the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. Under the partnership between the Territory and federal governments, 85 new homes were built on town camps and 196 rebuilds and refurbishments were completed.

Local construction firms benefited from this boost with the infrastructure works, and the wider community benefited from support given to social programs in the areas of family violence prevention, education, health and substance abuse.

I will touch on a meeting I had with the women's council of Tangentyre. It raised a few issues. One of the big disappointments it had is that things seem to be grinding to a slow drip in the activities that were occurring to improve the conditions of town camps. These are people interested in a partnership and being involved in the work that can and should occur. They say the jobs and training stimulating life in the town camps has stopped. There is no buy in and they do not get meetings with ministers. I was pretty shocked to hear that, because I had assumed, given you are Alice Springs based, you would be meeting regularly with key, grassroots organisations like these. The strong women of the Women's Council of Tangentyre – if you want to understand economic and social discussions, and the vast range of ideas and suggestions they have, it would be worth a visit and some time. I was genuinely shocked that you do not meet with them, and it is a shame. I urge you to meet with them, as well as the men's council. We know the town camps and the improvement of life in town camps is vital to the overall improvement of Alice Springs. Do not ignore them, engage and work with them.

They had some sad things to say about the removal of transport services and access to school. These were decisions made by the CLP government. When we understand the importance of access to school for these children – it is not working. Access to the town bus service is not working. I will not go into details in this debate, but I urge a representative of your government, whether it is someone senior in the Transport department, the Transport minister, the Minister for Central Australia or whoever you choose, to listen to what they have to say about what is occurring with the children in trying to access a bus service to get to school. It is appalling, and a little bit goes a long way.

They had a range of suggestions about what they could do. The announcement you made around the doubling of the sports voucher and the money for the 'go to school' voucher – they had some innovative suggestions around a way to use some of those funds for transport options for their kids to get to school that would make it a safe transport option for them. They are trying to do and generate different things that mean their kids can get to school and back safely. The government is not engaging at all. That is a huge shame, given you removed the service they relied on in the first place.

There are some real options they are prepared to put on the table and initiatives they are prepared to make. The government needs to listen and work with these people.

I am also delighted to see the redevelopment of the emergency department at the hospital. That occurred under Labor, and the renal patients are getting the Labor investment of the new beds in town and on country. Those upgrades at the remote health clinics in Ntaria, Titjikala, Papunya, Docker River and Yuendumu were Labor funded programs. You talk as though they were yours, but let us not split hairs on this. You, as a CLP government, will not mention the member for Lingiari in a positive light, but I will always tip my hat to a Territorian who delivers funding into the Territory, and these remote clinic upgrade were Commonwealth funded. When Warren Snowden had the allied health portfolio he poured a lot of investment in there. We have clinics being built at the moment, Hermannsburg for example, which are a result of that program. I believe in giving credit where credit is due. It shows maturity when you are able to achieve that point in politics.

The upgrades to schools have been very good. I still think the idea of removing children from their communities into large boarding houses is a significant error in judgement in Indigenous education. I have no issue with boarding schools; they are great, and they have their role and their place. However, our children deserve to have a choice. Our families deserve to have a choice. Allow both to happen if you genuinely want to give children access to a quality education.

Go to Kormilda, St Johns, or Marrara Christian College. Listen to the people who work in boarding schools now. They will genuinely say that some kids just will not stay; they will not stick it out. They cannot bear to be away from their families and communities. To give them no choice, to remove secondary education from their home communities would be the greatest travesty that could ever occur in the Territory's education system. I hope that policy has dramatically changed when the final Indigenous education report comes out.

Boarding schools have their place and their role. I know there are kids boarding in Tennant Creek. They have their place, but not instead of having a choice.

The Tanami Road sealing project is progressing. That is something Labor invested a significant amount into – millions and millions of dollars. It is crucial that sealing continues. Apparently the opportunity is the Finke Desert Race – the fantastic complex we built at the start/finish line. What an exciting event the Finke Desert Race is

as it continues to grow and bring visitors to the Centre every year.

You touched on tourism in your statement. I am disappointed that you did not talk about the issue of the Tigerair flight, what will occur from July and what the real opportunities are in pursuing an alternative carrier?

One of the things we are all very concerned about is that because Alice Springs is such a crucial service delivery hub for the region, the federal budget next week will potentially have a significant impact on the economy of Alice Springs. If the extent of the cuts that Warren Mundine has been talking about and the federal government has been hinting at is occurring in Indigenous funding, then I am genuinely concerned about the impact that will have on jobs and opportunities in Alice Springs. The more information the Territory government can find about what is occurring – you have to go and fight the fight, and put up arguments to ensure increased funding occurs in this region, not a reduction in funding for Indigenous Australians.

There is a very serious situation looming for the economy of Alice Springs if the Commonwealth has a down turn in funding and delivery of services. It is a double whammy. It will really hurt the local economy, but it will put a bit of a handbrake on the social improvements that need to occur in Central Australia. It is the job of the Northern Territory government to be a loud voice for people in Central Australia with Indigenous funding.

One of the things I really appreciated in the statement was recognition of the importance of Indigenous training and employment. I am pleased with the change that has come upon the member for Greatorex when he talks in such glowing terms about Indigenous training and employment. I will never forget the comment the member for Greatorex made when he was a shock jock on 8HA in 30 October 2006. I will quote what you said. You should never forget it because it was so wrong:

While the attackers have not been found yet, you can bet your bottom dollar who's responsible, and I don't mind saying it, young Aboriginal men. It's getting to a point where the only contribution the Aboriginal community are making to this town is adding to the crime stats.

Later in the program you answered the sender of an e-mail:

Surely you're not walking the same streets as the rest of us witnessing the utter despair and filth in our parks and streets.

You don't have to be Einstein to see that nearly every single one of these people are Aboriginal, it's as simple as that.

Minister, if you truly believe what you said in your statement in relation to the fantastic results occurring in Indigenous training and employment, what a fantastic turnaround. What a tremendous change and improvement. I sincerely hope you are light years away from the views you expressed as a shock jock on 8HA in 2006. I sincerely hope you have changed. The comments you have been quoted as making to one of your former colleagues makes me think maybe you have not and that someone wrote a good element of that speech for you and you read it out. However, we live in hope that you at least believe what you read.

Money spent on Indigenous programs in Central Australia is such an important part of that economy. More employment, workers living and spending their money locally, unlike the case with those mining enterprises where it is fly-in fly-out – Indigenous service delivery is crucial to the lifeblood of the Central Australian economy. Fight for those funds to be increased in the federal budget, not cut.

I will touch on land release. The minister mentioned Kilgariff. You would be led to believe, from that ministerial statement, that Labor did nothing in 11 years, which is the rhetoric quoted constantly by the minister. I do not know whether it was written in his speech or was just his bursts of anger.

Let us look at land release, remembering that until Labor came to power there had been no new land release in Alice Springs for a decade. Labor committed to serious and respectful negotiations with the native title holders, which resulted in the new suburbs of Sterling Heights, Ridges Estate and Mt Johns Valley.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I request an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Ms LAWRIE: Families are living in their new homes in all of these estates and contributing to the vibrancy of the town and the local economy. But we realised another growth zone was needed, so we went into a complex planning process that engaged and involved the people of the Alice Springs community. We did the hard yards to bring on the new suburb of Kilgariff. All the planning, zoning, design and consultation was completed under Labor. We invested the \$5m for headworks and had funding across the capital programs to ensure the program continued.

The incoming CLP government has had two years, and what has it managed to do? The Chief Minister promised to fast-track Kilgariff, saying the development was taking too long, but after two years, what do we have? We have a reduction from 100 blocks to 33. Have we seen any homes built under the CLP? Not one. I am not sure of the number of lots sold, Minister for Central Australia. It was missing from the speech; you might want to inform us of that. I am hearing that 14 lots have been sold, but, by all means, if you want to update us when you wrapping your speech, it would be good if you told us how many lots in Kilgariff have been sold.

I will not contribute to the statement in regard to the Barkly, because the member for Barkly - the Deputy Leader of the Opposition - will do so ably. I am sure the statement will come back at some stage, hopefully in the not too distant future, because I know he is keen to contribute.

The people of Alice Springs deserve better than what they are getting from their representatives who have the major say in Cabinet. I think people have been disappointed. They are glad they will get the court house stimulus, they needed it. But when you have major companies which have been in Alice Springs a long time shutting their doors and leaving town, or major construction firms on the brink of shutting their doors and leaving town, you are in all sorts of strife, and you are ignoring it.

I know the debate following this will be about crimes. I have not gone into the detail of that, but I will say that it is great that public crime has reduced. It did the same when we first came to government; we halved it. You can do and have done that, but violent crime is increasing. The spike in admissions to Alice Springs Hospital for assault after you scrapped the BDR was appalling. Put aside your ideology, get the police off the bottle shops – they should not be there, they should be preventing or following up crimes – stop the \$4m guard posting job they are doing and understand that sometimes you can put politics aside for a good policy, which is the BDR. That is what the Alice Springs community wants to see happen. It is a challenge I lay down at the end of contribution. Thank you.

Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this statement to the House. We live in the best part of the Northern Territory in Central Australia, and it is fantastic to talk about it. As you can see from the statement, like the Opposition Leader said, it is all to do with culture. It is talking about how important Aboriginal culture is.

My electorate is part of Kings Canyon; Uluru; Mount Connor; Palm Valley; Tnorala, Gosses

Bluff; Winbakwa at the back of Haasts Bluff; and Titjikala, Chambers Pillar. I am the member whose electorate covers most of the beautiful part of Central Australia and many beautiful people. It is fantastic to stand here and talk about things happening in Central Australia, and the government should be open to the things which are not happening in Central Australia or Alice Springs.

The Deputy Opposition Leader is right, I do not think the minister even walks in the street of Alice Springs. I have not seen him at any café or at Yeperinye eatery, and his office is just around the corner, a hop skip and a jump away. I went to say farewell to Don Thomas and Pam when they closed down. I had coffee with Pam and asked her why things were happening. I did not see the Minister for Central Australia taking the opportunity to say farewell and thank you to a long-term Central Australian, a whole family that is the fabric and the makeup of Central Australia.

You cannot see him in the mall having coffee. You do not see him walking around in the mall. It is okay for him to stand in the Chamber and talk about town camps, such as Ipiye-Ipiye, but has the minister ever been there? Has he gone to meet with Steph and Brian Stirling and had a cup of coffee with them, or had a yak with them at their gate if he does not want to enter their house?

These are the ideas which, as opposition, we give to the government to make sure it understands. The member for Port Darwin understands the important makeup of Indigenous people in Central Australia and how important this is. Member for Port Darwin, you need to run many classes with your colleague, the Minister for Central Australia, and feed all these ideas to him. Let him know it is safe and good to walk around the streets of Alice Springs, to acknowledge people, see long-term Territorians and Central Australians like Pam from Don Thomas and thank them for their service. She goes a long way back, before I arrived in Alice Springs.

She and her family are the makeup and fabric of Alice Springs. It was sad to see Don Thomas close down. I went there to tell Pam that Aboriginal people from stations like Alcoota, Ampilatwatja, Utopia and Harts Range – these are station people, and the member for Barkly would know how they dress. They are still walking around in their RM Williams boots, shirts and trousers, with their cowboy hats on. These people were devastated to see Don Thomas close down.

The member for Port Darwin would know, with the Harts Range and Hermannsburg races, how much money people spend to get their kids dressed up in RM Williams gear and hats. I produced a calendar five years ago with the kids dressed up

as little cowgirls and cowboys. It was ill-mannered of the so called Minister for Central Australia not to go and say farewell, have a coffee and even take a little gift to Pam to thank her for her business, talk to her to see if there was any way we could have helped her. He could have just had a coffee. I thank the Minister for Health, Robyn Lambley, because she has done that.

If you walk down the mall in Alice Springs you see that shops are closed. The front end of our mall is dead. We cannot see anything anymore. I go to the Red Dog café; I go to all of the restaurants there. I make sure that when I walk down the street, that I say hello to everybody and have coffee with everybody. But I have never seen the Minister for Central Australia, in broad daylight, on any day, walking in the Alice Springs mall. I might be wrong, but we may have to check CCTV to see if there is a shot of him in the mall somewhere.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's visit to Uluru was fantastic. As the minister said in his statement, it was fantastic for tourism, encouraging tourists to come to Central Australia, especially to Uluru, but he went back to use the oldest culture. The Duke and Duchess were at the culture centre. The Mutitjulu Aboriginal community is less than 5 km from that culture centre. If we are talking about Aboriginal people, we must expose Aboriginal issues, warts and all. We cannot say we will bring a handful of Aboriginals to the culture centre to meet the Duke and Duchess.

Princess Diana, the Duke's mum, was never afraid to go to children's hospitals to visit children who were sick and those with AIDS. Those two young fellows have grown into good men, understanding what their mother did and what she exposed them to. I do not think they would have minded going to Mutitjulu to see the traditional owners of that great, beautiful rock. They would have loved it, but it would have been an eye-opener for them to see Mutitjulu and the people there. They could have seen what kind of houses they live in, if they have a good clinic and if they have a good school. They could have said hello to the 200 other people they did not meet.

It was a missed opportunity. The world media did not go there. It is fantastic to see the minister talking about all the good things that are happening, but he must be encouraged to take new ideas from ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I seek your guidance in relation to Standing Order 61, which says no member may use her Majesty, her representative – I would presume, by implication, the Crown Prince as well – as a vehicle for influencing the Assembly's deliberations.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I remind the member of Standing Order 61 and that she should not use the names of any of the royal family disrespectfully. Be very careful. Thank you.

Ms Walker: She wasn't being disrespectful.

Ms ANDERSON: I was not disrespectful at all Mr Deputy Speaker, quite the opposite, thank you member for Nhulunbuy. I was just saying it would have been great for them to go to Mitiitjulu. I read lots on Princess Diana. I was sad the day she passed away. She grew up two beautiful boys, and now they are great men. It would have done them justice to say hello and look around at Mitiitjulu.

On the domestic violence issues in the statement, bring it on. This is a discussion we must have. This is a discussion that nobody inside this House will say no to. What we have to look at is not putting \$1.1m into domestic violence, but making sure there are programs on remote Aboriginal communities that could sustain people and where people can go to these centres in their own communities. We must make sure we have education strategies in senior classes in all our remote Aboriginal schools so children are learning as adolescents that domestic violence is not right.

We must look after our children. We must look after our women. Let us talk about gambling, drinking and women not being violated. I remind the member for Port Darwin that maybe he should not have done what he did before 2005 election, giving out playing cards with your face on them in remote Aboriginal communities. That really encouraged gambling, John. Maybe you regret that now, and you might change your tactics the next time you are going around in Port Darwin – a completely different electorate.

Mr Elferink: I haven't dished out that many kangaroo tails in Port Darwin.

Ms ANDERSON: I guess we all learn from that, the kangaroo tails and the playing cards. I think I have still have a pack of cards with your face on it, John. I might bring it into the Chamber next time.

Domestic violence – I do not think there is a person inside this House or in any of our agencies who would not want to discuss this issue. We must have the conversation, and it must not just include us inside this Chamber or people within our agencies; it must flow down to the smallest communities in the Northern Territory.

We must get the message out on radio. We must put posters together and send them to all our clinics, police stations, schools and shops to make sure our children are learning very early. We must make sure we use Radio Larrakia and

CAAMA Radio to make sure we are spreading the message in Aboriginal language so our people in remote Aboriginal communities can understand that the Northern Territory will not tolerate domestic violence or child abuse, and that we will look after all Territorians and make sure we nurture, economically and socially, the poorest people in this country.

If you look at the socioeconomic indicators of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory – you just reviewed education, but you did not review boarding schools. We have had our kids going to boarding schools for the last 20 to 30 years. They have been going to St Johns, Kormilda and Dhupuma College long before that; people from Central Australia went to school at Dukma College. There has to be two reviews. You need the review of education you have already done, and you need to review boarding schools. What is it about boarding school that some kids do not like? They go to Wiltja in South Australia, Worawa in Victoria and they go to boarding schools in Townsville, Sydney and Adelaide, but some kids you cannot take off their communities. They want to stay home with their parents and grandparents. They are not the type of kids who want to go too far away from their family structure. Their grandmother might be on a renal dialysis machine or the grandfather might be sick so they want to look after their family and be part of that social interaction with the community and their family.

Our communities are not dysfunctional. We do not wake up in the morning as black people and say, 'I am a dysfunctional Aboriginal and I live in a dysfunctional Aboriginal community'. We do not think like that. We wake up in the morning and whoever goes to work goes to work. We have teacher assistants who go to school and work. We have people who work in the shop, health workers at the clinics, CDEP workers, rangers and all sorts of workers. These people do not get up in the morning, wipe their eyes and say, 'Oh God, I am dysfunctional because I am Aboriginal and I live in a dysfunctional community'. We do not look at our communities as dysfunctional. We have been living in these communities. We were born and bred in them. We have to fix it, talk to people, interact with them, engage with them and make sure we ask them where they want to go.

This government is talking about economic development and developing the north. We need to make sure we talk to Indigenous people. As I said in this House and have said in the media for the last two weeks, under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act we are more than 50% landowners. We can call on another 48% under native title. We are more than a third of the Northern Territory's population, and we are at the bottom of

every socioeconomic indicator – at the human rubbish dump.

We need to make sure if we are to drive the Territory that we look at social programs and economic opportunities in the Northern Territory. You must engage with us and listen to us. It must be a true partnership of us working together to drive the Northern Territory forward. We have to be Territorians; we have to be one people. We cannot leave Aboriginal people behind and drive ourselves forward. We are landowners, we are human beings.

Yes, some policies that have been developed fail us. Yes, some part of it is our problem because we need to encourage our kids to go to school. We need to say to our community people and our leaders, 'Let's encourage our kids to go to school because it is important. Education opens lots of avenues for you, lots of doors for you to get employment and economic opportunities.' That can only be done if there is true partnership with the government and the Indigenous people of the Northern Territory.

If you are talking about developing the north, you have to ensure you engage the CLC and the NLC. You must talk about justice issues with NAAJA and CAALAS. You must be talking to NGOs, because they do a lot of work with governments and service providers. They are the thread between us. They bring us together, help us and are part of our community. We must look at volunteers. They are great people who volunteer for anything and everything, and they are part of our society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I suggested to the member for Port Darwin, the Minister for Central Australia needs some good lessons. The best teacher on the other side is the member for Port Darwin because he was the member in my old electorate of Macdonnell and enjoyed going up and down that area. People interacted with him, and it is a good opportunity the Minister for Central Australia should take from the member for Port Darwin. He will learn to be a good Territorian, a good spokesman and to start interacting with Aboriginal people instead of being frightened of them.

Debate adjourned.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Violent Crime in the Northern Territory

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, the Speaker received the following letter from the member for Fannie Bay. It reads:

Dear Madam Speaker

I propose for discussion this day the following definite Matter of Public Importance: the dramatic increase in violent crime in the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely
Michael Gunner MLA

Honourable members, is the proposed discussion supported? The proposal is supported.

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their support and the member for Port Darwin for supporting this debate on violent crime in the Northern Territory.

Last year, 2013, was the most violent year in Northern Territory history, which is a staggering statement. This happened after a commitment by the CLP to cut crime in the Northern Territory by 10% a year, every year. Before the election, the CLP guaranteed it would be cutting crime based on the crime which was occurring under Labor in the last term of the Labor government, August 2012.

After the election, unfortunately, under the CLP we have seen violent crime go up. This joins all the other promises the CLP has made and broken. There are too many undertakings the CLP has given that it has walked away from. The CLP said it would cut the cost of living, instead it has increased at the fastest rate in the country. The party handed out flyers to public servants saying, 'Your job will be safe'. The public servants who have lost their jobs since will remember that promise starkly. The members signed contracts with bush communities, which they then tore up and walked from. It has led to chaos and contributed to the formation of a new political party in this parliament.

There are many others, but the broken promise on crime goes directly to violence and pain in our community, to people who are hurt and to more victims in our community. This broken promise is so bad because being victim of violent crime is one of the worst things to happen to a person, and it happened on 7792 occasions last year.

Another reason this is such a heartbreaking broken promise is the CLP was told by experts and police that its policies would not work. They ignored the experts and police. The experts and police were right; the CLP was wrong, and 7792 Territorians paid a heavy price.

Let us have closer look at the numbers and compare what the CLP committed to with what has occurred. The CLP promised it would cut crime by 10% in its first year and every year, but

in its first year violent crime went up by 12%. The number of violent assaults jumped from 6948 in 2012 to 7792 in 2013. Alcohol-related assaults increased, domestic violence-related assaults increased. Assaults increased across the Territory. Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek all had the most violent year ever. Our remote communities had their most violent year ever.

The NT Balance, which records assaults outside the major centres, showed more violent assaults than ever before. If the CLP had delivered on its commitment, there would have been 695 fewer violent assaults in the Territory, instead there were 844 more violent assaults. In only one year, 1539 more Territorians were victims of violence than what the CLP had promised. This is the tragic bottom line. This is the effect of the broken promise. The CLP's response to this dramatic increase in violent crime has been, in our opinion on this side, pathetic.

First the Chief Minister tried to change his promise. The election promise said crime would be cut by 10% per year, every year, but in one of the first press conferences the now Chief Minister, Adam Giles, gave, he tried to change that to 10% over four years. That was his first response: 'How can we change the promise?' Not, 'How can we stop the increase in violence?' It was about how to change the promise the CLP made at the last election. Then the CLP said it was only domestic violence, as if that was some sort of mitigating factor or an acceptable response. The CLP then resorted to the standard excuse, whereby when crime goes up, it claims reporting has gone up, as if crime has not actually increased. Domestic violence increased by 22% in 2013, but the CLP said that was only because of the mandatory reporting of domestic violence.

Mr Elferink: No, it was much more than that.

Mr GUNNER: We will hear from the member for Port Darwin soon. I am looking forward to that, because he often provides a good contribution in this Chamber.

Mandatory reporting of domestic violence came in during 2009, over five years ago. According to the CLP, it was not until last year that people started reporting. That is completely wrong and goes to the professionalism of police, doctors and nurses who have been complying with the law since it came in. For the CLP to suggest they only started reporting in 2013 suggests they had been ignoring the law for four years, when they had not.

If the increase in domestic violence is due to increased reporting, why did alcohol-related admissions to the hospital jump by 80% in the CLP's first 14 months in government? The CLP

has not provided one reason why alcohol-related admissions went up by 80% in the first 14 months.

It claims doctors who said it was due to the scrapping of the Banned Drinker Register are wrong. There has not been – the member for Port Darwin said he is about to give us one – an alternative reason given, which we find extraordinary.

Alcohol-related admissions are up by 80%, and government has no explanation. Not only is the human toll horrific, but the cost of running an emergency department has blown out by \$40m. The undeniable fact is that people were free to drink again. Alcohol-related domestic violence increased as a result, and our emergency departments are overflowing with the victims. The CLP was told this would happen. Police said the Banned Drinker Register was the best tool they had to fight crime, but the CLP removed it, and without the best tool to fight crime, crime went up. All the CLP has done since is gag police, refusing to let them talk about alcohol-related crime. We saw the Attorney-General, who will contribute to this debate later, dive across Assistant Commissioner Mark Payne to prevent him discussing the Banned Drinker Register. The CLP says it is open and transparent, but we constantly see actions that demonstrate the opposite.

Police and doctors have been gagged. No Territory public servant is allowed to talk about alcohol. They were even stopped from talking to the CLP's own politicians and Nigel Scullion's inquiry into alcohol in the NT. Frontline staff did not talk to that inquiry. Alcohol is the biggest problem the Territory faces, but people on the frontline, police and doctors who deal with it every day, were not allowed to present to that inquiry.

In an attempt to dismiss the increase in violence, whenever the CLP talks about violent crime, they change the conversation to property crime. It is good that property crime has gone down. We welcome that; we think it is a good thing. But, effectively, by changing the conversation and ignoring the increase in violent crime, the Chief Minister is dismissing people's concerns about violence, stabbings, assaults and is saying people should be happy there is less graffiti in our community. We are happy there is less property crime. We acknowledge the work that has been done, but violent crime is going up. This is what we need to deal with, and the CLP will be held accountable for the promises it made in 2012. It will be measured against the figures from 2012 to now.

I dare the Chief Minister to go to our overflowing emergency departments, talk to the victims and try to explain to them that it is okay because property crime has gone down.

We are also seeing, as I just touched on, the CLP comparing crime statistics for this year with last year, claiming success. This morning in Question Time we saw the Chief Minister do just that, comparing statistics from this year to the same time last year. The CLP promise was to cut crime straight away, 10% on the crime figures they inherited from Labor. It did not promise to have the most violent year in Territory history and then claim any reduction on that as a victory. It is like someone doubling their weight, losing a couple of kilos and claiming they are the biggest loser, or totalling your car, fixing a couple of headlights and saying everything is sweet. Everything is not sweet.

I suspect we will continue to see the CLP try to claim a reduction in crime based on what happened in 2013. It was the most violent year in Territory history, and it all happened on the CLP's watch. The CLP election promise was to cut crime by 10% compared to Labor's track record, and that is what the CLP has to be measured on, not seeing crime go out of control then trying to claim a reduction on that as a success.

The biggest loser excuse is exactly what is happening in Tennant Creek, and the member for Barkly will be talking in more detail about that. Violent crime jumped by 75% in 2013, but now that it has levelled off, the CLP talks about Tennant Creek as a success. The last three months in Tennant Creek has still seen more violence than any quarter of 2012. It does not matter what excuse the CLP uses, violent crime is higher than ever before, and Territorians know it.

We heard the Minister for Alcohol Policy, Dave Tollner, talk about drunks being off our streets. I do not know what streets he is talking about. I cannot see that the drunks are off our streets. No one believes him because they have their own eyes. They know there is more drunkenness and violence, and we know that violent crime is out of control and higher than ever before because of the CLPs failed alcohol policies.

The CLP was told that its alcohol policies would not work. Police, doctors, lawyers, magistrates and more all said the policies would not work. The Chief Minister's response to that – we have said this in the Chamber before – please excuse my language, was to tell them to piss off. That is not the way to consult. That is not the way to deal with advice that people give because the people giving that advice care passionately about the Territory and Territory people, and they want to be constructive. That was not the right way to respond to them, and we have seen their criticisms proved correct.

We heard the Minister for Alcohol Rehabilitation respond quite badly initially, but I believe she is responding better now, on the concerns raised about lack of advocacy in mandatory detention for rehabilitation. The experts made a series of comments on why the CLPs alcohol policies would not work, and the Chief Minister's response was, pardon my language, to tell them to piss off.

We do not believe that mandatory detention for treatment works. We believe people are constantly walking away from it. The minister started a complete review of it six months after it came in. We are looking forward to seeing what comes out of that, because we need to get alcohol policy right. We believe in mandatory rehabilitation, but we do not believe in mandatory detention for rehabilitation. We need to find a way to get on top of the alcohol problems in the Northern Territory, especially since they have become so much worse under the CLP.

Three hundred people have been referred to mandatory detention for rehabilitation, but there is no evidence this is leading to sustained rehabilitation. People return to the environment from which they came and to drinking. One of the biggest issues of rehabilitation is making sure the aftercare programs are working and there is a constant support process in place. If people continue to return to the environment they came from they will return to the drink, which means the very expensive program will never work.

We also have the completely flawed Alcohol Protection Orders, where people can be banned, but the bans are not enforced.

We heard the Chief Minister talk about them in Question Time, again using the biggest loser excuse, comparing statistics from this year to last year, the most violent year in Territory history – a year completely covered by the CLP – and not statistics from when the CLP came into government. This is the big thing. The Chief Minister keeps using statistics comparing an extremely bad year under the CLP to a slightly better year under the CLP and trying to claim it is a big win. When compared to what the CLP inherited, Territorians are losing. When you lose under this promise you are talking about violence, pain and hurt. It is not a good thing.

The CLP alcohol policies have failed so badly that the CLP has had to resort to stationing police outside bottle shops. That is the desperate reaction, a stop-gap measure that is unsustainable and cannot work in the long term. Of course if you station a police officer outside a bottle shop things will cool down a little at that hot spot, but we know from experience, from history, that when one hot spot cools down another one heats up.

People follow the grog; people are mobile. We know that. The temporary beats are a stop-gap measure, not a serious policy measure to tackle alcohol problems in the Northern Territory or tackle the supply of alcohol to problem drinkers. Unless the CLP – I cannot imagine they will do this, I cannot imagine this in their budget – permanently places a police officer outside every takeaway outlet in the Northern Territory forever, it is nothing but a desperate stop-gap measure and a response to failed alcohol policies. This is a temporary bandaid, and you have to get serious and deal with the problem. The CLP is forcing police to stand outside bottle shops and be the BDR it scrapped to try to control the supply of alcohol. The police model is more expensive and less effective, because when the police are not there, there is nothing there.

The CLP argued that the Banned Drinker Register cost too much and was too much of an intrusion, yet the cost of police outside bottle shops, even for a day, far outweighs the cost of the Banned Drinker Register when it was in place in every bottle shop. It was a measure across the Northern Territory. I would like to hear someone explain how having a police officer outside the bottle shop talking to you before you enter is less intrusive than the Banned Drinker Register. How is having a police officer outside the bottle shop less intrusive and time intensive? Let us be honest, that police officer is not on the beat responding to calls. We think it is good to have proactive measures in place to stop crime occurring. That is why we went to the Banned Drinker Register. Having police outside bottle shops is something we did from time to time in our last term to complement the Banned Drinker Register, but having police outside bottle shops as your only measure to control the supply of alcohol is expensive and unsustainable.

It is a graphic illustration of just how big a failure the CLP's alcohol policies have been. The sequence of failure is: the police told the CLP scrapping the Banned Drinker Register would not work – they were right – crime got out of control and the CLP put police outside bottle shops as a human Banned Drinker Register. The next stage in the CLP alcohol policies is making it easier to get a licence to sell alcohol. We are extremely concerned on this side about the scrapping of the Liquor Commission.

Let us have a closer look at some of the specific problems of violent crime across the Territory. Let us start in Alice Springs, and 2013 was the most violent year in history there. Alcohol-related admissions to Alice Springs Hospital went up 87%. Not only was there the highest amount of violent crime ever, but the greatest percentage was related to alcohol. The percentage of alcohol-related assaults climbed over 70% for the

first time in Alice. The Chief Minister's response was to say crime had been completely cleaned up in Alice Springs, which is a complete denial of the problem. You cannot fix a problem if you say it does not exist. There is a problem.

Alcohol policy in Alice Springs has been a complete debacle. First Adam Giles said Alice Springs did not need an alcohol management plan, and then he said it did. Then he waited nearly 12 months to set up the Alcohol Reference Group. We now have the Alice Springs Alcohol Reference Group to look at local solutions.

The big question for the CLP is if the reference group it established to come up with local solutions recommends to electronically control alcohol at the point of sale, will it agree? Will it allow that to be a local solution? We would support that. We believe the BDR should be across the Territory because people are mobile. We in opposition acknowledge, in the spirit of compromise, local solutions. If that is the best we can achieve, we will completely support that.

Adam Giles promised a Police Beat for Northside shops, another broken promise. He promised calls to police in Alice Springs would be answered locally, another broken promise. The CLP is now scrapping projects like the youth outreach service, a decision that everyone involved with agrees will see youth crime go up.

Business people are talking to radio stations about how police do not respond to their calls because they are stuck outside bottle shops instead of free to attend crime scenes. I look forward to the work of the Alcohol Reference Group, chaired by the local mayor, Damien Ryan, and I hope the government acts upon its recommendations.

Nowhere has alcohol-fuelled violence increased more than in Tennant Creek, and the member for Barkly will contribute to this debate. The numbers coming out of Tennant Creek are horrifying. The CLP opened the rivers of grog in Tennant and the carnage followed. Violent assaults jumped by 58% in just one year and alcohol-related assaults by 74%. But as I mentioned earlier, after this year of complete carnage the CLP claimed that the current moderation is a glowing success. They promised to cut crime by 10% each year, so 18 months later, crime should be down by 15%. Instead it is up by 58% and the CLP say things are working, which is extraordinary.

It is worth comparing Tennant Creek with Nhulunbuy. Both communities have roughly the same population, around 2% of the NT's population, but in 2013 Tennant Creek had around seven times the rate of violent crime of Gove.

In 2013 in Gove, alcohol was still controlled electronically at the point of sale. In 2013 in Tennant Creek, there was nothing to replace the scrapped Banned Drinker Register. According to the CLP's own offence rate data, someone in Tennant Creek is eight times more likely to be a victim of a violent assault than someone in Gove.

I made a spelling mistake in my matter of public importance, before the Attorney-General spends his whole speech talking about it. I wrote 'mater' instead of 'matter'. As the member for Nelson joked, that makes it the mother of all matters of public importance.

If the CLP is realistic about a zero tolerance approach to domestic violence, bring back the Banned Drinker Register.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for this because there are a number of things I want to put to bed about this issue.

Yes, those numbers have gone up, and the member opposite knows exactly why. It is because we made a very clear policy decision based in part on what we inherited from the former Labor government, which also presided over increasing crime rates. Let us track back a little to what the member was talking about. He quite deliberately glossed over the important component of domestic violence, and we have to stop and talk about that for a while because it is very important.

I could drop these crime rates in the Northern Territory by 20% tomorrow. That is easy. We stop taking violent men from domestic violent situations and stop charging them with criminal offences. We return to the old process of merely getting an order of restraint under the domestic violence legislation. If we do that, a great slice will come off our violence rates in the Northern Territory.

But we have – and I have stood in this place on a number of occasions and said this – made a determination that we will treat domestic violence as a crime, so when the police are called to an incident of domestic violence, they go with the expectation they will be arresting somebody for violent behaviour, usually a man. That means those arrests lead to complaints, and those complaints are recorded as crimes of violence.

We are, as I have said, ripping the scab off this wound and looking at the underlying infection. I have been quite open about that, and I have said that would have the effect of pushing up crime rates. If I wanted to go through the mere statistical exercise of dropping crime rates, we stop that policy and just go back to just getting

domestic violence orders. Those numbers will drop, but that is a nice statistical exercise. It does nothing to protect women and children in their home, and domestic and family violence is something of particular concern to me. I hope we will be making some pretty big announcements in this area in the not so distant future.

It is for that reason we have seen a sharp increase, particularly in the bush, because the policing activity around this in the bush has been substantially enhanced. If alcohol is linked in the way the member for Fannie Bay suggests, then we should not be seeing the increases in the bush because most of those communities where these statistics come from are dry communities.

Mr McCarthy: Oh, come on.

Mr ELFERINK: They are. If you go to the front gate of Hermannsburg or Santa Teresa they are sitting at the very boundary and they are on the turps there ...

Mr McCarthy: The mobility factor, you know that, John.

Mr ELFERINK: I understand that, but the alcohol is heavily policed and these are dry communities. The numbers should not be going up there because whilst there is alcohol coming into them, it is not as accessible as it is in town. Yet the increases are greater in the remote communities because of the policing effort.

I am not trying to diminish what is happening in Tennant Creek. It is serious, and we discussed whether or not we should release the crime figures we have just received during this debate, because I think you will be very surprised at what comes out next week. I expect members opposite, if those numbers turn out to be pretty good, to acknowledge they are good numbers. We have not changed any of the statistical collection processes, nor have we changed policies. The policy of arresting a violent man in the home for bashing his woman and children still applies. If those numbers come down – and I know they do – I expect Labor members to say it is a good result, and not just compared to a violent year. We are talking about checking it against the benchmark set over a number of years. If you want to do this correctly, if those numbers come out the way they look like they will, I expect an acknowledgement.

I will quickly touch on this business about gagging police. I have said to every public servant who works for me – I know people still step over the boundaries, it irritates me when it happens – do not endorse government policy. Do not go out there and say, 'This is great government policy'. Every public servant who works in my

departments clearly understands that all they have to say in the media is, 'We apply government policy'. I have no problem with public servants talking to the media, as long as they are talking about their operational areas of concern. If the tea lady in the Attorney-General's office – if they have one – is interviewed by the ABC, I do not mind, as long as she is talking about her operational sphere, that is, tea bags, sugar and milk.

The problem is when governments of both flavours - the former Labor government in the Territory was particularly bad at this – send public servants out as the third-party endorsement of their policies. The public servant is largely obliged to sit there and say, 'Yes, this is a great policy and we support it'. The public servant may believe that or not at the time they are saying it. However, the effect is that when there is a change of government, it places the public servant in a very difficult situation. I have always been careful to say that public servants should not be used as human shields. That includes using public servants to endorse the policies of politicians.

Government sets the policy. I am responsible for the policies rolled out by the departments I serve. I will not ask my Commissioner for Corrections, the head of the Attorney-General's department or anyone else to say, 'This is a fantastic policy government has given to us'. All I want those senior public servants to say is that government has asked them to roll out policies in accordance with its desires, they have given frank and fearless advice and will now apply those policies in accordance with what government requires. If there is a change of government, the media cannot then trap those senior public servants later on and place them in a very difficult situation. That was about to happen in the press conference you referred to. That is why I stepped in. I knew it would be a week of, 'Minister gags public servant', and I wanted to save him the embarrassment. That is all it was. I gagged the police because I did not want them embarrassed.

I have touched on domestic violence as a crime, but I will now talk about alcohol admissions. The number of alcohol admissions into protective custody has declined very sharply over the last couple of years, particularly in the last year. There are a couple of reasons for that, including the change in police procedures. There was a time when apprehensions for public drunkenness, under the Labor Party, had reached 30 000 per year. I refer members to a number of police annual reports, starting at around the year 2000 when there were about 13 000 apprehensions, and it peaked at 2007 with 30 000 apprehensions into protective custody. That was a bucket load; that is in the order of arresting one in six Territorians a year for being drunk. That is not the case; we

arrest the same Territorian again and again, which is why we get this high rate.

Unfortunately that leads to an almost mechanical approach to apprehensions. Just another drunk, stick them in the car, drag them to the police station, into a sobering-up shelter, push them out and you keep going. If you read the coronial investigation into Kumanji Briscoe you can see that mechanical approach on foot. There was a mechanical approach by police and it fell down. I do not want to be critical of the police in this instance, I know the coroner was, but there is almost an indifference. I was guilty of it as a police officer as well. You become indifferent to the thousands of people you process for being drunk; it is just something you do.

When I look back at it, it amazes me that we did not have deaths in custody when I was a copper in Alice Springs – 100 people sitting in a tank cell in the old Alice Springs cells with no supervision whatsoever. The outside temperature was -4°, and the temperature in the tanks was 36° because of the body heat in the cell. That is what we did, it was mechanical.

The Kumanji Briscoe coronial investigation has led to two things. It has led to fewer apprehensions into protective custody, but police still have many of these contacts. In the worst case scenarios they are no longer taking those people into protective custody in the cells or at the sobering-up shelter. Some of these people are barely conscious. They then become a medical case. Therefore, where you see a drop in the number of people going through the police cells in a place like Alice Springs, you see a corresponding increase in the number of alcohol presentations at the Alice Springs Hospital. They are the same drunks, they are just going through different parts of the system because police systems have changed as a result of the Briscoe coronial inquiry.

That is what is happening within that environment. Whilst I understand the argument made by the member for Fannie Bay, in truth what is actually occurring is there are different processes in place, and they are leading to different outcomes. I know and I accept that Tennant Creek has had a serious increase in violent crime. A large slice of that serious increase has been the product of this much more aggressive approach to domestic violence, which is a rampant problem in Tennant Creek. I would be astonished if the member for Barkly would be prepared to say it was otherwise.

This will be a matter for dispute, because there is little statistical evidence to support the argument one way or the other. I assert that the violence has always been there, particularly in the home, particularly in the town camps. I am speaking with

little more than my personal experience as a police officer when we used to clean up the mess and not pursue criminal matters. You would write them off. The victim did not really want to give a statement so you would not pursue it too hard. Later on in the police career you got a domestic violence order and dealt with it that way. What you did not do was pursue a criminal matter. Police have been unequivocally told in Tennant Creek, Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Yuendumu that they will arrest where necessary, take people into custody and charge them with the criminal offences. That is why you are seeing these numbers track up.

That is provable, because if you look at the crime statistics throughout that whole period, the very ones the member for Fannie Bay referred to, you can see there is a deliberate separation of domestic violence-related offences and non-domestic violence-related offences. You follow those graphs as they come out, and non-domestic violence-related offences have been pretty flat up until now. That has not been an achievement of the 10% benchmark we were looking for, but they have not gone up. It has pretty much been the same set of assaults we have always recorded as police.

Crime statistics reports, particularly the quarterly ones that used to be released on paper – on page 92 of the first one issued you will see some interesting comments about the way the statistics are collected. It is repeated in subsequent reports. The one from 2001-02 or 2002-03 says violent crimes in the Northern Territory are only reported about 30% of the time, whereas crimes against property are reported about 70% of the time. Under the policy of pursuing violent criminals in the home, that statistic would no longer hold true in the Northern Territory. We now believe violent crime is being reported more than 50% of the time. That means what was not reported is now being reported, because we are barely giving people a choice. That has led to the increase in numbers.

To be honest with the people of the Northern Territory and say we will reduce crime, the first thing you have to do is go after the crime and describe it. If you have done that and reached a benchmark where you can be satisfied you have gone after all the crime you can possibly find and you achieve a result of it going down, that means you are dealing with many more criminal offences and then reductions in that crime afterwards. That is what I am hoping the next set of numbers will show. I will not say it is just the coppers at the front of bottle shops who are achieving this, just the Alcohol Protection Orders, just mandatory alcohol rehabilitation or just what is being done through the corrections system and some of the other policies that will be rolling out in the not too

distant future – of course they cannot be having an effect yet – but each one erodes what is happening. There has been a lag time to bring those policies to bear in a coordinated fashion.

I expect that after you have discovered the criminal offences, as many as you can find, and started to attack them with the full force of the law and the aid of a police force, you will see it taper off. But we will be tapering off from a higher crime rate by virtue of the fact we have detected a lot more crime, which is something I assert has always been there.

I do not take, and nobody in this government takes, domestic violence or assaults lightly. I do not take the alcohol abuse we see in this community lightly either. Depriving people of their liberty when they have committed no criminal offence is a serious step to take. Onerous things like Alcohol Protection Orders are a serious step to take. I do not agree with the assertion by the member of Fannie Bay that things are not policed; of course they are policed. Not only are they policed, those people who are breaking the law by breaching their Alcohol Protection Orders are going to court. Clearly there is a policing response, and there is oversight by the police to make sure when Alcohol Protection Orders are issued that people comply with them. When you do not comply you commit a criminal offence, and that is being policed.

I know it is being policed because I had NAAJA sitting in front of me not that long ago complaining about the number of cases it has to deal with for people committing that offence. It is being policed and, without producing a single statistic to support that, I ask you to call NAAJA and they will tell you. They do not like the law because I do not think it suits their philosophical world view, nevertheless, you cannot assert these things are not being policed.

Collectively there has been a strong response from this government. We have resisted the temptation, as a government, to artificially push these things down by changing policy. The policy that produced what the member for Fannie Bay calls the most violent crime in Territory history, on paper at least – that effort is now the benchmark against which we will work. I assert to you now that the numbers coming out next week will not be benchmarked against the most violent year we have had in Territory history, supposedly, but against other years. I think you will be surprised.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a privilege to stand with my colleague, the member for Fannie Bay, and talk about this significant matter of public importance: the dramatic increase in violent crime in the Northern Territory. I acknowledge the member for Fannie

Bay for his thorough research and the important debate he has put together to challenge government policy, which is what it is about.

I will start with a few comments for the Attorney-General, a learned man who has a very important position in the Northern Territory.

Wherever I go in the electorate and in the bush, communities complain about the grog in remote communities. It does not necessarily come in a cardboard box. It most often comes in the human form – the person who is intoxicated and wreaks havoc in the community. That is why there is an increase in crime and we have to talk about access to alcohol and alcohol policy. The member for Fannie Bay has set a distinct time frame in this debate from 2012 when the CLP took government – and those comparisons in policy.

I can advise the Attorney-General for his deliberations and policy development that the mobility factor in the bush is out of control. It is the recycling of second-hand cars, the improved road transport infrastructure and the mobility factor that is placing people all over the place. This mobility factor creates jealousy, superstition, innuendo and absolute chaos, whether people are drunk or not. When they return to their home community, there is family trouble and strife because of the stories, gossip, superstition and innuendo from people who have been away from home, their alcohol-affected behaviour and the stories follow them back. This is a daily occurrence. In this debate we are challenging the policy of the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.

The Attorney-General is a learned man with a legal background and can argue statistics. Okay, let us argue statistics. Police are doing a great job, a tough job policing domestic violence, and the statistics are going up.

However, let us talk about why the violence is occurring and why our police are continually dealing with inappropriate behaviour. We do not want the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. We are challenging the CLP government's policy positions in addressing the underlying problems.

We have heard debate tonight about closing important youth services in what is a challenging environment in the town of Alice Springs. It is not good enough to look at the mere policing strategy and see those statistics go down. It is about policies which will address the underlying offending behaviours and substance abuse.

The other point I make for the Attorney-General and his deliberations and policy input into his government is that now it is not just about beer. It is not about the good old white can. Look at what people are drinking across the regions. Look at

what people are drinking, smoking and taking in Tennant Creek. The big wide world of pop culture has implanted itself in the Northern Territory. I go back to 1980 when I arrived, and I am still shocked at how fast it grabbed a hold of Territory people.

When we talk about a violent society – unfortunately, I live in a town portrayed, statistically, and in real terms, as the most violent community in the Northern Territory. Come and look at what is fuelling the behaviour and the violence. It is not merely alcohol anymore. Look at a town which is a service centre for thousands of people who join us and have an impact on the social and cultural outcomes of the community at Tennant Creek.

I will talk to the Chief Minister, because in Question Time today he offered me a briefing on statistics and told me how good they are. I live in a town with the worst statistics and the biggest challenges in the Northern Territory in antisocial behaviour, crime, domestic violence and violent assault. I will take up the offer of a briefing, Chief Minister, but it will be in Tennant Creek. I will receive you any time, look after you any time, but I want you to come to Tennant Creek and brief me there, preferably over a day and a night. Thursday would be the best day. You can leave Friday morning, because I want you to see the reality of what I am talking about.

The Chief Minister's shallow cheap rhetoric, as he gazes at the ceiling and says, 'Nothing was ever done in Tennant Creek and the Barkly. It has been ignored and the local member has done nothing. There has been no economic vision and no investment.' – is now the mantra of the Chief Minister in all sorts of debates. I will try to influence his policy development, because that rhetoric shows his immaturity, lack of experience and that he is a newcomer to the Territory.

I will give him a quick example around Borroloola. When we talk about Borroloola we will talk about record infrastructure development with a new bridge, investment in the Carpentaria Highway, the Tablelands Highway and a new school; there was \$5.5m invested in new school. We are talking about the sewerage upgrade project. Stage two was \$17m. Upgrades to the Carpentaria Highway and the Tablelands Highway were undertaken over a number of years between 2008 and 2012.

The Labor policy link was to significantly invest in construction and infrastructure in that area. First we set the school up to create generational change for those children and families. Second was to provide regional and remote infrastructure to create jobs that would support training to employment. The third is the incredible legacy of

public infrastructure it creates. The next part is important; in that period, 2008 to 2012, the Labor government was setting up major initiatives in the region. I will mention a few of them: the expansion of the McArthur River mine, working hand in hand in partnership; the development of the Western Desert Resources Iron Ore Project; the establishment of the Limmern River National Park; and the establishment of the Maria Island Marine Park. I am pleased to say those projects created the link road between Bing Bong Port and Western Desert Resources; significant upgrades projects will now take place at the Port of Bing Bong. It is great to know that people I work with, kids I taught at school, have been employed on those projects. They have gone from project to project; some of them are now employed from the link road into the Western Desert Resources major mining initiatives.

This is how Labor went about generational change to try to address the issues, as opposed to being the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. The work experience and work placement program at Borroloola School, funded under the McArthur River mine trust, relate to the growth town policy of Borroloola. In Borroloola we were engaged in formal normalising through area and town plans, creating the public infrastructure to support further land release. Chief Minister, what have you done? You set up a cheap media event. You signed a contract with the previous Chief Minister, who you took out. You made promises and have never been back. You have abandoned that community, and I continue to demand that you supply MVR services into the retail centre the Mabunji Aboriginal corporation built. You promised it, and they built it. It has empty offices, and we want an MVR service.

In Tennant Creek, to address your shallow political rhetoric, we have:

- the Barkly Work Camp, servicing industry, jobs, and supporting the CLP's Sentenced to a Job program
- building the regional economy, the Building Education Revolution program
- the Trade Training Centre at Tennant Creek High School through the federal government
- the library and science learning centre through the federal government
- upgrades through the UMR program of the Territory government
- a new gymnasium and multipurpose hall
- a new police station

- the upgrade of the TC renal unit, doubling its capacity from 8 to 16
- the upgrade of the Tennant Creek Hospital Emergency Department ward
- the Ali Curung water treatment program
- a new sobering up shelter
- significant road transport infrastructure across the Barkly/Stuart Highway and the Tablelands Highway and the Barkly Stock Route
- the Gilbert Swamp project
- the SIHIP program in Tennant Creek and Ali Curung
- the Regional Integrated Transport Strategy that has supplied public transport routes that have never been before in regional or remote areas
- the land release program: 54 lots of residential land in the Peko Road subdivision – the first land release in Tennant Creek in 30 years with a Labor policy of 8% of all land release for public, social and affordable housing
- the Tennant Creek main street upgrade project
- funding of the Tennant Creek Foundation for Tourism,
- the Enough is Enough alcohol policy and the Banned Drinker Register.

On 26 August 2012 the CLP claimed government and scrapped the Enough is Enough policy. Not only did it scrap that policy, Chief Minister, with nothing in its place, but it abandoned us in terms of any further economic investment. I challenge you to come to Tennant Creek and take a tour to see what new projects there have been under your watch, what new jobs have been created and what generational change of the young people there has been, which we need to break the cycle.

It is half time Chief Minister. The whistle has blown. You guys are half way through a four-year term of government and you turn the tap off on economic investment. You only provide shallow rhetoric. You scrapped the Enough is Enough policy, turn the alcohol tap back on, and now you are trying to crisis manage the most violent community in the Northern Territory.

What is it with the Banned Drinker Register? At the moment, Chief Minister, you have additional problems, not only what the member for Fannie Bay outlined about police and bottle shops, but

police officers who do not want to be there. You have an Aboriginal community which is getting very aggressive about this. They have, as Aboriginal people do, a fantastic sense of humour and they coin European concepts very well. They call it the 'black crow law' because part of this policy used the black crow and an Aboriginal dot painting with a heap of text to try to explain why there were police at bottle shops. Now there is serious aggression. We have already had police officers assaulted in Tennant Creek because of the tension emerging. What do the liquor retail outlet staff tell me quietly? 'The BDR can do it.' Let us manage it on an electronic database that had 2500 banned drinkers that is non-discriminatory.

Chief Minister, I want to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in the big end of town in Darwin. I want a mantra of the Chief Minister, me and anybody else who wants to stand with us to be part of a solution for the whole of the Territory, not this populist Darwin/Palmerston issue that scrapped the BDR and the Enough is Enough policy with its components of the tribunal, mandatory work, education, rehabilitation and income quarantining. Let us get real about this, Chief Minister. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder and request that the whole of the Territory supports us as part of the solution to this skirmish which is destroying our communities. It is killing people and destroying families, with the risk of another dysfunctional generation in the town that I live in and across the regional areas. Chief Minister, there is your challenge. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder. Let us go back and address this populist political policy, this vote catching policy, and get real about real solutions.

Labor set the Territory up for what it believed was generational change – the growth town policy, the economic development. Labor put the rubber on the road and got the runs on the board. It was hard work, and Tennant Creek can compare 2008 to 2012, and now 2012 to 2014. I want you in Tennant Creek to hear that. Chief Minister, I want to introduce you to a broader cross-section of the community which asks me when the Chief Minister is coming to town. It makes me laugh. Many of them do not get it; I think they think I am CLP. But I get harangued now. 'When are you bringing that Chief Minister to town?' It is probably because Paul Henderson and the other Labor polities visited often and engaged.

Mr CONLAN (Central Australia): Mr Deputy Speaker, I go to Tennant Creek quite regularly but I go nowhere near this bloke!

I am more than happy to conduct a bit of Labor bashing; it is not a bad way to finish off the first week of a two-week sitting, particularly with the law and order stuff.

I will respond to the Leader of the Opposition, who talked about anger management and the like. Yes, I am angry, and I have a problem with Labor; I do not particularly like them very much. I think I channel that dislike and anger and use it for the betterment of the people of the Northern Territory, because any opportunity to expose these guys for what they did to the Northern Territory in 11 long years is good for the people of the Northern Territory. Make no mistake, member for Barkly, the people have to know it. If it means I have to get a bit angry and channel that anger to expose you for who you are and the legacy you left the people of the Northern Territory, it is a good thing. I feel I am doing my duty to the people of the Northern Territory by standing here exposing you in particular, and the whole rabble and circus on the other side of the Chamber.

Let us look at some of the crime statistics that never left us. Let us look at where Labor left us and the mess we were elected to clean up when it comes to law and order. It is remarkable. Going back to about 12 months before Labor was booted out of office resoundingly by the people because they left an absolute mess, crime rates in the Northern Territory were twice as high as the Australian average in most categories, and in some they were significantly higher. The Police, Fire and Emergency Services Annual Report for 2009--10 states there were 570 more crimes against the person than in 2008-09. The rate of violent assault had risen by 80% during Labor's decade of denial; they are still in denial. Last financial year there were 7296 crimes against the person in the Northern Territory compared to 6226 in the previous financial year, an 8.5% increase in only 12 months. It is not a great record and flies in the face of their argument today and in the face of one of the most extraordinary MPIs I have ever witnessed.

We bought MPIs into this House on a regular basis, nearly every day, because it is fantastic vehicle for the opposition to get its message out. Most of the parliamentary agenda is dominated by government, as you would normally expect. The opposition has General Business Day and an opportunity through an MPI. If you do not like the current General Business Day, members for Nhulunbuy and Nelson, why not go back to the old regime where you have one day every 12 sitting days. It was the Labor Party's scheme, one day every 12, and we got about two a year sometimes. I heard you say last night, 'We only get three hours once a week'. How about once every 12 sitting days? You might get two a year if you are lucky. If you do not like the current arrangement we can always go back to the old one. Not only do you have a weekly General Business Day to ramp up your own agenda ...

Mr Wood interjecting.

Mr CONLAN: That is fine, member for Nelson, I am more than happy to go back to the old regime. I will take it to the parliamentary wing and say, 'They don't like the current format, we will go back to the old regime of one day every 12 days'.

Members interjecting.

Mr CONLAN: Fine, I will take it on board. You have that platform and you have the matter of public importance. You have an opportunity every day ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Speaker has returned, a bit of order please.

Mr Wood: There was nothing in that, can you start again? That was the biggest lot of vacuum I've ever heard.

Mr CONLAN: Surely, Gerry, you have been around long enough that you would have heard bigger vacuums.

Mr Wood: I have.

Mr CONLAN: You have seen these guys in the Chamber for 11 years, and you are suggesting this is the biggest vacuum you have ever heard? You have been around a lot longer, Gerry. I thought you would know a hell of a lot better.

Ms WALKER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The minister is embarrassing. I would ask him to direct his comments through the Chair and not to shout across the Chamber.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, if you can direct your comments through the Chair please.

Mr CONLAN: It is incredibly amusing how irritated they get when people are simply rolling out the truth. All I have done is highlight the previous crime statistics under the previous government for 11 long years of Labor, and they do not like it very much.

Yes, I introduced the term 'puff piece', because that is what we got on a daily basis. Member for Nelson, 6000 words on Central Australia – I go out on a limb and say it is the longest statement on Central Australia in the history of this parliament. Six thousand words, 61 pages, show me another statement on Central Australia as big, comprehensive and gutsy as that in the history of this parliament. It does not exist because they never cared about Central Australia.

The member for Karama - the shadow minister for Central Australia, who does not visit Central Australia very often - has been going there since the 1970s, but how often? Very irregularly.

We see an opposition in denial. It cannot take the push back from the Northern Territory government, which has exposed it for what it is, for its incompetence ...

Mr Wood: Them's fighting words.

Mr CONLAN: Well, Gerry, there is a lot to be fighting about, and there is a huge mess to clean up; the 11 long years of Labor's neglect and crime was the centrepiece of it.

Crime has not been eradicated in the Northern Territory. There is a huge mess to clean up, and I do not think it is possible to completely clean it up. The problem is so big and, in some cases, insurmountable and unsustainable. We have been saying that for a long time. Even if Labor turned its attention to seriously trying to clean up crime, it would have faced the same problem. But it was not serious about it, particularly in the regions.

I have just read a 61-page, 6000-word statement on Central Australia. A huge chunk of it was dedicated to the Barkly. The member for Barkly is saying, 'Where is the Chief Minister, the economic growth and the measures to address crime in the Barkly?' I suggest the member for Barkly reads the statement. I hope he responds. He is the only Labor member south of – I am not quite sure ...

Ms Lawrie: South of Karama.

Mr CONLAN: South of Katherine, south of Karama, it must be.

There is not much representation on the ground in Central Australia. If anyone had any idea about Central Australia it would be the local member there. Clearly there is not a lot of confidence shown by the Labor Party or the member for Karama in the only local member south of Karama. But I hope he speaks on Central Australia, because we need to hear from the local member.

The Chief Minister visits the Barkly region regularly. He is a frequent visitor, as am I. We spend a lot of time in that region. We spend a lot of time all around the Northern Territory, particularly in the Barkly. Barkly has been suffering under Labor's lack of law and order policies. If it was not for this new government aggressively targeting the problem, we would be no better off than we were under Labor. We have slowly started to turn this ship around.

Let us look at some of the TBLs - the Temporary Beat Locations. The big misunderstanding is that they are costing the police and the Northern Territory taxpayer huge amounts of additional money. That is not right, because it is the same

police. They are not dragging additional resources in to put police outside bottle shops. First of all, the police outside bottle shops and takeaway outlets are not targeting just Aboriginal people. That is nonsense, and shame on you for even suggesting that. Shame on all of you for besmirching the reputation of the Northern Territory Police, suggesting they have some sort of racial agenda, and they see an Aboriginal person driving up in a car and say, 'This bloke looks like the right target, let us pull him over'. I get pulled over all the time, as does everyone.

The member for Karama alluded to some sort of comment I made on radio a number of years ago. It is always taken out of context. I have explained it *ad nauseum* and will not go over it again. Nevertheless, we do have a problem in the Northern Territory with Aboriginal drinkers. Every measure that has ever been brought to the table in the Northern Territory parliament was specifically designed to target problem Aboriginal drinkers. If it captures all problem drinkers, so be it, but due to our circumstances in the Northern Territory, we are overwhelmed with problem Aboriginal drinkers. Everyone would agree. That is not besmirching Aboriginal people, it is a simple fact. Even our Aboriginal colleagues in this Chamber would agree. In fact, on numerous occasions, they have espoused that themselves. It is not new. Yes, we are trying to target problem Aboriginal drinkers, but that does not mean police are pulling over, picking up or targeting Aboriginal people because they have some sort of gripe with them. That is a disgraceful slur, and you should be ashamed of yourselves for making such allegations against our hard-working police officers.

Let us look at what the TBLs have done. Here are some facts and figures. Coming from me, you will probably think I have doctored them, but you can go to the police for a briefing. I am sure we can arrange it, the minister for Police – I am sure the Attorney-General will arrange a briefing with the superintendent in charge or even the Police Commissioner to provide you with these facts and figures. These figures have come from the police officer in charge of the Central Australia region.

On 18 October 2013, police conducted a full lock down on all takeaway licenced premises. As a result of that lock down, we saw a 100% reduction in breaches of DVOs. We saw a 71% reduction in domestic violence. There was a 70% reduction in general disturbances; a 62% reduction in the 'drunk person', as it is called here; a 100% reduction in drunk drivers; a 20% reduction in liquor in a public place; a 100% reduction in *Liquor Act* breaches; and a 100% reduction in liquor in restricted areas, which is police speak for drinking in a restricted area. When we had police stationed at every bottle shop and takeaway outlet

in Alice Springs on 18 October, those were the results we achieved. You get those results because the police are stopping people drinking buying alcohol. They cannot go from one to the other. It is a glowing success.

I say to the member for Nhulunbuy, who represents the Labor Party tonight, you introduced it. I do not know if you recall that, but in June or July 2012, you introduced TBLs. They were outside the takeaway outlets in Alice Springs. We continued it, as we could see the merit in it. We have ramped it right up and resourced it, but you introduced it. There must be some sort of merit to it, wouldn't you think? The Labor Party introduced TBLs. Let the record show it was a Labor Party initiative.

I suggest you all read the Central Australia statement that proceeded this debate, because it talks at length about the measures we are putting in place when it comes to tackling law and order. The statement was only reflective of Central Australia, and that is fine, but you can extrapolate it right across the Northern Territory. In this case, when it comes to the Barkly, Alice Springs and the broader Central Australia region, there is a lot of work being done, and there is a huge amount we have achieved thus far.

I will quickly talk about something the member for Karama said. This might be a little cheeky, but I am going to get it in because there are 45 seconds to go. She said we did not mention Tigerair in the statement, how dare I; it was conveniently dropped, what am I doing about it. I draw her attention to the latest media release about our relationship with Qantas and what we are doing to come to the party.

Ms WALKER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! This is an MPI, not an opportunity to respond to his statement.

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order. Minister, you have the call.

Mr CONLAN: We have partnered with Qantas. An enormous amount of work has been done since Tigerair made that announcement last Friday. As a result of Tigerair pulling out, we have some fabulous airfares that Qantas has offered. We are working overtime. We are looking after the Centre and making sure the residents and citizens of the Northern Territory can live in the safe and most harmonious environment possible through the enormous amount of work we are doing and the great achievements we have made thus far.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I feel privileged today to have been here when the Minister for Central Australia delivered the longest

statement about Central Australia ever. We should commemorate it with a plaque, and we could probably have some formal occasion and make sure the minister was here to unveil it. I am deeply touched by that. But we need to discuss a more serious subject, and that is the issue of violence in the Northern Territory.

There is no doubt that much of the violence is caused by alcohol. We can discuss statistics until the cows come home, and we have discussed statistics in this place till the cows have come home. Usually when statistics are discussed on that side, all of a sudden they are different to the ones on this side. We should find a scientist who is based in statistics to give us an independent assessment of the figures quoted back and forwards across this Chamber so I can get an impartial view of what is actually happening in this area. I doubt very much, when I hear statistics being bandied around this place, that I am getting an independent view of what is happening in this area.

I know one thing: alcohol is one of the major reason we have problems with violence. It is not just alcohol. It is a range of issues that we seem to be unable to tackle. We bring in measures like putting police outside bottle shops, and putting people into mandatory detention and gaol. Some of that is worthwhile, but the issue that even the member for Greatorex was just talking about is looking at the causes and trying to get at them and do something.

How many times have I spoken in here about social security, unemployment, overcrowding and poor education? It is not just alcohol. Alcohol is part of the problem, and part of it is caused by unemployment and a lack of pride in oneself. We do not seem to have any government that is willing to really take that on.

There were some good stories spoken here last night about employment programs in some of our local areas, and the minister says we have a 1.8% unemployment figure, but he does not say what it is in Yuendumu, Papunya or Borroloola. They are the areas we have to tackle. We have an economy which is booming where people are making huge wages as part of the gas industry, and on the other hand we have people who are unemployed. I have always said that the society that cannot share the wealth is the society that is leading itself into trouble. It may not be riots, but it may manifest in the way people behave. They see the only way out is to drink because they do not have the opportunity to get a good job.

I have said many times that we need to look at social security and see if we can get people into employment, even if it is basic employment, by using social security money as part of payment for

work. That has been said many times here. In the Northern Territory, one of the best ways is to use councils, because they are already set up as the centre of an area. If you up the social security value so people have a reasonable dollar value per hour – as the member for Nhulunbuy would know, the cost of living in remote communities is not always reflected in the amount of money people are paid. They can be paid the same in Yuendumu as they are in Howard Springs. There is a lot less value for that dollar in Yuendumu because they have problems being able to spread that dollar around.

Tonight there has been a lot of debate over statistics. It may be worthwhile inviting somebody independent who knows about statistics, because we all know that there are 'lies, lies, damned lies and statistics', or something like that.

Mr Elferink: Benjamin Disraeli.

Mr WOOD: That is right. I studied statistics at school, and it is a complex science or form of mathematics. If you use it to run your case you should at least be able to have someone check what you say is true, because you bend statistics to support your argument.

We had that debate when the Council of Territory Cooperation was around. We had two lots of statistics, one from the police and one from the Department of Justice and the question was why the two were different. They were taking it from different sources or a different angle.

I hope both sides do not mind me saying I am sometimes a little sceptical when it comes to statistics. Perhaps one good thing parliament can do when it comes to discussing rates of violence and increases and decreases in violence, we could well do with – like we have an Auditor-General, perhaps we could have a Statistical-General ...

Mr Gunner: I said that.

Mr WOOD: Did you? I was not here to hear it. It must have flowed through the building into the Red Cross celebration tonight. I did not know you said that, but I am arguing that we need someone to look at the statistics. The case has been before that the statistics for two cars stolen in Nhulunbuy, when for the last three months there have not been any stolen, means there has been a 200% increase in car thefts in Nhulunbuy. It sounds terrific; it is a great headline for the local paper. You can make anything out of statistics.

I remember the rates going up at Litchfield. The rates were \$100 and went up by \$10 and the headlines were, '10% increase in the rates'. Of course Jack Ellis, who ran the *Litchfield Times*,

loved things like that. It made it sound tremendously bad, but it was only \$10. He did that for many years. You can use statistics in ways to suit you, but I am interested in an independent assessment of the statistics.

I laugh a bit when the government says the other government stopped having quarterly reports. The Council of Territory Cooperation agreed to change those quarterly reports because, as the Department of Justice said at that time, in having those quarterly reports you sometimes distort the statistics because it is too short a period, especially for small jurisdictions, to get an accurate assessment of what is happening.

In many cases trends over a period of time are more important than plain statistics. I do not believe the BDR was tested properly. It should have been tested for three years. It was condemned from the day it was debated in this parliament before there were any statistics, and later on statistics were used to show it did not work. The current government did not believe in it from day one, because in parliament they voted against it.

If we were sincere about seeing whether the BDR worked we would have given it a period of time which could have been analysed properly to see if it made any difference. I would not have supported it if it was shown to be a waste of time, but I cannot say it was a waste of time because it was not around long enough to know. Again, statistics can be used to show something is working and to say something is not working.

We have debated alcohol and violence time and again in this parliament, and there are some fundamental issues which have not been addressed. They have been tinkered with; we are getting more Aboriginal housing and it will reduce overcrowding, but it will be an ongoing thing. There were some statistics the other day on the increase in the Aboriginal population in Australia. It is enormous, and for us to keep providing public housing in Aboriginal communities is an enormous cost to the public purse. We need a system where Aboriginal people, instead of paying rents, can use the money to buy their own houses.

We do not provide government owned houses across Australia for everybody who wants a house. We expect a percentage of people to buy their own house, but it is not an easy thing to do. Houses are not cheap out bush and maybe we have to look at other approaches. There have been other approaches around for many years where Aboriginal people are building their own houses, even if they are basic structures, so they have some ownership over those structures at a price they can afford.

In relation to unemployment, you need to have a reasonable education. If you do not have a reasonable education, there is no reason why councils could not employ you. Governments give councils adequate capital equipment. There is plenty of work for people. They could be repairing houses, fixing roads, making gardens, fixing fences, repairing the airstrips, fixing erosion on beaches or cleaning up nets. Some of this work is done by some people, but some of this work could also be extended across the board. You just need people with a desire to turn things around.

I am not an expert on alcohol, but often alcohol is a sign that people have lost pride in themselves or where they live. If you can get it back by giving a person a job, it would be a way to give people some dignity in their lives if they can clean up their community and make it good. I am not trying to push my own barrow here, but when I was on Bathurst Island we had a nursery, and every Saturday morning we would sell plants. What was the idea? We would go around town, sell plants and ask people to put plants in their front garden to make it look nice. It was part of a program to make people feel their community was something to be proud of. You need to be proud of your community and of yourself.

Some of those things still go back to social security. Give people a job. Part of the job would be making the place where they live a place they are proud to bring people to; it gives dignity. It will not fix it all, because alcohol is an addictive drug. For some people it will be very hard to get off it. I have supported mandatory rehabilitation. It is costly, but if it is done for the right, compassionate reasons, it is an appropriate way of trying to help people.

The minister speaks about the results of it, but it is far too early to be looking at results. It has been going for less than 12 months. You need a three- or four-year period. You need to be able to trace people who have gone through the program to see where they are and if it has made a difference to their lives. I would not expect more than 1% or 2% of people to be successful. It is very hard to turn people's lives around when they are addicted to alcohol. Ask the people who volunteer for those kinds of services. It is very hard to change those people. But it is a good program from the government and I have supported it.

In summing up, there are some basic issues which are not addressed by the Commonwealth; it has a role to play. It seems to be too scared to remove welfare payments. Perhaps they think people down south would be upset about it, but people down south do not realise if we do not do something, things will not turn around. We need to do something and one way is to get rid of social security. Give the money to council and give

people a chance for some employment. They can lift themselves up from that up and get better jobs at some stage, but at least give people a start and do not leave them hanging around bored, because that is one of the problems we have.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Ms FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I will speak about some of the wonderful things happening in Drysdale and the broader Palmerston community.

Palmerston families and people rally around Defence families, our Diggers and our current serving troops, and pay their respects to our fallen soldiers and all of those left behind. Anzac Day this year was a stand out. The Palmerston RSL and all people involved helped Palmerston commemorate. In all capacities Palmerston paid its respects on Anzac Day.

There was a huge attendance at the gunfire breakfast. Speaking with long-term members of the Palmerston RSL, they were really amazed at not only the number of people who had the courage to stomach a rum and coffee at 4.30 am, but also the demographics. We had little babies, children, veterans and average people who wanted to get into the spirit of Anzac Day and pay their respects.

Following the gunfire breakfast the dawn service was held, and it was a very moving and sombre ceremony. It was done extremely well, and there was a very large attendance, appreciated by all. Following the dawn service, it was breakfast at the RSL, which is always very popular. Everyone gets together, the beer starts flowing at that time of the morning and the queue is right out the door to get a very good breakfast. Thank you to the Hub for supporting the RSL and all the sponsors who donated food so the RSL could keep the gate takings. That money goes to Legacy and other RSL-related charities.

Following the breakfast we had the march, which was wonderful. Many Palmerston schools were involved this year, more than last year, I believe, which is wonderful. There were many very proud parents watching their children, and many children with chests full of medals. It is very interesting to reflect on how we think about Anzac Day. When I was a little girl, Anzac Day always conjured images of old men marching with their chests full of medals, but now our young servicemen and women have seen war themselves. We have young children, in this day and age, marching with

their parents' medals, and so the legacy of the Anzac goes on. The march was very good.

The Marines participated as well, which is still very fresh and new for everyone in Palmerston. My mum was very disappointed she did not get to meet a few of them, but I am sure she will get around to it next year

Following the march we had the morning service, which was even better attended than the dawn service, which I did not think possible. It was completely packed out, it was excellent. The number of young people there was amazing, and it was wonderful to see the school students who came to lay wreaths and books to pay their respects. There was also the Scouts, the cadets, all of the different groups. It was wonderful and very touching.

Following that we all headed back to the RSL. It was great, from gunfire breakfast right through to way after lunch you saw families and people who had been to all of the commemorations that morning. Two up and all of the other traditions took place. My colleagues, minister Chandler and Nathan Barrett, and I were tasked with banging the drum and getting as much cash off people at the Hub as possible. I think we did a pretty good job, and we were glad to participate in fundraising for charity.

In the lead up to Anzac Day, Palmerston schools, as I am sure schools right across the Territory did, held their own Anzac Day commemorations. The day before Anzac Day was a very busy one in Palmerston. Unfortunately I was not able to get to all of my schools and all the commemorations that were held. However, I did manage to get to three out of six, which was not too bad considering most of the assemblies and commemorations were at the same time. I managed to get to Gray Primary School in the morning. It held a lovely morning service at a special assembly, and they had a captain from the Army speaking to students about what Anzac Day meant to him – a young man in our community with a chest full of medals. The kids really looked up to this Army captain and heard his message.

I want to thank Sue Beynon who is the Principal of Gray Primary School. She gave a very sombre but poignant speech which really complemented the things the Army captain had to say. Her words really resonated with the students and she showed great leadership in her speech. I commend Sue for her messages at that ceremony.

The students also made and laid wreaths and paid their respects in their own way. That was absolutely beautiful. Well done to teachers, staff and students at Gray Primary School.

Following that, I quickly made my way to McKillop college where I attended the Anzac Day commemoration mass, which was very lovely. The students, particularly the leadership group of students, had gone to a lot of trouble to prepare a beautiful slide presentation, an ensemble of appropriate prayers and readings. This was participated in by not only the school priest but local people important to the school, such as the chair of the parents' board, and Lance Johnson, who is heavily involved with the school through Duke of Edinburgh and things like that. He is also a veteran and participated heavily throughout the mass. So that was lovely.

I was very honoured to be able to lay flowers under the cross as part of the ceremony and I very much enjoyed the hospitality of Laretta Graham, the principal. That was another beautiful ceremony. Well done to students, teachers and staff for hosting such a beautiful ceremony for such an important commemoration.

Later in the day I attended the Palmerston Senior College afternoon service. That was very well done. The college had taken a different approach and looked specifically at the contribution nurses had made over the course of time in war. They told the story of the nursing corps, which was very, very interesting and extremely well done. Congratulations to the students who participated in that, it was exemplary. Well done.

I also specifically congratulate the cadets who did extremely well in the catafalque party. They were professional and their drill was very good. They should be extremely proud of themselves. They did their cadet units, their uniform and their school very proud that day. I certainly made sure that I caught up with them afterwards at the morning tea to congratulate them for doing such a marvellous day and wearing the uniform with pride. Thank you to Sue Healy for inviting me along. She is a wonderful school principal and is really making her mark on that school. She has not been there that long, but you can see her impression on the students. Congratulations to them, all for hosting very wonderful Anzac Day commemorative service.

Someone very special had their 35th birthday over the weekend, and that is Ima. Many people might not know who Ima is. She is the yellow house on the Safety House logo. She is very important because she is making sure there are places for young people to go when they feel threatened or unsafe.

To celebrate Ima's birthday, Safety House, in conjunction with Neighbourhood Watch, hosted a magnificent and enormous birthday party with over 600 people in attendance. I do not know, Mr Deputy Speaker, if you have ever had 600 people

at your birthday party, but certainly Ima was chuffed with the turn out, and she had a massive cake to go with it. The day would not have been possible without the support of Palmerston Power Basketball Club; the Rock Wall, which also provided the jumping castles; Fairy Jill; the Coffee Angels; Kevin's Mobile Disco; the Play Shack; Kidsafe; NT Police; Neighbourhood Watch; Kentish Family Day Care; Wongabilla Equestrian Centre; the Northern Territory government; St John cadets; the Country Liberals Palmerston Sub-Branch; and the Northern Territory Emergency Services.

They all contributed to an amazing day. There were so many free activities for the kids. I think parents were relieved that the Dry Season had slightly kicked in. There was shade, fun and activities. A huge thank you to Sue Sears, she is outstanding. She goes the extra mile to make sure Safety House is alive in our community. I thank her for everything she did to make that a wonderful birthday party. Thanks also to Tracy-Dale Middleton who, side by side with Neighbourhood Watch, continues to make Neighbourhood Watch and Safety House two very important foundations of our community. I look forward to continuing working with both of them to strengthen these organisations across Palmerston.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will talk about something I raised yesterday during Question Time. My question was about the new abattoir at Livingstone and my concerns that the abattoir has plans to put a power generating plant at the site. The minister, in response to my query about whether this would need a planning amendment from the original planning proposal, said:

I thank the member for Nelson for the question. You are right; the abattoir is in the rural area.

I thought that was a good statement, but he said:

On 27 May 2012, an exceptional development permit was granted, allowing the development of section 5410, 100 Strangeways Road for the purpose of an abattoir. The development as approved is a gas-powered facility. Any additional power generating facilities would require the planning permit to be varied, you are correct. Whether or not the facilities will require public exhibition will depend on the scale and potential impacts of the facilities.

The minister went on about other things which did not really relate.

My concern is that this is the section that was in the approved planning documents. The minister gave me a copy, but I have a copy in my office of the whole planning document that went through the DCA. It said, under 4.5, Infrastructure and Utilities:

The proponent has discussed the service requirements for the proposed development with Power and Water Corporation. PWC has confirmed the availability of the electrical supply, potable water and gas to the processing plant for the foreseeable future, up to 15 to 20 years. Regarding electricity supply, PWC says it has supply available to meet the project's demand. The service will be supplied on a commercial basis contingent upon the component reaching agreement with PWC on the provision of electricity infrastructure, including headworks. PWC's early advice was that a new water main would be required from PWC's future treatment site in Cox Peninsula Road.

It goes on to talk about water. The last paragraph says:

PWC has confirmed that it has gas supply available to meet the project's demand and will supply gas on a commercial basis contingent upon the proponent meeting the cost of the required infrastructure.

The only thing referring to anything that looks like a generating plant is a map of the site where it says, 'cogen plant'. I saw that, looked through the documentation and found no explanation as to what 'cogen plant' meant. I thought it may be an emergency generating plant. There was nothing in the written documentation to back up what that meant. Yesterday the minister mentioned that. He said:

Due to capability restrictions, Power and Water would need to undertake significant capital upgrades to the zone substation and install 1.5 km of electricity network. Those upgrades would require a customer capital contribution from AACo. AACo elected not to make that capital contribution and has opted for self-generation via a gas-fired plant. It will source the gas from Santos rather than Power and Water Corporation.

Power and Water said it could supply gas, and, from the documentation, my understanding is that gas was to be used to heat water. Obviously you will need hot water in an abattoir. There was no mention of a gas-fired power plant.

I do not want to be a stickler, but an approval was given with this documentation about Power and

Water, under clause 4.5, and for any person reading that document there is no way they would have known AACo was in negotiations with Santos and had agreed to put in a power plant. There is nothing in the documentation which reflects what the minister said.

I am asking the minister to revisit this planning approval and, even if he does not exhibit that as an amendment to the original plan, that he notifies all the people in that area that AACo is considering putting up a gas-fired power plant. I am not opposed to AACo doing such a thing, but the question is, especially in the rural area – sometimes people think we live in the rural area so what is a bit of noise? In the rural area, noise travels a lot further than if you live in the industrial area at Berrimah. If you put a gas-fired power plant in the member for Daly's electorate, I hope there have been some tests to find out what effect it will have.

This abattoir, we believe, will run 24 hours a day. At night the noise will travel further, especially in the Dry Season when it is still. Have any studies been done on noise attenuation from this proposal?

Mr Deputy Speaker, as the local member for this area, perhaps you could encourage the minister to revisit this, because my reading of it is that it was not included in the original plan. All that was approved was a plan site with no explanation showing a thing called cogen. What would that mean to people? If it said 'generating plant' maybe you would understand that, but you would expect some written explanation as to what that was for and to say, 'We are getting gas from Santos to run this gas-fired plant'. There was nothing in this document approved by the DCA which said that.

It should either go back to have an amendment to the exceptional development plan – he has to formally go back and get an amendment – or, if the minister says that is all too hard, the minister should write to all those people and perhaps AACo has to discuss with all the people whether this power generation plant would have an effect. It may have no effect. That is terrific and I am not knocking the company or the plant, but if this is running in the middle of July at night and the member for Daly gets a few phone calls about all the noise in the rural area at midnight, that would not be very appropriate or very pleasing to the member for Daly.

Minister, you need to revisit this, and I ask you to do that. If you can find ways around the technical side of it – going back to an amendment would delay things, but I encourage you to get the company and your department to sit down with anyone who is interested in that area. They may

not be interested, but at least give them the opportunity to find out what you will be doing with this gas-fired power plant and if it will have any deleterious effects on the community in that area. That is the least you can do. If you do not do something now and it blows up later, do not come running to me, run to the member for Daly. I am saying fix it and let us get on with a great scheme of having an abattoir in the rural area. I support it because of the employment and opportunities for training, especially for Aboriginal people. All that is great for the rural area, the Territory, the pastoral industry and those small farms which in the last few years have lost the opportunity to raise a few cows and take them to the abattoirs like we had near the piggery.

Hopefully we will have a chance, maybe for half a day a week, where people can have a few cattle on their block, keep the gamba grass down, then take them to the market and get some financial gain or some meat for Christmas.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will place on the public record some of the many great things that have been happening in the electorate of Nhulunbuy. It is nearly six months since the announcement by Rio Tinto of its decision to curtail operations on the back of a gas deal sadly and most regrettably reneged on by the CLP government.

Our community is definitely changing and, sadly, families are leaving, but that does not stop people getting on with their lives and relishing the great lifestyle we enjoy in beautiful northeast Arnhem Land. We have a glass half full view of the world, as opposed to half empty, during these difficult and changing times. If anything the community is in some way stronger and more united during these adverse times.

I will start by talking about the Airnorth Ladies Fishing Classic, which was held in Nhulunbuy over the weekend of 1 and 2 March. This year marked the tenth anniversary of the event, and it has not lost any of its popularity. Thirty eight teams were entered for a total of 115 anglers. This is again proof that in a time of such uncertainty the community of Nhulunbuy can still rally together to have a good time. For most entrants, this year will be their final competition, and there is some doubt as to whether or not there will be the resources left in Nhulunbuy to rally for the Airnorth Ladies Fishing Classic next year. We will see.

The presentation night was held the following weekend on Saturday 8 March at the fantastic club rooms that have been occupied and renovated by the Nhulunbuy Regional Sports Fishing Club. I am delighted to see that after all these years they have a permanent home. If

there is one thing I know about Gove women is that they know how to have fun and party, whether they are fishing or at the presentation night. It was resplendent with some very original, creative, colourful and hilarious costumes, as teams are encouraged to take on a theme, both when they are fishing and when they come to the presentation night.

I do not think when they had their photo taken they thought they would end up on the front page of our local paper. However, I did think the costumes of Annette Cotterill, Jessica Pitkin and Angela Cerchi, under the team name 'Reel Screamin' Drag Queenies', were hilarious.

The winners on the night were announced as follows: the Overall Champion Team went to ULUA Chicks; the Champion Angler was won by Tara Canobie; the Champion Billfish Angler was Susan Stiff; the Champion Female Junior was Savanne Canobie; the Champion Reef Team was ULUA Chicks; the Champion Land-Based Team was Devine Shine; and the Champion Estuary Team was Krillin' It. The winner of the inaugural Darryl 'Mando' Manderson Trophy was Tara Canobie.

Events like this only happen with much hard work, so I acknowledge the organising committee, along with members of the Nhulunbuy Regional Sports Fishing Club, whose hard work saw another successful event. I also acknowledge the many sponsors. I was proud to be one of them, as was Airnorth, a very generous major sponsor. While a fun evening was had by all, it was an evening touched by some sadness. The inaugural Darryl 'Mando' Manderson Trophy was awarded for largest fish, in memory of Darryl Manderson. He was a keen fisherman and golfer, tragically killed in a workplace accident only four days before the tournament. A short video montage was aired on the evening, showcasing the best photos and catches from the competition, as well as memories of those keen anglers who have recently lost their lives, Darryl Manderson and the lovely and beautiful Karen Keeley. She was another keen fisherwoman, who passed away quite suddenly some months ago.

I also congratulate the 2014 elected student leaders of Nhulunbuy Christian College. The students elected are held in high esteem by their peers to be elected to such important roles. Congratulations to: primary school captains, Emma Peace and Hannah Fourie; middle school captains, Rebecca Hermanus and Chayse Aston; Year 7 representative, Olivia Russell; Year 8 representative, Emily Giles; Year 9 representative, Hannah Adams; Meshach House captains, Katie Farnsworth and Samuel Nyamazana; Shadrach House captains, Chris Lamboa and Liam Arkoll;

and Abednego House captains, Brendan O'Sullivan and Serina O'Connor.

I wish these students the very best of luck in their roles. I am sure they will not only be fine young leaders for their peers and fellow students but fine ambassadors for their school. Their families are all extremely proud of them, and so they should be.

Last weekend I attended Gove Arts Theatre's production of *Blurred*, a play depicting the journey, quite literally, of five groups of young people on their way to schoolies week on the Gold Coast. It was also about the journey of these young people into adulthood. They were young people from all different backgrounds from the hoons, the bogans and the public school kids to the private school kids and the kid whose mother just would not stop phoning her.

No story or depiction of young people on their way to schoolies can be honest or truthful if it does not include sex, drugs and rock and roll, and I did say 'depicted'. With that, there is all of the risky behaviour that goes with it. It was hilarious, but it also had its moments which I found confronting, as I think some other parent members of the audience did. This was especially the case for me as the parent of a cast member suddenly killed in a moment of madness trying to surf a train.

It was one of the slickest amateur theatre productions I have seen in a while, especially so for the teenage cast, all students at Nhulunbuy High School. There were three performances at The Cell over last weekend. The Cell is our brilliant little theatre, entirely run by volunteers, I should add. I should also add there is concern about how we will continue the work of The Cell and amateur theatre in our town with the loss of so many people from the community by the end of the year.

I place on the record the names of those involved in the production of *Blurred* and congratulate them on their contributions. The brilliant and very talented cast included Morgan Hill, Alex Parfitt, Jordan Kirby, Tayla Edwards, Liyadari Alahakoon, Ashley Collins-Castle, Zoe Farnsworth, Liam Cottrell, Morgan Hill, Savanne Canobie, Riley Neenan, Tara Thomas-Doyle and Harry Walker.

I also offer my congratulations to the directors, Tiffany Kynigopoulos and Kasey Lloyd. I acknowledge the incredible hard work and hours they put in. They are both talented actors themselves and volunteer in their capacity as directors. With cast members and those who work backstage, they spent hours, over a number of weeks, preparing and rehearsing for this brilliant production. Well done to Casey and Tiffany.

I also acknowledge the producers, again Tiffany and Kasey. They were assisted by Zoe Farnsworth, a Year 12 student who was also acting in the play. I acknowledge Sam Matthews and Callum Barnes in lighting and sound. Both are high school students who are learning very valuable skills. They did a brilliant job in the lighting and sound box, very ably assisted and mentored by a stalwart of our theatre, Chris Andrews, who I also acknowledge for his brilliant work on set construction.

The backstage and props manager was Bernice Cox, who is also a stalwart of Gove Arts Theatre and has been involved for many years in countless productions, both on the stage and backstage.

Hair and makeup was looked after by students, Emily Hughes and Ning Ngammalang. There is a beautiful gathering area, which we call the red room, outside of The Cell, our theatre. It has a bar area, and I acknowledge the efforts of Peter Cox and Shelley Martin, also from Gove Arts Theatre, in running the bar.

The back of the program also gives thanks to Stephanie, Alix and Rhoda at the Nhulunbuy High School front office for all of their assistance in selling tickets. Thanks also go to Sodexo, Gove Pizza Shop and Dan Wagg for their generous contributions. Thanks to Bernice Cox for her 'time, expertise, advice and general awesomeness'. That is what it says and it is indeed true. The program finishes by thanking all of the families who supported their kids in this production. I too pass on my congratulations to them for what was a brilliant piece of theatre.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will talk about a couple of people in my electorate. They are ordinary people doing extraordinary things, and their achievements and contributions to the community need to be acknowledged.

The first I would like to reference is a fellow by the name of Darryel Binns, or as he is colloquially known, Biggles. Darryel came to the Northern Territory from Tasmania in 2004. He was a wildlife enforcement officer with Parks and Wildlife and became a member of the Vietnam Veterans Association. Clearly he had been in Vietnam during war time. From 2007 to 2008 he was the state president of the association, and from 2009, for a period of 13 years, he served as the vice president. In his time with the association and as a returned soldier, Darryel has been involved as the state coordinator of the NT Men's Health Peer Education. This organisation provides peer support to veterans to encourage them to look after their health, because we know what happened after the Vietnam War, where not being recognised for many years would have had a

devastating effect on people's health. The organisation delivers health presentations and distributes health promotions and information. It promotes the program, helps with activities and events and generally supports the Vietnam vets in their health and wellbeing.

After 10 years in this support role, Darryel left to pursue his great love of bird watching and that is what I want to talk about this evening. Apart from Darryel's contribution to his country in fighting for his country, he is a great bird watcher. There are many names for people involved in the sport of watching birds such as 'Bird'O' as his wife Deidre calls him, or twitcher, the more commonly known term. Twitching is a British term meaning the pursuit of a previously located rare bird. The term twitcher is reserved for those who travel long distances to see a rare bird that would be ticked or counted on a list. The term originated in the 1950s when it was used for the nervous behaviour of Howard Medhurst, a famous bird watcher.

The main goal of twitching is often to accumulate species on one's list. Some birders, as they are also called, engage in a competition to accumulate the longest species' list. The act of the pursuit is referred to as a twitch or chase. A rare bird that stays put long enough for people to see is twitchable or chaseable. Some of the interesting terminology used by fellow twitchers includes 'crippler', a rare and spectacular bird that shows brilliantly, perhaps an illusion to prevent people moving on. Also there is 'burn up' or 'flog', which is to beat around the undergrowth hoping to flush out a bird. A pretty desperate measure I think and not a kind way to treat an exhausted migrant bird. There is also the 'dude', who is a posh bird watcher who does not really know all that much about birds, someone who primarily seeks out birds for photography rather than study.

The interesting thing about Darryel and his bird watching interest or hobby, call it what you like, is he is one of six people in Australia who has clocked up 800 species of bird on his list that he has seen, whether they be in the Northern Territory or elsewhere. That is pretty impressive as Australia has just over, supposedly, 800 species of bird. His wife, Deidre, can count many a time when he has travelled interstate to glimpse a rare species or the rumour of a vagrant bird visitor off their usual migration route. Only recently he has had photos on his Facebook page of a trip he took off the Kimberley coast specifically to go bird watching and add some more birds to his list. I think it was at that time he got his 800th bird.

A bird from Indonesia that has never been seen in Australia before turned up in the Northern Territory. The rare Javan Pond Heron had Darryel

in a proverbial flap trying to locate the unusual visitor, which is on the International Union of Conservation of Nature's List of Threatened Species. This would have been a very interesting time for all the Territory twitchers, and they would have been out in force all around the rural area trying to find this rare bird.

I am led to believe by his wife Deidre that in 2009 at the Fogg Dam Conservation Reserve, which is a fabulous place if you want to go looking for birds and other wildlife, whilst he was trying to catch a glimpse of an elusive bird, Darryel had the shock of his life. Just behind where he had been standing was a 4.5 m crocodile. You might think being a twitcher is a safe sport. In this case it was a close shave.

Darryel, apart from his hobby, which is obviously fascinating if you are into birds and feathered fluffy things, has been a great contributor to our community. It is a bit sad because I only found out a few weeks ago that he and his wife Deidre are relocating down south, but wherever he goes I am sure he will make a great contribution, possibly with the Vietnam Veterans Association and returned military people.

He has also contributed to the chorale and has helped with many community events. Wherever he goes in his life with Deidre, I am sure he will continue to do his bird watching, keep adding to that list of 800, and perhaps become even higher up the list in Australia. I wish him and his wife Deidre the very best wherever they go.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I now compliment a young student from Taminmin College who is also doing extraordinary things. His name is Riley LeLay and he is completing Year 12 at Taminmin College. During January this year he was selected among the brightest young science students around Australia to attend the National Youth Science Forum in Canberra. About 350 students attended the forum, which ran for approximately two weeks. This program consists of a mix of scientific, formal, personal development and social activities. These range from laboratory visits to sports events, from a bush dance to group dynamics. The program helps students learn how to make informed decisions about courses and careers in science, and gain a professional skill set.

The science forum is a fantastic not-for-profit organisation which runs international programs after the forum finishes. Only a select few from the 350 who attended the Canberra event are chosen to attend international programs. Some of those programs are: the Nobel Prize Awards in Stockholm; the Europe Science Fair; and the Canada-Wide Science Fair. Riley was selected to attend the Canada-Wide Science Fair which is running from 9 to 25 May this year.

The following is from their website, giving a brief description about the Canada-Wide Science Fair, 'It is a premier youth science event. It is actually the national finals of an annual, huge competition. Five hundred or so Canadian participants must present a scientific project which has previously been ranked highly in regional science fairs. Six Australian students are invited to this as ambassadors for Australia ...'

Only six from Australia, and one of them was from the Northern Territory.

'... and as the guests of the host city they visit local primary and high schools. In 2014, the science fair is being staged in Windsor, Ontario. The trip includes also a week touring through the Rockies.

Riley LeLay has been an extraordinary student in his time at Taminmin College. He is in his last year and is one of the school captains. He participated, as I said, in the National Youth Science Forum, and his title is Australian Ambassador for Youth Science. He is a high-achieving student with a passion for science, demonstrated by distinctions and high distinctions for competitions with the Royal Australian Chemistry Institute. He has won a gold medal in the National Titration Competition, sponsored by Charles Darwin University in 2013. He participated in the World Challenge Expedition to Africa in 2012 and 2013. Part of the expedition was supporting students in a school in Botswana. Not only is he up there with his science knowledge and skills, clearly he wants to commit and give to the community. He actively raised funds for this component.

He has been dynamic member of the Student Representative Group over the past year and recently was selected to attend the United Nations Youth Conference in Canberra. Apart from being the school captain, he is enthusiastically involved in the Student Leadership Group, which meets weekly with the principal, providing advocacy and advice about student matters.

Riley has demonstrated leadership skills by scaffolding the structure and focus of meetings to meet school goals. He also finds time to be a committed and dedicated student, aiming to study in genetics at university in 2015 when he finishes school.

He has been seeking sponsorship for this trip to Canada and I have assisted a bit, as I know many businesses in the rural area have. The school, if not Riley and his family, has written to the NT government to see if it can support him as well. It is a huge achievement, six students going from Australia and one is from the Northern Territory, from the rural area and Taminmin College.

I have met Riley before but I met him again recently. He was at the Anzac Day ceremony at Humpty Doo Village Green and he was part of the Taminmin College group which laid a wreath. He is a great student and has a great family. I wish him the best in his travels to Canada. I hope he gets there, and I am sure he will. I wish him very well in his studies once he leaves school.

Mr STYLES (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to give some great news to this House about great events occurring in the Northern Territory. One-and-a-half weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending a number of functions associated with the Hakka conference that was held here. From Australasia and places as far as Macau, Surabaya, Kupang, Cairns, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth - all over Australia - people turned up for a three-day Hakka Conference in Darwin.

There were more than 60 delegates who attended, from all the places I just mentioned. It was a goodwill business conference and was hosted by the Hakka Association of the Northern Territory.

The conference, which was attended by many local people as well, came to be as a result of a trip I took, as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, to Indonesia last year, particularly Jakarta where the World Hakka Conference was held.

Although we only had a small conference here, it was the beginning of something we hope will grow and grow. At the conference in Jakarta there were 5500 Hakka people from all around the world. Hakka people are well known. They come from southern China and were predominantly the largest group to emigrate to other countries. They went out through the world, worked hard, and many have become very successful. The people at the conference in Jakarta were the who's who of Hakka business people throughout the world. It was a great forum at which to have the opportunity to address them. That is what I did last year in Jakarta. Not many of them knew exactly where the Northern Territory was or the significance of Darwin. However, when I left Jakarta, they certainly knew.

Of the 5500 Chinese people at the conference, I was the only European in the room, and it was an interesting experience. I was made to feel very welcome; I felt very at home. I travelled there with the Secretary of the Hakka Association, Mr Henry Yap, and as a result of meetings we had and participating in that conference, we brought back the conference we just had in Darwin.

It was an exploratory tour by some very significant people in the Hakka Association. The people who came here were presidents from various

organisations in different places, and throughout Southeast Asia. They were on a fact finding and goodwill mission so they can have further interaction with Darwin and the Northern Territory.

That can only bring the building of relationships. As most people know, when you do business with Southeast Asia or Asia in general, those business relationships are based on, first of all, friendship. People want to get to know you. They want to understand how you do business, what sort of person you are and whether they would like to do business with you. Generally, my experience over my lifetime has been that if these people cannot get on with you or do not like you for some reason, it is often the case they will not do business with you. So it is very important that the Northern Territory government engages with Asia, given it is our closest neighbour and that within six hours flying time from Darwin there are approximately 2.5bn people, most of them Asian.

It is very important that the government ensures that in Asia, people know exactly who we are, where we are, what we have to offer and that we are open for business. I was very fortunate to participate in that so we could get to know some of these people, meet with some people I met in Jakarta, and meet new people and build those relationships.

For me, the highlight of the forum was a luncheon and business networking opportunity held on the Saturday. This saw key local business and industry leaders meet delegates, extend friendships and strengthen business ties between our communities and countries. The Territory had a great opportunity to be seen as a place to do business as the forum exposed delegates and business industry investment opportunities available in the Northern Territory.

The Hakka Association of the Northern Territory is a very inspirational and motivated group, and these conferences were very well represented by our local Hakka people. It was a great opportunity for the Northern Territory to be promoted as a welcoming place for Hakka Chinese to visit and do business, as well as promoting Territory business opportunities to them for foreign investment.

Relationships are so important with these business people, and I am working hard to build and capitalise on those relationships. The weekend program included a social welcome reception, conference meeting, a tour of Darwin businesses and industry facilities, a cultural exchange and business networking lunch, an official forum banquet dinner and a rural study tour.

The lunch also saw discussions on Northern Territory development and the many opportunities

provided by the rapid growth of the Northern Territory. When we look at developing the north, 240 000 people do not have the capital base to invest in the infrastructure we will need to unlock the economic potential that exists in the Territory. Whilst you do not have capital or people with the capacity to develop, invest, make things work and grow and generate wealth, all it will be is economic potential. But we have to realise that potential, so I was grateful for the opportunity to speak at the lunch and the dinner and address people who have come a long way to see what we have to offer.

I express my thanks to the Chief Minister's Community Engagement Ministerial Advisor, Linda Fazldeen, who did a lot of work with the Hakka Association to bring this to fruition from an idea that came out of Jakarta to a conference in Darwin. It would not have happened without the driving force of Henry Yap, ably supported, as always, by his wife Suzanna and Adelino Nheu and his wife Monica Moura. Adelino is President of the Hakka Association, and I sincerely thank his committee for all the hard work. Putting these things together does not just happen. Many people work hard for a many months to make sure everything runs smoothly so when people arrive at conferences they get the experience they were expecting to have when they came to the Northern Territory.

The Saturday night function held at the Kalymnian Club was attended by about 450 people. It was a huge success. We had a lovely lady by the name of Maria who came third in *Indonesian Idol*. The quality of the entertainment was fantastic. This young lady really knew how to get a crowd going and she sang songs in English, Indonesian and Mandarin. There is a favourite – I cannot remember the name of it but I have heard it many times because it has been sung at every Chinese function I have been to. It is one of China's most favourite songs and I wish I knew the name of it. I know the tune, but it was a fabulous night ...

Madam SPEAKER: Perhaps you should hum it for us.

Mr STYLES: I thank the Department of the Chief Minister as well for its support in making sure this conference went smoothly. I am sure, as a result of what we did here, we will have many more.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.