

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

### VISITORS

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of Mrs Rhonda Higgins, wife of the member for Daly, Gary Higgins, and also Rhonda's sister, Christine, with husband, Bill Cox. Welcome to Parliament House.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I also advise of the presence in the gallery of Years 7 to 11 from Barkly College, accompanied by their teacher, Clarence Jeanny. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you who have come all the way from Tennant Creek. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

### STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Appointment of Acting Deputy Chair of Committees

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 12, Ms Larisa Lee, Mr Gerry Wood and Mr Francis Kurrupuwu are appointed to act as Deputy Chairs of Committees.

### MOTION Proposed Censure of Minister for Parks and Wildlife

**Ms FYLES (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Minister for Parks and Wildlife for misleading this House on government funding for FrogWatch.

Last week I questioned the Minister for Parks and Wildlife about the funding for FrogWatch. In response she said:

*Let me be clear, this government did not cut the funding for FrogWatch. The contract was terminated by mutual agreement, effective 31 March.*

In response to that, FrogWatch has claimed the cut to funding was not mutually agreed. Clearly, the minister was misleading the House.

FrogWatch said the NT government stopped all funding to FrogWatch, which means Darwin is now exposed to a renewed threat of cane toads, and they did not agree with the cuts; they were given no choice.

FrogWatch provides important and responsible work in keeping cane toads out of our suburban areas. This time of the year we see the first rains,

and as we would have heard last night, the frogs, cane toads, and the wildlife start to expand with the wet weather.

Over a number of years, Mr Sawyer and the FrogWatch group have provided a very important role in working at key times of the year with many hundreds of volunteers to eradicate cane toads from our urban areas, saving us a nuisance. They are unsightly, they can cause great harm to children and particularly to pets – something you, Madam Speaker, would be very appreciative of.

Cuts to these programs are mean spirited. We are talking about \$200 000 in funding, which is not a huge amount for a government. As well as being mean spirited, the Minister for Parks and Wildlife, in answering the question ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Whilst I appreciate the long speech we are about to get about FrogWatch, this censure motion is expressly about misleading this House. The censure motion should be restrained to the issue of the alleged misleading of the House without having to have a dissertation on the effectiveness or otherwise of FrogWatch.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Speaking to the point or order, Madam Speaker. Quite specifically:

*... for misleading this House on government funding for FrogWatch.*

It goes to the core of what we are discussing. It is the fact that the minister misled the House by claiming the cessation of funding for FrogWatch was by mutual consent. You cannot debate that element of misleading without talking about the funding for FrogWatch. I know you like to guillotine debate in this Chamber, Leader of Government Business, but you were not here last week when there was a shameful guillotine of Question Time.

This is a censure motion on misleading the House on funding for FrogWatch. FrogWatch is written in the motion. It is absolutely pertinent to the debate.

**Mr ELFERINK:** Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for highlighting the issue. She clearly understands the point I am raising, and I stand by the point. The issue is about misleading the House, not about the operational capacity of FrogWatch. I am more than happy to deal with the misleading allegation but we do not need a massive and broad conversation about FrogWatch simply to pad out the 40 minutes or so she needs to settle down her motion.

**Madam SPEAKER:** The motion is:

*... that this Assembly censure the Minister for Parks and Wildlife for misleading the House on government funding for FrogWatch.*

Member for Nightcliff, I ask you to keep as close as possible to the motion which you have put before the Assembly.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Speaker, in speaking to this motion I will talk as much as I want on the detail of FrogWatch because this *Hansard* and this parliament ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! You have just given her a very direct instruction. She has now said to this House she will, effectively, ignore that instruction. I ask you to reinforce your instruction.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Leader of Government Business, the last words of the statement are:

*... Parks and Wildlife for misleading the House on government funding for FrogWatch.*

As I see it, they cannot talk on the government funding and exclude FrogWatch. They need to include FrogWatch in the government funding argument.

**Ms FYLES:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I know the Minister for Children and Families, the Attorney-General, does not want to hear about this, I will try to keep it short. However, this is important. This might not seem like a big issue - \$200 000 in funding to a community organisation - but it is for Territorians. Residents of the Top End care, unlike your government.

Last week, I asked the minister a very direct question about the FrogWatch funding and asked her if the funding had been cut. She answered that it had not been cut, it was a mutual agreement. FrogWatch said that is not correct, they did not agree with the cuts and were given no choice. Clearly, the minister misled the House.

Hundreds of Territorians have worked with FrogWatch, and those Territorians deserve some respect. They deserve to understand what is happening and who is telling the truth. The program was not cut by mutual agreement. Minister, you are responsible for the department. You are the one who needs to fight in Cabinet for your department. I understand how the process works. You are the minister responsible for Parks and Wildlife and they provided the \$200 000 funding for FrogWatch. It is your responsibility to protect that funding so Territorians in the Top End can be protected from cane toads.

After the minister answered the question, quite categorically saying the government did not cut the funding and the contract was terminated by mutual agreement, FrogWatch's Graeme Sawyer was quoted in the *NT News* on 11 October:

*... that claim is insulting and showed the minister 'was being spun by her department ...*

*'We did not and do not agree with the cuts but we were given no choice' ...*

Clearly, he does not think it was cut by mutual agreement. He also said the Northern Territory government has the right to cut programs and the broader education program, but it should be up-front with the community about why and accept responsibility for the result. That is where we are today.

The minister tried to pretend it was a mutual agreement, that Territorians should just say, 'That is a shame, another nice program finished, but these things come to an end'. No, that is not right. Your government cut the funding, but tried to mislead Territorians by saying it was a mutual agreement.

Mr Sawyer went on to talk about how Territorians in the Top End - Darwin residents - are now exposed to potentially thousands of cane toads. The \$200 000 funding was used to remove tadpoles and cane toads from the Darwin area which, in turn, protects the Darwin area from hundreds, possibly thousands, of adult cane toads.

The government displayed in this House this morning that they think this is just a trivial matter; they are having a little laugh over FrogWatch funding. Well, FrogWatch is important. Darwin and Palmerston residents know and understand that and would like the government to. However, it is not a trivial matter when a minister of the Crown is asked a question. I recall she read from notes to answer the question, so she misled the House or she needs to start questioning the documents put in front of her.

Minister, you have the responsibility now. In understanding your role as a minister of the Crown, you need to start questioning material put in front of you. Surely, you would think, if there was a small community environmental organisation with people passionate about what they do and hundreds of volunteers, that \$200 000 in funding is not a huge amount. There must be a lot of hard, volunteer work going into that program. If you came across a document that said it was by mutual agreement, would you not question that and think it does not seem right that a group such as FrogWatch, which has been around for many

years – I am not sure how long, but I have been aware of them for the good part of a decade – would suddenly not want the funding?

As a minister, you need to ask those questions – not just read out everything put in front of you – so you can understand that a group of people as passionate as this would not just accept their funding being cut. Perhaps ask some questions before you read the information out in the House, because you have misrepresented the truth.

Your government promised to be open and accountable. We have seen many areas cut. Today in Question Time when the Minister for Transport was pushed to release documents and reports relating to open speed limits, he referred to them but would not release the documents. That is not being open and accountable, and we are seeing that commitment broken on a weekly basis ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Whilst I have listened so far without any rancour, we are now talking about open speed limits. I do not believe there is a reference in the censure motion to open speed limits. The member is now engaging in a mere frolic to fill out time. She has made out her argument. I get it. She does not have to pad the rest of it out.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Madam Speaker, speaking to the point of order. I have been in the House for 12 years and have witnessed numerous censure debates. The nature of a censure debate is they go vast and wide to contribute to the argument of where the government or a particular minister has failed. There is nothing that has constrained us in a censure debate to the extent the Leader of Government Business is trying to constrain us. It is ridiculous.

Of course, the member for Nightcliff has the opportunity to raise examples of where they fail to be open and accountable because this minister was failing to be open and accountable when she responded to the question in Question Time; that is, we believe, she deliberately misled the House. If not deliberately, she at the very least misled the House. It goes to the argument the member for Nightcliff is mounting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Nightcliff, if you could keep to the subject material as per the censure motion.

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### Visitors

**Madam SPEAKER:** Before you start, I advise of the presence of the gallery of Year 7 students from Taminmin College - what a terrific college, isn't it? - accompanied by their teachers Jenny

Mijota and Kara Kelly. On behalf of honourable members, I hope you enjoy your time here today at Parliament House and the time you have witnessing this debate.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Ms FYLES:** Madam Speaker, I know you will be very pleased to see the Taminmin students here. You speak very positively and passionately about the school, which lies in your electorate. My colleague, the member for Johnston, went to your school. So, study hard and you never know where you will end up; you could be in the parliamentary Chamber if you so wish.

Talking to the motion today, the NT government stopped all funding to Frogwatch, which is something the students of the rural area would understand. FrogWatch has a program of eradication of cane toads, and they do this through a volunteer base. They are funded \$200 000, no significant amount in the scheme of things. However, that money is used appropriately and helps to shape the organisation which is mainly volunteers who run programs to eradicate cane toads and cane toad tadpoles.

The FrogWatch coordinator, Graeme Sawyer, has been left stunned by this cut to funding, especially at the point where it is now clear that toad management activities were making a real difference. Research is showing just how severe the cane toad threat is to reptiles.

I live in Nightcliff and we have cane toads around our home. My dog has eaten a cane toad on the edge of the Nightcliff playground oval. That was a quick trip to the vet to have him treated, and he is now fine.

At this time of the year we see the first rains, and we start to see frogs and cane toads spread. On the television series *Kakadu* on the weekend, we saw the real damage done by cane toads to animals, particularly small reptiles, which has happened within Kakadu National Park. One of the quolls has nearly been eradicated because of cane toads. They can cause harm to the tiniest of animals through to large crocodiles.

What we are talking about today is important funding, yet our government does not seem to think so. They seem to think they can cut the funding. The minister needs to start to question documents placed in front of her. She would be aware of this small hard-working group and, as a minister, she should question things instead of reading and accepting what is put in front of her which, in this case, has led her to misleading our House.

She clearly stated the contract was terminated by mutual agreement, yet FrogWatch is telling us that is not correct. This comes to a minister of the Crown respecting Territorians. I have respect for the minister, who has come from being a backbencher and is a relatively new minister. However, she needs to understand her role and start to question things ...

**Ms Finocchiaro** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms FYLES:** Minister for seven days! Anyway ...

**Ms Finocchiaro:** Six. Aw, you have your snipey pants on!

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms Finocchiaro:** Snipey pants.

**Ms FYLES:** The interjections from those opposite show how trivial they think this issue is. They are laughing, thinking we are talking about a couple of hundred thousand dollars in funding to save some frogs. Well, it is not that ...

**Ms Finocchiaro** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Drysdale, cease interjecting.

**Ms FYLES:** Misleading the House is a significant issue, and has consequences to the parliament. I expected this morning the minister would have realised the error of her ways. We know that sometimes in this Chamber things get a little heated. She was reading from documents. She might have gone away and thought about it and asked some questions, and maybe read the paper on Friday or Saturday – I am not sure what day it was – where FrogWatch contradicted her view. Maybe she would have come into this House this morning and given us an explanation and apologised. We were prepared not to go ahead with this censure. However, I was most surprised the Minister for Parks and Wildlife did not acknowledge this, considering a very well-respected leader of this group, Mr Sawyer, has stated it was not by mutual agreement the funding was cut, and they did not agree with the cuts.

The minister needs to apologise for misleading the House, but she needs to understand this is a serious breach of the standards we expect of her as a minister. She is a relatively new minister, maybe she needs some support from her colleagues about understanding the responsibilities. If she has read something in parliament and the next day in the paper she reads it is not correct, she should question what process she should take to respect the position of

a minister of the Crown and, in this parliament, ensure it is clear the contract was not terminated by mutual agreement.

The insult goes further. We are a few days on and the minister had the opportunity this morning to rectify what happened last week. However, she has chosen not to, and she has chosen ...

**Mr Elferink:** Umm.

**Ms FYLES:** ... to ignore that ...

**Mr Elferink:** Umm.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Port Darwin!

**Mr Elferink:** Quoting the member.

**Ms FYLES:** We have school students in this House and you carry on like that.

Madam Speaker, I find the interjection from the member for Port Darwin offensive - Standing Order 62 ...

**Mr Elferink:** Then stop using the language.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Port Darwin!

**Ms FYLES:** In summing up, this is not a trivial matter. Territorians are concerned about cane toads. The threat to our wildlife and our pets is real. They want to know their government is doing everything reasonable to support cane toad control. Hundreds of Territorians have worked with FrogWatch over the years. Those Territorians deserve some respect. We would like to know ...

**Mr Elferink:** Umm.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Port Darwin, cease interjecting with 'umm'.

**Ms FYLES:** It appears the program was not cut by mutual agreement. Mr Sawyer, the FrogWatch Coordinator, said he was stunned to have the funding cut, especially at the point when it was clear that toad management activities were making a real difference. Research is showing how severe the cane toad threat is. This reversing reptile decline project was working. The toad numbers in Darwin were low due to the activities of the Toad Busters and projects within FrogWatch. To have this program cut is not fair, and the funding should be reinstated to FrogWatch.

The minister should apologise for misleading the House and for the comments she made by saying it was by mutual agreement. In the future, I urge her to question documents. She should know it is

a popular and effective program. She needs to understand her portfolio well. She talked about not being able to wait to get out to the amazing parks and reserves. She needs to talk to these community groups, and she should have phoned Mr Sawyer last week. She clearly misled the House.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I ask the minister to apologise for misleading the House and to reinstate the FrogWatch funding.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):**

Madam Speaker, a member of parliament accusing a minister of the Crown of inexperience has allowed herself to run a censure motion which, by her own statements during the motion, she defeated.

I point out a few things. Clearly, the problems they have on that side of the House in relation to the internal mechanics of who is who in the zoo have led to a point where the Leader of the Opposition needs to get her supporters around her and toughen them up.

That is what this is really about. This is an exercise in making the member for Nightcliff more forceful in the House, in trying to blood her, if you like, for lack of a better expression. If you are going to run a censure motion, then I suggest the member for Nightcliff do exactly what she is counselling the minister to do: find out a bit more about what you are talking about before you make a statement. That is the suggestion she has made.

I draw the member for Nightcliff's attention to page 501 of *House of Representatives Practice*, the essential bible that guides us in this House. On page 501 is says:

*May classifies examples of expressions which are unparliamentary and call for prompt interference as:*

- *the imputation of false or unavowed motives;*
- *the misrepresentation of the language of another and the accusation of misrepresentation;*
- *charges or uttering a deliberate falsehood ...*

The essence of this particular matter:

- *abusive and insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.*

It is interesting that a House of this nature would consider the utterance of a deliberate falsehood

as something so onerous that it would earn an instant rebuke. Of course, that is exactly what occurred when she used the word 'misleading' in reference to the minister she is making allegations about.

I was, quite rightly, on my feet until I became aware she was leading up to a censure motion. Misleading the House is one of the gravest allegations you can make against a minister of the Crown. I draw members' attention to pages 728 and 729 of *House of Representatives Practice* where it talks about misconduct and a number of other subheadings including the presence of a House Committee, disobedience to the rules and order of the House, abuse of the right of petition, forged or falsified documents, conspiracy to deceive, and deliberately misleading the House, which is the allegation we have before us.

You can tell already, by the nature of the headings I have just read out, that misleading the House is considered to be the equivalent of a crime in this place because we are obliged to tell the truth in this House. I then point out what the nature of the allegation of misleading really demands. It says:

*The Commons ...*

This is a reference to the House of Commons:

*... may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt. In 1963 the House resolved that in making a personal statement which contained words which he later admitted not to be true, a former Member had been guilty of a grave contempt.*

This was a reference in 1963 to the Profumo case, which, for those of us who remember that far back or have read our history books, was about a Foreign Secretary in the British parliament who had a liaison with a particular lady and, in an effort to cover his tracks, misled the British parliament. It cost him his career because it undermined his capacity to have his integrity publically displayed.

I continue to quote:

*The circumstances surrounding the decision of the House of Commons in Profumo's Case are of importance because of the guidance provided in cases of alleged misrepresentation by Members. Mr Profumo had sought the opportunity of making a personal statement to the House of Commons to deny the truth of allegations currently being made against him. Later he was forced to admit that in making his personal statement of denial to the House, he had deliberately misled the House. As a consequence of his actions, he resigned*

*from the House which subsequently agreed to a resolution declaring him guilty of a grave contempt.*

*Whilst claims that Members have deliberately misled the House have been raised as matters of privilege or contempt, the Speaker has not, to date, accepted such a claim.*

Such is the gravity of such matters in the House of Representatives.

It was very interesting to listen to the argument being made by the member for Nightcliff, because what she said on a number of occasions, and finished with, was the minister should apologise to this House. That weakens her own arguments in a very fundamental way in the sense that what she is asserting is the minister has deliberately misled this House, which is a profound contempt of this House and, therefore, she should do more than apologise, she should resign. That is really the only thing a minister can do if they mislead this House or, for that matter, any member of this House. But no, that is not what she called for. A mere apology will do, according to the member for Nightcliff. It is a misunderstanding of the nature of the allegation she is making in this House and is demonstrated by some other arguments.

She also went on to say the minister had simply read out a document somebody had shoved into her hands; therefore, it follows the minister should question those documents. Yes, that is a fair call; ministers should question the documents they receive. However, it also enlivens something else completely, and is where the lack of clarity in the thinking of the member opposite could not be made out more perfectly. Her argument vacillated between a deliberate attempt to mislead this House and a mistake because the minister may have been misinformed in a document. There is nothing in this parliamentary system that says ministers are not allowed to make mistakes. The moment a minister of the Crown walks across a swimming pool we can expect that minister not to make a mistake.

I am not suggesting for a second the minister has made a mistake, because I will not rely on the incompetent ranting of the member for Nightcliff as evidence of a mistake by the minister. I am saying if you are going to run an argument that the minister has deliberately engaged in conduct which is listed amongst conspiracies to deceive, use forged or falsified documents, or abuse the right of petition, then you have to make out a much stronger argument than has been put to this House.

The argument was deeply weakened when she said things like, 'She needs to start questioning

the documents put in front of her'. The worst thing we can make out of that - I do not accept it is necessarily the case - is she believes the minister may have made a mistake. Where in the *House of Representatives Practice* does it say for one second a minister or a member of parliament is not allowed to make a mistake?

What misleading the House is about is a grave crime as far as this House is concerned, and one that needs to be responded to carefully and cautiously. However, that response has been wanting in the member opposite by virtue of the fact she has neither been careful, nor cautious. In fact, she has not even made out the offence she alleges the minister of, simply because she is prepared to countenance the minister may have made a mistake by reading a document that was factually incorrect.

If we were to censure a member for doing that every time they uttered something in this House, I suspect nearly every member in this House, certainly the members opposite in the Labor Party, would all be guilty of, at one point or another, misleading the House. Of course we must, as a sensible and competent parliament, acknowledge the reality that what occurs from time to time is an honest and reasonable mistake. That is a far cry from forged and falsified documents, from conspiracies to deceive, and from the general heading of misleading the House.

Other headings which are covered in this part of the *House of Representatives Practice* include corruption in the execution of the office as ministers, and advocacy by minister, which I presume deals with lobbyists and looking after particular interest groups.

It is telling we heard a lecture from the member for Nightcliff to the minister about how she should prepare herself, when the member for Nightcliff clearly had a speech shoved into her hand and was told, in a rush of blood by some staff from the fourth floor, 'Read this out. We will put some pressure on the new minister'.

**Ms Walker:** Oh, rubbish!

**Mr ELFERINK:** Well, it is clearly what has happened. 'This will toughen you up, this will blood you a bit.' It just does not carry value.

When a member of this House has allegations of misleading or corruption surrounding them, what happens in Question Time in the real world is that matter is of such importance to the consciousness of the members bringing the allegation that Question Time is dedicated as a strident attack on that issue. Here are members opposite who are so convinced the minister has misled the House, committed a crime as far as this House is

concerned, as to be equivalent to a conspiracy or forged documents. That is the nature of the crime. What do they ask questions about? Speed limits, education, all sorts of things.

The censure motion which has been brought before this House is not indicative of an incensed opposition which believes a crime has been committed against the people of the Northern Territory and their democratically-elected House. No, it is much more indicative of an afterthought. How are you supposed to convince Territorians you are serious about this heinous crime which has been committed when you whack it up the back of Question Time as a single question, 'By the way, we think you have committed this heinous crime and we are now going to go after you'.

It just does not stack up! That is the problem with the way this thing is being run. What embarrasses me on behalf of the member for Nightcliff is that the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to see her pushed out the front in this fashion and remain, essentially, undefended. That is the challenge the member for Nightcliff and this House has been presented with. It says much about the Leader of the Opposition's capacity to deal with her own people around her as expendable for her own purposes. Was there an attempt by the member for Nightcliff to even look at *House of Representative Practices*? No, clearly, there was not. I will chalk that up to her inexperience.

However, I know the Leader of the Opposition knows much better as to what this allegation means, yet she did nothing to stop the member for Nightcliff being placed in the position she has placed herself in by trying to run this argument. In that process, the member for Nightcliff must be sitting there right now thinking to herself, 'My goodness gracious me, I have been asked to prosecute a crime when, at best, I can find a mistake'.

That is exactly what the member for Nightcliff has been asked to pursue. It demonstrates she must take a leaf out of her own book and do some homework. Do not think that just because some staffer sticks something into your hand, member for Nightcliff, you are in a position to run a censure motion. You have to make out the case particularly well when you are running such a serious allegation. You are alleging a gross misconduct and your argument makes out a mistake at best. It is for that reason we could not hope to support this censure motion, because it does not come close to passing muster ...

**Ms Anderson:** Cheap shot.

**Mr ELFERINK:** I pick up on the interjection from the member for Namatjira, 'cheap shot'. That is precisely what it is. It was ill-prepared, ill-considered, ill-researched and just wrong ...

**Ms Walker:** But it is not true that it was by mutual agreement, which is what the minister said.

**Mr ELFERINK:** You have missed the point. You see, this is the problem ...

**Ms Lawrie:** So she misled the House. It is a censure on misleading.

**Mr ELFERINK:** I pick up on the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. The best argument you have made out is a mistake. By the way, I will quote you in your point of order, 'She has deliberately misled the House or, at the very least, misled the House'. You are making a distinction between 'misled' and 'deliberately misled'. There is no such distinction! There is only 'misled with intent', 'honest and reasonable mistake' or, alternatively, 'a correct statement'. There is no such distinction you care to make out, which means you, in all of your wisdom, have also erred in exactly the same fashion. You have been unable to make a distinction between 'honest and reasonable mistake', maybe even 'honest and unreasonable mistake', and 'deliberately misleading'.

To rank the so-called crime, which I do not accept for one second, of the Minister for Parks and Wildlife up there with the cover-up in the Profumo case clearly demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of what that particular offence is. To make out that a person is lying and then accept, in your own argument, that it could well be an honest and reasonable mistake, or a misprinted document, defeats your own argument.

It is a poorly executed censure motion. It, frankly, does not pass muster at the first and most cursory examination. I urge the member for Nightcliff, before waltzing into this place, running a censure motion which attacks the very integrity of this House, to do her homework. Learn about the processes of this place, and then try to prosecute these things. At the moment, you have fallen so far short of the mark. When the member for Nightcliff reads this in a few years time she will feel excruciatingly embarrassed because she has performed so poorly, based on her inexperience and the poor advice of the people around her.

**Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader):** Mr Deputy Speaker, in classic fashion, shoot the messenger. The member for Port Darwin, the Leader of Government Business, in classic style, dedicated the bulk of his contribution to attacking the person who has brought to the attention of this House that

a minister of the Crown has misled the House, clearly, in black and white, in *Hansard*.

I am pleased to see the minister is here, and I look forward to the minister's response in defending herself because that defence was appalling. That defence was simply to attack the member for Nightcliff. That is in the copy book of the member for Port Darwin: attack the person who dared to speak in any way about the actions of the government. That is what you do constantly. However, it does not change the fact that this House has been misled by a minister of the government and that, of course, warrants a censure.

What is happening in the government ranks is they are following the leader. Just run around and say whatever you want to say, it does not matter if it has no basis of truth to it. You can say it because it sounds good at that moment and it gets you out of a tight corner. That is absolutely the copy book and the hallmark of this government. That is what the leader does, it is what his dodgy deputy does, it is what the member for Port Darwin has always done; it is in his DNA. That is what they are all doing.

New ministers come in here and mislead. Quite recently in this debate we posed the question: was it deliberately misleading? Did you know, Minister for Parks and Wildlife, there was no mutual agreement between the department and FrogWatch when their funding was axed? Did you know that, yet you came into this House and told us it was by mutual agreement? That is a genuine question, minister, which you need to answer in this debate. Were you aware there was no mutual agreement when you came into this House and advised us that the funding ceased by mutual agreement? You can clear that one up pretty quickly by letting us know whether you were aware or not.

Going on the assumption you were not aware – and that is a pretty big assumption to make because a minister should be aware of what has occurred with funding agreements. That was the point the member for Nightcliff consistently made: you should question what is occurring with the funding within your agency. That is part of your day job.

However, with the benefit of consideration, benefit of doubt, benefit of the fact we recognise you have not been in the portfolio for a long time and you have inherited decisions. The FrogWatch decision, timing wise, potentially was one you inherited. If you were not aware when you made the statement in the House last week that the funding ceased by mutual agreement, you then became aware that was not the case when FrogWatch issued a media statement. Graeme

Sawyer from FrogWatch went on to do media through a range of different mediums, including radio and print. It would have been brought to your attention, as the minister, that you had misled the House last week when you said the funding ceased by mutual agreement.

Today during Question Time you were given ample opportunity to be given another question from your own side to clean it up, to say: 'I have heard Graeme Sawyer and that was a mistake', which is the argument that is now being led by the member for Port Darwin, that you simply made a mistake. 'It was a mistake, I was given that advice. I recognise now it was not by mutual agreement. However, we stick by our decision and this is the decision we have made.' If that is what you are going to say, we want to hear that. We require an explanation from you, minister, because we expect people to come into this House and tell us the truth.

We know, of course, that is not in the copy book of the way the CLP work. They have not told the public the truth and they do not tell us the truth. When it is very clear in black and white, and it sticks like it is sticking today, you are being held to account by the opposition. That is our day job; we hold you to account. Minister, we are holding you to account for your words which misled the members of this House. We are doing it in quite a reasonable way; a censure is what we ought to do.

We are not threatening to take you to the Privileges Committee because of the heinous crime you have committed, we are just saying you are being censured for your actions. You are being censured for misleading the House. We have not threatened to take you to the Privileges Committee, but that can be a consequence of misleading the House. So, do not treat this flippantly, as you may choose to do, minister. This is a serious matter. The member for Nightcliff, in her question during Question Time today, quoted your comment from *Hansard*. I will quote it again. Minister, you said:

*Let me be clear, this government did not cut the funding for FrogWatch. The contract was terminated by mutual agreement, effective 31 March 2013.*

Yet, minister, FrogWatch has said:

*The NT Government has stopped all funding to FrogWatch which means that Darwin is now exposed to a renewed threat of cane toads.*

And:

*We did not and do not agree with the cut but were given no choice.*

They are the words of FrogWatch. There is no interpretation you can take from those words that it was a mutual agreement. Yet, you have said it was a mutual agreement. So, either you are not telling the truth or FrogWatch is not telling the truth. You have said it is mutual agreement and FrogWatch has said, 'No, it is not a mutual agreement; we did not agree'.

I will quote from the FrogWatch media release:

*The NTG has the right to cut programs like this and the broader education program it involved but it should be upfront with the community about why and then accept the responsibility for the results. We have written to the government and tried to get some clarity around which department is going to be responsible for biodiversity issues within the NTG and have had no success. Our last request to Minister Willem Westra van Holthe is still unanswered from 11 February.*

The media release from FrogWatch went on to say:

*FrogWatch coordinator Graeme Sawyer said he was stunned to have the funding cut, especially at a point when it was now clear that the toad management activities were making a real difference and research is showing just how severe the cane toad threat to reptiles is.*

I have had a bit of experience of the FrogWatch funding over the years. I was a backbencher on the inquiry into the cane toad incursion into the Northern Territory. I chaired that inquiry. The recommendation for funding of programs such as this arose out of that inquiry. I held the portfolio of Environment. I am very aware the department did not see it as a priority, but wanted to fund its own program. However, the government of the day, recognising the parliamentary committee recommendations, proceeded to fund FrogWatch.

The department, over the years, always arced up at that funding and the Labor government, over the years, always said, 'You will fund that \$200 000 to FrogWatch; it is a good thing to do.' We believed it was making a real difference. Why? Because we have not had the massive front wave of cane toads you would normally see with a cane toad incursion.

Minister, if you want to be dismissive of that I refer you to that parliamentary inquiry and three volumes of reports arising out of it. That was a bipartisan inquiry, as parliamentary inquiries tend

to be. You get a massive wave of high numbers of toads with that first wave of incursion. We believed, and we could see with the activities of FrogWatch around our waterways, our creeks, our lagoons, scooping up the all-important cane toad eggs – they lay about 10 000 in ropes – you can make a real difference to the wave of cane toads coming in. We have seen a lesser impact of cane toads across Palmerston and Darwin than we would otherwise have seen if FrogWatch was not funded to be out at night on the ground doing the job Territorians are benefiting from in regard to cane toads.

We are entering the Wet Season, a real problem time for us in incursion of cane toads, and you have axed the funding. Yes, without a doubt, Labor is saying, 'Do not axe the funding. Restore the funding to FrogWatch, it is important.' They are doing an important job and you are doing the wrong thing by axing the funding.

I get it. The department says, 'If you axe their funding we can do more important things with that \$200 000'. That has consistently been the department's view, but the Labor government's view was very different. We said, 'You are doing great things in the department but this needs to be done as well. We need to have FrogWatch, a community organisation, on the front line scooping up the ropes of eggs.'

At the end of the day, if your decision is, 'No, we are not going to fund FrogWatch', then own up to that and take responsibility for that. Do not pretend it was by mutual agreement when it was not. If you are going to argue, 'No, Graeme Sawyer agreed, he is okay with funding', you are going against what the man said in the media. I put to you that you are going against reality.

I have had so many meetings with Graeme Sawyer over the years about FrogWatch funding, and I know there is no way known he would agree to have the funding cut. Would he have been happy with it? No, but he would not agree to it. He stated that in his media release and his media comments.

Minister, if you have been given advice from the department again today that it was by mutual agreement, then unless you sat in that room, have picked up the phone and called Graeme Sawyer and checked that with him, my advice is do not lead with your chin on that one. It may be so, but I have heard the words of Graeme Sawyer. If he does not believe it was by mutual agreement then apologise, because that is what you said on the public record. That takes a fair bit I know, but you might be capable of doing that.

We believe you misled the House. You said it was by mutual agreement and it was not. It was

not by mutual agreement, you axed the funding. Graeme Sawyer from FrogWatch said he was stunned the funding was axed – not by mutual agreement.

Whether, as the member for Port Darwin makes out, you did so mistakenly is for you to say. Did you do it deliberately? That is for you to explain. How much knowledge did you have about this before you read out that answer? Had you spoken to Graeme Sawyer of FrogWatch? Had you met with Graeme Sawyer of FrogWatch? Did you know about the status of the funding before you read the answer? Had you asked questions about it? Are you completely convinced today it was a mutual agreement? They are all relevant questions. This deserves a censure.

Ministers are very loose with the truth; you say whatever suits. The classic example was Question Time when you went into a tailspin, a mad panic, and shut it down on Thursday, which is unprecedented in any Australian parliament. A leader has never shut down Question Time. Speakers do, Leaders of Government Business do, but a leader never has. You went into a mad flap panic because you were being questioned on a document the Chief Minister had referred to as 'a fairy tale' in his first response when questioned. Then, when presented with the documentation, the submission from Power and Water Corporation requesting a 58% increase to the network pricing charge, that is how they ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! This is a censure motion dealing with a misleading the House allegation. It has nothing to do with Power and Water charges and other flights of fancy. She has made a point. She can either sit down or she can try to execute the point, but she does not need to fluff it out for another five minutes with nonsense.

**Mr Deputy SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, when there is a point of order, do you mind getting back into your seat. I know Madam Speaker is very particular about that, so I should enforce her rules. At this point, I do not see a point or order. Please continue.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Yes, thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The point, of course, minister, is you are responsible for what you say in this House. You need to check your facts. If you are provided with advice from the department that the funding ceased by mutual agreement then, if you are going to stick by that, you are misleading the House because Graeme Sawyer was very clear there was no mutual agreement to cessation of that funding. He was stunned, he did not agree to it. He does not want the funding cut, he wants the funding restored.

I put it to you that not only does Graeme Sawyer from FrogWatch want the funding restored, very clearly the opposition is calling on you to restore the funding to FrogWatch of \$200 000. We are calling on you to apologise for cutting the funding and for misleading us in your answer. Also – this is the bit the government constantly misses – the community wants to see that funding restored. FrogWatch has enormous community support. Why? Because they are doing a really good job in our community to prevent the massive wave of the incursion of cane toads. Here we are, on the eve of the Wet Season, where the threat rises significantly ...

**Mr Tollner** interjecting.

**Ms LAWRIE:** I note the member for Fong Lim is laughing, and he thinks it is a joke, but some of us take seriously the fact that the consequences of the cane toad incursion are horrendous. We lose our snakes, goannas, and many of our other animals across the ecosystem. It has devastating consequences.

Do not do this, minister. Show some statesman-like behaviour in this Chamber today and say what the truth is of the funding arrangements. Was it mutual agreement or not? Graeme Sawyer has been very clear. Then take it a step further and give us an apology for misleading us. Apologise for the funding cut, restore the funding, and understand the community wants FrogWatch funded so we can fight the incursion of cane toads. I look forward to your response, minister.

**Mr TOLLNER (Treasurer):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Nightcliff for bringing on this censure motion. It took extraordinary guts to stand up in this place and bring such a motion on. Of course, it is not the member for Nightcliff who is behind this motion, it is the Leader of the Opposition because the Leader of the Opposition wants to play some political games with the minister. That is what this is all about. I will get back to that point.

I would like you to listen to this next bit very carefully. I have in front of me a document called a deed of termination. For those people who might be listening to this, a deed of termination is a legal document between the Northern Territory of Australia and FrogWatch North Incorporated. If you have a look inside this deed of termination, which I will table, it details in Item C under the heading Background:

*The Principal and the Contractor have mutually agreed to terminate the Contract on the terms and conditions set out in this Deed.*

FrogWatch North Incorporated has the address for service of notice as the coordinator. The physical address is 19 Tasman Circuit, Wagaman, which I believe is the address of Graeme Sawyer who is a signatory of this document. The signature of the second authorised person is the Coordinator, Graeme Robert Sawyer. I believe the Graeme Robert Sawyer who signed this document is probably the Graeme Sawyer you referred to. The document was also signed by the Chairman of FrogWatch, Mr Ian James Morris.

I will say it again:

*The Principal and the Contractor have mutually agreed to terminate the Contract on the terms and conditions set out in this Deed.*

That is a legal document.

**Ms Lawrie:** Table it.

**Mr TOLLNER:** A couple of provisions - I am about to table it, do not worry:

*Subject to and conditional upon the Contractor performing its obligations under clause 3 of this Deed the Principal will pay to the Contractor the amount of fifty thousand dollars (\$50 000) including GST (the 'Termination payment') within ten (10) Business Days of the Contractor having fully complied with those obligations under clause 3 of this Deed.*

I am not going to go through the whole deed, but it is a legal document. It was signed by the Chairman and the Coordinator of FrogWatch, and it adds a little weight to the comments made by the minister in this Chamber that the agreement was ceased by mutual agreement. I table this document and I hope it is quickly copied and circulated to members of the opposition so they have the opportunity in this censure debate to make an apology to the minister. That is really what is required here: irrefutable proof that this was mutually agreed to.

I listened to the Leader of Opposition and I have a couple of quotes from her censure speech. 'Loose with the truth', she called us. She said that we lead with the chin. She said, 'You need to check your facts'. Get that one! We need to check our facts? Someone needs to check their facts. I am sure it was not the member for Nightcliff. She was led into this by the Leader of the Opposition, who failed to check her facts.

She said, 'Graeme Sawyer was very clear'. Maybe you should have questioned him a little more tightly because he signed a legally binding

document saying he mutually agreed to the termination.

The Leader of the Opposition said, 'Show some statesman-like behaviour'. Is it statesman-like to actively target Aboriginal members of parliament?

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 62. It is highly offensive to make that allegation about the opposition.

**Mr Tollner:** I am talking on a censure.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Well, it is still offensive, and a censure does not remove offensive as a standing order.

**Mr ELFERINK:** Speaking to the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The minister is doing nothing other than reflecting on the motives of members opposite which, by the way, is something the members opposite do with reckless abandon in this place. It is a common allegation and the minister may well make observations about what he thinks are the motives of members opposite. They have to suck it up because they are making the blue.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I will let the minister continue at this stage, but be very careful, if you could, minister.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. To come into this place, go through Question Time, not ask a single question on FrogWatch through the whole of Question Time, then spring something in the last second of Question Time on a brand, spanking new minister and expect that minister to be prepared for such a censure motion is highly unusual. However, it is not the first time it has happened.

Last week on General Business Day, we saw exactly the same thing occur with the member for Arafura when he was targeted by the opposition who knew in the backs of their minds that he had already spoken on his own bill. It would not have appeared in the Notice Paper had he not. They targeted him, put him on the spot very quickly to try to get talking in an uncomfortable situation. They actively targeted the member for Arafura.

We hear countless times in Question Time the active targeting of the member for Arnhem. It has never been suggested the member for Arnhem has committed a crime anywhere, but the member for Arnhem is constantly under attack by members opposite.

Then there is the member for Namatjira. The member for Namatjira has committed the most heinous of crimes; she left the Labor Party. There is no crime under the sun that is worse than

leaving the Labor Party. For that, the member for Namatjira has been targeted. When you look at the systematic targeting, it is odd that it applies to all Aboriginal members in this place. It is absolutely appalling.

They came in here with a trumped-up censure motion that makes absolutely no sense. They are clearly red-faced about a signed contract that says it has been mutually agreed to, but it does not abate their strategic direction, which is targeting Aboriginal members of parliament ...

**Mr VOWLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I feel a little offended as the only Indigenous member on the Labor Party side. Last week I raised a point that a minister called Indigenous ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** What is your standing order?

**Mr VOWLES:** A minister last week called Aboriginal people in this House blackfellas and said, 'I am entitled to call them that', when we said that was not good enough and we wanted more respect. To say we do not respect Indigenous people is entirely incorrect. It is the Labor core of who we are. We represent all Territorians regardless of race, and the insinuation from the member for Fong Lim that we are targeting Indigenous politicians in this House is simply not correct. We are simply holding government to account.

**Madam SPEAKER:** What is your point of order, member for Johnston?

**Mr VOWLES:** Standing Order 62. It is offensive to say we are targeting Aboriginal members of this parliament.

**Madam SPEAKER:** All right, thank you. Minister, you have the call, but if you could tone your comments down a little, please.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Madam Speaker, the member for Johnston should feel ashamed of the way his party is treating Indigenous Territorians on this side of the Chamber. It is absolutely appalling ...

**Ms WALKER:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 62. It is offensive to continue to assert that members on this side of the House are deliberately targeting Indigenous members. It is not the case. It is highly offensive and I ask you to rule and ask the minister to withdraw.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, honourable members. Member for Fong Lim, obviously this is a sensitive and emotive subject area. Could you tone down your references to members' nationalities or ethnicity please?

**Mr TOLLNER:** Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I highlighted a systematic approach that has been happening from the opposition to date.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate we are approaching 12 noon ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** No, it is a censure motion. You may continue until it is exhausted, and it cuts into the luncheon suspension.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Is that right? No lunch, that is fine.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Fong Lim, you continue until the speakers are exhausted and then the motion is agreed to or otherwise.

**Mr TOLLNER:** I apologise, Madam Speaker, I always thought there was a lunch hour, irrespective of a censure motion. That is fine, I am more than happy to carry on.

This censure motion has nothing to do with cane toads. We have heard very little about cane toads. The censure motion was predominantly about the minister misleading the House in relation to cane toads. It was interesting to see that, in the last minute or two, the Opposition Leader made a couple of points about cane toads. It is also interesting that the Opposition Leader, the former Labor government Treasurer, the one who put this government into a \$5.5bn projected debt, is now coming into this House arguing. Every time the government does something to reduce its spending to tighten its belt the Opposition Leader screams blue murder.

The other thing that is interesting is the effect FrogWatch has had on cane toads. I have had a long association with FrogWatch. My former senior advisor, when I was in the federal parliament, Mr Paul Cowdy, worked for FrogWatch. That is when it hit its straps because Paul Cowdy was a communications expert, one of the best in the country, who did an incredible job of raising public awareness to the scourge of cane toads and their arrival in the Northern Territory.

The fact is it is almost impossible – I go as far as to say it is impossible – to stop cane toads advancing across north Australia without some sort of biological solution. That biological solution has to come from the federal parliament; that is not something in our control in the Northern Territory. Biosecurity is predominantly a federal government issue. There is an enormous amount of work going on at the CSIRO and other scientific agencies to find a biological solution to cane toads.

The idea that people can trap them and somehow capture them all, like we could shoot out buffaloes

in the BTEC program, is preposterous. Tens of thousands of eggs are laid by every female toad every time it breeds ...

**Ms Walker:** Are you suggesting we do nothing, just abandon it?

**Mr TOLLNER:** No, I am not suggesting that at all, member for Nhulunbuy. In fact, I made some suggestions a few years ago that we should encourage our kids and our friends to get out with golf clubs, cricket bats, star pickets and the like and start killing the damn things. When I was a kid growing up in Queensland, that is what we did; we killed cane toads ...

**Ms Walker:** They still collect them, put them in bags and put them in freezers. That is a more humane way to deal with it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr TOLLNER:** In fact, this weekend I am going out with a couple of mates. We will be sitting on the roof of a Land Cruiser driving around with a spotlight shooting cane toads with a .22 as a bit of fun. I encourage more people to do that because ...

**Mr Wood:** How many bullets do you have? You said there are millions of them.

**Mr TOLLNER:** No. Winchester makes a thing called the toad load, which might interest the member for Nelson. It is a purpose-made load for killing cane toads with a .22. Winchester has seen the opportunity and has made a toad load for blokes who like to go out shooting cane toads. That is not a bad pastime. As a government, I would like to see that pastime encouraged more. I would like to see schools encouraging kids to get out and kill cane toads.

However, the idea we are going to spend enormous amounts of money building fences, creating traps and trapping them all is preposterous. By the same token, I do not think all the kids in Australia could kill the cane toads if they put their minds to it, they are such a scourge. As I said, the only way to eradicate them, in my mind, is through a biological solution.

This motion was never anything to do with FrogWatch or its concern for cane toads, the environment or the like. This motion was simply another targeting of an Indigenous member, this time a brand new minister, trying to make her look bad in front of Territorians in exactly the same way they did to the member for Arafura and they constantly do to the members for Arnhem and Namatjira. It is a systematic, targeted approach trying to undermine Indigenous members of government.

Why are they doing this? Because they still cannot get over the fact that Indigenous Territorians turned their back on them at the last election. They are so consumed with hatred they are hitting out everywhere, to the point they target Indigenous members in parliament, trying to assert they are corrupt, they mislead parliament, they are ...

**Mr WOOD:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 67: digression from subject. We are talking about FrogWatch. We are now getting into matters which are completely away from the subject of the censure motion.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, you have the call. If you could contain your comments to the motion before the House.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Madam Speaker, I move that the motion be amended so that all words after 'the' be replaced with 'opposition for incompetent conduct in making allegations of professional misconduct against ministers'.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you. Do you wish to speak to the motion now, minister?

**Mr TOLLNER:** Of course I wish to speak to the motion, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Speak to the amended motion.

**Mr TOLLNER:** This is an incompetent opposition. They are incompetent when they come into this place making allegations of misconduct, misleading the parliament and the like.

As the member for Port Darwin said in this censure motion, a censure is the most serious thing to run in the parliament. A censure of misleading the House, of lying, of making things up against a minister is the most serious thing you could do in this place.

You would think, in making those serious allegations, you would have done your homework. To not find a legal contract signed by Graeme Sawyer and the chairman of FrogWatch saying they mutually agreed to terminate the contract is appalling and incompetent conduct. They are not checking the most basic facts and are not even asking a question – straight into a censure motion; making something up and accusing the minister of misleading the parliament.

Who is misleading who here? As I said, it is wrong. The Leader of the Opposition said we are loose with the truth. These are allegations the Opposition Leader is making about the government. We are loose with the truth! She said we lead with the chin. Who led with the chin?

I cannot believe it was the member for Nightcliff. I give her credit for that. In my heart of hearts, I believe the member for Nightcliff has been set up by the Leader of the Opposition, because this is her modus operandi.

I am glad the Leader of the Opposition brought power price increases into the debate last week because I was absolutely disgusted at her actions in revealing the massive increase. She has revealed this massive increase. It has been on the Utilities Commissioner's website for over a month but, no, she has revealed it. It has been in the public domain. If the Leader of the Opposition was even close to being half competent and half truthful about the ambit claim that Power and Water puts every time, she would say, 'That is just the nature of Power and Water. They always put in an ambit claim with the Utilities Commissioner.'

The Leader of the Opposition knows in the past she has overridden requests of the Power and Water Corporation; she has not listened to them at all. But no, there is a document on the Utilities Commissioner's website and, all of a sudden, that is enough reason to scare the daylights out of Territorians.

Goodness me, last week was a nightmare for me. I was phoned by people all over the Territory saying, 'What are you doing, what do you mean you are putting our power bills up by 58%? We have just copped a 20% increase.' This is just politics of the worst and most gutter nature when you scare Territorians for no reason. I feel eternally embarrassed for the media because they were completely misled by the Leader of the Opposition. The media were convinced power prices would be going up because the Leader of the Opposition managed to convince them.

It did not matter what I, the Chief Minister, or the Essential Services minister said, the Opposition Leader's work at creating that misinformation and putting the wrong story out there confused the media to the point where they spread it across the Northern Territory and caused massive, unwarranted concern about power prices. It does not matter how many times you say, 'Power prices are not going to increase by more than we have already said they will: 20% this year, 5% next year and 5% the year after'. The only thing that would change that is the removal of the carbon tax, in which case we would see those increases come down. That is not the story the Opposition Leader wants out there. She wants Territorians living in fear, concerned, questioning whether the government will increase power by 58%. This is wrong, it is twisted, it is everything this parliament is not supposed to be.

She said, 'Show some statesman-like behaviour'. This is the type of nonsense the Leader of the

Opposition preaches to us. Well, show some statesman-like behaviour. You now have the perfect opportunity with this amended statement to categorically apologise to the minister, which I am hoping you will do ...

**Ms Lawrie:** I am hoping to hear from the minister.

**Mr TOLLNER:** I am hoping you will stand up - I do not believe the minister should stand up. In fact, I will advise the minister not to stand up. The minister's name has been smeared in this whole thing. The minister has nothing to defend. Yet, you still call on the minister to stand up. You still try to target the minister. Why? Because you believe she cannot defend herself. You look at her and say, 'Oh, she is an Indigenous person from Central Australia and she cannot speak on a censure motion'. That is disgraceful ...

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 62. This is highly offensive ...

**Mr Tollner:** Oh, sit down. You are the one who is offensive. Get your facts right!

**Ms LAWRIE:** I have the right to point out why I find it highly offensive. Never in my life have I targeted anyone on race, and never will I. I am proudly a born and raised Territorian ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition ...

**Ms LAWRIE:** Let me finish my comments, Madam Speaker, please, because this is highly ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker!

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Sit! One member at a time, as I have ordered, instructed, and advised this House many times. Your point of order is taken, Opposition Leader, you find the comments offensive. Minister, if you could withdraw those comments in regard to targeting Indigenous ...

**Mr TOLLNER:** I withdraw.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! The Leader of the Opposition directly challenged you a moment ago, and she should either withdraw it or stand by it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Sit down, member for Fong Lim ...

**Mr Tollner:** Madam Speaker ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Wait! Sorry, sit down, member for Port Darwin. My apologies, member for Fong Lim.

The debate is heated, I ask that you take a deep breath. Minister, please continue your comments. You have 14 minutes left.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Yes, the debate is heated. Do you know why? Because we find what the Opposition Leader is doing offensive. If anyone should complain about feeling offended it is us on this side. But, oh, no, on the Labor side, 'We are so holy, we love Aboriginal people, they have always been part of Labor, they are always on our side'. Well, they are not. The last election did not go your way. Get over it! Do not target Aboriginal people on this side of the House, look within yourselves. Find out why your policy direction is wrong. Find out all these things, but do not, for goodness sake, continue to target Indigenous members of parliament on this side ...

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 62. I repeat, I and my entire team find it highly offensive to be accused of targeting members of parliament because they are Indigenous. It is not what we do. We have never done it, and we never will. We are not that heinous. We despise racism.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, Opposition Leader. Minister, please contain your comments to your amendment to the motion.

**Mr TOLLNER:** That is exactly what I am doing. The Leader of the Opposition is offensive. She is disgusting the way she is constantly dragging this parliament into the mud.

I have a question for the Leader of the Opposition when she apologises to the minister. She might also be able to inform this place whether she spoke to Graeme Sawyer or whether she has run this censure off a newspaper article. Let us find out who is misleading who here. That would be the question because, clearly, without any doubt, the minister is not. There is a signed contract in black and white with Graeme Sawyer's and the chairman's signatures saying they mutually agreed.

I do not believe the Opposition Leader spoke to Graeme Sawyer because I do not believe he would make those suggestions if the Leader of the Opposition had spoken to him. Did the Leader of the Opposition say, 'Mr Sawyer, did you sign anything to say you agreed to this or do you not feel right inside? Can we use this to attack the minister?' The Leader of the Opposition is all about attacking the minister. This is not about finding the truth, being offended by misleading the parliament or anything like that. The Opposition Leader is never offended by anything; she has the hide of a rhino.

This is a targeted campaign at the new minister and a couple of other members. We all know who they are ...

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 62. I know I am becoming repetitive, but the minister continues to make the allegation we are targeting members of parliament because of their race. That is highly offensive.

**Madam SPEAKER:** No, Opposition Leader, the minister referenced targeting of members without any reference to their background, ethnicity or race.

**Mr TOLLNER:** That is correct, Madam Speaker, and thank you for that ruling. We all know who I am talking about, though.

I believe I have made the point. The minister in this case is completely beyond blame. The opposition is incompetent ...

**Ms Lawrie:** Let the minister speak.

**Mr TOLLNER:** We have it from the Opposition Leader again, 'Let the minister speak'. That is all they are interested in. They are baying for blood, even when they are down on the floor and have had the knife shoved through their throat. They know they have it wrong but are still going in their death throes saying 'Let the minister speak'.

The minister has not committed a crime and has nothing to defend. You are making the allegation, you have been caught out, shame on you! You are targeting Indigenous members of the Territory parliament, shame on you!

Madam Speaker, this motion put up by the member for Nightcliff is but a political stunt which has backfired badly. I expect them to apologise the first opportunity they stand to speak.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, what I thought was to be a discussion about the future of FrogWatch has turned into something I am ashamed to hear in this parliament.

To bring the race card into this parliament is quite disgusting and shows the height of arrogance by the government to support that kind of statement being made. I do not look at the new Minister for Community Services and Parks and Wildlife as an Aboriginal person, therefore, I should not deal with her any differently than the member for Port Darwin as the Attorney-General.

This issue revolves around whether Mr Graeme Sawyer believed a contract was terminated and a statement from the minister saying that was the case.

I would have liked discussion about whether there has been some misunderstanding between Graeme Sawyer and the department. There could be, I do not know. Graeme Sawyer issued a media release saying something different to what the minister said. I am not sure of those reasons, but what ...

**Mr Elferink:** Does it warrant a censure motion at that point?

**Mr WOOD:** It may be the case, but this has gone further. I would like to have discussed the importance of FrogWatch. The statement showed the importance of FrogWatch.

The Treasurer said he will go out like John Wayne with a posse and Winchesters and be a real help in getting rid of cane toads. The point is we know in certain areas FrogWatch can succeed in helping reduce the impact on native fauna. That has been proven by – I think Graeme Sawyer mentioned it in here — the number of yellow-spotted monitors found in two locations in Darwin. The fact is many of those reptiles have been wiped out by cane toads.

We could have had that discussion and we might have been able to at least come up with some consensus about whether we support the idea of FrogWatch, and whether the minister would be willing to sit down with FrogWatch and work out a way it could be funded on a more long-term basis. I would have appreciated that debate.

But what happened? It turned into something disgusting. I do not go home and look at my wife as an Aboriginal woman; she is my wife. I do not look at the minister as an Aboriginal. I know she is, but I do not make that distinction. What the government is saying is, 'We will not let the minister speak because she is Aboriginal'.

I will turn the tables around the other way. I am quite happy for the minister to speak or not to speak. In fact, I support what the minister, to some extent, has done because she is brand new. I know the other day during Question Time she said she would prefer to take some of those questions on notice. I accept that being a minister for the first time – not being Aboriginal – is a difficult job and sometimes there will be some teething problems. That is what I would have discussed. I would not have raised the issue of Aboriginality, yet the member for Fong Lim has dragged that into this House in the worst way.

Am I supposed to not question the Chief Minister because he is Aboriginal? Give me a break! I do not look at the minister for Transport and say, 'Ah, well, I will give him a super-hard question because he is not Aboriginal'. I ask questions based on

whether people are ministers. It is sad we are now bringing race into it.

After all, we scrapped the minister for Indigenous Affairs and the Department for Indigenous Advancement because the Chief Minister said we are all one. I can agree with that; I just have some problems with how you put that into place. However, you have shown by singling out the minister that maybe we are not all one. You have raised an issue that should not have been raised in this parliament. It is disappointing that a debate which, for some people, is important has been reduced to this.

I know people laugh over there. I remember when there was laughter about how many nurses signed a petition. Guess who got hurt most by that? It was the government for laughing at the nurses. You may not have thought that is what you were doing, but that is what happened.

When a minister said Nhulunbuy is null and void, you might have thought it was funny. Ask the people in Nhulunbuy. Now, when you laugh at a censure motion about FrogWatch, there are many kids out there, in many schools – Madam Speaker's family has been involved in FrogWatch at Wallaby Holtze Road. There have been many people who have been involved in doing their best to hold back the cane toad invasion.

Yes, it is probably an impossible job, but in small locations, at the local school, at the local park, at the local swimming hole, maybe they were able to do something. When you laugh at the opposition for bringing forward a censure motion, you laugh at the people who look after FrogWatch.

When you bring up the issue of race, you destroy all your arguments. Perhaps the opposition did get it wrong; perhaps they did not know about the agreement the minister had. I did not know about the agreement, but when I spoke to the minister he showed me the agreement. The point is we could have had a discussion that could have ended with mutual satisfaction, with both sides saying we agree FrogWatch should be funded continuously ...

**Mr Elferink:** No criticism for the Labor Party for not even asking a question?

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. You did not need to bring on the race issue. What you needed to raise was the embarrassment, if you were true to this debate. If the opposition had not known there was an agreement, you could have purely left it at saying, 'This censure motion was silly. You were wrong. There was an agreement.'

But, no, the member for Fong Lim wants to amend the motion so the opposition is censured for

incompetent conduct in making allegations of professional misconduct against ministers. The member for Port Darwin said, 'Sometimes we make mistakes'. This does not allow for that either. The point I am making is this got out of hand. The embarrassment, if you want to put it that way, of a motion that may have been well and truly stomped on by proof there was an agreement, would have been enough.

But, no, there is a statement that the opposition is only targeting certain people because they are Aboriginal. We have laws in Australia to counter racial vilification. Perhaps these laws are dismissed when we are in this House because of parliamentary privilege. I do not think that should have anything to do with it. It should be about the decency in the way we deal with other people, not that people are Chinese, Aboriginal, part-Aboriginal or of Anglo-Saxon origin. We deal with them because they are human beings who have a job to do in this parliament.

I would be disgusted if a member of the opposition targeted a person because they are Aboriginal. The member for Arnhem has questions to answer which were raised on *Four Corners*. Did anyone say that *Four Corners* was racist? I did not think so. They took up an issue of certain allegations that had been made about the Jawoyn Association. Is that racist because they picked on an Aboriginal association? Warren Mundine was spot on when he said for too long people have got away with, 'It is all right. It is the cousins and aunts and uncles.' He said it is time that stopped. He was not called racist; he was stating the facts.

If something is wrong, it is wrong. It does not matter whether it is an Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal doing it, it is wrong. That is what this debate should be; it should not have even gone down this path. If the opposition thinks one of the ministers has done something wrong, how does the issue of Aboriginality come into that debate? I do not know. Yet, it has and it is one of the low points of parliament when people drag up that issue.

Madam Speaker, when we should be trying to work together regardless of race, what do we do? We fall back in the gutter and raise these issues that do not do our members of parliament any good in the public arena.

**Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I will speak to the amendment. Of course, the opposition will vote against the amendment ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I want some clarification in the speaking to the amendment processes.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is a new motion. It is an amendment to the motion, so people can speak on the amendment.

**Mr ELFERINK:** Okay, I am happy with that because I will speak as well.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Obviously, the opposition will not be agreeing with the amendment and we are speaking against it. That being said, ultimately the government has the weight of the numbers, and will use its numbers. The government will censure the opposition today.

It is extraordinary. I recall the years when we were in government, when there were plenty of things the opposition did we did not think were right and did not agree to. There were plenty of censures they led which we did not agree to. Every now and again someone would say, 'Let us move an amendment and put it back on them and let us censure them'. The wiser heads in the government would always look at them and say, 'No, you do not do that'. The government gets on with the job of government. Censure ...

**Mr Elferink:** That is precisely what you guys did.

**Ms LAWRIE:** No, we did not. We never censured the opposition. The wiser heads would say, 'No, governments are above and beyond that. You get on with the job of government.' Oppositions, by their nature, lead many censures against government.

We had today a censure surrounding the use of the words 'mutual agreement' by the minister last week in Question Time, saying there was a mutual agreement to cease the funding for FrogWatch. Graeme Sawyer, who runs FrogWatch, a well-known Territorian, very publicly said, 'No, there was no mutual agreement at all'.

We waited all of Question Time because sometimes when misleading occurs they go in and mop it up. That did not happen, so we raised the question and, of course, moved to substantive motion and a censure. There is nothing unusual in that process.

Regarding whether or not we have contacted Graeme Sawyer, yes, my office was in contact with Graeme Sawyer, and he advised ...

**Mr Styles:** Well, you did not get very good information.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Member for Sanderson, you might want to listen. Mr Sawyer advised that FrogWatch first got the letter saying the Northern Territory government wanted to end the funding agreement on 20 December 2012, requiring an answer by 24 December. Later, FrogWatch was asked to

sign the termination agreement, but on the basis it would not get any payments outstanding and payments were in arrears unless it signed. FrogWatch signed. It was owed money by the Northern Territory government. It signed a legal document that said – it has now been tabled by the Treasurer:

*The Principal and the Contractor have mutually agreed to terminate the Contract on the terms and conditions set out in this Deed.*

That was 1 February 2013 – legal terminology.

Very clearly, they were not agreeing to this. They had a gun at their head of getting their arrears paid, 'if you do not sign it, you do not get your arrears paid'.

In common parlance and the accepted way of operating, that is not a mutual agreement, that is a no-choice option. The legal documentation – a mutual agreement so the minister can get away with her words. If you were to be fair, frank, and honest with Territorians, you would say, 'We chose to cease the funding of FrogWatch, we have other priorities', not pretend they agreed to it. They did not. They had no choice but to sign the termination which had the mutual agreement in it, because they were not going to be paid their arrears.

That is a genuine disgrace. That the government behaves like that with community-based organisations is a disgrace. I would never countenance such behaviour in any government I was a part of. We worked constructively with community organisations. We respected the role community organisations played in our community. We particularly respected the role FrogWatch played in our community.

This government misses that. You are desperate to get the light off you and your actions, to not be held to account for your actions, so you use your weight of numbers to throw it back on the opposition.

The facts are that FrogWatch did not want its funding terminated. FrogWatch was advised on 20 December in writing that its funding agreement would cease and it was required to give an answer on 24 December, Christmas Eve. Stand and defend that. Then, later, making it even worse, FrogWatch was asked to sign the termination agreement, but on the basis it would not get any payments outstanding paid in arrears unless it signed – standover tactics by a government on a community organisation. Really? Are they the depths you are sinking to?

Then, you are so desperate in this censure today that you turn it around to censure the opposition, because we hold ministers to account. That is our job, to hold ministers to account on behalf of members of our community who are not in this Parliament House.

We are holding you to account on behalf of FrogWatch and the community which supports the work FrogWatch does.

I thank the member for Nelson for his contribution because he nailed it. The behaviour we see in this Chamber by senior members of government – constant disgusting allegations against the opposition that, somehow, we hold people to account because of their race, rather than because of their position or their actions.

The member for Arnhem is held to account for her actions. Her actions were the subject of *Four Corners* last night. Her actions on the record are significant. There were allegations she covered up; actions of fraud; use of the government fuel card, still the subject of an Auditor-General inquiry; and she is on the record altering her electoral returns to show a payment from the Jawoyn Association. The amount to be repaid is still not on the public record, by the way. I was interested in noting the Chief Minister said today it is \$8000. The electoral return says \$22 000. Where is the remainder? Who will pay that?

Ministers will be held to account for their answers in Question Time, regardless of their race. Each of us in parliament has a right to hold parliamentarians to account for their actions, for what they say and what they do, not their race – never for that. As the member for Nelson said, it could be interpreted as being racist to pull this card out on us. Because I am not an Aboriginal person I cannot question a minister? Really? Is that where you are going with this? That is not Territorian.

I have people stop me in the street who I have grown up with, Aboriginal Territorians, who say, 'Little one, do not let them stop you. We know they throw that race thing at you. We know they are wrong. You keep going.' I thank them for their kindness and support, because they know me. They know how I was raised and my values. They know how deeply I hold acceptance of individuals to the core of my being, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual preference ...

**Mr Elferink:** You are in the wrong party to believe that.

**Ms LAWRIE:** You do not like to hear it because you raise it and sling it, but you cannot handle it when it is refuted and rebuked.

My family is Aboriginal. I love them dearly. They get angry when they hear this disgusting behaviour from this government. How desperate are you to do this when you should be dealing with the substance? You cut funding to FrogWatch - \$200 000 gone to a community organisation which does vital work at the front line. We do not want a massive incursion of cane toads. We have every right to question the minister on that. When the minister told us it was mutual agreement and the organisation said it was not, we had every right to wait for the minister to put the record straight. She did not, so we, therefore, of course, censured. That is what oppositions do; it is their job.

You go too far, government, just as you went too far and got it terribly wrong last week shutting down Question Time. You went too far with your racist slurs and allegations in this Chamber today, saying, 'We are going to amend it and censure this opposition'. It will be seen for what it is. We will continue to hold you to account, and the community will continue coming to the opposition to say, 'Please stand up and fight for that issue. Fight for that funding, because this government is not listening to us.'

Just as we have the birthing mothers conducting a vigil outside parliament tonight, the teachers rallying outside parliament on Thursday, we will fight for FrogWatch funding and continue to hold you to account. At the end of the day, the poll and test that really matters will be the Territory election. I look forward to that because whether I travel in the city, the regional towns or out bush, people consistently are incredibly unhappy with this government because they said one thing before the election and, after the election, are doing the exact opposite.

You are hurting people through your price hikes and cost of living increases. You are hurting people through services being cut. You are hurting people through teacher numbers being cut from bush schools ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition has another 10 minutes, but she is not even talking about this now. She is having a meander around. Bring her back to the topic.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Port Darwin. Opposition Leader, if you could contain your comments to the amendment to the motion.

**Ms LAWRIE:** I am, Madam Speaker, because it talks about condemning the opposition for incompetent conduct in making allegations of professional misconduct against ministers – plural. I took into account that would include the Minister for Education regarding the cuts to teacher

numbers from schools. I took into account that would include the Treasurer for the massive tariff hikes, and the fact the Chief Minister did not even seem to be aware Power and Water had a submission to the Utilities Commission to increase our network power prices by 58%. If they had contained this to minister – singular – I would have contained it to the FrogWatch debate. However, given it is professional misconduct against 'ministers' then I took it to mean that.

The government was upset that opposition was taking the government to account across a range of ministerial portfolios and, somehow, we had been undertaking some misconduct. I look forward to hearing the rant from the member for Port Darwin, the Leader of Government Business, about what this professional misconduct is regarding Education and Power and Water. He will go back to his DNA, to what he always says, that they inherited a \$5.5bn debt. Last time I checked, your own budget papers have debt rising to \$5.1bn. You wonder where these savage cuts are going.

We dealt openly and accountably with the people of the Northern Territory. For example, if we undertook to make structural changes to Power and Water Corporation, we had the Merv Davies expert report that went into the repairs and maintenance and the capital program, and we provided that report into the public realm. In the financial sustainability of Power and Water, it was the Andrew Reeves report, and we put that report into the public realm.

From this government, you get no reports in the public realm. Embarrassingly, even today the government leads with the initiative of opening up speed limits on the Stuart Highway for 200 km south of Tennant Creek. The media knows the government has four reports on the issue of open speed limits ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance again. She is just having a meander around the room at the moment. She is not contributing in any meaningful way to this debate.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, member for Port Darwin. Opposition Leader, if you could contain your comments to the amendment to the motion, which is in regard to misleading the House and government funding for FrogWatch, and the amendment to censure the opposition.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I am going off the amended motion, which no longer refers to FrogWatch. The amended motion now says:

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker!

**Ms LAWRIE:**

*I move that this Assembly censures the opposition for incompetent conduct in making allegations of professional misconduct against ministers.*

Madam Speaker, I seek your guidance on whether it is just on FrogWatch ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Seeking your guidance, I will place myself equally in your hands.

**Madam SPEAKER:** My apologies, Opposition Leader. Yes, there is the censuring of the opposition for incompetent conduct. You are referencing past behaviour and conduct of the opposition, so continue. Try to keep your comments succinct if possible.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Yes, thank you. This is a serious motion and I take it seriously. The government is moving to censure an opposition, and that is not normally the case, as we know, nor is shutting down Question Time as we saw on Thursday.

What we have here are examples of a government that is so chaotic, so dysfunctional, so riven and torn amongst themselves, and so incapable of making good positive decisions on behalf of Territorians across their portfolios that they turn on the opposition and attack, because that is all they have left.

I put it to you, government, that what the public wants is the government to get on and do its job ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 70: tedious repetition. I urge you to consider the proposition that she is now engaging in nothing more than tedious repetition and rule accordingly.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Speaking to the ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** No, that is all right, Opposition Leader. I believe the Opposition Leader is speaking to the amended motion. Continue, Opposition Leader.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I put it to you that the government is so desperate, chaotic and dysfunctional that they do not have initiatives in government and, when they do come up with something, such as opening up the speed limits, when they are asked for any evidence, 'No, no, we have to hide those reports'.

The only incompetence I see here – and it will not come as any surprise to the government – is the CLP. You are incredibly incompetent. Territorians were not so sure you would be a good

government, but they had no idea of just how bad you would be, how appalling the infighting, chaos and dysfunction would be and how you would turn ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! She has now made this point about four times. I draw your attention again to Standing Order 70: tedious repetition.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, Leader of Government Business. Opposition Leader, if you could get to the point in regard to the comments around the motion without too much repetition.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Absolutely. Yes, thank you. I am saying any reference to incompetent conduct needs to go to the government. There have been five ministerial reshuffles and two Chief Ministers. Look at the Department of Children and Families; it has had five CEOs and three ministers in one year. That is unheard of. The pace of change occurring with the shuffling of chairs on the government's side is causing no strong initiatives to come out from this government. They do not have new housing subdivisions out of the ground, and they have not proceeded apace with new jobs and regional economic opportunities in the bush.

They then started to get petty and cut programs like FrogWatch. When people say, 'Do not do that', they say, 'It was by mutual agreement'. Then, when you look into it - code word - that mutual agreement was only the legal terminology in the documentation. In fact, Graeme Sawyer pointed out that they received a letter from the government on 20 December saying they were going to cut FrogWatch's funding and it had to get back to them by Christmas Eve. They were later forced to sign the termination contract otherwise they would not get their payment in arrears. Defend that as best you can. Defend the indefensible, because that is what you have been doing every day.

The Minister for Education has been defending the indefensible every day on teacher cuts, and now your Minister for Transport will start defending the indefensible on open speed limits because they are dangerous and reckless ...

**Mr ELFERINK:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! She has already talked about all this stuff. This is just tedious repetition. She is going through it again and again. I seek a direction.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Leader of Government Business, in light of the timing, the Opposition Leader is probably summing up. Opposition Leader, you have the call.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Madam Speaker, yes, I was summing up. They will continue to defend the

indefensible because they are not getting on with good government. There is a big problem over there.

We know the Chief Minister has lost the support of the Deputy Chief Minister, and the Deputy Chief Minister wants the Chief Minister's job. We know the member for Blain, the former Chief Minister, still has strong support amongst his colleagues because they really do not like what they are seeing in the leadership of this current government. We know the member for Port Darwin is frustrated because he cannot get any number beyond one to lead this dysfunctional rabble out of the malaise they are in because they are too busy fighting with each other to get on with any real, positive initiatives that will help Territorians.

Meanwhile, we will continue to hold you to account, just as we are today for the funding cuts to FrogWatch. We make no apology for doing that. We have shown you in this debate there was not genuine mutual agreement in that funding cut. There was a legal document with terminology, but there were letters preceding that saying, 'You are being terminated'. Then, there was the ultimate insult to injury which is the gun to the head saying, 'Sign the termination document or you will not be paid arrears'. That is embarrassing.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):** Madam Speaker, I support this amendment. I will start with the first comment by the Leader of the Opposition that governments do not censure oppositions. On 25 October 2001, that is precisely what occurred, and I table that. It was led by Mr Stirling at that time, so wrong ...

**Ms Lawrie:** Because you doctored the budget papers.

**Mr Styles:** Check your facts!

**Mr ELFERINK:** Once again, she talks about people misleading in this place. I am not going to accuse her of misleading; she was just wrong and made an honest and reasonable mistake – maybe, maybe not.

I am not going to dwell on this for a long time. The attack on the government was quite simple ...

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I apologise. There was that one occasion of the doctored of the budget papers early in government. They realised they got it wrong.

**Madam SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Sit down, Opposition Leader.

**Mr ELFERINK:** It is a one-all draw. I went to the trouble of scripting this amendment. Normally I

would not, but this was such a poorly executed censure motion, and you were so poorly informed, frankly, you deserve censure. Honestly, you walked in and did not ask a question. You then fired off a censure motion saying the minister had misled this House, essentially lied to this House. Your argument was simply that Mr Graeme Sawyer had come to you and said, 'Look guys, there was no mutual agreement'. The argument from the minister was, 'Yes, there was mutual agreement'. A deed of termination was produced in this House between the Northern Territory of Australia and FrogWatch NTH - I presume that is North – Incorporated.

The deed of termination says:

*The Principal and the Contractor have mutually agreed to terminate the Contract on the terms and conditions set out in this Deed.*

If you had asked the question or made an inquiry by picking up the telephone – if the minister had lied to this House you would have been able to find out by other means and it would have been a non-defensible position. It is a perfectly defensible position because she did not lie to this House, she did not mislead this House, and this government has produced evidence to demonstrate she is not guilty of anything. A simple inquiry would have done it: a phone call or maybe some questions in this House.

That is why I believe this censure motion has been reversed and brought to bear upon the opposition, which is largely symbolic, nothing flows from it. They deserve the censure of this House because they have acted in such a poverty-stricken fashion.

Their incompetence in this assault on government resonates deeply with me because they have gone off completely half-cocked. This is a simple rush of blood to the head, 'We have them now. Quick, member for Nightcliff, in you go, run this little censure motion.' Nobody did any homework, nobody knew what the allegation ...

**Ms Walker:** Rubbish, absolute rot.

**Mr ELFERINK:** Nobody knew what the censure motion meant and implied, which I made clear in my original statement.

The Deputy Chief Minister has moved an amendment. I agree with that amendment; the opposition should be censured for incompetence. Their execution of this has been extraordinary. I said at the outset the member for Nightcliff, at some point, will look back at this period of her parliamentary career with embarrassment. I know

that with more certainty now this debate has rolled out than I did before.

Madam Speaker, we support the amended motion and we will wait for it to go to the question.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

#### PETITION

##### Private Sale of Fireworks across the Northern Territory

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I present a petition from 958 petitioners praying that the private sale of fireworks across the Northern Territory cease. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirement of standing orders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

*To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.*

*We the undersigned respectfully showeth that we are seriously concerned for the safety of children and adults alike along with pets specifically dogs, cats and horses, of all families regardless of where they live from the distribution and private sale of fireworks. Regrettably, fireworks are lit well beyond the prescribed time frame resulting in ongoing stress, upset and injury to animals. Further, the illegal use of fireworks causes bush fires and urban vehicle fires causing further stress, damage and injury to animals, people and property.*

*Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that the Northern Territory government amends legislation to cease the private sale of fireworks across the Northern Territory, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.*

#### RESPONSES TO PETITIONS Petition Nos 20 and 21

**Mr CLERK:** Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 100A, I inform honourable members that responses to Petition Nos 20 and 21 have been received and circulated to honourable members. The text of the response will be placed on the Legislative Assembly website. A copy of the response will be provided to the member who tabled the petition for distribution to petitioners.

#### Petition No 20

*Dhimurru Aboriginal Land Management Corporation Senior Wildlife Ranger Position*

*Date presented: 21 August 2013*

*Presented by: Ms Walker*

*Referred to: Minister for Parks and Wildlife*

*Date response due: 27 November 2013*

*Date response received: 14 October 2013*

*Date response presented: 15 October 2013*

*Response:*

*NT Parks and Wildlife Ranger position at Nhulunbuy*

*Response to Petition No 20 read in the Legislative Assembly on 21 August 2013*

*The new government re-established the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory as a 'stand-alone' agency, with an 'on-park' service delivery.*

*The commission's 'off-park' services were reviewed prior to the mini-budget in December 2012.*

*To deliver savings the decision to cease funding to five off-park Indigenous ranger group support positions, at the completion of current contract arrangements, was taken. This will amount to a saving of \$594 000 once the final contract expires in 2014.*

*Funding for two positions ceased on 30 June 2013. One of these was a full-time on-site position supporting the Dhimurru Rangers at Nhulunbuy.*

*The intent of these ranger group support positions was to help build the capacity of these groups to eventually operate effectively without 'full-time on-site' assistance.*

*A Parks and Wildlife ranger has worked with the Dhimurru Rangers for more than 10 years. This has been a significant investment and it is now reasonable that the ranger group should operate more independently. However, the commission did offer to continue the arrangement, providing all costs were met by Dhimurru.*

*Dhimurru accepted this offer and are funding the continued presence of a commission ranger until 30 December 2013.*

*In 2002, the commission signed as a party to the Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area agreement, a 21-year agreement. The*

*commission will continue to honour its responsibilities under this agreement; however, this will be done without a 'full-time on-site' ranger presence.*

*The government is committed to reducing debt and therefore cannot agree to reinstate funding to these positions.*

*Petition No 21*

*Fishing on the Finnis River*

*Date presented: 28 August 2013*

*Presented by: Mr Higgins*

*Referred to: Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries*

*Date response due: 4 December 2013*

*Date response received: 14 October 2013*

*Date response presented: 15 October 2013*

*In July 2008, the High Court of Australia ruled that permission is required for all commercial and recreational fishers and other water users to enter waters overlying Aboriginal land. In what is known as the Blue Mud Bay case, the High Court also confirmed that the NT Fisheries Act applies in those waters. In effect, the decision recognises that traditional owners may control access to inter-tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land.*

*In recognition of the impacts of this decision and the practical difficulties it presents, the Territory government is working with land councils and traditional owners to establish agreements that will benefit everyone - Indigenous Territorians, recreational and commercial fishers, and other water users.*

*Earlier this year, traditional owners from the upper tidal reaches of the Finnis River made a decision not to allow access for recreational fishers and commercial fishers, including fishing tour operators. The decision followed extensive negotiations between the traditional owners, the Northern Land Council (NLC) and the Northern Territory government. While an agreement was not able to be reached, government respects the lawful decision taken by the traditional owners. Government also continues to work with the NLC to hear the concerns of the traditional owners involved in the decision and to find a way forward that may provide a more practical and better outcome for all Territorians.*

*It is important to note that while the decision precludes access to tidal waters in the upstream section of the Finnis, many*

*of the popular fishing sites on the river are located below this line and continue to be accessible.*

*Government is currently negotiating with traditional owners from individual land trusts across the Territory to reach agreements for access to all NT waterways, with a preference for no individual permits for recreational fishers. While negotiations are continuing, temporary arrangements are in place to allow continued access to waters overlying Aboriginal land, apart from the upper tidal waters of the Finnis River.*

*Government is maintaining an open and transparent negotiation process and will continue to provide public updates on discussions as relevant.*

### **CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (EXPERT PSYCHIATRIC OR MEDICAL EVIDENCE) BILL (Serial 49)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):**

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Criminal Code Amendment (Expert Psychiatric or Medical Evidence) Bill 2013 implements the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee's recommendations contained in the *Report on Defendants Submitting to Psychiatric or Other Medical Examination, Report No 36* of June 2012. That report recommended the *Criminal Code Act* be amended to empower a court, upon application of the prosecution and at the court's discretion, to require the accused person to submit to a psychiatric or other medical examination where a criminal defence based on a medical condition or particular state of mind is raised.

Part IIAA of the *Criminal Code Act* at sections 43G(1)(b), 43O(d) and 43P(3) allows the defence or prosecution to make an application to the court to require the accused person to submit to an examination by an appropriate expert where the defence of mental impairment is raised or there is an investigation regarding an accused person's fitness to be tried. Part IIAA of the *Criminal Code Act* also allows the court to make such an order on its own initiative.

However, psychiatric and medical evidence can be used to show a criminal defence may reasonably exist in circumstances that do not amount to a mental impairment. In such cases, the defendant bears the onus of proving a reasonable possibility the defence existed, known

as the evidentiary burden of proof, and the prosecution bears the legal onus of disproving the defence beyond reasonable doubt, known as the legal burden of proof.

The Law Reform Committee noted that when a criminal defence based on a medical condition or a particular state of mind is raised and the provisions of Part IIAA of the *Criminal Code Act* relating to mental impairment or an investigation regarding the fitness to plead are not applicable, the court does not have the power to require an accused person to undergo an examination by either an independent medical expert or a prosecution expert.

This means that the prosecution is not in a position to:

- (a) have the defendant examined by an expert witness approved by the court
- (b) call that expert to provide evidence of the results of their examination
- (c) call the witness to give their expert opinion regarding the existence of the medical or psychiatric condition that forms part of the defence.

In their report, the Law Reform Committee stated that producing expert evidence to show a criminal defence may reasonably exist is not a 'right to ambush' the prosecution, and found the requirement to undergo a psychiatric or medical examination should apply regardless of whether the medical condition relates to a defence of mental impairment or any other criminal defence. At page 39 of their report, the Law Reform Committee recommended the *Criminal Code Act* be amended to ensure that:

*If the accused proposes to introduce expert psychiatric or other expert medical evidence relevant to an accused's mental state or medical condition at the time of the alleged offence, the Court may, on application by a prosecutor, require the accused to submit, at the prosecution's expense, to an examination by an independent expert approved by the Court, and the Court may, on application of the prosecutor or the defence, allow such independent expert to be called to give evidence as to his examination of the accused, his findings and his opinions arising there from.*

If the accused person refuses to submit to such an examination, the Law Reform Committee recommended the *Criminal Code Act* provide that:

*The prosecution may cross-examine the accused person or any expert witness called by the accused person who gives evidence, as to the reason for the accused's refusal to submit to a medical or psychiatric examination.*

This bill inserts section 331B into the *Criminal Code Act* and provides that:

- (a) the section applies where the accused is to be tried upon indictment and intends to adduce expert psychiatric evidence or expert medical evidence relating to the accused's state of mind or medical condition at the time of the alleged offending, regardless of whether the notice of the expert evidence requirement under section 331A has been complied with
- (b) the court may, upon application by the prosecutor, require the accused person to be examined by an independent expert
- (c) the expert must be nominated by the prosecution and approved by the court
- (d) the prosecution will bear the cost of such an examination
- (e) the court may, upon application by either the prosecution or defence, allow the independent expert to be called to give evidence in chief for the applicant and therefore be cross-examined by the other party
- (f) the independent expert may give evidence in relation to their examination of the accused, including any opinions or findings arising from the examination.

The bill provides that:

- (a) if the accused refuses to undergo an examination, the prosecutor may cross-examine the accused person or any expert witness called by the accused person, as to the possible reasons for the accused's refusal to submit to a medical or psychiatric examination
- (b) the prosecutor or the court may, when addressing the jury, comment on the refusal
- (c) the court or prosecution cannot suggest that, as a result of the refusal, the accused is therefore guilty of the crime.

This provision mirrors section 331A(7)(b) of the *Criminal Code Act*.

This bill also states that section 331B does not affect the operation of Part IIA of the *Criminal Code Act*. Part IIA of the Criminal Code contains the procedures to be followed where mental impairment is raised or fitness to be tried is an issue. It is important that section 331B sits alongside, but does not affect, the operation of Part IIAA provisions.

Clause 5 of the bill inserts a transitional provision which provides that section 331B applies only in relation to an offence for which an accused person is committed for trial after the commencement of this act.

This government is committed to ensuring there are no loopholes or oversights in legislation and administration of justice in the Northern Territory is properly served. I thank the Northern Territory Law Reform Commission for its diligence and hard work in the production of its report and for its considered and sensible recommendations.

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

Debate adjourned.

**MISUSE OF DRUGS AMENDMENT  
(METHAMPHETAMINE) BILL  
(Serial 42)**

Continued from 29 August 2013.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this bill before the House and say at the outset that the opposition supports it.

As the Attorney-General outlined in his second reading speech, methamphetamine is indeed an insidious and extremely dangerous and addictive drug. The sale of this drug also creates enormous profits for those who manufacture it and from the misery it creates and the lives it destroys.

Essentially, this bill will close a loophole in the *Misuse of Drugs Act* which will see methamphetamine change from a Schedule 2 drug to a Schedule 1 drug, Schedule 1 also including cocaine, heroin and lysergic acid, or LSD.

Change in the legislation to see methamphetamine proscribed as a Schedule 1 drug will bring with it a significant increase in penalties for those who supply and manufacture it, as well as those in possession of a commercial quantity. These changes were outlined in the Attorney-General's second reading speech and will bring the Territory's legislation into line with other jurisdictions.

Let us hope increases in the maximum penalty for commercial manufacture, increasing imprisonment from 25 years to life, and the offence of supply to a child increasing imprisonment from 14 years to life, serve as deterrents to those organised crime groups which are focused on manufacture and supply to users, including children.

The Attorney-General is quite correct when he stated:

*... prescribing methamphetamine in Schedule 2 does not provide a sufficient deterrent for commercial enterprises manufacturing and supplying this drug and may result in the Northern Territory becoming perceived as a haven for methamphetamine drug manufacturing and supply.*

I thank the Attorney-General's office and officers from the department who provided me with a briefing and were able to explain why it is that a commercial quantity of a Schedule 1 drug like methamphetamine in other jurisdictions can be 250 g but in this bill a commercial quantity in the Territory is just 40 g. It is all to do with commercial value. In Victoria, for instance, 1 g is valued at somewhere between \$200 and \$300. By contrast, in the Territory it has a commercial value of somewhere between \$1200 and \$1800 per gram. As such, the bill ensures the volume of the drug is commensurate with the commercial value.

It beggars belief that people buying methamphetamine in the Territory - call it ice or crystal meth - have this kind of money to feed a recreational drug habit, let alone an addiction. It also beggars belief - at sums of money like that - the incredible profits the manufacturers, suppliers, and criminal syndicates behind them must be making. That is why the commercial quantity under this bill is 40 g, because it reflects the reality of the circumstances of the Northern Territory.

It is worrying that the use of methamphetamine is on the rise in Australia. At the briefing I attended, I was advised that statistics from Victoria in the period from 2011 to 2012 show meth charges have increased twofold. In 2011 in Victoria, 208 offenders were charged with methamphetamine offences, and this rose to 419 in 2012.

I was also advised the Territory is not immune to this trend, with police charging more and more people with manufacturing. I thank the Justice department for supplying me with statistics in the Northern Territory which show that in 2011 there were 146 charges resulting in 111 convictions. In 2012, there were 171 charges resulting in 126 convictions. As at 30 September this year in the

Northern Territory, there are currently 133 charges with 95 convictions, but that is expected to rise to approximately 180 charges and 127 convictions.

Thankfully, this hardly parallels the skyrocketing trends of methamphetamine use and, with it, the subsequent offending in Victoria where charges doubled in the space of a year. Nonetheless, from 2011 to the predicted statistics for 2013 represents in the Northern Territory an increase in charges of around 23%. The rising national trend in more people accessing and using methamphetamine is, obviously, the rise in related harm which can manifest itself in anxiety and psychosis – specifically paranoia and hallucinations – and also transgress to violence. Larger doses of methamphetamine are known to cause an extremely high heart rate and body temperature, strokes and, with it, heart abnormalities.

A recent article in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, co-authored by researchers from Turning Point Drug & Alcohol Centre in Melbourne, dated 16 September details the staggering increase of methamphetamine and amphetamine harm as evidenced by data collected in Melbourne around ambulance call-outs, as well as those seeking treatment. I quote from that article in the *Medical Journal of Australia* on 16 September in reference to these trends:

*... we conducted an exploratory study using multiple indicators of amphetamine-related harm from July 2010 to June 2012.*

*Metropolitan Melbourne ambulance attendance data, coded by researchers who are trained to identify alcohol and other drug (AOD) involvement in ambulance presentations, are unique in terms of capacity to distinguish use of ice from use of other amphetamines at a population level. Comparing the 2010-11 and 2011-12 financial years, a 318% increase in ice-related attendance (3.4 to 14.2 attendances per 100 000 population) underpinned a substantial rise in all amphetamine related attendances (11.1 to 21.1 attendances per 100 000 population). The greatest increase occurred among people aged 15-29 years (8.4 to 39.0 attendances per 100 000 population) ...*

I offer one other quote from this article:

*Other indicators also suggest an increasing incidence of harms. Comparing 2010-11 and 2011-12, amphetamine-related episodes of care provided by Victorian AOD ...*

That is Alcohol and Other Drug Services:

*... increased by 77% (66.2 to 117.2 episodes per 100 000 population), while amphetamine-related calls to DirectLine, Victoria's telephone AOD helpline, increased by 194% (1090 to 3210 calls).*

*Compared with our 2011-12 data, all indicators of amphetamine-related harms were lower during the previous peak in ice-related harms July 2006 to June 2007.*

The article concludes:

*... these findings support growing public health concerns regarding increases in amphetamine-related harms.*

I appreciate that is about amphetamine-related harms, but they do single out, as has been evidenced, particularly in relation to ambulance call-outs, those which are methamphetamine-related. It is alarming to see the trends and the increase in harms associated with methamphetamine use in Victoria. However, we also understand it is a national trend as well.

While this bill is important from the perspective of law, we all know legislation and associated deterrents, including hefty penalties, are not enough on their own, but recognise we need to do all we can to take this drug out of circulation. This is no doubt why, in Victoria, the government's Law Reform, Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee will examine over the next year not just the supply and distribution of methamphetamine and links to organised crime, but also the short- and long-term consequences on methamphetamine users and what might be appropriate responses.

There needs to be effective and hard-hitting education and awareness programs to drive prevention, but there also needs to be an appropriate therapeutic healthcare response to target the treatment of users.

This increase in methamphetamine use in Victoria is very topical. The 7 pm ABC news bulletin in Darwin last night which I was watching had a story about the inquiry in Victoria which is under way, with a spend of \$1.1m on education and preventive programs. Further statistics quoted on last night's bulletin, demonstrating the staggering increase in meth use, said that in 2010 one in 25 drug deaths in Victoria was due to methamphetamine but, in 2012, one in 10 deaths was the result of methamphetamine. Two-and-a-half times more deaths due to methamphetamine misuse in Victoria in two years is too much.

Dr Cherie Heilbronn is one of the authors of the research I have just referred to from the *Medical Journal of Australia*. Also on 16 September, the day that article was released, she published online

in *The Conversation* a piece titled 'Crystal meth harms on the rise in Australia'. She wrote about the changing demographic of users in Victoria. I quote from that article:

*Emerging anecdotal evidence also indicates that use – and harm – is increasing among people in occupational groups not traditionally associated with stimulant use, such as young tradespeople and professionals. Little is known about how ice affects these emerging user populations; researchers and clinicians are particularly concerned about the interplay between physical, behavioural, mental health and social problems.*

*We know that ice-related harm is growing. But given we're dealing with research data and anecdotal evidence, questions remain about the factors that might be driving the rise in harm: whether it's new populations of users, more harms for existing users, or changing patterns of use.*

*It's also unclear how these rising harms will impact on the community, particularly for delivering services to high-risk groups.*

The article concluded:

*To minimise harms, we need to promote a greater understanding of ice use in the community to enable appropriate prevention, intervention and service responses that are evidence-based and target those who are most at risk.*

I understand the Attorney-General's role is to ensure we have what we hope would be the appropriate legislative tool via the amendments today to the *Misuse of Drugs Act* to provide the deterrents. This bill does that by moving methamphetamine from a Schedule 2 drug to a Schedule 1 drug and, with it, significant increases in penalties for supply and manufacture.

However, legislative instruments alone are unlikely to be enough to deal with this insidious drug. During my contribution to the debate today, I have referred to the situation in Victoria and new research from that jurisdiction, but what we know about users in the Northern Territory is they have access to money, with methamphetamine available anywhere between \$1200 and \$1800 per gram. Perhaps that is a debate or discussion for another time.

I am interested to know if, for instance, Northern Territory ambulance officers see an increase in the number of call-outs to users suffering the effects of methamphetamine use or whether there is an increase in demand for treatment. Perhaps

we will see this government with mandatory treatment for meth users who can join those already in alcohol mandatory treatment, treated like criminals for what is an addiction and health issue.

Are we seeing in the Territory an increase in demand for counselling services along with treatment services and whether there is a corresponding capacity, within services, to meet that growing need, noting, as I said at the outset, the increase in people charged in relation to methamphetamine has increased in the Northern Territory between 2000 and 2011 by an estimated 23%? One would expect a correlation, as evidenced in Victoria, of an increase in harm and the number of people seeking treatment and counselling services.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this bill before the House. I commend it to honourable members.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this forward. I also thank the member for Nhulunbuy for what was a well-researched response to this issue – far more than I will say today. It is good to see there is debate in this House where people have the opportunity to put forward not just the bare bones of the debate but open that debate up for the wider issues that are involved in drug use in our society. I thank the member for Nhulunbuy for her contribution to this debate.

I also worry about where we are going in relation to some of these insidious drugs. I have grandchildren who are 17, 16 and 13 years old. One of them is doing his first year of apprenticeship, and he will be moving into the wider workforce next year. Another is finishing Year 12 and you wonder what sort of pressures will come upon those young people as they mix with people who get involved in drugs or who put pressure on them to take these drugs. Hopefully their upbringing will hold them in good stead and they will not get involved in these matters which we know have caused many problems, especially in other parts of Australia.

As the member for Nhulunbuy said, the people who have been using methamphetamines have caused major problems for people such as the paramedics and nurses in hospitals because of some of these violent tendencies they have. There is more than just the health of the person involved who has taken these drugs, but also the human side effects: the people who have to deal with these people who are in such a state.

It is a problem in our society. If you ask somebody today what ice is, they are not going to tell you it is frozen water, they are going to say it is

a drug. That is how common the name is and how well known it is in society. It does not mean people use it, but they have heard people talking about it on television and the radio. That does not make it any less dangerous, of course.

I fully support the legislation the minister is bringing forward, and I welcome it. I did not ask for a briefing because on the surface of it ...

**Mr Elferink:** You do not need to be briefed on it.

**Mr WOOD:** That is right, I support it. I had a couple of questions which I thought could be answered in parliament today. I try to get briefings on a fair number of things but I sometimes do not have the time to do the entire circuit. I will ask you a couple of questions. One is a fairly obvious question as to why it was not a Schedule 1 drug the first time. Why was it on Schedule 2 and what was the reason for it being there? How have we come to this stage that we need to move it to Schedule 1?

In the second reading minister, you said, as a result of this bill, the maximum penalty for the commercial possession of methamphetamine will increase from 14 years' imprisonment to 25 years' imprisonment. You went through a series of different terms of imprisonment for different occasions. Is there a maximum penalty for the private possession of methamphetamine, as it does not state it here?

The other question is in relation to the maximum penalty for supplying methamphetamine increasing from five years' imprisonment to 14 years' imprisonment. It then said the offence of supply to a child will increase from 14 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment.

The next dot point said something similar, but that the maximum penalty for commercial supply of methamphetamine will increase from 14 years' imprisonment to 25 years' imprisonment. It is exactly the same penalty, but there is an increase in the penalty for the offence of commercial supply to a child from 25 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment.

One case is supplying methamphetamine where the penalty will go from five years to 14 years. I hope I do not have this wrong. Maybe I have. I thought there was a difference between supplying a child, that it had not changed between supplying a commercial supply – that is right. I will start again, I had it the wrong way around.

The maximum penalty for commercial supply to a child will increase to 25 years of imprisonment – that is why I got it the wrong way around – but for just supplying methamphetamine – in other words,

not a commercial supply – it will only be 14 years' imprisonment ...

**Mr Elferink:** Yes, I get you. I got the question.

**Mr WOOD:** That is it. Sorry about that. I hope Hansard can handle that. I wrote my notes, but did not read them in the right order.

I am wondering, basically, what is the big deal? It is still a pretty serious offence ...

**Mr Elferink:** I know what you are saying.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes. They were my two questions. As you said at the end of your second reading, this bill will bring us in line with other parts of Australia, which makes sense. That also, you would hope, reduces us becoming a target for organised crime.

Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this legislation forward and I definitely support it.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):** Madam Speaker, I will start with the first question last simply because it is fresh in my mind. Any maximum penalty we develop in this place is an arbitrary thing. If you think about how we come to the idea of penalties, if you look at the civil law - tort, contracts, something like that - we go through a process where we assess damages, and there is a thing called exemplary damages and those sorts of things. Damages are easy to link to the wrong that is done.

Let us say I have a contractual arrangement to supply two million of these pens and they are worth a certain amount of money. If I failed to supply two million of these pens, then the party who has agreed can point to an amount of money they are owed or a number of pens they are owed. So, finding a link between the harm done and the fix-up, the damages, is very easy in those sorts of things because there is an obvious link.

Tort law is similar. I have lost my car because of your negligence in a certain incident. I want you to replace the car. I can tell you how much I need to fix the car, therefore, I can pursue you for that amount.

Criminal law throws up a difficulty in that the harm done is often unfixable. If you take the crime of rape, for argument sake, where one person rapes another person, clearly there is a harm done. It is a psychological harm, a physical harm, a harm that affects people in different ways. Some people recover quite well from those sorts of events, other people are scarred for life.

But, how does a court measure the harm done? That becomes a very difficult thing for a court to

do and, indeed, a legislature. We come in here and we set maximums. What you see, as a general rule, is a graduating scale of seriousness supported by a graduating scale of imposition of the penalty we can ask a court to put into place.

We say to a court there is a maximum penalty for this, there is a maximum penalty for that, there is a minimum penalty for that. It then leaves a range for which the court can look at all of the circumstances, but it is arbitrary. We could just as easily legislate that a person who is guilty of rape should apologise profoundly to the person they raped and leave it at that. It is a simple arbitrary thing, because it is very hard to measure the harm done.

When a legislative draftsman, Cabinet, or this parliament considers what we do with a measure of seriousness, we try to follow that graduated scale. You can see that in this sort of legislation. For supply to a child as opposed to supplying a commercial quantity to a child, to follow that graduated scale of seriousness you then create these arbitrary numbers the whole way up.

The fact is my arbitrary number and your arbitrary number could be as good as anybody else's. So we are stuck with the situation where we just create an arbitrary number. That is, essentially, what has happened in this case. Because the commercial quantity is considered, as a general principle, to be more serious than a non-commercial or trafficable quantity, you just create arbitrary numbers and scale them up according to the seriousness applied. Is there a rationale as to why we got that figure against that offence? How long is a bit of string? I hope that puts into context the nature of the scale we are being provided with.

If you look at what we are trying to do here, we are taking something out of a Schedule 2 and placing it into Schedule 1 to ramp up the seriousness of it. We know the graduated scale that applied to convictions on Schedule 1 offences is much higher than in Schedule 2, and that is the message we are trying to send: we take this more seriously now than we did a year ago.

It is that arbitrariness – you have to pull a figure from somewhere and work with it because there is no effective way to link the damage caused and the harm done; you have to do it in an artificial sense.

The maximum penalty for use was a simple question. I presume you were asking the maximum penalty for personal use. The basic possession penalty for a Schedule 1 drug is two years, and basic possession in a public place of a Schedule 1 drug is five years. I hope that answers that question.

Why was it not in Schedule 1 in the first place? I believe this was another question the member for Nelson asked. The short answer is I suspect it is historical. My guess is there was a time in the 1970s and early 1980s when speed was the standard drug. At that stage, it was called amphetamine, and was available in the usual outlets in the pub or club – in the toilet, back room, or some deal done in the booth somewhere. You bought little tablets of speed and would get a buzz and feel really high; it would have a certain effect.

Since the chemistry of these drugs has been changing in recent times, so has their effect. As chemistry has changed over time we have gone from amphetamine to methamphetamine. Methamphetamine could be sourced from the pseudoephedrine class of drugs, and they are commercially available. You can buy them across the counter in the form of – well, they used to be drugs like Sudafed which had the effect of stopping your nose from running. A bit of simple chemistry you could easily extract from the Internet would enable you to change pseudoephedrine into methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine, in the way it is sold now, is a much more aggressive drug, for a lack of a better term. You have a situation where something like ice, which you were talking about, and other forms of crystal meth, are the types of drugs which have a profound effect on the user, or appear to do so. Where you have these drugs in the community they show decay in the user which far outweighs the original variant on amphetamines which, 30 years ago, was speed. You only have to go to the mug shots they have been releasing in the United States. I invite you to Google 'mug shots crystal meth' or something like that, and you will see the mug shots of users over the period of one or two years and the transformation in those people from reasonably healthy people from their first arrest to skeletal remains, desiccated human beings, both spiritually and physically. That decay is what we are responding to.

Heroin, traditionally, was seen as a very dangerous drug because of the way it decayed people so quickly. Heroin is still a dangerous drug and the community will expect us to treat it as such. However, in truth there are many people who use heroin recreationally; it does not make every person an addict. The reason we do not see recreational users of heroin in the gutter is the same reason we do not see recreational users of alcohol in the gutter.

As a consequence, it is the addiction we are responding to and these drugs have addictive qualities. I have not seen the numbers on methamphetamines, but I presume there is a class of people who use this drug who do not show signs of addictive behaviour and do not end

up in a gutter. However, an alcohol addict's life is just as wretched and pathetic as a heroin addict's, as is a crystal meth addict's.

The public expects a response from government. The public expects protection. The member for Nelson gave us the reason in his own speech in the second reading debate. The reason is that, particularly, people like parents worry about their kids.

There is only so much we can do as a legislature to protect kids. The best protection we can give to children in the area of drugs is what we can teach them in the home as parents. We ask parents to do that. We hope we would assist parents in offering protection to their kids. However, I am reminded of the philosophies of Kahlil Gibran – and I am scratching my head now – in a work called *The Prophet*. I am paraphrasing him. Basically, he said even when it comes to parenting it is like firing an arrow into the future where you can have the straightest arrow you can possibly take, the straightest bow you could possibly have, the best manufactured string, knock the arrow as carefully as you can, aim it as carefully as you can but, once it is released, there if nothing you can do about its flight.

You can take all care to prepare a child for life, and I am sure the vast majority of parents do. I am trying my hardest with my kids, and I am certain the member for Nelson has done it with his, and everybody else in this room who has children has done the same with their kids. Unfortunately, there are occasions when you cannot affect the flight of those children beyond that point.

In dealing with drugs, whilst we hope we have prepared our kids for those challenges when they are faced with them, the only thing we can do as a parliament is offer the enfeebled protection of drug legislation. Is it successful? Frankly, I will be honest with you; I do not think it is particularly successful in this jurisdiction or other jurisdictions because it is still there. We spend huge amounts of effort trying to police it. The reason we do so is because the people who vote for us and elect us expect us to make that effort. We will continue to make that effort on behalf of them and their children.

There will always be organisations and people who will seek to sidestep the law. If it was not for the fact that was the case, we would not be needed, nor would any of the policing authorities in our community. Nevertheless, that is where we are at, so this is what we do as we do our best. In this instance, the best we can do is to ensure this dreadful chemical finds itself into Schedule 1 so those people who would seek to profit off other people's bad choices and misery are fully and

utterly held accountable for their activity and punished in accordance with the law of this jurisdiction.

Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for their support. I am sure all honourable members understand what we are driving at with these amendments.

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 Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Young Territorians**

**Mr STYLES (Multicultural Affairs):** Madam Speaker, this afternoon I speak on some very important matters; that is, the portfolios of Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Young Territorians.

I wish to update the House on the achievements so far, and aspirations this government has, in the areas of Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth, to further enhance the confident culture we are so proud of. Formerly, these three important areas were quite separate. They operated independent of each other despite remarkable synergies which can be achieved when people value and utilise the diversity in our community.

I am especially proud that these three areas are now together within the Social Policy Division of the Department of the Chief Minister. I thank the public servants for their efforts to make this happen. It is their passion which has brought together a team of people in such a way that I can work closely with the Chief Minister through his department to achieve the improved outcomes for Territorians. This is the vision needed to achieve what we have set out as the draft blueprint for the Northern Territory in *Framing the Future*. This is the sort of vision that can make the most out of the limited resources we have available.

We may not be able to produce new funds to support community groups but, as a government, we have found ways to better deliver our services. In the 2012-13 financial year we awarded over \$1.1m of grants to our multicultural community. Out of this, there are way too many good achievements to name them all; however, I will bring to your attention just a few. At the small end of the scale I recognise the important role we play in helping new and emerging communities come together, perhaps socially in the first instance but, more importantly, to build the support structures

within that help people assist others to adapt to a life in a new country.

I have awarded many small grants to organisations such as the Congolese, Somalian, Rohingya and South African communities, which are taking admirable proactive steps to become a part of the fabric of the Territory. Such grants typically range from \$500 to \$2000. As these communities grow and become confident, they naturally wish to share their culture with others. I have also awarded a number of mid-size grants for groups wishing to take the next steps of sharing, such as the South Pacific communities coming together for celebrations, the Hindu Society dance night which draws together Indian, Nepalese, Sri Lankan, Tamil and other groups, and the Australia-China Friendship Association which brought together a wide range of performers at the Darwin Entertainment Centre.

In Alice Springs, I was very pleased to be able to support the success of the Multicultural Big Day Out event, and hope to see that grow into an iconic event in the Centre.

There are a range of grants which have provided support services to individuals, families and communities who need assistance. We have funded community support workers who work within the Italian, Timorese, Greek and Chinese communities. We have funded the Happy Migrant Learning Centre which does magnificent work helping older Territorians improve their English skills in a fun environment.

In the Territory we are lucky to have several larger and established communities which are passionate in their desire to share their culture with all Territorians. They are passionate about giving back to the community they now call home. I have the amazing pleasure of both funding and attending these occasions, from the Latino Ball at the Convention Centre, to Pesona Indonesia as part of the Darwin Festival, the Greek Glenti, India@Mindil, the Cyprus Food and Wine Festival, and of course, the successful Italian Festival. These are all events which are more than just celebrations, they symbolise who we are as Territorians, who we want to be, and are demonstrations of what a confident culture is.

It was not long ago in the Territory that funding was being provided for many very separate celebrations of Harmony Day. Nowadays, we have grown the Darwin Waterfront Harmony Soiree, which this year attracted a huge crowd and gave every multicultural community, irrespective of its size and financial capacity, the stage to connect broadly with thousands of Territorians. This soiree is the epitome of what can be achieved by groups working together, and is a true reflection of our community.

It was particularly pleasing this year to see the event take the next step, and not just recognise migrant communities, but also benefit from the participation of Aboriginal performers. There is no other event like this in Australia, and I look forward to being part of helping it evolve further in coming years.

In the past 12 months, we have also finalised a review of funding to the multicultural service providers. I am pleased we are in the final stages of implementing the recommendations to improve both the services being delivered and the representation to government. In the coming months, a ministerial advisory council on multicultural affairs will commence, and I will be calling for community members to participate.

Compared to other jurisdictions, we have a relatively small seniors community. However, what they lack in numbers they more than make up in how they enjoy and contribute to our Territory lifestyle. These are the people who have built the Territory we are now enjoying, and recognise the lifestyle is such they wish to remain living here. I continue to work closely with the Council on the Ageing NT, National Seniors Australia and other groups. These organisations help seniors enjoy being a part of the community, but also assist the community to make the most of their learning and other experiences they have to offer all of us.

In August 2013, we enjoyed a vibrant Seniors Month with \$50 000 grants for activities all over the Territory. I particularly enjoyed being part of the Laughing Yoga group. That was quite an experience.

As we move forward, I will be looking for new ways to enhance the celebration of seniors, particularly ways to combine the three portfolios. I am, indeed, fortunate to have this responsibility to investigate how we can make more value of what seniors have to offer. There is so much potential held with many senior Territorians and I would like to have us make more of that.

The final portfolio I have to refer to is the one I hold as the Minister for Young Territorians, an area I have been passionate about for many years and continue to support wholeheartedly. This stems from the work I did in a previous life as a school-based police officer over many years in the greater Darwin area.

Young people play an integral role in the present and future development of the Northern Territory, and we support their achievements, aspirations and contributions to our community. This government is committed to working with young Territorians and to doing things differently to

ensure what we build is a strong foundation for the future.

As mentioned earlier, the *Framing the Future* document enables us to focus on young Territorians through enhancing the leadership and development opportunities available to those young people. Through this, we build a stronger society today, tomorrow and beyond.

In order to facilitate those opportunities, the Office of Youth Affairs develops and delivers initiatives that improve the wellbeing of young people and facilitates their contribution to government-making decisions. The office provides a whole-of-government approach to policy priorities for Territorians aged between 12 and 24 years. Furthermore, it engages with the community and government agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to the implementation of government's policy priorities, and develops effective communication links with young people, the NT government and the community.

I have witnessed the effect of coordination of the programs the office is responsible for. One program in particular you may all be aware of is the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians, known more commonly as the Round Table. The Round Table consists of 16 members aged between 15 and 25 years. Members are representative of the geographic, cultural, and ethnic diversity in the Northern Territory. Members meet four times a year and are also encouraged to actively canvass and represent the views and issues of young people throughout the Northern Territory.

One of the main functions of the Round Table is to liaise with young people in the community and report back to the Northern Territory government on issues and concerns raised by young people. The issues raised are discussed within the Round Table and appropriate action is taken, with the Chief Minister and I regularly updated on what topics the Round Table is working on. The Round Table members undertake community-based research projects throughout the year on issues that are important to young people living in the Northern Territory. At the end of the year, the recommendations from these projects will be presented to me, the Chief Minister, relevant ministers, and senior government officials.

This year, members are researching the following topics they choose to work on as their community-based project: dance theatre; a support group for young people with a disability in Alice Springs; street art in Alice Springs; business opportunities for young Territorians; gambling in Galiwinku; life after school; a scouting youth group; students' stress levels; cyber bullying; a travelling

headspace service; sexuality and gender education; and sexual assault prevention.

Throughout the year, Round Table members participate in a number of activities, attending many events promoting young Territorian interests. Members have also been afforded a wide array of opportunities to date, including media interviews, being invited to join the planning committee for the Anzac centenary celebrations, and meeting with the US Ambassador to Australia, Mr Jeffrey Bleich.

Since 1997, over 240 young Territorians have participated in the Round Table. A function was held in Parliament House on 1 October 2013 to celebrate the continued success of the program. It was a great evening.

On the subject of success, I highlight an initiative that claims to celebrate and recognise the value of all young Australians to their communities. National Youth Week, of course, is an annual event coordinated across Australia, but in the Territory our level of participation per capita well exceeds our southern counterparts.

In 2013, more than 150 events featured on the Territory-wide calendar of events. The growing number of registered events across the Northern Territory indicates a strong investment from organisers to take part in celebrations. The 10-day celebration is traditionally launched in April at the Northern Territory Young Achiever of the Year Gala Award Ceremony. The awards pay tribute to the potential of all young Territorians and recognise the achievements of nominated individuals aged 14 to 27 years through the following categories: the Charles Darwin University Arts Award; the ConocoPhillips Environment Award; the Northern Territory Government Small Business Achievement Award; the Glencore McArthur River Mining Regional and Rural Initiative Award; the Minister for Young Territorians Excellence in Youth Leadership Award; the PTTEP Australasia Health and Wellbeing Award; the Australian Super Career Kick Start Awards; the Somerville Community Services Award; and the Northern Territory Government Young Carers Award.

The 2014 awards were launched on 13 and 14 September 2013 in Darwin and Alice Springs respectively. Nominations closed on 29 November 2013, with winners announced in Darwin at a gala presentation dinner on 5 April 2014. This program provides an essential platform for people to learn from one another and shines a spotlight on their dedication to their communities. It is with this sentiment in mind I encourage everyone to get on board and recognise a young person this year.

I am also pleased to support the youth engagement grants program. This program aims to assist young Territorians to access a variety of youth-related events and personal development programs and activities. Young people are involved in the planning, staging, and evaluation of activities which reflect their needs and interests, and activities are promoted through the Northern Territory government's youth portal [www.youth.nt.gov.au](http://www.youth.nt.gov.au).

There are three rounds of grants of up to \$2000 to fund a range of activities during the December/January and June/July school holiday periods during National Youth Week in April. The quick response grants enable government to have a capacity to respond to urgent requests for funding that falls outside the set funding rounds - up to \$2000 that meet the selection criteria.

Our population is spread over a vast geographical distance with a high number of young people residing in regional and remote localities. With this in mind, it is important to recognise the challenges of supporting participation and delivering programs and services to meet the growing diverse needs of young people.

Young people play an integral role in the present and future development of the Northern Territory and will be supported to achieve their aspirations and contribute to our community. They are 24% of our population, but 100% of our future. It is my hope that together we will make meaningful improvements and build on what is working effectively.

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

**Mr VOWLES (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, I speak to the statement from the minister updating the portfolios of Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Young Territorians. I welcome the statement and the opportunity to reflect on these important sectors of our community.

The minister has spoken about the Social Policy Division bringing together Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Young Territorians. I welcome this approach. It makes sense to have a division focused on engaging these sectors of our community where ideas and strategies can be shared across the areas. I commend minister Styles and the Country Liberal Party government for their continued support of a Minister for Multicultural Affairs in their Cabinet.

This is a break from their national counterparts. Under federal Labor, there was a minister for Immigration, Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, but under Tony Abbott, Multicultural Affairs has

been stripped and we are left with a Minister for Immigration and Border Protection. Indeed, under the new federal Liberal government there are no ministers for any of these portfolios mentioned in this statement. Tony Abbott has no minister for youth or seniors.

In this regard, I recognise the CLP government's refreshing stance to distance itself from a decision of their federal counterparts. In fact, under John Howard, multiculturalism was a dirty word and he banned use of the term in his government. I have heard this man went as far as refusing to accept funding applications from groups that used the term 'multiculturalism' in their submissions. Thankfully, this is not the case with the CLP government in the Northern Territory. For all its faults, I have admired the CLP government's continued support of the values of multiculturalism. I know this portfolio is particularly dear to the minister's heart, given he had it in opposition and he worked very hard in this area.

The Territory, as we know it, would not be the same without the multicultural communities we have which enhance and enrich our unique and diverse lifestyles. My electorate office is located at Rapid Creek Business Village where they hold the Sunday markets. Where would the Rapid Creek Markets be without the wonderful blend of so many cultural groups offering their produce, food and talents? I believe it is our immense multicultural diversity which makes the Territory unique and special.

I recall a farewell gathering we had for the former Minister for Multicultural Affairs and former Chief Minister, Paul Henderson. He was immensely proud to be the Chief Minister of a Territory that embraced multiculturalism and the benefits which flowed from our community. During Paul's address to the crowd, he spoke of his time in politics and had many stories and thank yous to share. The one point in his speech when I recall him becoming most emotional was when he wavered in his composure when he reflected on our multicultural groups in the Northern Territory. I understand the sentiments Paul was reflecting on. We love the depth, joy, and humility so many individuals and groups have brought to our community. We cannot imagine a Territory without the hospitality and generosity of our multicultural groups, which has no end, and which we have received every time we have attended their events and functions. These are friendships which will last a lifetime.

I support our bipartisan approach to grants for multicultural groups, big and small, and funding for our programs and services in this sector. I make particular mention of the grants for Harmony Day. Under Labor, there was a decision to have the

focus of the whole event being the Harmony Day soiree, as opposed to a number of small events by each community. I believe this worked well. Our Darwin Waterfront Harmony Soiree is an incredibly special event.

In Adelaide, every March they hold their world music festival, WOMADelaide, which features international groups from all over the world. I have often thought the soiree felt like a mini-WOMADelaide. The beauty is we do not have to fly in acts from all over the world, as the dance, food and music is from people who live in Darwin and the Northern Territory. We are really lucky.

I also welcome the minister's advisory council on multicultural affairs. It is always important for governments to get the input and feedback from the groups they govern. This forum will provide multicultural groups and individuals with a voice direct to the minister.

At this point, I raise the issue of power and water tariff increases which, I am sure, has been voiced to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, but it is a matter he has skipped over in his statement. Under Terry Mills, the CLP introduced Power and Water price increases to electricity, water, and sewerage at 30%, 40% and 25% respectively. Adam Giles then lowered the increases to 20%, 30% and 15%.

However, the CLP is pushing multicultural groups which own buildings to crisis point. I will paint a picture for the minister – of which I am sure he is aware, but did not mention in his speech – when it comes to the most pressing issue at the moment for these multicultural groups. For example, some multicultural groups are paying a water bill of, say, \$2000 per month, which is \$24 000 a year the group must find to stay afloat. The context for these groups is this: they have buildings with multiple toilets and, as you know, the sewerage charge is based on the number of toilets the premise has; the building sits on a property which requires beautification for its garden, thus in the Dry Season and parts of the Wet Season the grounds need to be watered regularly for trees and vegetation to stay alive; and the buildings and their expenses are usually managed by small groups of volunteers from the community, with varying degrees of experience and qualifications. Building the team of volunteers that manage the buildings are not large commercial and sophisticated entities, they exist to service their members and communities.

These groups of volunteers that have a facility are paying business rates for their power, water and sewerage and are struggling to meet the dramatic rises the CLP government has inflicted on them. Finding \$24 000 a year for a community group is an enormous burden for these volunteers and

distracts from their principal aim of serving and engaging their communities.

I have no doubt many of these volunteers are extremely worried that they must increase their hiring fees and membership fees, and focus on fundraising in order to stay afloat. I have no doubt they dread opening the mail every month and seeing their power bills. Given these facilities are run by volunteers, I know many are worried whether they are making enough adjustments to withstand the full impact of these price increases. Of course, they want to do the right thing. They do not want this calendar year to be a year of financial loss for them. They take their responsibilities very seriously.

What is the minister doing to help these community groups? Nothing, according to his statement as he has not mentioned any support he has provided to them. I ask the minister whether he will make it a priority to approach each and every one of these groups and ask them how they are going and what the government could do to assist them with the power and water increases.

Minister, will you take responsibility and start looking at ways the government can help, be that sending a financial or business advisor to help them to set the right fees to stay afloat? Perhaps they need help with a business plan or an audit from Power and Water for their bills and where savings could be made, or even a dedicated grant to assist with covering the cost of power and water?

I understand in South Australia, for instance, community groups with buildings can apply for a grant every year that goes directly to paying their land tax bill. Whatever the solution is, minister, it will not be found if you continue to ignore these issues. I call on you to stand up for and look after the groups you have responsibility for as Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

I turn to seniors. I welcome the grants for Seniors Month, as it is a fantastic time of the year. I speak with many of my senior constituents and they are always excited by Seniors Month, planning the events they want to attend well in advance and enjoying a jammed-packed month of activities for their benefit.

For some reason, the minister has very little else to say in this space in his statement. Perhaps it is because whenever he meets with seniors these days he is bombarded with how unhappy they are with decisions of this CLP government that have adversely affected them.

There are a number of them. Firstly, the reduction of the travel scheme for pensioners and carers.

What a crying shame the decision has been made. Of all the groups the CLP government wanted to penalise, they chose to hit seniors. The decision by this government saw the reduction of the amount that can be taken every two years, but also the ruling that pensioners and carers could no longer let the entitlement accrue so they could have a full entitlement. For example, they cannot receive \$1000 after four years; it is \$500 every two years and that is it. How incredibly cruel!

It would have made little difference to government to let them accrue for the four years but, instead, this mean-spirited government thought they would take this provision away. What it principally means is those who previously travelled overseas, say, for example, visiting family in Greece or Germany every four years with the flights being entirely covered by the scheme, now cannot. The maximum benefit they can receive is \$500 for the two years.

Another blow to seniors by this government is the removal of free bus travel. As I said previously in this House, this decision has impacted the most vulnerable in our society, those seniors with no other means of transport who frequently travel for medical reasons or to visit loved ones in hospital or nursing homes.

Seniors also did not remain unscathed by the CLP's power and water hikes and, according to recent data, are heavily hit by the cost of living in the Northern Territory.

I commend the work done by the minister in the youth affairs sector. Despite the lack of detail in his statement, it seems he has maintained a similar policy to the former government. There has been much going on in this space in the Territory which the minister has failed to mention. I will mention some of it in my response. However, the minister did mention some important programs and initiatives.

The youth Round Table appears to have been, once again, a success in getting a wide range of young people involved in a process and advising government on youth issues. The youth Round Table has had some of the Territory's most highly achieving youth pass through its ranks, and I hope this government continues this into the future.

I congratulate the 2013 members of the youth Round Table who are coming to the end of their stint. I am impressed with the diversity of location of those who make up the Round Table which stretches from Alice Springs to the Tiwi Islands. This year the Round Table was made up of Caleb Maru and Olivia Johnson from Alice Springs, Elizabeth Fogarty from Humpty Doo, Allan Sommerville, Janet Truong, Renon Schafer, Rochelle Cabry, Thomas Ballas and Sarah

Tam-Perez from Darwin, Sebastian Pascoe from Galiwinku, Jessica Sullivan from Mataranka, Carlie Richards from Palmerston, Leonie Williams from Tennant Creek, Natasha Pilakui from Wurrumiyanga and Kenisha Ganambarr from Yulara.

I congratulate all the members for representing their regions so well. This is an incredibly diverse range of young people, and I look forward to hearing their recommendations. What these young people have done is a service to the Northern Territory and it needs to be recognised that we owe them our gratitude. The Territory has a very young population which makes programs like the youth Round Table so essential.

I congratulate the Office of Youth Affairs for another successful Youth Week this year – 150 events from the 5 to 14 April is a phenomenal effect. Again, events such as these are essential, especially in the Northern Territory, and the continued success of these events is paramount.

When I attended the 2013 Young Achiever Awards this year I was in awe of the achievements that so many of these young people had made at such a young age.

The Northern Territory Youth Parliament ran this year for the first time since 2008, and I congratulate Gemma Benn from the Office of Youth Affairs for coordinating the event. I attended and was hugely impressed with the standard of debate. The delegates of Youth Parliament were from all over the Territory, and I was impressed with the different perspectives brought to the table. It made me proud to be a Territorian.

I also congratulate the four Territory nominees for Young Australian of the Year. This is a great achievement. The four nominees are:

- Jameson Casson of Tennant Creek, who has collected cans and bottles to fundraise for sporting equipment for youth in his community. Jameson has been a role model for the youth in his community despite his disability
- Amy Hetherington from Darwin, who works for Music NT and has worked on National Youth Week and runs free Media Maker workshops to inspire young people on career journeys in media, journalism, film and editing
- Jesse King from Katherine, who teaches at St Joseph's College. Jesse is the information technology coordinator at St Joseph's and is well respected by his students, colleagues and the Northern Territory Catholic Education Office for his IT initiatives, both inside and outside the classroom

- Emily Osborne from Nhulunbuy, who is a young carer. Emily looks after her older sister Kaia, who has suffered from Rett Syndrome since she was 18 months old.

These are amazing young Territorians and I wanted to get them on record and congratulate them because I admire them greatly. I wish them all the best for the awards next year.

Again, I need to comment on the lack of detail given in this statement. The minister has given a lecture on the existence and processes with the Young Territorians portfolio, but has not gone into any real detail about who is benefiting. This is exemplified by the quick response grants. Yes, they exist; we are all aware the government has the capacity, but the minister has given no detail on who has received these grants and whether or not they have been beneficial.

The same applies for the Youth Engagement Grants program. The minister has explained the existence of these grants but has given no detail on the implementation of them. Again, there is no information as to who has received these grants and how effective they have been.

Finally, I acknowledge a truly inspiring Territorian. Adam Pulford was raised in the Territory and attended and graduated from Kormilda College in 2007. He went on to work with the Oaktee Foundation and PROJECT ROCKIT. Most recently, he was appointed the Australian Youth Representative to the United Nations. He is currently in New York at the United Nations General Assembly. He makes me extremely proud that a Territorian is representing Australia at the United Nations as we speak, and I wish Adam all the best.

The youth of the Territory really punch above their weight, and I hope the minister recognises this. It seems the minister sees this portfolio as a wholly administrative space. I hope this does not continue.

Madam Speaker, I am glad the minister has brought on this statement to recognise the work being undertaken in the Multicultural Affairs, Seniors and Youth portfolios. I particularly pay homage to the public servants who deliver these programs. Their continued passion in these sectors is what drives these programs and services. I hope the minister will take note of the homework he needs to do in his responsibilities as minister for these important sectors of the community, but I also commend the minister, because I know he truly believes in these portfolios.

**Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Primary Industry and Fisheries):** Madam Speaker, I support this

statement on multicultural affairs, seniors and young Territorians made by the minister.

This government's commitment to building a confident culture is reinforced through its highlighting in the *Framing the Future* blueprint. The support of a strong, proud, and culturally-confident society is essential to the enhancement of our diverse and multicultural way of living in the Northern Territory – and diverse and multicultural we are.

In my electorate of Katherine we are lucky to have an incredibly strong and culturally diverse community. The Katherine area benefits from many multicultural events and celebrations. When I talk to the many multicultural groups we have in my electorate, I make no secret of the fact that I believe they make an enormous contribution to the cultural richness of Katherine and of the greater Northern Territory. It is terribly important that they provide for us an opportunity to learn, understand, and experience the diversity their culture brings to Katherine and the Northern Territory.

Recently, I met with teams from across the world that were passing through Katherine as a part of the 2013 Solar Challenge. The turnout of spectators from the local community was great, and the opportunity to meet and talk with competitors was highly valued by all. There were teams in the solar car race from countries across the world: the Netherlands and United States to name a couple. Each one of the people who come here not only shares with us their culture but also takes the opportunity to allow us to share our culture with them, and that exchange is extremely important.

I had the great pleasure of attending the Indian Association of Katherine function last year, and I give special thanks to Biju Mani for the hard work that went into running it. I had not had a great deal to do with Indian culture prior to that, but there is a strong Indian society developing in Katherine. I have been experiencing that a little over the past couple of years through some of the dance celebrations the Indian community has brought to various events and functions. I did not realise just how strong the Indian community is in Katherine. It was wonderful to see so many Indian people at that Indian Association function last year. I was honoured to be there with my wife. We were treated in a manner which made me feel humble that we were so well received into that group of people. It was a wonderful night.

The Katherine Filipino Australian Association, KFAANT, runs a number of highly successful and well-attended events each year in Katherine, including the Barrio Fiesta and the multicultural

day, which is Harmony Day. They also run a Miss KFAANT at the same time.

The dedicated venue of the Mabuhay Hall is a popular and well-used community facility that is kindly shared by KFAANT with the wider community for a range of events and celebrations. Again, I must say the warmth and depth of feeling that comes from the Filipino community directed not only towards me in my position as the local member but to all people in Katherine is something to behold. Every time I manage to get to an event run by the Filipino association in Katherine, no matter whether we are Australian, Indian, or from any walk of life or culture, we are very warmly accepted by the Filipino community. I have often remarked to my good Filipinos friends in Katherine that their attitude and warmth is highly appreciated by not only me, but the whole community.

We also have in Katherine a very strong Thai community which is highly regarded as having some of the best culinary delights. Took Hayes, Nepa Jolley and Renu Bretherton hold food stalls at the Katherine Community Markets every Saturday. I challenge you to find a better laksa, curry puff or spring roll anywhere else in the Northern Territory. The Katherine Community Market is like the Mindil Market in Darwin – a smaller version but, nonetheless, a forum for our cultures to blend and mix. The markets are not only a very popular place to gather so people can talk, they are about becoming involved in the food and culture of other countries across the world. Joining together in that forum is wonderful.

In 2012, Katherine was honoured with a visit from the Indonesian Consulate. During this trip, Indonesian Cultural Day celebrations were held and included dance performances, a fashion show and cooking demonstrations, again at the Katherine Community Market.

People are probably getting the picture that it is a wonderful place for cultural diversity. Duah Asanema and Lyndal Carbery have a fashion outlet which includes West African arts and crafts. There is a small African community in Katherine also. They also run African drum and dance lessons for the town. This wonderful sharing of culture is greatly valued by me, but it is also valued by the entire Katherine community.

Shamwari Meats, owned by Hilton and June Graham, sells meat at the Katherine Community Market each Saturday and provides members of the Katherine community with the opportunity to experience African foods.

There are also Chinese language lessons held each Wednesday evening in my electorate office. How wonderful it is that the gift of language is

available to anyone in the community who might wish to learn it.

Without the dedication, commitment and input of many local members of the community, supported by grants from the government, I am sure many of these events would not be as successful as they are. The benefit of such events is immeasurable in their building of community spirit.

I move now to talking a little about our youth. It is important our youth have the opportunity to grow up in a community that values cultural diversity and share in the very many wonderful traditions and celebrations that come from those cultures. Our youth today will be leaders of tomorrow, and through emphasis on leadership and development opportunities we are committed to helping build our young people into strong and capable members of the community.

One of the things I most enjoy is getting along to my schools in Katherine. Getting to the assemblies and having an opportunity to interact with our students, our young people in Katherine, is something I really value. I go there because, in many ways, the sight of young fresh faces, young people who are at the beginning of their lives, at the beginning of their journey, represents something that is innocent, refreshing and gives me a great sense of hope and comfort that the Northern Territory will be in good hands in the future.

That is what I tell the students when I talk to them. I take the opportunity whenever I can to address the assembly. I look out across somewhere between 80 and 200 faces all looking up at me intently, and tell them what I see is not just a bunch of schoolkids sitting on the floor, but our future leaders, doctors, nurses, policemen – our future everything, the leaders of our community. Those young children have so much potential and all I ask them to do – I do it whenever I can – is to take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them. The other thing I tell them is they should be grateful for the opportunities afforded to them through not only their parents providing for them at home, but providing for them as they develop into young people by sending them to school, getting them involved in sport and extracurricular activities, and providing them with an environment that allows them to really blossom.

I do not do it as much as I used to; now being in government, it is difficult to find the time to always be in my electorate as I once was. However, I take every opportunity to tell those kids how I think they will develop in the future is very important.

Then, as they grow up, they start to become young adults, and we move them into an area where they might get involved in things like the

youth Round Table. This is an excellent government-supported initiative that seeks to provide the opportunity for young Territorians to have input and direct communication with government into what is important for the youth of the day. It is very important to remember that, in the context of those young people who will become the future leaders, the future decision-makers in the Northern Territory, we should, right now, be valuing their opinions and views.

Young people these days think a bit differently to how we did when we were their age. Society has changed. It seems to me that our young people these days are better able to communicate per year of age than when I was young. As I said, I go to my school assemblies and I see a whole class or sometimes individuals get up on stage and hold court. They perform, they grab hold of the microphone and they emcee an assembly. Every time I see that happening, I think back to my school days and that we never did any of that. What it tells me is the youth of today are far more confident about themselves.

They have been encouraged to stand up in front of a group of people and put themselves on display, and I can tell you that is something that did not happen when I was that age. It tells me young people these days are more mature per year of age than they used to be. Therefore, we would be foolish to ignore their views and thoughts as we move forward and as they become a much more integral and important part of the community.

Going back to the youth Round Table, I encourage all young people to consider applying to participate in the youth Round Table, as no matter who you are, where you come from, you have a voice and experiences that would be of value to others around you. The Round Table is a wonderful opportunity to lend your voice to your peers and represent what is important to you and the youth of today.

I will talk a little about seniors. It is important to recognise that many of the opportunities we have today would not have been possible without the work done by our now senior community. It is the seniors who provided our generation with the foundation to flourish. It is only right that when they are in what is often referred to as the golden years, we recognise their importance to our community and provide them the support and opportunity they bestowed upon us.

Katherine has a very vibrant seniors community which is very strong in number and in the activities they undertake. We have a Senior Citizens Association in Katherine which has proved to be a real mainstay for the senior people as they seek to find ways to further engage with the community, to

get out and keep themselves active, healthy, and involved. There is a wonderful opportunity for all of us – perhaps we do not do this often enough – in sitting down and talking with some of these old folk.

I note the member for Namatjira is particularly interested. I was thinking that the member for Namatjira would know this. She would know the importance of sitting down with old people and listening to their stories and the way things were done before. You can learn an awful lot from talking to old people, because – guess what – they have done it all before and we should give them credit for that.

We should not see them as a burden on the community in any way, shape or form. These people have the capacity to contribute in so many ways. They might not be working and contributing in that way, but what they can contribute to the community and to the rest of us is the sum of their knowledge and experience. There is an enormous amount to be gained by all of us from listening to what these old people have to say.

There are many wonderful programs available to seniors which they can take advantage of to continue to enjoy the Territory lifestyle. The commitment of this government to further enhance the celebration of seniors is welcome news, and I look forward to participating in new initiatives as they are developed.

Sometimes the areas of multicultural affairs, seniors and our youth are a bit underrated. We do not give them the importance they are due, and we miss out on something when we do that. We must embrace what those groups bring to our society. It is not just about us middle-aged working folk; it is all about that diversity that extends from the 90 and 100-year-olds, right down to the four- and five-year-olds and everybody in between from all walks of life and all cultures.

It is important that the minister brings statements like this into the House, because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on the importance these component parts of our community bring to society in general.

Madam Speaker, I welcome the statement. I commend the statement to the House and I thank the minister for making it.

**Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, it is always good to get the diversity of statements coming through the House. I am pleased the minister brought this one to the House today for debate. Whilst it did not make any big policy announcements or changes in the statement which, of course, we look for, it did, in a way, essentially recapture the way the

Multicultural Affairs, Youth and Seniors portfolios have been operating for a period of time in the Northern Territory.

That being said, I recognise what brought these aspects of these portfolios back into the Department of the Chief Minister. That was an election commitment by the member for Blain and it has been acted upon.

I hear one particular thing regarding multicultural affairs as I visit community groups and attend functions. I do so constantly to keep in touch with people because you form such wonderful bonds and friendships over the years. What I am hearing is confusion about the processes and access to multicultural grants. I will ensure my office works proactively to get elements of the ministerial statement out to the multicultural community to advise that this is the latest information and advice we have received from the government about those all-important multicultural grants. I am sure respective groups will follow up on them.

For example, before the election, the Portuguese Timorese Club was personally promised an air-conditioned hall by the member for Sanderson. After the election, they asked the member for Sanderson about the air conditioning and were advised they could have access to the second-hand air-conditioning unit they were pulling out of another government department. The members of that club looked at that unit and it was substandard, which is why it was being removed. There is still a state of flux and uncertainty about what will happen with the air conditioning of that club, as it was an election commitment.

It is one of those issues where I am sure in the fullness of time there will be some clarity about what is happening. This could be through a multicultural capital grant or the attempt by the member for Sanderson to legally okay the change of an air-conditioning service from one place to another. However, there is no doubt, over the years, these capital programs and the grant programs to run events have been crucial to the multicultural communities, irrespective of where they are in Territory. If you look at the grants for events, for example, they are across the diversity of the Northern Territory, across the regional towns as well as the major urban centres.

This debate, as the member for Katherine showed us, is not a Darwin-centric debate. There is a very strong and vibrant multicultural community in Alice Springs, and they are growing significantly in numbers. Having been in Alice Springs recently, I know there have been some concerns around community harmony. I went to volleyball, of all things, in the river. There is always more we can do, as members of parliament and as a

government, to raise multicultural awareness and promote harmony.

One of the greatest programs we have had consistently through the years is the Harmony Day celebrations. They have been supported through a range of grants by the Northern Territory government. I have seen multicultural communities across the Territory, not just Darwin and Palmerston but into the regional centres, embrace the Harmony Day grants because the message has been really powerful about respecting each other's cultures and embracing the broad diversity of cultural backgrounds we have in the Northern Territory. That is what makes this a great place to live.

That theme of unity and diversity has been one of our greatest strengths across our communities and has enriched our lives. Look at the backbone of some of the regional centres such as Pine Creek. It was the Chinese who created the thriving hub of Pine Creek, and the families are still there. They have not made some money and then packed up and left these communities. They are still in the communities across the Northern Territory.

You can go to Katherine where some of the residents who have lived there the longest are from migrant backgrounds. They love and embrace the Northern Territory through its different geographical zones, settle in and stay for generations, and become very much the fabric and backbone of the community.

When I think of multiculturalism and the way we are such a harmonious community, I believe the Territory is quite exceptional in how we have managed to do that through the decades. I do not think multiculturalism for us is ever a political football. I never want to see it used as a political football because we have been better than that, irrespective of who has been in government through the years. For example, the Fijian community had their gathering on Saturday night and members from both political persuasions were at that gathering. I had to give my apologies as I was Dancing with the Celebrities with the member for Blain, otherwise I would have been there. The Fijian celebration is fantastic.

Equally, look at the Filipino community and the way they have their Harmony Day celebrations and bring together people from a range of different ethnic backgrounds and age groups, particularly focusing on young talent for entertainment. It is a fantastic thing to see. Embracing that through the support of grants out of the Office of Multicultural Affairs is critical, and that is recognised in the statement by the minister, the member for Sanderson.

The beauty of many of our multicultural communities is they have come here at different stages of the Territory's development and really made a go of things, sometimes prevailing in tough environments. Sometimes, they have had to really struggle to get here, travelling by land or sea. Some people, our more newly-settled migrants, have come out of large refugee camps from around the world. We are seeing the Nepalese and Bhutanese settling in.

In this respect, when we talk about multiculturalism we need to recognise the people at the coalface who help with those all-important settlement programs. Melaleuca is fantastic in the work it does to help with settlement and helping people feel comfortable. I acknowledge the work of Melaleuca. I also acknowledge the work of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory because it buddies up with Melaleuca and broadens and extends the experience of the multicultural new settler into being a very dynamic and vibrant member of the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory.

Equally, I recognise the work of the multicultural broadcasters because they have gone through a journey of having lost access to Territory FM and having pulled together over many years and effort to create another frequency. They ended up buddying up with Radio Larrakia, a suggestion I gave them quite a few years ago because I could see the synergies. Radio Larrakia was doing a great job but on the smell of an oily rag, as community radio does. I had said to the multicultural broadcasters who had lost their argument with Territory FM to stay on that frequency, 'You should have a chat to Larrakia'. I did that because I knew our multicultural people have always had such a beautiful bond and relationship with our traditional owners. I thought that harmony could extend to the broadcasting realm. I am personally awesomely delighted to see, some years later, after much work from the multicultural broadcasters, that has come to pass.

Sometimes, when you look at what works and how things can work, you often look to your own back yard. I look to my back yard of Malak and the area of Malak shopping centre which is now called the Malak Community Area. There we have the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, a Danila Dilba social wellbeing service which has operated out of there successfully for quite some time now, and the Darwin Community Arts, which has been operating and linking in the work they do with the Multicultural Council NT.

We now have My Sister's Kitchen, which is food prepared by women of a variety of newly-settled migrant areas. They are preparing and selling their food. They have established a community garden. Quite a few of us have donated to that

community garden. They are producing the bulk of the food they require. In fact, they have just got the go ahead from the owner of the shopping centre, Henry Yap, to extend the community garden and take over more verge and more space. I say thank you to Henry Yap, but also to Darwin City Council, which has been partners in this, which has not said, 'You cannot do that because it might not look how normal verges look'. They have embraced this whole process.

They have regular dinner nights at Darwin Community Arts. We had a huge one recently with hundreds of people in the Darwin City Council car park. They have them frequently on a Monday night inside Darwin Community Arts. The number of different ethnic backgrounds people are from when they gather in that environment is just superb. People who are very Anglo, like me, are there as well, supporting and loving it. I have to say the food is awesome. For someone who, for religious reasons, cannot eat pork, I love going there because it is mostly vegetarian. I get awesome food I know I can eat. I just love that they are showing us how to get organised and do things in a more harmonious way than, sometimes, people who have lived here for a really long time take for granted. They are pushing the boundaries of what is next in real community and community-organised actions. I take my hat off to Darwin Community Arts and the work they are doing with the people in the Multicultural Council NT.

As an aside, whilst this statement covers off on youth - I will come back to youth soon - what I also love about that is the alternative education program which was set up in that Malak space to deal with the young kids who were disengaged from school and did not go to school. When they are put in a school environment when before they have not really been going to school, they do not work in that school environment. The youth there have been plugged in and engaged with Darwin Community Arts. Now, we have this flavour of the newly-settled migrants, the migrants who have been here for quite some time, Multicultural Council NT, Darwin Community Arts, and the young people who have been disengaged from the school system all in there together, working together on projects.

It is an awesome example of not only diversity across races, but diversity across age groups. I am proud of the fact that it is in my own back yard. I have worked hard with each of those organisations, including the Department of Education, to try to bring that to bear and make it happen. I played a little role; they are all out there and doing it themselves. It would not be happening if it was not for the people who are on the ground every day organising these activities and doing it for the love of it.

Most of these people are volunteers, they are not getting paid. Most of those who run multicultural organisations or who run their own multicultural community and club are volunteers. It is rare to see a paid position. That is an amazing aspect of the multicultural movement in the Northern Territory. It is something we should never forget. It is a reason why Labor had multicultural awards, which morphed into the Charles See Kee Awards. Minister, I say to you, the more awards the better because we are recognising the work of volunteers and, as we know, the multicultural groups love the awards.

We are so fortunate to have this smorgasbord of cultural festivities when you look at the music, dance, cooking, costumes, the festivals and the variety of places and spice of life they cover, whether it is the Greek Glenti, India@Mindil, the Italian Festival that has just started up, not to forget the Cypriot Food and Wine Festival, the Barrio Fiesta by the Filipino community, Chinese New Year, the fantastic Portuguese Timorese celebrations to mark their occasions, and the African community that regularly comes together, as a whole, but also those from the different parts of Africa. Increasingly, we are seeing the Vietnamese hosting functions with their social club we helped establish. There is the Thai community at their temple, working with the Laotians and Cambodians. I am seeing a real growth in the Japanese community. Minister, it will be interesting to see in your response what is occurring in support for the Japan Australia Friendship Association, because they have had some good gatherings. Given the number of additional Japanese coming to work in Darwin, it will be interesting to see whether there is any targeted work your Office of Multicultural Affairs is doing to support the association.

Of course, we have a few different groups from Timor-Leste operating and putting on great festivals and occasions for us. Whether it is the Chinese-Timorese, the Portuguese-Timorese or those I call Timorese-Timorese, who are the Tetum speakers and the native Timorese, they are all organising festivals and cultural events and inviting people along.

I pay a special tribute in this debate to the Islamic Society. I have watched the Islamic Society grow through the decades from the opening of the mosque on Vanderlin Drive in the early 1970s. Now they have another mosque in Palmerston. The Islamic Society in Alice Springs is organised and vibrant, and is the core of many of the professionals in the Alice Springs community. The Islamic Society has the quiet unsung heroes, nestled in our communities, paving the way of harmony and providing all-important professionals to jobs that would otherwise be very difficult to fill. The people of the Islamic Society come from a

multitude of nations, whether it is the African nations, Indonesia, and what I call the Arab state nation. Even within the Islamic Society there are multicultural groupings. They open up their doors and invite us into the mosque and teach us about the teachings of the *Koran*. They are very open and friendly, and are fantastic members of our society.

As I said, there is always the importance of the grants program. I know in a one-year period under our previous government we put in approximately \$1.2m to support facilities such as the capital program, cultural and linguistic events, and to sponsor the multicultural programs themselves. Whether it was an installation of a wheelchair ramp, toilets, concrete slab extensions, or roller doors, the physical facilities grants are important as they make it easier for the clubs to get things built.

There were linguistic awards which the Fijians had money from in the past. When you look at the all-important sponsorship program, we funded the African Association of Central Australia, the African Charity Choir, the Alliance Française French community, the Indonesians, the Burmese, the Buddhists, and the Chung Wah Society which is the oldest cultural group organised, I believe, in their facilities, because that temple survived many disasters and they have a beautiful museum. If anyone has not been to the Chung Wah museum, you really should. The Malayalee is an Indian subcontinent group which is growing in numbers. The Congolese are becoming quite significant in numbers, the Latinos have formed themselves into an association to cover a number of countries from Latin America and, as I said, the Nepalese are growing in numbers.

That is just touching on some of the groups we have been able to assist in the past. I know the Vietnamese community is very grateful for the support they received in getting their halls.

I am very pleased the member for Sanderson has given his view of multiculturalism and where it is at in sponsorship and programs.

Regarding youth, I thank the government for continuing the youth Round Table, or its own version of that. Everyone will have their own version of things that work, so it is important you have the youth Round Table.

I would like, if possible, for you to revisit your decision to axe the funding of the youth networks. Youth networks, while not a sexy thing, are about getting all the youth providers together in a room, as a network, trying to work out what works and where the gaps are. This gives them a voice to lobby government to fill the gaps, and this is important. I know you axed the funding a year

ago, but if you could revisit the youth networks funding arrangements, it would be worth doing. I ask, minister, if you could update us on what is happening at ANZAC Hill? I have heard that not much is happening there. I would be happy if you could tell me about all the activities occurring at ANZAC Hill. As you would recall, it was established as a youth hub in Alice Springs. It was designed to be co-located and coordinated across youth service providers in Alice Springs. The facility is ideal and centrally located. I would like to have your advice on what is occurring with the youth hub in Alice Springs and how many people have located there ...

**Mr GUNNER:** Madam Speaker, I move an extension of time for the member to complete her remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Thank you. It would be interesting to hear what is happening with the youth hub in Alice Springs. I would also like to hear about the funding for youth activities in the regional centres such as Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy. I have a pretty good understanding about what is happening, as I keep in touch with the youth networks in Darwin and Palmerston. There will always be a greater need than what is available in funding and programs. However, it is good to continually update the House in debates such as this about what is occurring.

I could not see details of that apart from the youth Round Table and the Young Achiever Awards, which are important. I have always been passionate about the Young Achiever Awards; it is one of the most important evenings of the calendar year. You can see these incredible young Territorians, who are paving the way in quite astounding ways in their given pursuit. I am a mother of teenagers; I am totally engaged in the youth area because they are not shy of lobbying. I note the member for Katherine talked about how young people these days are far more vocal advocates than we were when we were young, and I believe he is right. It has been my experience that young people are very strong advocates and will lobby quite directly for services they need.

I consistently hear, minister, that they need more support regarding mental health. I know there was a bipartisan parliamentary committee of inquiry into youth suicide, and a series of recommendations about that. As Minister for Young Territorians, you could pay some heed to those recommendations and have the relevant minister report back to the Chamber on what is occurring in implementation of those recommendations. Youth suicide is frighteningly present in our lives. I say frighteningly because

just this weekend, we lost a young guy in our community. That was the second one within a matter of days.

Studies into youth suicide show they often occur, tragically, in a spate, in what they call a copycat pattern. I am starting to see a concerning re-emergence of youth suicides. I listen to the teachers at our high schools and they have spoken to me about the amount of work they do counselling their students who are threatening self-harm. I am engaged with people who work with headspace, which is an incredible mental health program for young people.

However, minister, we cannot rest on our laurels, we need to do more. The youth suicide parliamentary report gave us some very clear indicators of where to go.

I would also like to know what is happening where things have proven to have worked. For example, on the Tiwi Islands there was a mental health program established originally as a trial, but it was so successful in stemming the suicides on the Tiwi Islands it became permanently funded. I have heard that is no longer funded. Whilst that is not directly in your responsibility for youth, minister, as it falls under the Health department, I raise it in the context that it was an incredibly good group of mental health workers, community people trained in mental health who, as explained to me, were living in the community, as part of the community, and were called upon when there was an issue going down and, often, stepped in and prevented a suicide. That is crucial. Our young people are more vulnerable, as we know.

I raise the issue in the hope you can ask what is occurring with that mental health program on the Tiwi Islands. If it is no longer being funded, can you see your way to advocating on behalf of the young people of the Tiwi to get funding reinstated to that program? It was incredibly successful and there are some fantastic trained Tiwi people who can do that work. I did not want to put a dampener on your statement. There are some good things in here, but I needed to raise those matters in all consciousness as it came before the Chamber.

In the time I have left I want to touch on our senior Territorians. How incredible are our seniors in the volunteer work they do? Many things that occur in our community do so because our senior Territorians are spending their time willingly, for free, making things happen. Whether it is the organised charity groups such as RSPCA, Lions, or Rotary, often it is people who have retired – our seniors – doing the hard yards and hard work. Clearly, there are people with day jobs who are still active members of all those charity groups, but for much of the work it is the people in the

retirement age who give their time willingly and happily back to their community.

It is also fantastic to keep our seniors here because we want our kids to grow up with their grandparents. I can say that because I was of the Darwin generation where the Aboriginal, Greek and Italian grandparents were here, but that was about it. The rest of the children grew up pretty well without their grandparents, who lived elsewhere. I have seen the value of that third generation helping out with the little ones, helping out the social fabric of the family, helping out the workers, the parents, through the care of the grandchildren. I know and can see what the grandchildren are learning, importantly, from the grandparents.

We need to look at the messages we send about respecting our seniors. I know Citizens for Action is very concerned about the messages the government sent out in their early days about seniors. There is more work to be done to repair some of those concerns.

Every day, seniors pay \$1 for the bus and, to be honest, they are still not impressed. They still believe that is a mean action given the government cannot explain how much that revenue brings in. People are still complaining to me about the changes to the seniors travel concession. That was not one of the greater moments of the government's decision-making process.

It is one of those things where you say you value your seniors. Often they will look at what you are doing to them to make that determination. We have seniors groups in our communities and people work with our seniors groups and stay engaged.

Seniors Month is always a fantastic month. So many different activities are available to people, and I encourage the government to look at how they network more intensively with senior organisations leading up to Seniors Month. I know you do in the calendar of events and things like that, but you could elicit from seniors prior to settling the calendar some of the things they would like to see and whether or not it is innovative.

When you talk to seniors and listen to their concerns, it comes down to the provision of aged care services, health services and the like. Minister for Senior Territorians, you have a role of advocacy within your Cabinet. When debates are happening in another minister's portfolio area and it touches on seniors, put your antenna up.

The debate around bed block at Royal Darwin Hospital is real and present. There were concerns

raised by the Minister for Health around the aged-care facilities and the fact they had not passed some regulatory tests, therefore, bed block was being exacerbated because you could not release patients into those facilities.

The feedback I got from senior Territorians at that point in that debate, when they heard what the Minister for Health had to say, was that they were appalled because no Minister for Health should be advocating that aged care should not have that high level of ensuring a quality of service provision. That is where you can take that concern, 'We have bed block. Why will you not let us release people into the aged-care facilities?'

If there are restrictions put on aged-care facilities, there is a reason. Understand and attend to the reason. Obviously, you would need to work with the Commonwealth government in that respect. However, do not advocate releasing people to facilities that are not up to scratch. We have aged-care facilities here constantly under the pressure of any service provider dependant on issues of trying to get qualified staff and the like. I am not, in any way, saying our aged-care facilities do not try hard, they do. At any given time when there is a problem with the system, be aware we are talking about our seniors who rely on us to ensure we are setting as high a standard for their care as possible, rather than seeing it as a bed-flow issue from our acute end of the hospital.

Madam Speaker, in short, I thank the minister for making this statement today. I am pleased we have had the opportunity to contribute to the statement. I hope he can get back to us on some of the questions I have asked.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Health):** Madam Speaker, I am very happy this afternoon to talk to minister Styles' statement on multicultural affairs, senior Territorians and young Territorians. I also say it was quite pleasant to listen to the member for Karama's contribution to this debate. I cannot say I have felt that way very often in the past, but I enjoyed listening to her insightful comments about, particularly, multicultural affairs in Darwin. Clearly, these three groups – senior Territorians, young Territorians and Territorians from diverse backgrounds – add to the rich tapestry of the Northern Territory. As Minister for Health, I will first start by talking about services for seniors, and some of the issues I have discovered since becoming the Minister for Health of senior Territorians suffering with problems within the aged-care system.

Senior Territorians are, of course, the big users of health services. I listened to what the member for Karama had to say about comments I made several weeks ago about the problems which have come about due to three nursing homes in

Darwin being directed through the standards and accreditation process, I believe, to not take new residents into their facilities and how this has placed pressure on the public health system and, in particular, the hospitals.

The point I made, which was not particularly well conveyed to the parliament by the member for Karama, was that hospitals are no place for elderly people, or anyone for that matter, unless they are sick. Hospitals are there for acute illnesses and conditions that require acute medical attention. With the lack of nursing home beds, the Department of Health has found itself in a situation where it has many elderly people who require residential care having to come into an acute health setting because of the lack of those services. I make no apology. I feel the member for Karama has misrepresented my words. I am sure most elderly Territorians would agree it is not desirable to place people who are not sick in a hospital.

The problems within the residential aged-care services in Darwin have had enormous impacts, not just on the Department of Health and health services, but on families. I can vouch for this personally. My mother is in a nursing home and my father died in a nursing home earlier this year, so I know exactly the difficulty and the strain it puts on families, having to come to the realisation and the point in time when an elderly person cannot be cared for in the home and, for various reasons, requires care in a residential service for the elderly. When those positions are not available, it creates enormous pressure on the family, and community services have to step in and assist.

In the case of Alice Springs of late, the community services that would assist elderly people to stay in their homes have been stretched to the limit. There are no federal aged-care packages available for people currently requiring that assistance in Alice Springs, and there will not be any available for many months, I am told. That means families – usually spouses, husbands or wives, and quite often children of elderly people – have to struggle with assisting people with their day-to-day living requirements: assisting people to go to the toilet, with showering, to eat and to fulfil their basic needs. Often, if you are not skilled in this area it can be dangerous for both the elderly person involved and the people trying to care for them.

When we found ourselves in this situation in Darwin where three nursing homes were in breach of the required standards and were no longer able to take nursing home patients or residents, it placed enormous pressure on the whole system. At the time, I felt enormously angry and dissatisfied with the federal Department of Health

and Ageing which is responsible for ensuring that nursing homes meet the standards required, that they had effectively taken their eye off the ball and had failed in their duty. As a result, these nursing homes that were clearly struggling, for lots of different reasons, were told to freeze their intake.

I feel, in order to honour elderly people in our community, the Northern Territory government and the federal Department of Health and Ageing have to work closely together. We have to work as a team and do what we can to provide first-class services in the Northern Territory for elderly people. I have recently heard stories, and there has been some correspondence in the local newspaper, from families who have felt the care of their elderly people has been substandard and, in some cases, completely unacceptable. They have not received the care they should in a residential nursing home.

There are obviously ongoing problems within some of our aged-care facilities in Darwin and that continues to disturb me. For people facing the prospect of their elderly relative going into a nursing home in Darwin, quite frankly, it would be quite an unsettling period for them, trying to work out if nursing homes are able to fulfil their requirements to provide a top-quality service. How do you assess that, particularly if you have never had any experience in dealing with nursing homes? It unfolds as an unknown territory. You are poking around in something about which you have no idea how it works, how you pay for it, or what your expectations are. They wonder how they will survive once mum goes into the nursing home; it is an incredibly stressful time. However, lay on top of that uncertainty around the quality of services available in Darwin, for example, then the stress is enormous.

In Alice Springs, as I mentioned, there has been pressure around providing community-based support services for people who are choosing to stay in their own home. This is also an enormous source of stress for people. I was discreetly contacted by a woman who works in the aged-care industry who had reached the end of her tether. This goes back a few months, just before the federal election. She came to me knowing this could be an important issue the federal candidates may have chosen to take up. She came to me, hoping I would stir the pot, so to speak, and put some of these issues into the public arena. She was so concerned that so many families in Alice Springs were doing it hard, without assistance from the non-government organisations, which are funded to provide these support services, only because they were completely stretched to the limit. She was despairing and feeling upset and beside herself just contemplating how terrible things had become in Alice Springs.

The other centre in the Northern Territory which has caused me great concern is in the centre of Nhulunbuy. My first and only visit to Nhulunbuy as the Minister for Health was several months ago. I have mentioned in parliament previously that I was approached by a group of about four or five people who had gathered, on notice, to tell me about their long and unsuccessful mission over many years – it was something like 10 years – to try to establish an aged-care residential facility in Nhulunbuy, and how they had just met closed door after closed door.

I was shocked at how disempowered this group of people felt; they communicated that to me loud and clear. They could see the need in Nhulunbuy for a residential aged-care service. There is not one of any description in Nhulunbuy. Despite their efforts over a long period of time, as I said, it just has not happened. I have to question the commitment and work the current member for Nhulunbuy had done in this space. It appeared to me that, despite the fact her Northern Territory Labor Party had held government for 11 years, and there was currently a federal Labor government in power, she was impotent in doing anything in this space, apparently.

I have instructed the Department of Health, as the current Minister for Health in the Northern Territory, to start work on this real deficit in aged care in Nhulunbuy. I want them to get cracking and to find a way through what these people had described as insurmountable problems.

There are major problems across the Northern Territory in residential aged-care services and adequate community support for aged people who choose to stay at home. I was quite shocked, coming into government, that this was the case. For many years, aged care was something which was well resourced, and something people were reasonably proud of. We were keeping abreast of the need but, somewhere along the line, people have taken their eye off the ball and we have not kept abreast with the demand.

I look forward to having conversations with the new Coalition federal government about how we can step up better and adequate services for our aged people in the Northern Territory.

In other areas where the Northern Territory government assists elderly people, we have recently upgraded, expanded, and spent a whole lot more money on the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme, which affects many elderly people. A great proportion of users of the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme are elderly people. People, inevitably, become ill as they get older and often require specialist treatment which is not necessarily available in the centre where they live.

The updated PATS came into effect on 1 September this year. We made a commitment to the Northern Territory to review PATS prior to the last election and have done that. As a reasonably new Country Liberal government, this is something we should be very proud of. We promised it for many years in opposition, and we have done it. For Territorians, it means greater assistance when they travel to their specialist treatment. We have updated guidelines and, for the first time, those guidelines are available online, not hidden away within the department.

We are providing fuel subsidies for patients travelling 400 km or more per week for treatment, and have increased the commercial accommodation allowance from \$35 – it was \$35 when I came to the Territory in the early 1990s – to \$60 per person per night. We have doubled the private accommodation subsidy and have increased the fuel subsidy from 15 ¢ per kilometre to 20 ¢, which is amongst the highest you will get anywhere in Australia for this type of assistance.

We also have a guideline where you lodge a claim for PATS up to three months after travel instead of the current 28 days. Even I have been caught out with the 28 days. This is a far more generous system with an additional \$7.5m per year in the 2013-14 budget to provide more and better assistance under PATS for Territorians.

We are very proud of this. We have honoured our commitment and I know Territorians are very happy about this. It is one of those forms of assistance that, until you need it, you do not realise how important it is.

The other scheme we have in place, the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme, despite some trimming back is still the most generous scheme in the country. It was first introduced by the Country Liberals government in 1979 and provides a range of offsets and price reductions, and is managed by the Department of Health. Pensioners, non-pensioner age war service veterans, low income superannuants, and senior citizens are eligible for concessions. So, too, are carers who are permanent residents of the Territory and in receipt of the Commonwealth Carer's Allowance from Centrelink.

The budget in 2013-14 allocated \$22.5m in subsidies and support to assist seniors, pensioners and carers to meet a range of costs and expenses. The government has provided an additional \$7.9m in support to offset the increase in utility tariffs. This is an incredibly generous system. I have heard of people leaving the Territory, as many people do when they get to retirement age, only to return because they realise the concessions you get as a pensioner and a carer in the Northern Territory far outweigh

anything you would get anywhere else in Australia.

We still have our interstate and overseas travel subsidy under our scheme. Eligible members are entitled to \$500 every two years to meet the cost of interstate and overseas travel. This has been trimmed back because we have had to pull in our belt, unlike Labor governments throughout the history of Australia and, indeed, throughout the last 11 years of the Northern Territory. They were big spenders and have put us in a very compromising financial situation in the Northern Territory. We have had to pull in our belts, tighten up, and have trimmed this back. It is still very generous, \$500 every two years. It was slightly more generous than that, but people realise it is something we had to do. You cannot keep spending and putting it on the credit card as Labor has done for many years. You have to spend within your means. We have maintained the generosity of the subsidy, but we have trimmed it back. We apologise, but that is the way it has had to be. We have made similar savings and cutbacks in most other areas of government, so it is all very consistent ...

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move an extension of time for the member for Araluen.

Motion agreed to.

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

This week is Carer's Week 2013. I attended a function yesterday morning and, as always, this is a group of people who deserve acknowledgement for their amazing work, for the contribution they make to not just the people they are caring for but the whole of the community. They save us a heck of a lot of money in, essentially, free care for people who must have it, but they also are selfless human beings who do it because they love the person they care for. They are particularly decent and good human beings.

The theme of this year's Carer's Week in the Northern Territory is Be Care Aware, Support and Celebrate Australia's Carers. This is a great week for carers to try to relax and feel valued, and to feel confident that people recognise the contribution they make. They are not taken for granted which is, I suppose, a fear they might have at times.

There are 2.6 million carers across Australia and an estimated 30 000 in the Northern Territory. In 2006, the former Labor government legislated the Northern Territory *Carers Recognition Act* which included eight key principles for the way carers should be treated and their roles, rights and responsibilities. I will not read through them, but

the former Labor government did a particularly good job in raising this legislation, and we support it 100%.

We are conducting a review of this legislation, however, to make sure it is still relevant and contemporary. We have asked stakeholders and individuals to contribute to that review process. There is a survey people can complete, which is due this Friday, but I am sure if you do not get it in by this Friday there will not be any problem around us accepting it beyond that.

It is timely that this statement has come on because of the number of carers we have in the Northern Territory, the critical role they play, and how valued they are within our community.

On young carers, the Commonwealth department of Social Services provided funding to Carer's NT for a young carer's program. According to the ABS, the 2011 estimate was there were 1500 primary carers in NT homes aged less than 18 – 1500 is a remarkable number – and 1000 primary carers in NT homes aged 18 to 24. There are 2500 young people under the age of 24 caring for someone in their home, being the primary carer. That is a staggering number of people, considering our population is around 240 000 people. Clearly, they do a remarkable job and should be recognised and applauded for their efforts.

Another important issue affecting older people and people with disabilities is adult guardianship. The *Adult Guardianship Act* sets out the rules for adults currently the subject of an adult guardianship order. The Northern Territory government is currently exploring options to update and modernise our guardianship laws. We have heard from the community that they would like to improve the timeliness in processing adult guardianship orders.

This is old legislation; it is antiquated and not in line with other jurisdictions. It is something the former Labor government did not turn their attention to. It was probably an area they chose to neglect for some reason. They tried to bring on legislation to update it at the eleventh hour before the last Northern Territory government election, but it was all too little too late.

We are doing a lot of work around this. We are considering proposals to streamline the system through the introduction of a tribunal, for example, and the establishment of an independent statutory office of the Public Advocate, bringing the NT into line with other jurisdictions. I look forward to providing further information to the House in the New Year.

The member for Karama quite eloquently described the rich nature of multicultural affairs throughout the Northern Territory, including Alice Springs. There has been an expanding multicultural community in Alice Springs over the last 10 years. The social fabric of Central Australia has dramatically changed. You only have to drive around the streets of Alice Springs to see that we have so many different nationalities represented within a relatively small town of fewer than 30 000 people.

At the centre of all that is multicultural in Alice Springs is the Migrant Resource Centre. I pay tribute to a former colleague of mine, Marguerite Baptiste-Rooke. She is an amazing woman who has been the coordinator of the Migrant Resource Centre in Alice Springs for many years. I met Marguerite in 2004 when we became Aldermen of the Alice Springs Town Council together. She is from Seychelles. She is African, from one of the glorious islands in the Indian Ocean and is an exceptional human being. She has assisted new residents from different nationalities coming to Alice Springs for many years. She is a true Territorian. I cannot imagine how Alice Springs would have coped without her contribution. Well done, Marguerite.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in closing, I thank the minister for providing the opportunity today to highlight some of the important roles senior Territorians, in particular, and people from multicultural backgrounds have in our society. Many are performing vital jobs as carers, and many more come into contact with the health system on a regular basis. As Minister for Health, I am committed to ensuring all of them receive the health services they need, and have the programs like PATS and the pensioner concession scheme to assist in accessing those important services.

**Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this statement from my colleague, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Senior Territorians, and Young Territorians.

This statement is part of this government's vision. The document the Chief Minister launched and tabled in parliament, called *Framing the Future*, is about framing the future of the Territory. It is not just a future for foresight of economic growth or employment opportunities, it is about bringing all Territorian seniors, people who come from a multicultural background, and our youth together, because they are the future.

When we talk about multicultural affairs, we talk about people who are builders and farmers, people who have become our friends and part of our families.

This is a funny story, because I have had the privilege and honour to go to Easter functions to cater for seniors in the Greek community, and I have started to call myself a Wogarigine. It was a combination of us enjoying the Territory together, working with each other, and feeling the pain together, but enjoying the good things in the Northern Territory. I had the privilege, along with the Deputy Chief Minister before he got this portfolio, during Easter this year, of helping the seniors. It was fantastic to walk into the area where we were working for the old people to see Aboriginal, Italian, Chinese, and Greek people sitting there; it was a fantastic vibe, a fantastic atmosphere.

They did not separate themselves; they did not have a table for Chinese seniors or Aboriginal seniors. They were long-term friends who had worked very hard in the Northern Territory. They came before Cyclone Tracy. These were people who put their sweat and tears into building the Northern Territory, who have worked together and who have now become families as their kids have intermarried. That is the beauty we have in the Northern Territory: that we walk down the street with many nationalities. When you go to Casuarina, you will be lucky to see a non-Indigenous or Indigenous person there. We do not separate, we do not look for the difference when we go to our supermarkets, walk down the street, or go to the markets. We enjoy the company of one another, and we love the fact that we live in this great Northern Territory together. We work together and we enjoy the future of the Northern Territory together.

As I said, some of these people have come from very hard communities and they have found peace and love in the Northern Territory in Australia. Some of these people would not go back to their communities because they love the Northern Territory so much. This is their home.

I have had tremendous, fantastic and funny talks with Greek people I know. I said to Yianni – I hope you are listening, Yianni – 'Why is it everyone is called Yianni?' All the Yiannis are Johns, and that is their way of ensuring they carry on their heritage. It is similar to us as Aboriginals who have skin names. *Nambadjin Bungnumerai*, mother and daughter. We come from a similar background and it is fantastic and interesting to absorb all of this information.

Chief Minister, while you are in the House, it would be fantastic for all our kids to learn the history of the Northern Territory and the fact that we are a multicultural society – to learn the history of where these people came from and how we are travelling on this journey of building the Northern Territory together.

These people come from very hard backgrounds, and I reflect on the hard times my people had. Senior Aboriginal people in remote communities led a nomadic life where they roamed the desert and were picked up by lots of good missionaries – in my area by the Lutherans. We are so honoured and grateful always to those missionaries who are still in our lives today. Those missionaries brought people into major communities like Hermannsburg, Areyonga, Haasts Bluff, and Papunya. You have the same with other churches doing the same at Yuendumu, Ali Curung and Lajamanu.

We still see many things in remote Aboriginal communities that we can do better. This government is working hard to ensure they improve lives. I am so honoured and always grateful to my old people for the things they taught me. I can sit down on the ground and talk to them and go hunting with them. The hunting experiences are so funny. It is not something you learn from a book, you have to walk the 9 km or 12 km every time you go hunting to see how you can track the goannas or pick out the honey ants. You have to look for the ants on the surface to tell you the honey ants are down under the ground. It is like opening up a book, but the book is not there because it is all transferred from person to person. You have to do the hard yakka; you cannot just sit underneath the tree, open a book and learn how to attract the bush turkey or how to read the signs.

When you go hunting it is not about talking, it is about understanding the sign language. You have to know what people are telling you. You have to find the black ant with a yellow tail which tells you there are lots of honey ants. You have to look for the yellow flowers because they are the sign that tell you all your bush foods are fat. That is the kind of beautiful education you get from Aboriginal seniors.

It is fantastic to go to Docker River and Mutitjulu and see the aged-care centres. These are the things governments have done. They can see the struggles of the past and are trying to improve how we can make things better for people in the future.

When we talk about seniors we are talking about the people who have built the foundations we stand on. We are always grateful for the things they have done because they have come through the tough times. They have come through the times of no telecommunications, no telephones, and they found it very hard doing the washing only when water was available, with no gas stoves or electricity. They are the people who built everything we have today.

When we talk about youth, they are the kids of the future. The document the Chief Minister launched

called *Framing the Future* is where we bring everybody together as Territorians in a multicultural society: youth, seniors, everybody who loves and enjoys the Northern Territory so much. This document is a journey we want Territorians to enjoy and to travel with us. This document, quite clearly, is an indication to Territorians that we are here to cater for all Territorians young and old, from all different nationalities. It does not matter where you come from, you are classified as a Territorian.

We live in exciting times and in the best part of Australia. I am sure everyone will agree the Northern Territory is unique. It has some problems, but we live in the most fantastic part of Australia. Everyone in this Chamber or anybody listening to us would not disagree and say they would want to live somewhere else. Opportunities are here and have been for a long time. Opportunities are here for the future, for our next generation of kids we call the youth of today. They are our children, our nieces and nephews, and our friend's children. It is so fantastic to see government policy and grants going to embrace the difference we have in the Northern Territory, to encourage the future youth to participate and enjoy this journey with government. We live in interesting times. This is the space we should not forget.

I know the minister is very particular about this portfolio. He loves it and he goes to every single event. He loves mingling with all different nationalities and youth. He is very passionate about it; I have heard him talk about it. This is something we need to make a tape of because I am sure the minister, as he gets into his senior years, would love to sit down and listen to some of the things he has said about youth, the Territory, and multiculturalism. You might want to sit down and listen to them when you are 70 or 80 and hear how passionate you were about all these subjects and working in this area as a minister ...

**Mr Styles:** When I get old.

**Ms ANDERSON:** Yes, when we all get old.

I hope the youth we have today can have the same passion we have to give them the opportunities, vision, and future direction so they can say all the good things about us when we are old and in homes, and try to bring us all together. The Territory people are very lucky there have been great opportunities always in the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the minister for bringing this statement to the House. It is a fantastic statement and the future direction we have in this area is a very positive direction.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I too congratulate minister Styles on his statement on seniors, young Territorians, and multicultural affairs. It is another brilliant example of our commitment to all Territorians. Something that was very important to us right from the start when we took government was that we would govern for all Territorians; there would be no more Berrimah Line, no more classing Alice Springs as a backwater. We have embraced the whole of the Territory and all Territorians, and that is evident in the minister's statement. I congratulate him.

I echo some of the sentiments of the member for Namatjira. I am Italian by heritage. My grandparents and their family migrated here in the 1950s. It must have been incredible moving to Darwin in those days. I cannot imagine how awful it must have been with the lack of infrastructure, the heat, and the struggle of not being able to speak English. Those people were pioneers of our great Territory, and they have shaped the look and feel of this beautiful place. It is not just the Italians, obviously, it is all manner of cultures and communities. Over time, we are seeing that expand and increase from our traditional communities which came here in the 1940s and 1950s such as the Greeks and Italians and, of course, the Chinese who have been here for a very long time, to now African cultures and a large Indian community. It is fantastic to see.

Going to Gray Primary School when I was a little girl, I did not know if the little boy or girl next to me was an Indigenous boy or girl or whether they were Italian. I just thought everyone had a nonna and a nonno as I did. Life was glorious. That is one of the beautiful things about the Territory, that it is a melting pot. It builds on the fabric of who we are. That is what distinguishes us from the rest of the country.

Palmerston has a very young and vibrant population of which 52% is under the age of 30, and 10% is under the age of five. There is no shortage of young Territorians in Palmerston. Similarly, there is no shortage of senior Territorians. We have in excess of 1500 senior Territorians in Palmerston. Both of those sectors of our community contribute greatly in different ways but, when we bring it all together, it makes for the beautiful city we have.

Palmerston is culturally diverse; the whole of the Northern Territory is. It is lovely when I go to my school assemblies at Gray Primary School which has a very large Indigenous population, which is fantastic. It also has a high proportion of students who speak English as a second language. However, it is not Indigenous kids but kids from southeast Asia. It is brilliant going to that school and seeing all the beautiful kids wearing their traditional dress and hearing their beautiful

languages. As a result, Gray Primary School conducts many cultural activities. They embrace Harmony Day in an enormous way, and hosted an end-of-year show called Many Cultures, One School that perfectly sums up Gray Primary School. It was like that when I was a little girl going to that school, and it has remained exactly the same. They are exceptionally proud of their cultural diversity.

The Special Education Centre at Palmerston Senior College embraces Harmony Day. It is one of the biggest days on their calendar. Equally, Driver Primary School holds an enormous international food festival once every two years that embraces the cultures within their school. They have an incredibly diverse group of students. It is wonderful. The event is so big they physically, and mentally I think, can only run it once every two years because it exhausts the school council and, of course, the teachers. It is a brilliant event. That is just a very small snapshot of what the schools are doing in the multicultural space. The list goes on.

We have continued with significant grant funding this year and I congratulate the minister for that. As he said, our government recognises the need to embrace all Territorians from everywhere and all corners of our Northern Territory.

I was particularly proud this year to be part of the first major Italian Festival in the Northern Territory. We had one in the late 1980s when I was a very young girl. That was at Fannie Bay shops and it was called Pasta in the Park and ...

**Mr Elferink:** I had already been in the workforce for eight years in the late 1980s.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** Yes, you are much older than I, member for Port Darwin. I am a young Territorian. The definition of a young Territorian is up to the age of 24, so I am a little outside of that. However, I am under 30, so that gives me some runs on the board or some authority to speak as a young person.

The Italian festival was spectacular. We thank the Northern Territory government for the funding. It gave our culture an opportunity to come together. As I said, Pasta in the Park happened twice in the 1980s. It was a 100% volunteer model which exhausted the handful of volunteers, and it could never be repeated. It was so huge, successful and exhausting, and our relatively small Italian community – compared to the Greek or Chinese communities which are large – could not continue that momentum. Then, all these years later, we were able to come back together and decide that this is so important for our community on a number of levels.

Back at Pasta in the Park, everyone in my nonna's generation was in their 60s and they were the volunteers cooking the calamari and all of the food; it was a 100% volunteer model. We did not have stalls that you could just tender out, all of our community rallied together to create it. Reflecting back, we realised it was so important to give back to our own community and, thanks to government funding, we were able to deliver that to pay back our community elders and show them our thanks for taking that huge leap of faith to flee Italy after the war so their kids and my generation could have a better future which, thanks to them, we have.

I am very proud of my heritage and of the Italian Festival that allowed us to show the elders in our community just how grateful we are to them. I believe we had about 20 000 patrons attend the Italian Festival which was held on the lawns next to Parliament House, across through Bennett Park and over to the Old Town Hall ruins. It is a stunning location. I was also very proud that it showed off the magnitude of this beautiful building which, in many ways, has a nice connection with the architecture of Italy. We felt the nexus was there and the space flowed beautifully. The festival celebrated our dance, it showcased our culture, it had Italian food and Italian song, and it was a tremendous success. Hopefully, going into the future, the Northern Territory government will continue to fund the Italian festival, because if they do not, I will be a very cranky member for Drysdale. Member for Sanderson, perhaps we need to schedule a meeting sometime soon and make sure we get that across the line.

**Mr Styles:** I will be right onto that.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** I know the minister is very keen for Italian food, so I might have to start bringing in pasta lunch boxes or something like that ...

**Mr Styles:** How about dinner?

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** Dinner, now that is a whole other story.

Moving on to talk about seniors, it is no surprise to anyone sitting in this parliament that I absolutely love Palmerston seniors. I spend a great deal of my week with them and I rave on about them in adjournment. I am going to rave on about them now because they rock. They are such amazing people who are a stronghold of our community. It always gravely upsets me when I hear of the wrong things being done to seniors in our community. There are many examples of this.

We talk about discrimination against disabled people in the workforce, women and young people, but it is important to remember that senior

Territorians also face discrimination. Whenever I hear of it, I am very quick to make sure we are actioning any assistance the government can give. There is no room for treating senior Territorians badly. They have worked their guts out their entire lives to contribute to our country. It might not even be our country, they might have just chosen to settle in the Northern Territory, but it does not matter. We must show the utmost respect for these individuals, and we can only hope then that is paid back to us when we become older and we rely on services and support in that third age of our life.

They are incredible contributors to our society; we owe everything to them. Anyone who does not realise or appreciate that has hard things coming to them as they age through this lifetime. In my electorate we had the Advance Personal Planning consultation. I advised everyone over 50 in my electorate, and it was very interesting to see the number of people who came to it. There were older people who the bill directly related to, but there was this whole group of other people who were interested in it and glad that something was being done. They wanted that opportunity and choice. It was excellent on that level to be able to do something directly in my community which related to seniors.

One of the very first jobs I did as a newly-elected MLA at the end of last year was create the 2013 seniors calendar. I am very proud of this. In many ways, it is copyrighted to the Drysdale electoral office. We spent a great deal of time working with all our seniors to make this happen. I have spoken about this in adjournment before, but I will mention half a dozen of the things you can do as a Palmerston senior during any week.

Some of the activities the Northern Territory government contributes to, some the City of Palmerston, but the vast majority is done by the senior Palmerston residents themselves. They are an incredibly robust group of people. They are independent and very proud of what they do in our community. You can go to carpet bowls every Thursday, bridge every Thursday, or busy-bees bingo on Monday. Those women are good fun, so if you are ever in Palmerston on Monday anytime before 1.30 pm, stop by the Gray hall, it is well worth going in there to play 5¢ bingo.

There are digital literacy and computer classes, early morning walks, Groovy Grannies, indoor croquet, memorabilia mosaics, over 50s yoga, morning tea at Cazalys, the Men's Shed which is fantastic, the Palmerston 50+ Club, Probus, the Palmerston Home Library Service, the Recreation Centre, meditation, swimming, craft, University of the Third Age, Senior Songsters, Tai Chi – you name it, we have it in Palmerston. Seniors are running the show and it is fantastic to see.

One area the Northern Territory government significantly contributes to is Seniors Week. We all know and love Seniors Week in Palmerston. It forms part of Seniors Month, but in Palmerston we like to do things Palmerston style. For a whole week, we have an amazing number of events, and the Palmerston Seniors Week Committee does an unbelievable job. The women who organised Seniors Week this year put their shoulder to the wheel, so much so that many of them caught a terrible flu which they suffered for two or three weeks. It was really terrible and bittersweet because half of them were quite exhausted by the end of it. However, it goes to show how committed to this process they are.

In 2012, Sunday to Sunday there was the opening ceremony, morning tea at Palmerston Golf Club, a movie morning, a fantastic Robertson Barracks tour, an Adelaide River tour, a Larrakeyah Naval Base tour, a motorcycle ride and, of course, the closing ceremony.

This year was bigger and better, because we do not do things by half in Palmerston. There was the opening ceremony, mini golf, a movie, morning tea, a gourmet lunch at Cazalys followed by a RAAF Base tour, trivia and morning tea, a seniors high tea, a Larrakeyah Naval Base tour, and the motorcycle rides. They book out very quickly. If you ever want to get on the back of a motorcycle during Seniors Week you better start booking the year before. There was a concert at Cazalys and, of course, the closing ceremony.

Much of that is thanks to the Northern Territory government and the City of Palmerston. However, it is mostly thanks to Palmerston seniors because they continue to organise a brilliant and, I argue, the best sequence of Seniors Month activities in the Northern Territory. It is a tribute to them.

I note many of the opposition members have not been able to resist the temptation to talk down the statement in the sense we are charging seniors \$1 for the bus, and we are so horrible we have changed the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme for travel. There is no doubt everyone is not 100% happy with those changes, but one thing all of us know is one issue one person thinks is excellent another will hate. It is about governing as best you can and for everyone, but not everyone will be on board 100%.

From my perspective, and because I spend so much time with seniors, I had a lot of the opposite feedback. I had negative feedback and passed that on to the relevant ministers and conveyed the constituents' dissatisfaction as any good local member would.

However, interestingly, seniors told me the change to the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme is better because where they had only 50% of their fare refunded if they flew every two years, now they have the opportunity to travel every two years without being out of pocket whatsoever because they get the \$500 option. For many people that has increased their ability to travel because they can travel more frequently. With a little planning, they can get flights or fuel reimbursement for under that amount. Where many people were out of pocket 50%, they are now not out of pocket at all, and there is something important to be said about that.

Equally with the \$1 bus fare, many seniors in my community saw the value in that and many bus drivers who drive for Darwin Bus saw the value in it and appreciated it. It gave them a greater sense of worth because people cared more about the service they were using. So, horses for courses. There are always naysayers, but positives come out of things as well ...

**Mr Elferink:** If they are horses, of course they neigh.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** That is right. I did not mean to do that. Of course, you would pick up on that.

Moving to young Territorians, I am the youngest member of parliament in the Northern Territory and am very proud to hold that title. It is awesome because it means I get to be involved in many youth activities. When the Youth Parliament was on I did my best to come here a couple of times, sitting with the guys in the government lobby, chatting with them during their break times and watching them in action. I am always in awe of young Territorians. It seems like they jump out of bed every morning ready for a new day and to conquer the world. They are amazing.

Recently, I also took part in the Y Change forum, which was also brilliant. The Palmerston Recreation Centre was full to the brim of teenagers. There were powerful speakers talking on a range of issues affecting young Territorians. It was a very powerful day, and well done to Y Change for putting that on.

Minister Lambley touched on this earlier, but given it is Carer's Week, I feel it appropriate to mention the enormous contribution young carers make. Young carers are generally classed as aged between five and 24. ABS data collected in 2009 estimated, at 2011, the primary carers in NT homes who were younger than 18 years of age were 1500, and aged between 18 and 24 was 1000. That is 2500 young carers out of an estimated 30 000 carers in the Northern Territory. That is huge, and those young people should be commended.

Another exciting youth initiative I have been able to ...

**Mr STYLES:** Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move an extension for the member.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you to the minister. Another exciting initiative I have been able to get involved with is the Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians. I have been to two of four of their meetings so far. It is always refreshing to walk into that room. I love going. Being a young person, you think of things that affect your or your friend's lives, or interactions you have, as a government member, of what is affecting young Territorians. Then, you go to an awesome initiative such as the Round Table and are blown out of the water with what is happening in their minds. They are incredibly dynamic powerhouses of information. I am so excited to see their final projects coming up because there is a broad range of issues and projects they are working on as part of their Round Table experience. Minister Styles listed all of them, so I will not go through that. It is amazing that 16 members aged 15 to 25 years are representing the whole of the Northern Territory. Wow! They are amazing people.

They are even more amazing because their Chair, Allan Sommerville, who is the Operations Manager at Vincent Aviation, was awarded on Saturday night the Australian Institute of Management Young Manager of the Year Award. That was a huge night for him. As I sit on the Australian Institute of Management Young Managers Advisory Board, I was fortunate to be one of the judges on the Friday for the Young Manager category. We had a number of finalists. It blows your mind what people under 30 are doing in our community. They should never be underestimated.

It was just amazing that Allan, who was the youngest of the all the finalists at 22 years of age, took out the Young Manager category. I congratulate all of the finalists. You were exceptional and it was so difficult for the four of us on the judging panel to make our decision because the quality and the calibre was very high. I would like to do you all justice and say a few sentences about all of you.

Jenna Perry is the Senior Program Manager for the Centre for School Leadership Learning and Development, which offers programs for teachers, aspiring leaders, principals, and officials. As Senior Program Manager, Jenna is responsible for facilitating the preparation for school leadership program and the Indigenous preparation for school leadership program. Jenna played a key

role in designing and developing a high-quality professional learning program for Indigenous teachers, a project that took considerable leadership skills. Despite her young age, Jenna holds an esteemed position with the centre and is highly respected by her peers. Well done to you, Jenna.

Rebecca Moore is the Director of Moore's Heavy Diesel Mechanical in Katherine, and their business is doing very well. Minister Westra van Holthe, you should go to Moore's Heavy Diesel Mechanical. They have grown from strength to strength this year; since February they have just exploded. They do not know what to do with themselves they are so busy ...

**Mr Westra van Holthe:** I know Bec and Rohan very well.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** Very good. Moore's Heavy Diesel Mechanical is a family-run heavy diesel workshop in Katherine and, as a director, Rebecca is responsible for running the office, supporting company operations, maintaining office systems and supervising staff. Rebecca is a very interactive and team-focused manager who leads by example and takes pride in engaging, inspiring, and genuinely valuing the efforts of her team. She strives to be a leader who listens to employees, encourages participation, and is open and empowers the team. Well done to Rebecca.

Kamal Ali is the Director of Sterling Property Services Pty Ltd. This young man has an amazing story of how he became the owner of this business. It is remarkable. If you ever speak to Kamal it is well worth hearing the story. Sterling Property Services specialises in cleaning, gardening, ground maintenance, building maintenance and repairs. Its director, Kamal, leads a team of 120 staff, with nine managers reporting to him directly. As leader, Kamal is a strong believer in maintaining integrity and honesty. He strives to show value for his team, promoting a healthy work/life balance and nurturing a loyal team of happy workers. Kamal was humbled to be included in the 2013 prestigious AM under 30 list for young managers.

Then we have Allan Sommerville who ultimately took out the award. As I said, he is the Operations Manager for Vincent Aviation which is a regional airline with bases in Darwin and Wellington. As Operations Manager, Allan is responsible for the coordination and scheduling, as well as despatch and arrival of all services, with approximately 13 direct reports. He is also the commercial point of contact for all major contracts and clients. Allan is proudly the youngest member of Vincent Aviation's senior management team. He is also the Chair of the 2013 Chief Minister's Round Table of Young Territorians, in which he

provides a mentoring and support role to all Round Table members, showing leadership and wisdom beyond his years. Congratulations to Allan.

Jodie Milne is the Franchise Manager at Quest Palmerston Serviced Apartments and also sits on the Palmerston Regional Business Association. I had the pleasure of being on the PRBA with Jodie for a number of years. Quest Palmerston Serviced Apartments are sophisticated and stylishly appointed serviced apartments in a range of sizes. As the proud owner, operator and franchisee manager, Jodie is responsible for managing and growing the business. As a leader, Jodie's self-motivation, drive and passion for the community, and friendly approach, have been integral in the success of the business and the achievements of the town. In 2011, Jodie was a proud finalist in the Telstra Businesswomen of the Year Awards in two separate categories. Well done to Jodie.

Finally, Zack Neck is a project manager and consultant at Thinc Projects Australia which has been established for over 25 years and provides a full range of project and development management services with offices located throughout Australia. As project manager and consultant, Zack specialises in aviation, commercial and residential projects and leads the project team. Zack is the youngest project manager within the organisation and holds the responsibility of managing Quest's largest private development project. Zack is highly esteemed and respected by his peers, and regularly provides mentoring to other staff. Well done to Zack.

In closing, I mention the comments the judges made about young Allan Sommerville when he was awarded Young Manager of the Year:

*At such a remarkable young age, Allan has demonstrated incredible management skills with an infectious passion and enthusiasm. His rationale and decisive nature have allowed him to deal with the complex challenges of being an operations manager. He has taken responsibility for developing his management skills, and has made a conscious decision to forge a career path and excel in the aviation industry.*

I commend the minister's statement to the House. It encompasses everything it is to be Territorian. I am proud to be a part of a government that recognises multiculturalism and that senior Territorians and young Territorians all have such a huge contribution to make to our community. I am proud of the quality of young persons in the Territory and that I get to experience it regularly by

interacting with so many of these special people, like the ones I have mentioned today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister and commend the statement to the House.

**Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this statement to the House about three important groups in our society: young people, senior Territorians and, of course, people from non-English speaking backgrounds which we call the multicultural communities.

I listened to the member for Drysdale talking about the history of her grandparents and I relate her grandparent's history to the history of many Territorians who arrived at approximately the same time and, surprisingly, became very good friends. These are friendships that have lasted 50, 60, 70 years. They worked together to build this place to what it is today.

Starting with the senior Territorians, when I first came to Darwin I found there were not many senior Territorians. That was 20 years ago, so people today who are aged 60 years were then 40 and would not consider themselves Territorians. I remember how few Territorians were here; they were a very small percentage of the population. I remember driving to Melbourne with my two sons and we arrived in Port Augusta. My oldest son, Alexander, pulled my hand and he said in a very quiet voice, 'Dad, there is something strange in this place'. I asked him what it was and I was looking around to see what was strange in Port Augusta. He said to me, 'There are too many old people'. In Darwin, there were not many old people. They were people in their 40s and 50s; you would not see many 70 and 80-year-olds. Since then, things have changed.

People have decided to stay in Darwin for many reasons. One of the reasons is people have come from somewhere else. They have come from Italy, Greece, Vietnam, they grew old here and they stayed here because this is where the family is. It is where the children and grandchildren are.

People came to Darwin to work for two or three years for postings with the credit or public service. Then, they would go back to Perth, Adelaide or Melbourne. Nowadays, people come here and stay. We have members of the Defence Forces who come here for a posting and, after they retire, they stay here. As a result, grandparents and parents will come here. We have seen the establishment of many nursing homes and retirement villages in Darwin, something that was not as popular a few years ago as it is today. There are many senior Territorians and, mark my words, the number of senior Territorians will continue to increase. Of course, we might be

young now, but in 20 years time we will include ourselves in that group called senior Territorians.

I am very pleased the Territory government continues the good work previous Territory governments have done, both with senior and young Territorians.

There is criticism about the new costs imposed on senior Territorians, because the number of senior Territorians is still small and the \$1 fee for the bus imposed will not raise any more money. It will not justify the pain to senior Territorians inflicted by the current government. That money could be raised from somewhere else and senior Territorians could still enjoy riding the buses. They do not ride the buses to go from here to there and anywhere. I do not think they want to spend their day in a bus just travelling around. They use the buses because they are unable to have or maintain a car. They may find it easier to catch a bus than drive where they have to find a parking spot in the city.

However, this Territory government has continued to practice the tradition of previous Territory governments, including the CLP governments which were in power before Labor in 2001. I recall very well that one of the few things I praised the then CLP government for was the attention they paid to senior Territorians and, of course, young Territorians.

Young Territorians are the future of this place. We are one of the youngest jurisdictions in Australia. Young people are brought here by their parents and they make Darwin home. They make it home or if they are born here, they study here. Many of them want to leave Darwin. Darwin, this small urban centre in the Territory is the place to leave when you are 18 or 19 years old. If you go down south to study, all of a sudden, Darwin calls you back or you want to come back for the simple reason you realise you can be either a small fish in a big pond or you can be a small fish in a much smaller pond like Darwin.

The opportunities are here if you want to do something with your life; this is the place to do what you want. This is the place where people will give you opportunity. Living in a place like Sydney or Melbourne, you will just be another face amongst four million faces, but here is the place where you know other people, have your connections, have the opportunities, and you can work hard and succeed. You do not have to have the competition of another four million people trying to compete for the same things you want to achieve.

Of course, it is important we support young Territorians, but support them from the very beginning. If I have any criticism about a lack of

support, it is to do with the recent decision of the Territory government regarding education and teachers.

We have to continue to support our young people. We have to make sure our young people will not leave the Territory because the opportunities for education are not here, or are not as good as in Perth, Adelaide, or Melbourne. I am proud to say both my sons came out of a state primary school, the Nightcliff Primary School. They went to a state high school – Darwin High School – and they both succeeded in entering university and now study interstate because what they want to do was not offered at CDU. They had the opportunity because the education system was good. The teachers provided what they wanted, and the units they wanted to do were available.

My criticism today is that, by limiting the number of teachers and increasing the classes, the current generation of young Territorians going through middle school or high school will not have the same opportunities and level of education kids a few years ago had.

I also mention a significant number of young Territorians are Indigenous, and if we increase the classes and do not provide the same opportunities in remote high schools, these people will miss out.

It was with great pride when we were in government that one young Indigenous Territorian graduated from Year 12 in the Kalkarindji High School. We have seen many more since then, but we do not want to see a return to the old trend of no Indigenous Territorians graduating from Year 12 anywhere in the Northern Territory. I am afraid we are going back to these dark days.

Minister, I congratulate you because you are one of the few I see regularly at events I attend. I saw you, even before you became a member of parliament, attend some of the multicultural events. That shows you appreciate the contribution the ethnic community has made to the Territory. You have many friends of different ethnic backgrounds, there is no denying it; you can see it when you arrive somewhere. I could see it before you became a member of parliament.

It is very important and very different to other places. I have been to other places in Australia. I have been to Perth, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney. Nowhere else have I seen the social cohesion and acceptance of people from other ethnic and religious backgrounds as I have seen in the Territory. I have many examples.

One of the most important examples was 11 September and the tragic events in New York. Darwin was the only place in Australia where there was no negative reaction towards people in

the city from another background such as Muslims who attended the mosque. Our mosque did not suffer any attacks, as happened in other states in Australia. Instead, people were very accepting and understood the reality behind it. They realised and accepted our people live in and share the same city with us, irrespective of their religious background. They had nothing to do with the terrorist attack in New York.

I have seen it many times in the kids growing up in Darwin. People come from other states and ask me, 'Why is there no racial tension in Darwin?' It is because we are growing in a city as a whole community. We do not have ghettos. If you go to Melbourne you find Greeks live in one suburb, Italians in another, Vietnamese in another, Chinese in another, and very rarely do they interact.

Here we have people from different ethnic backgrounds living in the same neighbourhood. My neighbours are Greek, English, Italian, New Zealanders and Indigenous. The colour, the way they speak or their religion does not make a difference.

Our kids go to school together from an early age. My son went to school with Italian, Chinese, and Indigenous kids. I always tell of the example that when my sons' friends came home to play, after they went home I said to Alexander, 'Your friend is Aboriginal'. He said, 'No dad, he is only a kid'. That is what children in the Northern Territory see from an early age. There are no ethnic backgrounds and ethnic stereotypes; they are just other kids in the Territory.

Not only that, they go to high school together. In Darwin, I believe we have one of the highest percentages of mixed marriages anywhere in Australia. If you are a Greek in Melbourne you marry a Greek, if you are an Italian in Perth you marry an Italian, if you are Chinese in Sydney you are trying to find somebody from the Chinese community to marry. In Darwin, Greeks go to high school with Chinese girls and marry Chinese girls. I have attended these weddings; I have seen Indigenous people marrying people from Asian backgrounds, Italians marrying Greeks, Greeks marrying Indonesians, and Cypriots marrying people from the Philippines.

Ethnicity, background, colour, language does not make any difference to us. We are one of the beacons in Australia. Darwin and the Northern Territory is one of the most accepting places in Australia and the place where being from another ethnic background means nothing.

There are many examples in this parliament, for example. The member for Drysdale is from an Italian background, and we have four or five

members who are Indigenous. I came as a first generation migrant from Greece. I came here at 26 years old. I moved to Western Australia, then to Darwin, and I was elected to parliament. My own electorate has Italians, Greeks, Indigenous, Chinese and Filipinos. All of them will vote for me, not because I am of a particular ethnic background, but because they believe I represent them well in this place.

Like the member for Sanderson, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, I attend many of the ethnic and religious events. I have no problem going to the mosque, for the simple reason I am welcome in the mosque as I am welcome in the Catholic cathedral, the Anglican church or the Greek church. I have no problem attending the religious festivals of the Indian community or the Pakistani National Day because these are my friends who live in this place, and their national day is my national day. I celebrate with them their cultural background, the history and the customs they bring here. All these things they have brought here today are something we incorporate in the Territory culture. The Territory culture is not a monoculture of Anglo-Saxon background.

It is the only place we celebrate Chinese New Year. We have a Chinese lion blessing the parliament when it opens. We expect at Greek Easter to hear the dynamite. We go to the Glenti or India@Mindil, which have become part of the Territory lifestyle and life. Territory culture now is not a unique culture of one ethnic group, it is a mixture of cultures, of many ethnic groups that have been incorporated seamlessly in our culture and accepted by everybody.

It is incredible that people have come to the Territory from the beginning of time. The original inhabitants were the Indigenous people, and they welcomed the first people who came here. They were Anglo-Saxons first, followed by the Greeks as early as the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, and Asians. Asia is not far away, about a day's sailing from Timor or West Timor. We had other people who made the Territory their home through the passage of time. Yes, we had friction and a bad history. However, in the past 100 years, Territorians have lived together peacefully, accepting each other and creating a new home that is called the Northern Territory.

There are also people who continue coming to the Territory. A few years ago, it was the Vietnamese after the Vietnam War. They arrived at the wharf with their leaky fishing boats, and have now become members of the Territory community. We owe the Asian trade in the Territory to the Vietnamese.

It was the Chinese who came in the 1870s to work in the gold mines and establish Chinatown. In

1927, there were more Chinese in Darwin than Europeans. The Chinese community bankrolled the then Territory Administrator because they were holding the wealth in their hands. It was the Greeks and Italians who came in the 1950s. If you look around you today, you will find many of the Greek names, not only in the signs in the shops, but on the street names.

The Territory is a great place to be and it is great the way we accept people from other nationalities. It is sad, though, to see the trend in Australia of xenophobia that has been cultivated by people who are supposed to be leaders, people of empowerment who have turned the public opinion against the so-called illegal migrants, especially considering the fact that these people are not illegal. They might be migrants, but they are not illegal.

Every person has the right to go to another country and seek political asylum. Australia has signed agreements with the United Nations that people who will come to Australia have the right to seek political asylum. Even the Australian Constitution, which was written at the end of the last century, has provided for people who come from other places to seek refuge in Australia to be provided with full legal cover like any Australian citizen. It is sad to see how xenophobic we have become in Australia.

Yes, I understand the problem and that many of these people who come here are by-passing the legal processes, but when you live in a country where people are trying to kill you and your family, is there time for you to consider the legal process in submitting a legal application in an Australian Embassy or Consulate? Just ask the people in Syria what they have in their everyday lives and if they have the liberty, the freedom and the luxury of going through the legal processes.

We have to change the way we see things around us. A typical example is what happened in Lampedusa just a few days ago when 300 people lost their lives. They were illegal migrants who got into a boat to try to escape from Eritrea, off the coast of Africa, to Europe, and they drowned.

The reaction from the public, the government, even the Pope, was totally different to what we have seen today in Australia. The Italian government offered to pay for a public funeral for these people. The Pope cried when he heard the news. There was a strong reaction by the European governments to find an alternative to stop these people coming from Africa to escape to Europe, not closing the borders, not returning the boats, but finding alternatives to make their life better than the country where they live, and providing opportunities and assistance for these countries.

Unfortunately, we have the idea that turning the boats back will solve the problem of illegal migrants. At the same time, we are cutting foreign aid. Unfortunately, this is not going to work.

This country was built by people who came from somewhere else. Yes, the first people who came here were forced to come here, they were convicts. However, from there on, people who came here were escaping trouble in their own countries. Immediately after World War II, there were the Balts, as we used to call them, people who left the Baltic states because of the Soviet Union invading their territory, the Greeks were escaping civil war and persecution, the Italians were trying to find a better life from a country that was ravaged by the war, as were many other people. The Vietnamese escaped the communist regime of Vietnam to come to Australia. People who built this place came from somewhere else for various reasons.

Multiculturalism is something that is part of the fabric of our society. I congratulate the minister for continuing the project we started when we were in government: the \$1m ethnic community infrastructure fund. They are grants provided to the different communities, especially the emerging communities. When I first came here there were no Africans; today we have people from Somalia, Zimbabwe and various places in Africa. They have become a part of, and will continue to integrate into, our community.

Minister, irrespective of the comments you get from anywhere and of the pressure you get about cutting funding and trying to save money, it is very important you continue to provide this assistance to the ethnic communities. We need these people, their culture, their attitude towards work and their hard working ethic.

The reality is these people stay here for one, two, three, four, or five years with their kids growing up here creating links. These will be tomorrow's Territorians and the people who will increase our population. At the same time, I urge you to not only consider as part of our society people who speak a language other than English, but also how to integrate Indigenous Territorians with the non-English speaking Territorians. We are one people and one Territory. We have to stay and be together for the future.

Debate adjourned.

#### REORDER OF ROUTINE OF BUSINESS

**Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business):** Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst there is no motion before the Chair, I move that, pursuant to Standing Order 89, Government Business Order of the Day No 6 be called on now and

Government Business Orders of the Day Nos 10 and 21 be subsequently considered.

Motion agreed to.

**MOTION**  
**Note Statement - Twelve Months in**  
**Government and Framing the Future**

Continued from 29 August 2013

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

**MOTION**  
**Note Statement – Pillars of Justice**

Continued from 16 May 2013.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

**MOTION**  
**Note Statement – Government’s Achievements**  
**in Sport, Recreation and Racing**

Continued from 10 October 2013.

**Mr VOWLES (Johnston):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the government for the opportunity to contribute to the statement as the shadow minister for Sport and Recreation, as I was ill on Thursday ...

**Mr Elferink:** We hope you are feeling better.

**Mr VOWLES:** Thank you.

I welcome this statement; it is an area of government that has prospered from bipartisan support and this is shown in this statement, with the CLP continuing many of the initiatives Labor brought to fruition.

Sport and recreation undeniably has far-reaching benefits for our community. By far, the two main benefits we will never be able to completely quantify are the ability to bring communities together and the health and wellbeing benefits to participants. Studies show that sport and recreation brings individuals and communities together, preventing isolation, especially for older or retired people. For our young children, it teaches them teamwork, commitment and perseverance, and life skills about failing, learning, and succeeding.

To that end, it has been a priority of Labor governments to invest in sport and recreation programs, clubs, and facilities, as well as contributing to sporting events that cater to our great Territory lifestyle.

I am glad the CLP has continued that investment in sport and recreation to the benefit of our

community. As the minister said in his statement, there may have been subtle changes to our approach, indicating the CLP’s recognition that Labor was on the right track.

In the minister’s statement, he first claimed a key achievement has been the creation of a standalone department. I believe achievements are outcomes or results. Changing a department name does not qualify, in my book, as an achievement. I like to think the good people of Sport and Recreation know how to do their job, no matter the name of their department. I am happy to be proven wrong if the minister, in time, demonstrates that a standalone department, in this instance, has resulted in achievements such as an increase in participation in sport and recreation.

Labor has a great relationship with sporting peak bodies, and the CLP is simply continuing this relationship. I am amused by the reference from the minister to ‘re-engaging and restoring quality relationships with national sporting bodies’. Perhaps the minister meant introducing himself as the new minister. I know the Northern Territory Labor government had a fantastic working relationship with these peak sport and recreation bodies. I am glad the CLP has continued to invest in these relationships.

It was under the Labor government that the Northern Territory was finally put on the national stage with the biggest football coach in the country. It was under a Labor government that the first premiership games for NRL and AFL were played in the Northern Territory. I am ecstatic the CLP has continued this initiative.

However, I admit that many Territorians felt there was a cloud of doubt following the axing of the very popular Arafura Games, and we still have no news on these games. In this statement on sport and recreation, the minister has again failed to mention the games, knowing he handpassed to Major Events after he cancelled the Arafura Games. It is still a major sporting event. During the last sittings, the minister delivered a statement on tourism major events, with no mention of the bigger and better Arafura Games, as his Chief Minister has described on numerous occasions. Here we have a sport and recreation statement and, again, no more news.

I feel like a broken record on this issue because the minister continues to be silent on this very important sporting event in the Northern Territory, one that brings over \$10m into the very important tourism industry which sorely missed the games this year. It has had an impact on numbers in hotels and the general tourism economy. The Arafura Games was an event proudly delivered by the good people of Sport and Recreation and over

1000 Territorians who volunteered their time. The minister's continued silence on it only adds fuel to what many people are saying out there. This CLP government has not done any work on the games and we should not expect them to return any time soon. I wait with bated breath on any news at all of your plans for the future of the Arafura Games.

I turn to the minister's reference to rebuilding relationships with peak bodies. The former Labor government had extremely beneficial relationships with Cricket Australia, the NRL, the AFL, and the Australia Sports Commission. The new minister has written away Labor's strong sporting ties with these organisations.

However, I need to point out the minister has made no mention of the Australian Rugby Union, the ARU, in his list of rebuilt relationships. This is an organisation with which the Territory's relationship has clearly gone backwards. In fact, the relationship was so bad the minister had to issue a media release on it saying 'Bang for Buck'. I guarantee the minister the \$300 000 spent on a Brumbies game which benefited Territorians, exposed the game of rugby to Territory youth, and enhanced our relations with ARU was a whole lot more bang for buck than a \$300 000 cash grab for the Alice Springs Golf Club.

At the time, the minister confused his roles as Tourism minister and Sports minister when he said they could justify paying \$300 000 for a trial game with no television coverage or national exposure. At some point these events need to be about the development of the game as well as exposure. The Brumbies deal also included a development officer based in Darwin. Once again, I query how much national exposure the NT received since the minister gave \$300 000 to the CLP's favourite drinking spot, the Alice Springs Golf Club.

The minister's statement demonstrates how the CLP has ridden a wave of Labor achievements. This is particularly apparent in reference to Cricket Australia and cricket in the Northern Territory. The minister is rightly proud of securing a tour match for the upcoming summer of cricket. However, the implication that our relationship with Cricket Australia needs fixing, given Labor delivered two test matches and several one-dayers, is ridiculous. We delivered Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene to name a few international and Australian superstars of the game. This is on top of the unprecedented investment of over \$2m into NT Cricket which saw a new world-class training facility built at Marrara which is being used by the Australian Cricket Squad, the South Australian Cricket team, and other teams from as far away as India.

Incidentally, the last match played at Traeger Park, which the minister mentioned in his statement, was 13 years ago. I played in that game for the Northern Territory Invitation XI against the West Indies. While I thanked the CLP government at that time for giving me the opportunity to face the West Indies and play alongside international legends like Ricky Ponting – it was something I will never forget – I hope we will get more cricket to the Northern Territory.

I also welcome the minister's details in his statement about the upcoming cricket match. However, he has failed to mention the cost of getting cricket to Alice Springs and any figures for the expected crowd. Perhaps the minister can enlighten us in his wrapping up with those figures.

Moving on to the Parramatta Eels agreement, worth \$1m a season for four seasons – the Chief Minister's favourite team, I might add. I am glad the minister secured a home and away game as well as a trial game. However, it seems to fly in the face of the Brumbies deal which cost less than a third of the money and is for about half of the benefit of the Eels deal. In other words, the Brumbies deal was better value, yet the minister insists the Brumbies deal was not bang for buck. The Brumbies deal saw a trial match played in Darwin and a development officer stationed in Darwin. The minister made no mention of the Brumbies paid development officer position in his statement.

In the minister's statement he talked about events having a big impact on coaches. It is agreed that coaching has a big part to play in participation, but the minister has not provided any detail of a comprehensive and holistic approach to coach development in the Northern Territory. This may be more beneficial than ad hoc ideas here and there, if the government is serious about coach development.

I turn to the Adelaide United deal. While the CLP government has been crying poor, with the Education minister justifying teacher cuts because they needed to save money, any new sports deal should come under increased scrutiny. By my reading, the Adelaide United deal involves \$350 000 a year: \$150 000 from Sport and Recreation and \$200 000 from Tourism. While I welcome many aspects of the deal, I am disappointed it does not include an actual A-League game for Territorians. In saying that, \$350 000 a year and no A-League game is very disappointing for our vibrant soccer community in the Northern Territory. We have a strong competition here for both men and women, and many fans will be disappointed at not seeing an A-League game, yet the taxpayers are forking out \$350 000. I implore the minister to continue to try for a better deal.

In fact, some people in the community are very disappointed with the tourism spending aspect, with some going so far as to say it is the worst tourism deal ever. I can understand their disappointment. The CLP is spending \$200 000 of taxpayers' tourism dollars for a logo on a shirt. This is all the while crying poor and slashing the jobs of teachers on the front line. Territorians can see through this contradiction. Whilst I always welcome growth in sport, we should always ensure we are getting the best deal with taxpayers' money.

The minister tried valiantly to sugar coat his tourism deal with the Melbourne Demons. I remain sceptical about the benefits of the Tourism NT logo as the backdrop to the coaches' box. Most Territorians agree it is not a good use of taxpayers' money.

On the field, the Melbourne Football Club has had a dismal year, and this is after a number of years lurking at the bottom of the ladder. I cannot see how associating the Tourism NT logo with such a bad year in footy is a good thing and a good deal. The minister is kidding himself if he cannot see how ineffective having the Northern Territory logo proudly displayed behind scenes of utter despair and desperation really is. Minister, you seemed convinced that \$200 000 is a good investment, so I look forward to your next update to the House on the final figures.

I support the \$75 Sport Voucher. Anything that can ease the burden for Northern Territory families who are hit by a \$2000 increase to the cost of living per year with the CLP's increases to power, water and sewage is welcomed by me. It is, of course, only a small concession for those parents hit with the enormous increases to the cost of living. I note that of the 45 000 eligible recipients of the vouchers, only 16 600 took it up. That is a hit rate of around one-third. This means millions of dollars were not spent on honouring the vouchers. I encourage the minister to come clean about what happened to the rest of the money. What has it been used for? Has it been reappropriated? At this stage, I call the government's execution of the scheme a failure. If approximately 30 000 children are not cashing in 75 free dollars, the government is clearly not implementing this scheme correctly.

There are a few different theories in the community about what has happened with the millions of unspent money. The rumour is the CLP will scrap school sport and use this money to put together an alternative program. Those involved in school sport are naturally very worried about any such non-consulted decisions by the CLP government, so I call on the minister to explain where the money has gone and to

reinstate his support for school sport. Let us put the rumours to rest.

Naturally, minister, I welcome the grants and upgrades for grassroots sporting organisations. These organisations run on the blood, sweat, and tears of volunteers. As always, it is a good thing when we can help the future growth of organisations and clubs through our grants process.

I particularly thank you, minister, for your continued support of the Jingili BMX Club, a club with many good members located in my electorate of Johnston across the road. Again, I commend our bipartisan support for a number of sport and recreation events and facilities including the V8 Supercars, Hidden Valley, Palmerston Water Park, Magpies Football Club, Palmerston Raiders home ground, the new netball courts in Palmerston, the new squash centre in Marrara, the Hottest 7s, the AFL Masters, the AFL Masters Nationals and the Masters Games in Alice Springs.

I note with interest the minister's mention of Sports House. Although brief, the minister assured me his department continues to work with the tenants who will be evicted. I have spoken with many of the members of these clubs and I believe the uncertainty this decision has created for the continued enjoyment of their chosen sport and recreation activity has been overwhelming. I have had countless conversations and phone calls from members who feel the government is abandoning them. I was pleased by the recent grants from the CLP government given to some of the clubs, but I remain very sceptical that the government is doing enough for these clubs and their members to ensure they will have a home next month.

In his statement, the minister spoke about the Northern Territory Institute of Sport being headed on the right track. I hope the minister is not alluding to further cuts to the NTIS budget, given that was his latest direction for the NTIS in the CLP budget.

I will touch briefly on the racing component of the statement, as the member for Fannie Bay has carriage for this portfolio and gave it the credit it deserves: more than a couple of paragraphs at the end of a 36-page puff statement. This is an industry that is worth over \$190m of economic value to the Northern Territory, employing over 2000 people, which adds \$147m to the Darwin economy, \$40m to the Alice Springs economy, and \$2m across the rest of the Northern Territory. To give our important racing industry just over 400 words in a nearly 9000-word statement is not giving the racing industry enough respect.

In closing, sport and recreation remains a huge part of life for Territorians, and it is a good thing that it continues to have bipartisan support. Also, in this area we must also be mindful and ensure we are using taxpayers' money wisely. We must ensure that all deals and grants benefit the vast majority and not a select few. Similarly, we must ensure that all dollars spent reap their intended rewards, be that an increase in sport and participation, bringing communities together, or bringing tourist visitors to the Top End, the Alice Springs region, or the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our great Territory lifestyle is an active one. We need strong, vibrant and sustainable sport and active recreation clubs that offer a range of high-level activities and management that Territorians have come to expect from these great organisations. We need targeted investment into key infrastructure and sport and recreation resources to support the thousands of participants, volunteers, mums and dads, and Territory representatives who have, and continue to, bat above their average in the national and international arenas.

**Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I support my colleague, the minister for Sport and Tourism for bringing this statement to the House. What a fantastic statement it is! It embraces and encompasses so many directions this government is going in, unlike the doom and gloom we just heard from the shadow. If you listened to the speech the shadow made, you would think there was nothing happening in the Northern Territory.

Minister, I congratulate you and say thank you for the upgrade of Anzac Oval at Traeger Park. No more does the Berrimah Line exist under this government.

I also take this opportunity to thank the minister for the money you have allocated for the Papunya sports weekend. We are not just concentrating on Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. Thank you for allocating the Docker River sports weekend some money for guernseys, for softball and football, and to ensure there is real encouragement in remote Aboriginal communities for a healthy lifestyle and to get people interacting, not just in the Northern Territory but also at these sports weekends where we also get people from Western Australia. They have come from places like Warburton, Wiluna, Wingellina: all the 'Ws' across Western Australia. It is fantastic because they are our families who we embrace and encompass in our remote Aboriginal communities.

If you look at the history of sporting activities in the Northern Territory when we were kids growing up, the Yuendumu sports weekend used to be like the national Olympics. Absolutely fantastic! We used

to have the singing by the choir at Areyonga in the caves. That is a form of bringing people together.

I take this opportunity, minister, to thank you for your encouragement and enthusiasm, always, for my nephew, Charlie Maher, a fantastic young Aboriginal Territorian, marathon runner with Rob de Castella. Also, thanks to Eli Melky for encouraging him – footballer, father of two. This year, he got the girls involved as well. My nieces were telling me he trains them like men; if he sees them getting slack, they have to do extra push ups. That is fantastic.

I have been a major sponsor of the girls playing footy at Traeger Park. I went along to see them play the grand final against Pioneers. It was unfortunate that Pioneers beat them. It is a fantastic result to see so much interaction now in women's football. I encourage this kind of activity because football gets our young ladies and girls into a field they would never have gone into. It was absolutely fantastic. The first time it was ever introduced I saw it in my electorate at Titjikala, where Phillip Ellis encouraged the blokes to play softball and the girls to play football, and it was absolutely amazing. These blokes have all the skills in football to take the mark, and there is no grass on that red dirt out there. It is out in the open, the west wind blowing, with no game stops for the west wind or the east wind when it is blowing, as the former member for MacDonnell can verify. Everywhere on communities, on bare dirt, you see these people flying like eagles, and it is fantastic.

Then you see the girls playing footy and you can see the skill. These men think that softball is really easy, but try to hit a ball coming at 30 km/h or 40 km/h, one of those fast-swinging pitches. It is nice now to go to communities and see that interaction between what we once classified as women's sports and men's sports with people now playing in whatever sports they want.

Tourism is another area where the minister is selling the Northern Territory, promoting it in everything he does. If he goes around Australia to Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, he is not there for himself, he is selling the Northern Territory, and so he should, it is an absolutely fantastic place to be. When he goes overseas, guess what he does? He sells the Northern Territory. That is all he does; that is his job to sell the Northern Territory and encourage all these people who have never been to the Northern Territory or, if they have, to come again. That is the job of the minister and the government: to ensure we all continuously talk up the Northern Territory and these beautiful parks we have that we are in joint management of now.

We have to now, through that joint management, encourage Indigenous people to take the opportunities they have and create real employment in the parks, and make sure they do it. They are not just the traditional owners, it is not just a piece of paper saying they are joint managing these parks, they are actually working. One of the fantastic things about tourists wanting to come to the Northern Territory is they want to see Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have to be engaged and driven economically to ensure we meet these great people our minister encourages to come to the Northern Territory.

We have so many things to sell in the Northern Territory. We have beautiful places, but we also have beautiful people. In our previous statement, we talked about multiculturalism in the Northern Territory. That is exactly what we need to sell, and these are the fantastic things we have.

Going back to the sporting field, I take this opportunity also to talk about young Baydon Ngalkin, who plays for the Redtails. He is a kid born and bred at Hermannsburg. It is fantastic to see him now go up a notch, to the next step and start playing for the Redtails. He often travels between Alice Springs and Darwin. He feels comfortable now. He can ring people, he is not lonely anymore. That is a transition the Redtails have taken. They carefully monitor these people so they do not get into the space of missing their families and their communities.

Sport and recreation is vital, not just in cities like Darwin and towns like Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs, for interaction, engaging, and health issues in remote Aboriginal communities.

I want to talk about a kid named Michael Mummery who lives in Bagot. It was fantastic to see this young fellow, who has come out of Bagot Reserve, playing soccer in Darwin. He received the Best and Fairest for playing soccer. This kid has potential and could be the next Charlie Perkins in the soccer arena. He is fantastic with full commitment from mum – thanks Deli. Thanks to aunty Deb and uncle. It is a commitment the whole family has made to these children. They all play soccer. Guess what? The day they got their trophies, the next day soccer finished and footy started with aunty Deb and uncle right there taking them to footy training. That is the enthusiasm, love and encouragement we need to give as parents. This is the enthusiasm, love and commitment from a small community in Darwin to ensure they keep taking their kids to training, whether it be soccer or footy.

There are many good health outcomes if children are participating in sporting activities. This is not done in an ad hoc way. I will always go back to the document *Framing the Future*. The

government has been very smart in framing all its programs and policies to move Territorians socially and economically through sports and the Pillars of Justice. Every policy this government develops is about moving Territorians forward.

I congratulate you again, minister, on your statement, the things you do to sell the Northern Territory, and the way you keep going overseas talking up the Northern Territory and all the beautiful places and people we have in the Northern Territory, ensuring there is real encouragement for these people to see more than they have. If they have been to the Northern Territory, come back again. That is the message, 'Come back again'. That is what the minister says, 'Come back again. If you have been here once, come back twice, come back three times and keep coming back'. That is the kind of encouragement this minister, with this government, is taking across Australia and the world. That is the message we need to keep selling to people, encouraging them to come to the Northern Territory. That is a real focus of this government.

The document the Chief Minister launched, *Framing the Future*, was no accident. It pulls together all the threads of the policies this government is directing into the future of growing all Territorians to ensure we are on this journey together and are involved economically.

The minister for Resources and Mines is creating jobs in mines all over the Territory, and ensuring when he goes overseas, he is promoting that. Of course, the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, at all the functions they go to, they talk up the Northern Territory. That is what this government is focused on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to again thank the minister for a fantastic statement.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk about something not raised in the speech by the minister, the 2013 Bridgestone World Solar Challenge ...

**Mr Westra van Holthe:** I raised it in mine.

**Mr WOOD:** That is good. I thank the member for Katherine for raising it.

This is a terrific event. The reason I am raising it is because the government has to put more effort into promoting this wonderful sporting event. It is a sporting event; it is a race from Darwin to Adelaide. We put heaps of money into the V8s, the Superbikes, the drags, but are we putting a similar amount into promoting the Bridgestone World Solar Challenge? This started on Sunday, 6 October. Before it commenced, there were time

trials, registration requirements, and quite a number of teams were in the Northern Territory up to about three weeks before the start. All of a sudden, we had an influx of people from all over the world. In fact, there were 40 teams on the team list which came from 23 countries. These people were in Darwin and down the track on the Cox Peninsula Road doing their trials, spending money in the Northern Territory and mixing with the locals.

Before I get on to some of the details about the races, one of the reasons we should be promoting this far more than we are at present – I am concerned as I heard rumours on Sunday that the government is thinking twice about promoting this event – is there are 23 very diverse countries. I will name some: China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Turkey, Philippines, USA, Germany, Holland, Chile, Canada, UK, Iran, New Zealand, and Australia. I am sure I have missed quite a few countries.

All of a sudden, people from all these nations were in Darwin with a common goal, which was to race a solar vehicle they produced that they hoped would beat their competitors from Darwin to Adelaide. From that point of view, it is a very unique occasion. If you go on the Sunday to the start where Darwin people can walk around amidst the cars and talk to the different crews, you are amazed at the United Nations. I should say, for the minister for multiculturalism, it is a perfect example of multiculturalism in action where people have a common goal of trying to produce a car that is reliant purely on the sun to give it the power to travel all the way to Adelaide.

This year there were three classes of cars. That is what made it more interesting. There was a Challenger Class, a Cruiser Class and an Adventure Class. The Challenger Class was the speedy class. To give you an idea of the vehicles, the maximum length of a vehicle in the Challenger Class was 4.5 m, 1.8 m wide, 6 m<sup>2</sup> of solar array, four wheels, and one driver, and that was it. Those cars could really move; they were set up for speed. Of course, you could watch these races day by day; there was a television crew. Red Bikini was the name of the company, and it was working for WSCTV. Every day, about three times during the day, you could see and get an update of where the cars were. You could listen to that update.

There was also the Cruiser Class. I saw a letter in the paper saying these solar cars are the same, same, same. Obviously, they did not look at the Cruiser Class. The Cruiser Class was a group of cars that looked like cars. In fact, the University of New South Wales' solar racing team produced a sports car. If you looked at it on television, except for the solar panels on the roof, you would have

thought it was just a sports car. The Dutch solar team Eindhoven, had a vehicle called Stella, which carried four people. It was pretty fast too. This was what they called a new generation, where they are trying to put the technology we have seen for so many years in the flat-look solar cars into vehicles that look like cars.

This is the first year the new Cruiser Class was entered into the solar challenge. I read from the description:

*This goal of the Michelin Cruiser Class is not speed but practicality, with the ultimate goal of an entrant being able to meet the requirements for road registration in the country of origin.*

They had to make it look like it was a normal vehicle. They had to have four vehicles that could carry one-on-one passengers, both facing forward. As I said, the Dutch entry could carry four. What can we expect from these types of vehicles with entrants scored according to their energy consumption and the subjective element of practicality? Not only did they have to get to Adelaide at a fair speed, they were also judged on their practicality.

*The judging concept exposes designers to the 'real-world' needs of industry to predict what end users (in this case our panel) find practicable, attractive or present that essential point of difference from other contenders. Whether this be a new invention or innovative application of existing technology, we look forward to some interesting outcomes.*

You certainly did get vehicles that started to look like the cars you see on the roads today.

The third class was the GoPro Adventure Class. That was probably a slower class than the other two. One of our old Australian cars was in it, the Aurora vehicle, which has been around for many years. The Adventure Class was primarily designed to allow teams with solar cars built for previous events to return, usually with new team members for the adventure of crossing the continent on the silent power of nature. So some of the older cars were there, redeveloped as best they could be.

I found it sad that once upon a time the Northern Territory was one of the leaders in the solar car challenges. We had a car from Kormilda College, I think one from Dripstone, and we regularly had a car from the university. We were the leaders in developing, at the university, a motor that was attached to the wheel so you got maximum power at the place where you needed it: right at the road surface.

I ask the minister, what has happened? I asked the same question of Paul Henderson when he was in government, 'Where is the local contribution to solar-powered cars?' He, obviously, did not win the election, so he could not take it up; I am fairly sure he said he would ensure we had an entrant in the 2013 challenge, but it was not the case.

I will be asking the Sports minister, maybe the Minister for Business, and maybe the Minister for Education to look at promoting and getting sponsors and finding out why our university, which was a leader in some of the development in the Northern Territory, is not putting an effort into making sure we have a solar car entry in the next Solar Car Challenge.

To let people know, not all the cars got there. Unfortunately, the Cambridge University car ran off the road on Cox Peninsula Road and damaged some solar cells. No one was hurt, but even though they got it to State Square on Sunday, it did not quite get off the ground. Well, it was not that they did not get off the ground, it did not quite move. They were concerned about its safety so, unfortunately, they came all the way here, had one little bingle and that meant they could not operate.

This is an area the government could promote. Where else do you get such an event where you not only promote solar power and electrical technology, but promote Darwin as the start of this important race? There were people on the road – I was one of them – who were taking pictures. How can we promote this as something that attracts more attention worldwide? These days people are promoting renewable resources. We have an opportunity for the best universities and businesses throughout the world which come to Darwin to promote something that is really special.

I noticed on the film clip that there were people way down the track. However, when you consider the big start to get to the V8s and some of those events, how can we make this a big start? Have we taken our foot off the pedal when it comes to promotion? It is something that is really unique for the Northern Territory to promote, as I said, from the point of view of promoting friendship between nations. What is wrong with that? We had people from Turkey, Canada, Iran, Chile, Holland, Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan mixing together in the one little place, State Square. I find that a great feeling. The Darwin public can talk to them about their vehicles. They are all very friendly and they all have two goals (1) to make a good car, and (2) to get to Adelaide faster than the rest.

I hope the government does not look at removing sponsorship. In fact, I hope it might be able to

promote this far more than it is at the moment so, down the track when they get to Alice Springs, there is a big event when they arrive, and when they get to Adelaide there are people lining the streets watching these unique vehicles arrive.

People might ask what the point is in this technology. Well, technology develops as time goes on. When you look at the speeds, say, of a Clipsal and Schneider Electric Challenger Class, they left here, I think it was at 8 am or 8.30 am on the Sunday. Do not forget they are only allowed to travel until 5 pm every night, so they could not head down a few more hours later.

The new Nuon Solar team, Nuna7, arrived on Thursday – Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, not quite five days, because they got there at 10 am. They were only 150 km out of Adelaide on the Wednesday.

The Tokai Challenger from the Tokai University in Japan came in about two hours later. They had some problems, I gather, with one of their motors. Another Dutch team, the Solar Team Twente, The Red Engine, a flash looking vehicle, came in at just after 2.30 pm on Thursday.

They travelled the 3020 km from Darwin in just on five days on solar power. These vehicles can move at great speeds, even the vehicles in the Cruiser Class I talked about, the ones that look like cars. The New South Wales team car looked like a sports car. Just to give you an idea, the New South Wales solar team arrived on Friday at 11 am. However, I mentioned before they were also judged on practicality. That is when they arrived, but when the final results came out, it was the Eindhoven solar team from Holland, the one that could carry four people, that won on the day because there was a practicality measure.

It just proves that the solar technology will always have its issues in relation to batteries and whether the sun is out, but it is advancing. It is a great opportunity for the Northern Territory to promote renewable energy sources, especially where it is used in transport. It is a great opportunity to promote the Territory as a great place to run it. Why do they come to the Territory? They come because, generally speaking, there is plenty of sunshine and they can get the sunshine that needs to make them go fast from A to B.

I also think it is an opportunity for some of the older vehicles. We should be trying to get the Kormilda school vehicle back up and running if it still exists. Dripstone, as I said, had one. We especially need the one from Charles Darwin University. The Aurora vehicle turned up in Adelaide and had an average speed – an older vehicle – of 77.57 km/h. The challenger from the Netherlands had an average speed of 90.71 km/h.

They should not have been booked at too many places for that, but it shows the speed these vehicles can travel.

I hope the government does not have any intention of downgrading this race. It should be in the same bracket as the V8s. Obviously it will not attract the same sponsorship; the V8s are big time with many people. However, there is no reason we could not promote something that is a little more energy conserving than the V8s.

It was great to see the Fords win Bathurst with Mark Winterbottom, Old Frosty. However, I digress. Perhaps one day we might have a Ford, Holden or Mercedes solar car. Would that not be nice?

It is an alternative and something we should promote. I raised it as an issue I did not see in the minister's statement.

I thank the minister for his statement. You can talk about all things with sport, but I wanted to raise something a little different. Having been to INPEX recently and seen their swimming pool and asked how much it cost – it is not as bad as you might think. One day we might have a pool in the rural area; it would be great for the kids. I thank you for coming to my office to give me a briefing on badminton.

I also mention that the Northern Territory Basketball Association has mentioned to me several times the possibility of developing basketball in the rural area. We must not forget there are 20 000 people in the rural area and they are not all attached to the northern suburbs. They need their own facilities. I put a proposal to the minister that in future budgets things like a basketball stadium, a smaller swimming pool and a few facilities like that are still needed in the rural area.

There are not many places you can swim in the rural area these days because of the crocodile threat. There is no swimming pool in the rural area either. There is a need, for the safety of kids, to have a swimming pool available.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for his rundown of what is happening in sport in the Northern Territory. It was a good summary of what is happening, and I hope some of those things continue, especially in the rural area.

**Ms LEE (Arnhem):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I also make a contribution to this statement and thank the minister for all the work he has done so far within Sport and Recreation. It has always been the government's focus to encourage and support Territorians to stay fit, be healthy, and promote living in the NT. Importantly, the introduction of

the Sport Voucher – I remember the former government; I cannot remember the amount, I believe it was \$50 per voucher ...

**Mr Styles:** \$75.

**Ms LEE:** It was \$75 and we increased it to \$150?

**Mr Conlan:** No, it is now \$75.

**Ms LEE:** It is still the same ...

**Mr Vowles:** That is the school voucher.

**Ms LEE:** That is the school vouchers. There is the difference, all right. It is really good to keep that going. We have spread it out to the Indigenous communities now, but I do not see how the Indigenous kids are really going to benefit from it. There have to be other alternatives, especially when it comes to the Sport Vouchers.

We do not have clubs like everybody else. We have our sporting clubs, but it is not like a paid thing. All this is run by the government anyway. It is not like the towns and cities so, from my perspective, we should look into that.

Other than that, in everything we have done, one of our key achievements in making the Department of Sport and Recreation a standalone department is pretty good. That has never been done and it needed to be. Sport and recreation is a priority, especially in the bush.

There needs to be some improvement within AFLNT . We have a vast array of talent in the bush from Wadeye, Daly River, Tiwi Islands, all the way to Arnhem Land, north, east, south, and all the way across to Central Australia and back west again to Lajamanu and those areas. It is mainly AFL in these communities. If it is not softball or basketball, it is AFL.

In Darwin, we have the ladies football team. I watch them on the weekends when I am here, and it is fun. It is encouraging. Sometimes, it makes me want to bring my boots and join a club. My father has always been a Wanderers supporter, so I have thought about joining the girls. My son always played for St Mary's, so it will always be a big clash for us at home. I even played football in boarding school. It is no surprise. I played netball and basketball. I did not play soccer. My son and my sisters played soccer, but it was not a sport for me.

Sport is opening up the doors, especially for the people in the bush. They do not get the opportunities. Yes, there needs to be some structure in place and support, mentoring and everything with our Indigenous young fellows and

ladies who want to get into the big time sports down south. That is all it needs.

At the moment, working closely with the AFLNT on improving that and pushing them to work with that area would be awesome. We have seen what happened to Liam Jurrah. That is a tragedy and something we need to learn from. The media just shut him down. Working with the AFLNT would be the best thing to start promoting Indigenous people into sports again.

In the Territory, sport is critical. It is part of everybody's life. I started playing sports when I was only two years old, probably, when I started running. It is critical, especially in the bush. We do not have the infrastructure in place as you do in the cities and towns.

The member for Nelson was talking about basketball in rural areas which has been a discussion with Basketball NT in Darwin. What about basketball in the remote communities? Some of the best players are out bush. You ask the girls in Darwin. A couple of the clubs came to Barunga Festival to try to play basketball against the local teams. They did not even make it to the semi-finals. These Indigenous basketball teams are pretty talented and pretty good. Yet, they are not recognised or supported, and we are not talking about it. We should look into these issues. Indigenous people have as much talent as anybody else.

It is too much for them; not everybody in the bush has a job to be able to come up here. A few girls were selected to play in Darwin, but it is too much to drive 500 km one way to play basketball and drive back again. Think about the fuel, food, accommodation and everything else. Not everybody has family here. Even when they come here, the house is already crowded. We have been talking about crowded houses for a long time.

Sport in our community is one of the biggest promoters in Indigenous lives, and it always has been. It is like Christianity in Indigenous communities. Sports is very much the same, everybody gets involved in it. The kids get painted up every weekend when the local carnivals are on.

The biggest thing that moved me, and I support very much in this House – I thank the minister for this – was one of our election commitments to fund our community festivals. The former minister for Sport was Karl Hampton. Do you know how much he gave to the Barunga Festival? Five hundred dollars! This Country Liberals government contributed \$50 000, and for the Bulman Festival for the next three years, \$20 000 ...

**Mr Conlan:** \$57 000.

**Ms LEE:** \$57 000, I am corrected. The member for Johnston knows that because he was in the department working under the former Labor member, Karl Hampton. But, \$500! Yet, he stood there and had the audacity to say to me, 'We are going to build lights at your oval'. I said, 'How are you going to do that if you can only afford to give the community \$500 a year to support their festivals?' ...

**Mr Conlan:** To support Malarndirri as well.

**Ms LEE:** Yes, \$500 to support Malarndirri. What kind of dedication and support is that from that side of the House? That is appalling. I could not believe it. The Jawoyn Association had to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars sponsoring, trying to take care of the community, because the people wanted the festival to keep going. The Labor government could only come up with \$500 every year. That is how much they support the bush. Yet, they throw criticism across the floor, but that is their support at the end of the day. Look at Aussie Rules.

Many of the remote kids whose families have migrated to Darwin for medical reasons play rugby. Many kids from the communities surrounding towns like Katherine play rugby; they love rugby. Even the girls like playing touch rugby. It is sport and a friendly game. My sister's kids have been playing rugby and touch all of their lives. It gets the kids out to socialise and, at the end of the day, it makes them better people because of it. It goes back to multiculturalism and education.

If you work together within these portfolios, you are going to make a difference, and that is what we have been doing. We are really pushing for that.

I congratulate the minister on the agreement with Parramatta, the \$4m over the four years based on the four major projects: the NRL trial match each year, the NRL Premiership match each year, sports development and the community engagement programs. We are not only looking at community engagement programs through the shires to enhance Aboriginal ability and to support them. The shires could not handle the stuff they were given. They were basically broke half the time. They could not even take the boys to footy every weekend, everybody else had to chip in. It was too big and that is too much. That puts the pressure on the players, the families and the community alone. I do not know how long the football lasts for. Is it 12 weeks in the communities? Yet, that was on the back of every player.

They still had to pay their fees and everything else like any other club, but they had to pay for the fuel, the food and find the vehicle to get into town every weekend. At the end of the day, that shows dedication from each and every player. It continues every year. We need to support that. I am glad the minister is looking in that direction because that was not brought up back then. If you have never lived in an Aboriginal community, to actually see and express – I cheer for my team, the Arnhem Crows. I am a born and bred little Arnhem Crows girl, I will always cheer for my team ...

**Ms Anderson:** Boo! Boo!

**Ms LEE:** 'Boo!' says the member for Namatjira, but I am an Arnhem Crows girl and I am proud. It shows our homegrown talents. To name some of the boys from the Arnhem Crows, there is Relton Roberts who has made it to Melbourne Demons, and Liam Jurrah who plays for the Gold Coast Suns. They both came from the Arnhem Crows: a club that produced some of the best players. This is a club in the bush that made their funding through winning the premierships every year. That is how they built it up, and from the community members putting on a sausage sizzle for the community. Supporting is all it had to come down to at the end of the day, and we did it. We always supported our club. Even if they did not make it into the premiership this year, hopefully, they will make it next year. We produced some of the best AFL players around, and we need to mentor them and keep them in place.

Apart from these major sporting agreements, this government has introduced a brand new scheme into the Northern Territory to increase the number of children participating in organised sports, \$4m on Sport Vouchers alone. That \$75 Sport Voucher for junior sport participation helps cover the cost of playing organised sports. Approximately 45 000 children across the Northern Territory will have the opportunity to benefit from the scheme. A total of 6000 children in remote communities have utilised the vouchers which are being accepted by over 168 sporting clubs across the Northern Territory. In total, this government provided over \$10m in funding and other grants in the 2013–14 budget.

I would like to go back in history and see how much the former Labor government did in that area. I would like to have a look at that. If I had more time to dig that up, I would, because it is a priority. I would really like to see how much they provided in funding of grants just to the community. There was \$500 to Barunga! I wonder how much they gave the Merrepen and every other festival around the place?

**Ms Lambley:** About \$15 000.

**Ms LEE:** Yes, well, there was \$500 to Barunga. That was all Karl Hampton could do.

This funding includes the \$2.3m for the active communities grant program. This funding provides for the employment of 150 to 160 community sport and recreation officers to work with the kids and the community to deliver sport and other activities.

To go back to the shires, they were too big. There were hardly any jobs for anyone. That is why we had to make it a standalone department, so you can really focus on what the needs are in a community. Sport is really one of the needs. The kids cannot even come up here when there is a concert or any education event happening in Darwin. They never have the opportunity to do it, not even in education! Look at the statistics the minister was quoting. They did not care about the wellbeing of the kids. The former government did not care. The kids did not have the opportunity to come into Darwin or even go to concerts. It benefits them to go to school. We want to encourage our kids to go to school. Well, you have to support them. There was no dedication down that road, nothing whatsoever.

Most of these schools, privately, have to fundraise through the community. Some of these parents at home do not even have jobs. Yet, they manage. I will be honest with you. Do you know what they do? They gamble just to get enough money to get their kids up here. That is the truth. Even if they have to go days without cigarettes, or a few days without food, these parents will actually go down that road to get their kids up here. That is dedication at the end of the day, because there are no jobs for them. Everything was scrapped out in the bush. They cannot afford anything, so what do they do? They put themselves and their money and everything else on the line for their kids. It is hard yakka.

I see my own family doing that, but I am glad I am in a position where I can support them. I wonder how many in this House on the opposite side do that – support these families on a day-to-day basis ...

**A member:** I do.

**Ms LEE:** Out of your own pocket? I would like to know that. That is where it goes with me, from my own pocket, and that is ongoing. That was even before I walked into this House. I had a good job and I have always supported my own people.

I thank the minister for the \$50 000 provided to NT Cricket to hold the Imparja Cup in Alice Springs. Even my mob goes to the Imparja Cup in Alice Springs. There are a couple of teams in Katherine, I know that. Even in the surrounding

regions, in some of the remote communities, they get on to these teams and they go all the way down for the Imparja Cup. I even have the T-shirt. I had to bag them to bring the T-shirt back for me once, and they did. Even Indigenous communities play cricket. We love cricket. You might not see that at the festivals, but we do play cricket. Kids play cricket at school. Hit and run is very similar to cricket. That is what they call it: hit and run. I played it in my time and the kids are still playing it today.

In June 2013, at the Melbourne Festival, 17 AFL teams, five softball teams, seven women's basketball teams, and five men's basketball teams competed. That goes to show the commitment of females playing basketball in remote communities and why NT Basketball should dedicate its time to them. I encourage them to go into the bush and work with some of the teams because there is some of the best talent there. They are unnoticed and untouched. You can really do some good.

Look at the impact on these girls who end up drinking, smoking drugs, and petrol sniffing. Why? There is nothing else; they are not going anywhere. They are going through the same cycle and are staying there. We need to encourage them and give them opportunities to get out of that box and look out of that box. I was in that box; I got out of it.

Basketball shows how committed and passionate about basketball girls are. The West Arnhem Shire Council supported the conducting of a men's and women's basketball competition in Maningrida. I do not have to talk about basketball anymore; basketball is one of the main games out bush.

The Roper Gulf Shire AFL competition ran from April to September with junior women's and senior competitions. We can go on forever. I can name so many things the minister has done in just 12 months. That is an improvement.

He also talked in his statement about facility upgrades within the communities. In 11 years of Labor I did not see one facility upgrade in any of the communities I have ever been to on sports weekends. I have been to most of them, trust me. I travel around with my basketball girls and we go to most of the communities to play basketball.

The facilities there are appalling. There has been no vision to improve them over the years – nothing. It is just there for the weekend, and everyone will drive out then go back to their community anyway, so why should we invest in that? If you want tourism – the numbers and everything else – you have to. Tourists come out for a firsthand cultural experience. Where do they want to go? They want to go straight to the bush

where there are community festivals. That is where you will get firsthand Aboriginal experience, not at Nitmiluk. Even though Nitmiluk must be the prime Indigenous place, it is the communities because not all our boys and girls in remote communities live and work there. The ones in town benefit from that ...

**Mr GUNNER:** A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms LEE:** Thank you, Mr Gunner ...

**A member:** Support from over there.

**Ms LEE:** At least he was watching.

Usually the jobs are supporting the ones around the town area in the Katherine region, so our boys and girls do not have the opportunity. It is too much for them to move into town; it is the cultural barriers and everything else. It is pretty scary for a young person to move into town, get a job and be a standalone person. It is pretty hard on Indigenous kids. I have gone through that. I am just starting to come through it now and find myself.

It is an opportunity for everybody, but sport really does bring the best out in you. By being active you live longer, anybody would know that.

The member for Katherine would like this – \$43 500 to improve irrigation at the Katherine Country Club and \$20 000 to upgrade the basketball court at Timber Creek. We have numerous lists of improvements in the bush which could have been done in the last 11 years because they were the prime supporter of Indigenous people. Although it could have been done in 11 years of building infrastructure in the bush, not one thing has happened.

Everywhere I have been they still say, 'What about this, what about that? We need improvements in this'. That is the truth. In 11 years there was nothing.

The member for Barkly, during the election, went to Elliott and spoke about putting a park barbecue area at Longreach, and he wanted to fix the oval. Jake Neade's father said to him, 'Wait a minute; we do not need an oval. Hardly anybody uses that oval anyway, not even our boys. We want houses'. That place has not had one house built there for the last 11 years. How long have you been in the position? Seriously, this is Jake Neade's father. Everybody knows who Jake Neade is. Jake Neade is an AFL footballer. How is Jake Neade related to me? Well, his father and

my partner are brothers. This bloke thinks we do not have the connection and get the stories back. They tell us exactly what is out there. Trying to prove a little point and throwing his little weight around – well, it does not work that way. They are not jumping up and down. Wade, the young fellow who was in the newspaper talking about the football oval is, again, my nephew.

Yes, there is a need. They have the Elliott Hawks. But, at the moment, the highest priority for them is houses, with the overcrowding situation. I do not even think one house has been renovated in that place in what – Jesus Christ! – the years go on ...

**Ms Finocchiaro:** Is there a standing order for that?

**Ms LEE:** It is appalling. The state and the promises and everything else is disgusting. I did not go out promising one thing except for working on the local shires. Yet, here we are. When I was out there during the federal election, all the promises were made. The CLP was to scrap their baby bonus. For one, the CLP is not in charge of Centrelink, it comes under the federal government. How are we going to scrap anything? Oh, wait a minute, we have a magic wand, we must be witches. Is there a word for men? This is just appalling.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is my contribution to the House. Thank you, minister, for your contribution and for listening to us, the bush members.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I speak, albeit briefly, to the minister's statement on sport and recreation and racing. I will not comment on racing too much, but more on sport and recreation as it pertains to my electorate and the rural area.

I thank the minister for the statement which is comprehensive. It is an important area of activity for our Northern Territory across the board, whether it be young people, in the middle, or our elderly citizens, because they all get involved in some kind of recreational activity or sport. We have the environment and the facilities to do so.

Minister, in the early part of the speech on page 2, you talked about the activities of government re-engaging and restoring relationships with national bodies, and this is commendable. I congratulate you on that – sports commission, rugby league, football, Cricket Australia, for example. However, what I would like to see – I know it takes time to establish these relationships – is some work done in re-engaging and restoring, if not developing, relationships with Netball Australia, possibly the National Polocrosse Association given the size of that activity in the Northern Territory, Swimming Australia – clearly we have many good and

talented swimmers who go to national level and compete, if not international level as they have done in the past. Also what kind of relationship could the NT government have with Equestrian Australia which, as we know, is a large organisation?

While I am talking about those horse issues which are large in my electorate, for the parliament's benefit and for the minister, because I am sure he will be happy to write letters of congratulations, our NT inter-schools team that competed in Perth in the national championships recently finished fourth overall, which is a tremendous effort. The Northern Territory won the Teamwork and the Sportsmanship Award, which is not surprising given the attitude and the behaviour of our young people and, of course, Territory people and how we are, always wanting to pitch in, to help people, whether it be our team or someone else's team.

The people in this inter-school team received placings in showmanship, show jumping and dressage. A special mention to the Beasy boys, Finnis and Mackinlay, who achieved terrific results. They were such a happy-go-lucky, friendly couple with good horsemanship. They will go on to bigger and better things in their sport, given they are only in middle and upper primary school.

The minister mentioned on page 12 the national competitions which are coming to the Northern Territory, or have been in the Northern Territory, and how these national competitions leverage tourism and bring economic benefits. We have seen that with our football and rugby league matches and other things.

The minister mentioned later in the speech that we have the National Polocrosse Championships in Darwin next July. These championships bring in excess of 600 horses to the Northern Territory. It will see upwards of 3000 visitors to the Northern Territory. In these kinds of competitions and championships you do not have single people travelling, you usually have families travelling. At past championships in Perth and the eastern seaboard they have brought between \$5m and \$7m to the economy just in purchasing and procuring of goods and services, accommodation and meals.

An obvious large expense for those 600 horses is the feed, and the organisers of that competition are already talking with the feed business in the rural area to ensure there is enough fodder for all those horses. I know the government has supported, and is supporting, these championships. I thank the minister for that, but it will not be a surprise to you that the organisers of that national championship and the Territory people will be knocking on your door again for

other kinds of support that can be given to ensure that not only is it a successful championship, but we maximise the economic contribution and the tourism benefits. We want those 3000 people to return to the Northern Territory for a visit without their horses, because it will be a lot more enjoyable for them, probably.

I commend the government on its Sport Voucher Scheme, the \$75 that goes towards schoolchildren in the Territory. I thank the minister for the briefing I had the other day from the department and his staff, which was not only about this statement. However, I was surprised that there is only a 35% take-up of the Sport Voucher. Minister, I have sent a note to all the schools in my electorate to encourage families, if they have not, to take up this opportunity to help offset some of the costs associated with whatever sporting activity their children get into, or perhaps should get into.

On page 24 of your speech you made reference to the water parks in the Top End of the Territory, being the Palmerston Water Park, the Howard Springs Reserve and Lake Leanyer. They are terrific facilities. It does not matter who established them, this government is obviously committed to ensuring those water parks continue to grow and prosper and that people enjoy them.

However, it is time for the government – I will be lobbying the government strongly on this, and I am sure you, as one of my colleagues in the rural area, Mr Deputy Speaker, will join me – to commit to a pool in the rural area. They do not need a water park because children cannot learn to swim in a waterpark, they need a pool. We have a generation, if not two, of children in the rural area growing up not knowing how to swim.

We saw only last week the report released by the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia. We know that drowning is the greatest cause of accidental deaths in children under five in Australia. Each week on average, one child drowns and, sadly, some of these drownings occur in the Northern Territory and the Top End. There are always reasons behind statistics, but based on the data they have collated, the Northern Territory has the highest rate of drowning in Australia with 3.8 per 100 000 population, which is followed by Western Australia. There are always contributing factors to why adults as well as children drown, but the fact remains we need to have more children learn to swim as they go into adulthood, and learn about water safety and being responsible around water. Whether they want to swim or not is a side issue, but you can promote responsible behaviour.

To support the argument that we need a pool and to seriously look at the facilities, or the lack thereof, in the rural area, there are about 20 000

people who live in the greater rural area, down to about Adelaide River. There are about 8000 properties. There are numerous primary schools and Taminmin College. We have Humpty Doo, Bees Creek, Sattler, St Francis of Assisi, Taminmin, Berry Springs, Howard Springs, Girraween, Lutheran College and Middle Point from Preschool to Year 12. There are 3869 schoolchildren in the Litchfield shire. Many of those schoolchildren cannot participate in any swimming program because the school either does not have the funds, the resources, or cannot organise to get a bus to take children to the closest swimming pool, which is usually Palmerston. If a pool was developed in the rural area, there would be the possibility of schools at the top end of Palmerston that could feed in and utilise the pool.

I will be writing to the minister and the government regarding this matter because there has been a great deal of work done on it. I am not interested in the politics that has gone before; it does not matter. It goes back to when John Ah Kit was the minister. Clearly, the Litchfield Council has a role to play and it needs to be at the table. We need to look at it seriously so our children in our schools, or children who do home schooling, have the opportunity to learn to swim.

I note the national championships we have had here, which were terrific: the Hottest 7s, and the Surf Life Saving. The AFL Masters was conducted recently and we had some of the footballers stay on the property with my family. I have mentioned the national polocrosse championships which are in July next year. The Masters Games in Alice Springs was mentioned, but I did not hear any mention of the Arafura Games. I know the government has a commitment to the Arafura Games, but it would be interesting to see how the plans are progressing on that.

I will not comment on racing at this point in time. However, in regard to recreation I will add a few comments about the biggest, you could call it, sporting and recreational facility in the greater rural area which, of course, is Freds Pass Reserve. It is a reserve which is managed by a board, with the underlying owner of the land being Litchfield Council. This is a major reserve which has a long history and, mostly, a positive and happy history. There are about 25 user groups which use the reserve and, at any week in the busy season, you could have anything from 3000 to 4000 young people and adults using the reserve. The footy, sporting and other clubs vary from horse clubs to archery, rugby, Aussie rules, soccer, polocrosse, athletics, Hash House Harriers, cricket and paint ball. Recently, a boxing troop has been set up at Freds Pass with a young fellow who is really keen to teach young people

the sport of boxing, and also to get fit. There are other groups at the reserve such as the Quilters Down the Track, the Bumps and Bibs, as they are called, and the positive dog training which is, basically, obedience.

The Freds Pass Reserve is also a home to much more than that. We have had bike shows, the volunteer fires games, a Triple J concert, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra has played there, the markets are there now, we had a country music concert a few years back and, of course, the Freds Pass Show which did not occur this year. However, there is a group, the Freds Pass Community Show Incorporated, which is working very hard and diligently to get the show up and running for next year in about mid-May.

They are having many issues with the current Freds Pass Management Board. A few people have resigned from the Freds Pass Management Board. This group, which has the support of you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and me, has kept in contact with the member for Nelson in regard to trying to make the Freds Pass Show a reality again. They have put in a tender, which was accepted, but every step of the way the group seems to be meeting obstacles from the management board, which is disappointing because that show was the beginning of the show circuit in the Northern Territory. We know many show goers enjoyed that show because it was a rural show.

The plans are to make it themed as a rural show, from paddock to plate, so people, no matter where they live, can come and enjoy and understand the benefits of farming and where our food comes from, more so these days than before.

The AGM is coming up for the Freds Pass Management Board, and I encourage many people to take an interest in this because the future of Freds Pass Show is at stake. I have been exceptionally disappointed at the way the communication has been undertaken by the board. I encourage the board to work constructively and cooperatively with this very legitimate group.

I will be sending some information through to you, minister, in your capacity as Sports and Recreation Minister, because you need to understand that many of the community groups, sporting groups, and people who want to display products and wares are being hampered by the lack of cooperation of the board. No doubt, when the board hears my comments, they will probably be a little agitated, but enough is enough and we need to get on with the show.

Thank you, minister, for a good statement. I wanted to raise the issue surrounding the need for a pool, not a water park, in the rural area. We

need to get down to practicalities about what is coming up at Freds Pass Reserve and how we need to plan for that reserve going into the future. The question has to be asked about the future of Freds Pass Reserve given I have not seen the master plan for it. I am sure you would be interested to know where that reserve is going, minister, given you are a large investor.

Money going to Freds Pass Reserve comes from local government but, predominantly, it is Northern Territory government funding for the infrastructure and the facilities. Minister, when you have some time I encourage you to let me take you there, along with the member for Daly, to have a quick run around so you can see firsthand all that has been going on there.

**Mr CONLAN (Sport, Recreation and Racing):**

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the contributors to this statement over the course of the last week. We have had a number of speakers and I thank all those who made a contribution, some a bit more constructive than others. It is great to get on the record the work done for sport, recreation and racing over the last 12 months and outline the government's vision for sport and recreation.

I believe the member for Fannie Bay was the first to contribute from the opposition. He raised a few points and I made some notes so I can address those. His points were pretty much articulated by most members in the House today so, rather than trawl through and respond to every single member, it might be worth touching on a couple of the key points from the member for Fannie Bay and capture those in the net of response, if you like.

First, we can start with the A-League. That has come under a bit of criticism, but for the life of me I am unsure why it received such strong criticism. Nevertheless it has. With regard to the A-League, the Adelaide United sponsorship arrangements, I know people like to throw the word 'deal' around. It is not a word I like to use when embarking on relationships and partnerships with organisations such as this. It is not a deal as such, it is a partnership or an agreement.

Tourism NT has agreed to sponsor the Adelaide United A-League side. This includes the Tourism logo appearing on the match day jersey, home ground signage linking with commercial and other partners, and Tourism NT linking with social media and Adelaide United members. It is fairly significant. I noted the shadow slammed the deal saying it is a waste of \$200 000 just for a logo on a T-shirt. It is not just any logo, or a logo on a T-shirt, it is this logo here, which is the Tourism NT logo, our new refreshed full colour brand that will be seen across the marketplace. It

is not just any logo; it is the Northern Territory logo so I consider it to be a wise investment.

The Department of Sport and Recreation has agreed, in principle, to a football development agreement to run in tandem with Tourism NT. That will work to develop the code in the Northern Territory with a concentration, at this stage, on Central Australia. That is not to say this will not expand in coming years, but to strike up this agreement, in the initial stages it will run through Central Australia. The agreement is currently being finalised by the Solicitor for the Northern Territory and Adelaide United, and is for \$150 000 per annum for the next two A-League seasons. It will also see Adelaide United appoint a development manager to be based at the Department of Sport and Recreation in Alice Springs to oversee the development of quality coaching in junior development. Adelaide United will also provide junior coaching clinics by players and coaching staff, as well as provide assistance with equipment and uniforms.

A training camp will also feature a trial match against another A-League side, and we are finalising who that might be at this stage. Watch this space, it looks pretty exciting. That will be a trial match against an NT All Star team as well.

The Chief Executive Officer of Adelaide United has already met with representatives of Alice Springs football clubs and board members in Alice Springs, as well as with the Football Federation of the Northern Territory to discuss how to purposefully develop the code in Central Australia. The A-League is, for the first time on Friday night, on free-to-air television. Territorians all over the Territory who have access to free-to-air television can watch this. Round 1 saw over 100 000 attending the games, plus the highest-ever TV viewing audience.

Adelaide is paying for a full-time development officer, as I mentioned. The point I am trying to make is that this is gaining enormous exposure for the Northern Territory. That, we believe, will convert directly into holiday and business spend.

There was some concern about the Brumbies. Let me see, I have made some notes about the Brumbies. The agreement with the Brumbies was for \$300 000 a year for 2011, 2012 and 2013. Whilst the agreement provided for the Brumbies to provide player support in the Northern Territory, it did not specify a development officer. The Brumbies contributed \$23 000 to a development officer position, which the Australian Rugby Union did not continue post the Brumbies agreement.

We felt the Adelaide United agreement of \$200 000 from Tourism NT and \$150 000 from the Department of Sport and Recreation was a better

spend. We felt it was better value for money for Territorians. That is a call we made and we stand by. We will be judged on that, there is no doubt about it. However, it is a bit too early to come out swinging and saying this is all wrong. We will see. We believe it is much better value for money when you stack it up against the Brumbies deal or agreement. It will provide, as I said, a pre-season camp, a pre-season game and will create enormous exposure of one of the fastest growing games in the world – certainly in Australia.

We have spoken about the Arafura Games on numerous occasions. Your talk about value for money and where it is positioned in the world sporting landscape in 2013 is, essentially, irrelevant. I say that with great respect. A large proportion of those sporting organisations that contribute, or have contributed, to the Arafura Games would agree. We did not meet an enormous amount of resistance from the local sporting community when we deferred the Arafura Games late last year. In fact, many of them embraced the idea because, frankly, the Arafura Games had run its course. In 1993 or 1992, when the games kicked off, it was one of the premier sporting events in Southeast Asia. In 2013, it was relegated to, essentially, the world of irrelevance.

I have said before, Southeast Asian countries are hosting games these days that have a budget of in excess of \$1bn. Our budget for the Arafura Games is anywhere between \$3m to \$4m. You just cannot stage a games for that price and stay relevant. To suggest we are missing out on something or are abandoning our Asian neighbours because we have deferred the games is simply not true.

With regard to the accommodation, there has been some speculation and accusations that the hoteliers, accommodation, restaurant, and hospitality industries have suffered a huge blow as a result of the Arafura Games being deferred. That is simply not true either. Look at the IRB National Surf Championships, the Australian Masters and a number of events we have brought to the Northern Territory. They contribute more to the Northern Territory economy, particularly the Top End economy, than the Arafura Games did. It is a simple fact. We can go through the semantics and the ins and outs of exactly what the Arafura Games brought to the Northern Territory in spend, but I can assure you, as the years went on, it diminished to the point where it was not worth putting the games on. It dragged a huge amount of resources from the sporting organisations and was not value for money.

It has served its purpose well. It put Darwin on the map for Southeast Asian countries. It provided a wonderful platform and pathway for our Asian neighbours to enter into the sporting arena,

but 20 years ago things were different. These days, Asia is a major player in the sporting arena with infrastructure we could only ever dream of. Twenty years ago, that was not the case. Things have changed considerably.

We have deferred the Arafura Games in an attempt to bring that Asian engagement strategy. That is exactly what the Arafura Games was about 20 years ago. It was about the Northern Territory government having a platform to engage with our Asian neighbours. We have said that in this House on a number of previous occasions. We have all heard it. There was a time when the Northern Territory government had a better relationship with Asia than the Australian government, and those were those days. Now, sadly, that has somewhat diminished for a number of reasons. However, to suggest the sky will fall in, the sporting bodies and the sporting organisations are reeling, and the accommodation houses and the hospitality industry is suffering and on the brink of financial ruin as a result is not true. This was an Asian engagement strategy using sport as the platform, and that has changed.

The Northern Territory government has deferred the Arafura Games, which is, potentially, using sport as a platform. Our Asian engagement strategy is alive and well and stronger than ever. We will bring back some form of community Asian engagement strategy once we know exactly what that looks like. We do not know what it will look like. I am unsure. As Sports minister, it might not even include sport. It might involve arts; it could be a cultural festival that includes some high-end sporting representation. I am confident we will not see the return of the Arafura Games as we once knew it.

The Parramatta Rugby League arrangement was raised. I have some notes about Parramatta, but I could probably talk about it off the top of my head, to be honest. This is an agreement with one of the great rugby league clubs in Australia, albeit languishing at the bottom of the ladder at the moment ...

**Mr Giles:** It is embarrassing!

**Mr CONLAN:** Yes, and the Chief Minister is a passionate member of Parramatta Eels and has been for most of his life. It is a coincidence, I believe ...

**Mr Giles:** So is the Minister for Education.

**Mr CONLAN:** Yes, there is certainly no conflict of interest here. He declared his interest. I am a member of the Melbourne Football Club now. I signed up once Tourism NT partnered with the Melbourne Football Club to show my support. I encourage all members in this House to sign up to

the Parramatta Eels and the Melbourne Football Club to show support. Nevertheless, that is a matter for you. I do not see any issues with the allegation there is a conflict of interest because the Chief Minister happens to be a lifelong supporter of Parramatta. I will find a little more detail on the previous agreement because it is worth articulating in a factual way.

I will run through some of this and it might answer the questions raised by various members. The previous agreements for NRL games to be played in the Northern Territory have been with the NRL and not individual clubs. That is something else we have tried ...

**Mr Giles:** The shadow minister supports Parramatta as well, by the way.

**Mr CONLAN:** Very good. He is a member as well, that is great.

They have been with the NRL, which is a key point. We have negotiated with the peak bodies in the past rather than individual clubs. We believe while that has been pretty good, we can do it better. You can leverage much more by negotiating with a particular club, whether it be an AFL club, an NRL club or an A-League club, than you can by negotiating with the peak body to better leverage the tourism component. I make no apologies about the fact I have had a lifelong belief that tourism and sport go hand in hand. I have said that in this place on a number of occasions. It is an absolute no-brainer, and jurisdictions around Australia are just starting to see that. We are ahead of the game, as we have identified that. There is a wonderful synergy between tourism and sport.

Meetings were held, in conjunction with the NRL, with both the Parramatta Eels and the Gold Coast Titans to discuss opportunities available in the Northern Territory. Melbourne was pursued for the AFL. As I said, the A-League in Western Sydney – some of the key facts are that a four-year agreement was subsequently agreed to in principle, which is currently being finalised by the Solicitor-General. That is \$1m a year, notionally split, to be made up of \$500 000 for the premiership game, \$300 000 for the pre-season game, and \$200 000 for game development. This compares to about \$400 000 per match for the previous agreement. With that agreement, we saw a game earlier this year.

The Department of Sport and Recreation will use the match receipts to offset game day costs such as ticketing, utilities and security. Corporate arrangements for fixtures are currently being developed. Parramatta will undertake a wide range of activities in association with the agreement, the extent of which were previously

unable to be leveraged with the relationship with the NRL. That is the point I am trying to make: if you negotiate with a club directly, then you are in a much better position to leverage those tourism and game development opportunities. This is not just a fly-in/fly-out arrangement, and we are very keen to ensure this is not the case. It is not about winning votes in the northern suburbs for us, it is about growing the game and developing sporting infrastructure and sporting pathways. It is about setting up that future. When you negotiate with an NRL, A-League or AFL club, you are in a much better position to advance that agenda. That is our agenda and I unashamedly say that.

The development side of the Eels agreement will be an Eels development manager based in Darwin full-time. It will become Eels territory. If we look at what Tasmania has done with Hawthorn or, if you like, what Hawthorn has done with Tasmania, Hawthorn has transformed Tasmania as a tourism destination. It has been a long road over a number of years, and it has come at a cost. However, it has transformed Tasmania into one of the premier tourism destinations in this country. That is simply through the Tasmanian government negotiating an arrangement with the Hawthorn Football Club. This is exactly what we are intending to do with Parramatta and the Melbourne Football Club. We want this to become Demons' territory, Eels territory, and A-League territory.

There are promotional activities with the NT Rugby League clubs. You will see this sort of thing transpire and transform in the games being played in Sydney and Melbourne. You will start to see the Northern Territory appear in a number of promotional activities in the games taking place in those respective cities. This is not to mention what will happen on the ground here.

NT juniors will have a trial for places in Parramatta development squads, which is just fantastic, and a pathway that was not available previously. There will be assistance in delivering Level 1 and Level 2 coaching courses. The Eels will assist with rugby league academy programs in the NT to develop talented juniors. The Eels will also join the management committee of the Northern Territory Institute of Sport rugby league program, which is just fantastic.

I have touched on the Melbourne Football Club while talking about the Parramatta Eels. Let us make one thing clear: the Melbourne Football Club is languishing at the bottom of the ladder, but the arrangement with Melbourne was never about the performance of the side. That would have been great and a bonus, but it is not about their performance on the field. The Melbourne Football Club has the most corporate industry leaders of any club. In the Melbourne Football Club there is

a lot of old money and many high-powered business and corporate executives. That is vital to the Northern Territory in attracting business events. It is about business events and attracting these high-yielding conferencing activities in the Northern Territory. A 400-delegate conference to the Northern Territory can return anywhere between \$3 to \$4m ...

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr CONLAN:** Thanks, member for Sanderson.

The point is to leverage one great brand against another great brand; that is, the Melbourne brand with the Northern Territory or Darwin, but the Northern Territory particularly. Darwin is a wonderful brand. Melbourne is an iconic brand. Take away the Melbourne Football Club, Melbourne city itself is one of the great Australian brands. To tie the two together, we believe, will bring enormous benefits to the Northern Territory.

We have said that the first year of the arrangement has not converted to a huge amount of holiday bookings. However, it has amounted to a number of bookings. The return on investment in the holiday bookings is more than the original investment; we did not lose. However, the point of the agreement was the business events sector. I believe going forward to 2014, that yes, we are going to embark on another sponsorship deal between Sport and Recreation, Tourism NT, and the Melbourne Football Club. The Northern Territory government, Tourism NT, and the club have fine-tuned it and will emerge at the end of the 2014 season with a great return on the original outlay of investment.

Let us keep in mind we now have Peter Jackson, Chief Executive of Melbourne, who brings enormous clout to the club and is highly connected in Victoria and throughout the whole of the AFL fraternity, and one of the great personalities of AFL, Paul Roos. Essentially, we got tomorrow's agreement at yesterday's price. We are very lucky Paul Roos came on board. This will be a wonderful return to the Northern Territory through the business conferencing sector, and that is the key point of the Melbourne Football Club. It is not about quantity, it is about quality. That is what you will get through the conferencing side as opposed to having holidaymakers coming to the Northern Territory. You will get more yield from conferencing than from holidaymakers in this case, and that is what we are looking at.

Racing is enormous. There was some criticism about the amount of time spent on racing, but have no fear, the government is committed to racing. We recognise its importance in the economy of the Northern Territory and what it brings to the table. We are committed to that and are looking at a number of ways to improve the racing sector in the Northern Territory. I understand three or four paragraphs did not seem to be enough in an 8000-word statement, but I did not think 12 minutes was long enough in a 5400-word statement with regard to tourism. You cannot be all things to all people all the time. However, rest assured, the racing community and the Northern Territory government have a very good relationship, one we are prepared to continue to strengthen.

Madam Speaker, you raised some areas with regard to netball, swimming, equestrian and polocrosse. Yes, we are committed to polocrosse and understand the national championships are coming to the Northern Territory. We are very keen and have supported that to the tune of – I do not know the amount off the top of my head, but we have put \$20 000 to \$25 000 into that. We will continue to support it with another outlay about to come. We have been lobbied pretty hard, and we see the benefits of that. You are right, you said about \$7m in Perth. I heard the ROI was closer to about \$4m or \$5m on the polocrosse championships in Western Australia. Nevertheless, whatever it is, it is worthwhile, and worth the government's while to be in that space because it returns significantly to us. It puts us on the national map. In fact, it puts us on the world map. That is the point: we need to be getting the Northern Territory brand out there as much as possible. The Northern Territory is open for business and we are on the world map. We are here to promote and support polocrosse at the very least.

We do very well with netball. I am guessing your comments were relating to netball in the rural area – I am not sure – or netball overall. We have a couple of agreements with national bodies, and netball games are being played in the Northern Territory. We are big supporters of netball, always have been. I guess you can do more; you can always do more. However, netball does pretty well. It does very well on its own, is what I am saying. It is a great organisation and very proactive in making sure it does whatever it can to deliver a wonderful fixture across the NT. In Alice Springs, we have close to 2000 participants – 2000 girls every Saturday morning playing netball. It is a hell of a sight. It is a wonderful community and organisation. It is the same with the netball associations up and down the track, particularly through Katherine, Nhulunbuy, and Darwin. We support netball quite well. As I said, perhaps we

can do more; I would like to do that. Our door is always open for the netballers.

You talked about swimming and equestrian. I touched a bit on that with polocrosse. You are dead right, these are areas where we need to strengthen those relationships as well. Where do you draw the line? There is only so much money we can spread around in one financial year. However, it is about relationships, and we are determined to ensure we build on these relationships with these national sporting bodies across the country to maximise and leverage as much as we possibly can for the Northern Territory, because that is the point.

The member for Nelson touched on the world solar cars and what a great event that is. I guess he felt we did not do enough to promote that – I was not quite sure. He spoke about it at length. The Northern Territory government was at the forefront and has been a huge supporter and promoter of the World Solar Car Challenge. I am not quite sure what his point was, but maybe we can do more. Nothing is ever off the table. People say, 'You can do more with this sport and this organisation. You can do more, you should be doing more'.

Maybe we can. There is only a limited bucket, but maybe we can do more. Maybe it is about building relationships, about entering into a partnership with these organisations and putting the NT logo on them. We have been criticised for placing the NT logo on particular A-League jerseys or V8 Supercars and the like. I am unsure exactly where the member for Nelson was coming from with regard to that. Maybe there is a bit more we can do with the World Solar Car Challenge, but we do a pretty good job there too. As I said, the Northern Territory government has been at the forefront of the World Solar Car Challenge for a very long time and will continue to be.

What else? We spoke about badminton briefly in Question Time today. Badminton is a tricky one and a sore point for many people. It is not easy. We are caught between a rock and a hard place when it comes to badminton. We are doing everything we can to assist badminton and are in negotiations with them. Recently, in the last 12 hours or so since Question Time this morning – in fact, pretty much as soon as I went back to my office after Question Time – an e-mail appeared with a proposal from badminton about what they want. That was what we were waiting on. Now we have that in hand, we are able to negotiate what I hope is a positive outcome.

All in all, I thank all members for their contribution, and the cheer squad. It is fantastic to have a cheer squad. It is hard to draw a crowd, but it is

great to have one up there. Thank you very much.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their contribution to this. Sport and Recreation is a priority, particularly when we can tie it in with Tourism and drive the economy of the Northern Territory. I thank all members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

#### **TABLED PAPER**

##### **Travel Report from Member for Nhulunbuy**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table a travel report from the member for Nhulunbuy pursuant to clause 4.1 of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 2012.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Ms FYLES (Nightcliff):** Mr Deputy Speaker, as elected members of parliament we are the voice of our community and our people. Tonight I speak on behalf of a community group which, over the last 12 weeks, has been speaking on behalf of Territory women and their right to give birth with the model of care they wish.

Top End birthing mothers, their families and supporters, tonight held a vigil outside Parliament House – and some are in the public gallery this evening – asking the government to reinstate birthing options for mothers who have had a previous caesarean. These women have spent 12 weeks campaigning and trying to work with government to get an outcome to allow them to have the birth they choose.

I did not think much thought about where and how I would give birth and what support I would have until I fell pregnant. Unlike most expectant mothers, I then spent almost 10 months focusing on my health, my unborn baby's health, and seeking support from health professionals.

First time mothers have the choice in the Territory of a number of options for maternity care: private hospital, public hospital, birthing centre, or home birth-based care. For as long as time, expectant mothers care has been based around midwives. It is only in more recent times surgical and medical intervention has become heavily involved in the birth process. However, many women still wish for midwifery-based care either in hospital or the home.

Midwives are highly-trained specialists in childbirth and can deal with more difficult situations such as breech births and twin births, to name a few, although sometimes this is forgotten. Midwifery is its own profession and, in many developed nations, is the entry point for maternity care.

However, tonight I am not here to lead a discussion about midwives versus obstetricians, it is about choice. Obstetricians are medical doctors who are experts in caring for women during pregnancy and birth, and who have the surgical skills that work with midwives in tandem to provide care to childbearing women.

Birthing options in the Territory have seen change in the last decade but, in recent months, they have seen a step backwards with women who have had a prior caesarean birth not able to access a home birth or the birthing centre of Royal Darwin Hospital. They are being forced against their wishes to give birth in the main hospital.

By way of history, in 2002 privately-practising midwives in Australia lost access to professional indemnity insurance as a result of a medical indemnity insurance crisis. As a result of this, Territory women lost their right to home birth as the NT requires health practitioners to hold professional indemnity insurance. In an effort to resolve the problem, the NT government at the time established the home birth service which provided publicly-funded home birth care.

The 2010 Commonwealth maternity services reforms provided for Commonwealth subsidised professional indemnity insurance for eligible midwives, not including labour or birth outside a hospital.

In 2010, the national law mandated that all practitioners had to have professional indemnity insurance in order to be registered. All states and territories included an exception for midwives providing home birth.

In order for the midwives to privately practice in the NT, the government needs to amend the legislation. As described by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, 'Eligible and credential midwives are a key part of this established framework'.

On 12 November 2010, the National Maternity Services Plan was endorsed by the Australian Health Minister's Conference. The plan recognised the importance of maternity services within the health system and provided a strategic national framework as endorsed by state, territory and Commonwealth governments for a five-year period from 2010 to 2015.

The plan focuses on maintaining Australia's high standard of safety and quality in maternity care while seeking to improve access to services and choice in models of care. This plan highlighted criteria that community home birth in the Territory meets. These include increased access for Australian women and their family members to local maternity care by expanding the range of models of care. Point 1.2.3 indicator of success is women having increased access to community models of care including publicly-funded home birth. Point 1.2.4 indicator of success is programs that utilise midwives to their full scope of practice in a range of different locations. Point 1.2.6 indicator of success is mechanisms to increase the availability of access to public antenatal care in community settings are identified.

I am aware of a number of proposals for solutions the home birth organisation requested in their submission to government. Again, I draw the government's attention to them:

*The home birth services continue to operate as a caseload primary health midwifery-led model based in the community providing care for women who plan to birth at home or in the Royal Darwin Hospital birth centre. The home birth service continues to see low-risk women and a broader group of women as per current guidelines, and the home birth centre service may accept VIVAT clients for caseload midwifery care.*

The Minister for Health has acknowledged evidence today in Question Time about some research, but I felt it was a little selective and raise some queries I have with it. I understand the figure of women who have used the homebirth services this year is not 22, but more like 80 women. Many of these women have accessed home birth specifically for the one-to-one midwifery care. Minister, you should be well aware of this because I understand you have received letters from over 40 women stating a variety of reasons for seeking one-to-one midwifery care.

Many members of the community would like to see the minister lift the ban on midwives from the home birth service so they can provide pre and postnatal care for women who have had a previous caesarean once again. There is absolutely no clinical explanation for this ban. Recent studies, in fact, identify that one-to-one midwifery care in the community, in collaboration with GPs and obstetricians, is safe for all women, for all types, and is highly beneficial.

I now quote briefly from some of the research from an article in *The Australian*:

*They found that using an individual caseload midwife led to a significant reduction in rates of non-emergency caesarean-section births.*

*Women under the care of a named midwife were also less likely to experience a spontaneous labour, required lower doses of pain-killing drugs, and suffered less blood loss after birth.*

*They stayed in hospital for less time than women given standard care, and were more likely to breastfeed their babies.*

*In addition, employing a caseload midwife led to cost saving of \$566 per woman giving birth.*

Not only do we have the benefits for mother and baby, we have the benefits for the baby into the future, and also cost benefits. That is just one piece of evidence. I ask the minister and the government to explore more detailed research.

I appreciated this evening, when the women were out the front, that the minister and government members took the time to go and speak to the women. I hope hearing their stories face-to-face, and their passion, has helped you understand this is not a straightforward issue. I understand that. It is a difficult role to be in government, but we need to find options because these are women who are choosing a birth option and, at the moment, I feel we are letting them down.

There are a number of questions. In particular, there is one lady who is weeks, if not days away, from giving birth. I believe there was a promise made to her around being able to birth in the birthing centre at the hospital. I would like to see that upheld. It might seem trivial in your very busy and important roles, but when you are giving birth that time is particularly important. There is research and studies that show it has lifelong consequences. It might seem like one person, but that means an awful lot.

When, in 2010, the government signed the National Maternity Plan based on current best practices, all the evidence was women-centred care. There is definitely evidence there. There is the national plan, so it is important the government can maybe revisit this and have a look at it.

Another point the group has asked me to raise this evening in the parliament is around water births within the ward at RDH. Currently, you can water birth at home or in the birthing centre, but not in the ward, which is a change from when I had my first child when it was an option. Again, there may be some policies around that, but it is really worthwhile looking at this because much research

shows water can help with pain relief, particularly if a lady has had a caesarean previously. The birth centre at Royal Darwin Hospital is quite hard to get into. There are three teams of midwives working there. Looking at resourcing it is particularly important, as many women want that option but often miss out.

I am being cut short by time, but to the members of the Home Birth Association, Childbirth Education Association and others who have spent time sharing their stories, researching, writing letters, thank you for your hard work, enthusiasm and support.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as members of this House, we respect the right and recognise women's rights to access different choices of care, including continuity of care during pregnancy and birth. Birth choices are very important to our community and, as parliamentarians, we must listen. These women have provided solutions and plans and I ask the government to work with them to find a way, a path forward.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Nightcliff for her contribution to this sensitive debate. Childbirth is an extremely emotional time for women, their partners, and their families. My introduction to this issue, particularly vaginal births after caesareans within a home setting, was first introduced to me a few weeks ago by members of the Darwin Homebirth Group and the Childbirth Education Association in Darwin.

Four very articulate women visited me and introduced me to this contentious issue. I listened to them. On that day they presented me with a fairly large pile of letters from women who were sharing their experiences of childbirth and, essentially, the meaning and the value they place on having access to the home birthing service in Darwin. I read those letters.

Unfortunately, I did not write a different response to each letter, and for that I apologise. Writing a separate response to 40 letters takes time and, after reading them, I decided a generic response was adequate. For those people who were offended by my lack of personalising their response, I apologise.

After meeting with those women and reading those letters I embarked on a process of investigation. I have now visited all the public midwifery services in Darwin and have spoken to staff in each of those services. From that, I believe I have developed an understanding of the issues - perhaps not a particularly comprehensive understanding as that takes longer to develop. Without repeating the speech I made this morning, I was able to define for the people of the Northern

Territory, particularly the people within the Darwin area, exactly where we are with this issue.

To summarise where we are, the government will endeavour to, as hastily as we can, try to address the issue of private practising midwives in Darwin and the broader Northern Territory. This is a problem identified by the member for Nightcliff. The system collapsed in this respect some years ago, and it has not been repaired. I had a commitment from the Chief Minister earlier this morning in our wing meeting that we will try to push this through as soon as possible. It will more than likely involve amendments to legislation. We are even looking at the prospect of having to amend national legislation on this issue, but I will not get too far ahead of myself. I will commit, at this stage, to keeping the stakeholder groups informed of where we are at so there is no unnecessary anxiety around the time it might take to make that happen.

The second item of information I gave this morning was the fact we stand by the medical opinion provided by the Rural Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists that home births, after a mother has previously had a caesarean, should not take place due to the potential risk it poses to the mother and child.

I have spoken to some of the women who participated in the vigil this evening. There seems to be some level of acceptance that we, as a government, have to weigh these matters up. It seems to be a very strong medical position all other jurisdictions in Australia have adopted.

However, the issue that is still hanging, to some extent, is whether women who have had caesareans can access the public home birth service in Darwin. I have listened to the stories of several women this evening. We need to think about this more. The women I spoke to told me the value of having that one-on-one service played in keeping them mentally and physically healthy in preparation for the birth of their children. I have noted that.

I will go back to the department and explore exactly the rationale behind excluding women who have had caesareans from the home birthing service. To be honest, I do not fully understand that decision. I guess, on the surface, it is a matter of if you are not home birthing, then why would you access a home birthing centre? However, as I said, I have listened to the concerns of these women. It is not just about accessing a service that will, ultimately, end in a home birth, it is about accessing a different type of service that offers a fairly blue ribbon service to women in a particular situation. Indeed, it should be offered to all women, which is a quandary for government in

restricted resources in this area. Unfortunately, at the end of the day, you have to weigh it all up in access, equity, and the dollar.

I take on board the comment made by the member for Nightcliff about home birthing being a cost-effective option. To be honest, it is not a cost-effective option in the Northern Territory at the moment. Maybe that is because we do not have a critical mass of people using that service. That is another issue. Perhaps if we open up this service to a broader group of women, then the critical mass will be there and the cost of providing home births will reduce. However, at the moment, it is not a cost-effective option in the Northern Territory.

The number 22 I referred to this morning is not about the number of people accessing the home birth service, it was strictly the number of home births last year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the difficulty of this issue. It has become a difficult issue for me, as the Minister for Health, to navigate. However, I can reassure all interested parties I absolutely commit to resolving all these issues. You never can do this to the satisfaction of all, but we can work our way through to a space in which women feel they have been heard, that there is the maximum number of options available to most women in the Northern Territory when it comes to midwifery services.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will speak briefly on this topic before moving on to another adjournment I must do. I thank the women and their families who have come here today. It was great to catch up with you out on the lawn. I made myself very comfortable, kicking off the heels and the jacket to spend some nice time with you on the lawn. It was fabulous. I do not know why more people do not pull up a blanket in front of Parliament House because it was lovely.

My journey with this issue started with Tracy at the Palmerston Markets. She was collecting signatures for a petition and was going around to all the market stalls and engaging on the topic and ensuring we all understood the issues. I very much thank her for that because that was the first time I had heard of it. I was very grateful for Bronwyn and Catherine who came into my office with their little babies where we had a lengthy conversation about their stories of the home birth centre and differences between accessing the home birth centre and birthing at home, or accessing the centre and birthing in a hospital; and all of the issues around obstetrics. Thank you for being so open and honest with all of us; it was very personal. I am not a mother but I can imagine, as a woman, it is an incredibly personal issue. I feel your plight, and hear what you are

saying about being in control of that journey and able to make and exercise your own rational decisions because you are all intelligent women who understand your bodies and have your own wishes. Everyone is different. I do not think anyone can cast any judgment on how any other woman would like to have her child. No judgment is made.

I asked the question in Question Time today of the minister about what we are we doing in this space. The private midwife amendments that will have to inevitably happen to legislation sound like they are going to be a positive step in the right direction. Generally speaking, you are all very accepting of that. The Chief Minister gave his commitment to escalate that up the rank. Obviously, we have a long list of legislation Parliamentary Counsel is busily working through, so we just have to hop, skip and jump a few of those many more boring amendments and get your amendments rearing.

I again say thank you. I will move on to another topic unless anyone else wants to contribute in adjournment to this debate? Again, thank you for sharing your stories and it will not be the last you hear of us and, I dare say, it will not be the last time we hear from you guys.

On Monday was the 2013 AHA harbottle on-premise Gold Plate Awards and I acknowledge the winners. It shows excellence in the hospitality industry for food and beverage, and customer service. It was great to see the winners of those various and numerous awards came from across the Territory. Today, we have talked about our government removing the Berrimah Line and that is really evident with the winners of these awards.

I congratulate the Katherine Country Club for taking out Best Club Restaurant, the Cavenagh Hotel for taking out Best Casual Dining, Cornucopia Museum Café for Best Informal Dining Café Restaurant, Anna's Restaurant and Blue Stone Motor Inn for the Best Family Restaurant, the Cavenagh Hotel for Best Public Hotel Dining, Hanuman Restaurant Alice Springs for Best Asian Restaurant, Moorish Café for Best Speciality Cuisine Restaurant, Knott's Crossing Resort for Best Hotel Restaurant, Numutj Gallery Restaurant at Glen Helen Resort for Best Wayside Inn Dining, Karen Sheldon Catering Pty Ltd for Best Function Event Caterer, Moorish Café again for Best Select Wine List, Char Admiralty for Best Extensive Wine List, Evoo for Best Fine Dining Restaurant, Pavonia Place for Best New Establishment, Pee Wee's at the Point for Best Standalone Restaurant, Antiquity Greek Restaurant for Minister for Business Encouragement Award, and Pee Wee's at the Point for Restaurant of the Year.

Congratulations again to all of you, you are all very deserving of receiving those Gold Plate

Awards and the encouragement plaque. I look forward to getting to as many of your establishments as possible, to see what all that fuss is about. Congratulations.

I also comment that the magpie geese hunting season is open for business once again. I thank the Minister for Parks and Wildlife for continuing our commitment to a great Territory lifestyle. I spoke in my maiden speech in August last year about one of the key things I want to do in my time in parliament, which is to protect our unique Territory lifestyle. I have grown up in a geese hunting family. In my maiden speech I said that the first time I went out with my dad I was 4 years old and I had my pink jeans on. My mom was bawling her eyes out, and my little sister was bawling her eyes out because she wanted to come. I was pretty chuffed that I got to go along and walk through the swamp with my dad and drag around a few geese. I guess you have to be a Territorian to love that kind of stuff.

It is important to note that more than 2000 Territorians enjoy geese hunting every year. Geese hunting is a very popular pastime in the Top End which allows Territorians to enjoy our great outdoors. It is a unique aspect of our lifestyle.

Almost 560 people have already been issued with waterfowl hunting permits in preparation for the 2013 season. My family has quite a few of those 560 permits all ready to go. There is always a fierce competition to see who can get the smallest permit number, but this year No 1 was turned in to a competition, much to the disappointment of many members of my family.

The Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory will also be doing random checks to ensure that hunters have permits and are doing the right thing by others and the environment, which is really important. There is nothing worse than going out to the swamp and seeing litter of cans and empty shells. It is disgraceful, so it is great that Parks and Wildlife will get out there. It is those few bad people who spoil it for everyone. If we want to protect our Territory lifestyle then everyone needs to respect the environment and the rules, and embrace the opportunity, not cause problems for everyone else in the future.

The daily bag limit this year is 10 magpie geese and 10 ducks per hunter per day, which is exactly the same as last year. Magpie geese are classified as protected wildlife in the Northern Territory and strict conditions will apply again this season, including the prohibition of the use of lead shot on all Northern Territory land, including Parks and Wildlife Commission hunting reserves.

Waterfowl hunting permits are available prior to the opening of and for the duration of the season, and all hunters are required to obtain a permit whether hunting on the hunting reserves, Crown land, or private property. Lodgement of a permit return at the end of the hunting season is not mandatory; however, permit returns have an essential role in determining the overall management of the waterfowl hunting season. Failure to lodge a permit return may reduce our capacity as a government to appropriately manage waterfowl hunting season and place the long-term continuance of the season in jeopardy, which could see changes to bag limits if we do not have detailed levels of the harvest.

My father, particularly, is very keen on making sure all of that information is recorded and submitted. He is very strict on that and that is a good standard. We can only hope all waterfowl hunters again respect what Parks and Wildlife is putting out and comply so we can continue to enjoy this Territory pastime for many years to come.

Hunters can access identified Parks and Wildlife Commission hunting reserves, which are Lambells Lagoon Conservation Reserve and Howard Springs Hunting Reserve until 23 December 2013. Shoal Bay Coastal Reserve and Harrison Dam Conservation Reserve will be open for hunting until 5 January 2014, providing you comply with all of the other hunting requirements.

There is also designated Crown land provided. Hunters have a permit to hunt waterfowl and a permit issued by the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. Hunters can access private property, which includes Aboriginal land, provided you have a permit to hunt waterfowl, have the permission of the landholder, and you meet the setback conditions under the *Firearms Act*.

I remind all hunters to enjoy what you do, to hunt responsibly, to make sure you obtain your permit before participating and observe bag limits and the environment, and that you leave our hunting reserves as you found them. Please also consider submitting your permit returns at the end of the season. It is valuable information. The department needs it to be able to continue with this Territory pastime. If you respect the system, the system will respect you, and we will be able to enjoy hunting for many years to come. My little cousins who are about the age I was when I first went hunting enjoy it as much as I did. I like to think that one day my children can enjoy it as much as I did also.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on another note, I congratulate minister Styles. He came out to Palmerston MVR a couple of weeks ago and

launched the MVR app. It was awesome and the MVR was full of people who were happy to get involved with our MVR. The level of engagement we received was surprising. Behind my office is McDonalds, so we popped over there and had a chat with many locals who were keen to check out the app. We tested it on a few cars in the car park and, sure enough, information about when registration expires came up. It was all working beautifully. We even had people in the Palmerston MVR offer to do testimonials in front of the news camera, which was extraordinary considering people do not usually proffer themselves up for politicians and TV ads. The app is free; it is a fantastic app. I commend the minister for this initiative and thank him for coming out to Palmerston MVR.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory Surf Life Saving Championships were held in Gove over the last weekend in September coinciding with the end of the school holiday week. I congratulate everyone involved in making this such a successful event, and acknowledge the Darwin and Mindil Beach Surf Life Saving Clubs for travelling to Gove to participate in the championships.

There were some 60 competitors from Darwin, but added to that, family members who travelled with the competitors. Suffice to say we had quite an influx of Darwinites into our town who know the place is anything but null and void.

The Gove Peninsula Surf Life Saving Club sits on the most picturesque piece of real estate with million-dollar views looking out to the Arafura Sea. It also doubles as a camping ground for many visitors to our community.

I place on the record the results of the competition for members of the Gove Peninsula Surf Life Saving Club, but also take the opportunity to congratulate Darwin for taking out the titles overall. For Gove, I will start with those who were awarded overall age champions. The Under 8 Female was Shelbie Francis; Under 9 Female, Tia Hutton; Under 10 Female, Billie Francis; Under 11 Male, Laith Cavanagh who tied with Martin Kranz from Darwin; Under 12 Male was Macallaster Barnett; Under 12 Female, Olivia Russell; Under 13 Female, Jordin Ritchie-Clark; Under 15 Male, Jack Pitkin; Under 15 Male, Savanne Canobie; and the Masters Male, Alan Cross.

Savanne Canobie, apart from being Under 15 Age Champion, also took out Under 15 Female Champion Life Saver first place, Under 15 Female Iron Woman first place, Under 15 Female Beach Flags first place, and Under 15 Female Surf Race first place. She also took out pool events, including the Under 15 Female Manikin Tow, first place in a time of one minute and 38 seconds, as

well as the Under 15 Female Obstacle first place in a time of three minutes and 42 seconds.

Jack Pitkin, apart from being Age Champion, took out the Under 14 Male Iron Man first place, as well as Under 15 Male Surf Race first place. Well done, Jack! I know Jack's family and his mum and dad, Mal and Jess, are very involved in our local surf lifesaving club, as is the mum of Bella Marrabel. Bella Marrabel won the Under 17 Female Beach Flags first place. Her mum, Denise Marrabel, has been involved for many years and is a fantastic competitor and mentor.

Madeline Barnett took out the Under 19 Female Champion Life Saver first place. Sister of Macallaster and daughter of our hard-working president, Grant Barnett, better known as Barney, she is always supported by mum, Marcia, who is also a hard worker at our surf lifesaving club.

Alan Cross, who has a very long association with the club at Gove, took out the following: Open Male Champion Life Saver first place; the Masters Male Iron Man first place; Masters Male Board Race first place; and Masters Single Ski first place. In the pool events, Alan took out Open Male Manikin Tow first place. He also took out Masters Male Manikin Tow first place; Open Male 200 m Obstacles first place; and Alan, along with Emma Putland, our current club captain, also took out first place in the First Aid Competition, beating Mindil Beach team in second place by only six points.

Matt Houston won Open Male Beach Flags first place, and he also won Open Male Beach Sprint first place.

Greer Ashby won Masters Female Beach Flags first place. I note in the line of competition, Greer sustained a nasty break to her lower arm and I trust she is on the mend.

Trudy Guiney took out awards in the pool events including the Masters 100 m Manikin Tow, where she was first place in a time of one minute and 22 seconds. In exactly the same time, she took out first place in the Masters 100 m Obstacles in the pool events.

Gove also took out the Open Male and Open Female Surf Boat Race. What a fantastic effort for our Gove Peninsula Surf Life Saving Club to hold a successful event, the NT titles. It is not the first time they have done it, especially considering it has been a difficult time for the club. It is just over 19 months since the club had a devastating fire which destroyed a massive storage shed, the caretaker's quarters, and just about all of the club's equipment. The new premises, including the new caretaker's residence for Pete Ridgotts

and his beloved and loyal dog, Blue Dog, was officially opened in July this year.

We all know that surf lifesaving is an Australia-wide movement, entirely run by volunteers and people who dedicate their time, patrol our beaches, keep people safe, but also train young people and older people in surf lifesaving, first aid, and all of these things that keep people safe and save lives. I take my hat off to them.

I also update the House on the conclusion of the Gove AFL competition, with the grand final which was played on Saturday, 21 September in Yirrkala. It was a close match that saw Nguykal win the Lynne Walker Premiership Cup for the first time in 10 years, and by only 16 points over Gopu, which has been premiers for the last three years. I am very proud to be a sponsor of the Gove Aussie Rules Football League, and acknowledge the strong support from Miwatj Health and AFLNT, as well as many community supporters, families, and local organisations who put their support behind the competition.

Congratulations to Robbie Clements from Nguykal who was awarded Best and Fairest on the day. Robbie played a huge role in pulling the comp together, along with Hamish Simpson, both of whom run the successful Clontarf Academy at Yirrkala School.

The Gove Aussie Rules Football League grand final was preceded on that date by the women's AFL grand final with the Latram Lions claiming victory over the East Woody Eagles. Best on Ground was awarded to Shanti Garrawurra. Special thanks to Vern Patullo and Richie Sedden who, apart from coaching the Djarrak team, also gave up their time to coach the women's competition. It has come a long way in the two years it has been going.

The 2013 GAFL season has been a successful one, and I congratulate all teams. In addition to Nguykal and Gopu, we have Djarrak, Baywara, Walkabout Cats, and newcomers to the comp this year, Gapuwiyak. I make special mention of Mick Montague, who is the AFLNT development officer at Gapuwiyak and has worked very hard to coach the team and undertake, quite regularly, the near five-hour return trip to ovals on the Gove Peninsula, including Yirrkala, Nhulunbuy and Gunyangarra. They have managed to have a handful of home games at Gapuwiyak, which is great for the locals. Most certainly, the Gapuwiyak team has gone from strength to strength this season and, without a doubt, exposure to the competition has seen them grow as sportsmen and young men. I take my hat off to the team at Gapuwiyak for the effort they have put in for this season.

I also place on the record the fact that the Gove Peninsula Tennis Club celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in style with a ball held on the tennis courts on 21 September, the night of the GAFL grand final. The guest speaker was medal winning Paralympian Don Elgin, who spoke with humour and wisdom about his rise to prominence as an athlete, and in complete denial he was an athlete with a disability. An inspirational speaker, Don visited schools the day before where he was warmly welcomed and listened to by students of all ages.

Club Manager, Nicky Mayer, and her team of hard-working committee members including our President, Paul Mery, deserve huge congratulations. I acknowledge the tireless effort that Nicky puts into the club to make it the biggest small club in Australia, and the fact that for the last two years in a row, the club has won national awards with Tennis Australia as Club of the Year and Community Club of the Year. Not bad for a little town in northeast Arnhem Land.

I also update the House about a group of students from Ramingining, Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak and Nhulunbuy who represented Arnhem Cluster at the NT State Athletics and Cross Country Championships held in Darwin between 5 and 8 September. The team of 27 students did extremely well, with a total medal tally of 20 for the event. Congratulations to everyone involved, especially to the medal winners, which included: Jaedon Djerrkura, who won cross country first place and 800 m second place; Jamie Douglas, second place in the long jump and second place in the 70 m dash; Harry Parfitt, 1500 m third place; Pauline Lamboa, 800 m second place; India Russell, 800 m second place; Finn Russell, relay first place; Shandyn Moody, relay first place; Alex Parfitt, cross country first place, 3000 m second place, 1500 m second place, 800 m third place, and Under 20 relay first place - well done Alex; Nakeisha Moody, high jump second place, long jump third place, 200 m third place, and relay second place; and Shikeira Baxter, cross country third place and relay second place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these students and others from remote areas always have the prospect of meeting the expense of costly travel but parents dig deep into their pockets and fundraise to ensure their kids do not miss out. The opportunity for these athletes to represent their school and their region at Northern Territory level, is one that I welcome. By all accounts, this group of athletes were wonderful ambassadors for their schools and regions, and their families can be rightly proud of their achievements.

**Mr STYLES (Sanderson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, *buenos noches* which, for those who do not speak Spanish, means good evening. You might guess I

was at the Latino Gala Ball on Saturday night having a fantastic time. Nights like these are fantastic and it is a testament to the committee's hard work as to how a great evening is put together. They had a great turn-out. They achieved a magnificent evening. I congratulate the President of the Latino NT Association, Ms Giovanna Webb and the rest of the committee. Congratulations on the night's success.

The ball was about celebrating the Latino NT Association and the Latino community as a whole. It gave Darwin a chance to observe the great work carried out by this group. The Latino NT Association was established in 2004 by a group of volunteers - funny about ethnic groups and volunteers. Without volunteers, we would not be able to have so much of the rich cultural environment we have in Darwin. They represent people living and working in Darwin from the 21 Spanish speaking countries in Central America, South America and the Caribbean, depending on where you come from.

The aims of the Latino NT Association are very admirable. They are: to enhance family and friendships and traditional Latin American values; to promote community interaction, network, and growth; to assist and support those with the settling-in process for the recent Latin American arrivals from any one of the 21 countries to the Northern Territory, making the process easier and welcoming; and to foster, develop, and promote the Latin American culture in Australia and in the Northern Territory. It is all about getting to know your neighbour. Those of us who live in the Northern Territory and engage with others know if you know your neighbour then you do not fear your neighbour. It is for those who are ignorant as to the fantastic joy you can get out of knowing your neighbours and enjoying the rich culture so many people in the Northern Territory are able to give to us, not only spiritually and emotionally but also with their culture, food and values.

The 2013 Latino Gala Ball highlighted the spectacular band, Chukale Afro-Cuban Salsa Ensemble, showcasing the cream of Latin American talent, performing dances including the tango, the salsa, the zumba, and a couple I cannot pronounce. We were very fortunate to have the Australian champion dance duo in the tango and the salsa dance categories. They were on the dance floor doing tango and salsa, and many other dances I have no idea how to pronounce, or I could ever possibly do. It is fantastic to watch the precision with which this South American dancing is performed. They are very serious tango dancers. It was an amazing experience to watch how so many people can get it so right in unison. It was great entertainment for all. There were many very professional dance

people. The band was absolutely fantastic, and the music and some of the vocals were excellent.

Darwin leads by example in multiculturalism, and show how well our multicultural groups work together in our community. When one looked around the room, it was a bit like the United Nations. There were people from just about every continent and most countries in the world present, which demonstrates just what Darwin is about. It does not matter who is having the function, everybody goes. You do not have to be from the Latino community or from South America or the Caribbean to go to these functions and have an absolute ball. It was encouraging to see so many different nationalities and ethnic groups represented at the ball.

We are, in fact, the envy of the rest of the nation in how well we live together in harmony, whilst maintaining our strong cultures. One only has to go out on any Saturday or Friday night in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, or Tennant Creek to enjoy some of the richness that multiculturalism brings to our community. Our city in Darwin thrives on all our different communities which live and work together and share these cultures within our whole community.

Events such as the Latino Gala Ball make me proud and honoured to be the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, but also a Territorian. One of the great joys of being the minister, the shadow minister and, before entering into this parliament, a member of the community is to attend so many of these functions. It is fantastic and one of the reasons why I choose to live here. It is one of the reasons I came here, and the main reason that keeps me here; that is, the people of the Northern Territory.

Our government is delighted to support events such as these as they are so important to our community. Events like the Latino Gala Ball are so important, as they contribute so much to the fabric of our community.

The Latino community had a silent auction on the night. One of the foundations they support is the Fred Hollows Foundation. Those who have been around Australia for some time will know that Fred Hollows was an Australian philanthropist and ophthalmologist. He became known for restoring sight to thousands of people in developing countries and also his passionate fight to improve the health of Indigenous Australians living in remote communities. His work is legendary. If you watch television occasionally, you will see the advertisements asking people to promote and support the Fred Hollows Foundation. I am informed the Latino Ball raised about \$2000 for the Fred Hollows Foundation, which will go

towards helping people to work in communities, saving sight, and also working overseas.

The last issue I raise is the President of the Latino NT community, Ms Giovanna Webb. Many people around Darwin are beginning to understand and know what this lady is about. She works tirelessly for her community, in more ways than we know. She was recently nominated and received the award of being the Northern Territory Rural Woman of the Year. I congratulated her publicly on Saturday night, and I put on public record what a fine job Giovanna Webb does, ably assisted by her husband, Grahame Webb. They run Crocodylus Park opposite the Berrimah police centre. She is going to the southern states to compete with other nominated winners in Australia, and all I can ask is that we all send her our morale support and wish her the very best. We hope she brings back the coveted prize of national Rural Woman of the Year. We wish her well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on that note, I say *gracias* and *buenes noches* which is thank you and goodnight.

**Mr KURRUPUWU (Arafura):** Mr Deputy Speaker I speak on the TITEB graduation. It was a great pleasure for me to be invited to speak to the graduating students, parents, and relatives at the recent graduating ceremony of students who have completed their studies with the Tiwi Training Education Board. It is a major lifetime achievement for students who graduated. Striving to achieve a sound and relevant education is a key to a happy life.

We Tiwi have to understand two lives: our own Tiwi education and culture and that of our wider society in Australia and, increasingly, the rest of the world. The secret of how to be successful in a wider society lies in the secret that education can teach us. Education is the means by which people can achieve an understanding, regardless of their race or background. Like all things that are available, education requires hard work and discipline.

One of the first secrets about education is it is a great equaliser. A good education makes us all equal. What becomes important is the skill and knowledge we have learnt, not our background or the colour of our skin. It is a reason why individual organisations and countries become powerful and prosperous; it gives them more knowledge and understanding.

Having an educational qualification is the first step a student takes on the role to be able to choose the job they like and they are happy working in. In this job they can earn income, have a family, support a family, and buy all necessary goods and

services to make themselves and their family happy and successful. Without education this lifestyle cannot start. People are left to take handouts from government, they cannot earn more than they are given, and they can never step up to higher income or better jobs. This is the reason why many become angry and depressed. In the wider society, education and learning does not stop; it is an important part of life and is called continual learning.

As we prepare to learn more, more secrets are uncovered and we become special and important people. In wider society we are paid more for these important skills and knowledge because they are scarce and not many people possess them. That is important because it means those of us who are prepared to learn are going to understand better than others the complex questions and answers that surround us.

Besides the graduating students and their families and friends, I also congratulate the terrific work and contribution of the dedicated staff of Tiwi Islands Training and Education Board led by founder, Norm Buchan. Under the guidance of Norm and his dedicated staff, we had 81 more students graduating at the ceremony in baking, kitchen operation, conservation and land management, community service, business education, health, and work preparation. The qualifications range from Certificates I, II, III and IV to diploma level. This is a truly great achievement, both for the students and TITEB.

TITEB was established by Norm and the Tiwi Land Council to coordinate all training and employment activities on the Tiwi Islands. The board is owned and managed by the Tiwi board and directors. The main goal of TITEB is to put Tiwi people into jobs. The vision of TITEB is to facilitate a prosperous future for all Tiwis to lifelong learning and skill development. Learning, it seems, is vital to understand and contribute to society, as well as perceiving personal economic outcome.

TITEB seeks to train people for a wider range of employment opportunities available on the Tiwi Islands. It considers it to be just as important to train someone to be a motor mechanic as to train someone to help their children with their homework. Such an approach leads to a wider range of skills and knowledge and an appreciation that everyone has an important role to play in building a balanced, prosperous, and happy community.

TITEB is a registered training organisation and group training organisation registered internationally and quality endorsed. It has recently become responsible for very important remote jobs and community programs. Since

commencing operation in 1999, TITEB has been responsible for assisting 215 apprentices complete their apprenticeship in carpentry, plant operation, children's service, education support, business study, essential services, forestry, environmental land management, health workers, environment health, and sport and recreation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, all students who graduated from TITEB have a tremendous amount to be proud of. I offer them sincere congratulations. These students are leaders of the future and we will depend on them to guide us to happy and prosperous lives with the knowledge and skills they have acquired.

**Ms MANISON (Wanguri):** Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I congratulate all the people who were involved in the recent Leanyer school 30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. It was an terrific afternoon the school organised, and a huge celebration where we saw people across the community attend. It reflected the school motto which is 'Together As One'. All the students, parents, and their families came together. People from the local community joined with the school to celebrate 30 years of providing quality education to students at Leanyer school.

There were some great performances, plenty of games for all the kids, food stalls, jumping castles, a dunking machine on a particularly hot build-up day where the kids were lined up and absolutely loved it, a photo booth, a second-hand store, a bit of a trash and treasure-type stall, and free craft activities. It was loaded full of activities the kids loved.

On a sad note, but also a very proud one, the school started the official running sheet of the day with the unveiling of a sign to name the oval the Sally Bruyn Oval. It was attended by the Bruyn family, ex-work colleagues of Sally, who was the Assistant Principal of the school until she, unfortunately, passed away earlier this year. The students of the school were involved as well, and it was a very moving ceremony to unveil this sign. It is very proudly placed on Leanyer Drive on the school premises where everybody can see it. It is a wonderful tribute to all the work she put into the school. You can see the school is very proud of renaming the oval after Sally.

There was also a very big moment for the school on the day where they sang a new school song, which was written by the music teacher, Anna Potts. She also led the choir in singing this new song. The school song goes with the school motto, 'Together As One'. It was a terrific performance by the students who were part of the choir.

That was followed with a cake cutting. Anna had taught the students at the school a party trick for when they are a bit older later in life, of how to sing *Happy Birthday* in five different languages. There was Korean, Indonesian, German, English, and I cannot remember the last one. But, it was very impressive and all the kids sang along. It was wonderful.

The conclusion or the very exciting event for the kids was a balloon drop, where parents and staff had got together and worked very busily the night before to blow up many balloons, and rig them up to the school assembly area roof. The kids were extremely excited. Watching the balloons fall down after the singing of *Happy Birthday* and a few speeches, I was lost for words. The kids went nuts; they had a great time and really enjoyed themselves.

Big congratulations to two people who drove the organisation of the celebrations. They put in a lot of time and work into doing that. Yvonne Swingler and Kim Roper did an absolutely terrific job and were the driving force behind this event that was so well enjoyed by everybody in the community. Congratulations, ladies.

Well done to Anne Tonkin, the Principal, Tanya Kolomitsev, the Assistant Principal, and Acting Assistant Principal at the time, David Cocks. Maria Albion, the other Assistant Principal, unfortunately, could not be there, but I know she would have put a lot of work into it. Anna Potts, of course, the music teacher, did such a terrific job with writing the new school song and working with the choir and their performance. I thank Neale Cooper, the School Council Chair, Petula and the ladies from the office for all their hard work on the raffles tickets, the craft store, and many different activities for the kids, the teachers who worked on many of the stalls as well, the SRC members also contributed, and the school council members - you could see the parents were on hand and helping out where they could. It was also great to see Henry Gray, the ex-principal who had been there for a long time. Many Leanyer ex-students who are now in middle school or at senior school went up to say hello to Henry. He is still very popular and well-loved within the school community.

A big thank you to the businesses and volunteers who helped out, particularly Top End Signs which donated the banner advertising the family fun day and the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations, and designed the Sally Bruyn Oval sign; Neighbourhood Watch for being there; St John Ambulance; NT Emergency Services - the fire service was there and the kids were having a great time; the Australian Army; a Pakistani dance group; the Jamealah Belly Dancers; the Darwin Irish Dancers; the Greek traditional dancing group; and the NT School of Music.

I also thank business for donations: Top End Sounds, Bunnings, Hamna Jameel, Darwin Party Hire, Darwin Party Shop and Top End Shaved Ice. I also thank the businesses which donated to the wonderful raffle: Pearl Galleria, Darwin Fishing Tours, Stomp Shoes, Crocodylus Park and many more. Well done to all involved.

Congratulations to Leanyer School on 30 great years so far, and looking forward to another 30 years and many more after that, providing outstanding education and achievement within our community for all our local kids.

I also congratulate Investor and Defence Housing Australia on the completion of the new park in Muirhead. It has some beautiful play equipment, a lovely climbing frame just like the one in the Botanic Gardens in Darwin when I was a kid, and barbecues for the families. That will be a terrific community asset for everyone.

I also pass on a few congratulations and thank yous for an event I was involved in helping organise for my netball club on the weekend. We held a monster quiz night run by Waratah Netball Club at the Parap Markets area for one of the members of our club, a lady by the name of Louise Jowett who is, unfortunately, battling cancer and has a huge battle on her hands. The Waratah Netball Club backs their players and it is not just about netball at the club, it is about friendship and fitness. When you see a member of your club who is going through a tough time you are there to support them. That is exactly what we did. We got together when she got the bad news about six weeks ago and asked how we could help her. We decided to put on the biggest quiz night we possibly could.

Thank you so much to Kate Warden and Jasmine Pascoe, the driving force behind putting this together. They did an incredible job and managed to have so many prizes donated. There were 250 people who attended on the night paying \$25 a head. Everybody said they had a terrific time, so that was great to see.

Also, a big thank you to all the businesses which kindly donated prizes. Everybody we approached said yes, so there were so many prizes on the night it was wonderful. Thank you to the performers who volunteered their time: *X Factor* finalist, Gemma Thorpe; local netballer Katie Streeter; a young gentleman by the name of Josh Goodrem who has a fabulous voice and performed on the night; the City of Darwin which helped out; and Micky the sound tech. I also have to thank the calisthenics community which contributed, as well as staff from Defence Housing Australia who put in as well because they have done a lot of work with Louise in the past.

I thank also all the volunteers from the club who rolled up their sleeves and helped: Sam, Michael Lloyd, Liz and Noni, Courtney, Rachel, and many girls who helped out. The Arora family always contribute a lot to the club, but we saw a very special Polynesian dance by young Sam who is probably one of the shyest girls I have ever met. The performance was completely outstanding and blew everyone away.

Mr Deputy Speaker, most importantly, aside from raising a great deal of cash for Louise and her family to support them through this tough time, it was wonderful to see Louise there all night with a smile on her face. She told us to know that so many people care about her and want to help her through this battle makes a big difference to her and she really appreciated all the help. So, thank you to everybody involved.

**Mrs PRICE (Stuart):** Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I will talk about a number of things that are happening in my electorate of Stuart.

First, I talk about a personal matter and the recent loss of my husband, Dave's, brother. I met my brother-in-law when I was 19 years old. That was in 1979 when I first went to Newcastle with him. It was an honour to meet his family because, obviously to me, they had not met a real Aboriginal. It was quite a funny experience meeting them and them meeting me.

Dave's brother, Bill, came up to the Northern Territory with us when we first moved up to take up residence at Melville Island at Milikapiti. He drove up with us and I got to know him a bit on the trip. It was my first time getting to know the family and some of their family members. As the years went on, during the 34 years we have been together, I got to know the rest of his family, including Bill who was most passionate about wildlife. I got to know him because he was so interested in wildlife. He talked about animals that were my totem, and his passion was about looking after the animals, the lizards, and everything else that came to his house, or the ones he had in his cage.

It was a sad day for all of my husband's family. They buried him today. I wanted to raise that in my adjournment as my thoughts and prayers are with Dave and his family as they celebrate the life of his brother today. *Wiyarrpa ngaju-parntaku purdangka*.

I want to speak about fantastic people as well. I congratulate the Emerald Springs Roadhouse owners, Dallas and Belinda, who won the Outstanding Community Service and Achievement Award at the recent Australian Hotel Association's National Awards for Excellence in Canberra. As well, the roadhouse was named one of the five

venues to receive a top honour at the awards. The Emerald Springs Roadhouse is at the very northern end of my electorate of Stuart. This award is a fantastic achievement and acknowledges the hard work of Dallas and Belinda in putting Emerald Springs back on the map.

They did not have it easy, with the old roadhouse closed for four years. Dallas and Belinda saw its potential and, with the help of locals, completely transformed the old roadhouse into the amazing complex it is today. The roadhouse now has six acres of landscaped tropical gardens with 40 rooms, a caravan park, a licensed restaurant and bar, conference and function facilities, and an enormous hardwood deck on which I sit when I often call in and have my coffee or breakfast of bacon and egg sandwich.

I am informed that is only the beginning. They have plans in motion to construct 10 eco-friendly cabins around Lake Emerald. The property has a lily-covered spring-fed lake as well. They are also planning a new Buley Rockhole-inspired swimming pool that will go in this year.

I encourage all Territorians either driving down or up the Stuart Highway, who are looking for some time away, to take a break at Emerald Springs Roadhouse. In fact, I invite all my colleagues to join me there for a quiet cool drink on the fantastic hardwood deck overlooking Lake Emerald.

While I am on congratulations, I congratulate Lisa Mumbin, a great friend of mine and an outstanding Indigenous woman and leader who was recently elected as Chair of the Jawoyn Association. Lisa was born and raised in Katherine in traditional Jawoyn country. Lisa has been involved over many years in the association and the board of the Godinymayin Yijard Rivers Arts and Cultural Centre. Lisa has been a leader in our culture and in women's support and youth, as well as the Godinymayin board.

She is also involved in many organisations such as Kalano Community Association, Wurlu Wurlinjang Health Service, the Northern Land Council, the Northern Land Council Women's Group and the ABA Board. Lisa's involvement in these organisations and committees helps her provide strong representation and support to her people, especially the women in these communities who look up to her and are inspired to take on leadership. Lisa's leadership and involvement in these organisations shows future generations the importance of leadership in their communities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt the Jawoyn Association faces some challenges at the moment but, with the people backing Lisa, and the Jawoyn,

like Lisa, standing up and taking responsibility, it is clear their association will have a long and prosperous future.

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I place on the record my thanks to the Honda team which was recently here as part of the Superbikes competition on Friday, 13 September, an auspicious date I am sure you would agree. I had the opportunity to do a hot lap on the back of one of the bikes and I would like to thank Team Honda for taking me along as a pillion passenger.

Having been a motor cyclist myself for many years, I have never travelled at about 275 km/h - and I absolutely loved it! As we were just starting in the main straight, I had tucked myself in behind the rider, Joshua Hook, who, by his professionalism and comfort on the bike, I immediately got a sense of his competence. I expect if you are a superbike rider, you are competent anyhow. I did not, at any stage, feel in any danger and thought it was a splendid experience. I confess as I was cruising down the straight and looking over the top of Josh's helmet, I was mildly disappointed we were not going any faster. I thank the good Lord that at 48 years of age I have not lost the inner child.

There is, obviously, a great level of camaraderie amongst the people who race motor cycles. It was a wonderful experience. Joshua, of course, is 20 years old. I was 28 on the day he was born, which only goes to demonstrate once you are a boy you are always a boy. Guess what, Joshua? In 28 years time, you will still want to go tearing around as fast as you possibly can. Good luck to you, mate!

I also thank Paul Free, the Honda Team principal, who was kind enough to make his motor cycle team available to me and other Territorians for the hot lap experience. Paul travels the circuit with his wife, Laura Free, who is the Media and PR Manager. Clearly, they are an effective husband and wife team and love their motor cycles with a passion.

I also thank Mark Bracks, the photographer who took the professional shots that captured the speed of the motor bike. I also thank my staff for having one of those photographs blown up and placed on my office wall for my birthday; it is an amazing and beautiful thing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I place on the record I am very grateful to Team Honda for their efforts, their kindness, their hospitality, and for taking the time out to give me the opportunity. One does not always get these opportunities in life. I am a strong believer that once one of those opportunities is given to you, you should take

them. Good on Team Honda. I also thank Major Events for their support in this area. I hope to have another crack at it in 12 months time or so.

**Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay):** Mr Deputy Speaker, the Northern Territory Open Education Centre serves around 650 students, predominantly from remote and many Indigenous areas. Other NT Open Education Centre students come from Darwin or Palmerston, high achievers studying subjects not offered at their school. The Northern Territory Open Education has purpose-built electronic classrooms and studios, and sophisticated equipment that will cost a great deal to replicate elsewhere.

We support the construction of a purpose-built facility for the Northern Territory Open Education Centre at Darwin High School. We believe in one move: the Northern Territory Education Centre moving to that purpose-built facility at Darwin High School. Once that is done, then we can make arrangements for Essington to lease that old Northern Territory Open Education Centre facility that is no longer being used. That will be a win/win/win for all parties.

What is actually happening? The Friends of the Northern Territory School of Music wrote to me:

*Here is how I see it. The Northern Territory Open Education staff and all the infrastructure move to the premises at Nightcliff Middle School currently occupied by the NT Music School. The NT Music School move to Sanderson Middle School to premises currently occupied by Students Services, and no one seems to know where this important unit will end up. Northern Territory Open Education Centre will eventually move into a purpose-built office building on the Darwin High Middle School campus, the only move which I am aware of as a member of the Darwin High School Council.*

*What is wrong with this picture?*

- 1. Nobody outside the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of the Mitchell Centre or Chandler's own office knew about it in advance of the announcement. Parents, teachers and students have been kept in the dark. Once again, parents do not get the status of stakeholders when these decisions get made. There has been no consultation, not even a briefing. I believe the staff fared as poorly. They were told yesterday, just before Chandler made the announcement.*

This letter was written on the day of the announcement.

- 2. Aside from the sheer inconvenience of the move for everyone, there are issues about the NT Music School's move which remain unresolved. Among them, the suitability of the accommodation for individual tuition and ensemble work, not to mention video and sound recording and editing. There is no internal access road at Sanderson to allow for frequent packing and moving of instruments for outside gigs. Public transport access to and from the school at times when ensembles are practising is uncertain.*

- 3. We have no idea of the cost of this exercise. This has been conveniently left out of the announcement. The cost factor is significant because taxpayers are expected to underwrite a series of relocations to suit the needs of a private education funder.*

*I am a member of the friends of the NT Music School and I believe that NT Music School, a Territory asset, deserves better than to be treated as an afterthought in the government's grand partnership plan.*

That was an excerpt from a letter from Michael Duffy, who was speaking on behalf of the Friends of the NT Music School. He is happy to meet both the minister and the CEO.

The Northern Territory Open Education Centre School Council is probably even more concerned. Their school council chair wrote to me.

*Dear Mr Gunner,*

*I am writing to you as Chair of the Northern Territory Open Education School Council. As you know, it was recently announced by government that NTOEC would be getting a new purpose-built facility located at Darwin High School. It was also announced that whilst the facilities are being built NTOEC would be temporarily moved to Nightcliff Middle School. As council, we are very concerned about a number of issues this interim move will cause.*

*Please see attached a letter that council sent to the Education Minister on 30 September 2013. To date, we have had no response.*

*It outlines in detail our concerns of this very important issue. As council, we are seeking your support to raise our concerns with the government, as shadow minister for Education. Our school should not be moved to accommodate a non-government*

*school whilst we wait for our new facility to be built. To date, government has given no indication of when this will be completed. We are concerned the interim move could become permanent, and the NTOEC will lose both its independence and its identity, not to mention the stress this is causing the NTOEC teachers who are expected to pack up and vacate Chrisp Street facility by the end of Term 4 this year, 12 December, so that the building can be handed over to Essington School. To say this timeline is ridiculous is an understatement.*

*Any assistance you can give us in this matter would be very much appreciated.*

*Kind regards  
Vicky Proud.*

I also quote from her letter to the minister:

*Dear Minister,*

*Today I am writing again on behalf of the NTOEC School Council to express our concerns about not being involved in the decision-making process for our school's future. I would like to remind you of your recent statement during the 2013 Estimates hearing where you stated:*

*I will certainly be ensuring that we negotiate correctly. I believe the first thing to do is to consult with the Open Education School Council in order to demonstrate what we have as a vision for open education in the NT. I would like to believe that whatever happens to that facility in the future, whether it becomes part of a school or we build a new facility, we will follow a good process that achieves the best outcome for all.*

*Estimates hearing 12 June 2013.*

*To date, we have not been consulted by the government on its vision for the future of our school. In fact, we have not even had a reply from your office re our letter dated 10 September 2013.*

*It has been indicated that NTOEC will be moved and relocated to the Nightcliff Middle School at the end of 2013 to commence teaching at the beginning of 2014. The school council and many concerned parents firmly believe that this is an unreasonable request by the government. There is not sufficient time to finalise the school's end-of-year processes, relocate and set up at the new premises*

*before our teachers go on six weeks recreation leave on 12 December 2013.*

*Many students do not complete final lessons until, and possibly including, the last week. Normal reporting processes have to occur. The Year 11 and Year 10 reports are not posted until the day after teachers leave for Christmas holidays. On top of this, enrolments for 2013 and the holiday school program also need to take place.*

*We firmly believe that it is unrealistic and unfair to expect both teachers and administration staff to undertake the necessary clean-up and pack-up that will be required on top of their normal end-of-year processes by the end of the 2013 school year.*

*The school council feels that our school has been bulldozed and forced into an unfair situation. The council had no opportunity to have a say about the interim move, or fight for our school. We believe Essington knew about the possibility of our move before we did. The council and parents of NTOEC feel that distance education has been treated as second best.*

*School council is also annoyed that the department considered this building unsuitable. It has been good enough up until now and, therefore, should remain our school premises until the purpose-built facility is completed. It seems clear to council that, at this point, only one organisation has got what they want or has been promised: Essington School. Since mid-last year, NTOEC's school council has unsuccessfully requested three meetings with the Education Minister on this matter. On behalf of the NTOEC's school council, I am again requesting a face-to-face meeting with you to discuss the matters I have raised and enable you to provide a clear picture to us, as a school council, of what your vision is for the future of the NT Open Education Centre.*

The minister should agree with the sentiments of the school council's chair, and should be meeting with the school council and with the Friends of the School of Music. In March 2011, the minister himself said:

*Turning up and telling people what you're going to do is not consultation, it's arrogance.*

That is the minister's own words in regard to consultation process from his media release 'Anti-consultation' from 18 March 2011.

No funding has been allocated for a new building for NT Open Education at Darwin High School. That is one of the things that significantly concerns all the parties involved. They have been made to temporarily move to new facilities without any idea of how long they will be there, what is happening with the purpose-built facility at Darwin High School, and what will happen once NTOEC moves into the purpose-built facility at Darwin High School, if it happens. Does the NT School of Music then move back into Nightcliff? There is a very temporary and expensive reshuffle happening in Education that is concerning many parents and students.

INPEX is a good corporate citizen which is interested in the NTOEC project. In government, we were talking to them, yet, 14 months later, the CLP does not have a result. That is extremely concerning. After 14 months, the CLP has no start date for work, no money for the work, and no end date for the work at Darwin High School. That is a consequence of a government that has had three Education ministers in 14 months.

Students from the Northern Territory Open Education Centre and from the NT Music School are being treated as second-class citizens, and that is not good enough. The minister needs to meet with the Friends of the School of Music and with the NT Open Education Centre School Council and talk to them directly about their concerns around how they are going to look after their students, both for the rest of this year and next year, and provide them some certainty about what is happening with their children. There are parents who are extremely concerned at the moment because they have not been consulted. Mr Deputy Speaker, decisions have been made that affect the future of their students. They are extremely concerned about that and they want a response. They want to be able to talk to the person who has been making those decisions.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.