

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Nightcliff**

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted for the member for Nightcliff today on account of personal business.

Motion agreed to.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS
Reorder of Business**

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, with the acquiescence of members opposite, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as to enable the Chief Minister at 3 pm to update the House by way of ministerial statement on the response to Cyclone Lam.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of two Year 4 classes from Larrakeyah Primary School accompanied by Sue Folley and Joanna Koulouriotis. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

**WORKERS REHABILITATION AND
COMPENSATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL
(Serial 117)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr STYLES (Employment and Training): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Members may recall the ministerial statement delivered by the member for Port Darwin in the House on 26 November 2014, in which he outlined the government's intention to amend the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act* following an extensive review of the act.

That review was overseen by the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Advisory Council, which is made up of representatives of employers, workers and other scheme participants. The review involved considerable public and stakeholder consultation, including an 84-day public comment period resulting in submissions being made. The last

comprehensive review was undertaken in 1984. While there have been reviews of specific issues, the Northern Territory Workers Compensation Scheme is now out of step with other jurisdictions.

This has been of concern to the insurance industry and the business community, both of which have been seeking a comprehensive review for some time. The current scheme provides no fault cover for eligible workers injured at work. Benefits of the scheme include weekly payments, medical treatment, rehabilitation costs and, in some cases, payment for permanent impairment.

The scheme is focused on rehabilitation and return to work, but with potential for injured workers to be paid income maintenance until pension age and medical expenses for life. It is a generous scheme in comparison with other schemes in Australia.

Northern Territory insurers have flagged that pressures in the scheme will result in increased premiums for employers. The average premium rate in the Northern Territory is already one of the highest in Australia, with only the ACT and South Australia being higher. Unless action is taken to revise scheme benefits, workers compensation premiums in the Northern Territory will continue to rise.

Northern Territory businesses are already competing with interstate businesses. As such, the review of the scheme has advocated changes to benefits are necessary if the Northern Territory scheme is to remain affordable for business and to ensure Northern Territory businesses have every chance to be competitive.

While a significant change will be to restrict compensation to five years for less seriously injured workers, other proposed changes will benefit many more workers. There are changes that increase benefits and others that will provide increased transparency, better claims management and improved communication with injured workers.

Government is committed to ensuring the scheme is fair and balanced and enhances its primary focus on achieving early and successful return to work outcomes.

This bill represents the first stage in the implementation of the review's recommendations. The balance of the recommendations will be captured in a second bill expected to be introduced in the May 2015 sittings.

I want to bring to the attention of the House the key changes we are proposing in this bill. To reflect government's commitment to ensuring all participants in the scheme have a clear

understanding of the purpose of the legislation, it is proposed that the act be renamed the Return to Work Act. The most significant proposal is to limit weekly benefits for most claimants to a maximum of five years, with medical and treatment costs to end 12 months after that date. However, claimants who are assessed as having significant, permanent impairment of 15% or more will retain the existing entitlement of weekly benefits until their pension eligibility age and be entitled to medical and treatment costs for life.

Although this is an important change to the scheme, it will only impact a minority of claimants. Analysis by the Northern Territory scheme actuary has estimated that of the 22 000 claims made on insurers over the past nine years, only 157 claimants – an average of 18 claimants per year – are still on compensation after five years. Although these numbers are relatively small, the cost of these claims is disproportionately high.

A new definition of worker is proposed, based on whether pay as you go tax instalments are being deducted, or should be deducted, by a worker's employer. The benefit of this change is the pay as you go test will achieve better consistency with Australian Taxation Office requirements. The Australian Taxation Office website includes extensive explanatory information and a tool to help business determine if pay as you go should be deducted.

The approach will make it easier for individual businesses to determine their workers compensation insurance obligations. The change will also achieve consistency with Queensland and proposed changes in Western Australia.

The Northern Territory recognises that there is a proven link between firefighting and the risk of some cancers, and has decided to provide presumptive legislation for fire fighters. This includes volunteers of NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Bushfires NT. This legislation will be made retrospective to 25 August 2012.

The proposed legislation establishes a rebuttable presumption that particular forms of cancer developed by career and volunteer fire fighters are work-related. This new provision will make the process of claiming workers compensation less cumbersome. Under the presumption, if a firefighter is diagnosed with one of the 12 cancers identified in the bill and served as a firefighter for the relevant qualifying period, it will be presumed that the cancer is an occupational disease and is therefore compensable.

For volunteer fire fighters an additional requirement is proposed – the person must have attended at least 150 exposure events within any

five-year period for brain cancer and leukaemia, and within 10 years for the remaining 10 cancers. This requirement ensures the presumption only applies to volunteers who have had measurable exposure to the hazards of fire. The proposed legislation will allow claims to be made up to 10 years after having been involved in active firefighting.

It is recognised that people are working longer than the traditional pension age. Currently, workers injured after 67 years of age are restricted to a maximum of 26 weeks of incapacity benefit. This bill proposes older workers will get 104 weeks of compensation instead of 26 weeks. This will provide a more reasonable level of economic protection for older workers and is consistent with changes in other jurisdictions.

The review of the scheme recognises a weakness in the present system; there can be little or no financial incentive for highly paid workers or their employers to participate in the return to work process. The proposed change to remedy this is to limit the amount of weekly earnings that can be considered for the calculation of a worker's weekly compensation. The limit proposed is 250% of average weekly earnings, which is the equivalent of over \$180 000 per annum. This cap only applies where the claimant is incapacitated for more than 26 weeks and will only impact a small number of claimants.

The review identified the Territory as falling behind other jurisdictions in the lump sum payable to dependents after the death of a worker. It is, therefore, proposed to increase the lump sum and funeral benefit in addition to creating a new benefit for counselling dependent family members of a deceased worker. On today's values, the death benefit will increase by a little over \$147 000, easing the financial burden on the deceased worker's dependent family. The funeral benefit will double from \$7 369 to \$14 739.

The intention of the current act is that for diseases to be compensable, employment should materially contribute to the disease. However, strokes and heart attacks which result from underlying disease are often being compensated because they happen at work. The proposed legislation will exclude strokes and heart attacks, unless employment was the major contributor to the underlying disease and cause of the condition. The calculation of normal weekly earnings is of key importance in determining an injured worker's compensation entitlement.

To achieve improved consistency, this bill provides rules for the calculation of a worker's normal weekly earnings. The underlying objective is the worker's compensation entitlement will closely reflect the amount the injured worker

would continue to earn, had they not been injured. Some changes identified in the review will also be included. For example, for a worker with two jobs, their compensation entitlement will be for the earnings from both jobs. In the case where there is an entitlement to non-cash benefits for electricity, meals and accommodation, these benefits will be capped at 35% of average weekly earnings – currently \$496. However, these non-cash benefits will no longer apply to fly-in, fly-out – or drive-in, drive-out – workers. This is because these workers can receive more in compensation benefits than they earned when working, which is an obvious disincentive to return to work.

The current legislation provides that a claimant will be paid their normal weekly earnings for the first 26 weeks of incapacity. After 26 weeks the benefit, in most cases, reduces to 75% of normal weekly earnings. The bill proposes it be made clear that the 26 weeks will be based on the aggregate of 26 weeks paid certified incapacity, rather than counting 26 calendar weeks. Unfortunately, there have been cases where injured workers have stoically continued to work, only to find when they needed time off their compensation had already been reduced because the 26 weeks had passed. This change rectifies this unfair situation.

The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia where the administration costs of the workers compensation regulator are not funded by contributions from insurance premiums. This bill includes a provision that will require improved insurers and self-insurers to contribute to the operating costs of NT WorkSafe.

The bill before the House is the first stage of this government's commitment to provide a more efficient and effective sustainable Northern Territory Workers Compensation Scheme. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned.

BAIL AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 105)

Continued from 27 November 2014.

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, I am speaking on behalf of the shadow Attorney-General.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to this bill and I thank the Attorney-General's office for providing the opposition a briefing. The shadow Attorney-General has spoken to stakeholders and reviewed the submissions put to the Attorney-General and government on this reform. It is not clear the government has responded to many issues raised by the legal sector. It is also not clear that the

Attorney-General has sought the advice of the Northern Territory Law Reform Committee – an expert committee – the role of which is to advise the Attorney-General on law reform. These experts are well placed, provide sound research analysis and considered non-political advice as to the merits of this legislation.

If the Attorney-General has received advice from the NT Law Reform Committee, I ask him to inform the House of their deliberations or table a copy of their report.

This bill expands the range of offences which attract a presumption against bail. The Law Society Northern Territory, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service have raised that this bill undermines the basic principle of presumption of innocence. Their submissions point to a range of issues, including the present rate of remand prisoners. The Territory had the highest rate of un-sentenced persons in custody at the June quarter 2014, as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The Attorney-General may expand on this in his debate to identify any assessments undertaken on the impact of this legislation, and any measures or resources that may be required in the court and corrections systems. The Law Society NT suggested a regulatory impact statement be undertaken and published to ascertain the impact of this bill.

This legislation appears to go further than that in other states by including young offenders. The New South Wales *Bail Act* that commenced on 28 January this year reverses the onus of proof on bail applications. However, it excludes persons who were under the age of 18 at the time of the offence.

While the legal sector in the Territory has welcomed the Attorney-General's extension of the range of criteria for consideration in bail applications, to include cognitive or mental impairment – and whether the person is a youth as defined by the *Youth Justice Act* – it has called for a youth specific bail regime that aligns with the *Youth Justice Act*. Under the principles of the *Youth Justice Act*, a young person should only be kept in custody for an offence – whether under arrest, in remand or under sentence – as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

Presently, the *Bail Act* overrides the *Youth Justice Act*. The *Youth Justice Act* was reviewed by the former member for Araluen, Jodeen Carney, in 2011 and was in the implementation phase at the change of government in 2012. CAALAS has called on the government to implement the recommendations of that review as a priority. The

research and evidence shows that early intervention, prevention and diversion are the key to preventing young people falling into a life of crime. Yet, under this government we have seen cuts to youth programs.

The government has cut more than \$3m to youth services in Alice Springs, which saw an enormous spike in children on the street at night. There has been a worrying increase in volatile substance abuse in Alice, which concerns police and the youth sector. The town has also been suffering from a dramatic increase in youth-related crimes. The government cut several youth diversion intervention programs, such as the Youth Street Outreach Service, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress' after hours youth drop-in service, and it shut down the youth hub. These services were making a difference to keeping kids off the street, making them and the community safer.

A good government needs to ensure there are proper diversion, intervention and treatment programs for volatile substances. More needs to be invested at the preventative end. Instead, we have seen this government strip the non-government sector of resources – the services working with disadvantages families to provide intervention as well as family and parent support programs.

The CAALAS submission raises a number of measures that could be applied in Central Australia to support young offenders in complying with bail conditions, including increased access to accommodation options and drug and alcohol treatment. The submission points to the higher proportion of youth bail files held by CAALAS, relating to young people without fixed accommodation or a carer who has continuous responsibility for them.

As the Attorney-General is also the minister for Children and Families, he has the opportunity to consider an integrated response.

We support making it harder for DV offenders with serious criminal histories who breach restraining orders to get bail. The government's domestic violence strategy, announced in September last year, has not detailed an implementation plan. There are no time lines attached to this strategy and there is no breakdown of the funding allocations. I welcome the Attorney-General's update to the House in this debate about progress. It makes sense for the government to ensure DV offenders on remand are made to undertake intervention programs and anger management behavioural change programs to address their offending.

Rosie Batty, Australian of the Year 2015 and an incredible woman who has suffered at the hands of domestic violence, has voiced a need for a focus on sentencing and intervention. In a column printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 22 February this year, she said:

Intervention programs should be mandated but then we must also make sure that an offender's behaviour has actually changed when these are completed.

The legal sector has raise concerns that prisoners in remand are unable to access programs, and they must be in gaol for nine months or more to access programs. Attorney-General, can you please outline whether DV offenders on remand will get access to behaviour change and anger management programs?

There is also concern in the community that government is not matching resources with their rhetoric. The Department of Children and Families' budget papers for 2014-15 forecast 200 fewer clients accessing DV crisis support through non-government organisations. Yet, in 2014, Women's Safe Houses across the Territory reported that in June 2013 there was an increase of nearly 70% in the number of women seeking shelter, compared to December 2012. Domestic violence assaults are now up 7.5% since the CLP was elected – 40% in Darwin, 21% in Palmerston and 14% in our remote areas, as reported in the crime statistics released last week.

Over the same period as these statistics cover, the CLP has opened up the rivers of grog. Statistics point to the link between grog and domestic violence. Previous data has shown around 65% of domestic violence assaults are alcohol-related. The CLP government's DV strategy does not mention alcohol. The CLP's failed alcohol policies are contributing to the domestic violence toll inflicted on Territory families. There is not enough being done by this government to prevent domestic violence.

The Labor government introduced mandatory reporting for domestic violence and provided \$15m over two years, funding programs, legal assistance and Women's Safe Houses. It was the Labor government that put domestic violence offenders on the Banned Drinker Register.

There is still more to be done and I encourage the government to fast-track the delivery of intervention programs to protect families.

It is not clear if this reform has taken an evidence-based approach to consider a range of options, including investment in intervention programs for DV offenders and other remand prisoners. If those assessments have been undertaken and

additional programs investment considered, I look forward to the Attorney-General providing information to the House.

The Law Society has called for the legislation to be reviewed in 12 months. Reviewing legislation after implementation is not an unusual practice. Will the Attorney-General commit to a review of this legislation?

There are a number of questions for the Attorney-General. There was a request for some information or response to some of the submissions made by the Law Society NT, NAAJA and CAALAS. There were some questions about the NT Law Reform Committee; has it been consulted? If so, can we please have a copy of what they provided to the Attorney-General? There are many questions about time lines and implementation of the strategies government has discussed – where they are at, what funding has been put to them and what time lines are against them.

We welcome the Attorney-General in debate, countering any assertions he considers unfair and false. We are also interested in hearing anything from the Attorney-General detailing the implementation, the time lines and the money he has put together toward programs he has announced – including a response to the interested and concerned non-government bodies which have put forward submissions.

Both sides of the House believe more needs to be done about DV. While I spoke about some things we have done and what we are worried the CLP will not do, which we may argue about, without doubt we both want to see action on DV. These arguments are important, because if we focus on this then more will happen.

We all agree more needs to happen and that this is a terrible thing happening in our society and – as much as we give it attention here – does not get as much attention and commitment as it should. In some respects, that is a reflection on where we are at nationally. Some of the things we point to – on a national level – which require attention, intervention and investment are not as important as the problems we have with domestic violence.

We can do much better in the Territory, but the more attention we get from the Australian government, which has other legislative triggers and greater funds available, the better.

There are a number of questions and I look forward to hearing from the Attorney-General.

**Distinguished Visitor
Maggie Hickey**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the gallery where we have Maggie Hickey, a previous member and Opposition Leader. Welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I will not speak for long, but I felt it necessary to speak on one very important component of the bill, which is how it relates to breaches of domestic violence orders.

This bill meets the expectations of my community in Palmerston. Early last week, a constituent came to me with a situation where domestic violence was being inflicted upon the constituent and their children. The spouse had been granted bail, yet continued to cause distress to my constituent's family and was in breach of the domestic violence order set by the court.

The bill focuses on three main components, which are: offences carrying life imprisonment; offences relating to breach of domestic violence orders; and circumstances where a person is charged with a serious offence. I want to speak briefly about the domestic violence component.

Domestic violence in our community is shameful. It does not matter if you are a man or a woman; it affects our community deeply and there must be zero tolerance of it. If you have a domestic violence order against you and are in breach of it, I am comfortable – as are the people of Drysdale – to reverse the presumption of bail and say, 'No, you cannot walk in here and assume to walk out on bail'. That sends a clear and strong message, and I hope it puts everyone on notice that the buck will stop here and domestic violence will not be tolerated.

We must protect the most vulnerable in our community. I am proud of the reversal of this presumption. I hope it will have a strong effect and suspect it will. I must give credit to the minister for reviewing the Bail Amendment Bill and coming up with these solutions. I certainly look forward to the implementation and have no problem with restricting the freedom of those who repeatedly commit domestic violence in our community.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I thank the department for its briefing. If I can understand what they are talking about, it must be a pretty

good briefing, especially when it comes to matters of legal issues.

This changes the neutral position in our existing acts, in relation to whether a person should get bail or not. My understanding is this was based on the New South Wales legislation, which was repealed about 18 months ago, and we are the only jurisdiction in Australia with that clause in an act.

The member for Fannie Bay asked who the stakeholders were – it would be good to hear the answer – but, I gather 30 stakeholders were asked and nearly everyone agreed. I know from being in parliament listening to debates – especially on matters arising from the *Criminal Code Act* and other similar legislation – not everybody in the legal fraternity will agree. If they did, you would not need many lawyers, you would only need one. Lawyers disagree and, no matter if the Labor Party is in power or the CLP, you will always get some difference of opinion with these matters.

I listened to the member for Drysdale and agree with her that domestic violence is a curse on our society. As is said here, if one of the presumptions against bail is domestic violence offences, then it is good to ensure people are protected. We know of cases where people have been released on bail and another offence has taken place. In some cases, those offences have been fatal, so it is certainly something worth changing.

Most of the bill is about turning what was the neutral position into the against bail position, for instance, ensuring the *Bail Act* lines up with the *Misuse of Drugs Act*. There have been some slight changes in the wording, with 'by a term of imprisonment for more than seven years', being changed to 'seven years or more'. There are important, relevant changes in relation to criminal offences, such as terrorism, sabotage, arson, threats against people involved in criminal investigations, and damage to public property infrastructure which can cause injury or death. There have been changes in relation to domestic violence and committing a serious offence while on bail.

There is a range of offences which have reverted from the neutral position to against. Even though the act will move those offences to be against bail provisions, I presume a judge still has the right to grant bail. This is not something that is set.

Mr Elferink: This is why it is called a presumption.

Mr WOOD: Yes, I wanted to make sure that was clear.

In general, I agree with the bill. I am interested in the amendments to section 24 – it is down in the amended act as section 11, but deals with section 24 being amended – where people with cognitive or mental impairment have those things taken into consideration in regard to bail.

For many months, a number of us have worked on the report on foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. This is one area we are concerned about in regard to issues related to cognitive impairment. This is one of the outcomes of pregnant women drinking and we need to ensure the courts understand these people may be suffering from this ailment – if you can call it that – so it is taken into account. That was an interesting part of the changes.

I note on the first page of Attorney-General's second reading, he said clause 7 makes a number of amendments to section 7A of the *Bail Act* – amid section 7A(1)(b), which refers to the offence of treason. With the recent occurrences in the government, it is lucky we do not have the offence of treason; otherwise, there could have been lesser numbers in the parliament.

Mr Elferink: I am thinking about the people shooting at Australian soldiers when they have Australian citizenship. We would not want that to occur, would we?

Mr WOOD: No. Overall, this is a serious matter. I think the member for Fannie Bay, who was speaking for the member for Nightcliff, spoke about the need for tighter controls because these offences continue in our society. The other half of the equation is how we can prevent this from happening. How do we stop this? I will not tell the government it is doing the wrong thing, because this is a difficult area to get into, but we do not give up trying. You are dealing with the misuse of drugs, domestic violence, serious assaults, and threats against people undertaking criminal investigations. These issues are reflective of some of the problems in our society.

I do not care which government is in power; part of their responsibility in dealing with these issues is not only the sentencing, but trying to reduce the occurrence of these problems. We need a legal system which deals with them fairly; that is why we have a judicial system. Our prison system is not only about punishment, but about rehabilitation. I appreciate that the minister has done a lot of work in that area. We are looking at one section of a very broad issue, which all people in this parliament should be aware of and work together to reduce the need for these matters which we raise. Overall, I support the legislation.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments today. I confess I did not hear all

of what the member for Fannie Bay said, but I will attempt to address a number of the issues he raised.

There is no doubt – and this somewhat reflects on what the member for Nelson said – the *Bail Act* is part of a spectrum of the criminal justice system. If you want to talk about issues from before the criminal justice system, there is an added spectrum.

The comments made by the members for Fannie Bay and Nelson invite a broad ranging debate which goes to heart of who we are and how we respond as a society.

Madam Speaker, I have just been advised the Minister for Community Services also wanted to speak on this issue. I would be closing off debate at this stage, but I seek leave to allow the Minister for Community Services to speak, with your acquiescence.

Leave is granted.

Mrs PRICE (Local Government and Community Services): Madam Speaker, I will speak briefly on this bill. I thank the member for Port Darwin for presenting this bill.

For me, this is personal. I have seen many women involved in domestic violence who have suffered and would rather have the perpetrators put in gaol and not given bail. I have seen this across Central Australia. Women and families would rather see perpetrators not allowed bail. It is a sign that we, as government, are strong in protecting these women and in saying to these perpetrators, 'We will not tolerate any violence whatsoever'. Bail will mean this perpetrator will reoffend. It has happened many times. I have seen it; it involved my close family members. It is not right for these people to suffer more because of this person being given a couple of months out in the open. It creates more suffering for the rest of the community. As an Aboriginal woman, I believe it should not be tolerated.

For families, it is a sigh of relief. They know once the person is locked up, they will receive counselling and be placed in a behaviour management program designed to help them understand how to live with family, live with life, be a part of that community and be a human being.

I have seen breaches of DV orders over and over again. People say that the Northern Territory is like a Gulag. Yes, my people reoffend again and again – it is not funny. We talk about programs, counselling and the support that government, should be promoting, but it will not make a difference until these programs and counselling happen on the ground in places like Yuendumu,

Papunya, Hermannsburg and Tennant Creek. That is when we will start seeing a difference. If we take these programs to these communities, and if we are seen to be listening to the women there – to ensure their men do not reoffend – that will make a huge difference in the Northern Territory.

We can sit here and debate it as long as we want, but it will never change. There are so many do-gooders out there who think they know what is good for an Aboriginal person – a blackfella. They do not live the lifestyle my people live or understand it deeply, as I do. You have to live it to understand it – to see and feel how serious it is to do something about it. Unless you live that lifestyle, you will never understand it. No matter how much money you throw at it, you will never understand it. I am telling you this because I have lived it myself.

I support changes to the act to make sure those who breach DV orders do not have the right to bail. That is my stand on this.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I thank the House for the indulgence in the late – but important – speech by the minister. The minister is in a position where she can say things others can only think, sadly, because of the preciousness of the number of those who would accuse us – as non-Aboriginal people – of being aggressive or hard on Aboriginal people.

It is a fundamental role of any government to protect its citizens – for example, the weak – from those who would use brutality and thuggery as a way of dealing with relationship issues. I know what the minister means when she speaks of these matters, because, as a former police officer in Central Australia, I have put bodies in the body bags. It is that serious.

I was reflecting on something the minister said. I investigated a case once for grievous harm; we found the victim in a semi-conscious state with a punctured lung and two fractures, all because she would not give a little money to her husband so he could buy grog. Her crime was wanting to feed her kids. He did all of that to her for about \$14, if memory serves me.

What the minister says is real. It has so moved me over the years that I have sought deliberately to become a White Ribbon Ambassador. I wear the ribbon in this House today because I know how serious these issues are, especially in remote communities and town camps dotted around the Northern Territory. I know the minister to be a passionate campaigner for the rights of women and for victims. I am proud to join her in that campaign and thank her for her good service to

the people of the Northern Territory in protecting primarily the women of the Northern Territory who are the victims of these gross and brutish assaults.

Part of the reason we have this legislation before the House today is to create an extra brick in the wall which is the fortress we seek to build, to defend the victims against their thuggish perpetrators. The brick people have been talking about is the amendment to this legislative instrument which says that if you have a history of being a thug and beating your spouse, you can expect the court – by direction of this parliament – will not cast a benevolent eye upon your bail application, because you have a track record. We will ask the court to assume at the outset that you do not get a right to liberty, and that you are placed in custody by virtue of the fact your track record alone – and the fact you come again before a court charged with a similar offence – is sufficient to have you placed into that custodial environment.

Naturally, bail has been brought out of a concept which has been long held and established in law, that is, the right to be at liberty rather than in custody when you have not been dealt with by the law. Bail is the process by which one is brought to a court after they have been charged by their own recognizance, or by virtue of a promise they make to the court that they will appear at a court date in the future. We do that because there is a presumption in law that you are innocent until the contrary is proved beyond reasonable doubt.

I, as Attorney-General and a lawyer, am mindful of those truths. We do not penalise people before they find themselves in a court and been found guilty. Nevertheless, having made that observation, there are certain circumstances in the real world where we ask courts to reverse the presumption in favour of bail. The presumption has always been that you will get bail for certain circumstances.

Traditionally until the 1980s, those two circumstances were the crimes of murder and treason. Treason is, in the modern world, somewhat of an anachronism which is being expunged through the process of this legislative instrument. Nevertheless, when reviewing the *Bail Act*, we look at how it operates in its entirety.

As a consequence, we have sought to do a number of things. One of those things in this legislative amendment is to make certain the *Bail Act* is clearer and easier to understand. Prior to these changes going through there were three presumptions.

There was a presumption for bail, presumption against bail and then what is called the neutral

presumption. Some time ago I had a look at the New South Wales model and asked myself, 'Should we have a bail instrument here in the Northern Territory which is exclusively bound within neutral presumptions only?'

Unfortunately, in the practical application of the *Bail Act* in New South Wales, it has become clear over time that it has led to a substantial amount of public dissatisfaction about the way the courts have chosen to interpret the neutral provisions.

As a consequence, we have sought to expunge the neutral provisions through this legislative instrument and there will only be presumptions in favour or against bail, in certain conditions. The elements of the presumption against bail are clearly described in this bill before the House.

As I have said, there is a clear focus on domestic violence in this legislation, but there are a number of other offences where the presumption in relation to other violent offences is also against bail. It means that using section 24 of the act a court determining bail will start off, in instances of crimes of violence and domestic violence, on the presumption you will not get bail.

It is up to you, as the applicant for bail, to convince a court to change its mind. To do that, you have to satisfy the criteria outlined in section 24 of the act, which are quite broad. I have asked for one extra item to be inserted in the criteria, which you will find in the bill before the House today. The amendment, located after subsection 24(3), will read the following:

In assessing the risks to others under subsection (3), the authorised member or court must consider the following:

- (a) *the previous, current or proposed living arrangements for an alleged victim and for the accused person (assuming the accused person's release on bail);*
- (b) *whether those arrangements include or would include their living in unreasonably close proximity to each other.*

This is a deliberate insertion I requested, because there are times when a person's proximity to an accused person should be a matter of concern for the court. By way of example, what was just described by the minister is a good way to proceed to illuminate this issue.

There will be instances where a person may be granted bail by a court, but because they intend to return to a community – for arguments sake, Yuendumu – the court must now turn its mind to

the issue as to whether or not releasing that person on bail and allowing them to return to Yuendumu is a good thing. If a court cannot satisfy itself where that is the case, it should not release that person on bail. Alternatively, they could put a bail condition in place which prevents that person from returning to Yuendumu, even if they are able to step over the presumption against bail for a regular domestic violence offender.

That being the case, the walls continue to be constructed, but this casts a wider net because it may also apply to a house-breaker who lives in proximity to the victim. This matter was drawn to my attention by a member of the public not long ago. I thank that person for drawing this to my attention; a court should consider this when dealing with bail in relation to matters of property crime, especially the type that sees someone's home violated by a trespasser with villainous intent.

I heard comments from the members for Nelson and Fannie Bay in relation to the broader issues. Whilst listening to the member for Nelson I was reminded of the old novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, by Kurt Vonnegut from the 1950s. Without going into the novel too much, he describes the passage of a human through life being like looking out of a train at the passing mountain range. You can only see a part of the mountain range at any particular time.

That is pretty much how the statute book operates. Whilst there is a spectrum of human experiences across the social environment, you find you can only – from a legislative point of view – deal with slices of that experience as you step through it. The *Bail Act* can in no way bring about social reform with what happens in a household to children and those types of things. We are tightly discussing the application of bail which only occurs in certain circumstances, namely when a person is charged with a criminal offence. It does not cast a broader net.

There is no way the *Bail Act* can intrude into a person's home, with regard to the child protection issue. Inviting the type of conversation the members for Nelson and Fannie Bay have invited would probably not be appropriate in this debate. However, I will address some of the issues raised by the member for Fannie Bay, with regard to how we deal with domestic violence offences generally, and some of the changes made in relation to services in Alice Springs.

Starting off with domestic violence, it is well known – and I am surprised to hear the member asking for information in relation to a domestic violence policy, which was clearly articulated and funded last year – millions of dollars were being directed towards rolling out a domestic violence policy,

which the minister for Community Services and I worked together on. In my opinion, it will be the best policy in the country because it brings together 11 local agencies, plus non-government organisations, around a table to deal with specific issues almost on a case management basis.

This was based on the back of a trial run in Alice Springs through some federal money which found its way there. Where government departments and NGOs came together in that fashion to deal with these things on almost a case-by-case basis, the return effect from families supported through that process was three in 100. This is a staggering improvement on the circumstances just described by the minister for Community Services.

It is that model we are now rolling out across the Northern Territory, which includes Darwin, Palmerston, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek and some remote Aboriginal communities. The model around supporting the whole family when a perpetrator comes to the attention of police has demonstrated effects already, through the original trial program in Alice Springs.

I continue to press on with that model, as does the minister for Community Development. It is exactly the type of model we need, because it means local intervention by the punters who know what is going on. I can no more find a pathway for a family in Alice Springs remotely from Darwin, than I could successfully tell a brain surgeon how to do brain surgery. In truth, the only way to intervene on these circumstances is to do it locally, with the people who know those individuals.

This is the reason remote programs consistently fail. If you take something like the intervention – a bureaucrat in Canberra was making decisions about somebody in a place called Yuendumu, which they could not even find on a map. Talk about trying to knit with baseball mitts on. For some reason, we seem to think as policy drivers we are capable of fixing lives by waving a magic wand over some distant human beings, which is errant nonsense and rot. We can only intervene in a limited fashion when we are on the ground, but ultimately the question for behavioural correction still rests with the individuals and families.

If somebody chooses not to commit a crime, that is the only response that can ultimately prevent someone from committing it. How do you get into a person's head? The member for Nelson is a practising and devout Catholic ...

Mr Wood: Devout might be a bit harsh – struggling.

Mr ELFERINK: He shows the requisite humility as well.

In the Catholic faith, the idea of the confession is an idea of redemption. When a person changes their heart, mind and spirit they need no punishment but forgiveness, as long as the decision to reform oneself is genuine and recognised in the faith and by God. Unfortunately, as humans we are unable to see into a person's heart. The only thing we can judge is a person's actions, rather than necessarily stated intentions. That is the mechanism of law we now deal with on a daily basis.

Those are the proposals we have before the House today. These are the reasons we wish to change the act, because it will make it simpler, more straightforward and will give comfort to people who need it. As a lawyer, a citizen of the Northern Territory and someone with academic training of the political sciences, I am always conscious of the intrusion of the state into people's liberties.

A large slice of my personal political philosophies are based in those fundamental principles, so that when we – as a parliament – choose to intrude in those spaces, I do so with forbearance and great caution. These things must be considered in order of their balance, rather than one position or the other.

I believe the balance we have here today is the correct one. It meets the public expectation degree and will meet the expectations of the courts to a degree. Those two positions will not always reconcile comfortably and there will always be decisions by courts where people will shake their heads and ask, 'How could a court possibly come to that conclusion?' There will always be responses from people which leave the courts mystified, asking, 'How could a person respond in that fashion if they knew all the details?' There is a natural tension in our community, but it is a healthy tension whereby the courts continue to understand their legitimacy is not derived from anything we do in this House, but from the fact that the people of the Northern Territory – or any other jurisdiction – acknowledges their authority and the fact those courts are there to represent the interests of the community.

Whilst there are prickly moments and points of conflict between the community and the court system, it is still heartening to see the community accepts – without question – the authority of our courts to go about their business, even if they are not always happy with the decisions. In short, this is a series of useful, good and functional amendments which I hope will benefit the true welfare of the people of the Northern Territory.

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.

TABLED PAPER
Review of the Northern Territory Youth
Detention System Report

Continued from 18 February 2015.

Mr ELFERINK (Correctional Services): Madam Speaker, I have sought leave to continue my remarks and will keep this fairly short.

The Vita report is self-explanatory. Anybody who has read the Vita review will realise there are shortcomings. As I said during Question Time when I tabled the report, it was not a clean bill of health. What we were doing in the Don Dale environment has concerned me over the years.

Here is the truth of it – Don Dale is not an environment which is conducive to the needs of youth justice practices, specifically custodial practices, in the Northern Territory. There were a number of physical shortcomings in the building, not least of which was the absence of flushing lavatories in dormitories. This meant a young boy needing to use the toilet at 3 am had to wake somebody up to escort them. Often that would not occur. I remember the first time I walked into one of those dormitories, I could smell urine. This clearly meant somebody was taking a leak in the corner rather than waking up a guard. That is not acceptable practice in this day and age.

The other component is the former Don Dale centre was built for only one gender. This meant housing two genders, which is a fairly recent manifestation in our communities, was something the building was never designed to do. Therefore, it led to a number of problematic circumstances, not least of which was walking the girls into their classroom through the boys' section. That design feature was never intended and it meant some young ladies – and some young gentlemen – were more than happy to be distracted when they were in eyeshot or earshot of each other.

There are other physical shortcomings of the Don Dale centre. One concerned me deeply on one of my first visits, when I noticed there was a substantial scorch mark up a set of wooden boards in the female section. The ceiling in the old female section was made of wood, as well as part of the wall, and a fluorescent lamp had short circuited and left a large mark up the wooden wall. I was advised by Commissioner Middlebrook that if it had not been for the quick thinking of an officer, it may have caused a disastrous fire. I am

grateful to the professionalism of the people we have in place there.

Something else which has become manifest in recent times is the nature of certain people we have in custody. They have taken it upon themselves, as their post pubescent occupation, to become the most violent and aggressive people they can be. This has become manifest on a number of occasions, and it demonstrated the shortcomings of the Don Dale centre when they were able to escape, find their way back into the community and continue to commit offences – so it is alleged. This is not good enough.

The nature of the offences for which these kids are in custody, and for which they stand on trial, are serious and indictable. It is no longer simply the housebreaker we keep in Don Dale. These offences include aggravated assault and aggravated robbery. These are not things to be taken lightly; they are very serious offences.

The other thing needing to be understood is the little darlings we speak of are not so little anymore; they are 16 or 17 years of age, but are still children in the eyes of the law. Consequently, as Minister for Correctional Services, I examined a brand spanking new youth corrections facility. The challenge with that is you come back with a bill between \$120m and \$150m to build a new child correction detention facility. I am not prepared to walk into Cabinet with that outcome.

Having had these discussions with my commissioner, we cast our eye on the old medium-security section at the now decommissioned Berrimah gaol. If we spent \$800 000 to \$1m on it, we could create a new custodial environment sufficient enough to separate the genders, improve their classroom environments, keep the community safe and provide flushing toilets to detainees. Nevertheless, as was noted in the paper the other day, there were challenges in the new environment. However, it appears to be holding its own against the ambitions of the young folk we continue to have in custody.

The report spends a lot of time focusing on operating procedures, which was another area I was concerned about. I have often said incarceration should be about the buildings, but also what you do inside those buildings. It is clear through the Vita review there are a number of standard operating procedures that need to be applied. There are 16 recommendations and have either been attended to or are being attended to by way of implementation.

As a consequence, we will have a facility in Darwin which is fit for purpose and this is clear in the Vita review. Fit for purpose means it will

effectively be able to provide the programs these kids require, as well as the custodial environment they should be in to protect the community as a whole. That is part of the reason I asked for the Vita review to be done.

There was no requirement for me to table this report. It was not produced as a result of any legislative demand. It was not produced as a result of anything, other than the fact the community has a right to know about some of the challenges we face. I also want the report to become a shield in the sense that I want the report to direct and give guidance to the Corrections department, so they will engage and put those recommendations into place to ensure we have standard operating procedures. If followed, those procedures will become a way of protecting the staff working in those institutions, as well as the community as a whole.

I am grateful to Michael Vita for his work. He has done a fine job and has given us a warts-and-all assessment of what we have, what we do not have and what issues in the Northern Territory require addressing. This is a piece of work par excellence. It is simple, straightforward, easy to understand, clear, concise, complete, correct, and – as I said at the outset – it does not give us a clean bill of health. It does, however, give us a road map to go forward, so we can improve services to protect these kids from themselves and to protect the people of the Northern Territory.

MOTION

Print Paper – Review of the Northern Territory Youth Detention System Report

Mr ELFERINK (Correctional Services): Madam Speaker, I move that the paper be printed

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Paper – Review of the Northern Territory Youth Detention System Report

Mr ELFERINK (Correctional Services): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Madam, Speaker, I wish to speak to the *Review of the Northern Territory Youth Detention System Report* by Michael Vita, as tabled by the Attorney-General in parliament last week.

I commend the Attorney-General for releasing this report in full, knowing it is – for the most part – not a flattering review of the two youth detention centres in the Northern Territory, so it can be considered and debated in its entirety today. I

also commend the government on its investment in upgrades in youth detention centres.

The Attorney-General has previously referred to physical upgrades to the facility as integral to the rehabilitation of offenders. The former government invested in the construction of a new facility for adult prisoners to facilitate rehabilitation. The Berrimah facility was recognised as beyond its use-by date and not conducive to operating a contemporary prison with a rehabilitation focus for the number of prisoners housed there. I note that this has been criticised previously by the Attorney-General.

We welcome investment in education and rehabilitation programs in detention, and supporting staff with further training in case management. There is a lot to take on in the report and my first reflections are that many of the recommended actions for detention centre workers – and the system generally – reflect on the principles of restorative justice. It is about modelling behaviour, having consistent dialogue with detainees around problem behaviours, and consistent approaches and messages. There has been discussion of the chart method, which is about building understanding of the impact of behaviours, with the aim being offenders taking responsibility for their actions.

A restorative practice is in many ways already underpinning our youth diversion system. We can perhaps be a bit more obvious about this in our juvenile justice system. It is clear from this review that consistency across the board is what we need to lift our standards on immediately. Things like training, occupational health and safety for detention centre workers – those things need to be consistent across the board.

Multidisciplinary teams feature heavily and are important in identifying and addressing issues, providing the greatest opportunity for rehabilitation, including the important role of family responsibility programs identified in the report as being beneficial. Such integrated responses have been applauded in this review. I make mention of the Alice Springs Youth Hub – introduced under the Labor government – which is, sadly, no longer. The Alice Springs Youth Hub encouraged interagency government, and non-government communication and collaboration. I make no secret of it; I want to see more of these opportunities and approaches, where multidisciplinary teams are integrated to provide wrap-around services to those in need of support across the spectrum, at risk and entering the justice system.

This government has cut several youth diversion and intervention programs across the Territory, including YSOS – Youth Street Outreach Services

– the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress after hours youth drop-in service, and the Youth Hub. The youth sector and police have continued to remain vocal about the need for more integrated responses and night services, to ensure we provide a proper plan for re-engaging young people back into education, work and meaningful activity. Such services were keeping young people off the streets and were working, and the youth sector warned the government about the outcome which saw the CLP government recant after significant community pressure. Increases in volatile substance abuse, youth in risky situations late at night, young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour – if we want to reduce the numbers of young people entering the justice system, we need a plan to reduce, not a reaction.

We saw \$4.2m allocated back to youth services across the Territory about three weeks ago. I point that Alice Springs lost \$3m from its youth sector. On my last trip to Alice Springs, it was a pleasure to drop into a workshop on networking, collective impact and the youth and families sector – seeing some of those integrated responses continue and being accepted as good practice.

The section in the report about the classification system makes specific references to mental health. I hope, given the Attorney-General's comments in that area over the last two days, we see some initiatives relating to the identification and management of mental illness in our justice systems.

Mr Elferink: It has not been lost on me.

Ms MOSS: I know. For some detainees, this might be their first opportunity to be connected with the system. The Attorney-General has mentioned the importance of identifying mental illness and that we need to invest in early intervention. Mental disorders are often onset in childhood and adolescence and some of our juvenile detention population experience mental illness, alcohol and other drug issues. They may have experienced family dysfunction and breakdown, or may display symptoms of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

This not only presents huge challenges for workers and to the system, but highlights that more support is needed within our communities to identify these risk factors early in children and young people in the Territory. We need a common language between sectors around young people at risk, including the meaning of at risk. We need clearer referral pathways, ease of transition between services and integrated responses. We need youth detention centre workers to feel confident enough in their training and support mechanisms to deal with issues compounded by environment.

The review does not speak highly of that training, which is currently four days for youth workers. I quote from the report:

The current four days allocated for youth workers compared to the 11 weeks (and 12 month probationary period) for prison officers is grossly inadequate. This is clearly not enough to develop a professional youth worker to manage young, immature and challenging adolescents – many of whom have significant mental health, AOD and behavioural problems and who, in the main come from abusive and violent backgrounds.

The final statement in that is important. These are serious issues in the Northern Territory community. A good government needs to invest in families and strengthen their capacity to support young people at risk. Instead, we have seen this government strip the non-government sector of resources. These provide essential services to disadvantaged families, providing intervention and family and parent support programs.

It is unfortunate to hear the Attorney-General's response to an article about the rate of juvenile incarceration hitting a new high, especially in WA and the NT. In responding to a call for a national summit on Indigenous juvenile incarceration to provide a national debate, the Attorney-General was dismissive, telling the ABC:

... it isn't the government's role to fix these problems, the role starts with the parents.

No one is denying that parents have responsibility for the wellbeing and the welfare of their children; however, your government has stripped the capacity of the NGO sector to support vulnerable families. Under this government, the vulnerable in our community are losing out.

I look forward to seeing the outcomes from the Labor government initiated youth justice review, after being part of one of the consultations. There has been an incredibly strong consultation process in the review undertaken by Jodeen Carney. The evidence base takes into account interventions and investment across the spectrum for youths at risk, including transition back into the community. It was also discussed at the consultations how NGOs might be involved – another area that is lacking according to the review.

I was interested in the final few pages of this review, where Michael Vita specifically mentioned potential for NGOs to be co-located. I raised that in the consultation because it is an interesting area for exploration.

I have spoken in this House many times about the need for early intervention investment, and this is no exception. The intervention needs to occur where possible long before contact with the justice system. Investment in young people needs to be made for the benefit of our wider community; that is why it is important. It provides the opportunity to also invest in our communities and turn lives around through a crime prevention approach, not just an incarceration approach.

Increasing our capacity to provide community interventions should be a focus to reduce recidivism. Training youth workers is clearly an issue that requires urgent attention, given the complex issues and highly demanding roles that have high levels of burnout. I hope to hear from the government about work references to improve the training program for workers, and I acknowledge that it is referenced in the report.

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from Wanguri Primary School accompanied by Julie Fraser. On behalf of honourable members, welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms MOSS: It is disappointing to hear that so many workers in the youth detention centres are on casual contracts, with uncertainty being a potential factor in the loss of ongoing knowledge-building in the effectiveness of operations. I hope to hear from the government about communication occurring with staff members about changes as a result of this review, with the opportunity for them to adapt and learn skills that are identified as essential if the goal posts move, which it sounds like they need to.

I also hope to hear from the government about the time frame for implementation of recommendations from the youth justice review, and when we can expect the results of those changes to be monitored and evaluated for continuous improvement in the current situation. In addition, how might the recommendations contained in this report fit into the youth justice review, and when will we see the outcomes of that? Will the government consider changing the way it supports families as a result of this review and the rising number of young people in our juvenile justice system?

One thing is clear from this report: we can and should be doing more.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I was reading through the report and have one minor point to make. The Darwin Correctional Centre is in Howard Springs, but it is always referred to as Holtze. Perhaps the media picked that up. It is only a technical issue.

Madam SPEAKER: It is a very important issue.

Mr WOOD: Thank you to the member representing Holtze for being aware of that. It is a geographical area and nothing to be overly concerned about, but the member for Port Darwin is a stickler for things being accurate.

I am concerned by the fact that 96% of people in the youth detention centre are Indigenous, and 90% are male. The previous government had a program where young men were learning to ride horses at the mango station, which was down the bottom ...

Mr Higgins interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Not the one at Daly River.

They set up a so-called cattle station at the bottom end of the Berrimah Correctional Centre. With the help of a trained horse supervisor, about 10 inmates learnt to ride, handle and care for horses correctly; it was a great program. It only had one problem, it was expensive. They had to get up at 5.30 am to learn about the fencing and management of horses. Some inmates were waiting to be released from the main part of the prison because they were keen to get on the horses and do the work.

Prior to the big Rotary events starting I saw them in action. They went to the mango station, collected their horses, rode back to the rodeo centre on the Stuart Highway and spent the day welding and painting. They learnt a range of skills.

I remember the use of animals in rehabilitation. I have previously mentioned my trip to Ohio about seven years ago, when I visited the West Central Community Correctional Facility and the Ohio Reformatory for Women. A number of the women had the job of looking after greyhounds; we opened one of the cells and observed that.

I am a great believer, and have seen it in other places, in the use of animals in prisons to create a calming effect on prisoners. Young people without anybody to care for them can find a replacement for that with an animal; they find a friend. I have seen television reports about it. I wonder if that type of program could be expanded in the Berrimah youth detention centre as it is near Wongabilla Equestrian Centre. The minister may update me on this, but Wongabilla is a

diversionary place for youth. After talking to the people who run Wongabilla, I am aware that many kids are not getting into trouble after taking a course where they can relate to or cared for an animal. They have had had an incentive to do something rather than get into trouble.

One program in the main prison which may not have continued was caring for injured wildlife. I have a feeling that program might have been dropped. When I was in the United States, the Ohio Reformatory for Women had a special section for women caring for injured animals; they saw this as a very important part of the rehabilitation process.

We need to look at programs that might assist because you hear about these young people, but have they become dislocated from society? I visited Wildman River Wilderness Work Camp; I was very angry the previous Labor government got rid of that. Even though it was costly, I liked that it took people out bush. I think being out bush is therapeutic not only for Aboriginal people, but for many other people. The kids there got an education, had recreation time and had to work. Although it was costly, it was something that should have continued.

The CLP closed down Beatrice Hill Rehabilitation Farm and Gunn Point Prison Farm. I am not picking sides, but some facilities that had their merits were closed down. I went to Wildman River one day and spoke to one of the kids. I think the reason Wildman River existed was to give kids who were not in too much trouble a chance. I think this kid might have pinched a car, but I sat down with him and could feel straight away that he missed somebody. He had a girlfriend and was missing her, but by the way he spoke I could tell he did not have a family life; he did not have anyone to give him a hug. Those types of issues can cause kids to go off the rails, when there is no one at home who cares for them.

I think it is appropriate to use animals in rehabilitation to give people a feeling of meaning in their life, especially in an area where polocrosse, rodeo and the Wongabilla horse club all exist. There is a good link between the two. They may even have a small chook farm. It might sound silly, but if kids were collecting eggs every morning and feeding the chickens, it might get them interested and give them a sense of pride. I bet by the end of their time they will be talking to the chickens. I know what that is like; talking to chickens is a bit like being in parliament. I remind myself of a previous Premier of Queensland who referred to media conferences as feeding the chooks.

Mr Elferink: No, that was Paul Keating.

Mr WOOD: No, Joh Bjelke-Petersen said it. This is not just about strict programs or the training; other things can make a difference. I have not had time to go through all of the recommendations. Mr Michael Vita makes an important statement where he provides his 14 findings, and a lot of those are negative. He explains what is wrong, but he also says

It is important for the review to stress that the vast majority of staff, including management, are working well in a difficult environment and with young people of difficult and challenging backgrounds and behaviours. The findings of this review are not meant to demean their good intentions but rather to improve the way the detention system operates into the future.

It is important to put that into context.

He lists the recommendations on page 18 of the report. I will throw in my recommendation about using animals in the rehabilitation process. Many of these young people have complex backgrounds, but we cannot give up. It would be good if we can get these kids out bush. I raised this issue some years ago when we were discussing the future of Mataranka Station, and whether it could be used as an education or work camp facility. If 96% of the population in youth detention is Indigenous and 90% are male, a fair number of them must come from the bush and would relish the idea that they could get on a horse and learn some cattle mustering skills, animal husbandry or the workings of a pastoral property.

Although we are looking at one facility, I hope we can break away from that and take kids out bush. I believe the philosophy behind the Wildman River model was good, even though it was not perfect. If we use Mataranka for a similar outcome it would be great.

Many people know that I umpire, and some say not very well. I have always been impressed that some prisoners are released to umpire Australian Rules football. Some of the other umpires are miles younger than me, they are juveniles. There may be some options there. Some might say that is not much, but through umpiring they can learn to be responsible. They learn to be leaders; they are the ones making the decisions. If a ball goes out of bounds they tell players to stop; they are in control. It is a good program not only because young people learn those disciplines through being leaders of the game, but they can take those skills back to their community.

The AFL has been trying to encourage Aboriginal people to umpire games. It is a little thing but an important one. We are looking for ways to

rehabilitate some of these young people. I raise that because that is option not necessarily in this document, but important to consider.

As the members for Casuarina and Fannie Bay asked in the previous debate, why are those young people there in the first place? That is the \$64m question. How can we stop it? The increase in the number of people going through detention is alarming. I am not sure how long ago I visited Don Dale, but I used to go there occasionally to look at the facilities. There were about 27, and it may have been less than that ...

Mr Elferink: Often 40 or 50.

Mr WOOD: It is concerning that the figures have gone up considerably.

I presume some case studies are done for these young people. It is not for me to ask the details of those case studies, but it would be interesting to know their individual backgrounds. How did they end up in this place? When I visited the West Central Community Correctional Facility in Marysville, Ohio, six or seven men sat in front of me at a table, and all of them explained their early life and how they ended up in prison. Each of them said they had broken families and got into drugs or alcohol at a very early age. If they had a broken family and got into drugs or alcohol early, you knew they would end up in the prison system.

I remember saying to them, 'When you get out ...,' because they were going through what I call a very tough therapeutic centre where their lives change for the better. It is a self-help therapeutic centre where everyone works for each other's benefit. It is disciplinary but also self-help. When they got out they did pretty well, so I said to them, 'If you ever go to the Territory I will take you fishing', because anybody who has been through the system deserves a pat on the back.

It makes you wonder whether we have the same issues in our society, where the family background is next to nothing and alcohol and drugs come into their lives at an early stage, leading to crime. The big question is how can we change that? I believe unemployment is one of the most dreadful things in our society.

There is no reason for anyone, especially in remote areas, to be unemployed. If the government would fund councils in those areas, at least enough work would be available to give people a reason to get up in the morning and go somewhere. As they develop skills, those people have a chance to improve themselves and move on to other jobs, which would improve their life overall.

I could speak about this issue for ages; it is a difficult area. It may sound funny but chooks, dogs and horses can make a big difference to people's lives. We know this from older people; what do we call those types of pets? There is a name for them.

Ms Lawrie: Companion animals.

Mr WOOD: Companion animals, yes – they give someone a companion. This is something the government should look at. I do not think it is a silly idea; if we can help a young person get themselves back on track it will be worthwhile looking at.

Visitors

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students from Palmerston Senior College, accompanied by Jacqueline Connolly. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to our visitors and hope you enjoy your visit to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr ELFERINK (Correctional Services): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank members opposite for their observations.

I do not often try to buy into these things at a personal level, but I feel an affinity with these kids because I got into strife as a kid. If it was not for the fact that no complaints were forthcoming, I would have a good criminal record to go forward with.

I got lucky in an important way when I was younger, perhaps through my father's Rotary connections; I am not sure, as the secret went with him to the grave. I got into the Police cadets, which was then an apprentice police system in the early 1980s. The gift was that it introduced me to a disciplined environment. I was a screwed up, mixed up kid, but I was lucky to get into that system. As a consequence, it paved the way forward for me in a way that the member for Nelson understands.

I understood what you said about Wildman River. Paul Nuku was not soft on those boys. God rest his soul, I believe he did a terrific job; he had the right balance you need in that type of environment. He was as hard as bloody nails, but only where he needed to be. Then he would put his arm around the boy and say, 'Son, you still have a lot to learn'. He used to do things which nowadays would make people's hair stand on end. I would not be surprised if the odd kid got a

clip under the earhole, but it was always for the right reasons.

He used boxing a lot of the time. Nowadays in certain circles you say, 'Get young fellows boxing'. In my opinion, whilst this is not government policy, there is nothing wrong with getting a couple of young fellows into a ring and work out what makes them tick ...

Mr Wood: There are three boxing clubs in the rural area.

Mr ELFERINK: I hear you and understand what you are talking about. If it had not been for the two years of personal training I went through – eight hours a week of running and God knows what else; I was in the best condition of my whole life at that time. That placed structures around me. Boys are misunderstood in many respects, as if we have to throw our arms around them and cuddle them. They need to be supported emotionally, but there is nothing wrong with challenging and asking something of them. Taking on responsibilities discovering what their limitations are turns them into young men.

Everything I have heard today is correct. I hear the member for Casuarina in relation to these kids in the system, and it has not fallen on deaf ears. You referred to kids in custody, but most of them are kids in care. They are processed twice through the system because their parents are completely disengaged with them. They do not care; worse, they abuse them and worse again, they rape them. This happens to some of these kids and they end up with no grounding and no sense of self, responsibility or duty because they have not learnt it at home. To think government can become a good parent – it cannot.

A good parent has a connection with the kid. Paul Nuku at Wildman River was a pseudo parent in the sense he was there showing guidance, but also placing expectations on these kids. Even with all his passion, the contact with a kid was often not sufficient to carry that kid through life. Curiously, an anecdote was shared at his funeral that one of these kids left custody and got into trouble. I cannot remember the anecdote, but the first response for this kid was to contact Paul and say, 'What do I do? I am in trouble.'

Clearly there was a connection. Despite the fact he was hard – he made them box, run and work; he could be horrible and probably yelled and swore at them – they still went to him in the first instance. They knew somewhere in that relationship there was affection, closeness and respect between him and the boys. Young men in groups form a bond. Look at police squads, military units and all of those things. Once they bond it is often for life.

You still see old men in RSL clubs thinking about the days they were in service. They are still bonding and talking to the same guys they went through service with. This is often a close and intimate bond. How do you develop that?

We expect the roll-out of the youth justice strategy soon and we make some announcements on that. I want to ensure that our response to youth in custody results in them asking themselves, 'Who am I? What can I do better? Can I bond with someone for the first time in my life?'

I understand the politics of this; the member for Casuarina threw a comment at me that I said government does not have a role. I did not say exactly that. Government does not have a primary role in these kids' lives, nor should it. The primary role in these kids' lives should be their parents. It is fine to talk about programs and make suggestions on things happening in Alice Springs, but without parental engagement it is like sticking a Band-Aid on an amputation. This is their lives, and the frustrating thing is you cannot talk about what happens in Alice Springs in isolation and say that if we had a certain youth program everything would be sweetness and light, because you would be sorely disappointed.

There are bigger things at play. The member for Nelson is good at identifying the field and talking about jobs. I wish we could employ every person in every remote community, but that would be 30 000 jobs, which is one-and-a-half times the size of the existing public service and we do not have the budget for it. There is a source of money which is paid already; it is called welfare.

If I drove into Yuendumu today, I could find a year's worth of work for the whole population without leaving the town boundaries. We are on the same page; this comes down to the issue of passive welfare which you and I stridently despise. We are of one mind on this issue and passive welfare continues to be the corrosive rot that chews its way through Aboriginal society especially, but not exclusively.

If you find passive welfare in any form, in any country in the world, you will see the same rancid problems with drug and alcohol abuse, and other manifestations of lives wasted and destroyed by the vehicle of indifference and self-indulgence which, in many instances, comes with being a passive welfare recipient.

I will chat with the member for Nelson later about Wildman River. We will make some announcements hopefully in the not so distant future, not necessarily about the old Wildman River site, but what he said about it did not fall on deaf ears. I am not ready to make announcements yet, but I am happy to brief the

member for Nelson in-confidence to give him some comfort in how we will go forward.

You mentioned Mataranka; as I said yesterday, conversations are being had. I cannot make any announcements yet as we are not guaranteed any results, but I am mindful of what you were talking about. It has not fallen over, but it just has not been landed yet. I hope that gives you sufficient comfort at this point.

It all comes down to this issue of the nature of these kids. I am often dismayed when I speak to these kids. I occasionally spend time at the youth justice facility and I talk to them. In so many ways I recognise them because of the experiences of my youth; I also find this in correctional facilities when talking to adult prisoners. I have a certain empathy and I often think to myself there but for the grace of God go I, because the choices we make early in life – our parents warn us of this – stick with us for life.

I got plain old lucky; it is not any more technical than that. The choices I ended up making finally saw me go into the police force, give up the grog and get an education under my belt with a couple of degrees. I got myself lawyered up with post-graduate studies, got elected and all of a sudden I was the Attorney-General of the Northern Territory. This privilege was bestowed upon me and I do not want to waste it by being flippant or political in this environment, but I want to see the best possible practical results.

I want to attend to one last issue which has been consistently raised in relation to YSOS and the Alice Springs youth services.

I was presented with a straightforward decision as the minister responsible for child protection. The outreach service available on the streets of Alice Springs employed child protection workers. Essentially, the service located kids and took them home, and there was often a conversation on the way home. It was no more complex than that, and other services available on the streets were doing similar things.

My problem is that I have to live within limited resources. The member for Casuarina has spent a lot of time on her feet stating the things we should do and I would love to have the ability to do them all. Should she ever come into government, the Treasurer will challenge those assertions.

You must then strike a balance. There are child protection issues in Alice Springs. Some investigations are required into children who have been neglected, abused and in some sad instances sexually abused by parents or family members. One must look at one's resources and

ask, 'What will I do with child protection workers? Will I get them to drive around at night, essentially providing a taxi service to get kids home? Or can I place them on the front line of protecting children who are raped, abused and neglected?' I had to make that straight-up decision, and I had no problem making it. If other resources become available over time to provide other services, such as the ones described by the member for Casuarina, then I will sign up to it in a heartbeat. As the minister responsible for child protection I take that role very seriously.

I will not do what the former government did, which is say, 'We will call it the Department of Children and Families and send you into an environment where everybody else can sit back and watch you fix children and their families'. That does not and will not work; it creates an embattled environment in a public service department because everybody is poking at them saying, 'Why are you guys screwing up?' There are many roles in Education, Health, Corrections, and Police, which need to respond to what is happening in the child protection environment.

To leave them there and to watch it is like sending a platoon into the middle of a battle space and allowing them to be shot at by the enemy, whilst the whole army kicks back and watches it all unfold. That erodes the enthusiasm of the workers in that field and gives them a sense of embattlement, which is encouraged by direct criticism of their work when they do the best they can do. I have such enormous regard for the work of those child protection workers that I will not leave them there by themselves. If you draw them back into the army, the whole army then steps forward. That is what we are doing as a government.

This provides us with challenges, but also with effective responses. The response I have described on a number of occasions in the last few weeks is to domestic violence. The families producing these neglected children in the criminal justice system, and producing truancy and health issues, are invariably the families with domestic violence problems.

This is why we have rolled out a domestic violence policy which sees 11 government departments across the Northern Territory sitting down on a service delivery level, sharing information with NGOs present. When a domestic violence situation occurs the police will say, for example, 'We have dealt with Bill Smith and arrested him for punching his wife'. The Department of Health will ask what we can do for Mrs Smith, and child protection and Education will ask what we can do for the Smith kids. We then start to build structures around it. The member for

Casuarina referred to wraparound services; that is how you do it.

The problem is that you cannot do it remotely. As I said earlier, if you try to run somebody else's life remotely you will screw it up. Goodness gracious me, I have enough trouble dealing with my wife and two kids and making sure my family is in order, let alone fixing a family in Yuendumu. Somehow as public policy makers we sit around and suggest that we do this all the time.

The intervention was run from Canberra. If you ask the Canberra bureaucrat who made those decisions to find Yuendumu on a map, nine times out of 10 they could not do it. Magically, with the wave of a bureaucratic wand, there is the solution and we can fix that family. What nonsense.

The response needs to be locally driven by those who know the players in the field. It includes the local PC Plod, the local frontline child protection worker, educator, health worker or NGO staff – such as the Salvation Army – who all know these people and can create a plan around instances of family violence.

When the program was run in Alice Springs, from every 100 cases there was a 3% return rate. That is phenomenal. The response can be tailor-made on the ground by the people involved. The devolution of that authority has to be down the front end. If executive directors talk to other executive directors you have missed the point. The local PC Plod needs to talk to the childcare worker, because they know these families intimately. You can then create a plan specific to that family.

The more remote you become when making a plan or public policy pronouncement of this nature, the more general you have to be. The more general you are the more exceptions you will create. That is an invariable and fundamental truism. It is a little like Isaac Newton's inverse square law. Your effectiveness as a government department is directly and inversely proportional to your distance from the service you are trying to deliver. If you are up the front end and involved, you will achieve much better results than trying to wave a wand from some distant source.

Nevertheless I am grateful for the positive contribution the member for Casuarina tried to make, and I am grateful to the member for Nelson for his – once again – homespun style which demonstrates a deep understanding of the nature of these kids. I suspect the member for Nelson, because of his homespun style, has come through the world in a bumpy way and lived more fulsomely than many other people in this House may have done. Nevertheless he has come to some conclusions over the years. Whilst the

member for Nelson and I have travelled different paths on this issue, we have come to similar conclusions.

I thank all honourable members for their contribution to this debate. My deep and abiding thanks go to the professionalism and straightforwardness of Mr Michael Vita in the report he has given us today. This pathway forward will be studied, mapped out and followed.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

The Assembly suspended.

PAIRING ARRANGEMENT

Member for Araluen and Member for Nightcliff

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received a document for pairs for all day 26 February 2015 between the member for Araluen and the member for Nightcliff. It is signed by both Whips.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Cyclone Response, Recovery and Redevelopment

Mr GILES (Chief Minister): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to provide the House with an update on ex-Tropical Cyclone Lam and the recovery efforts that are continuing throughout northeast Arnhem Land.

On the evening of Thursday 19 February, Cyclone Lam tracked towards the Territory as a Category 4 tropical cyclone. It was an unpredictable system which hovered over the warm waters off our coast, building in intensity for several days. It was a scary time for many of those in its path. As it crossed the coast near Elcho Island the cyclonic winds peaked at an estimated 260 km/h. It caused extensive damage to Galiwinku, Ramingining, Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak and outlying homelands. Hundreds of people took refuge as strong winds battered down houses, brought down trees and cut essential services. Territorians watched on anxiously, especially those with family and friends in Arnhem Land. As the winds eased and people began emerging from shelters, it was quickly established that despite the damage no lives were lost, and for this we must be hugely thankful.

There has only been one reported injury to date; a nine-year-old child suffered an electrical burn to the foot as a result of contact with a downed power line in Milingimbi. The child is being treated at Royal Darwin Hospital and is in a stable condition. I wish that child a speedy recovery.

It is a testament to the resilience of those communities that they were ready and knew to

take shelter when the time came. It is also a testament to the police, emergency services, public servants, Bureau of Meteorology staff and the numerous volunteers who have worked tirelessly to ensure the Territory was prepared for the worst.

Days before the cyclone hit preparations were in full swing, with police running a 24-hour emergency operations centre at Berrimah. From here, acting on advice from the Bureau of Meteorology, police quickly identified which communities were under threat and responded accordingly. This process worked well. It was put into full effect in the early hours of the morning of Thursday 19 February. A decision was made then to evacuate Warruwi as the cyclone crept closer to the Territory.

The member for Arafura was pleased to know the residents of Goulburn Island were protected. In just a few hours a full scale evacuation plan was up and running. Warruwi residents were flown to Darwin then returned when the all clear was given. This was a mammoth effort. It was executed with precision and professionalism with cooperation from the airlines and major companies which helped us source the aircraft.

While this was all happening police, public servants and volunteers opened shelters in other communities, ensuring residents were aware of the dangers and well prepared. This type of planning and foresight kept people safe in their time of need. I thank all of those people involved in the initial response. Without their efforts things could have turned out differently. I acknowledge the leadership of Police, Fire and Emergency Services, especially Acting Commissioner Reece Kershaw, Northern Territory Emergency Service Commander Bruce Porter, and Director of Northern Territory Emergency Services Andrew Warton.

I also pay tribute to the coordination of the Northern Territory Public Service's response by the Department of the Chief Minister's Acting Chief Executive Officer Michael Tennant. The way you and your staff conducted yourself and your teams during the response is to be commended. I wish to express my appreciation to all of the government workers and volunteers involved. I know many of you have been working long hours in difficult conditions. I want you all to know that your efforts are appreciated not only by me and the Country Liberals members of parliament, but all Territorians, especially the local communities involved.

Today it was an honour to meet many of the workers who were at the emergency operations centre and I thank them for their efforts. I recognise those staff members were but a fraction

of the hundreds of people involved tirelessly in working since Cyclone Lam hit our Territory.

We have extended the state of emergency to Friday this week. This is to allow recovery efforts to continue smoothly, ensure the safe restoration of essential services, and maintain the health and safety of residents. The declared areas of the state of emergency include Milingimbi, Ramingining, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak and associated homelands, including Mapuru.

With the initial response behind us the long road to recovery has begun. The task ahead is huge, but with the right people and skills we will get the right results. Mr Jim Rogers from the Department of the Chief Minister in Nhulunbuy has been appointed Regional Recovery Coordinator. Jim and his staff have been on the ground working tirelessly in the affected communities coordinating recovery efforts. These efforts have also been supported by the emergency operations centre in Darwin.

The Northern Territory government's Cyclone Lam recovery operation is now focused on ensuring residents can safely return to their homes as soon as possible. A housing recovery plan is being actioned following impact assessments in all four major communities affected by Cyclone Lam. As part of this recovery plan we will ensure uninhabitable houses that only need minor repairs are targeted first by repair contractors. A short-term emergency accommodation camp will be established at Galiwinku on Elcho Island to house residents whose homes have been heavily damaged.

Roads are being cleared of tree debris to help residents return to homelands and additional Northern Territory Emergency Service volunteers with chainsaws have been flown to Galiwinku, Ramingining and Millingimbi to assist with clearing dangerous fallen trees and trees affecting power lines. Power and Water staff have restored the majority of the high- and low-voltage power systems in each community and electrical contractors are restoring individual household electricity connections. Drinking water and sewerage services have been restored to all communities.

Municipal services, including waste management, are now operating in all communities. The regional council is also progressively returning other agency services, including night patrol, Centrelink, Australia Post, youth services and childcare services. Technical teams have begun assessment of the Marthakal and Milingimbi homelands. Schools at Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, Maningrida, Gapuwiyak, Waruwi, Wugularr and Bulman have reopened. The Northern Territory and Australian governments are now visiting

communities affected by Cyclone Lam and taking applications for relief payments for residents and their families.

It is anticipated that the first round of payments to eligible residents will be made within a week and every effort will be undertaken to conduct all payments in a timely manner. The Department of Children and Families are undertaking the relief payment process on behalf of the Australian government.

Health centres in all four affected communities are operating and have continued to offer emergency services where possible. The Department of Health is working with the Australian government to ensure these centres get the support they need in this recovery time of crisis.

Public health messages on topics such as food safety, drinking water, asbestos, hygiene, the risk of disease and mosquitoes have been translated into Yolngu Matha to be broadcast throughout the community radio stations; I thank them for their cooperation.

In the community of Waruwi, in the electorate of Arafura, the majority of residents who were evacuated have been returned to Goulburn Island already.

I will now update the House with more detailed information on those communities impacted by the ex-tropical cyclone.

Galiwinku, with a population of 2200, sustained most of the damage. This community has a total of 243 tenants currently displaced. The most recent figures in public housing are: 63 with minor damage; 122 with moderate damage; 14 with severe damage; and 73 are still to be inspected.

We are working with Emergency Management Australia and the New South Wales Rural Fire Service to establish a short-term emergency accommodation shelter at Galiwinku.

The shelter was previously used immediately after bushfires in New South Wales. It can safely house up to 300 residents and will be used to accommodate residents currently sheltering at Shepherdson College or with family.

The 15 tonne emergency shelter accommodation arrived in Darwin today and has been sent on a barge to Galiwinku. It is expected that the short-term accommodation will arrive in Galiwinku tomorrow afternoon. It can take up to 24 hours to construct, establish and set up.

After a short delay with the defence plane delivering the camp, we now aim to have the camp open to residents by Monday. Power and

water has reviewed service options and is working hard to ensure the site is ready to connect power, water and sewerage to the facility.

This will mean the school can reopen and kids can go back to the normality of a school day. This is a very important step in the process of recovery. I will make a decision on the timing around opening Shepherdson College sometime tomorrow.

The accommodation camp is an immediate solution for the coming weeks but we are looking at other accommodation options, such as demountable containers, which can be provided by local Territory companies while the wider rebuilding work is undertaken.

Other recovery works in Galiwinku are also under way and works to clear trees from roads and power lines are a priority. More than 1000 trees are strewn across the local roads. The Galiwinku health clinic remains operational. Additional staff have been deployed to relieve doctors, nurses and health workers. Crews arrived in Galiwinku on Tuesday to assist with the assessment and remediation of asbestos.

The local store operators have put in a mammoth effort to reopen quickly and supply food and other essentials to the community. We want to support all community businesses; once we have attended to the urgent priorities of health and safety, we will send business support staff to Galiwinku to provide any assistance required.

The barge is able to land at Galiwinku and supplies including food, water and other essentials were delivered to the community on Saturday with the normal delivery schedule to follow.

The majority of high- and low-voltage power systems have been restored. A residual issue with a section of the high-voltage power system is expected to be resolved today with the arrival of an alternate cable. Plumbing and electrical contractors are assisting with individual homes that are experiencing issues related to toilets and power supply. All water and sewer works have been completed.

Ramingining, with a population of 800, has an estimated total of 117 tenants displaced. The most recent figures in relation to government and employee housing in Ramingining are: 73 with minor damage; 35 with moderate damage; and two with severe damage. A total of 110 homes in the community are damaged.

Emergency services volunteers, private contractors and local regional council staff along with the community are working as a team to remove trees from power lines, housing and around the community. There is extensive

damage inside the Ramingining School grounds, with a number of trees down. The school is likely to remain closed for the remainder of the week while repair assessments are completed and damaged buildings are made safe.

All of the high-voltage and the majority of the low-voltage systems have been restored. Electricians are required to connect individual homes and they are currently being mobilised to the community. As of this morning, 64% of customers had power to their home or business. The power has been restored to the council offices and local supermarket, and it is being restored to local small businesses as a priority.

Sewerage and water services have been restored. Works are being undertaken to reinstate the second water tank for the community. The most recent count on the ground indicates that there are 122 lots with power on, 29 requiring new service lines and 40 damaged houses requiring a certificate of compliance from a licensed electrician. These must be confirmed by housing assessors.

Ramingining Community Health Centre continues to provide emergency services and it reopened on Monday. A payment team was set up at the Women's Safe House on Tuesday. It will be operational today and tomorrow, and again on Tuesday and Wednesday next week.

The road to the barge opened on Sunday; anyone who knows Ramingining is aware that it is a long road to the barge. The barge landing is in operation and it continues to support the normal delivery of goods and services to the community. The Ramingining supermarket is well-stocked and further deliveries are now possible.

The Northern Territory government wants to support all community businesses. Again, once we have attended to the urgent priorities of health and safety, we will send Department of Business support staff to Ramingining to talk with business operators and see what assistance we can provide.

Work is currently under way to progressively clear and restore power lines to outstations in the Ramingining area. The following outstations are reported with the following: in Ngangalala, of the 10 houses, seven have power, two require service lines and one damaged house requires a certificate of compliance from a licensed electrician; in Yathalamarra, of the nine houses, none have power, four require service lines and five require a certificate of compliance. In the airport camp of those six houses, three have power, two require new service lines and one requires a certificate of compliance.

In Milingimbi, with a population of 1500, it has a total of 107 residents displaced. The most recent figures in relation to public and government employee housing in Milingimbi are: 90 with minor damage; 16 with moderate damage; one with severe damage; and 35 are yet to be inspected. Temporary roof repairs are being progressed to prevent further water damage and electrical contractors are on site assisting with household electrical issues. The Department of Housing sent a crew to assist the community and Northern Territory Emergency Service crews with removing damaged trees in the community yesterday.

The Milingimbi School has extensive damage, including water damage to all classrooms and is likely to remain closed for the remainder of the week. All of the high-voltage and the majority of the low-voltage power systems have been restored. Electricians are on the ground working to connect individual houses and are currently working in the community. As of this morning, 77% of customers had power to their home or business. The most recent count on the ground indicates 143 lots with power on, seven requiring new services and 31 damaged houses requiring a certificate of compliance from a licensed electrician.

Power is being restored to local small businesses as a priority. Sewerage and water services have been restored. Welfare payment teams are in Milingimbi today. The health centre continued to provide emergency services throughout and reopened again on Monday. The barge landing and road are open in Milingimbi, and normal deliveries are now possible. The Milingimbi supermarket is well-stocked and further deliveries are possible. The town fuel supply was contaminated by water, and emergency fuel supplies were deployed to Milingimbi yesterday.

Once we have attended to the urgent priorities of health and safety we will send the Department of Business support staff to talk with business operators to see what assistance we can provide.

Gapuwiyak has a population of 850. Fortunately, very few houses received any damage and we will continue to assess any issues in the coming weeks. The school at Gapuwiyak has reopened and the health clinic is open. The Gapuwiyak store is open and well-stocked, and the barge landing and road are open with normal deliveries possible. A welfare support team is expected to attend the community early next week.

In regards to the way forward, as outlined we are currently in the recovery phase but we are now thinking about redevelopment in the longer term. Tropical Cyclone Lam's destruction gives our affected communities an opportunity to redevelop.

Instead of us repairing only what has been destroyed, we are engaging with the local communities about their long-term visions and aspirations for their communities, especially as we invest in replacement infrastructure. We want to work alongside them to redevelop their communities and achieve those aspirations.

The major objectives of this redevelopment phase are:

- redevelopment of Galiwinku, Milingimbi, Gapuwiyak and Ramingining and surrounding outstations to deliver infrastructure and services which meet the long-term needs of the communities and the region
- ensuring the redevelopment of the communities and the region supports community and government objectives for social and economic outcomes, including for economic growth and stronger societies
- ensuring the aspirations of the communities and other key stakeholders are recognised in the planning and delivery of the redevelopment phase
- maximising local training and job opportunities during delivery.

The affected residents will be the best judges and chief drivers of delivering the best outcomes for redevelopment. We recognise that community leaders will be an important and necessary part of the reconstruction process. I look forward to working with local redevelopment committees in each affected community as we embark on this rebuilding project. They will comprise: traditional owners and community leaders; local authorities under the reformed local government structure; local businesses and organisations; and local government. Each community will be supported by an on-the-ground Northern Territory government local redevelopment coordinator.

Cyclone Lam was a destructive weather event, but this government is determined to ensure it is also an opportunity to redevelop and bring residents a brighter economic future. I will have more to say about this in the coming weeks.

In closing, I acknowledge the impressive way impacted residents have approached this recovery. I am sure it has not been easy on them, their families and their friends. Their high spirits and positive attitude in the face of such adversity have been remarkable.

I thank everyone involved in the enormous relief and recovery effort to get people back in their houses as quickly as possible. You have done an amazing job and you are a credit to your agencies

and organisations. The Northern Territory is extremely proud of all your efforts. On behalf of those people affected by the cyclone, I thank the thousands of people who have helped out; you have made those people's lives much easier.

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

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this statement to the House. I echo many of his sentiments, especially in acknowledging the enormous effort across the board to support affected communities across Arnhem Land in the lead up to, during, and the recovery phase of Cyclone Lam. An enormous clean-up effort has been required, as outlined by the Chief Minister on a number of levels.

The Leader of the Opposition will speak to this statement as well. My statement comes from the perspective of local member, especially through my close relationship with the homelands within my electorate, and the community of Galiwinku on Elcho Island. I pay tribute to all of the communities that have literally weathered this storm, in Milingimbi, Ramingining and the surrounding homelands, Maningrida, Goulburn Island, my electorate and Gapuwiyak.

Tropical Cyclone Lam was heading our way as we sat in parliament last week. I am grateful for the leave of absence granted to me so I could return home to my family and my community last Thursday morning, having gone to the airport the previous morning in the hopes of getting on the Airnorth flight along with many other locals and a few journalists. We were disappointed to learn that we were unable to travel due to Gove airport being closed, but these decisions are made on the basis of safety and we abide by them.

We were greatly relieved on Thursday morning to arrive at Darwin airport and learn that the Airnorth flight was travelling to Gove, into strong winds and heavy rain. I do not know his name, but I pay tribute to the Airnorth pilot who flew the 70-seater jet to Gove that morning. His landing on the Gove airstrip was textbook perfect despite the challenging conditions to fly in. I was advised by a member of staff at Gove airport that Airnorth made sure its most experienced pilot flew into Gove that day and on to Cairns. The passengers were grateful for his experience and skill.

Thursday was a strange day in Nhulunbuy. It was very windy and rainy throughout the day; it felt a ghost town and businesses had closed. I worked in my office for a few hours and took the opportunity to phone around communities. I started phoning on Wednesday when I realised I could not leave Darwin. The phone calls were to

places like Gapuwiyak, to residents in the homelands in the path of the cyclone, also to those not in the path of the cyclone but who would cop the wind and rain. I was heartened when speaking to people who felt well-prepared for the cyclone by stowing items away, ensuring they had water stored and emergency plans in place. Preparedness is the key to any critical event, especially when a cyclone is coming and you have time to prepare.

I have no doubt the preparedness of communities across Arnhem Land in the face of Cyclone Lam minimised harm to people. The fact there were no casualties or major injuries is remarkable. However, nature is unpredictable and there is not much one can do about trees and buildings affected by strong winds. I have seen in many photographs, and with my own eyes, the damage that has been wrought is remarkable.

I followed it closely throughout Thursday afternoon. I do not know where we would be without social media; people from places like Elcho Island and Gove were posting what was happening in their communities through good old Facebook noticeboard pages, as phone lines were still open. Communications dropped out at Elcho Island late on Thursday afternoon. With it we lost any report of what was happening. Power was gone and telecommunications were gone.

However, there were satellite phones and police were working with essential and emergency services at Galiwinku and across the communities of Milingimbi and Ramingining, monitoring the path of the cyclone and ensuring people had taken shelter. The cyclone shelters at Galiwinku were opened on Tuesday night so people sought shelter as early as that. There were two cyclone shelters in Galiwinku; one was at Shepherdson College in a huge school hall which was built as part of the federal government's Building the Education Revolution funding. It was not designed to be a cyclone shelter but it did a darn good job. It continues to house a couple of hundred people there who are now homeless, but the situation will be resolved come Sunday with the new emergency shelter. The shelter will arrive in Galiwinku tomorrow; it will be erected on Saturday and should be operational by Sunday which is fantastic, because some people have been left homeless as a result of Cyclone Lam.

The other cyclone shelter in Galiwinku is at the Marthakal workshop. I saw the conversion they did; they moved all of their equipment out. There are ablution facilities available there. People came with their bags of belongings, mattresses and bedding. The people who sheltered there were very thankful to Marthakal and the staff who looked after them.

On Friday we were all desperate to know what had happened in Galiwinku. Telecommunications were still down but we were getting word through other outlets that people were safe; all we knew was that there had been quite extensive damage.

Early on Saturday morning I made a decision to travel to Galiwinku and a couple of the homelands, pending pilots' judgements about airstrips being safe to land on. By Saturday morning phones were up and running again and it was a great relief to talk to a number of my constituents out in the homelands, including Yinyikay, Matamata and the community of Mapuru which sits on the mainland just below and to the west of Elcho Island.

I was kindly offered a seat by the Chief Minister to travel with him, however, he was not certain when he would travel, it was unlikely to be before Sunday. I suspected that the Chief Minister would charter directly from Darwin to Galiwinku as there would be no need for him to pass through Nhulunbuy other than to pick me up, which would make it a longer trip. I made the decision to charter there and I am pleased that I did. I thank Laynhapuy homelands, their aviation arm – and Dan Wagg who runs it – responded to my call swiftly and confirmed there was one charter left for the day that I could access.

I flew with Dhangal Gurruwiwi, a senior woman from Birritjimi, which is a little community out near the old Rio Tinto refinery. She is a wonderful woman; she is a teacher and a linguist, and fluent in her own language and English. She is a wonderful travelling companion and was very anxious to catch up with family members who reside at Galiwinku. On the Thursday I called out to see her. I took some food to her family; like many others on the Wednesday night they went to the cyclone shelter in Nhulunbuy which was open. There were a couple of hundred people there, but she was quite pleased to get home.

When I met with her on Thursday afternoon, I was showing her on my iPhone the path of the cyclone as she did not have a radio and was unaware of where the cyclone was going. I sat in her carport with her for about half an hour and held the screen in front of her. She was on her phone to family members in Galiwinku, Milingimbi and Ramingining, and she described to them how the cyclone was tracking and which islands she thought it was coming towards. What a difference it made; even though there were people in cyclone shelters, the language barrier makes it difficult for people to understand exactly what is happening. It felt like a bush telegraph was operating out of Dhangal Gurruwiwi's carport on Thursday afternoon while she alerted as many people as she could to the fact the cyclone was tracking their way.

On Saturday I spoke with the people at Matamata, a beautiful little Gumatj homeland. People were anxious about how the families were at Matamata, because we could not get through. We tried a couple of phone numbers, including the public phone and senior woman Phyllis Batumbil, and we could not get through. People were increasingly anxious that they had not heard from her.

It was a huge relief on Saturday morning when somebody answered the public phone at Matamata. I was able to talk with Batumbil and understand the situation there. She was remarkably well and she explained that her little community was fine; there were only three adults who happened to be in the community during the cyclone, and her 11 dogs which she calls her children. Other family members were away on funeral business – Bapurru business – in Yirrkala. She was fine; she put in requests for things she wanted me to bring from Nhulunbuy, which included fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, and a big bottle of washing detergent because she had a lot of laundry to do.

That morning I spoke with Marcus Lacey at Yinyikay and his mother Balatj, and I understand they are all fine and there was no damage to their community or trees down. Like those in Matamata, they were also keen to receive some fresh fruit and vegetables and meat.

I went shopping to prepare to visit these communities; I picked up Dhangal on the way to the airport and was pleased to see Jim Rogers, the regional coordinator for cyclone recovery. Jim was also waiting for his charter flight with Laynha Air along with Bryan Hughes, the Arnhem Land Regional Director for Education. They were stocked up with the items they needed to take to government employees who flew to these communities earlier that morning.

I was delighted that our pilot, James, did a quick circuit over the airstrip at Yinyikay. He was happy and the airstrip was fine; residents had already told us that. We were able to land at Yinyikay for 20 minutes or so to say hello to the family. Everybody was fine; the chooks, dogs and cats were all fine and they were pleased to receive some visitors and to have food dropped to them. Dhangal was keen to share news with them.

Following on from Yinyikay we then pulled in at the homeland of Matamata, which was about a 10 minute charter ride. Typically the community of Matamata was remarkably neat and tidy, even though it had just been through a cyclone. Batumbil is incredibly proud of her community and she was very busy cleaning up around her community with the other two adults. She was also extremely proud of herself for managing to change the blades on the lawnmower in readiness

for one of the men to do the mowing. The community of Matamata looked as neat as a pin.

She was very well, but she asked me to give a message to parliament. I recorded it on a short video and I must put it on social media. It calls on both levels of government to deliver what they said they would a few years ago, which is build a proper cyclone shelter that would double as a community hall in Galiwinku.

It was a huge relief to hear that people at those two homelands were well. By the time we eventually landed at Galiwinku it was just after 4.30 pm. What struck Dhangal and I as we flew into Galiwinku was seeing from the air that the trees were stripped of leaves. Dhangal said it looked like a bushfire had been through because all the leaves from the trees were gone. It was a remarkable sight when we landed to see through to the police station, which you normally cannot see because of the trees. Places throughout the community which you normally cannot see are now visible from afar because there are no leafy trees blocking the view.

As we got into our hire car on Saturday afternoon – and I thank Marthakal Yolngu Airlines for providing me with a vehicle – it struck us how much work had been done. Crews had arrived early Friday morning and it struck us how much work had already been done to tidy the community up. Roads were cleared, the chainsaws had been out, many trees were down and had been pushed to the sides of roads, and power lines were down everywhere. Thanks to the Power and Water workers who were there since Friday morning, those power lines had been isolated to keep the community safe. There was no power, but there was running water.

It was a huge effort at Galiwinku. I acknowledge a number of organisations and individuals for their efforts. ALPA, the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation, which runs stores at Galiwinku, Ramingining and Milingimbi amongst others, was incredibly responsive to the community. There was no power so people could not use EFTPOS or their BasicsCard; ALPA generously provided many \$50 vouchers to allow people to purchase essential items. In total, ALPA's contribution to these affected communities is more than \$125 000, which is incredibly generous. This is what ALPA does; it is an excellent organisation which looks after the communities. I acknowledge ALPA, its CEO, Alastair King and the people who work on the ground in ALPA stores.

ALPA is a wonderful employer and trainer of Indigenous people. If you step into an ALPA store, almost without exception the people who work on the checkouts or stacking shelves are

Yolngu people. It is an incredible organisation, and very generous and supportive of the communities it operates in.

I also acknowledge the Miwatj Ngalkanbuy health clinic in Galiwinku. It was one of the first organisations to get its power and communications up and running as it has a generator. It was the first to receive news on the damage to the community and the status there. I thank Dr Lucas de Toca, the Medical Director, who ensured communications flowed through. People were keen to see rumours dispelled. I was asked if I heard that somebody had been killed in the cyclone. These types of rumours elevate anxiety levels in communities. To get word out as soon as possible that nobody was killed and everybody was fine provided enormous comfort to people.

I acknowledge Mr George Mu who owns and operates two stores at Galiwinku, one known as the top shop because it is at the top, and also the Bottom Shop which is at the bottom of Galiwinku next to the oval. I understand George had lost power and was losing an awful lot of stock, so he gave it away which was the smart thing to do and very generous. It was only going to waste, so George did his utmost to make sure people who needed food had access to it. One of his buildings suffered some damage in the roof. I hope George's business is getting back up and running.

Regrettably, there were looters in one of George's stores, which is just one of those things. We see crisis events happen around the world. Part of the aftermath always seems to include people who may be genuinely hungry and cannot find food anywhere else – which I find hard to believe, given there was ample food available at the shelters – or are simply opportunistic. They broke into George's top shop because the roof had lost some of its iron and offered a way in. Community leaders were very angry about this; I hope those who were looting have been found.

Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre played an enormous role in Galiwinku and provided shelter at the workshop. I acknowledge one of the senior women, a board member of Marthakal, Helen Nyomba. I am advised she played a lead role in keeping people organised in the shelter, especially with conveying messages once the cyclone was upon them that nobody could go outside.

I acknowledge Trevor Gurruwiwi, the CEO of Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre. He has shown strong community leadership throughout this event, as has the organisation. I am pleased to see the Marthakal building withstood the weather. Dhangal tells me it is because it was

solidly built with cypress pine harvested on the island many years ago in the mission days by Yolngu tradesmen.

I wish to acknowledge Yvonne Sutherland, the health services manager for Marthakal Homelands Health Service. She is an extremely experienced nurse and it was fantastic to see her return at the end of last year to Galiwinku in this job. She was there previously for a couple of years, running the Aged & Disability Services for the East Arnhem Regional Council. Yvonne is a tower of strength and possesses bucket loads of common sense. If there is a cyclone or some other crisis, Yvonne is the type of person you want around. She made available to the shelters whatever stock she could provide, from disinfectant to toilet paper, as well as tea, coffee, milk and sugar, and whatever they had in their stores within the clinic.

I also acknowledge Helen Nyomba's sister, Jane Garrwitju, Chair of Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre. She is another strong, vocal community member. She met the Chief Minister when he visited last Sunday. She is not afraid to ask hard questions and she questioned when housing would be fixed.

There was extensive damage to houses and I can only imagine what the community might have looked like if those 90 houses, built under SIHIP, were not there. Those 90 houses sheltered many families and stood up to a Category 4 cyclone; the term 'safe as houses' is true of those SIHIP houses. About 65 of those houses are in the new subdivision of Buthan. I visited a few families who sheltered there and they said they felt safe throughout the cyclone. Luckily enough, Buthan was one of the first areas of Galiwinku to have power restored by Saturday afternoon.

I acknowledge the police on Elcho Island. Forgive me if I do not remember all of their names. Senior Sergeant Brendan Muldoon like many others working during this cyclone, manning shelters, got very little sleep. When I chatted with him on Sunday he said things were starting to look up, and the night before he managed to get five hours sleep. As a matter of precaution and courtesy, I phoned police at Galiwinku on Saturday morning to be sure it was all right for me to travel there. I did not intend to be in anybody's way, but in an emergency disaster zone people want to minimise the number of travellers coming through. I went through that channel and was told it was okay for me to travel there. Brendan's offsider, John Worrall, did a remarkable effort in the days they were preparing for and enduring Cyclone Lam.

Tim Wethers is a police officer on Elcho Island. He and his wife Belinda have been residents on the island for nearly four years. Tim was the Rotary Club of Darwin Police Officer of the Year

last year for obvious reasons. He is a great policeman and a well-respected member of the community. I was very grateful because I planned to take my swag and camp on the floor of the Miwatj clinic, but Belinda Wethers sent me a message saying I was welcome to stay in their spare room, which I accepted. I should also add that Belinda was busy on social media posting updates. She posted the path map of the cyclone onto the Elcho Island noticeboard to keep people abreast of what was happening. Jazlie Grygoruk, who is also a resident of Galiwinku, was also keeping locals updated through the Elcho Island noticeboard.

Out of adversity there is always some kind of heart-warming event, and I have a great one from Galiwinku. Belinda Wethers was heavily pregnant with baby number four, and she flew out to Gove on Tuesday this week. She managed to go on the charter with Bryan Hughes. She was on that charter at 11 am with her husband, Tim and three children, Charlie, Billie and Dusty. Little baby boy, Bodie, was born at 2.50 pm at Gove District Hospital, weighing in at 2.4 kg. Congratulations to Tim and Belinda on the arrival of little Bodie. I have seen photographs; he is a dear little thing and thankfully things have turned out well for them. I am sure they will be itching to get back home to Galiwinku when it is safe to do so.

I also acknowledge teachers and other staff from Shepherdson College who worked tirelessly to man the school hall, which became a community cyclone shelter. It was the first time it had ever been utilised for that purpose.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 77, I request for the member an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Ms WALKER: I am sure across all of the communities affected by the cyclone there will be debriefing as to what worked well and what could be done better next time. Plans were pretty thin regarding how the Shepherdson College hall would operate as a cyclone shelter. Remarkably, people rallied and were organised. I especially want to acknowledge Marg Fenbury, Principal of Shepherdson College. I understand she did not get much sleep on the first couple of nights while in charge of that shelter. There were 400 or more people taking shelter there. It was a challenging environment for her to work in with so many people closed in, but all went well.

I do not have a list of names, but many other teachers rallied and made themselves available to help in the cyclone shelter at the school. When I visited on Sunday, families were still there. They had their little areas very neatly mapped out, with

blankets folded away for the next night. One lady was using a broom with a child alongside her, sweeping up dirt from the cyclone. There is a real community effort there. Bryan Hughes, our Regional Director for Education, was formerly Principal of Shepherdson College. One of his purposes in flying up there on Saturday was to look after the cyclone shelter at the school hall, in order to give Marg Fenbury a break. Thanks, Bryan, for doing that; I am sure your presence on the island was greatly appreciated.

East Arnhem Regional Council employees logged in and put in a remarkable effort. I understand the Council Services Manager Diana Roper, who has only been there for a few months, deserves a medal as she worked incredibly long hours. She is a very caring individual and I hope she is currently taking a break, because people were exhausted after dealing with this cyclone. They are still dealing with it; we are in the recovery phase. A few hundred people in Galiwinku have been left homeless.

I want to acknowledge another Northern Territory government employee who has worked incredibly hard to deal with this situation – the Chief Minister mentioned him – Jim Rogers. He is senior public servant in Nhulunbuy with DCM and has taken on the role of regional coordinator for recovery activities post-cyclone. I thank Jim for providing me with a briefing on Saturday night over a dinner, which was cooked up on a gas stove in the GEC quarters under a light running from a cord plugged in next door because they did not have any power.

Jim was accompanied to Elcho Island earlier in the morning by Tim Appo and Simone Gianelli, who are providing the local on-the-ground coordination for the recovery efforts. They are working very hard, long hours doing all manner of jobs. I saw Tim at Elcho the week before at the local authority meeting; one of the items for discussion was issues around repairs and maintenance for houses. He works incredibly hard in his job with Housing, to address the needs associated with repairs and maintenance. I joked with him about how he had been dealing with repairs and maintenance on these houses, and now has to deal with replacing and repairing dozens of them. He has a huge job in front of him, but he is a very capable individual. With good support from Simone Gianelli they will do an awesome job and the very best they can for the people at Galiwinku.

In Ramingining, from Nhulunbuy, Tim Pickford is working with Housing. I think Tim may have relocated to DCM, but I have no doubt that he will do an awesome job in Ramingining. In Milingimbi, the government's on-the-ground coordinator for recovery is Janine Bevis who has worked for the Department of Health in Nhulunbuy for a number

of years. She is an incredibly hard working and caring individual, and I have no doubt that she will also do a top notch job.

Trying to hold the fort in Nhulunbuy, Sharon Norris is doing an awful lot of work in coordinating things – similarly is her colleague Sarah Thurgood. I acknowledge all of those public servants working hard to ensure we get through the recovery phase and that people's lives are returned to a semblance of normality as soon as possible.

A number of volunteers want to help, through physically travelling to places, being at the end of a chainsaw or doing whatever they can. There are also people in the background rallying to get much needed goods. I want to acknowledge Jessica Dillon, who has been at the core of organising collections in Nhulunbuy. I think she started on Friday, collecting whatever people donated from their cupboards. There was need for linen, bedding, clothing, children's items, non-perishable food and water. Whilst water was restored there was a warning that as a precautionary measure people should boil it. That has now been lifted and the water is safe to drink. Thank you to Jessica Dillon for the enormous effort she has made. She was collecting things from people's houses, constantly out in her car – with two little kids, I might add – collecting items and delivering them to Toll.

I extend a huge thank you to Toll and to Fiona Goulding, who is a community-minded person working at Toll. Toll delivered the first lot of donated items from Gove to Elcho Island for free. It arrived there on Saturday, I think. These items were hugely welcomed. Jessica tells me that Dan Wagg from Laynha Air and Matthew Collins from Black Diamond Aviation have been completely awesome. Their charters heading to Galiwinku were taking bags of whatever they could fit on the planes, not only to Galiwinku, but also to Ramingining and Milingimbi.

Jim Rogers was so focused on the recovery efforts – I asked him on Saturday night how we can direct these efforts and where we can deliver these items. Who is going to sort them out when they are delivered? I suggested to Jim that the B'dik B'dik training shop, which is a successful enterprise at Elcho Island, might be the best drop-off point. Simon at the training shop has said he is happy to accept those items and they are sending them to people who need them.

Gawa sits at the top of Elcho Island. I take my hat off to Karen and Steve Fletcher. Karen is the Principal of Gawa Christian School; it is under the NT Christian Schools association. I acknowledge Harry and Sal Moes who also live up at Gawa, and Colin and Gotha Baker. The community of Gawa was evacuated. Steve and Harry were the

first ones on the ground on Tuesday morning, they went on the ranger boat. Their airstrip is fine. They have a big clean-up effort ahead of them, but are keen to get homelands restored so people can get back to their communities and relieve the pressure on services in Galiwinku. Best wishes to everybody at Gawa and the community of Banthula nearby.

I managed to stop in the homeland of Mapuru, where I also delivered much-needed food. I was delighted to see the people at Mapuru who survived well through this cyclone. I extend a huge thank you to Linda Miller, the Principal of Mapuru Christian School, who showed incredible leadership. I also thank all community members including Roslyn and Jackie.

The Chief Minister has spoken about redevelopment committees. I remind the government that local implementation plans – which are incredible planning documents under the Australian, Territory and local governments – are the go to documents. They have been dropped under the current local government, but so much work needs to be done to rebuild and redevelop. My thanks go to everybody involved in these efforts.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, I support the statement providing an update on Tropical Cyclone Lam delivered by the Chief Minister. The Power and Water Corporation Essential Service Operators – ESOs, as they are known – were on the ground in affected communities before, during and after the tropical cyclone.

The ESOs provided substantial support with preparation and, within several hours of the all clear being given on Friday, Power and Water crews had landed in the communities and were working with those ESOs in assessing the damage sustained from the extreme weather conditions of Tropical Cyclone Lam. The Power and Water crews and ESOs have achieved considerable outcomes and have put every effort into restoring essential services.

It is a testament to the dedication and commitment of the Power and Water crews, and their ESOs, that as of late Saturday afternoon water and sewerage services were fully restored to each of the four affected communities.

Repairs to the power distribution network and service connection to properties remain a top priority of the Power and Water crews. Power and Water crews and their ESOs are continuing to work tirelessly, and their engagement with local people has been steadfast.

Power and Water Corporation's engagement in support of Territorians is commendable. A dedicated bulletin can be found on the Power and Water Corporation webpage at: www.powerwater.com.au. This provides regular updates on service restoration. At the click of a mouse you can view the status of power, water and sewerage services in each community. I have the page open on the iPad in front of me and it shows how well we are progressing with restoration of power services. Most of the pie graphs are all green, which means a huge amount of work has been undertaken to get these services back up and running.

You can also view the structure of Power and Water crews on the ground doing the hard yards, ensuring residents have access to essential services. Feedback on the great work being achieved by the Power and Water crews and their ESOs has been overwhelming, exemplified by statements such as, 'This is what you call true workers, out straight away, getting power on'. Another was, 'Really glad to see that residents are getting services back'.

As I stated in this House last week, the Territory is one of the harshest environments in which to run a utility when you consider the prevalence of extreme weather conditions such as tropical cyclones. What the Power and Water crews and their ESOs have achieved since last Friday is nothing short of remarkable. They have served with passion and purpose.

I commend them for their preparation and response. I commend them for their hard work, dedication and expertise. As a mark of respect for their valuable contribution, I will visit the affected communities in the near future to personally thank Power and Water crews and their ESOs. On behalf of all Territorians, I extend a heartfelt thank you to the ESOs, the Power and Water Corporation and its staff for the service restoration to communities affected by Cyclone Lam. I applaud their efforts and wish to say well done.

Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for his statement to the House and for the regular updates he has provided to the Assembly, and Territorians, on the approaching cyclone threat and the subsequent recovery operations.

The threat and impact of cyclones has been on the minds of all Territorians this year after reflecting on the 40th anniversary of Cyclone Tracy. Thankfully there were no reports of serious harm to people as a consequence of Cyclone Lam, but there is significant damage to housing and other structures to deal with.

I am also mindful of the impact of harrowing cyclone experiences on families and children. The wellbeing of families and children continues as a key priority area of recovery action. People in our remote communities often wonder if they are being thought of elsewhere in Australia. Rest assured, the people of Galiwinku, Milingimbi, Ramingining and Gapuwiyak have been very much in the thoughts of all Territorians and Australians in recent weeks. My colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, has consistently reminded us that the cyclone affected areas also include many small homelands and smaller communities across northeast Arnhem Land and Elcho Island. We should also not forget the communities of Bulman, Beswick and Weemol, which were confronted with strong winds and flood damage as the cyclone moved south.

We have also been thinking of the other communities potentially affected by the cyclone, such as Nhulunbuy, Groote Eylandt, Maningrida and Warruwi. The wellbeing of Territorians preparing for the cyclone has been in our minds and our prayers. I acknowledge the importance of faith to many families in these towns, and the support of the church communities and networks. I am in awe of the fabulous work of local people in preparation for the cyclone and the immediate recovery action. Local community leaders, government workers including teachers, children and family workers, health staff, police, emergency services, transport staff, the East Arnhem Regional Council, and Shepherdson College which provided shelter for over 300 people. I pass on a personal thank you to Marg Fenbury, Principal of Shepherdson College, who I worked closely with for the best part of a decade when she was principal at Karama Primary School. Marg is an outstanding Territorian.

Miwatj health staff and the Marthakal Homelands Resource Centre have done a great job, as have the RJCP workers in the region, key organisations such as the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation, barge operators, air charter companies and other businesses in Darwin and Nhulunbuy.

The skills, quick response and commitment of Power and Water workers and the local essential services officers in restoring power and water supplies has been critical to recovery. I sincerely thank them for their readiness and quick response, often in very trying, difficult and dangerous conditions.

Thank you to our senior police and emergency service workers in Darwin, as well as the Bureau of Meteorology and emergency services centre staff. This extends to the staff of the Department of the Chief Minister and Northern Territory Emergency Services, who work in key

coordination roles, as well as the many NTES volunteers who helped on the ground.

I was especially pleased to see local community NTES crews kick into action, local emergency service teams – which were supported with funding while we were in government – and you can see how good they are on the ground doing local work.

I acknowledge the important role of social media, especially Facebook pages like the East Arnhem Community workers and ALPA RJCP, in keeping us all informed on what was happening. ALPA, led by Alastair King and his board of management, has done a great job in mobilising its resources, including more than \$120 000 of food aid within 24 hours.

Our mainstream media also responded well to the approaching cyclone and the damage to our communities, as well as the resilience of our communities. I thank all government and non-government workers in Darwin and elsewhere who quickly offered support and mobilised, ready to assist those affected by the cyclone. I thank the doctors and nurses at Royal Darwin Hospital, as well as the pilots and support staff assisting with the evacuation and accommodation of the Warruwi residents. I also thank staff and students at Ludmilla Primary School who welcomed the kids from Warruwi into their classrooms. It was a great initiative of the Department of Education to ensure the kids went to school.

I acknowledge the quick action in establishing emergency accommodation at Galiwinku, the support of Emergency Management Australia, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service and the Royal Australian Air Force in making this accommodation available so quickly. It is needed to help relieve the pressure on Shepherdson College so the school can get back to normal as soon as possible.

We now turn to the urgent and the important work of replacing damaged housing and rehousing displaced families. We have heard of more than 60 uninhabitable homes in Galiwinku, and some \$800m to \$100m or more in damage across the affected communities.

Things could have been worse. Many in Galiwinku were comforted that the 90 new and strong SIHIP houses stayed up. This experience reinforces the need for more work and investment in new, durable bush housing, and sound shelter for our coastal communities that face the risk of cyclones.

It is important that funding for cyclone recovery does not impact on the separate investments needed to build momentum in addressing housing

in our communities. It is critically important that the recovery and response to this cyclone is informed, and that the voice, experience and knowledge of local people is at the table and is heard.

I believe strong, local, consultative committees need to be established. These committees could draw on the local expertise. There are the RJCP programs, ALPA, the homelands resource centres and these are all local organisations that know the local capacity. They can be at the table explaining how to harness training and employment opportunities for local people living in and restoring their community. It is a sustainable and sensible approach, and I urge these local consultative committees to be established as quickly as possible if they are not already established.

A stand out of this event is the way local people stood up to help themselves, their extended families and their community. They have also looked out for their neighbouring communities, which includes extended family members. The people in Maningrida are worried about the people in Ramingining. The people throughout the homelands of northeast Arnhem Land are worried about their families on Elcho Island. Those family connections are strong, and the community was not only looking out for itself, it was looking out for neighbouring communities. It was truly beautiful to see.

As we know, they can only do so much by themselves. They need targeted and ongoing support. This must be informed by local experience and knowledge. The building response effort is significant and it provides significant opportunities in training and employment, and in harnessing the capacity of local organisations which can do the job well and provide opportunities for people in the communities. Whether it is Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, Marthakal or ALPA, all of these organisations have a role to play in ensuring they are at the table and not an afterthought.

One thing that struck me whilst watching the media coverage was the call of Miwatj health worker, Charlie Yebarrar, who noted that we must pay attention to the emotional distress caused to some people as a consequence of the cyclone. Can we please ensure in the coming weeks and months that we work with local families and our strong communities for a culturally appropriate approach. I understand, having been confronted with and surviving Cyclone Tracy, sometimes during the community's physical recovery not enough attention is paid to the emotional recovery of those who suffer trauma. It is traumatic to not know whether you will make it through the night; this is what people in these communities went

through. I am confident that with the call out by Miwatj health that they know how to sensibly do this work and how to approach it.

With the new portfolio of Mental Health, which the Leader of Government Business is responsible for, I request a dedicated pool of funding to provide support for people's wellbeing recovery. They are strong, vibrant, capable people, but all of us in strength and vibrancy also need some support. We can do the physical recovery, but let us also pay attention to the emotional and social recovery.

Nobody wants to see the devastation we have just seen across our communities. We can take great heart that the new buildings withstood well, and that the communities responded appropriately, and continue to do so every day. We can also take great heart that the government, non-government and private corporations involved in the preparation, aftermath and recovery did very well. Let us take heart that the recovery effort, although seriously significant, provides opportunities for a vibrant regional economic development program, which could be driven by local people in the communities and the great businesses of northeast Arnhem Land. I commend this statement to the House.

Mr KURRUPUWU (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for bringing the statement to the House. I also thank everyone here for allowing me to go to Maningrida this morning.

The people of Maningrida missed the cyclone. However, the community was still affected by significant wind and rain. There was no serious structural damage in Maningrida, though a number of trees were down and the roof of the museum was slightly damaged by falling tree branches.

Though there were no reports of serious damage at the outstations around Maningrida, a number of these are still cut off by flood waters and it will be some time before proper assessment can be done. I was told by some residents that the members of the police force did a good job in moving people into cyclone coded buildings. I thank the people of Arnhem Land and West Arnhem Land for their patience and goodwill as the recovery effort is undertaken. I also thank the volunteers and NT Emergency Service staff who have worked so well to keep the community safe. All people affected by this cyclone are in my thoughts and prayers.

Mrs PRICE (Local Government and Community Services): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for his statement to the House today, updating Territorians on the hard work of our government after Cyclone Lam.

Two of my departments are working around the clock in recovery efforts to get those communities back to normal. The Department of Housing is focused on ensuring our tenants are supported and can safely return to their homes. An initial assessment indicated the majority of public houses in the region escaped major damage. The public housing dwellings were built to code and withstood the Category 4 storm.

Department of Housing staff worked 24-hour rotating shifts, from last Friday to Sunday evening in the Darwin-based call centre. This was to ensure tenants at Galiwinku, Milingimbi, and Ramingining had access to support and information. The call centre is still operating during business hours to take calls from tenants with any concerns relating to Cyclone Lam.

In addition, my department has initiated an emergency housing operations team located at RCG Centre in Darwin. The team is led by Michael White, Executive Director Service Delivery, normally based in Alice Springs but temporarily relocated to Darwin to employ his skills as a former Northern Territory Police Commander. He has a wealth of experience in emergency management. To ensure a consistent approach, the team has been established in line with the emergency operations centre based in Berrimah.

The emergency housing operations team operates from 6 am to 9 pm daily, consisting of two rotational shifts. The emergency housing operations team will focus on assessment, welfare, accommodation, contractor coordination, communication with staff, contractors and tenants, and government department liaison.

There are 14 housing staff at the three most affected communities, Galiwinku, Milingimbi and Ramingining. They are assisting tenants with accommodation and other housing queries. A shift roster is being arranged to assist those 14 housing staff on the ground to avoid fatigue. This will enable them to carry out their amazing work, maintain their high spirits and continue their commitment to providing assistance to their fellow Territorians.

My department has also engaged a number of contractors to assist housing staff on the ground to undertake in-depth assessments and scope the repair requirements to these three most affected communities. Nhulunbuy office staff are also contributing to the whole-of-government recovery effort in the affected communities.

Darwin housing staff are also doing their bit by taking paid leave of absence to undertake volunteer work with non-government agencies assisting in the affected communities. An

increase in Public Housing Safety Officers is assisting tenants with high numbers of visitors as a result of remote tenants being temporarily relocated.

In Galiwinku my department has deployed six housing staff. In addition, plumbers and electricians were deployed to Galiwinku on Monday 23 February 2015 to assist with urgent works and returning residents to their dwellings. Asbestos contractors departed on Tuesday 24 February 2015 to commence removal of asbestos. A total of 272 dwellings have been assessed – this is only public housing. The damage reported includes: 63 dwellings with minor damage; 18 dwellings with moderate damage; 14 dwellings with severe damage; 104 dwellings with no damage; 73 dwellings are yet to be assessed; and 242 tenants have been displaced with an estimated repair cost of \$47.1m.

In Milingimbi my department has deployed four Housing staff, including managers from Nhulunbuy. A total of 142 dwellings have been assessed and the damage reported includes: 39 dwellings with minor damage; 17 dwellings with severe damage; 41 dwellings with no damage; 43 dwellings are yet to be assessed; and 107 tenants have been displaced, with an estimated repair cost of \$17.6m.

In Ramingining the Department of Housing has deployed four staff. A total of 110 dwellings have been assessed and damage reported includes: 44 dwellings with minor damage; 17 dwellings with moderate damage; seven dwellings with severe damage; 20 dwellings with no damage; 22 dwellings are yet to be assessed; and approximately 117 tenants have been displaced, with an estimated repair bill of \$17.7m.

Turning to my portfolio of Local Government and Community Services, rapid assessment reviews are taking place in affected homelands to understand recovery needs. Asbestos management and removal for all infrastructure is under way and is being coordinated through my department.

Departmental staff are working in the various operations centres. Volunteer staff will help to staff the emergency shelter operation on Galiwinku. Staff have been assigned to work with Marthakal to support the management team and ensure effective and timely delivery of services.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service is also assisting in the recovery by providing communications and language translation throughout the affected region. These comprehensive assessments are informing the need for priority recovery works to ensure homelands are safe to be reoccupied, and

teams are being deployed to address identified issues.

We are also focusing on clearing priority homeland roads and getting people who relocated to the larger communities of Milingimbi, Galiwinku and Gapuwiyak back home safely. Three Dhimurru rangers from Nhulunbuy and one YBE experienced tree lopper are travelling by ranger boat to Gawa homeland today. Hopefully they arrived by midday.

The Christian school has made accommodation and onsite transport with assistance from Marthakal. They plan to remove dangerous trees from homelands in the first instance followed by clearing access tracks, followed by clearing of track to bore. The team will then offer general assistance as required.

Two Dhimurru rangers and a tree lopper from YBE have travelled by the crocodile ranger's boat to Mooronga homeland for tree clearing. This demonstrates the tremendous cooperation between everyone involved in helping Yolngu people return to their homes.

We are supporting Yirrkala rangers by providing equipment such as chainsaws and safety equipment, and organising tree clearing in homelands in the Gapuwiyak area. A care pack has been provided to Mapuru and additional chainsaws are being provided for local use. A charter with food has been arranged to restock the store. At 3 pm today my department chartered food, bedding and equipment to Mooronga to support rangers on site.

It is clear that Cyclone Lam was a destructive event for Territorians living in communities in its path. Our community and government's approach to the recovery is very significant and pleasing. Everyone has pulled together and focused on helping their fellow Territorians.

This is another way the Giles government is making Territorians' lives simpler, safer and easier. I support the Chief Minister's statement to the House.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Increase in Poker Machine Numbers

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the member for Nelson which reads:

Dear Madam Speaker

I propose for discussion this day the following definite matter of public importance:

- *that the minister for Racing and Gaming explain why the government lifted the individual venue caps on poker machines from 10 to 20 in hotels, and the number in clubs from 45 to 55*
- *that the minister for Racing and Gaming explain why the government did not announce the changes to poker machine numbers and the increase in the gaming machine levy in parliament, but instead waited until parliament had closed down for the year*
- *that the minister say who the government discussed the changes with before these changes were announced, and did the government do any study of the potential impacts these changes might bring, for example, a social impacts study?*

The letter is signed by the member for Nelson.

Honourable members, is the discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, the last day of parliamentary sittings in 2014 was held on 27 November. Two weeks later on Friday 12 December at 5.45 pm, the minister, Hon Peter Styles, sent out at press release headed *Electronic gaming machine reforms*.

The media release stated that the current cap of 1190 poker machines was out dated and the government had decided to lift the cap. The media release also said the number of pokies at pubs and clubs would be increased by 10 at pubs, which doubled the number, and 10 more at clubs which took the number from 45 to 55. It also mentioned that a one-off payment levy would need to be paid per application for a new machine. Those changes were in subordinate legislation, numbers 41, 42 and 44 of 2014.

Late on Friday night when the media and others were having dinner, a press release was released. Considering the changes were not due to occur until 1 January 2015 and that regulations were not assented to until 17 December 2014, surely there was plenty of time to release the media statement at a normal time of the day.

Press secretaries know when the best time is to get the media's attention; Friday night was not one of those times. Why did the minister release the news at that time? One can only conclude that he

thought this important matter would slip under the radar so no one would take any notice.

What makes matters worse is that this is an important change and the minister could not bring it to parliament to debate. It reminds me of the selling of the Government Printing Office and of the Darwin bus company. He could not bring it to parliament even though the government was thinking about it. The Treasurer, Dave Tollner, dropped a hint at the estimates hearing earlier in the year; he wanted the number of pokies at pubs raised to 30.

We know who he had been talking to. It seems the minister was reluctant to consult with the public or the parliament. I go back to the statement made by the member for Katherine this month amongst the issue of leadership:

... this government will be more consultative with Territorians and engage with them before we make important and crucial decisions to the future of the Territory.

This was an important and crucial decision where the government should have engaged and consulted with the people. Instead the government used the cover of regulations late at night to push these changes through without anyone having a chance to debate this change. This shows contempt for the parliament and the people, because the government knew this move would be controversial.

There was no chance for members of this parliament to ask questions, such as: who were the people or groups the government spoke to when contemplating the changes; how long has the AHA been lobbying the government, and did the \$150 000 donation to the CLP at the last election influence the decision; what studies has the government done in relation to possible negative social impacts; does the government intend to allow poker machines in remote communities which have licensed premises, if so, what say will that community have; why did the government double the number of machines in pubs; does the government believe pubs will become friendlier, as claimed by the Treasurer, quoted on the ABC; and is it true the government only introduced a levy on new poker machines to offset community concerns about the increase in poker machine numbers, and is that admitting the increase in pokies will have a negative effect?

When a pub introduces an extra 10 poker machines, what form of public consultation will there be, as was mentioned in the minister's press release? Will it only be an ad in the paper or will it take another form?

What did Amity Community Services and other similar NGOs think about the changes? Why do pubs pay five times more for a new poker machine than clubs? You said the money will go to improving regulatory programs; what are the programs? Who changed the rules to allow machines in pubs to accept notes, something that is banned in South Australia and Tasmania? Should there be an equal number of 1c and 2c machines in pubs and clubs? Are your harm minimisation strategies working and, if so, how do you know? Should the Territory ban poker machines, except in casinos, as happened in Western Australia?

Many questions could be asked but, due to the minister's move to avoid scrutiny, we as members of parliament were unable to ask them. That is why I raise this matter of public importance tonight. This is the first chance we have had to debate this. I believe this change was introduced by lobbying from the AHA. The ABC reported that Justin Coleman, President of the AHA, said they had been pushing for the change for a long time.

The member for Fong Lim was clearly involved in some of these discussions. He reckons the pubs will become more family friendly. Believe it or not, some people want to go to pubs with no pokies. The minister also reported on ABC on 15 December:

Mr Styles also rejected suggestions the increase in the number of poker machines would cause social problems in the Territory.

'The great majority of people use gaming machines responsibly, as other people in the community use whatever hobby they have responsibly,' he said.

When asked how he could claim an increase would not cause problems for problem gamblers despite extensive research suggesting it would, Mr Styles said he rejected the premise of the question.

The Minister said remote Indigenous communities would be able to apply for poker machine licences.

'Even though people apply they might not get their pokies.'

On the other side of the coin, I wonder whether the minister takes any notice of what other people have said; for example:

Senior research fellow with the Menzies School of Health Matt Stevens said the research on the social impacts of poker machines was clear.

'There definitely will be an increase in problem gambling rates as a result.'

'You find with poker machines, the more machines you have in a venue, the more money per machine they make.'

'With pubs going from 10 to 20 machines, that will lead to much bigger losses from players.'

'It's to do with psychology and marketing principles. People are hearing machines winning, so that encourages people to keep gambling and betting, thinking they're going to win as well.'

Matt Stevens is no dropkick; I will give you an idea of his background. He is a multidisciplinary researcher specialising in public health and statistics and has worked as a consultant statistician across a range of disciplines, from environmental science to epidemiology. After moving to the Northern Territory in 2000, he began working for the Australian Bureau of Statistics in the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands Statistics before joining Menzies School of Health Research in 2002 in the area of Indigenous housing and social determinants of health.

He received a Doctorate of Philosophy in 2013 for his research into gambling problems amongst the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. He now works across the fields of gambling and Indigenous tobacco control and applies public health frameworks that focus on harm minimisation. He has authored reports and journal articles on housing and Indigenous child health, gambling – Indigenous and general population – natural fluoride and dental caries in Indigenous communities, professional mobility in the Northern Territory, and multivariate analyses of benthic organisms in Moreton Bay amongst other things.

I quote from ABC:

The Northern Territory Law Society has also attacked the move.

The Society's President Tass Liveris said increasing the number of poker machines was counterintuitive to the strong links between problem gambling and crime.

And he said he had little faith the Government's plan to use money from poker machines to deal with problem gambling would work.

'There is a real risk that the one-off fee payable per new machine and the new

assessment process will provide inadequate protection against the wide community-based problems that are linked to problem gambling,' he said.

I understand there may be an argument for removing the total cap which could allow some pubs to compete on a level playing field, but to double the number is madness. If it is taken to its fullest extent, we now have the possibility of having more than 3000 poker machines for a population of about 220 000 people. That is one machine for about every 70 people. My understanding is we have approximately 1000 poker machines between the two casinos. If you add that in, it comes down to one machine per 55 people.

I do not believe this issue has been considered or debated properly. The pokie business is big business. Look at the gross profit for licensed premises in Palmerston. Gross profit represents a net loss by players. This is out of the *Northern Territory Licensing Commission 2013-14 Annual Report*: Cazalys, \$6.253m; Palmerston Golf and Country Club, \$609 000; Palmerston Sports Club, \$5.27m; and The Arch Rival, \$488 000. That works out at \$12m gross profit in 2013-14. That is a lot of money representing net loss by players.

The same old CLP is introducing changes when no one is looking, such as with the Government Printing Office and the Darwin Bus Service, only letting people know well after the horse has bolted. This is not open or transparent government; it is looking after the industry. This change without proper debate, analysis or questioning is not the way we should be dealing with serious matters.

Arrogance has been mentioned many times over the last few days, and this is a classic example of it, as well as the government thumbing its nose at parliament. The government should put a hold on any changes to the number of poker machines until there is a public inquiry into the effects these changes will have in our communities. The inquiry would allow NGOs, government agencies such as Centrelink and NT Police, pubs and clubs, the casinos and people of the community to discuss these issues publicly, so the government can make an informed decision about whether it should increase the number of poker machines in the Territory.

This is a very important question. We are talking about something that damages people's lives and families. It may be a minority – I use the pokies every now and then for a bit of fun – but the reality is many people lose money they cannot afford to lose. By increasing the number of pokies, as the experts have said, you will increase the number of people ending up in that situation.

We need to debate whether we should allow licensed clubs in remote communities to have 55 poker machines. There is no doubt that public consultation is required, but the government has set the agenda before looking at the whole issue of increasing the numbers of poker machines.

It is an especially important issue in remote communities. Many Indigenous people have issues with poker machines; you only have to visit Lasseters and SKYCITY to see that is a fact of life. Other cultural groups also have problems, but it is an issue amongst people who can least afford to spend their money.

I raised this issue tonight as a matter of public importance because I believe it needs debating. I am happy to hear what the government has to say, but I am disappointed that this issue did not come before parliament in the form of a statement or similar. That would have allowed us to hear the government's arguments for raising the cap, and whether any work was done before making this decision to see any social impacts of these changes. Two of those basic issues needed to be discussed, but here are plenty of others.

Instead, it was a late evening media release after parliament finished. Many of us were getting ready a week-and-a-half out from Christmas, so we were not interested in subordinate legislation number 42 of 2014 which bumped the numbers of pokies from 10 to 20 in pubs and 45 to 55 in clubs. I did not know it had happened until I heard it on the ABC.

The government is failing in its duty to bring these issues to parliament for debate, and it is failing in its duty to talk to the community. I go back to the statement the member for Katherine made, at that problematic time for government, around consulting. The government was to be more consultative with Territorians and engage with them before making important and crucial decisions for the future of the Northern Territory. This is an important and crucial matter and it should have been discussed with the parliament and the people.

Mr STYLES (Racing, Gaming and Licensing): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Nelson for bringing this matter forward. I do not think I have enough time this evening to explain much of this, but I will give you a briefing on the history of happened. The member for Nelson raised the fact that pubs will go from 10 to 20 machines, as if it is an automatic increase.

In the last paragraph of your matter of public importance letter to the Speaker, where you ask if the government did any study of the potential impacts these changes might bring, such as social impact studies.

The Director-General is charged with ensuring that anyone who wants to increase the number or introduce some electronic gaming machines must complete a community impact assessment. There are many hurdles to get over. The first thing is you must have licensed premises. If you do not have licensed premises and a licence to operate, you cannot have any poker machines. However, having licensed premises does not mean you will automatically get poker machines on those premises, nor does it mean you will get an increase.

The previous government members were lobbied to do a range of things. In 2008 they simply put a moratorium on it and said, 'This is too hard, we will not do it'. The Giles government has had to do many things in relation to sorting out things that were not done. If it was too hard, they had a huge too-hard basket. It came to us and we had to look at a range of things.

There has been an increase in the population. I understand there is an increase in fly-in fly-out workers in the member for Nelson's electorate. There has been a suggestion that the Howard Springs Tavern might have some expansion work done; they might want to apply for some poker machines. Many people will come out of the INPEX camp and into a business in your electorate to use the services provided there. This might be for entertainment, a night out, somewhere to go with their friends or simply enjoy responsible gambling, if that is what they want to do. If they do not want to gamble they can go to a lounge or a public bar for a meal. This is part of an overall business strategy which most licensed premises run, but it is about finding the balance.

The government has no intention of flooding the place with electronic gaming machines. Irrespective of what the opposition says, that the sky is falling and everything is disastrous, we will not do that. The Director-General has very clear instructions on the criteria to be met before any consideration is given.

I note you were giving some figures in relation to the Northern Territory population with respect to the fly-in fly-out population. It is not only those who are registered to vote or who live here. We have an interesting fly-in fly-out situation. We also have drive-in drive-out people coming across the borders from interstate to work in various regional and rural areas.

We are looking at electronic gaming machines, and I have looked at a range of hobbies people have. Look at the money people spend on fishing, the depreciation on their boats, the equipment they sometimes lose and the fuel they spend; it runs into thousands of dollars a year.

I am not saying everyone does that, but look at some of the boats people have. I saw a presentation from the minister for Primary Industries the other day on fishing changes that have occurred in the Northern Territory. Going back 10 or 15 years, you had the old 12 ft tinny with a little outboard motor on the back; that is what I had. We did not go far offshore because it was not a bit outboard or a big boat. You can see these days the difference in the size of boats. People are choosing to spend their disposable income on a range of things. That is one example of a hobby that can cost you a lot of money each year.

You talk about gaming machines out on communities. This was floated past me when I was in opposition, whether I would consider doing something in parliament to try to have licensed premises reinstated in some communities. A community approached me and asked if I would consider it, and I asked them why. I will tell the story again; you may have heard it and may not recall it, but I have said it in this House. The story goes back about three-and-a-half years from a community. In communities we know that gambling occurs and previous CLP governments have tried to do something about it, as have previous Labor governments, but no one seems to have had any success. No one can claim any success in getting rid of gambling. It is what they gamble on.

There was a particular community, the name of which I will not mention, but a group of people sitting under a tree. It was a big game; the pot in the middle was \$22 000. A 12-year old girl in that game won that \$22 000. Within a number of hours, the local drug dealers had the \$22 000 in their pocket and she had a bag full of marijuana deals that she was running around giving to her friends. Some of those friends ranged between 10 and 14. She was giving out \$22 000 worth of marijuana bags for free, from the community into the drug dealers' pockets.

The community asked me, 'Would you consider gaming machines in licensed premises, in a community where people sit under a tree gambling with card games, and put that money into poker machines in a club environment? That way the profits can go straight out the back door and into the youth centre, where they could use it to provide youth services'. It was well thought out as they had been to speak to some people about it before they came to see me as the shadow minister. They asked if that would be a good idea, because they could then provide meals and people could play on the poker machines. They could then work out getting meals for the kids if the adults wanted play in a nice environment, which is a bit cooler than under the tree.

They would know who is doing what because it would be a controlled environment. The club management could keep an eye on people and they could ensure that kids were fed and looked after. When a community comes to you wanting these things as a way of solving local issues – we have said this before; government is about having solutions to local problems. If that worked, and if the community wants it, we should seriously consider it. That is just one issue regarding the communities you spoke about.

You mentioned the increases in machines only being advertised in the newspaper, so I hope I have covered that. It is not automatic; the Director-General will decide what is and is not appropriate. I do not know how many machines are on Mitchell Street and I have not seen any community impact statements, but someone will need to do one before they get an increase. I do not know if you have seen this book called *Gambling Harm in the Northern Territory: An Atlas of Venue Catchments* which was released by Menzies in conjunction with a number of other people.

The book lists all of the licensed premises in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek; it is a very informative book. The Director-General has a copy of this and would refer to it as a source of information, so when he makes a decision he can take everything into consideration. If I was a business person with licensed premises and I want to apply for 45 or 55 machines, I am not guaranteed even one. If there is sufficient saturation in that area, they will not get them. If somebody wants to build new premises somewhere and the building next door has a number of gaming machines, the Director-General would look at the community impact statement and ask how many people go through there.

There is a raft of things to take into consideration before you up the numbers. Instead of us deciding who will do what, there are people concentrating on it day-in and day-out, taking into account what businesses want and what the community objects to because it is a process.

You asked why pubs pay more for the machines. I will give you the taxation rates shortly, but pubs and clubs are two different entities. Both are driven by profit and both pay tax on what goes through the machines. Pubs are required to contribute to the Community Benefit Fund, which gives grants to Amity, Somerville and others to help problem gamblers or those going down that road who may need assistance. The Community Benefit Fund is funding research into gambling harm, which is conducted by these organisations to can get a better picture of what is occurring.

It is close to the tune of \$2m for those organisations to do that work, which comes out of the Community Benefit Fund. It also comes from hotels which contribute to that, so we can ensure we get the best possible information. The Director-General will also have access to this when he makes an assessment on applications that come before him.

A lot must occur before we give machines out to anyone. Harm minimisation is about education. Michael Long was involved in a recent campaign, I cannot remember the terminology used, but it was a very good and successful campaign about educating people.

Amity and Somerville also educate people who might need a hand, and those with addictions. If people are addicted to gambling, it may not necessarily be to pokies; it may be card games. In my days as a police officer many years ago, I recall there being groups of people with clubs around Darwin, where some massive card games went on. I remember because they were illegal and we did raids on a couple of them. The amount of cash sitting on the table in those days was astounding.

They got clever and started to play with chips, they thought they would outsmart us. The trouble was that someone held the bank. Some people would be there all night playing. I will not pick on any specific group, but I know who they are, as might you. A great deal of money changed hands.

It is all about your game of choice. Some people go to the horseraces; how much money is lost on that? How much is won? Should we say in these situations, 'You should not bet on horses or on cricket'? When you do that you end up with illegal betting. When you clamp down on it people and money go offshore. I recall the argument some years ago when the then Prime Minister, John Howard, introduced legislation making it illegal for people to play in the overseas casinos. They still do; however, they cannot come back to the federal or Northern Territory government and say that someone has ripped them off, because what they are doing is against Australian law.

If we start making things too hard for people, they will find something to gamble on. The old adage is that some groups of people will bet on two flies walking up a wall. Some will go into the member for Nelson's electorate and bet on toad races, crab races or something else. This is about what you do in a community. You have to get a balance. It is not about looking at only one form of gambling; you have to get the balance right. As a government we are trying to deal with the issue, the expanding population and the people going into our rapidly growing suburbs saying, 'We want a new hotel, I do not want to walk 3.2 km to the

nearest one because I do not want to drive. I want to be responsible when I am for the night and walk home if I choose.' What do we then do with the original business? Do we say, 'All of your customers are now going to the place up the road because it offers a different form of entertainment'? These are considerations we have to make.

Electronic gaming machines came in around the 1980s. The licences can only be issued to clubs, hotels, taverns and casinos, which we have two of. When the Territory-wide cap and the number of gaming machines located in those premises – that is, clubs, hotels and taverns – was put in place in 2008, the individual caps of 45 for clubs and 10 for hotels remained unchanged.

There has been a population increase and a change in the way people do things. Look at the changes in the way people live. When I first came to the Territory, everyone had a house on a quarter-acre block. On the weekends you mowed the lawn, had a barbecue at home and that was it. That has changed. People now have higher disposable incomes; they live in units and are looking for somewhere to go. We have seen an increase in the number of people.

As a police officer 30 years ago working in Mitchell Street, some nights you could shoot a gun down there and no one would know. It is now a vibrant entertainment area where people who live in city units go. You can see what is occurring at Palmerston. I do not know what will happen in the rural area, whether they build multiple-storey accommodation units at Howard Springs. I am sure the member for Nelson would have something to say about that.

We have a changing environment in the way people do things after work. The entertainment services have changed. Member for Nelson, you have been here longer than I have so you are aware of what life in Darwin was like 35 years ago. I have only been here 34 years. It has changed and we must change with it, which means you cannot ignore the issue.

The previous government put a moratorium on it, said, 'Too hard', threw its arms up in the air and said that someone else could worry about it. Sadly, we have to worry about it. Someone has to worry about it. In the two-and-a-half years since we came into government, we have had to worry about many things not dealt with by the previous government.

The cap that was in place was 1190, which covered the number of approved gaming machines already operating in the community. It did not capture gaming machines in the Darwin

and Alice Springs casinos, which still remain uncapped.

The previous government promised to introduce a trading scheme to allow for traded gaming machines between venues. We have chosen not to do that. The sad thing is if there is a trading scheme, the moment a club gets into trouble, something is likely to happen. The first thing they can sell to get the income will be the gaming machines. If we have a trading scheme between pubs, clubs and taverns, I suspect the pubs will end up owning all of the gaming machines.

I spoke about the Community Benefit Fund which is paid into by the pubs and taverns; the clubs pay in to their own benefit funds and are required to sponsor a range of sporting activities. Tracy Village club supports many different groups.

Look at the number of clubs in the Palmerston area; they have to put the money back into sporting groups and the community. Sadly, I am running out of time. I want to carry on this conversation with you, member for Nelson, at some stage in the near future. I can give you much more information than I could give in this short period of time this evening.

We need to deal with the issue; we need to look at the interest from the communities and listen to them. That is what the Director-General does, and he will make the assessments on the impact on the community across the range of hurdles.

Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, we just heard a series of musings from the minister without any evidence. We found out about him fishing in his tinny, and that according to him there are many people with disposable incomes. That is a curious take on the state of the households of the Northern Territory. Most people's disposable incomes are being eaten away by the cost of living, especially with the power and water tariff increases. I do not know where you are hanging out, but it is certainly not what we are hearing consistently from families struggling so much that they are packing up and leaving the Territory.

I will make sure we get that quote of yours out to everyone to let them that know life is good, there are disposable incomes everywhere – that this is all about choice, and they can spend that disposable income on their style of gambling. It ignores all evidence about the design of poker machines, which takes them to addictive level of gambling.

He talked about responsible gamblers, which is not the issue. He ignored the issue of problem gamblers, which is at the heart of why the Labor government did not decide it was too hard and put

it in the too-hard basket – so that is simply not true. Go back and read the *Hansard* debates from that time. I was not a case of putting a cap on pokies because we thought it was too hard to decide on the number; wrong. That is an absolute misrepresentation of the debate at the time.

A decision was made to cap poker machines for valid reasons. There was concern around the harm of problem gambling in our society. We felt, with the casinos having existing agreements first put in place under the CLP, there was no ability for the government of the day to limit the number of pokies increased in our casinos. Bear in mind we have casinos in Darwin and Alice Springs, our two major centres. If you listen to the minister, he would like to simply pretend, and he insinuated Labor let the casinos have unfettered situations. We inherited those contracts and we went on to resign contracts.

The CLP and Labor have responsibility for the casino contracts regarding the number of poker machines there. I had this portfolio for a while, so I have a good view about this debate. I have participated with industry in discussions about whether or not to increase pokies. Labor was very clear that casinos are large venues which people make a choice to go to and they have a range of gambling options; they are gambling venues.

Pubs and clubs are social venues, pubs especially. That is why they have a small number of allowable poker machines in there. Clubs are larger social venues, which is why they have a larger number of poker machines in there. The cap was not put in place because it was too hard, but because it was the right thing to do.

I thank the member for Nelson for bringing this debate on. It draws attention to the fact you have made an arbitrary decision as government to increase the numbers of available poker machines into the pool for pubs and clubs, without community consultation.

Your musings around whether or not remote communities want licenses and poker machines are just that – musings. There was no consultation with the remote communities or towns about this specific regulatory change. People did not know you would increase them, other than Labor asking questions in the estimates process of the previous minister, the member for Fong Lim.

The media ran with it for a while but I do not think anyone believed you would do it without significant consultation. It was not until in the lead up to Christmas that we got wind of the fact you would use the Christmas period to do a sneaky sign off on 1 January allowing this to happen.

It is extraordinary given the evidence of the impact pokies have on household budgets through problem gamblers. We are not talking about responsible gamblers; we are talking about people who become addicted. The machines are very smart designs and there is a lot of investment, research and development into these machines. You increased pokies without any community consultation and snuck it through around Christmas, announcing it on 1 January.

Before this change the Northern Territory already had the highest proportion of poker machines in the nation. It is not coming off a low base where we say, 'We are nowhere near the proportion around the nation on average, so maybe there is an argument for more licences and poker machines in different places'. We are coming off a high base already at 12.9 machines per 1000 people, compared to the national average of 11. That is the need for the cap.

In 2008 machines were capped at 1190. You are giving ability, through a regulatory sign off by the Director-General of the department, to lift the number of poker machines in pubs from 10 to 20, doubling the pool, and in clubs from 45 to 55. The reality is that the sign off by the Director-General, after the applicant completes a community impact assessment, could essentially turn a pub into a mini club. There are clubs out there with 20 machines.

I have great admiration for the Director-General you appointed. He is a long-serving, highly-esteemed police officer of the Northern Territory. But he is expected to make a decision from a social impact statement by the applicant of a licence, without any alternative assessment or proposal being put forward by anyone else. Is the issue of harm minimisation being assessed by anyone else, and is there any consultation with the communities the proposed additional pokies are going into? No. Why did you not at least mandate consultation? That is something I do not understand.

I have been to Maningrida and heard the concerns amongst people around the potential of pokies at the social club. There will always be those who want opportunity, no doubt about it. Then you talk to people who understand the consequences of that and how the money will leave the community and go to whoever owns that licence – the local money is gone and lost. I do not pretend that people are not involved in card games. That money is washing around the local community. You put it into a poker machine and it goes to the licence holder. That could happen without community consultation, because community consultation is not mandated. How is that okay? It would make such a significant change to the money in the community.

To put this into context, last financial year Territorians lost \$68m on poker machines in our community. This was across 1181 machines, which is about \$57 627 per machine. That is up by 12.6% on the previous year. Research shows that problem gamblers – not the casual, happy, gamble if they feel like it type of person – are more likely to play poker machines than any other form of gambling. I am sorry, minister, but research and evidence puts paid to your toad racing analogies. It is nonsense.

One of the recognised principles for socially responsible gambling policy is community consultation. It is a significant issue. You have taken that step out in regard to this dramatic potential increase in poker machines in our community, and as a mandated step in any assessment on whether or not in a regulatory environment it can be signed off. You have removed a fundamental principle for socially responsible gambling policy. How will you know about the cost benefit analysis or what the impact on the community is if you do not consult with the community?

The CLP failed to consult with our community. There was no forum, no talking to people and no listening to them. The member for Fong Lim, as the former minister responsible, told the estimates hearing in June last year:

... once we have consulted with industry we will be very keen to consult with the community.

When pressed on the timing of public consultation, the member for Fong Lim said:

The public will have an opportunity to commence once we have settled on numbers, about what we think might be possible into the future.

And

We will consult widely with the community.

No public consultation took place. What happened? The member for Fong Lim, the previous minister, committed to that. We know the member for Fong Lim lost the portfolio. Was the decision not to proceed with the community consultations made by the Chief Minister? There are some legitimate answers required, because under the requirements of telling the truth a minister of Crown said there would be consultation and it did not occur. Why did the promised community consultation not occur?

Amity is known by most people who understand Territory capacity, in regards to research into problem gambling, as an outstanding community

service provider. They prepared a comprehensive submission that detailed a range of research, including the outcomes of the last survey undertaken on community attitudes to gambling in the Territory – the Northern Territory Gambling Prevalence Survey 2005. I will quote from the report by Amity:

In this report respondents were asked if they thought EGM numbers in the local community should increase, decrease or remain as they are, 90.2% of respondents believed that they should decrease or stay the same. While the public clearly recognises the enjoyment various members of the community derive from gambling, it appears people may remain sceptical about the overall community benefits of this activity. When asked 'do EGMs do more good than harm within the community context', 71.7% of respondents disagreed.

...

Of this 90.2% about one third (33.3%) responded with a 'large decrease', 12.2% with a 'small decrease' and 44.7% indicated that they thought the numbers should 'stay the same'. There was minimal support from the community for the increase in EGMs with only 1.8% of participants indicating a view of support for an increase and 8% of respondents indicated that they had 'no opinion'.

That is the data from the 2006 community survey. Minister, where is your data upon which your government made the decision? You said it is no longer 1.8% of participants saying they support an increase, but there is some larger magical number.

Mr Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are no extensions.

Ms LAWRIE: Government needs to consult with the community. Do not sign off on the regulations. I know you are backdating them, but they have not gone through the Subordination Legislation and Publications Committee.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, your time has expired.

TABLED PAPER
Select Committee on Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
Report – The Preventable Disability

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I table the Select Committee on Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – commonly known as FASD – report, *The Preventable Disability*.

The inquiry examined the known and suspected devastating effects that foetal alcohol spectrum disorder is having on sufferers, carers and the community across the Territory. The committee received 27 submissions and heard evidence from many witnesses at hearings and public forums held in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy. All hearings were well-attended, which was good for broad community input. It was pleasing to see that many people at the public meetings.

FASD is doing untold harm to children of all ages in the Northern Territory, which will stay with them throughout their lives. Not only does this harm deny those children the life and opportunities they otherwise would have had, it also puts immeasurable burden on their families, carers, the community, health services, in some ways the economy, and the Territory as a whole. The impacts on sufferers and their carers are life-long. The special needs of FASD children increase the need for health services and additional resources in some schools. The cognitive impairment of some FASD sufferers can cause antisocial behaviour and deny the person the capacity for independent living or employment. This can also cost the community with an increase in crime, and with the challenge of justly managing individuals who do not understand the consequences of their actions. The prevention and treatment of FASD is therefore a moral and an economic imperative for government.

FASD is solely caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy; the ailment is completely avoidable. Reducing alcohol consumption will decrease the incidence of FASD across the Territory. Better alcohol management and improvements to denial of supply are the key to addressing this terrible problem, but this is only part of the issue.

Over the past 20 years, the Territory has made progress in addressing alcohol abuse in our communities. Per capita consumption of alcohol continues to decrease, from around 20 L per annum prior to the 1990s to less than 13 L in 2013. Alcohol-related assaults have fallen by as much as 50% in regional centres with temporary beat locations. This has been possible via government-sponsored programs, and the work of

non-government organisations and families. However, we need to build on these successes by evaluating what is effective and what is not, and continue to innovate and bring down alcohol-related harm.

The Territory still has the highest rates of risky alcohol consumption in the country, and a higher rate than any other country according to the OECD. We cannot afford the damage the misuse of alcohol is doing in the Territory. For further gains, we need a coordinated policy approach based on evidence and informed innovation. In addition to improved alcohol management, we need to target education on the risks of consuming alcohol while pregnant, so these women know how to protect their unborn child from alcohol. For pregnant women who find it difficult to avoid alcohol, we need to provide targeted support services to equip them to do the best for their child. We need to also target families so they can receive the best services and knowledge to help the child.

Unplanned pregnancies can be vulnerable to FASD. We need to increase awareness of sexual health and contraception, especially for young women so they know the risk of consuming alcohol if they might be pregnant, and can avoid unwanted pregnancies.

Prevention is the ultimate and only goal. The sad reality is FASD cannot be cured. Once the damage is done to the foetus it cannot be reversed. The damage is forever. However, the future impact of that damage can be mitigated through early intervention, with the greatest intervention outcomes to be gained in the first three years of the child's life.

This is where diagnostic and support services become crucial. The committee has made a number of recommendations to reduce the harm and effects of FASD based upon the extensive evidence received during the inquiry. The recommendations address the following: FASD diagnostic services; early intervention services; early childhood support and education; support and referral programs for pregnant women, including services targeting alcohol dependant pregnant women; training for health professionals; and residential secure care.

The committee recognises implementing the recommendations will require funding, and acknowledges the current budget pressures. Nevertheless we cannot afford the cost of inaction. Investing in FASD preventions now will produce significant personal, social and budget savings into the future and reduce the terrible harm that FASD is inflicting across the territory.

MOTION

Print Paper – Select Committee on Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Report – The Preventable Disability

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the paper be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Paper – Select Committee on Action to Prevent Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Report – The Preventable Disability

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the paper be noted and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

Leave granted.

TABLED PAPER Cabinet Handbook

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, on behalf, and for, the Chief Minister who is currently indisposed, I table the Cabinet handbook.

Members will recall that the Stella Maris Inquiry made a number of recommendations in relation to improving guidance materials for Cabinet ministers. The inquiry specifically recommended the Cabinet handbook be expanded with materials similar to that in the Commonwealth Cabinet handbook, including more guidance for Cabinet ministers.

The inquiry also recommended that the handbook include an updated a ministerial code of conduct and specific guidance for Cabinet secretaries on what must be recorded to ensure the proper maintenance of official Cabinet records. The inquiry proposed that a new Cabinet handbook be made public and tabled in the Legislative Assembly. I am pleased to table in this House today a new Cabinet handbook for the Giles government, incorporating a comprehensive ministerial code of conduct, guidelines for Cabinet secretaries and the broad guidance materials for ministers, especially new ministers.

This handbook consists of four main sections covering Cabinet government, Cabinet business, Cabinet meetings and a guide to preparing Cabinet submissions. The handbook also contains a number of appendices on matters, such as: confidentiality; consultation on Cabinet proposals; handling and access to Cabinet documentation; the conduct of Cabinet meetings; Cabinet decisions; sub-committee procedures; appointment processes; and templates and procedures.

The new handbook provides ministers with detailed guidance on their obligations within the Westminster system of government. This information will assist with the briefing of new ministers on their Cabinet responsibilities, and will also serve as a valuable aid memoir for all ministers on an ongoing basis.

The new ministerial code of conduct in the handbook retains the key elements of the existing ministerial code of conduct as adopted by the Giles government in September 2012. It adds to this extensively by firstly drawing on a model of ministerial code of conducts developed by the Tasmanian Integrity Commission in 2011, which was the result of a review of best practice in its field nationally and internationally, and has since been adopted in Tasmania. Secondly, it draws on the ministerial code of conduct adopted in the Australian Capital Territory in 2012, which was recommended for consideration by the Stella Maris Inquiry Commissioner, Mr John Lawler AM APM.

The content of the code is also consistent with the Commonwealth government's Standards of Ministerial Ethics and the Northern Territory *Legislative Assembly (Members' Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards) Act*. The code covers such matters as: Westminster principles; conflict of interest; ministerial responsibility; proposal for Cabinet decisions; ethical principles; responsibilities under the legislation; indemnities; and post-ministerial employment.

Consistent with the recommendation of the Stella Maris Inquiry, the new Cabinet handbook will be publicly available on the department's website in the near future. The Giles government is proud to adopt this code of conduct which reflects the high standards of governance and accountability that the Giles government expects of its ministers.

MOTION

Note Paper – Cabinet Handbook

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the paper be noted.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPERS

Travel Reports for Fannie Bay and Nhulunbuy

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table two travel reports from the members for Fannie Bay and Nhulunbuy, pursuant to clause 4.12 of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I provide some comment on what has transpired over the last two weeks, in particular why and how someone's birth is relevant in contemporary society.

It is my view that it does not matter where someone is born: under a tree, in a hospital, on a beach, in an ambulance, in a humpy or at home with the help of a midwife. What matters is what happens after that person's birth: how they grow and develop and what they absorb and choose not to absorb. Being born is just the beginning. What comes next is the internal fortitude of the person to give, not only to themselves but others, living and working towards enriching people and the world around us.

All of us have different backgrounds, levels of education and levels in society. While a person's birth location may be interesting for some, it is not the paramount aspect of life. What is important is how you live life and engage with humanity.

I am sad to say the events over the recent days seemed to have diminished our standing as members of parliament, and the parliament as a whole. I know, as all members know, what Territorians expect of us. I doubt any of us can say we, individually or collectively, have met their expectations in the last two weeks.

This position saddens me as I work hard in my role as a local member and enjoy helping, laughing with and perhaps fighting with people, learning new things and generally walking together towards a better rural area and the Territory. I am hopeful all members have a high level of determination to work towards making the Territory a better place and the lives of Territorians better, richer and more rewarding. We should be working towards making a difference to our homes, neighbourhood and community, and the Territory.

I say to members on both sides of the Chamber that if you disagree with my sentiments, so be it, but remember we are being watched carefully. Time is of the essence to demonstrate to the people of the Territory that we are serious in our work and we take their concerns and issues seriously and respond accordingly.

On a final and formal note to my comments, I quote from the book of Romans, Chapter 2:1 – yes, my Catholic upbringing has yielded some benefits:

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same thing.

I will share a short story of where one of my younger sisters was born and the first few days of her life. My parents went to Melbourne for the Royal Show and bought a new dachshund puppy in 1965. In those days they let woman fly when they were nearly nine-months pregnant in order to give birth. In Melbourne things must have become a bit tense as my sister Plaxy was induced. I always thought my sister fell out accidentally but my mother assures me she was induced. It beats me why would you have a child in Melbourne when there was a perfectly good hospital in Darwin. However, that is a different story.

Suffice to say the child was born. My parents were staying in a modest hotel with no cot so they rigged up one of the drawers in the chest of drawers and parked Plaxy in it. Unbeknown to Plaxy, they bought the puppy and it was also parked in a drawer of the chest of drawers. Plaxy was relieved to find out much later that she was in the higher drawer, above the puppy in the second drawer.

At dinner times the baby was taken with them. Before they could get inside the dining room the barmaid saw the new baby and whisked it off to do the rounds of the bar. My parents did not see the baby again until the end of their meal. My mother was pleased she had not grabbed the wrong bundle from the drawers, otherwise the bar patrons might have thought, 'Sheesh, that is a strange looking baby, must have drunk too much, better go home'.

Upon returning to Darwin there was no cot as there were seven years between Plaxy and the next child up, me. Again, improvisation. Plaxy spent the first few days in Darwin in a leather suitcase on the floor of my parent's bedroom and no one thought that was unusual. I do not recall when Plaxy graduated to a proper cot. It must have been some time after coming back to Darwin.

Plaxy has grown to be happy, successful, a loving mother, sister and daughter. Her early arrangements, while unusual, did not, and have not, taken away from how she embraced life and what she has done. So the moral of the story is birth locations can be interesting but they do not define who you are.

I also inform the House of some wonderful achievements within my electorate. Taminmin College achieved 100% NTCET completion rate

from eligible Year 12 students in 2014, with many students reaching their goals for higher education through their ATAR scores. This reflects enormous commitment and hard work from students, teachers and the leadership team, and is an achievement to be proud of.

Taminmin College also achieved an 85% VET certificate completion rate. This is a great result because it reflects that 11 Year 11 students obtained apprenticeships throughout the year. In this area, the school does not want 100% completion rate. The delivery of high-quality training that makes students work ready is being achieved and is valued by employers.

There were 205 completed qualifications in Certificate I, II and III across a range of courses including Agrifood Operations, Rural Operations, Agriculture, Automotive, Business, Construction, Engineering, Racing (Stable Hand), Resources and Infrastructure Operations, Hospitality and Kitchen Operations. These VET qualifications not only provide real life job skills but also contribute to the student's NTCET.

The 100% completion rate is directly attributable to the delivery of programs offered. There is an increasing demand in this area and further programs in electrotechnology and retail are the next focus for the college.

Taminmin students were sixth in the National Chemistry Titration competitions held in Term 4 of 2014. This was an outstanding achievement, as 1500 teams compete in the first phase of this event.

At the Board of Studies Student Awards 2014 ceremony at Parliament House on 13 February, Emma Kellaway was presented with the Karmi Sceney Indigenous Excellence and Leadership Award. Emma was a high-achieving student and wonderful role model as School Captain during the 2014 year. Emma was also presented with the NT Indigenous Education Council Northern Region Indigenous NTCET with VET Award.

Georgia Lowery was presented with the NT Board of Studies Year 11 Vocational Education and Training in Schools Award. Georgia is an exceptional student and completed her Certificate III in Agriculture at the highest standard, and was a role model to her peers with her skills and commitment to her training. Georgia is now studying agriculture at college in Longreach.

Danielle Hazelton from Taminmin College was awarded the NT Secondary Teacher of the Year and the Palmerston Rural Secondary Teacher of the Year for 2014. I have spoken about Danielle before. Dani is a passionate educator and a well-respected senior teacher who has made a

difference to students' educational outcomes through her leadership. She was also a star of the inaugural production of the newly formed Rural Amateur Theatre Society, RATS, called *Harem Scarem*. My good colleague, the member for Nelson, also played a starring role in this production.

Taminmin College has a commitment to use teaching methods that accelerate students' literacy learning, and in 2014 developed a partnership with Griffith University to facilitate this. Through a carefully-managed reprioritisation of projects and reattribution of funds, the council was able to approve a major funding commitment over two years to commence the Accelerated Literacy Learning (ALL) Program in Term 3. This is an evidenced-based program producing great improvements in literacy.

The delay to other projects has already been justified as the results are exciting already. For example, those Year 9 students in June 2014 who were up to two years behind the national average after standardised testing are now in Year 10, and on average are now only a few months behind the national average. This is a great achievement, but literacy improvements are not just the domain of schools. Parents can also contribute to even greater improvements by ensuring there is reading material available for students and assisting them with their reading. The council regularly communicates with its community to convey this expectation.

The college successfully launched the school-wide Positive Behaviour Support program during 2014 and has made a commitment to using the school values of REACH – R=Respect, E=Effort towards excellence, A=Achieve your goals, C=Caring community, H=Honesty – to unpack expected behaviour across the school. This resulted in students being awarded gold, silver and bronze certificates of good standing at the end of Semester 2, giving them a range of privileges.

The outlook for 2015 for Taminmin College is exciting and positive. Perhaps in response to the school's achievements, programs and pathways which allow every student the opportunity to achieve success, enrolments have again increased in 2015, most notably in Year 10, requiring the creation of a complete new class.

The school has a great record in responding to the educational needs of its community, and as such has introduced some new initiatives in 2015 to complement existing programs. Taminmin College has the Leading Learners program which supports, extends and challenges academically gifted students to develop high-order thinking and problem solving in order to reach their academic

potential. The school has now introduced an Aspire class to target those students who are not at the Leading Learner academic level but who have a commitment to learning a sound work ethic and possess the required behaviours. This has been a highly sought-after class by students.

Planning is currently under way to introduce a young scholars program in Term 2. This program will provide enriched opportunities for academically motivated students in Year 5 and 6 from Taminmin College's public feeder schools of Bees Creek, Girraween, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo, Berry Springs and Middle Point. Young scholars will participate in a number of challenging activities along with other like-minded students. Activities will cover a range of subject areas including science, maths, English, SOCE, IT, performing and visual arts, health and PE and technologies. Successful students will gain automatic entry into Taminmin's Leading Learner program in Year 7 which leads to the Centre of Excellence in Year 10. It is planned that young scholars will attend Taminmin for one full day during term.

Taminmin Council will also soon begin consultation with the rural community for the development of a master plan to support informed decision-making about future work and how to cater for anticipated growth in the rural area. The rural area is indeed full of exciting opportunities and potential, and Taminmin College is at the hub in Humpty Doo and very much part of the rural area.

My congratulations to all the students and teachers who have achieved these wonderful results. I compliment the principal, Miriam McDonald and the council chairman, Beverly Ratahi, for driving the interests of all the students, teachers and families associated with Taminmin College. Congratulations.

Ms MOSS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I speak on the topic of mental health, given the Minister for Mental Health Services' comments over the course of the week about his priorities for the future.

I commend the Minister for Mental Health Services for the commitment given in this House to priorities for youth mental health, primary service delivery in remote areas and dealing with the gaps that exist between different tiers of service delivery for mental health service consumers and that mental illness is part of life for many within our justice system.

I have publicly commended the government previously on the addition of the ministry of Mental Health Services. I will be honest; it is something I have wanted to see for a long time. That is why I

was pleased and proud when the opposition added mental health as a portfolio area in November last year.

In my inaugural speech in this House on 21 October 2014, I proudly said, 'I also hope to keep mental health firmly on the agenda'. So I was pleased to receive the media release titled 'Mental Health Firmly on the Agenda' this week and to hear the minister's comments over the last couple of days.

I agree with the Minister for Mental Health Services that the areas he has outlined are ones that are incredibly important and complex. I am sure local stakeholders will be all too happy to talk to him about those and excited to participate in a conversation with mental health as the focus.

Mental health is a particular passion of mine. It is not an area I claim to be an expert in, as I am not a mental health professional. There are many mental health professionals in the Northern Territory and nationally who do a stunning job, and are highly knowledgeable and skilled in these areas.

I am most grateful that I can consider some of these people an important part of my network and have been part of their work to improve the mental health system across the nation over the last five years. This included when I had the honour last year of representing one of our national youth mental health organisations at The 2nd International Youth Mental Health Conference in the United Kingdom. I addressed the conference along with Professor Jane Burns the CEO of the Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre about the possibilities of the use of technology for wellbeing. It was thought provoking and an honour to hear from the likes of former Australian of the Year, Professor Patrick McGorry, Professor Ian Hickie, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg and others.

It hit home at the conference that Australia is leading the way in many aspects of mental health service delivery, particularly in involving young people in the design of youth mental health services.

I will share a personal reflection with you. Through years of volunteering with a number of national mental health organisations, I have heard endless stories of diverse and passionate young people from all walks of life who experience mental illness. I have worked alongside them to promote and contribute to the development of services and campaigns. It opened my eyes to the true breadth of what comes under the umbrella of mental health: how we optimise individual mental health in the same way we look at physical health; issues that can be managed through self-care and maybe one-off reaching out;

medication; ongoing care; assisted living arrangements; residential care; and disability.

Through my advocacy I was quite open about my own experiences. I understand the sometimes terrifying nature of experiencing a panic attack and how the deeply personal experience can be different to somebody else who technically experiences the same thing.

One in five Australians are impacted by mental disorders every year, which is a lot of Australians. We have 25 members of parliament and I hazard a guess that almost everyone, if not everybody, has been touched by mental illness in some way and many more will experience difficult times and short-term issues.

Many of us have been touched by the loss of far too many Territorians to suicide every year. I thank all of those incredible people who work and volunteer in mental health-related fields. It is such important work and often they save lives and help people get back on track.

Some of the areas I am keen to explore, and see the government explore, include those identified by the minister, including how current effective models can be adapted in remote areas. I am very aware that where models rely in strong part on population bases, we often miss out.

We need to be exploring how we can optimise the use of technology to improve our health outcomes in the Territory, working across sectors towards common language for ease of transition between services and ensuring Territorians do not have to tell their story repeatedly before they get to the right place.

I want us to explore advocating for those who care for Territorians who experience severe mental disorders and are unable to work. It would be great to see more inter-agency work between government and the non-government sector on substance abuse and mental health, which the Minister for Health also touched on. Also in those cases where a person might have a co-existing disability and mental disorder, often people fall through the cracks when seeing professionals about individual issues when they experience a range of them. I acknowledge recruitment and retention in the mental health workforce is an ongoing challenge for the Territory.

We deserve to be considered when the federal government is deciding where the next headspace centre will be, particularly when both major federal parties have committed to funding these centres. A huge amount of lobbying by a diverse range of stakeholders has occurred in Tennant Creek over the years. I attended a meeting in Katherine about 18 months ago relating to the potential for

services to collaborate for the provision of a centre there. The recommendations for headspace centres have appeared in the Gone Too Soon report by the bipartisan parliamentary inquiry into youth suicide and many reports of the Youth Round Table over the years. As part of that important push, at times I have been insufferable in my relationships with some national organisations.

I continue my advocacy as I committed to do, speaking to headspace, writing to Sussan Ley, the federal Minister for Health and talking to the media in the hope that we might be considered. I genuinely hope to see government ministers opposite look into this and join the push. I acknowledge and thank the Northern Territory government public servants who have been part of the establishment of existing centres. The first was established here over six years ago, I believe, and was one of the first in the wave of centres rolled out in the country. There are also some members of the media who are very passionate on this topic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that together we can do some incredible good in this area.

Mr GILES (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the member for Casuarina for that very good and informative speech about headspace, in particular.

Today I note the 50th anniversary of boarding at St Philip's College in Alice Springs, providing a home away from home for hundreds of outback children who come from a catchment area as wide as western Europe. St Philip's is Australia's most remote multicultural day and boarding school. Boarders come from as far afield as Broome, the Tiwi Islands, Katherine, Borroloola and deep in the homelands of South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

St Philip's was first established in 1965 by Reverend Dr Fred McKay. He was the successor to John Flynn of Royal Flying Doctor Service fame. It is one of Fred's legacies and testimony to his relentless aim to establish a mantle of caring across the outback. He knew it was vital that young people raised in the outback stayed long enough to put down roots and impetus was lost when children were sent away to school. He wanted education to be delivered locally and to be relevant to the Territory and its future.

Fred lobbied the United Church in the NT and a lease for 19 acres of bush backing onto the Telegraph Station National Park was secured. Budget constraints meant that the college had to rely heavily on volunteer labour to complete the building. This saw the beginning of the work party tradition, as more than 300 self-funded volunteers

paid their own way to come from down south to help ready St Philip's for its opening in 1965. It is excellent to note that the working party tradition continues today. While faces may have changed, the same commitment to helping the community remains.

Families from across the outback attended the commencement service in February 1965 and 56 children were welcomed as boarders. Territorians will recognise many of the names: Chalmers, Prior, Morton, Murphy, Savage, Colson, Allen, Hagan and Collings to name but a few. In many cases there are now second and third generations of those families attending the college.

The first principal was John Cope and the first enrolled student was Charlie Chalmers from the 2000 m² MacDonald Downs Station. Fees were £98 per secondary student per term and £5 less for primary students with a discount for families with more than one child. Then, as now, the Commonwealth government subsidised all boarding students.

Development of the college progressed and new buildings included a medical centre, more boarding houses and staff accommodation. Extensions were opened in 1980 by the late Senator Bernie Kilgariff.

The opening of the day school in 1989 changed the face of St Philip's boarding forever. Although free to choose to attend any local school, the majority of boarders chose to attend the new facilities. The college has grown from 147 enrolled students in 1989 to almost 700 today, with up to 60 boarders.

The tremendous community support St Philip's has had and continues to enjoy today stands out in the college's history. As always, it is the people who make things happen including: Chris Tudor, who has been headmaster for 29 years; Jan Heaslip, the driving force behind the day school; deputy headmaster, Chris Leesong, who has been an integral part of the team led by Chris for 25 years; Jean Thurgood, who gave 35 years of service to St Philip's including in the role of matron; and former matron, Lois Walker, who remains a staunch supporter and regular visitor.

Fred McKay not only founded St Philip's but in 1994 came out of retirement to lead the national Outback Achievers' Appeal as patron to help raise over \$2m.

An overall sense of family and community is a hallmark of St Philip's. Small numbers and great facilities which cater for the individual and the special needs of young people often raised in great isolation set the college apart. Not only do the experienced staff have to be familiar with the

special needs of former School of the Air students, they often deal with young people who are sometimes more comfortable with adults than with those their own age. Fifty years on, St Philip's is an integral part of the fabric of the outback. The fact St Philip's has a waiting list confirms the vital role the college plays not only in Central Australia, but beyond.

The 50th anniversary celebrations are taking place from 13 to 15 March, to which all past and current boarders, families, staff and friends of the college are invited.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I extend by congratulations, and the congratulations of this House, to an institution that has excelled in growing Territorians.

Mr BARRETT (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a petition put together by the people in Rosebery in relation to a liquor licence application. I missed the deadline to present the petition today, so I will make a quick adjournment speech and table it. The grievance has to do with the proximity of the premises to a school and childcare centre.

In this area there is a lack of the antisocial behaviour which happens in other parts of the community and people are nervous that awarding this liquor licence will change that. It is a suburb with many small children. Given that I spend a great deal of time there, I note the parks in that area are heavily used by small children and families riding their bikes around and having fun.

Families in the area are nervous that the granting of this liquor licence will change the dynamic within that community so people cannot enjoy those public spaces as much as they could before.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table this document.

Leave granted.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will comment on an ABC radio news bulletin that quoted the member for Port Darwin, who used an estimated dollar value on operating the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly as a veiled slur to try to discredit the motion I brought to the Assembly in the General Business Day opportunity of three-and-a-half hours per week.

The media chose to report the member for Port Darwin's veiled slur to discredit the motion. It is important to put on the record that as the member for Barkly in the Legislative Assembly representing about 7000 in population, covering a geographic area one-and-a-half times the size of

Victoria, I cost the taxpayers money. That is the nature of democracy. Whether I am boiling up the billy in a gravel pit on the Minyerri road before setting up camp for the night, staying in a motel room in Borrooloola or Mataranka or travelling to Alice Springs and staying in a motel, the taxpayer pays.

I am an elected community member who represents the constituency of Barkly. I am also the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and I frequently represent the Leader of the Opposition and colleagues on the Labor team. I receive a wage and an electorate allowance, have a motor vehicle and a phone provided, and do the best I can. I do not receive a pension. I am on 9% superannuation like the other members of this House. I am a servant of the people.

That the media reported on this veiled slur of this cost factor to discredit the motion is rather unfortunate. What should have been reported after the motion was defeated in the Legislative Assembly in a true democratic process, was how many members of the Country Liberal Party supported the Chief Minister. Remember, the motion was calling for the Chief Minister to resign.

I cannot count how many constituents in the Barkly and members of the wider Northern Territory community have said to me, 'We have to get rid of this government. We have to get rid of the Chief Minister. You are a parliamentarian, do something about it.' I have had this conversation regularly.

The opposition brought the most serious motion of no confidence to the House that was defeated 13:10. I brought a motion to the House providing an opportunity to create the dialogue for Territorians that the Country Liberal Party had confidence in the Chief Minister. That was not displayed in the debate last night, and was not reported by the media.

As a matter of fact, there was a small minority of members who spoke. The member for Port Darwin spoke with a philosophical-type contribution to debate with many opportunities to show clever intellect. The Chief Minister spoke with a very short, sharp, crafted written speech. The member for Fong Lim spoke and as usual provided a very good political take in debate. Then two ministers spoke, the Deputy Chief Minister and the Minister for Business who gave a cut-and-paste synopsis of quite interesting work the departments of government are doing. The member for Stuart delivered a one-line contribution we have become used to, unaccustomed to speaking in this House on behalf of Territorians without a hand-delivered, hand-prepared script. Then the member for Brennan delivered the punch line that he will probably

regret for the rest of his political career, where he admitted that the CLP had been a dysfunctional government since 2012.

Essentially Territorians were waiting to hear a resounding level of support for the Chief Minister in this House. The motion provided that opportunity but, once again, it was not delivered.

I am leaving the two-week sittings period. I will get in a motor car, and as soon as I leave this fair city that will be the end of the travel allowance I am paid while living away from home. I will go back on to my wages and be back in the bush camping out, using different accommodation services, visiting people and researching and learning. That is paid for by the taxpayer.

Unfortunately, I cannot tell the story that the CLP showed true confidence in the member for Braitling as their Chief Minister so I cannot guarantee this government is stable. I will be on the road talking to many people before I return to this parliament. It is still up in the air.

We have said constantly in debate in this House that is this uncertainty and calamity has reduced our reputations as elected community members. It has reduced business confidence and has a residual effect of crushing consumer confidence. Most importantly, as I said in my contribution, it has created a cloud over our credibility as a Northern Territory administration, both at a national level in the statehood debate, and even more important in the current policy development for northern Australia, with our colleagues, friends and trading partners in Asia. We leave this place with this uncertainty still floating. That is what, importantly, should have been reported.

I am aware there is an important meeting of the Country Liberal Party founding fathers, mothers and members. I am sure the media will be very interested in following that meeting and reporting the outcomes of what happens in that next stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, on this side of the House it is business as usual. It is the job of the opposition to be the voice of the people, as we are. As I said, I cannot count any longer how many constituents in the Northern Territory have said, 'Get rid of this government. Get rid of the member for Braitling as the Chief Minister.'

In a true democratic style and process, that is what the opposition tried to do in the last couple of weeks. We had two pieces in that democratic puzzle. Both those motions were debated, but unfortunately without a resounding level of support from CLP members on the other side, other than gathering in the corner of the Legislative Assembly under the banner of 13:10.

As I said last night, if you count the members who spoke in support of the Chief Minister in relation to the motion there was one, the member for Port Darwin. One would assume what I fear and Territorians should be very concerned about: the possibility now of our Country Liberal Party government going forward with a two-man Cabinet. I am very concerned.

Those other members on that side who represent the Cabinet have just received their new handbook. They will need to fight hard and drive accountability because what we found out from the member for Araluen was the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, during the Christmas period last year, Northern Territory police began a six-month trial of intensive temporary beat locations outside takeaway liquor outlets in Katherine. This drastic measure was a bid to reduce alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour. This drastic measure has proved highly successful.

Prior to this move, temporary beat locations, or TBLs as they are known, had already proven hugely successful in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. In these towns levels of alcohol-related crime have plummeted since TBLs began in 2014. Statistics show assaults were reduced by 27% in Alice Springs and halved in Tennant Creek as a result of the Country Liberal government's alcohol policies.

TBLs have already served to protect the Katherine community in the same way. By employing a similar high visibility preventative approach at the town's main takeaway grog outlets, assaults and other acts of violence have been markedly reduced. In the year to October assaults in Katherine were down 17% and house break-ins dropped 19% compared to the previous year.

These are impressive results being delivered by our hard-working police, but we recognise antisocial behaviour is still a major issue in the centre of the town. The temporary beat locations have helped police tackle the cause of the trouble instead of just dealing with the aftermath.

The TBLs were used on individual occasions in Katherine over the past year with excellent results. However this government realised that extra officers were needed for the policy to be applied more comprehensively.

Under Operation Veto, 10 additional officers were seconded from Darwin on 14-day rotations for six months from December last year. These police are stationed outside the town's main bottle shops and their job is to identify people likely to buy and then consume alcohol in a restricted area.

The figures from Alice Springs and Tennant Creek show TBLs work where there are clearly established no-alcohol drinking zones and where the consumption of alcohol in nearby communities is prohibited. We are confident this intensive approach will also deliver similar results in Katherine. It is about preventing the public drunkenness which so often leads to criminal offending. It is about the protection of women and children in Katherine who are too often the victims of the violence that flows from alcohol abuse.

This preventative approach is increasingly supported by health advocates across the Territory. Only the opposition remains stubbornly opposed to this highly-effective tool that helped drive assaults down Territory-wide.

Labor leader Delia Lawrie is on the record as saying that TBLs are a, 'Stupid policy move as far as the opposition is concerned'. She is demonstrably wrong and the statistics prove it. We think protecting women and children from violence is the best use of police resources. We are giving Katherine police the tools they need to do that.

While I am on my feet talking about that, I add that as a former police officer I recognise the importance of being able to nip problems in the bud. The best way to nip those problems in the bud is early intervention. You could apply that across the whole board of social interactions that cause, or have potential to cause, problems in our society but none could be truer than early intervention with alcohol.

We used to think about a clock in determining what the night shift or the late evening shift would look like. We knew there was a direct correlation between the police intervening to prevent the consumption of alcohol earlier in the day and the amount of work being done by them in responding to serious crimes at night. We knew there would be less work for police at night if there was more intervention and alcohol tipped out during the day. In the same way the TBLs are having a very similar effect.

These measures work. It is now the challenge for our government to make sure we can maintain those in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. We are up to that task. I am already engaged with the Police minister, the Chief Minister and other ministers to formulate a plan of how we can deal with this scourge going forward.

I also take this opportunity to thank the police officers in Katherine and those who visit Katherine on this rotational basis. It is tough work standing at a bottle shop hour after hour talking to people and identifying who might be problem drinkers and where they might be intending to go to drink their

liquor. It is hard work and I am told it is a bit soul destroying. Nonetheless, it is an important job. To the police officers concerned, the work you are doing is making a difference to my town. The people of Katherine appreciate the work you are doing; you can see it. On day one, I heard comments from people who said, 'I have never seen this town so quiet'. So to the police officers involved in this operation and all of the police in Katherine, I tip my hat and say thank you for your efforts.

Tonight I also talk about Katherine's new \$2.9m renal unit. As the member for the Katherine, I had the pleasure late last year to officially open the new facility which will increase renal dialysis capacity in Katherine by providing an additional eight chairs. The unit will be staffed with six nurses and three support staff. Operated via a service agreement between Top End Health Service and Fresenius Medical Care, the dialysis clinic provides haemodialysis treatment for 32 patients at a 16-station renal unit. The renal unit is the second partnership between the public and private sectors to provide renal services in the Northern Territory.

The Fresenius Medical Care Katherine Dialysis Clinic is situated at 122 Casuarina Drive, Katherine. The clinic operates from Monday to Saturday from 7 am until 4 pm. As well as the 16 renal dialysis chairs, the clinic has two facility-owned buses which travel a 25 km radius offering pick-up and drop-off services to patients. The unit is a modern facility overlooking landscaped gardens and natural bushland, which also features two clinical consultation rooms, office space, a training area for staff and a comfortable tea room and waiting area for patients.

This is a facility not just for the Katherine township but for the entire Katherine region. It will relieve the strain on our existing renal services in Katherine. Under national best practice renal units like this are located within a community to provide a total wellness model of care.

The Country Liberals government is providing services where they are needed most. I take this opportunity to thank staff at the renal unit in Katherine, particularly those new ones who joined to operate the renal dialysis centre and the staff who have traditionally maintained renal dialysis services at the Katherine Hospital.

We are very lucky as the Katherine Hospital is an outstanding place. As old as some of the buildings might be, and some are about 75 years old, it is not the buildings that make the hospital, it is the people who work there.

Katherine Hospital is renowned for the best maternity services in the Northern Territory. I can

vouch for that by demonstrating just how far and to what extent people will go to get back to Katherine. I have known people who lived and had babies in Katherine then moved away, who travelled from interstate back to Katherine Hospital to have another baby. You could not ask for a better recommendation or comment on the quality of services at Katherine Hospital.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the staff there. Well done for the work you do. I hope I have an opportunity to catch up with many of you in the months ahead.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.