

Madam Speaker Agaard took the Chair at 10 am pursuant to resolution of the Assembly dated 10 August 2009:

And the Assembly agreed to give precedence to a notice of motion expressing no confidence in the government which was given on 10 August 2009 by the Leader of the Opposition, pursuant to section 24(1)(a) of the *Electoral Act*.

**MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 11**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received from His Honour the Administrator Message No 11 notifying assent to bills passed in the June sitting of the Assembly.

**TABLED PAPER
Government Administrative Arrangements**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Administrative Arrangements Order dated 6 August 2009, as follows:

Paul Raymond Henderson - Chief Minister; Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Major Projects, Employment and Economic Development; Education and Training; Climate Change; Territory-Federal Relations; and Multicultural Affairs

Delia Phoebe Lawrie - Deputy Chief Minister; Treasurer; Justice and Attorney-General; Planning and Lands; and Infrastructure

Christopher Bruce Burns - Leader of Government Business; Business; Tourism; Trade; Asian Relations; and Defence Support

Konstantine Vatskalis – Health; Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources; Racing, Gaming and Licensing; and Alcohol Policy

Daniel Robert Knight – Housing; Local Government; Essential Services; and Public Employment

Malarndirri Barbara Anne McCarthy - Children and Families; Child Protection; Statehood; Women's Policy; and Indigenous Policy

Karl Rio Hampton - Regional Development; Sport and Recreation; Information, Communications and Technology Policy; Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Major Projects and Economic Development; Central Australia; Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage; and Parks and Wildlife

Gerald Francis McCarthy – Transport; Correctional Services; Arts and Museums; Senior Territorians; Young Territorians; and Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Multicultural Affairs and Education

**STATEMENT BY SPEAKER
No Confidence Motion - Debate**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, when the Assembly met on Monday, 10 August 2009, it was agreed by resolution that the Assembly meet on Friday, 14 August 2009, for the purpose of debating the no confidence motion. It is the intention of all members to debate the no confidence motion until there is a resolution. It is also the intention to suspend the Assembly at 1 pm and resume at 2 pm.

I have given permission for ABC television, ABC radio, Channel 9 and the *NT News* to film and photograph the debate on the motion.

Honourable members, this is likely to be a most robust debate because of its very nature; I believe that it should be because it is a very grave matter and of concern to all Territorians. Without wishing to stifle debate in any way, I remind honourable members the standing orders still apply in relation to this debate, and draw your attention in particular to Standing Orders 62, 63 and 64 in relation to parliamentary language, and allegations and imputations against a member, and the power of the Speaker to intervene.

I remind honourable members the time limits for speeches are 30 minutes for the first two speakers and 20 minutes for all other speakers. By agreement, all members should be afforded the possibility of a single extension of time of 10 minutes should they wish.

Thank you, honourable members.

**MOTION
Electoral Act – No Confidence in Government**

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move - That the Assembly, pursuant to section 24(1)(a) of the *Electoral Act* express 'that the government no longer possesses the confidence of the Assembly'.

We now meet to consider the future of the crisis-ridden Henderson government and, as a consequence, the future of the Northern Territory. For many Territorians, the events of the past couple of weeks will have come as a surprise because it is rare for governments to face a motion of no confidence in the parliament. It happens to governments consumed by the vision; governments which are inherently unstable, and on their last legs. This is certainly the case for the

Henderson government. From the moment the people delivered a near-death experience at the last Territory election, this Territory government, this Henderson government, has been in crisis.

Yet, in reality, today's no confidence motion has been much longer in the making. Indeed, it has its genesis in events which began more than three years ago. In fact, I believe, the night in 2006 the ABC's *Lateline* program exposed that young girls at Mutitjulu community were trading sexual favours for petrol marks the very beginning of why we are here today. Young girls prostituting themselves to obtain petrol to escape the reality of their lives is a shocking indictment on our society. The very exposure of that trade and the revelation that the then Chief Minister, Clare Martin, had been aware of but failed to act, prompted media and community pressure which saw her establish the inquiry into the protection of Aboriginal children from sexual abuse.

The inquiry was appointed on 8 August 2006. It reported on 15 June 2007, and called its report *Little Children are Sacred*. The report confirmed there was widespread sexual abuse of children across many remote communities. After the release of the report, Clare Martin issued a media release stating:

I will table the report in parliament next week and the government will provide its full response to the report in the August sittings of parliament.

Given that the Chief Minister had actually received the inquiry's report six weeks before its public release, she was willing to wait a further three months before responding to the alarming news that child sexual abuse was widespread within remote communities – 12 weeks of inertia. It is hard to imagine - it is impossible for me to imagine - such a casual approach to the grave issues that were raised by this inquiry.

In contrast, whilst the Martin government sat and waited, the federal government declared the emergency intervention and poured people and resources into 72 remote communities across the Northern Territory. The contrast could not have been starker, nor the implications more profound. Clare Martin's leadership of Territory Labor was effectively over from that moment. Her failure to deal with the issue of child abuse provided just the ammunition the arrogant and ambitious member for Wanguri needed to snatch the leadership from his predecessor.

The emergency intervention also produced the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program. Two years later, the Henderson government's abject failure to implement SIHIP has torn the last shred of creditability from this

Chief Minister's leadership, and provided the catalyst for this vote of no confidence. Not that this no confidence motion should live or die on the Henderson government's failure to deliver a single new house to the bush under SIHIP during the past two years; it should not just rest on that - far from it. This no confidence motion needs to reflect on the history of division and instability in the Henderson government, and how the downward spiral of the last 18 months has failed Territorians, and will continue to fail Territorians into the future.

The failure of SIHIP is just one part of the equation when assessing the performance of the Henderson government. As a consequence, I will be considering a number of critical points of the Chief Minister's time in office. The Chief Minister's decision to force the most successful Labor leader in the history of the Territory prematurely out of office says a great deal about his lack of judgment. A little more than two years after Clare Martin decimated the opposition, the Chief Minister had her head on a plate. It says this Chief Minister's ambition runs well ahead of his modest ability; it demonstrates both arrogance and ignorance - which is a dangerous combination in any leader.

Just days later, the Chief Minister again showcased his lack of judgment when he appointed Len Kiely to his ministry. Appointing a member who had disgraced himself and his party to Cabinet set an abysmal example; the bar could be set no lower. However, the Chief Minister had no choice; it was the price of the deal to push Clare Martin and Syd Stirling out of the top jobs. It is a price that the Chief Minister has been willing to pay time and time again to hold on to the top job. His 'no cost is too high, no price too dear' approach to power is the root cause of the instability which characterises this government.

The real cost, however, has been borne by Territorians, as this compromised administration has failed to deliver time and time again.

Consider the retirement of Elliot McAdam. Everyone recognised we desperately needed local government reform, but when Elliot McAdam wanted to stand firm with a policy he believed in, he was abandoned by his Chief Minister. The Chief Minister had already decided to head to an early election so the dissent around local government reform had to be put to bed. The political ambitions of the Chief Minister trumped the need for local government reform.

We then had the embarrassing spectacle of the Chief Minister calling an early election on the ludicrous claim that only he could secure INPEX and, as a consequence, we needed to go to the polls 12 months early. Of course, the electorate

saw through this shabby deception and, to their great credit, ripped the heart out of the majority Clare Martin had achieved. That foolish decision to go early is further evidence of a want of judgment on behalf of the Chief Minister. It was shallow, opportunistic, and politically foolish.

These are the ingredients of the instability in the Henderson government which has brought us to debate this motion. These failings are on display so often in the Henderson government. When the Coroner exposed a culture of cover-up amongst the highest levels of the Health bureaucracy, including the Health Minister, the Chief Minister refused to act. Politically, of course, he could not afford to dump his disgraced Health Minister. A by-election in the seat of Johnston would bring the government down. Political considerations are of greater importance; hence, the Health Minister was moved sideways. Any standard of ministerial responsibility was abandoned by this compromised Chief Minister, and the impact of the abysmal standards of ministerial responsibility run deep in the Henderson government.

When his deputy leader, the member for Arafura, sacked the CEO of Education, Margaret Banks, and claimed she resigned, the Chief Minister sat mute. Once again, the Chief Minister was in no position to require a member of his Cabinet to adhere to even the most basic standards of ministerial behaviour.

Having compromised himself over the death of an elderly woman at Royal Darwin Hospital, how could he now sack his deputy for lying about the sacking of the head of Education? Having escaped censure for lying outside the parliament, the deputy leader of the government then promptly walked into parliament and told another calculated deception about her whereabouts during a demonstration by teachers on the steps of parliament. His deputy leader had committed the ultimate sin against the Westminster system, but it was of no account to this Chief Minister.

Once again, this hollow and calculating Chief Minister allowed a minister in his government to survive despite being exposed as dishonest. Ultimately, the member for Arafura did resign from Cabinet, but not because she had repeatedly misled Territorians, nor did her decision to stand aside from Cabinet result in any improved standards within the Henderson government. How could it? The Chief Minister had no standards to enforce.

There is no requirement to be either honest or diligent in the performance of ministerial duties, so when the new Deputy Chief Minister, the member for Karama, was asked in parliament whether she had directed a prosecution against Red Rooster in

Tennant Creek be dropped, she deliberately misled parliament. 'No', she told parliament, 'I gave no such instruction', yet an e-mail from the CEO of the department specifically states the minister '... has verbally instructed me to cease the prosecution action', against Red Rooster. What does this hollow and compromised Chief Minister do? Nothing. After the member for Johnston had deliberately misled parliament, and the member for Arafura had deliberately misled parliament, how can he now move on his deputy leader for the exactly the same offence? He cannot and he does not.

There is no commitment to the principles of parliament, no respect for the truth, no honesty for the people of the Territory. This is the type of stability the member for Nelson has opted for, I understand: free rein for ministers to mislead parliament; no sanctions for failure to tell the truth. Honesty is a critical element of a stable government, a government that has the confidence of the community. Tell the truth.

The Chief Minister places no requirements on his ministers or his members to be honest and, as a consequence, a culture of deception is entrenched in this government. That culture of deception could explode in the member for Nelson's face any moment. That culture of deception is why the Henderson government is deeply divided and inherently unstable. The other critical failure of the Henderson government is its failure to deliver. My mother says this administration could not make a decision if its life depended on it; nothing ever gets done.

Look at land release for residential development in Darwin and Alice Springs. The spiral in the cost of housing in the Territory has been ringing alarm bells for five years. The Henderson government's response is to issue glossy brochures, talk about releasing land at Bellamack, at Johnston, at Zuccoli, even Weddell. It never delivered what it promised and, as a result, the land release slowed to a trickle and the price of housing in Darwin skyrocketed. Thanks to the Henderson government's failure to release land, Darwin is now the most expensive city in Australia in which to rent a house or unit. That is a disgrace, as is the Henderson government's decision to offer tiny housing blocks - just 150 m² - at Bellamack. We do not have four million people trying to crowd around our beautiful harbour. Darwin is home to just 120 000 people, yet renting a house in Darwin is more expensive than Sydney. How could that be?

This Chamber also needs to reflect on the alarming 80% increase in the rate of assaults in the Northern Territory during this decade. The Chief Minister's explanation for that shocking figure is we have an increase in the rate of

reporting of domestic violence. He claims there is no more violence, just more reported violence. There are only 12 people in the Territory willing to swallow that nonsense. At the same time, the Chief Minister says the rate of assaults is directly linked to the abuse of alcohol. The other thing that has happened over the last decade is the rate of alcohol consumption in the Territory has skyrocketed. So, on the Chief Minister's own reasoning, there would have been a substantial increase in the rate of violent assaults in the last decade. This, tragically, is the case. There will be no reduction in the rate of violent assaults whilst the Chief Minister refuses to admit the harsh reality of it. Refusal to face the true facts results in token efforts to curb the problem. The Henderson government has alcohol courts that are rarely used, and rarely effective when used. The Henderson government has voluntary rehabilitation for prisoners suffering from alcohol and drug addiction. The Henderson government introduced alcohol management plans based on a political calculus. The Henderson government has neither the stomach nor the nous to curb the rate of assaults in the Territory.

Equally, it has failed to improve education outcomes in the bush. Indeed, already poor education performances in the bush have actually declined under Labor. A measure of the Henderson Labor government's confusion in dealing with falling education standards can be found in the chaotic argument it conducted about bilingual education in the bush. It has dropped it. It should be reinstated and, finally, it will now be allowed to continue for another year. In fact, bilingual education is a side issue. Getting kids to school, establishing standards in education, and ensuring that a qualified teacher is in front of the classes is far more important than whether we teach kids to speak English, in their mother tongue, or conduct classes exclusively in English. Education policy in the bush has been hijacked by politics. This government's divisions and instability see the real issue sidelined, and the results, sadly, are plain to see.

No one actually knows what this government believes in, aside from politics. In a political environment without value, principles, or belief - anything is up for grabs. The long-term legacy of this chaotic approach is cause for real concern for the future of the Northern Territory. We have a population explosion in the bush, and a failure to educate that next generation will compound many of the Territory's existing problems. This second-rate government is leaving a heavy and increasing burden for future generations to deal with.

Look at the debacle surrounding Darwin's electricity system. It is bad enough that Labor bled Power and Water for dividends, thereby

denying the corporation money for maintenance, leading to the collapse of the system and a 25% price hike to repair the damage. It is absurd that Labor has just announced another investigation into electricity systems by the Utilities Commissioner, and he has raised the possibility of further price hikes. Why could this feeble government not get the investigation right in the first place, rather than institute another one?

Territorians should not have to suffer this amateurish approach to the running of essential services. The collapse of electricity is just one reason the Territory is now labouring under a massive debt. We will owe \$26 000 for every man, woman and child in the Territory for the next few years. We face a \$200m black hole budget deficit this year. We have a government that has no idea how to rein in that debt. Territorians will be paying for this government's budget blowout for years to come.

We need a government which has a plan and is willing to work diligently to deliver that plan. The Chief Minister's only plan appears to be staying in power - and buggery the consequences. That is why we have such instability, such deep division, and delivery of so few results for Territorians.

I am very disappointed the member for Nelson has indicated he has signed up for more of Labor's division and delay. There will be no stability whilst the Labor Party fails to service the needs of the Territory community. It is only a matter of time before another Labor member will no longer be willing to be complicit in the waste, the delay, and the deceit of this dysfunctional government. I just wonder how long members opposite will be willing to tolerate their government's failure to deliver child protection workers for kids at risk, teachers to bush schools, or desperately-needed houses for Indigenous communities. Do they remain true believers desperately defending a failed Labor government while hope flickers for the vulnerable who are far from this Chamber - the ones we are elected to serve and advance? This brings me back to where the no confidence motion began - SIHIP.

SIHIP was born of the intervention. It is fair to say the intervention was the result of the then federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough's determination to end the callous indifference of the Martin Labor government to the shocking reality of child abuse in remote Indigenous communities. And Territory Labor's response to the intervention was stunned resentment followed by a grudging acceptance, but only after federal Labor backed the plan. Shame!

The one exception amongst Labor politicians was the member for Macdonnell. She knew full well the extent of the problems in remote communities and the totally inadequate nature of her own government's decision to wait 12 weeks before announcing a plan of action to deal with the abuse of children. With great courage she came forward and supported the intervention as the rest of her party muttered darkly about wedge politics.

The member for Macdonnell spoke up because she wanted protection for children and women at risk of abuse in remote communities. She was not interested in the political posturing of her party. The same motives dictated she spoke publicly about the scandal surrounding the delivery of houses to the bush: the failed Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program. The member for Macdonnell was told by the Henderson government's hand-picked man that 70% of the \$672m would be sucked up in indirect costs. She was told the number of houses likely to be delivered would be around half the original figure promised. She was told, in two years and after the expenditure of grotesque amounts of money, not a single home had been delivered under SIHIP.

The member for Macdonnell again chose to speak out. She put the interests of the people of the Territory before her own political position. Such courage is rare – indeed, priceless - in politics, and it is a damn shame the Chief Minister does not possess similar moral fibre. Instead of being outraged that after two years not a single house had been built and obscene amounts of taxpayers' money spent, the Chief Minister claimed the figure provided to his Minister for Indigenous Policy by Jim Davidson, the man he picked to oversee SIHIP, had been wrong. A real leader would have been demanding to know what the hell was going on. A real leader would have gone to the people of the Territory with the facts regarding the scandal.

The member for Macdonnell left the Labor Party in disgust. The Chief Minister could not even face the parliament to answer questions about the project. He still refuses to detail the amount of SIHIP money already wasted. He arrogantly hides this embarrassing fact from consideration in this no confidence motion. The Chief Minister will not tell this parliament how much former federal Labor candidate for the electorate of Solomon, Jim Davidson, is being paid for his role in SIHIP. The Chief Minister will not detail how much former Labor minister, Jack Ah Kit, is being paid from SIHIP. The Chief Minister will not even provide a breakdown of money from SIHIP expended by the three alliances involved in SIHIP. The Chief Minister will not explain why Tennant Creek is no longer to receive any new houses under SIHIP. He will not

explain why the Territory government's own figures on houses to be built on the Tiwi Islands fell from around 90 new houses late last year to just 29 this year. The Chief Minister will not even offer an explanation as to why not a single home has been built in two years since SIHIP was announced.

Next week, I will be establishing a website on which whistleblowers can alert the opposition to examples of exactly how this government misuses public funds. I will be bringing these examples into this parliament and letting the member for Nelson know exactly what kind of government he has chosen to support. The Chief Minister's inability to deliver a single house, and his unwillingness to explain his failings, confirms his government is on life support - temporarily hooked up to the member for Nelson. The Chief Minister is now at the whim of the member for Nelson, as well as his deeply divided Caucus. The member for Nelson is now linked to this failed administration. There is no stability in these arrangements; there is no plan for breaking the chains of compromise that have characterised the Chief Minister's leadership from the moment he plotted the downfall of Clare Martin.

I have a plan for the Territory, a plan that will be measured by actual results; a program to lift the Territory out of the doldrums that have engulfed this stagnate, faction-ridden and deceitful administration. I will not sit back and watch taxpayers' money rush through the gaping holes of poorly-delivered projects. I will not tolerate another lost generation in the bush. I will not excuse liars or malingerers. I will deliver real justice for Territorians. I will ensure that our public service is again equipped with the tools necessary to deliver for the people of the Territory - no more dithering, no more evasion, no more abuse of taxpayers' money for shameless political purposes.

In contrast, a vote for the Chief Minister offers more of the same - more division, more instability, more aimless drift from a government that has long lost its moral compass. You cannot lead without reference to standards, and you certainly are not a leader if you fail to enforce those standards here.

I say to you, member for Nelson: if you have chosen as I understand you may have, I believe you have made the wrong decision. You have made the wrong decision in the interests of the future of the Northern Territory. Territorians want change. They want to break away from the poisonous relations that have become the norm for this Labor government. They want a government that will deliver for the people of the Territory, a government that brings law and order back under control; a government that is capable

of keeping the lights on; a government that does not feed the high cost of living in the Territory; a government that reverses the decline in education; a government that builds houses in the bush; a government that delivers. Territorians deserve a new government - a government they can have confidence in, a government that earns their confidence. That is something the leadership of this Chief Minister will not achieve.

Through you, Madam Speaker, it is important I say this to the member for Nelson: if you go through with this and vote to hitch yourself to this Labor government, which one of their very own recently described as 'rotten to the core', not only are you not doing what the public and your own constituents expect but, I am sorry to say, you will show yourself as a man whose word and honour is compromised. I say, please, Gerry, be a man of your word and support this motion of no confidence in the Henderson government.

Madam Speaker, I say to this House: end the instability, end the divisive reign of the Henderson government - support the motion.

Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, this is the most serious motion that can be debated in this parliament. This motion should be soundly defeated. I will articulate the case to defeat this motion.

Territorians want stability. Territorians want certainty. Territorians want leadership. Territorians want government with a plan for a future of the Northern Territory.

In the speech by the Leader of the Opposition, there was no plan for the Northern Territory. What we had was rhetoric dripping vitriol, a totally inaccurate portrayal of history, convoluted conspiracy theories, and grubby personal attacks on honest Territorians.

There was no plan for strong, stable government for the people of the Northern Territory. There was just a desperate Leader of the Opposition seeking to slip into government based on a single issue that has caused this government problems in SIHIP. I will go to the truth about SIHIP in a minute.

If the Leader of the Opposition had any integrity at all in convincing the members of this House that he had a plan to lead the people of the Northern Territory, he should have outlined that plan here today instead of relying a totally inaccurate portrayal of history.

I am not going to follow his path in my response in chasing all of those convoluted conspiracy theories down the various rabbit holes the Leader of the Opposition would want us to

debate. Territorians deserve better. Territorians deserve better debate in this parliament about the future of the people of the Northern Territory, not about the future of the Leader of the Opposition and his desperate attempts to slip into the position of Chief Minister.

What a couple of weeks it has been. Politics and those involved have been front and centre. It is doubtful we will ever get to stand in this parliament and debate something more fundamental to our democracy than the motion before us. The Leader of the Opposition has totally failed in promoting himself and his party, and a coalition of Independents, being able to give strong, stable government to the people of the Northern Territory with a plan to deliver a strong economy, health, education, and closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

I would have thought if he was serious about this House supporting the no confidence motion, he would actually deliver some vision for the Northern Territory – none, Madam Speaker, none at all.

It is a very big decision to vote for a want of confidence in the government because the consequences are extreme. You need a trigger just as extreme to go down that path. There are strong conventions in Westminster parliamentary democracy. By that, I mean evidence of corruption, graft, fraud, or crime. There are none of those triggers in the Leader of the Opposition's speech. None of these things have happened, nor is there any allegation of any of those issues.

It is true to say ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HENDERSON: It is true to say that one of the government MLAs decided to leave the party and that has raised some questions of the government. That was a sad day, and I will get to those issues.

It is very important that the government of the day can deliver stability - and I can guarantee that stability. I think it is reasonable to ask whether we can do that and my emphatic answer is yes. We can and we will deliver strong, stable government for the people of the Northern Territory with a plan to take Territorians forward. The Leader of the Opposition has no plan.

Can a minority government of 12 of the 25 seats deliver stability? Yes, it can. There are many examples across Australia over long periods of time where minority governments have delivered, and delivered well, for their

constituents. They have delivered good policy, good governance and most importantly, stability.

For example, the first Rann government in South Australia provided a stable government - open, transparent and inclusive. The Rann government was first elected in 2002. It also must be remembered that the Rann government also lost one of its Labor members in the first year when Kris Hanna moved to the Greens.

We should also look to the ACT Legislative Assembly, which is similar in many ways to this single Chamber Assembly. In the ACT Assembly, minority governments are the norm. Currently, Jon Stanhope leads a strong, stable government following an agreement with the Greens. There are seven Labor members, four Greens and six Liberals.

One of the hallmarks of the Rann government has been a willingness to go outside the Labor Party for advice, expertise and decision-making. This is something we have already started to do in the Northern Territory. The *Territory 2030* agenda has included the appointment of the first two non-politicians to a Cabinet subcommittee. I know *Territory 2030* is derided by the opposition - they have not even managed to put in a submission, so lazy and inept are they. *Territory 2030* is an inclusive plan; it has engaged Territorians across the Northern Territory. It is aspirational about the future of the Northern Territory, the aspirations of Territorians to see the Territory as the best place to live in Australia, and how we can maintain and grow that to 2030. Did the opposition wish to contribute in that debate? Not at all - because they had no plans. There was not a big deal made about it at the time, but this was the first instance of non-government people getting a look into executive government, and Bill Moss and Vicki O'Halloran have shown how valuable an exercise this can be. There is more to come as we step forward to deliver a new inclusive government for the Territory.

This government has also tried to be more inclusive in the development of policy. The Cash for Containers Scheme is a good example of the members for Fannie Bay and Nelson working together to get a good result. I acknowledge these are small steps, but they are in the right direction, and more inclusive government will benefit all Territorians.

In years to come, when the historians write the book on this important period in the Territory - and there is much to write - I hope they can say we made the most of this opportunity. If this parliament is going to be looked on favourably in the future, it will be in no small part due to the introduction of fixed four-year parliamentary terms.

Voters spoke loudly and clearly at the last election that they did not like early elections. I listened ...

Members interjecting.

Mr HENDERSON: I listened. When I was narrowly elected I said I would listen. One of the first things I acted on was to ensure no government could call a snap election. This was supported enthusiastically by all 25 members of this House. By doing this, I took away one of the tools the Chief Minister has at his disposal. I was willing to sacrifice that for the good of the Territory. Fixed four-year terms may not be as politically convenient for the government of the day, but they are good for the stability of the political system. They take away the opportunity for a government to call an election when it suits them. Instead, it provides a clear pathway for an extended period of time which results in better planning, more productive policies and, importantly, less cynicism about our political system. That is why I believe it would be a great shame for this parliament to fall at the first hurdle on fixed four-year terms.

No doubt the last couple of weeks have been less than ideal, but none of us got into this job because we thought it would be easy. We put our hands up to be politicians to give something back to this community, to lead this community, to represent the good people of the Northern Territory, and that means dealing with the tough issues and finding solutions when the easier course would be to walk away.

We have an obligation to try to make fixed four-year terms work. Fixed four-year terms provide a more open and transparent government, and build on the other measures my government has introduced to make government more accountable. The Territory now has protection for whistleblowers; we now have freedom of information laws; we now have a code of conduct for the members of this House; we now have a modern declaration of members' interests laws; and the Territory now has an estimates process - it is not perfect, but miles ahead of what it had previously been in place.

For the first time since self-government, the government promised to deliver in this House a report every six months on election commitments. No other government has done this. We had a mandate from the people at the last election. Based on our election commitments, we are reporting progress on those commitments every six months in this House. We are the most accountable government since self-government and I believe everyone in this House would agree we need to do more, and more will be done.

I want this parliament to be more inclusive based on cooperation not conflict. We have much in common, but we tend to concentrate on the things which divide us. I have outlined some of the steps we have taken, but there are many more miles to be walked along this road. There is no better opportunity than now to make this happen.

The one thing we all agree on is the need for governments to deliver for all Territorians, and that is certainly something I have tried to do. This government represents all Territorians - those in the city, the towns, and our rural and remote communities. We represent all races, all creeds, all colours. This government is the makeup of its members and is a microcosm of the Territory as a whole. We have people from all walks of life, Indigenous members, and we very proudly have a member who was born in Greece and now calls the Territory his home. We all bring the passions of our backgrounds - where we have come from, who we are, who we represent - to the business of government.

Sometimes, that gets tough because we are all passionate people and our policies reflect this diversity, particularly our unrelenting resolve to close the gap of Indigenous disadvantage. It is an unrelenting resolve which defines this government like nothing else, and it is, as we all know, a very difficult issue to work through.

When our government was first elected in 2001, we inherited three decades of neglect on Indigenous issues. I am not here to apportion blame or go down the history of neglect because blame does not fix the problems. Solutions fix problems, and we have been working hard on finding and implementing the answers to the huge challenges we have in Indigenous affairs.

What have we done? We have undertaken the most comprehensive plan of Indigenous disadvantage in the history of the Territory. When we first came to office we identified an appalling fact, a known fact: no Indigenous students had ever graduated with a Year 12 result from a remote school. Not one, in 27 years. I have been a member of the Labor Party for 26 years now in the Northern Territory, and a man I had huge respect for was Brian Ede, the former Leader of the Opposition and member for Stuart. I was in this House when Brian Ede made his last speech in this Assembly. He said the greatest regret he had in his 10 years in this House was that not one single Indigenous student in his electorate from a remote school had left with a Year 12 certificate. The neglect of Indigenous education over those years left a profound impact on me.

We have identified that problem and we have moved to solve it. There is a huge way to go, but it is not buried under the carpet. What did we do?

We provided the resources needed to give kids in the bush an education and a chance to succeed. The result? Our first three students graduated in Kalkarindji in 2003 and, since then, another 111 students have followed their lead. Many more need to increase those numbers over the years. However, I do not stand here pretending our challenges of education have been met - not at all; there is a huge gap. New ways must be found to deliver *Transforming Indigenous Education*. It is a massive agenda, but one I am passionately committed to, along with the Australian government and all my colleagues on this side of the House. The most important thing we all need to do is get kids to school on a regular basis. That is not just a job for the government; it is a job for the entire community. We have a long way to go. We have started the job and we want to finish it. I seek your vote of confidence so I can finish the things we have started.

Education is not the only gap we need to close. We have many other areas which need urgent attention; none more so than Indigenous housing. In many ways, we are here today due to the attempt by the federal and Territory governments to implement the most comprehensive campaign to improve housing in the bush ever seen in this country. It is massive. For too long, Aboriginal people in remote areas have been living in housing that is simply not good enough - up to 20 people crammed into one house with the problems that creates.

After years of discussion and, in partnership with the federal government, in April last year - 14 months ago, not two years - we signed a \$672m housing program - \$100m of that is Territory government money. For the first time, the Territory government has committed significant funding to Indigenous housing. We have agreed to build new houses, rebuild old houses, and refurbish many more. We also agreed to deliver all the associated infrastructure such as power, water and sewerage.

An important part of SIHIP is to ensure that Indigenous people are trained to help build and repair these homes. For too long, houses were built and let by construction companies and, no one - or very few - in the local community were given the skills necessary to repair the homes or build new ones. There was a never-ending cycle of homes being built, then abandoned because they were not maintained. That was not the fault of the local communities; that was the fault of successive governments which built the housing, then forgot about it. Under SIHIP, that will not happen. Every project has an Indigenous employment target which will give locals the skills to build their own homes and repair them in the future. It also gives them the skills and qualifications to get jobs either in home

communities or elsewhere. In short, it gives them the same opportunities everyone else enjoys in the Territory. However, like every program of this size, there have been challenges along the way.

The inaccurate briefing to the former Minister for Indigenous Policy did not help. Someone asked me at the time whether I was angry at the reaction to that meeting. I said: 'No, I would have been just as outraged if I was given those figures because, if they were true, it would have been scandalous'. I can understand why the former minister was upset. However, the figures have since been clarified. Administration costs are currently tracking at about 11% and we are confident we can reduce that further.

Let us talk about SIHIP and all the assertions that not a single house has been built in two years. It is 14 months. Why is this so different? It is different in three ways. First of all, the Australian government insisted on a new contracting method to deliver those houses. The private sector was brought in to manage the program under the method of contracting called alliance contracting - something never done in the Northern Territory before, and only rarely done in Queensland. The assertions and allegations that the Territory government has been skimming money and putting excessive costs in administration are absolutely wrong. The Territory government is not running this program; it is being delivered by the private sector.

The absolute commitment, reasserted, is to build 750 new houses, 230 rebuilt houses, and over 2500 upgrades across the Northern Territory - and we are delivering. On the Tiwi Islands, 90 new and replacement houses will be constructed at Nguiu over the life of SIHIP. Work on the first stage of 155 upgrades has started, with the refurbishment of the first seven houses under way.

On Groote Eylandt, construction of the first new houses has begun, with foundations being poured. Ultimately, 80 new houses will be constructed. Work is currently under way on the next 18 of the 55 upgrades.

In Tennant Creek, eight currently unoccupied houses are in the process of being refurbished; 78 houses will be substantially upgraded over the next 18 months, including 10 houses which were previously uninhabitable. This is the first series of contracts that have been negotiated - work is under way. All of the alliances have committed to at least 20% of the workforce being Indigenous across the life of the program, and 40 Indigenous employees are working with alliances in these communities.

In regard to all of the allegations and assertions around 70% of this is going into administration - that is not true. I have been over these numbers up hill and down dale, and there will be further reductions in project administration costs and standard designs, less consultation, which will actually reduce the cost of housing. Those numbers will be met.

We all respect the Auditor-General. He is looking at this program, as the Auditor-General has looked at the construction of the railway and the delivery of the waterfront project. The Auditor-General looks at all the big projects, and I believe he will report to this House in February in regard to this. I am absolutely rock solid and confident the Auditor-General will not come back with a number for administration costs anywhere near the 70% that is being bandied about ...

Mr Elferink: Well, put a figure on it.

Mr HENDERSON: I have put a figure on it - 11.4%.

Madam Speaker, could we have delivered this program better? We can always do better. That is what being in government is all about. Will we improve the way it is being delivered? Yes, we will, and that goes for the entire program of *Closing The Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage*.

It is only fair, when looking at this motion, that you look at our record. I am not going to stand here today and deliver slogans. I am outlining what we have done, what we are doing, and what we will do into the future. Do not get me wrong: we are not perfect - no government is perfect. When you look at the ledger and see what has been achieved and what we need to do, any fair assessment would mark us favourably.

Let us start with the economy. This is a government that has delivered six straight surplus budgets - six. We only went into debt as a result of the global financial crisis and collapsing Australian government revenues that flow through into our budget. The Territory's economy is the strongest in the country. That has not happened by accident. That has happened as a result of good fiscal management, priorities in infrastructure, and confidence of the private sector to invest.

Why am I passionate about the economy? Because the economy is about people, not numbers. It is about people, communities, families, and opportunity. There is nothing more precious to a Labor government than providing opportunities for the people we represent, in having the honour of being the government of the Northern Territory.

Without a strong economy, you cannot provide for opportunity for Territorians to build wonderful lives for themselves in the Northern Territory. We have a track record, since we came to government, of delivering a strong economy for Territorians, and we have delivered confidence - confidence in the private sector to invest in the Northern Territory. We have the lowest recurrent taxes for small business in Australia. In the last 12 months, we have created 7800 more jobs, and an economic growth forecast by Access Economics of 4.9%, the best in the country. This is at a time when the world has been in economic meltdown. Look at what is happening in the USA, the UK, Germany, and Japan; at the amazing, indescribable budget deficits in those countries and the lengthening unemployment queues. Look at the other states around Australia, barely struggling to maintain positive numbers in economic growth and lengthening unemployment across the country - not here in the Northern Territory.

The most responsible thing for all governments is to deliver a strong economy. Without a strong economy you do not have the revenue flows to invest in health, in education, in infrastructure across the Northern Territory. The opposition has absolutely no plans - no plans were articulated today to say how they would manage the economy.

Look at the great debate around law and order. This government has delivered more than 300 extra police across the Northern Territory since 2001. I was recently at the graduation of Squad 100 - what a fine group of men and women to serve and protect the people of the Northern Territory. Have we eliminated all crime in the Northern Territory? No, we have not. No government is going to eliminate crime. Have we provided police with the tools they need, and the courts with the laws they need, to crack down on criminals? Yes, we have; the cleanup rate for crime in the Territory is the best in the country. Our police do a magnificent job. Property crime has halved since we came to government.

I am not going into a long debate about the absolutely inaccurate, illogical assertion by the Leader of the Opposition that violent crime has increased by 80% - it has not. We have had this debate in this House over and over again. It is as a result of an unrelenting focus by our police on domestic violence - the establishment of Domestic Violence Units in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennant Creek - not there before - and women, increasingly, having confidence to report because police are actually enforcing domestic violence orders.

This whole debate is not just what the Chief Minister and Police minister are saying. If you do

not believe me, then look at the reports issued by the Police Commissioner about why those rates have gone up. It is as a result of reporting domestic violence in a way it was never reported under previous CLP governments.

Do we need to do more? Yes, we do. We realise improved rehabilitation and work camps are needed to reduce the number of people who re-offend, and we certainly will continue to work on that.

What have we done in Health? We have more doctors and nurses than ever before - 179 more doctors and 632 more nurses - in the Northern Territory. That is an enormous boost to our health services. We have more access to specialist services than ever before. Does this mean we have a perfect health system? Of course not, but we have one that is constantly being improved. We have the busiest accident and emergency departments in the country, which puts pressure on our hospitals. Part of the solution in the Top End has been the development of the Palmerston Super Clinic which has eased the pressure on RDH by treating more than 6000 patients since opening in December last year. We are building a new emergency department at Alice Springs Hospital in partnership with the federal government.

Our health system, like every health system around the world, is under stress. We are providing a first-class service, and I pay tribute to everyone who works in our health system - they are an amazing group of men and women.

Land release is an area where we could have done better. We are pulling out all stops to get Territorians into their own homes. First, land has been snapped up at Bellamack, and Johnston is not far away. That has been backed up by Homestart NT; there have been 85 new Homestart NT applications in just six weeks. Since 1 July 2004, nearly 1200 people have been helped by our first homebuyer schemes. The most recent figures show the Territory's first homeowner purchases are up 30.6% on last year. Our Buildstart program has approved 205 applications worth \$2.8m, and we have announced the new site of the Territory's next city of Weddell.

As Chief Minister, I acknowledge the biggest issue facing the Northern Territory is the rising cost of housing - housing in general - and the costs of rents. We have a plan to deliver a massive land release; we have a plan in regard to affordable housing. All we have from the opposition is complaints about the issue. I acknowledge it is an issue. We have a plan to do much better, and that work is under way.

We deliver on our promises. This is a government that delivers on its promises. When we say we are going to do something, we do. We are so committed to keeping the contract with the people who elected us that we have started to report to parliament every six months. If we are a bit behind on some things and get a bit of stick in the media, so be it. It is about being accountable in the parliament and to the people of the Northern Territory on the mandate we have.

In a recent report delivered in June, the government was on track on most of its promises. I will not go through them item by item; however, I will give the House a general idea of where we are in the one year since we made those promises to the people of the Territory.

CCTV: a room has been refurbished at Peter McAuley Centre for the use of the CCTV command centre, a project manager has been appointed, and the contract has been awarded. Police Beats: we have delivered a Police Beat at Casuarina Square; I recently opened another at Alice Springs, and Palmerston will get one soon. Regarding 10 000 apprenticeship and traineeship commencements; earlier this week I revealed the program is on target with 1305 already commenced. Nothing makes me happier than to walk into businesses around the Territory and see trainees and apprentices at work. Primary schools will get a \$300 000 upgrade; schools have started to receive funding in the biggest primary school upgrade program undertaken by a Territory government. The Ribbons of Green Program is a work in progress: the Smith Street connection is finished; consultations have started regarding the old hospital site; and detailed design has started on Flagstaff Park.

As I have mentioned, the first blocks have been sold at Bellamack; contracts have been awarded for the first phase of Johnston; and detailed planning has started for Zuccoli. We have also released land in Tennant Creek and Katherine ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HENDERSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We promised free buses for seniors and students - we have delivered that ahead of schedule. We promised new bus services for Bayview, Cullen Bay and the Waterfront Precinct, and we have done that. The first stage of Palmerston Super Clinic is completed. As I said, 6000 people have already used this service. The contract for the second stage will be awarded.

Altogether we made 93 commitments during the election. The government has work under way on 56 of those, and 16 have been completed. The rest will be completed before the next scheduled election in 2012. That is one of the reasons this motion is so important; we have made a good start on the promises we made to Territorians, and I believe the government should finish the job. I made a pact with the voters at the last election and I want to see it through to the end. That is what, I believe, Territorians expect. I also want to see through to the end all the other plans we have for the Territory.

It is an honour and a privilege to be the Chief Minister, and it is not a privilege I take lightly. It gives you the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of people, and I know that is what everyone is passionate about in this House. If you get the chance to help people get jobs, put food on the table, have a family, build a life in the Northern Territory, that is a great opportunity. That is one of the opportunities presented in the recent budget; we made a conscious decision to go into debt to protect Territory jobs - the most important thing. I believe history will judge us well, as our comprehensive plans to take the Territory through the global financial crisis appear to be working well. We are just a couple of months into it and I believe we need to see it through - I know we need to see it through.

The Territory needs the \$1.3bn infrastructure program to keep our economy strong and build infrastructure across the Territory. I am determined to deliver new roads, schools, houses, and other vital infrastructure. This infrastructure program will create 2500 jobs at a time when every job is absolutely critical to the future of the Territory. The program includes \$322m investment in roads that will see improvements to our beef and mining roads, including the Buntine, Plenty and Tanami Highways, Maryvale Road, and the Wollogorang Road bridge over the McArthur River. I am determined to fix our power problems. In this financial year alone we will spend more than \$330m to improve power, water and sewerage. We have dedicated \$390m for housing projects, and \$118m to upgrade our schools. We will get better roads, we will get better schools, we will get better hospitals. We have a plan to take the Territory through the global financial crisis and come out at the other end stronger and better placed than when we went in. The opposition offers no plan.

It is not only infrastructure either; we have to have people as well. That is why we will employ 17 more doctors, 95 more nurses, 54 more police, 80 extra teachers and 20 additional firefighters. This is all clearly set out, clearly costed, and already happening.

It is about certainty; this is part of our detailed plan to take the Territory forward. Just 12 months ago, we went to an election with firm promises and have since delivered a comprehensive budget. There can be no question about what we will do over the next three years.

I will continue to create jobs, encourage investment, and work with the Australian government - a vital partnership that is delivering real results for Territorians in ways we have not seen from a federal government for many years. I will continue to work closely with INPEX. I will continue to push through on the most comprehensive housing package in the Territory's history. I will continue to improve our roads, our hospitals, our schools. I will continue to crack down on crime. I will continue to try to make this government more accountable, more transparent and more inclusive. I will continue to try to give Territorians the same opportunities I have been given by this great place we all call home.

At the beginning of this speech, I said this is as serious as it gets in this House. We do not get to debate anything more fundamental to our democracy than this motion. I thank the member for Nelson for listening to me over the last few weeks. I thank him for listening to all the people who have contacted him. The member for Nelson is a man of integrity, honesty, and has a passion for the Northern Territory. I respect him for that.

The Leader of the Opposition has offered no plan for the Northern Territory. He had a real opportunity today to stand up with a plan and a vision for the Northern Territory. All we had was vindictiveness and vitriol.

I can guarantee stability, unity, and passionate determination to deliver good government for the people of the Northern Territory. There is no doubt this has been a difficult period - there is no doubt about that. However, I can say the 12 members on this side of the House are absolutely determined and passionately committed to delivering the good things of life for Territorians.

Madam Speaker, this motion should be voted down, and this government should be freed to get back to the business of continuing the job it was elected to do just 12 months ago.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, after the last two weeks, I know there must be a heaven. In my office I have a framed document which says:

I, Gerard Vincent Wood, do swear that I will render true and faithful service as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the

Northern Territory of Australia, so help me, God.

Today is a day I have not asked for; it is a day I would prefer was not mine. It is a day I cannot avoid; it is a day that will not go away. It is the day where I will make a decision, because that is my responsibility as an elected member of the Legislative Assembly for the Northern Territory, as written in the oath I made when I first entered parliament.

I have given this matter before parliament today as much consideration as I could possibly have given. From last Monday to today, I have done more media interviews than I could poke a stick at, plus many phone calls, e-mails and conversations with people in the street, at church, at the footy, at restaurants, at the pub - everywhere I have been over the last week - and, of course, with leaders of both parties and the member for Macdonnell.

I thank the many people who expressed support and offered their prayers for me, regardless of what my decision is today. I said a few prayers as well. Just to add a little degree of difficulty into the equation, I had the flu for the past four days, which has not helped. Lucky it was not the swine flu; that might have thrown a spanner in the works.

What has brought us to this point just over 12 months since the last election? The first signs of a change in the government's stability came when the member for Arafura left the government on 4 June and became an Independent. The situation in parliament then was government 12, Country Liberals 11, and two Independents, who both said they would not block supply or support a no confidence motion.

On 4 August, the government again lost one of its members, the member for Macdonnell, which meant for a very short period there were three Independents, with 11 members on each side of the House. Within hours on the same day, the member for Arafura returned to the government. This meant the state of the House was, once again, 12 Labor, 11 CLP, and two Independents - the government relying on one of the Independents to retain power. This gave the impression of an unstable government, something not ideal for the Territory in this economic climate.

The difference between 4 June and 4 August is that the Independent member for Macdonnell has not made any agreement to support the government. I said on ABC news on 8 June that I would not block any government budget measures, or support any no confidence motion against the government. Of course, I did not hold the balance of power then. Now I do. So,

something needed to be sorted out to create certainty.

It is for that reason - and that reason alone - I supported a motion which would test whether the government had support in the House. This then meant I had three options to consider:

- (1) an election which would happen if I could not support either party;
- (2) an agreement with the Country Liberals and an agreement with the member for Macdonnell, the other Independent; and
- (3) an agreement with the Labor government.

Over the last three days, I believed each one of these options was the right option. I looked at the CLP option, I looked at the election option, and I looked at an option with the government. I have gone through every one of those options in as much detail as possible, and that is one of the reasons I went bush. In the end, I had to make this decision on my own.

I would like to explain the process I took in making my decision. First, I studied the legislation. There are now provisions under section 23 of the *Electoral Act* which allow for four-year fixed terms. The idea of fixed-term elections is something I have always supported, and I was disappointed when the previous Chief Minister introduced a hybrid version of the model. Today, we have fixed terms. Fixed terms are designed to do at least four things:

- (1) to stop governments calling an election when it conveniently suits them, naturally when they are doing well or when the opposition is not doing so well; for example, the last NT election;
- (2) to create certainty of when the next election will be, allowing voting systems to be in place in plenty of time, and sitting members and possible candidates to plan ahead;
- (3) it reduces the number of elections, once every four years, reducing costs and voter angst; and
- (4) it gives time for governments to put in place policies which can be subjected to full-term scrutiny and evaluation. Usually, it can send out a message of stability over that four-year period.

I then looked at section 26 of the *Electoral Act*. This refers to the criteria for deciding whether to issue writs. Although this relates to what criteria the Administrator must take into account if a no confidence motion is passed, it also indicates to me what my responsibilities are. Section 26, in part, says:

In deciding whether a writ for a general election should be issued under section 24 or 25, the Administrator must consider whether a viable alternative government can be formed without a general election ...

After talking to the Solicitor-General, it is my understanding of political theory that the option of forming a government within the parliament should be tested first. If no agreement can be made with either side, the election would be the next option, and that, of course, would be the call of the Administrator. Both the Chief Minister and the Leader of the Opposition stated publicly they did not want an election but preferred the matter to be resolved on the floor of the House.

Second, I looked at other examples of minority governments. For example, Canada has had a number of minority governments over the years. The party with the most seats always formed an alliance with another party to form a minority government. The most recent conservative party held power for 937 days until the next election. It should be noted that the accepted process for forming a minority government indicates that the majority party has the first opportunity to try to form government with the support of members of parliament from other parties or Independents.

Third, I analysed the three options. In an attempt to analyse these options fairly, I tried to set aside my political bias as best I could. This issue has to be about what is best for the governance of the Territory, not necessarily what is best for me or any of the political parties. I once again refer to the oath that I have taken in this House.

These are the questions I used to analyse the options: which option could provide the most stability; which option would be the least disruptive to the running of government; which option would be the least divisive; which one would cause the least damage to investment and the economy; and which one could bring parliamentarians and community together.

Option 1 was the election. There is no doubt that an election is a legitimate option because it asks the people what they think, and that is a fundamental right. It should be remembered an election was held 12 months ago and the people made their choice. Which option would provide the most stability? Looking at the last election

result, stability is not guaranteed, as we could find ourselves in the same position as we are now. Which option would be the least disruptive to the running of government? The changeover to new government when least expected; that is, within the four-year term, would cause disruption to the operation of government business. Which option would be the least divisive? In the current climate, where race has raised its ugly head, and with the media whipping itself into a frenzy, I feel an election would be counterproductive to the good order of the Territory. Which one would cause least damage to investment and the economy? Besides disrupting the work of government, any sign of a bitter campaign would send out the wrong message to potential investors in the Northern Territory. In light of the world economic climate, that could be disastrous. Which one could bring parliamentarians and the community together? Definitely not this one - especially at the moment. We should also consider the cost of an election.

Option 2 was an agreement with the Country Liberals. Once again, I asked the question: which option would provide the most stability? Whilst there may be a reasonable chance of stability if all the cards fell in the right place, for me the instability risk could be high. First, the Country Liberals would have to make an agreement with two Independents. The Independents would then need to make an agreement between themselves and I am not sure, at this stage, I have had sufficient time working with the member for Macdonnell as an Independent to say I could have a stable relationship that would last. I am not in any way denigrating the member for Macdonnell; I get on very well with her. However, I am talking politics and how it would work in a real-life situation. That is not to say I could not work with her; she has only been an Independent since last Monday and I need more time than that to know whether we are on the same track. Second, a recent internal document from the Country Liberals was reported in the media criticising the party for its performance in the Estimates Committee. Regardless of the weight placed on leaked documents, it does not send out a message of confidence.

Which option would be least disruptive to the running of government? Like the election option, there would be a major disruption to government business if there was a changeover. I am concerned this would have an effect on investors in the Northern Territory. Again, in the current economic climate, certainty is required. Which option would be the least divisive? A changeover would not be as divisive as an election, but there could be some public disquiet if the opposition obtained power without going to an election.

Which would cause the least damage to investment in the economy? A changeover of government only 12 months into a four-year term, I believe, would send out negative signals to investors. Which one would bring parliamentarians and community together? I know the Leader of the Opposition has some great new proposals to bring to parliament of how he would run government and parliament, and he is dedicated to change. I believe, if I had an agreement with the CLP, there would be some changes in that area.

Option 3 was an agreement with the Chief Minister. Again, I asked the same question: what option would provide the most stability? The Labor government has shown itself to be unstable in recent times and that is why we are here today. They need the help of one Independent to stay in power. They are the government that was elected last year. Even though they have lost one member, they are still the majority party. Which option would be the least disruptive to the running of government? As the government is still in power, this option would be the least disruptive - there will be no changeover required. Which option would be the least divisive than if we had an election? There would be some public concern whether instability still existed in the party. Which one would cause the least damage to investment and the economy? At the moment the economy is still buoyant, and changing government at this time of economic uncertainty is fraught with danger. Which one would bring parliamentarians and community together? Like the Leader of the Opposition, I believe the Chief Minister is also interested in parliamentary changes to the way we do things.

In summary, I have weighed up the legislation, the precedents, my comments on 8 June regarding a no confidence vote, four-year fixed terms, the comments of both leaders preferring not to have an election, and all other options.

I have come to the conclusion for stable government in the Northern Territory I will sign an agreement with the Chief Minister. There are a number of things I must make clear before I read the agreement.

Over the last 11 days, at some stage, I believed each option was the best. I tried to weigh up the best option for the Northern Territory, and the one that had the best chance to provide stability. Both the agreement and the appendix, which I will table later, detail some specific matters. They were only agreed upon after I had decided which option was the most appropriate for the Northern Territory - they were not the reasons for my support.

Let me make it very clear: I have not joined the Labor Party in any shape or form - nor do I intend to. I will remain as an Independent in government, and will continue to sit on the crossbenches. I should also make it clear that I am not necessarily a great fan of a number of Labor policies. There are some members of the Labor Party who probably squirm at the thought of me having any formal agreement with the Chief Minister. This agreement is not with the Labor Party. I have made this decision not for the benefit of any political party, but for the benefit of the Northern Territory.

Some may ask how the agreement provides stability. The answer is simple: if the government reneges on the agreement we will be back in parliament again debating the same issue. I will now read from the terms of the agreement:

This agreement is dated 14 August 2009

BETWEEN Paul Henderson, MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

AND Mr Gerry Wood, MLA, Independent member for Nelson.

The aim of this Agreement is to:

- *provide for stable government for the people of the Northern Territory.*
- *enhance Parliamentary democracy and to ensure an accountable and transparent government, public service and Parliament.*
- *provide for Mr Wood to be consulted in areas of government policy and also issues where he has specific interest*

AGREE to the following for the current terms of the Legislative Assembly:

1. *Provided that all Labor MLAs continue to support the Government; vote in favour of its legislation and Paul Henderson retains the position of Chief Minister, Mr Wood shall vote:*
 - *in favour of Government Supply and Appropriation Bills;*
 - *against any no confidence motion in the Government, except in a proven case of corruption or serious maladministration.*
2. *To enhance inclusion and transparency in decision-making, in consultation with opposition and other MLAs, the government shall: (i) form a Council of*

Territory Cooperation comprised of 2 Government Members, 2 Opposition Members and at least one Independent member; (ii) commit to reforms of Parliamentary procedures; and (iii) progress the matters in Appendix A and any matters added by agreement.

3. *To hold monthly meetings with the Chief Minister, the Hon Paul Henderson MLA, to review progress of agreement and add items to Appendix A as agreed.*
4. *The items identified on Appendix A shall be advanced in line with the processes and time frames outlined.*
5. *The parties will, in event of a perceived non-adherence to this agreement, notify the other party in writing immediately with a view to the Chief Minister and Mr Wood rectifying the situation or agreeing to a mechanism to resolve the dispute.*

Madam Speaker, not written in there is, of course, if I cannot find agreement with the government, then this agreement is void.

It should be noted that I am not required to support any legislation or motions of this government other than government supply and appropriation bills and against any no confidence motion in the government, except in a proven case of corruption or serious maladministration. The government, where it cannot gain my support, always has the opportunity of lobbying the opposition or the other Independent to gain their support.

It is hoped from this agreement a new era of inclusion and transparency will commence. I realise that this will not be easy as can be seen with the Alice Springs Youth Action Plan, which seems to have floundered. Goodwill on all sides, and no more spin, will be required if we are to achieve the goals set out in this agreement.

Madam Speaker, I will now give more details of the reforms in the appendix, and I should note that the list I am talking about here is not exclusive, as there was only a limited time to negotiate specific issues. I need to say I heard what the Leader of the Opposition said about many of the serious issues facing the NT. I am not making this agreement because I support the failures of the government. I am using this unique opportunity to try to change things. If I fail, people will make that judgment, but I am going to try because we need a more inclusive government instead of the division caused by the party political system and, so, I have agreed to try to change the political culture.

Madam Speaker, how will I try to change the political culture? I quote from the appendix:

The approach and mechanisms of governance in the Northern Territory are often overly Party political and adversarial in nature. There should be enhanced recognition of the contribution that can be made by all MLAs and those from the broader Territory community to devising approaches to tackle the important issues facing the Territory.

They have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition and Chief Minister today:

MLAs, Local Government and the community should have a greater involvement in the oversight of important issues across the Northern Territory.

Legislation will be enacted to establish the Council of Territory Cooperation. The Council shall be made up of up to six Members of the Legislative Assembly: 2 ALP, 2 CLP and at least 1 Independent.

The Council shall facilitate:

- *greater levels of collaboration in the governance of the Northern Territory;*
- *enhance Parliamentary democracy by providing a stronger role for MLAs who are not members of the Executive - particularly on matters of common concern;*
- *expand involvement in important Northern Territory initiatives and projects;*
- *provide new avenues for Territorians to have input through the Legislative Assembly into the governance of the Northern Territory; and*
- *provide a roadmap for tackling some specific issues currently facing the Northern Territory*

The Council shall be empowered to conduct inquiries and make recommendations on matters of public importance which are referred to it by Legislative Assembly or self-referred.

Current matters of public importance which the Government agrees to support being referred to the Council include: Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP); Local Government

Reform; the Planning Scheme and the establishment of Weddell; and A Working Future (including Homelands Policy).

The Council shall determine the appropriate time frames and work plans for the matters referred to it. Where the Council has multiple references to it, the Council shall determine which matter it inquires into first.

The Council shall be empowered to conduct inquiries which shall include the capacity to conduct public hearings, consult with stakeholders such as Local Government and call expert evidence.

Reports of recommendations of the Council shall be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and made publicly available.

Madam Speaker, that is why I believe there is an opportunity here to do something different. I have spoken on the radio about having a unified government; we have 25 people here who all have the same ambition - to do something for the Territory. Unfortunately, we are stifled by party politics and, to me, that is something that is no good for us as a Territory. Here is an opportunity to try to change it.

There will be other parliamentary reforms, including reforming Question Time to allow more non-government questions. We will dispense with Ministerial Reports and there will be other parliamentary reforms to be discussed. We will allow government reports available under FOI free of charge to MLAs. There are some other issues in relation to budget consultations with me, and that is just the normal process ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member for Nelson, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Mr Wood: Can you make that 12 minutes, Madam Speaker? He is two minutes early.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, we will make it 12 minutes as it is not actually up to the end of the speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WOOD: I will do my best. In relation to the prison location, we will establish an expert review panel to review the location. It will examine alternative options to one large prison. We will investigate prison farms for Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, and Darwin. We will introduce caravan park legislation - at last - to protect the permanent tenants. We will look at property law reform, which I have been pushing for, for five years.

One of the main issues which I have just about worn myself out trying to get the government to do something about is the availability of land - affordable land. Here it is: we are going to address pricing and availability of land, especially for first homeowners. That is one of the reasons I have signed up; I want the government to do something. For too long, nothing has happened - young people cannot afford to buy a block of land. I want the subdivision - and this is part of what the government is intending to look at - of the forestry land in the rural area. Where possible, they will expedite native title issues and housing proposals for the Howard Springs forestry land to overcome residential land shortage. There is a possibility 400 blocks could be developed very quickly.

We need to look at the industrial land - review Glyde Point as a potential site and detail other options. We need to review and update the Humpty Doo District Plan with the view to encourage housing opportunities. Humpty Doo has been stagnant for years.

We need to investigate development of the Girraween district centre. We need to look at the establishment of the city of Weddell. There will be a competition to be announced by November 2009 asking for architects and town planners to design a visionary plan including sustainability principles for the new city of Weddell. We need to look at the future development of Middle Arm, where future approvals will be dealt with by the existing Litchfield Development Consent Authority - something the government took away. The government is prepared to put it back, with the exception - and it is out of my hands - INPEX has been approved. That has happened. However, the rest - at least Middle Arm - has gone back to the Litchfield Development Consent Authority.

I have asked for a town planner - and this has been agreed to. They will appoint a qualified, experienced town planner to provide direct advice to the minister. The Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan will be reviewed and updated following public consultation. Also, issues with traffic from the Robertson Barracks to the northern suburbs via the Knuckey Lagoon area will be addressed.

Public housing waiting lists are too long. The government will now set goals to reduce waiting lists for public housing by type and by region each year, and work towards these reductions over the next five years.

In regard to national resources and environment and the national radioactive waste repository, the Northern Territory government will continue to call on the Australian government to

repeal the *Radioactive Management Act 2005*, and for the site selection of the national repository to be based on scientific evidence and allow for appropriate consultation and approvals. If the Commonwealth government chooses the Northern Territory based on scientific approvals, I will immediately ask the government to repeal its own law, not allowing that to happen.

There will be continued commitment to the implementation of the container deposit scheme.

There will be the establishment of three heritage parks, especially for World War II heritage.

The Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program will be referred to the Council of Territory Cooperation for inquiry and report to the parliament.

Youth clubs will be developed based on the old Police Boys Club model in urban areas at Casuarina, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs, to be managed by police or non-government organisations.

I believe the rural area, for far too long, has missed out on a fair input from the government. I am asking the government to investigate: a sewerage system for the Howard Springs commercial area to allow for existing demands and future growth; the adequacy of a water supply system to support future development of the Howard Springs commercial area; sewerage infrastructure for the growing Coolalinga shopping area; replacement of private water mains with Power and Water Corporation mains where appropriate; and support Freds Pass Reserve by funding greater capital and operational funds on an annual basis. Freds Pass Reserve is a major recreational centre for the whole area and, yet, its funding is so inadequate it has struggled and still struggles. It is time the government appreciated we must support our young people and that is why I included it. The big bucks have gone in town; the little bucks have gone out in the rural area.

We need to develop an aquatic centre for the rural area; work on improving relationships between the Northern Territory government and Litchfield Shire Council; commence construction of bicycle paths in the rural area in conjunction with preserving the old railway corridor; and review and expedite the development of a regional waste facility in the rural area - something which has fallen off the books,

In regard to special education, I believe the government has said it will investigate and report on delivery, and investigate and provide plans for infrastructure upgrades.

Agriculture: there will be a new emphasis placed on primary industry in the Territory as a key industry driver of regional economic development and employment. **The Ord River:** the Northern Territory government will have an ongoing relationship with the Western Australian government and Kimberley Development Commission into matters concerning development of the Ord River Irrigation Project, especially those areas in the Northern Territory. The relationship will be managed by a senior officer of the Department of Regional Development, Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources.

Beef roads: further upgrades of beef, commercial and community roads such as those in the Douglas/Daly region. **Land clearing/native vegetation:** introduce a native vegetation act to provide clearer guidelines for vegetation preserving and clearing. **Local government:** local government reform – refer to the Council of Territory Cooperation for inquiry and report to the government.

The last one, Madam Speaker, is under miscellaneous, but it is just as important as the rest – promote bipartisanship in the Territory; hold quarterly meetings with the Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and myself.

This has been the hardest decision I have ever had to make. I could have looked at the many things where I believe Labor has failed and used this as a reason for giving them the boot. The Country Liberals have some good policies which I support, and I could have made an agreement with them. However, my prime reasoning was based on stability of government, and I believe our best chance, when all things are considered, was with the elected government. I see this as an opportunity for me to bring change and to bring all sides of parliament into the decision-making process, especially the many issues the Leader of the Opposition has spoken about today.

I could have taken the election option, which would have been the easy way out. If re-elected, I could have gone back to the simple life of a local Independent member. By signing this agreement, I has made a decision which will have a very big impact on my work, my family, and friends, but the decision, I still believe, is the best for the Territory at this time.

Naturally, there will be some who will disagree with my decision. I hope they will understand why I have come to the decision before being too critical. I know members of the opposition held some hope they would now be the government, and I hope they understand why I made this decision. I know the Leader of the Opposition has great plans, but I had to look at the reality before me, assess the risks, weigh up the options, look at

the implications of my decision and, although painful for some of my friends, make this decision.

I believe the agreement signed today is the first option in an attempt to provide stable government. I am putting the government on notice: I am giving them a second chance to prove they are worthy of government. If they are not up to the task, then I will have no hesitation in withdrawing and handing it over to the people to decide, or handing governance to the Country Liberals.

To the people of the Nelson electorate, no doubt some of you will have differing views, but I have made this decision on what I feel is best for the whole of the Territory, not just for my electorate; and that has not been easy.

Before I finish, I thank the good Lord; the people in the rural area; and the people in the Howard Springs Tavern last night. When I walked in there at 9pm they gave me a round of applause, which was very touching especially at that time of night. I appreciate they made no comment on how I was going to vote today, but they knew I was trying to make an effort. I thank my family who are here today, especially my wife, Imelda; my staff, Kim, and my research officer, Michelle, who has been a tower of strength; and my small support group who have helped me each step of the way over the last 11 days.

Finally, I reiterate what I said at the beginning of this speech: I, Gerard Vincent Wood, do swear that I will render true and faithful service as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the Northern Territory of Australia, so help me God.

Madam Speaker, I have tried.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nelson for his comments and his speech. Quite honestly, I do not believe the agreement is worth the paper it is written on. It is very Top End focused, which I find very disappointing. I know my colleagues will talk more about that later.

I speak to this motion of no confidence in this Labor government. As I speak, out in the suburbs and in the remote communities, people are doing it tough. People are living in cars and in overcrowded houses; people are too frightened to walk the streets at night; people cannot get in to have elective surgery; people have to wait up to four years to get into public housing; people are weighed down by the high cost of living and, now, increased power and water charges. People are upset and concerned at the high level of crime in the suburbs. People in the rural area are frustrated at being treated like second-class citizens while their city cousins get it all - wave

pools, water parks, bike paths, and better roads. I am sure people in the remote and regional communities are also fed up with not being acknowledged in any way, and getting substandard services.

People see this Labor government for what it is: a government devoid of any real action plans; a government with no ideas; a government high on talk and low on delivering real benefits, a government which is arrogant and out of touch with Territorians. This is a government intent only on political survival and not on what is best for the Territory. This government is all about self-interest and not about bringing real benefits to Territorians ...

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, would you mind pausing for a minute. We are just trying to clarify - member for Nelson, was it your intention to seek leave to table that document. Would you like to seek leave?

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the agreement and the appendix.

Leave granted.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you very much, member for Goyder.

Ms PURICK: Madam Speaker, this government is dysfunctional at best and, at worst, the most appalling example of an organisation that is rotten to the core. This is a government quite happy to have exceptionally high debt levels and budget deficits. The Territory debt is climbing astronomically and, in three years' time, including the superannuation liability, it will stand at around \$6bn. This year's budget deficit is \$200m. The debt laid upon Territorians for every man, woman and child is around \$26 000. This is an outrageous situation and should not be tolerated by anyone. Labor cannot manage the budget. Now the tough times are here they will be, and are, in trouble. If this government was a business it would not only be broke, it would be in the courts on all manner of charges.

This motion has been moved by the Country Liberals because we believe it is truly warranted in the Territory's interests, and not for political advantage. What we are doing today in bringing this motion is showing the appalling record of this government's inability to bring about change - change which benefits Territorians. This government has failed on all fronts: failed in law and order, failed in health, failed in education, failed in housing, and failed Aboriginal people in the bush. The gravity of the situation cannot, and must not, be underestimated. This Labor government has lived high on the hog for many

years without a care for the future of the Territory. It has mismanaged every aspect of government.

I can provide specific case studies which go to the heart of this government's ineptitude and incompetence. Let us take housing. Not one house has been built as part of SIHIP in nearly two years - not one - yet we have ex-Labor politicians and ex-Labor candidates paid \$300 000 a year to work and oversee the alliances. SIHIP is about emergency housing, 'emergency' being the key word. Emergency is not waiting two years for a house. This government does not understand the word 'emergency' despite the fact that the government's own commissioned report, *Little Children Are Sacred*, clearly demonstrated that lack of housing and overcrowding in housing were the main contributors to child sexual abuse, child health issues, and poor living standards, generally, for Aboriginal people in remote communities.

There has been no action by this Labor government, but they are content to take Commonwealth money and siphon off large amounts into administration rather than do what was intended - build houses, as many as possible, in the shortest time.

Housing in the urban areas is no better. There are daily reports of crime and antisocial activities in and around public housing blocks. There is a wait list of up to four years for public housing and, as a consequence, we have people living in their cars. There is an alarming trend emerging in the Territory, a new term 'the working homeless', a person who has a job, but has to live in his or her car as they cannot afford a house or rental accommodation. There is no affordable accommodation, and release of land for new housing developments is at an all-time low. We need more land released. It is not really a housing affordability problem - it is a land affordability problem. Labor does not have a plan of action for the future growth of the Territory. It does not have a vision of how Weddell should be developed, and it has no planned system for land release.

Government has stated the Northern Territory needs 1700 dwelling units per year to deal with our population growth and interstate migration. In 2009, the government has committed to the release of 270 house blocks in Bellamack and additional housing for the Lyons development. However, only 90 of the Bellamack lots have been sold to the public or set aside for government housing, and this development is two years behind schedule. There are no lots as yet, in addition to those on the market, to reach the 270 lot release. Public housing stocks have decreased since 2001. The Emery Avenue redevelopment involved \$1.2m of public money,

but has priced ownership out of the first homeowner buyer capacity, even under the government's Homestart scheme. Rental availability is extreme; the average rent for a three-bedroom house is \$550 a week; some are as high as \$900 a week.

Planning is worse. Where is the vision and plan of action for the growth of Darwin and the sprawling rural area in the Top End? At present, there is little forward planning for horticultural development; there has been no consideration given to the identification and allocation of suitable land and the assessment of water availability and future demand. There is no comprehensive land capability mapping and allocation of appropriately resourced areas for horticultural production with long-term security of tenure. In fact, this government could not care less for the agriculture and horticulture industries, and their sheer arrogance is leaving people frustrated and angry. This government wants to shut down Berrimah Research Farm; it wants to leave us vulnerable, with little regard to the future of the Territory's, if not Australia's, biosecurity.

Urban planning under this Labor government is a joke - again, there is no vision for the future of Darwin and the regions. The greatest growth in population and industry is in the urban areas, and its impacts are long-lasting. This government has no idea of sustainability in the urban areas, no thought to the environmental or social impacts of this growth, and no decent system to regulate and manage the growth.

I turn my attention now to an example of this government's incompetence. The office of WorkSafe is pretty much run by the unions. Exploration companies are required now to lodge a risk assessment plan which is submitted to WorkSafe for approval prior to any work starting. I know of a company which lodged their risk management plan with WorkSafe on 9 July 2009. By 23 July there had been no response from WorkSafe, so the company followed up with an e-mail to find out what was going on - still no response after that e-mail of 23 July. WorkSafe then sent a letter to the company saying they were in breach for not lodging their risk management plan. The company phoned WorkSafe. WorkSafe then sent a letter to that company, and many other companies, recording their previous letter of threat. As of today's date, mid-August, this company has still not received a response that their risk management plan has been accepted. This is the same agency that does not even have its own risk assessment plan, yet expects and demands one from companies. It is an appalling situation.

Local government reforms were not popular in the Top End rural area. We know only too well

this government capitulated under pressure from the Litchfield Shire Council residents, because it knew it was on a hiding to nothing. There were no benefits in the amalgamation and, yet, we now have the government giving out consultancies to people so they can go around the rural area again and talk to those in the non-incorporated areas. They are telling residents it is a question of not if, but when, they will be forced into a shire or a council. Public meetings were held and that is what was put to residents - not if, but when.

At a meeting I was involved with, residents were asked about their involvement with political parties and which one. To go further, the consultants hired for this job accused residents - one in particular - of being a bully and, then, had the audacity to put these accusations in an e-mail to her. That shows how these consultants are doing the government's work. If this is how the government goes about consulting, then we are all going to pay the price of a dysfunctional government.

Building certification - what a monumental disaster. Half of Territory buildings are uncertified, and this government has known about it for years and done nothing. Yet, it has gone around intimidating rural residents and telling them they will have to move off their properties because they are living in a shed. The hypocrisy of it stuns me. Once again, it shows this government is arrogant, out of touch, and could not care less for ordinary Territorians - Territorians who are struggling to get into their first home.

The builders' registration system is no better. What about the home warranty insurance promised by the first Martin Labor government and still not delivered? Where is the protection from dodgy builders who build substandard homes, or do not complete them? Where is the safety net from the fly-by-night builders who have no scruples, rip innocent people off, and leave their lives in tatters when the dream home is not finished?

As a case in point, there is currently a builder doing the rounds in Darwin and ripping off people. The Territory Construction Association and the Housing Industry Association know about him. The Territory Construction Association spoke with the minister's office about him, and the minister's office said they could do nothing. The Builders Practitioner Board knows about him, and they also do nothing. Five families I know of - two in my electorate - have been ripped off by this interstate builder, and no one in this government cares.

Territorians have paid the price, and paid dearly, for Henderson's failure to implement proper systems and rules for the home building industry. Territorians have paid the price for

Henderson's failed approach and divided government ...

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I remind you that you are referring to the Chief Minister. This is a parliament; if you could abide by the rules, thank you.

Ms PURICK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Territorians have paid the price for this Labor government's failed approach and divided government.

The Country Liberals will establish a Territory housing land corporation to deliver public housing and develop public land. A rolling infrastructure development plan will be put in place with one-year, five-year, 10-year and 20-year markers. We will commit to a long-term gas future, particularly in power generation, and meet a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020. We will commit to redeveloping the Berrimah prison.

Wherever one turns, there is frustration and anger because of poor services delivery and, in many cases, no services at all. Power prices have gone up by 25% and, yet, this government cannot even provide reliable power to Territorians. Areas of the rural area suffer blackouts daily, and all Power and Water can say is: 'Oh, it is the bats.' There are houses in Humpty Doo east which suffer up to three hours without electricity every second day. We know Channel Island is at capacity at the moment, and I fear what will happen in the Wet Season. When we experience another large urban blackout, will this government again tell us to buy a generator? Maybe we should all stock up on candles, because I am quite sure the power supply will be unreliable into the Wet Season.

This government has failed dismally in delivering gas supplies to the Territory power grid. While the Blacktip project was due for completion in January 2009, it is still not completed and nearly 50 million litres of diesel have been used at Channel Island Power Station to keep the lights on. I am reliably informed by industry people it is unlikely gas will come to Channel Island until early next year. For a government which has committed to a greenhouse gas reduction strategy, the unrelenting guzzling of diesel is a farcical outcome, let alone the additional tens of millions of dollars in cost to Territorians.

Where is the planning for our future water supply for Darwin and the rural areas? Where is the planning for the next dam? Or is this government going to continue to suck dry the aquifer in the Howard River region by pumping 24 hours per day from their five government bores? Power and Water Corporation has a licence to pump 12 000 ML per year from these

bores. Currently, it pumps around 3500 ML per year. What happens if the Power and Water bores pump to their licence level? I will tell you. It will stuff the aquifer, resulting in thousands of rural residents being denied water from their bores. Does this government care? No. Does this government have a plan for our future water supply? No. It has no vision and has no plan, and does not understand how to develop on a sustainable basis. Labor is dysfunctional and paralysed and more concerned with its own survival than governing for all Territorians.

This government's inability to plan and inability to manage has resulted in all Territorians suffering, and they will continue to suffer until this government is removed from office. The member for Nelson had a chance to back real change. The member for Nelson had a chance to give the Territory a new direction and get things moving again. And, despite saying otherwise, he has now moved into the Labor Party's camp and has backed more of the same.

This is a sad day in the Territory's life, and Territorians will suffer as a result. Territorians want change, and want change now. They do not want more Labor pain; they want a new way and a new vision.

I urge the member for Nelson to support this motion of no confidence in this Labor government, as he previously stated publicly he would do, and bring about real change to the Territory for the benefit of all Territorians.

Ms LAWRIE (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I do not support this motion and I strongly endorse the contribution from the Chief Minister. On any objective analysis, the member for Wanguri is clearly the best option for Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. Sorting out this grave situation within this House is the right approach. The *Electoral Act*, quite deliberately, has sections designed to deal with exactly the situation we find ourselves in. These sections are designed to avoid elections, if possible, and that is what we are doing today.

I also believe the Henderson government should continue with our mandate to govern the Territory, not just because convention is the party which wins government at an election and the party with the most number of seats should govern, but because it is the Henderson government that can offer the most stable government, and it is this government that is best able to deliver for all Territorians.

If this motion is defeated today, there will be a new cooperative approach to government, which I believe will be a good outcome for all Territorians. This government has proven we are prepared to

reform and improve transparency and accountability. When we came to government there was no thorough estimates process, no freedom of information, the Electoral Commission sat in the Department of the Chief Minister, and there was no whistleblower legislation.

We welcome further reforms. A new era will mean changes, but not everything will change. We will continue to deliver on our election commitments, our contract with our electors. We will continue to work hard with the federal government through these uncertain economic times. We will continue our best endeavours to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

We have seen eight years of strong financial management from this government, which is why the Territory has been an outstanding performer in Australia in relation to most key economic indicators in recent years. Strong financial management takes courageous decisions, none more so than our decision this year to go into a temporary deficit position. It was not an easy decision, but it was the right decision. It protected Territory jobs, and it continues to do so.

We knew our decision would be the focus of criticism, but this decision proves that a strong economy does not happen by accident - it takes carefully considered, tough decisions. We went into deficit to ensure our record infrastructure spending continues, to fund much needed innovative stimulus initiatives like Buildstart. We worked extremely closely with the Commonwealth to ensure our respective measures address the global financial crisis, and the stimulus required complemented each other to protect the Territory ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! There is a disruption from the gallery. I believe the member should be heard in silence.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Port Darwin. Visitors in the gallery, if you have telephones or radios, they should be turned off. Thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I thank the member for Port Darwin.

Last sittings, the Chief Minister tabled a document which detailed progress on the election commitments we made just a year ago. One year into a four-year term there has already been significant progress on many of these commitments. That is one of the reasons it is important we continue with the mandate we received a year ago. We made commitments, and the community, quite rightly, expects us to deliver on them. They are important commitments such

as delivering 10 000 new trainees and apprentices, and Police Beats in our shopping centres. Some are already up and running, in Casuarina and Alice Springs; while others, like Parap, Palmerston and Karama, are progressing, and yet to open.

This is an example why it is important this government is able to deliver on our commitments. There is a commitment to upgrade every school. Some have received those early commitments, some have not. We have three years to go. Those that have not deserve the right to have that commitment delivered.

Across my portfolios, I will highlight a number of initiatives we have delivered, and our plans for the future. We have turned the Territory economy around. There is no better demonstration of that than the fact, in these current difficult economic times, the Territory is outperforming the nation with the highest economic growth rate of 4.9% in the 2008-09 financial year. We now have a more robust economy compared to past boom and bust cycles. Economic data shows the Territory is the most economically buoyant and business confident place in our nation. That is something that does not happen by accident. We have been prepared to make the hard decisions. We have also supported Territory businesses to grow, with the lowest taxes for small and medium business in our nation. Our jobs initiatives have also helped businesses to expand and, importantly and significantly, invest in young Territorians.

We have achieved what others said we would not be able to; that is, supporting 10 000 new apprentices and trainees in our second term of government. We are now delivering on the second round of that extra 10 000 new apprentices and trainees commitment.

We are creating 5000 jobs a year. We have the strongest employment growth in our country. Our labour force participation rate is at 75.1% - the highest in the nation at a time of job contraction across our country - as a result of the global financial crisis. Compare our 75.1% to the national figure which sits at 63.5%.

We have overhauled and streamlined procurement processes to cut red tape for business and improve efficiencies in government procurement processes. This has been welcomed by business, particularly the all-important construction sector. We went out and pursued INPEX to come to the Territory. Their final investment decision, due next year, will herald an investment of \$20bn, which will lift the Territory economy to its next stage of critical development. This is an investment which will have a flow-on effect of about \$50bn into the Territory economy in the two decades to follow.

The Territory is now Australia's newest oil and gas hub with ConocoPhillips Darwin LNG already in place, and the arrival of ENI Blacktip and INPEX already investing in the Territory. We are not resting on our laurels - INPEX is a good example of that. Our government is going after the large projects to attract all-important investment to the Territory. We have stimulated mining exploration and focused on increasing trade through our Trade Support Scheme. Territory-based mining supply companies are now exporting to Indonesia; we are expanding cattle exports to Indonesia into the market in Vietnam; and we have secured new shipping links between Shanghai, Singapore and Indonesia.

The Chief Minister has proven his mettle in this area, and his plans to grow international trade over the next five years are currently being finalised. We will continue to work hard to keep our economy on track, and protect Territory jobs.

Infrastructure and roads are critical to economic and social development, which is why we targeted, in Budget 2009-10, the protection of jobs with an unprecedented \$1.3bn spend on infrastructure, supporting 2500 new jobs across our construction and related sectors. We have hit the ground running on delivering this program, which includes a record \$322m for Territory roads - our beef, mining, community, and tourism roads. We are committed to improving our road network right across the Territory. We are finalising a 10-year infrastructure plan, a 10-year road strategy, and a transport strategy to underpin *Territory 2030*, a vision for the future economic and social development of the Territory. These plans will guide and inform our infrastructure development including, critically, our roads into the future.

Importantly, we have built a strong, stable and respectful working relationship with the federal Rudd government which is delivering real results for the Territory. As example of this, we have just signed a roads deal for the Territory for the next five years which delivers \$425m - this is more than double the \$200m Auslink package for the Territory under Howard. This extra investment is directed to major projects like Tiger Brennan Drive; our community beef and mining roads such as the Tanami, the Plenty, and Buntine Highways, the Central Arnhem Highway and Maryvale Road.

We will continue to work with the Commonwealth to secure more funding for the Territory. Two weeks ago, I met with the Board of Infrastructure Australia and emphasised to them the importance of our bush arterial road network for both the social and economic development of the Territory. I have been invited to Sydney for further discussions with Infrastructure Australia Board members on our roads funding submission,

our regional transport strategy, our 10-year roads plan, and on the exciting expansion of our port.

The Territory's strong economy and growing population is placing significant pressure on our housing market; we recognise that and we are taking action to tackle it through framing the new initiative of Housing the Territory as a 20-year land release plan. It includes measures to deliver affordable housing, reforms to our public housing, and fast-tracking land release processes.

We are the first government in the history of the Territory to enshrine as policy that all government land release incorporates 15% for affordable and social housing. This is to help our battlers; we recognise how tough it is for people to enter the housing market. This policy is being actioned and land release is being fast-tracked. We have \$108m in Budget 2009-10 to provide for infrastructure for land release across the Territory and to support land release in important community infrastructure. Work is under way in the first four new suburbs of Palmerston. These suburbs will provide 3700 lots; development works are already under way on the first stage of Bellamack providing around 234 lots, including critically important, affordable housing packages.

The headworks are also under way at the new suburb of Johnston which is proceeding through the planning and development consent phases. Planning has also started on the new city of Weddell. It is exciting, in terms of the agreement today, to see the competition coming forward for that important, new, sustainable city of Weddell which will provide around 10 000 new lots.

We have streamlined our development processes providing parallel processing of approvals and design, master planning of subdivisions, a move to auction subdivisions with design and development approvals in place, and providing more opportunities to purchase lots off-the-plan. We have seen lots already purchased off-the-plan at Bellamack, and we look forward to the next ballot at Bellamack, expected shortly.

Affordable housing initiatives have been complemented by Homestart NT; that important loans scheme to help the battlers into the marketplace. We have the \$14 000 Buildstart grant scheme, an NT government initiative supported by the construction sector which is reporting a resultant increase in housing projects. We are the only jurisdiction that has a program like Buildstart to attract investors back into the property marketplace to provide those critical rental opportunities for Territorians. We are also working closely with Defence Housing for the release of Muirhead, which is at a critical stage.

The Territory government's record on law reform and social justice is sound. We have made significant progress, but we acknowledge we have more to do. A key example of progress is on native title resolutions made under a Labor Territory government. We have proceeded down the path of negotiation rather than the litigious approach of the past. We have worked with traditional owners to deliver the Larapinta and Mt John Valley Indigenous Land Use Agreements which saw the development of land for housing ...

Mr Elferink: Did you take the native title claimants of Darwin to the High Court, or not? This is arrant nonsense!

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order! Deputy Chief Minister, you have the call.

Ms LAWRIE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have worked with the traditional owners to deliver the Larapinta and Mt John Valley Indigenous Land Use Agreements which saw the development of land for housing in a previously land-locked Alice Springs. We signed an ILUA at Pine Hill ...

Mr Elferink: Did you give the native title claimants over Darwin the same rights?

Ms LAWRIE: We have signed an ILUA at Pine Hill which is supporting horticultural development, and ILUAs at both Elliott and Tennant Creek.

We have a respectful relationship with our courts and legal profession, and we are implementing a significant boost to the courts in resources and, importantly, facility improvements. Right across the Territory our community courts initiative is increasing and welcomed by Indigenous communities. We have focused on addressing the causes of crime, particularly alcohol and substance abuse, in a comprehensive way, and are committed to do more to improve rehabilitation for offenders to break that cycle of crime.

Our package to tackle antisocial behaviour is a good example of a multipronged approach. Through increased alcohol rehabilitation services, Return To Country program, Night Patrols, and the First Response Patrols we are responding to the impact that this problem has on our community, as well as supporting the problem drinkers to break the cycle through rehabilitation, or returning to the wider support in their home communities. We have also given courts the mechanism to deal with problem drinkers who commit crime, through the alcohol court. We have introduced drug house laws to tackle drug abuse in the community and resultant crime. We have introduced legislation to deal with hoons on our

streets which includes vehicle seizure, and hit-and-run offences. We have mandated reporting of domestic violence and boosted services, importantly, to support the victims of that heinous abuse. We have introduced the volatile substance abuse legislation and associated rehabilitation programs. We are tackling youth crime in a multipronged approach with targeted legislation, providing family responsibility orders, youth camps for young people at risk to get them back on track, and the Safer Streets and Youth Crime Unit policing initiatives.

In Alice Springs, we have worked with the community to develop a comprehensive response to youth crime issues which, at its foundation, works to support youth at risk to re-engage with their community, re-engage in school, and support them to make better choices for a better future. These are all examples of our multifaceted approach to community safety; and we will continue to strive and to work hard with the community to respond to community safety needs to make our Territory a safer place.

Of course, Indigenous affairs are a significant challenge for Australia as a nation, and for our Territory. We all have a long way to go, and over the decades there have been many failures. Just as important as addressing the areas of failure is the need to identify and work on the areas of success. Building on success is one of the best ways to address the failure. Previously, I have had the carriage of the fight against petrol sniffing, which now sits with our Minister for Health. A recent study undertaken by the Commonwealth demonstrated in Central Australia petrol sniffing has been cut by over 90%. The introduction of Opal is clearly a significant contributor to this, but feedback from people working on the ground is that the *Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act* this Labor government introduced, and the complementary programs we are funding, are proving extremely valuable in not only cutting petrol sniffing, but helping to get those kids back on track. A 90% cut ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the minister, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Ms LAWRIE: I thank members for the extension.

A 90% cut is a remarkable achievement, but we are continuing to work with the Commonwealth to improve legislation and to roll out further programs in this critically important area.

There are other areas where we are seeing positive outcomes. In recent years, average life

expectancy for Aboriginal women has increased by three years, and infant mortality has improved for Aboriginal children by 35% - two very fundamental improvements. However, we know and acknowledge much more needs to be done, particularly in addressing alcohol misuse and poverty.

The new Minister for Indigenous Policy, the member for Arnhem, has Cabinet and Caucus right behind her as she embarks on what she knows is one of the greatest challenges any minister in Australia faces. Around our country debate on the right way to head in Indigenous affairs and policies is intense, and rightly so, because these issues are significant. The member for Arnhem is extremely well suited, I believe, to bring people together and work together. I know she has enormous respect in Canberra, and throughout the Territory, and I am confident she will work well with the Commonwealth in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

I firmly believe this government should be able to continue with the mandate it received just a year ago to deliver on our election commitments. The current Chief Minister is the best Chief Minister. He leads a stable team committed to delivering and working hard to address the challenges our Territory faces.

Madam Speaker, I support our Chief Minister wholeheartedly and know he now has a stable team to work with him. I thank sincerely the member for Nelson; he has made a very tough decision. I am committed to working with the Chief Minister and government to ensure we provide a better Territory for Territorians, and I look forward to the reforms which will see us be a more inclusive government. I do not support this motion.

Ms CARNEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, it is a pity the member for Nelson is not in the Chamber at the moment to hear what else will be said during this debate ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, you are aware you are not supposed to refer to the presence or absence of a member.

Ms CARNEY: I am sorry, Madam Speaker, yes.

The member for Nelson has made the wrong decision. He has decided to support an unstable and dysfunctional government. It is the wrong decision. He will vote for a government knee-capped by itself. He will vote for a bandaid

solution to a political problem entirely of the government's own making.

I note with interest, the Deputy Chief Minister referred earlier to the situation in which the government finds itself as if it had nothing to do with the government at all - It has everything to do with the government - its dysfunction and its instability.

The member for Nelson will vote for a government which is unwilling to tackle the issues because its members are consumed by entrenched internal conflicts. He will vote for a government focused on clinging to power rather than delivering results for Territorians. He will vote for a Chief Minister who, in political terms, is a dead man walking. The Chief Minister has, seemingly, been saved from challenge by his unpopular and divisive deputy. So, Labor is, it seems, saved from the utterly desperate option of turning to the Deputy Chief Minister to move the member for Wanguri, the present Chief Minister, out of the way.

The member for Nelson will vote for a government that, on a good day, when it is momentarily able to move beyond its own internal problems, can only extend itself to re-announcing previous announcements, producing glossy brochures, opening political offices with taxpayers' money, and engaging in political stunts. On a good day this is the government of the Northern Territory at its best.

Territorians, now more than ever, need certainty and competence - they have neither - and that is the worst part of what seems to be a cobbled together deal. The government is crippled by division and defections, and it is completely incapable of looking beyond clinging on to power. Only one year after the last election the government is tired and falling apart and, only months after the last election, the government's get up and go has got up and went.

The member for Nelson somehow believes, it seems to me - based on discussions he has had with others, and on what he said this morning - he is not supporting Labor, he is just supporting the Chief Minister. He is supporting, apparently, stable government. It is, I suggest, incredibly peculiar logic. The Chief Minister has been a senior minister since the first days of this administration. He has been involved in everything; his hands are all over the failures of the last eight years.

He is the man who, in the last 20 months since he has been leader - having knifed his predecessor, Clare Martin - has shown appalling political judgment. This man took the Territory to an election almost a year early, a tactical error

which should have cost him his leadership. He lost control of a parliament with 19 Labor seats, and four Country Liberal seats. How does a bloke do that? If that is not incompetence, I do not know what is.

During the Chief Minister's inauspicious 20 months, it is unquestionably the case he has been incapable of controlling his own Cabinet. I note with interest that he said, in his very mediocre speech earlier, he will deliver stable government for Territorians, and he will deliver results with a minority government. He could not do that even when he had a majority, when he was part of the government for eight years with 19:4, the now Chief Minister could not deliver stable government or results for the people we serve. The Chief Minister cannot possibly be taken seriously except, of course, by his colleagues on the other side of this Chamber, and the member for Nelson.

All I heard from the Chief Minister is more of the same - the same I have heard since 2001. 'We have a plan' seems to be the mantra of the Territory government, because I have been here for eight years and that is what I have heard every single sittings: 'We have a plan'. Territorians do not want plans - they want action. They want action, and the member for Nelson wants to support this mob. It is somewhat extraordinary.

I note with interest at the end of the Chief Minister's speech he said he will try to make government more accountable and transparent. We were all here; we all heard it. Is it not extraordinary for a Chief Minister at any time, but particularly during a no confidence motion, to say he will 'try' to make government more accountable and transparent? He did not say he 'would' make government more accountable and transparent. That is what the people of the Northern Territory are looking for and, once again, the Chief Minister has failed them.

It illustrates, furthermore, how crippled the government is with a Chief Minister whose hands are tied behind his back. He has lost control of government and his Cabinet, and he is not a Chief Minister who can get things done. Yet, the member for Nelson wants to support him. The member for Nelson has made the wrong decision.

I will now speak of the people in my electorate of Araluen in Alice Springs. I make this point abundantly clear: the member for Nelson does not speak for the people in my electorate - they have given me that privilege. They tell me they are sick of being thrown beads and trinkets from this appalling government. I am compelled to ask: what is it exactly my constituents get from the government being saved by the member for Nelson? How exactly are things going to change

for the better in the electorate of Araluen or in the town of Alice Springs? What changes can they expect to see in the high crime rate in our town? What changes to the structure or number of police will they see? Can they ever be assured of getting through in a timely manner whenever they ring the local police station? When will the so-called dry town be taken seriously and become a reality? When will there be real and effective treatment programs for those addicted to alcohol?

What can I tell them, I ask, particularly, the member for Nelson? What can I tell the people of my electorate and Alice Springs when I go home tomorrow? How exactly has their lot been improved by this deal? I listened closely to what was said, and I do not see it. I am here representing the people in my electorate - that is what I am paid to do - and the member for Nelson does not speak for them.

The people in my electorate will get more of the same from this government; from a Chief Minister, the senior member of a team that for eight years has repeatedly failed Alice Springs. The member for Nelson has voted for a Chief Minister who will go through the motions of dropping in occasionally, doing some stunts, and then leaving on the 5 o'clock plane. For them - the people I proudly represent in this Assembly - the member for Nelson's decision is the wrong decision.

Moving to my responsibilities in my shadow portfolios, I ask whether the member for Nelson made the right decision. Quickly I come to the answer: he made the wrong decision. For instance, at estimates only two months ago, it was revealed that three years after the Territory attracted national and international attention on the issue of child abuse; the government continues to fail children at risk. The Child Abuse Taskforce in Alice Springs has not had an increase in the number of child protection workers in the last 12 months. Despite an increasing rate of notifications - it still only has three. The Mobile Child Protection Unit which works in remote parts of the Territory has seen a reduction in the number of child protection workers from 10 to six.

Response times for investigations of child abuse are nowhere near the government's own benchmarks. Children who are abused or neglected are highly reliant upon a well-functioning child protection system; they have a right to expect that government delivers on its promises. This government has failed on both counts, to its enduring shame. That is why the member for Nelson has made the wrong decision.

There is a culture of ducking and weaving in this government. The energy and the idealism it had in 2001 - and I was here, for those Labor

supporters in the gallery - they had it and it was great, they were at their best. Newly elected, 26, 27 years in the wilderness, they came here full of enthusiasm and a desire to make the Territory a better place. Their first term was their best; it was a long time ago. The idealism they had in 2001 has gone and it is obvious for all to see, even its own party members. There is no determination to address these problems, only a steadfast determination to cling on to power. That is why the member for Nelson's decision was the wrong decision.

To use the very recent example of the unintended consequence created by the *Care and Protection of Children Act* where the sexual health of young people under 16 has been at risk for many months, the government dragged its feet - until Monday this week. Government did not even know if it was going to make changes on urgency in the parliament. Government has had months to fix this problem, yet, it just could not get it done - a simple change to legislation to correct an unintended consequence of earlier legislation. This government could not even act appropriately on that issue. It begs the question: how on earth can this government possibly run the Territory? The member for Nelson has made the wrong call.

In the Corrections portfolio at estimates only a couple of months ago it was revealed, in the 2008-09 year, of the more than 1000 prisoners in our two Territory gaols, only 111 of them participated in alcohol rehabilitation programs - 111? You are kidding me! No, that was their answer. The results for sex offender treatment programs were even worse. In 2007-08, only 24 prisoners completed a sex offender treatment program; in 2008-09 there were only six. This is not a government that has delivered and, yet, every time we come to this parliament, I hear this drivel: 'We have a plan, we will deliver, we have done a bit, but there is so much more to do'. I have been hearing that for the last five years. I asked how the numbers and results of alcohol rehabilitation and sex offender treatment programs in our gaols are going to improve. They will, in the absence of anything to the contrary, go on having very low and disappointing results. Then - as if by magic - things are going to change in 2012 or 2014 when, apparently, the new gaol is going to be built - as if by magic.

My point is, this government is not delivering, has not delivered, and will continue not to deliver. Yet, the member for Nelson supports this administration. There can be no doubt, regardless of Labor's attempts to cover it up and spin out of it, this government is divided. In political terms, this government is a basket case headed by a dead man walking. What a sham and what a national embarrassment!

The crisis in the Labor Party and the government will now, presumably, not be on the pages of the newspaper. However, I suggest it will not last for long. Sooner or later, more cracks will emerge. In recent times Labor, and the Chief Minister, in particular, has demonstrated how desperate he is to cling on to power, and Labor members will do everything necessary, I suggest, to ensure that continues. But, at what cost?

A government - any government - consumed by itself, focused on stunts and spin, is not a good government, and it is not a government the Territory needs. The Chief Minister has had his go, he has failed, and he must go. The Territory must move forward, and our challenges must be addressed by meaningful action, not more announcements about more plans. The government has hamstrung itself; and dysfunction and internal divisions will not repair it. However, this is the government the member for Nelson has thrown a lifeline. The member for Nelson has chosen to support a rotten and rancid government, led by a man who was there from day one, and who has demonstrated appalling judgment time and time again. The member for Nelson supports such a government rather than supporting a new and fresh alternative: a party of action which will deliver outcomes for Territorians and take the Territory forward. This is an outcome in Labor's best interests, not in the best interests of Territorians.

In conclusion, the deal the member for Nelson managed to - I guess he would use the word - negotiate with government does rather give the impression there are now two Chief Ministers in the Northern Territory - B1 and B2. You have the Chief Minister over there, who was actually voted for by his colleagues back in the days, presumably, when they liked him, and you have another one over there who will call himself an Independent which, I guess, is a matter for other people to make a judgment on.

I note the irony of the member for Nelson and the members of government all talking about stability in government. One wonders how that is going to work when you have B1 and B2 as the Northern Territory Chief Ministers. I wonder whether they will travel to ministerial council meetings together. I wonder whether I will receive an invitation in the mail from one Chief Minister of the Northern Territory - perhaps both their names will be on the government invitation? My hunch is that many people in the Territory will be somewhat confused by this; I feel confident people in my electorate will be. I have already received some e-mails from them, some of which contain language somewhat less than parliamentary, so I dare not read them out.

The point is, the member for Nelson has made the wrong decision by supporting a government that is rotten to the core. It is a very disappointing result - not for those opposite who love being in government rather than delivering outcomes, but it is a disappointing result for the people of the Territory and, in particular, the people I serve.

Mr KNIGHT (Housing): Madam Speaker, I sought a place in this House because I did want to make a difference, like other members. I wanted to improve the lives, not only for my constituents, but for all Territorians. That can only happen, in my mind, through a strong Henderson Labor government. The Northern Territory is in a very strong economic position, and this government has the plans for the future to continue that economic growth.

Much has been said about who should lead the Territory moving forward. The simple answer is - the Henderson Labor government. It was elected 12 months ago and has a mandate to deliver on the election commitments it took to the election. Our commitments include strategically investing in the Territory to protect jobs; to close the gap of Indigenous disadvantage through a whole range of programs and policy initiatives; to build the Territory for the future; and to work for all Territorians. I am confident in the ability and the dedication of this government and all its members.

Over the past few days, I have taken the opportunity to get out and about in my electorate and talk to my constituents, and they are extremely supportive of the Henderson Labor government. They have given their trust in this government to undertake the running of the Territory, and they want us to finish the job we started. In my electorate, people expect me to see through a whole range of commitments such as continued sealing of the road, and a whole range of infrastructure developments in the area of Dundee. It was this Labor government that delivered power to Dundee; it was this Labor government that got 80% of that road sealed to date, and we will continue until it is 100% sealed. It was this Labor government which acquired community land so we could actually have a township there.

In the Daly River region, we have a commitment to build a bridge, and that work is ongoing - another commitment from the federal Labor government, the only government dedicated to putting that bridge in. There have been no plans from the other side about a strategic investment. There were no plans at the last election from the other side of the House for such infrastructure to improve the lives of people living in the Daly River region. It was this government, with the Commonwealth government, which committed \$15m to the Port Keats road. No other

money, of that size, has been committed to the Port Keats road - a commitment to the people of that region.

There are also commitments to upgrading access roads to the Daly River Nauiyu community. That tender goes out very shortly after recent community consultation, which I attended. Again, that is a commitment from this government to improving the lives of those people in the Daly River region. There is a commitment to build a new health clinic at Wadeye, with the growing population there, and that work is just about to start.

It was through the last budget we saw a record \$1.3bn investment in infrastructure - a record amount. That is the commitment this government has in securing jobs for the Territory and underpinning the economic development of industries coming to the Northern Territory. It is only this government which made that commitment to the future.

Fundamental to our agenda for this term has not only been improving housing affordability, but also essential services. The Housing the Territory Strategy is comprehensive, and very ambitious. It will change the dynamics of the Territory forever. We also continue our commitment to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Much of my contribution today will be focused on Indigenous housing. The facts need to be placed on the public record. This is not about politics; I am focusing on delivering a remote housing construction program to improve the lives of Indigenous Territorians, improving their living standards for the future. I also take this opportunity to speak of this government's commitments, challenges and achievements across local government, public employment and essential services.

We are delivering a record investment in housing. Our Housing the Territory Strategy will deliver more land, new places to buy and rent at an affordable price, and new public housing. \$390m was allocated in this 2009-10 Budget - a record amount. A \$187m or 92% boost on the previous year. This reflects this government's commitment to boosting public housing, supporting the non-government housing sector, and creating more affordable housing for Territorians. Budget 2009-10 also delivers \$23m for more public housing, which includes providing more beds for our greatest client group in the public housing area - our seniors.

We are revitalising old public housing complexes and working towards the Parap Gateway project. The demolition of Wirrinya Flats has recently gone out to tender. We are committed to the establishment of an affordable

housing rental company, and growing the not-for-profit housing sector to support those people most in need.

Much has been said about the Rudd government's \$64bn Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan. The social housing investment has been extremely successful in bringing our public housing stock up to standard and providing local tradespeople with work. To date, our additional stimulus expenditure on repairs and maintenance has reached \$2.148m. At least 236 dwellings have been upgraded, or have had common areas upgraded. A further \$2m worth of works will continue to roll out in urban centres in the coming weeks.

Stage 1 of the social housing stimulus package delivers new housing to help reduce our waiting lists. The \$7.1m investment has commenced. It will see 22 dwellings built at an average estimated cost of around \$320 000 per dwelling. Tenders have already been awarded for the construction of dwellings at Malak, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Additional tenders will be released shortly for the construction of duplexes in Millner, Malak, Bakewell and Humpty Doo.

There is a large and growing demand for supported accommodation in the Territory. This is not a new challenge, and there are many people in our community dedicated to fixing this problem. I have established the Housing Support Working Group to work with my departments of Local Government and Housing to find solutions. This brings together non-government organisations, my department, and the Minister for Children and Families' department to cover supported accommodation. We need to ensure our efforts match or complement the efforts of the not-for-profit and private sector to best achieve our goals of providing a roof over everyone's head.

I recently submitted the Territory's bid for \$54m of new investment for social housing construction under the final stage of Operation Stimulus. Projects across the Territory - many put forward by the social sector - if supported, will be delivered in partnership with the social sector. We need, through that sector, to leverage and use their knowledge and their own investment.

I move now to SIHIP. This program is the largest ever investment in social housing in the bush, and our best opportunity to make real inroads into living conditions in the bush. Let me make it clear right now, SIHIP will deliver, and is delivering, as we speak ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr KNIGHT: Madam Speaker, many months of detailed planning ...

Members interjecting.

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 51 - no interruption. I believe this debate, so far, has been held in very good spirit and members have been listening. We should be affording the member for Daly the same courtesy.

Mr ELFERINK: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker. You did say at the outset you appreciated there would be certain robustness in this debate, and I have heard nothing excessive so far.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I remind you of Standing Order 51, which is:

No Member may converse aloud or make any disturbance which in the opinion of the Speaker is designed to interrupt or has the effect of interrupting a Member speaking.

Honourable members, I have been allowing a deal of latitude already in this debate, but I must say I am quite concerned for the people listening to the broadcast, because the interjections may be making it quite difficult for people to hear the person who has the call, simply because of the sound system in here. If you could just bear that in mind, because I believe the people of the Northern Territory would like to hear the person who has the call.

Mr KNIGHT: Thank you, Madam Speaker. SIHIP is a very significant program; the biggest ever. It is the biggest thing happening in the bush and the biggest thing in government. I take this program very seriously, and I try to get all the information. I was very disappointed at the Estimates Committee hearings several months ago when SIHIP, the largest ever housing program for the bush in the Territory's history, rated two questions - a meagre 10 minutes of scrutiny from the opposition. That is how seriously you took it ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr KNIGHT: To date, the members for Brainting and Goyder have not sought a briefing from my department about the most significant housing program for the bush in the Territory's history. I am very serious about it, and I have offered them briefings on a number of occasions, but they have not been taken up.

Many months worth of detailed planning was set in train in April this year when \$145m of work

began for the first three strategic alliance contracting packages. By the end of this financial year, just shy of \$500m of works packages will have been allocated across 47 communities and 25 town camps. For those not familiar with the alliance concept, work has been packaged up under SIHIP and will be delivered under partnerships between government, corporations and the communities. That way, we can put serious runs on the board with housing construction and refurbishment, employment and training, and community involvement. I have inspected the works under way in Tennant Creek, the Tiwi Islands, and Groote Eylandt.

What has somehow been forgotten is the fact that SIHIP is more than just a construction program. Construction of Indigenous housing has come and gone over the years, and none have come close to breaking the cycle of poverty, unemployment, and overcrowding. The first three alliance groups have already employed local Indigenous people - 42 to date - and is skilling up an additional 40 for when the work ramps up over the next couple of years and into the future.

I will give an example. Mr Rodney Moreen, from the Tiwi Islands, a high school student and a St Mary's midfielder, has already been engaged for two weeks on-site training in his home community of Milikapiti. He said he is learning to build houses, including a range of skills such as painting, drilling, and using equipment, and his family is proud of him - by all accounts, he is very proud of himself. He will continue his education in Darwin but, obviously, Territory ...

Mr Tollner: This is a national emergency, not a training program.

Mr Giles: They have one person trained.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, Order! The minister has the call.

Mr KNIGHT: Another example of how this program is delivering is in Tennant Creek, a place I visited and I saw the trainees there. New Future Alliance believes they can exceed the target of 20% local employment to around 30%. Every last house in those town camps and urban living areas will be refurbished in the process - all 78 of them will be refurbished, with new ones to come after completion. Also, there will be upgrades to power, water and sewerage and roads, as identified by local representative council and agreed to with the federal government.

We are seeing these results with SIHIP within a year of the alliances getting off the ground. People have jobs; they are earning real incomes and learning new skills, which they are putting to the test. Houses are being fixed. I saw houses

handed over already; foundations going into the ground and walls going up. As we speak ...

Mr Giles: Where?

Mr KNIGHT: Well, you need to get out and have a look.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Mr KNIGHT: Madam Speaker, I have seen the refurbished homes handed over. I have seen the pride of those tenants ...

Members: Where?

Mr Giles: Name them. You cannot. You have not done anything.

Mr KNIGHT: Groote Eylandt.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, Order!

Mr KNIGHT: The member for Arafura and I went out to Groote Eylandt, and we met some of the ...

A member: Member for Arnhem.

Mr KNIGHT: Arnhem. We met some of the residents. The amount of pride they have in their homes now they have been refurbished ...

Mr Tollner: You are misleading parliament.

Madam PEAKER: Order, Order!

Mr KNIGHT: There was community involvement. There were people - local boys, local girls - working on those projects ...

Mr Elferink: Where? So we can see.

Mr KNIGHT: SIHIP is delivering, it will deliver, it is on schedule, just as the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments have planned. In doing so, SIHIP has set the direction for investment in housing for Indigenous communities for the long term. Breaking Indigenous disadvantage will require a long-term effort on the part of governments and communities. It requires long-term commitment to tenancy and property management, local jobs, local pride - and that is what the Commonwealth, the Territory government, and local communities have committed to. SIHIP means a completely new way of doing things. While we are engaging contractors, negotiating leases, and getting the

program up and running, houses are still being built.

Over the last 18 months, the Commonwealth and Territory governments have built 96 new homes under previous programs which have overlapped with SIHIP. Not until SIHIP, has the demand for housing amongst the Northern Territory Indigenous population living in remote communities been effectively addressed by governments - too many families living in overcrowded homes that do not last as long as they otherwise would. They have lived this way for far too long.

Within Northern Territory Housing, we have underpinned the creation of new markets in remote communities which could be the source of sustainable economic development for remote townships and entire regions. With housing, jobs and skills created, enterprises would then grow, markets in land and housing would emerge, and private investment in communities would increase. SIHIP is the first housing program to set up meaningful targets in addition to bricks and mortar. Community involvement and jobs, now and for the future, are critical, as is securing the value of assets and leases.

This government recognised the remote housing shortfall could never be met by the Territory's coffers alone. The status quo held for years in the Territory until we threw down the gauntlet on 19 October 2006 with a \$100m, five-year commitment to Indigenous housing over and above our existing funding - that was from this Northern Territory Labor government. We had to convince the Commonwealth we could deliver significant improvement in remote housing if they backed us financially. We knew we could, so we put as much cash as we could on the table.

In early 2007, the former federal Indigenous Affairs Minister, Mr Mal Brough, came up with \$200m to be spent on housing in a handful of NT communities; this was known as the Strategic Intervention Housing Program. As part of the Strategic Intervention Housing Program, we worked with the Commonwealth to determine the most effective way ...

Dr BURNS: Madam Speaker, I move an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr KNIGHT: Madam Speaker, as part of the Strategic Intervention Housing Program, we worked with the Commonwealth to determine the most effective way to roll-out the housing program in the bush, remembering it needed to hit targets outside the scope of normal programs. Connell

Wagner, an expert consulting firm in this area, was engaged to weigh the options and assist with our deliberations. We knew that small programs would continue to fall short of our objectives. The traditional grant programs were never going to achieve the necessary economies of scale. Immobilisation costs were too high relative to such small returns; the logistic costs reduced the level of the value of money we were getting. Governments were not basing their investment on the whole-of-life costing for the house: we had inappropriate designs, construction of poor quality, and less incentive for innovation in the construction sector. Most importantly, traditional contracting methodologies held no real opportunities for Indigenous involvement. The construction programs were too short, and employment and training outcomes were rarely mandated.

We determined that the alliance contracting model was the best way to deliver SIHIP. It outstripped traditional management contracting against all the Northern Territory and Commonwealth evaluation criteria with transparency, whole-of-life costing, stakeholder involvement, local employment, flexibility, quality, and continuous improvement, to name a few.

On 12 April 2008, 14 months ago, the Chief Minister and the federal Indigenous Affairs minister, Jenny Macklin, launched the then \$647m landmark housing project which covered 73 remote communities and some urban areas. The Chief Minister and minister Macklin stated that SIHIP would deliver 750 new homes, including new subdivisions; 230 rebuilds to replace derelict structures; 2500 upgrades to existing homes, and also better conditions in our town camps. We will deliver on this commitment, Madam Speaker.

The preliminaries for SIHIP were completed on schedule. We engaged a commercial program manager in March 2008, and the alliance participants were contracted in October 2008. In November 2008, the alliance groups for Tiwi, Groote Eylandt, and Tennant Creek packages of works began engaging with the communities in question. As I mentioned, the programs at these locations are now in full swing with over \$145m-worth of works already being delivered.

I want to elaborate on those first three packages, because they give a real sense of what we are achieving under SIHIP.

On the Tiwi Islands, in the first stage of work, overcrowding will be reduced by around 60%. The program will achieve this by building 29 new homes for 170 people, building extensions to 25 existing houses so they can accommodate a further 50 people, and refurbishing 155 homes. Ninety houses will be constructed on the Tiwi

Islands over the life of SIHIP. We have set a target for Indigenous employment on the Tiwi projects of 20%. We are aiming to even better these results, as we continue to do with every aspect of SIHIP.

Territory Alliance has already employed six local people at Nguuu, and another 15 are being trained for other works. The alliance is already working with Tiwi Enterprises to establish a local labour hire company, and it has held a skid steer backhoe and heavy truck driving course for eight Indigenous trainees so they can work on the refurbishments at Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti.

Last weekend, I had a look at the first phase of work on Groote Eylandt, as I mentioned. This work is improving the housing situation for over 600 people. There will be 26 new houses with a collective capacity for 185 people and 80 visitors. This feature was requested by the community because the local population swells during the Wet Season. Seventy-five of the 152 existing houses not up to the standard required under the *Residential Tenancy Act* will be upgraded. Eighty new and replacement houses will be constructed over the life of SIHIP.

In Tennant Creek, the New Future Alliance is working closely with Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation and local subcontractors who are also doing the majority of the work in the town camps. As I mentioned, around 78 houses in the urban living areas will be refurbished, and new homes will follow. The community wanted all houses refurbished first before we started on the new housing. We are happy to work with what the community actually wants. There will also be a complete upgrade of power, water and sewerage; and road infrastructure desperately needed in those areas.

We have an Indigenous employment target of 30% in Tennant Creek, a significant amount, but the New Future Alliance believes they may even go beyond 30%. Before any of the works start under the strategic alliance, an alliance group will engage with the community to bed down a range of important issues including land tenure, land use and area planning, housing design, priorities and options, jobs and training opportunities, and how local businesses can benefit. The first round of packages has reinforced the importance of meaningful engagement. For example, on Groote Eylandt many local people had their say on housing design, because access and functionality is critical to local people who suffer from the genetic Machado Joseph Disease. At Nguuu, advice from the community was they preferred to replace the existing uninhabitable housing, rather than develop a new subdivision; so, that is what we will do.

Looking at the future of SIHIP, more packages are currently being scoped for start by the end of 2009. These packages include the southern region refurbishments around Central Australia, Maningrida, Wadeye, Gunbalanya and Galiwinku. Some people have questioned the wisdom of investing in existing remote housing stock rather than redirecting all SIHIP funds to new construction. I say this: to not invest in existing stock would, in fact, represent a waste of our resources. There are approximately 5000 publicly-funded homes in the Northern Territory's remote communities and a great many of these need to be upgraded so they are safe, up to an acceptable standard for living and, importantly, so the normal conditions for a residential tenancy can be applied. Refurbishment here does not just mean a coat of paint; some of these houses require complete refits to bring them back online.

Security of tenure is a key element in SIHIP. On top of the government needing title to assets, secure land tenure will encourage the development of markets in land and a private investment in home ownership in the longer term. For this reason, SIHIP is closely linked to the broader reform of the Northern Territory remote housing system where mainstream and consistent housing management practice will be put in place.

In formulating SIHIP, both the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments agreed to quarantine 15% of the overall \$672m budget for program management and Northern Territory operational costs. We did so knowing this percentage would be reduced over the life of the program as we established the alliances and works designs and programs were implemented with new efficiencies. I am pleased to say this cost is currently tracking at 11.4% and we are committed to driving this down even further. Operational costs will soon run at 10% and that will, hopefully, be cut as far as 8%.

Madam Speaker, I am going to run out of time, but I can say that SIHIP is delivering. I have been out there and see those works commence, not only in the first three packages, but other communities as well – Wadeye, where audits are already completed; packages have been designed, and houses will be delivered on time. We will see every one of those 750 homes completed within the life of the program. I look forward to coming back to this parliament and continually reporting on the delivery of every one of those 750 homes, every one of those 230 upgrades, and every one of those 2500 refurbishes. We will get there. This government is strong, and it will deliver for all Territorians.

Debate suspended.

MOTION

Electoral Act – No Confidence in Government

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms ANDERSON (Macdonnell): Madam Speaker, I speak this afternoon as a proud Territorian; a desert woman alone, without party or advisors. I will speak plainly about what I have seen and defend what I believe in, which is: the truth, honest government, and fairness for my people and all Territorians.

I will tell you what I feel about the government we have today - a government I know very well from the inside. I came into Northern Territory politics not out of vanity or desire for position or power, but to work for the good of people. I believed that we, in government, would help bring the Territory forward. I believed that the Territory could grow and prosper in harmony.

It has always been my dream that we all - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal - can work together for a better future. It is still my hope that this Territory can be the jewel of Australia. We can only do this if we look after each other, speak up for each other, and care for one another. The best hope for us, as a Territory, is if we look each other in the eye and support each other. The place of our birth or the colour of our skin should not be things that divide us.

When I was elected by the people of Macdonnell I gave them my word I would always fight for their interests; I promised them I would speak out for them. I spent many months in this parliament watching, listening, learning the way the system worked, getting to know the character of my former colleagues. When I was made a minister after the election last year, I did the same - I watched and listened for months. It has taken me almost a year at the heart of the government machine to lose my illusions and to question all my hopes.

Let me tell you a little of that story, by way of explaining the reasons for my vote today. I have sat around the Cabinet table with my former ministerial colleagues week after week, and seen just how things work. I have come to understand what is at the heart of the government. I will not betray any secrets or details of those meetings - I never have and I never will.

I will tell you how, in those meetings, my party made me feel over time as I came to understand the system. I was made minister for the Environment almost a year ago, and how happy I was to take that post. I come from the land, I am of the land, and my dearest wish is to protect it and use it well. I decided at once to work cooperatively with the opposition and the

Independent member for Nelson. Things changed in the Environment department. We gave open briefings to the opposition and we worked in cooperation. That was what I saw as good government. I believed we could do good for all Territorians.

However, above all, I worried for my people. Aboriginal people in remote communities are the poorest and the most disadvantaged people amongst us. I dreamed I could help change things for Aboriginal people in the bush. I believed the Labor Party cared about Aboriginal issues; that Labor was the party for the Aboriginal cause. After four years in the system, I know that I was wrong.

Labor lives on the Aboriginal vote. It talks constantly about Aboriginal people, but what it is really good at is spending Aboriginal money. What has changed for Aboriginal people in eight years since Labor came to power? What is better today? Nothing to speak of. Some of you in this House may say we now have high schools in the bush, but I know them; they are gammon schools - the kind of schools you give people when you pity them, but do not believe they can really learn. There is money being spent - always money, rivers of money - but it never seems to reach the people on the ground.

I want to tell you a little about the example in everyone's thoughts today - SIHIP. SIHIP was designed as the great answer to the remote housing crisis crippling my people. It was the heart and core of the Commonwealth emergency response after the *Little Children are Sacred* report was made public. It was the one big chance to change the way things are on communities. We politicians said that we would build the houses that were needed - 750 houses. Last year, I began to receive briefings about the program. I knew things were going wrong. I raised my concerns with my colleagues. I struggled to get action. I appealed to them. I could see the disaster in the making. I could see the money being swallowed up on consultation, training costs, and administration.

At meeting after meeting, I warned my ministerial colleagues; I did everything I could to resolve this matter inside the party. I was unsuccessful. There was no urgency; they did not care. I came to understand then that they were quite content to just continue administering Aboriginal communities. Taking the money from Canberra was just business as usual for them.

I have always been a passionate politician; I speak out for what I believe in. I spoke out against the Labor government when it took over Aboriginal land at McArthur River. I crossed the floor with two of my Indigenous colleagues. I did

not have to cross the floor then; it was not my people, it was not my land. The fact that the Labor government extinguished the right of these Aboriginal people forever is what made me act on my principles and support the member for Arnhem on that occasion.

Two years ago, I spoke out for the federal intervention when Territory Labor wished it had never happened. Now, I have spoken out against SIHIP, the biggest scandal I have seen in my political career. I have left the government and given away my ministerial portfolios. I am not one to keep quiet when the wellbeing of my people is at stake, but my Labor colleagues were quite prepared to sweep this disaster under the carpet.

You can read the coverage of this disaster in the newspapers. You can read the story of the programs, delays, and confusion in Tennant Creek. The record of waste and chaos is a shame on the government. Here, the ministers sit cool and comfortable while Aboriginal people live crowded, 20 to a house. It is a disgrace. Of course, I have no confidence in this government, knowing what I know about SIHIP, but I am astonished anyone in this House can give the government support.

I have sat in the streets of Darwin for days, talking to the public. I have spoken to hundreds of Territorians and received their text messages. I have whole books of their written messages. I have made a list of their demands. I know what they want by a large margin: change, by election, if possible - well, we know now that is not going to happen - but, above all, change. Now, we are about to give them the opposite, and we have done that against the wishes of all the Territorians who have sent me text messages and spoken to me.

How can we build a new future for Territorians? How can we make a road ahead? Only when we all stand together and design a parliament of unity, beyond the faction and private party politics; only when we accept that we are all brothers and sisters; only when we dare to break the mould and stand up for what is right.

I want to tell you what is wrong at the heart of the Labor government. It is not so much the ministers, the constant fighting or the worrying about the interests of the party and its friends; it is Labor's problem with the truth. I always wanted to be straight with Territorians, but I was opposed in this at every turn by the political minders, the shadow men who are the real masters of this government. If I wanted to tell Territorians anything, I had to struggle against an army of spin doctors. Those consultancies and everything else I have seen, I will keep for another day. I came to realise the truth was what the government most

feared. It feared telling the truth about its finances, about its priorities, about its connections, and even about its policies.

I was startled by what I found at the top of the tree. I reached the pinnacle of the Territory's political system and I realised there was nothing good or precious there. I came to see I was in a wilderness of spin. I know this very well, because I was in national politics for 12 years at a high level before I came into this Assembly. What I realised in the end was this: the real governing was being done by an inner group, a little secret club. On the outside, you see ministers and departments; on the inside, you see little groups of political advisors plotting and planning. You see consultants coming and going. You see jobs being handed out to political friends and allies. You see another world. The public has no idea of what things are like, and here are all the insiders today, in the gallery, looking down, waiting to learn their fate. They think they are friends to the Aboriginal cause. Well, we know them for what they are. We know what they have done; we will remember them. The days of the safe black vote for Labor have gone.

Madam Speaker, what a game we are caught up in. My feeling is for the Northern Territory. It is like a giant money game. We have no real economy to speak of, four-fifths of the money comes in from Canberra and the job of the government is to hand it out - hand it out the way it sees fit. Or, I could put it like this: the Northern Territory is a large Aboriginal community and the government is like the council clerk. It is the government that decides who wins and who loses, who gets top-up and who gets vehicles, where the money goes.

The government must bear the blame for the state of Aboriginal Territorians today. The government has betrayed my people and it has lost our trust. It is a little game, and all it cares about is power, holding on to power to the bitter end. I have seen them up close for a long time now. Their day has come. We all know the public wants them out. We all know if an election was held now, they would lose. We all know they have promised the world to keep their slender margin, and we all know they will deliver nothing.

Madam Speaker, the crisis we face is deep. As a parliament, we have the chance today to begin a new chapter. Why not take that chance and tell the world we have no confidence in the Chief Minister and his spin machine?

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Arafura): Madam Speaker, I do not support the motion. I acknowledge the member for Macdonnell's passionate statement.

On one level, this debate could be approached as a comparison between the current government's track record and capacity, and that of the opposition. Having no confidence in the current government realistically has to mean having confidence in a hypothetical alternative government made up of CLP members, and supported by the two Independents. The first port of call in a journey towards deciding an alternative government to be given the nod is consideration of the CLP's track record, in particular to Indigenous Territorians.

In my own electorate, the communities at Garden Point and Waruwi have been asking for sealed airstrips for years prior to 2001. It was a Labor government which made those places safe for Wet Season medical evacuations. When I was living there and working for the council at Nguiu, in the early 1990s, we had to raise our own money to install airstrip landing lights from service fees collected from community residents. Later in the decade, the council - and I am not referring to the Tiwi Land Council - had raised loan finance to build the police station, which the CLP government refused to pay for.

The Territory Labor government has completed extensive school expansions and cyclone shelter construction programs which, everywhere else, is taken for granted, yet, not one existed in our remote Aboriginal communities.

We have listened to concerns expressed by residents at Jabiru and other users of the Arnhem Highway. There has been extensive upgrade work on that important road. We have seen an agreement signed between the government and ERA, with the endorsement of a Kakadu Regional Education Strategy, which will have great involvement from the traditional owners.

Many speakers, particularly the member for Daly, have talked about SIHIP. I was going to touch on some of the issues of SIHIP in my electorate. However, when you look at SIHIP, it is, necessarily, a gargantuan construction, training, and employment campaign aimed at addressing what almost everyone agrees has been a notorious and long-standing housing and overcrowding problem.

When the story broke on 23 July, in *The Australian*, under the heading 'Costs erode 70% of Indigenous housing fund', like every member of this parliament, people were concerned. Certainly I was concerned where SIHIP was going to be rolled out as a major project, and asked for briefings immediately. I wrote to the minister and members who had responsibility. When I was talking to communities in my electorate, there was certainly a lot of concern in Maningrida and

Gunbalanya although, in the Tiwi Islands, the program was well and truly rolling.

I know there has been some confusion regarding the Tiwi Islands. The Leader of the Opposition talked about only 29 houses out of 90. However, that was 29 with another 61 to come. That announcement was made very clear by federal minister Macklin. If you add 29 plus 61 it gives you 90. I know on the Tiwi Islands, particularly Nguiu, which was based on the 99-year lease, there is a commitment and there will be 90 houses; the work for 90 has started.

Long lead times are something I am familiar with from my own experiences of establishing and implementing large-scale new initiatives involving government and non-government partners. For example, it took years, not months, for the Katherine West Health Board to progress to the stage where it could take over control of the Northern Territory government's health clinic in the Katherine West region. That handover was preceded by a long process of community consultation, organisation development, and a trial period during which the board functioned as a purchaser, but not a provider, of health services.

Similarly, it was always going to take a significant period of time for government to secure long-term leases over the lots where houses were to be constructed or refurbished, then managed by Territory Housing. It was also going to take time for the SIHIP alliance companies to secure all other necessary approvals, consents, engage in the required consultations regarding community design and other preferences, and to lock in local Indigenous employment participation arrangements.

Subcontractors, including local Aboriginal housing associations, had to be brought in to undertake work within the allowed budgets. Ever since the Beswick water supply dispute in the early 1980s, the CLP's position on leasing of Aboriginal land by the Northern Territory government was made crystal clear. Because of an ideological objection to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* which went right back to the commencement of self-government, successive CLP governments would not allow or acknowledge the status of traditional owners by entering into government leases over land where new community infrastructure was to be constructed.

If a land council, on behalf of the relevant traditional owners, tried to dig its heels in on the issue then, as far as government was concerned, the community could simply go without. The result was always that the Northern Territory government would win the ideological stoush and the land councils and traditional owners would

back down. The infrastructure would get built without a lease, and there would be no legal basis on which the government could protect and control its taxpayer-funded investment.

Because the Territory government is a self-insurer, the insurance implications of this bizarre situation - which also applied to Northern Territory government health clinics on Aboriginal land in the 1990s, going back to when I was Director of Katherine West Health Board - were left murky. Just consider this situation by reference to normal commercial practice and principles. Would your insurer cover you for a public liability incident which occurred on business premises you operated without any kind of lease or tenure? No. So not bothering to negotiate long-term SIHIP leases before commencing the construction of new houses and infrastructure was never an option.

Regarding the type and term of lease required, I have been pushing - and am on record - the block and strategic leasing barrow, long before the intervention. The five-year compulsory leases over prescribed communities under the intervention legislation were far too short to be satisfactory, with insufficient security mechanisms for the government housing investment; and the Commonwealth government has always recognised that.

I have consistently maintained the preferable option for both government and traditional owners is to try to negotiate not whole-of-township lease, but block or strategic leases over just the areas of land in a community where public housing and infrastructure is to be constructed or maintained. I understand that negotiations over leasing have, in most SIHIP targeted communities in my electorate, reached finalisation stage and that matter should not, in most cases, further delay the SIHIP roll-out.

As regards the concerns which have been raised in respect to project management costs and budget adjustments, I understand, when I had the briefing, that the recent adjustments principally relate to tightening and reducing the scope of community engagement consultations, and the resulting savings will be applied to more quickly get the number of houses targeted that were originally set.

Nevertheless, like all members of parliament, I look forward to being provided with further and more detailed information on the program. I am sure this will be forthcoming once the joint Commonwealth/Territory review has been completed in the next several weeks. As I said in the letter I wrote to affected constituents in my electorate on 6 August 2009, the allegations made

about funding shortfalls are as much a concern to me as they are to everyone else.

That brings us to what, I believe, has been a central issue in this debate; one which, perhaps, more than anything else, persuaded me to return to the Labor Party. It is an issue of whether, as alleged, our current Chief Minister is a racist. The charge relates to the Chief Minister's failure to publicly condemn - which I understand to mean condemn as racist - an opinion article headed 'The Politics of Ruin' by journalist Nigel Adlam published in the *Northern Territory News* on 1 August 2009. Adlam took aim, not just at the member for Macdonnell, but at the other three Indigenous MLAs - including me - who had been elected as Territory Labor candidates. To refresh everyone's memory, this is what he said :

Ms Anderson seems to have no concept of the Westminster style of government, of collective responsibility - a system of government that has served the democratic world very nicely.

Nor does her sidekick, Karl Hampton, nor her arch enemy Marion Scrymgour, nor heart-on-her-sleeve, Malarndirri McCarthy.

They have all indulged in one-issue, self-centred politics.

As far as they are concerned, it's all about them - and they have the cheek to pretend they are standing on principle.

I squirm with embarrassment at the way our elected Indigenous politicians behave.

Racist? I do not think so - nowhere near it. Whether or not the four of us agree or disagree with the criticisms Adlam levelled at us, the fact remains the attack against each of us was based on our performance as politicians. However, I thought his lumping of the members for Stuart and Arnhem together with the member for Macdonnell and me, was gratuitous and without justification.

Speaking only for myself, I can understand why Mr Adlam might perceive my recent actions as undisciplined. While I have a lot of experience and success working collaboratively and cooperatively with other people throughout my work history, both before and after my entry into politics, I am quite willing to admit I have made many mistakes during my time in politics and have perhaps, at times, exercised less discipline than I should. I have always tried to do what I thought was the best thing for my constituents, but I acknowledge that the best thing in that regard may not always be the most obvious or immediate. As the saying goes, there is more than one way to skin a cat. I have spent some

time over the past month thinking about that, and I hope and believe the insights I have gained will enable me to improve my service to Territorians, in particular, my constituents.

As a newly-rejoined member of the team, I will be approaching my future with humility and in a spirit of cooperation. Looking back on my political career and mistakes, I need to show our young Aboriginal men and women that being true to yourself and to your people does not mean we have to be passive; but that the broader political system and the Northern Territory community, in general, can look at you in the future and be proud of the achievements and contributions we make when we embark on political journeys. In that future, I will be happy to take a back seat to the new Minister for Indigenous Policy, who I will be proud to support and assist. I have had my moment in the political sun, and the coming months and, hopefully, years, are the member for Arnhem's time. I want to help and maintain a stable Labor government in which the members for Arnhem and Stuart can make progress towards closing that gap, while respecting hard-won Aboriginal rights.

The 1 August 2009 opinion article by Nigel Adlam inevitably made me think back to the similar uncomplimentary opinion article he wrote about me in the media in the lead-up to my departure from the Labor Party. I admit I was angry at the time about the references in that article to my health, but I never considered it to be racist.

To get an idea of the subtle, but effective, use of journalistic racism, you would do better to look at Natasha Robinson's reporting of me being an urban saviour, followed by her newspaper falsely claiming I had attended an exclusive girls school in Sydney, and topping it off with a secret agent misreporting the circumstances of my attendance at the place where I sometimes get waxing treatment - all designed to insinuate that I am not a sufficiently traditional, cultural Aboriginal, but a shallow individual; that I have no right to comment on things like the intervention, and do not understand Aboriginal disadvantage. Or the slur by Peter Murphy about me being 'part-Tiwi'. Which particular part of me is that supposed to be? My blackness is not something I could conceal, even if I wanted to.

I have lived out bush as well as in town and I experienced just as much childhood poverty and hardship as any other member in this Chamber. As far as my Tiwi identity is concerned, I still know where my cultural limitations lie, and I recognise the life's work that still lies ahead of me to reach the status my mother had. I also acknowledge my Central Australian heritage, just as many other Tiwis acknowledge their varied and mixed

genealogies. I have never pretended to be anything other than what I am. As a politician, I believe I do not deserve to have my personal life and my cultural identity targeted. I have no qualms about the criticism or assessments from Nigel Adlam, or any other person, of my public life as a politician and a political representative. However, if it happens, as it has happened since October 2007, I do not believe blaming the leader of my party is going to be an effective response.

Paul Henderson did not like the various newspaper articles that got under my skin, and he was not responsible for them. Is Paul Henderson a racist? No, he is not. He is a decent and open-minded person I have worked with for some time, and someone for whom I have immense respect.

Although I do not agree with the comments which have been made about the Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, in relation to that, I believe the member for Macdonnell has made a very important point in her comments; that is, as we move into a demographic reality where Aboriginal people make up well over a quarter of the Territory's population - and a much higher percentage than that of its truly permanent population - we can no longer expect issues relating to Aboriginal disadvantage and unfulfilled aspirations not to regularly dominate Territory politics in the way they have recently.

Those unfulfilled aspirations are expressed differently by different Aboriginal Territorians. Engagement with the economy through education and jobs is one of them, and meaningful self-determination is another. We can no longer expect elected Aboriginal politicians will not advocate those aspirations ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! I move that the member be given an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Madam Deputy Speaker, we can no longer expect that elected Aboriginal politicians will not advocate those aspirations as first order issues. The Aboriginal politicians themselves may not disagree on these things but, together, we are all capable of participating in a stable government process in the Territory which accommodates such debate.

Finally, I acknowledge the member for Nelson. I said when I went to the crossbenches the most gut-wrenching decision I had to take was to leave the Labor Party, and I had the privilege of working with the member for Nelson for two months. I look around this Chamber and see 25 members, but someone I got to know in those two months is a

man of integrity, someone who works very hard - not just for the Territory, but for his electorate. I put on record my thanks to the member for Nelson for his support and wisdom.

I know many people have been praying. I am not a practicing Catholic, but was brought up a Catholic, and I have said my prayers for the member for Nelson to be guided. This morning, he spoke about that oath which we all signed when we came into parliament. When you look and reflect on those words, they are so true. I acknowledge the member for Nelson but, also, the Chief Minister and all members of the Labor government. We will go forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not support the no confidence motion.

Mr BOHLIN (Drysdale): Madam Deputy Speaker, today is a very important day. It should be a day which will lead the people of the Territory to once again taking the vote, making the choice for them - the Territory people, the people of Drysdale. It is, and should be, the people's choice. In such circumstances, it should be their choice by a new election, and not that of one man or one woman.

Ordinary Territorians, people in Palmerston and the Drysdale electorate, are being made to pay for the Henderson government's failed land release policies. Homelessness is rising, yet housing stock for the most vulnerable is falling. What logic is there when a family huddles behind the fly-screen of a tent, because this government has failed to supply them a safe home? Territory-wide, housing shortage is hitting renters hard. The figures show the median rental for a three-bedroom home in inner Darwin, which includes suburbs as diverse as Fannie Bay, Stuart Park, Parap, Ludmilla, Woolner, The Narrows, Winnellie and Berrimah is \$700 a week - an increase of 9.4% in the June quarter, and 16.7% for the year. Across Darwin and Palmerston, the median rental for a three-bedroom home is \$555 a week, up 4.7% for the quarter, and 8.8% for the year. Rental vacancies across the Territory are at an incomprehensibly low 0.8% in Darwin and a disgusting 0.3% in Alice Springs.

The urgency of our land shortage is illustrated by the fact that just 12 residential blocks were sold in Darwin in the June quarter, just 40 in Palmerston, and 27 in the rural area. But blocks of land are not homes. Government's own estimates indicate 1700 new residences - house, home, castle - must be built across the Territory every year to meet population growth. What does all this mean? Labor's stranglehold is suffocating the Territory's growth; Labor is suffocating families with rental debt; Labor is suffocating families with ballooning housing prices and repayments that

come with ballooning housing costs; and Labor is suffocating Territory development. Development is held back by incompetent ministers who fail to make decisions for the Territory and its people but, instead - and always have - make backdoor deals.

The minister does not make the decision; the advisor makes the decision. Who runs the government, the minister or all the grubby deals behind the closed doors? Who runs this government?

From now on the Chief Minister, a dead man walking, will have to strike a new deal every time a decision is required - a Chief Minister muted with a backdoor deal to secure governance. He is a Chief Minister muted by a deal with the members for Nelson and Arafura. Labor, for all its desire to retain government, will continue to claw at power while they smother and suffocate the Territory through their failings, and drive up Territory personal debt beyond \$26 000 per person - man, woman and child.

Law and order continues to fail, where drunk, disorderly and offensive behaviour is a scourge upon the beauty of the Northern Territory; a beauty, I believe, like a vibrant teen - full of energy, opportunity and style, with a look of its own. Between 1 July 2008 and 31 May 2009, 32 678 people were taken into protective custody; this is the acne upon our beautiful landscape.

The Country Liberals committed to cleaning up drunks during the last election with the habitual drunks policy, and that policy has been spelt out. The Katherine prison farm has a focus on rehabilitation with real life skills to help people get a job and get out of the cycle of alcoholism - a plan that will breathe life into the Northern Territory suppressed through crime and antisocial behaviour. A total of 69.9% of prisoners in the Northern Territory have known prior imprisonment. Education is the key to reducing crime. Released prisoners with better education levels are prisoners with better job prospects who are less likely to fall back into the cycle that sent them to prison in the first place.

The Country Liberals will assess the education level of all prisoners when they first enter the prison system and provide practical education solutions to address the areas of their education which need the most attention. The Katherine prison farm will have a real skills education program which will focus on equipping prisoners with the skills employers are looking for.

With violent offences increased by 25% from 12 months ago in the Northern Territory, on a quarter-by-quarter basis, it is not good enough to talk about how much money you have spent, how

many officers you have trained, and not about how many have left or not been placed directly at the coalface where officers are needed. For all the talk and money thrown down in spin, are we safer, are we stronger? No, we are more divided, more in fear; we are all victims of a failed Labor Henderson government. There is less likelihood of real accountability for offenders. Who is listening to the people who want accountability, who want to be protected as all Territorians should be?

An election is what the people want and deserve to ensure they get the protection from this government and the criminals they protect through their incompetence. An election is the protection they deserve. An election is what they deserve.

I highlight a failing in the Labor government to protect the good, law-abiding citizens, and it is only one part of several. Drink-driving is the major contributor to death on Territory roads. In the five years between 2003 and 2007 there were 240 fatalities on Territory roads, and 51% of these fatalities were attributed to alcohol – 51%. Between 2005 and 2007, of the 6169 recorded drink-driving offences in the NT, 1130 people, or 18.3%, had been caught drink-driving previously. Last year, there were 75 road fatalities with a high proportion, again, attributed to alcohol.

The Country Liberals will introduce legislation so repeat, high-level drink-drivers will have their cars confiscated. This opportunity has been put before this parliament and rejected by the Labor government. If this government was serious about protecting our families, it would have made sure repeat drink-drivers get the message and confiscate their cars. We are talking about people who drink and drive and, in over 51% of fatalities, have contributed to road deaths.

Transport continues to be a problem in Drysdale and throughout the Territory. I am reminded again today on my journey to this House, of the battle with traffic on the road network, particularly Wishart Road and Tiger Brennan Drive - roads many Drysdale residents use daily to get to work. Twelve months after the last election we still have not seen major changes to the bus system which would rapidly alleviate this problem. We have seen total failure of this Labor government to address our bus system. A handful of passing lanes are very unlikely to address this at any point. For example, squeezing 50 lollies into one bottle is no different to putting them in two bottles beside each other - they all head for the same mouth. Effectively, that is all the passing lanes will do.

As my colleagues have said: a dead man walking. Over the past 12 months, Territorians have paid the price of the failed approach by a

dead man walking's divided government. Labor has had their chance to change, but they cannot and they will not. A vote for Labor is a vote for a government which has failed to deliver and which does not have plans for the Territory. The sad thing is, when they do deliver outcomes to the Territory, it is late and over budget. Labor cannot manage the budget and, now the tough times are here, they are in trouble. Labor is paralysed and dysfunctional.

The member for Nelson had a chance to back real change. The member for Nelson had a chance to give the Territory a new direction, to get things moving again. Despite saying otherwise, he has now moved into the Labor Party and has backed more of the same. It is a pity because, after eight years, Paul Henderson has had his go.

Mrs AAGAARD (Nightcliff): Madam Deputy Speaker, it is with sadness that I speak in debate today on the motion of no confidence in the Chief Minister and the Northern Territory government.

I am aware it is very unusual for the Speaker to take part in debate. Over more than four years in that role I have never spoken in debate except, occasionally, during condolence motions which always have the full support of the House. I am speaking today, as I feel this motion is of such consequence that my constituents in the electorate of Nightcliff would expect me to speak; and also the people of the Northern Territory are entitled to know my position in this historic debate.

The events of the past few weeks have been very distressing, and have had a grave impact on all members in this Chamber and, more importantly, on the people of the Northern Territory we serve. This is regrettable, because it has unleashed a divisiveness and anguish in our community I have never witnessed before, and about which I am most disturbed. This needs to be settled so the people of the Northern Territory can be assured their government is stable, and the needs of the people of the Northern Territory are being met. I believe the focus needs to be shifted from members of parliament to the people we represent.

In preparation for this debate, I spent a long time in contemplation of what it means to be a member of parliament, why I chose to stand for election eight years ago, and what has happened over those eight years that has impacted on the lives of Territorians. I have also reflected on the meaning of power, and how power, itself, is illusory. It seems to me power is only real when it is seen as an active tool for the betterment of others. It is not of any value in itself.

I stood for the Australian Labor Party in the electorate of Nightcliff in 2001, not because I saw

power for myself but, rather, because I wanted the community in which I live to change significantly. I was, perhaps, a reluctant politician in some ways, not due to a lack of passion for people and causes that affect our community - I was very passionate about those things and remain so - but, rather, about the perceived nastiness that can arise in politics, with which I still battle. We, as honourable members of this House, need to rise above the petty and personal, and remember we are each here per kind favour of the people who elected us, and to live up to their expectations of us as mature adults with very serious responsibilities.

The reason I stood for election in 2001 was because I wanted to change the Territory as I saw it at that time. I was a business owner, and it concerned me greatly that it appeared, rightly or wrongly, if you were not somehow associated with the CLP, it was going to be very hard to work in the Territory. This is something that really struck me when I moved here in late 1985. Everyone assumed you were either a CLP supporter or member, and people were disbelieving that a person could have an opinion not similar to that of the CLP. To be a Labor supporter was to be a pariah, and I soon learnt not to reveal my political colours.

Similarly, I was despairing of the way the CLP government of the day appeared to deal with Indigenous issues, and the incredible gap in every area of life of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. This was exacerbated, in my mind, by the introduction of mandatory sentencing of juvenile offenders, where young offenders were gaoled for often trivial offences and, most dramatically and appallingly, even led to the death of one young Aboriginal boy in prison. This lad had stolen a tin of biscuits on Christmas Eve because he had no food and was hungry.

At that time in my life, I was very involved with the Uniting Church, particularly its natural justice arm, and I helped spearhead a campaign throughout that church and, later, through the Northern Territory Council of Churches and the national bodies of the Uniting Church, the Anglican Church of Australia, and the Catholic Church in opposition to mandatory sentencing. I believed then, as I do now, that these laws are immoral and unethical, and that young people needed to be treated with dignity, whatever their crime, and that gaol should always be the last resort for young people.

The third reason I stood in the seat of Nightcliff was because I love the community itself and the people in it. I wanted the Northern Territory to become a better place for the people living here and our children, and to pass on a better heritage to those who came after us. Being a member of

parliament can never be described as boring. In fact, in my case, I describe it as a rollercoaster of emotions, experiences, hard work, hopes, and dreams.

When I was first elected in 2001, I was appointed as the Territory's first Labor Health minister, and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Women's Policy. It was a great privilege to represent the people of the Northern Territory in this way. It was also a real eye-opener to the real state of affairs in our remote communities. I went back through my records to a speech I gave on Indigenous health in this House on 21 May 2002, and some comments I made during that speech on health centre infrastructure. I made these comments in light of the suggestion that nothing has happened in remote communities since the Labor government came to government:

As I have travelled through Territory communities, I have been struck by the powerful difference between health services in places where non-Aboriginal people may be part of the clientele, from those further from tourist view. It has left me with a great feeling of shame that this should be the case in a society that prides itself on notions of equality and fairness. If we allowed health services in any urban area to degenerate to the standard of some clinics, there would be vehement public outrage.

From this, I asked the Department of Health and Community Services to audit all health clinics. From the beginnings in those early days of government, there has now been a total replacement of clinics at Milikapiti, Daly River, Nguuu, Minjilang, Maningrida, Yuendumu, and the most recent at Kalkarindji, which is opening next Friday. In addition, there is a rolling upgrade program of every health clinic in the Northern Territory, and a program of removal of single-nurse posts and an upgrade of security at all remote health clinics for the safety of our health staff and their patients.

One area which I remember as being especially disturbing on coming to government was the state of our renal services, particularly for people in remote areas of the Northern Territory. This paucity of services in renal health was highlighted by an interview on the ABC *Lateline* program on 22 February 2001, where presenter, Tony Jones, interviewed a then CLP Health minister, Mr Steve Dunham, about renal services in the Northern Territory following a report of the deaths of five Aboriginal people from the Tennant Creek area who refused to go to Alice Springs for renal treatment, and a further three who died after going to Alice Springs for treatment and, then, decided they could not stand to be away from their

families, and returned to Tennant Creek knowing they would die. In the interview, Mr Dunham indicated that while he had received a report showing the need for a dialyses unit in Tennant Creek, he basically said it would not be happening, and I quote from the interview:

Tony Jones: ... Let me just ask you very briefly this one fundamental question. How many more people have to die before, as your original report suggested, a dialysis machine is put into Tennant Creek?

Mr Dunham: I can answer that in two ways. Nobody has to die. People have the opportunity to access this specialised medicine at Alice Springs, and I'm not in the position to ... compel people to access that medicine. In the event that they don't wish to, the choices are theirs.

I am happy to say that was not my view, and the service in Tennant Creek was commissioned on Labor coming to government. In addition, I asked the Department of Health and Community Services to provide me with relevant social and biomedical data to support the development, in partnership with the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum, of a strategic plan for best practice renal health services across the Northern Territory. We wanted to know what it would take to be able to offer remote area renal options which were on par with mainstream services in other jurisdictions, such as self-care dialysis and transplants.

I am very proud to say now there are greatly expanded renal services in the Northern Territory, allowing people in their own communities to access dialysis closest to home. I also note all new clinics now have a dialysis unit attached to them. No longer do you have to travel to Alice Springs, Darwin or Katherine for services; now there are services in Palmerston, Tennant Creek, Gove, and expanded services in Katherine, Darwin and Alice Springs, as well as units in Alyangula, Umbakumba, Angurugu, Galiwinku, Nguiu, Maningrida, Ramingining, Kintore, Borroloola and Santa Teresa - a far cry from the position of the former government.

Other achievements in those early years related to increased funding and prioritising mental health and child protection. I am not suggesting by any stretch of the imagination that things are good in Indigenous health. However, there are real improvements in facilities, morbidity rates and infant mortality rates, which I do not believe would have been the case had there not been a Labor government. The previous government was simply not heading in that direction.

In December 2003, I was removed from the Health portfolio in what was, personally, a distressing time. But I moved on, as one has to in politics, and became the Chair of the Substance Abuse Committee. We completed a significant report on alcohol, cannabis and petrol sniffing. This, together with the work by the then member for Arafura, led to the volatile substance abuse legislation and money to go with it to treat petrol and glue sniffers in an appropriate way. This was a major breakthrough in this harrowing, addictive habit.

In 2005, I was re-elected to the seat of Nightcliff, and became the Speaker of this House for the first time - a great honour which I still enjoy, thanks to the members of this House. In this role, I have opened the parliament up as much as possible to the public. In fact, tomorrow we are hosting an Open Day, together with the Supreme Court and Government House. Honourable members, I extend an invitation to you to come to the Open Day tomorrow.

In 2001, this government allowed cameras in at Question Time for the first time, and we are currently upgrading both the sound and vision systems so vision will be available for the whole proceedings. In 2005, I approved the live streaming of parliament on the Internet, and this is now available for all media and listeners until the sound and vision system is fully upgraded. Once the upgrade is complete, the media will have access to vision of the entire proceedings of this parliament.

We have also taken the parliament to Alice Springs three times, and plan to do so again in November this year. This had never been done before, and allowed the people of Central Australia to see firsthand their parliament in action. In association with this, in the last regional sittings in Alice Springs the parliament ran an art competition in Central Australian schools on community leadership, which had the most astounding entries. We also ran a similar competition last year for Top End remote schools, which was very popular and highlighted the beautiful artwork and creativity of our young people.

Another highlight during my time as the Speaker has been the Portrait of a Senior Territorian exhibition, which attracts large numbers of entries and many people to that function here in Parliament House. I note this is coming up again in October.

The thing I am most pleased with in my time as Speaker, which I see as an improvement in this parliament, has been a greater engagement with the public - invitations via advertisements and direct invitations to community groups to attend

the parliament; and this has been extended to school groups across the Northern Territory. Many thousands of people now visit our parliament each year, which was very unusual previously.

In addition, visits to remote communities have become an important part of our parliamentary education program, and I have taken parliamentary education staff to remote communities in Yulara, Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, Jabiru, the Tiwi Islands and Katherine to talk about parliamentary democracy with remote school students and their families. This was never done in the past, but is now an important part of educating our young people, in particular, about our system of parliamentary democracy.

I note in his speech this morning, the member for Nelson indicated he had an agreement with the Chief Minister for reforms to this parliament. I am looking forward to working with the member for Nelson, and all members, to improve what are sometimes quite difficult rules in the parliament. It is a positive way we can look forward to improving our parliamentary democracy.

In the midst of my time as Speaker, I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006, and then followed some quite harrowing and very public treatment. I guess you cannot really pretend that nothing is happening when, suddenly, you appear in public and on the front page of the *NT News* bald. It was during this time, and earlier when I was removed from the Health ministry, that I realised the most important aspect of my work was for the people of Nightcliff.

On both occasions and, indeed, on becoming the Speaker for the first time, I was overwhelmed by letters, e-mails, faxes and phone calls from people offering me support. Each of us is here only by the kind favour of the people in our electorates. I am very honoured to have been elected three times in Nightcliff, and I am very proud of the achievements in my electorate over the years, and the many election commitments that have been fulfilled.

My electorate has seen significant changes during the eight years I have been the member. On coming to government, we promised to underground the power in Nightcliff and Rapid Creek; Nightcliff is complete, with Rapid Creek nearing completion. Two shopping centres have undergone major refurbishments in Pavonia Place and Aralia Street. There have been significant upgrades to infrastructure at the Essington School, Nightcliff Middle School and Nightcliff Primary School.

In 2002, an after-hours program for young people, run by the Red Cross and funded by

government, was established in the electorate for after-hours activities for young people. This successful program was extended to other areas in later years. This was one of my first election commitments.

In 2004, I worked with a group of Nightcliff artists and musicians to coordinate the first Nightcliff Seabreeze Festival, which continues each year with funding to support this community festival.

In 2008, after working with residents and business people in my electorate over a long period of time, dry areas were introduced into parts of the electorate. This has resulted in significant improvements in the level of itinerants in the electorate, and a decrease in antisocial behaviour. This has coincided with extra funding by the government for services such as People Living Rough, and alcohol and drug rehabilitation services and programs. In association with this, a Police Beat is expected to be established at the Nightcliff Police Station over the next year.

Next week, the outdoor gymnasium will open along the foreshore in my electorate. This is another of my election commitments. This is a series of state-of-the-art exercise stations which cater for the fit and the not-so-fit and which, I believe, will be heavily used by the local schools as well as residents. In association with these, is the erection of new history markers - also an election commitment - outlining the fascinating history of the area.

The last eight years have been a very long path. There have been many turns, some good and some not so good. I have to say today is a very low moment in our history. However, I believe the Northern Territory is now a better place to live than when Labor came to government. Undoubtedly, we are not a perfect government and there have been mistakes made, and new ways of doing things need to be worked through. Relationships need to be healed, and we need to work with the community to regain their confidence.

I express my thanks to the member for Nelson for his support of the government. I will certainly be working as closely as I can with him to ensure the government remains as stable as possible. I thank him for the integrity in his decision-making.

To the member for Macdonnell, who I know is a Christian woman, and so am I, I say: peace be with you, member for Macdonnell.

The government has cohesive plans for the future. The economy is strong and we have the lowest jobless rates in the country. I remind honourable members that this government was

elected only a year ago, and I believe it still has a mandate from the people to provide health, education and community safety outcomes for all Territorians. The legislation for fixed four-year terms was only passed earlier this year, and I believe it is incumbent upon all members to support the will of the people

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not be supporting this motion and indicate my support for both the Chief Minister and the government. I encourage other members not to support the motion.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Katherine):
Madam Deputy Speaker, today I wholeheartedly support this motion of a want of confidence in this Labor government.

Quite frankly, 12 months ago after winning my seat in Katherine and becoming part of the parliament of the Northern Territory, I never dreamed I would be standing here today debating an issue which the Henderson government said, by inference, would never happen.

The Chief Minister promised several things both before and after the 2008 election. He promised a stable and united government. I do not know what dictionary he used to find the definitions of stable and united, but I can assure you it is not the same dictionary most people in the Territory use. I have now formed the opinion that, perhaps, the member for Nelson has been peering into the same dictionary used by the Chief Minister.

All we have seen so far from this government is instability and disunity. Let us look at the kind of stability we have seen in recent history. The much-touted shire reforms saw the resignation of Elliot McAdam, not just from the ministry and the Labor Party, but from parliament. I can only imagine the frustration he must have felt, being steamrolled by the Labor Party machine, that he resigned completely from politics. I do not call that stable and united.

Let us look at the member for Arafura, who I thought was a strongly principled woman. She left the Labor Party as a result of the lack of consultation over the government's homelands policy. Up until that time the member for Arafura might have been a principled woman, yet we have seen she is quite capable of selling her principles for the sake of keeping her Labor mates in government. I do not call that principled, nor do I call it unified or stable.

In the latest bout of so-called stability, the member for Macdonnell has left her ministry and resigned from the Labor Party in disgust. Unlike her former colleague, the member for Arafura, the

member for Macdonnell now stands on her principles and has been prepared to maintain the strength of her resolve. Rather than be castigated for her departure from the Labor machine, she should be applauded for standing on the principles which make Australian democracy what it is.

The member for Nelson has said he is prepared to support the Chief Minister, a statement I found to be quite extraordinary. Support for the man who is Paul Henderson, is support for the current NT Labor administration, along with each and every one of its failures. Member for Nelson, there is nothing to suggest the Labor government will change its divisive ways.

Support for the Henderson government can, and will, only lead to more of the same. I hear every morning during prayers in this parliament words to the effect that we are here to advance the true welfare of Territorians. Member for Nelson, through the Chair, you had the opportunity to set things right in this House, and the Northern Territory, and to advance the true welfare of Territorians. Yet, I hear that you are going down the path condemning the people of the Northern Territory to more of the same. I have to admit, that makes me sad.

However, if you cannot be convinced to support this motion of want of confidence in the government by looking at this government's record of division and instability, then let us look at some of the results of eight years of this Labor regime. This government has had eight years to compile a strategic plan for the commercial and recreational fishing sector. What have we seen? Absolutely nothing. Just this year we saw the first hint of what might be with a fishing survey - eight years, and all they have to show for it is a survey. This government has no plan for fishing in the Northern Territory, it swings from making policy on the run to making knee-jerk decisions. The government promised buy-back of barramundi licences for years, yet, it took the pressure of the most recent Amateur Fisherman's Association's AGM to finally come to any action. They sat on their hands until their hands were forced.

Should the Country Liberals be called upon to form government, we will have a plan. There will be a strategic plan for fishing, and that is a promise. We will look 10, 15, 20 years ahead to see what we want our fisheries to look like, and we will work with the stakeholders to find ways to achieve that. Fishery management plans will be implemented on a catchment basis so the impact of commercial and recreational fishers can be assessed. If it becomes apparent from scientific research that fisheries are under pressure, we will implement stronger management controls. This may include bag limits, licensing controls or, in the

most extreme situations, closure to commercial and/or recreational fishing.

One of the first things we will do is convene a round table discussion with AFANT, the Seafood Council, fishing tour operators, and the minister. This is something this government has never done in their eight years of power. Our decisions will be based on science, not emotion.

There is a problem with Blue Mud Bay at the moment. Negotiations to resolve the stalemate over Blue Mud Bay have been allowed to stall by this Henderson government. However, we have a solution. Our aim, articulated in 2008, will be to ensure amateur fisherman have access to fishing waters affected by Blue Mud Bay without the requirement for individual permits or payment for fish, and we remain committed to work towards that control.

In April this year, the Country Liberals introduced a bill to amend the *Aboriginal Land Act*. This is a bill we have been trying to pass since 2007. This bill would give traditional owners the ability to grant a permit exemption to a person or class of person to fish in their waters, and this would help facilitate the process of access to Blue Mud Bay waters. We are committed to continuing negotiations with traditional owners, either directly with them, or in conjunction with the NLC.

I can advise I have already begun this process with two groups of traditional owners in two distinct geographical areas of the Northern Territory. Negotiations cannot be allowed to be caught up in bureaucratic bottlenecks. The rewriting of the *Fisheries Act* - where is that?

Let us look briefly at the Primary Industry sector. This government - and member for Nelson, you know this to be true because you and I have discussed it - this government has primary industries way back on its lists of priorities. The NT should aim to be the food bowl of Australia, yet this government has done barely enough to justify the need for a Primary Industry minister. The Ord Stage 2 on this side of the border is a lame duck, just like this Chief Minister and his Cabinet. The federal government and the WA government have been working on this for years, yet this government has done the sum total of nothing.

When I was in Kununurra, I was asked by WA government employees what the NT government was doing with their side of the Ord. I was shocked this government's counterparts in WA did not have a clue what this government was doing - I would have thought they would have known. How much money is invested in the Ord Stage 2 by the federal government and the WA government? Somewhere around \$400m. And

how much from this side of the border? Not a brass razoo.

It is widely known, member for Nelson, this government fails regional Territorians, and I know that is a matter close to your heart. In the resources sector, what has this government done, or not done, as the case may be?

Port Darwin capacity - there is a constraint on the flow of iron ore and other bulk commodities through our port. This government has been unable to secure the \$200m needed to make this port workable up to its current capacity, and what about the future? Where are the plans to grow our facilities to meet demand in 10 years' time? Mining in the NT can only go one way, and that is up. There is no strategic plan from this government.

Something this government touted as being so important to the Territory - geothermal energy legislation - that took three years to get off the ground. What plans are there for downstream processing? Increasing value? Will it be in South Australia, or will there be facilities built in the Northern Territory? Again, there is no plan. On the energy sector, there has been a winding down of Palm Valley and Mereenie, and this government has failed, still, to bring gas onshore from Blacktip. A review of the *Mining Act* - where is that?

Ms Purick: Four years down the line.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: Thank you. Road infrastructure. You promised in this year's budget a paltry \$19m for upgrades to beef and mining roads - that is an insult. Mining and pastoral pursuits are two of the highest earners in the Northern Territory, yet this government throws a pittance into roads infrastructure to support these two vital industries.

Local government reform has been, and remains, a debacle and a total failure. It was doomed to a life of decay from the day this government ran roughshod over Elliot McAdam and forced the legislation through on urgency. Here we are, more than a year into the reform and the shires are going broke, many are in deficit with no way to prop up their ailing finances. The cost of maintaining the IT systems has ballooned from \$500 000 to \$1m, and this government has reneged on providing sufficient funding to support the maintenance of those shire IT systems. Some shires are now stepping away from shire-biz, or CouncilBiz - or whatever the name of the IT system is - to seek a system that works.

This is a system this government allowed to be put in place and - I remind people of the Northern Territory and people sitting in this House - the

implementation of that system caused people not to be paid in the early stages. It was implemented without testing under operational circumstances, and we are now paying the price.

In the past year, shires have been fined by the Australian Taxation Office for failing to lodge Business Activity Statements on time. I would have thought the NT government would have facilitated a system which would prevent that from happening. I am sure the shire presidents, the councillors, and all the staff of the shires thank this government every day for the wonderful system inflicted on them. Shires cannot, and I repeat cannot, at this point, produce accurate and meaningful financial statements for their councils. More than 12 months into it and they still cannot produce financial statements. They are in breach of the act because of your failure to deliver a proper and useful IT framework.

In conjunction with changes to the CDEP program, I can advise this House there are now 140 Indigenous people at Yirrkala who have lost their jobs because of the implementation of shires. I was in Yirrkala just a week ago and had briefings from people who work within the community and the structure has changed over there so those 140 people who were employed fulltime, now have no work whatsoever - 140 Indigenous Territorians without a job in Yirrkala. Shame! That is a theme repeated across the Northern Territory. I am sure the current Minister for Local Government will go down in history as the worst Local Government minister the Northern Territory has seen. Yet his government refuses to acknowledge there is a problem.

The Minister for Local Government has stood in this House many times telling us what a wonderful job he is doing, yet there is no substance to what he says. The problems still exist. A Country Liberal Government would accept the responsibility of fixing this government's screw-ups on Local Government reform. We will work with shires and councils to find a real solution to the problems with the reform. Unlike this government, we will not throw money around and then tell people the outcome is the amount of money we have spent on it. That also is a common theme across the workings of the current NT government.

I do not watch very much commercial television, but recently I saw something that took my breath away. I am referring to the antisocial behaviour advertisements - and I was told today they have restarted on television after about a six month hiatus. Is an antisocial behaviour hotline the only weapon this government has in its arsenal to deal with antisocial behaviour? A 1800 number to report antisocial behaviour - so much for fresh ideas and real results. Can we solve

antisocial behaviour by giving it a 1800 number to report to? What a bunch of fools. Do the calls to that number become another means of gathering statistics to support your contention that you are doing something to deliver results to Territorians? I suspect so. It would not surprise me if you think that, as your whole policing strategy is now focused on statistics, which you manipulate to make yourselves look good.

Tell the truth - you have absolutely no idea how to address antisocial behaviour, which is a major scourge on our society. You fail Territorians every day of the week with your weak and shallow responses on this issue. A 1800 number - you are a joke. I thought we already had 131444. Why would we need another number to report antisocial behaviour?

The member for Araluen said it before, and I reiterate her comments in the context of Katherine: the member for Nelson does not speak for the Katherine constituency. In making an agreement of the nature he has with this government, the member for Nelson has sold out virtually everyone south of greater Darwin. His agreement provides for no real outcomes for Katherine, or the bush.

In this, he has made a grave mistake. Already we have received feedback from people of the Territory, including those within the legal fraternity, that this arrangement is a joke. This arrangement between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister will prove, I am sure, in a very short space of time, to be nothing short of untenable. But this is not a lost opportunity for the Country Liberals; nothing could be further from the truth - it is, in fact, a lost opportunity for Territorians; it was a lost opportunity for the member for Nelson to do the right thing by Territorians.

He spoke of having the least impact on stability of government and business confidence and a number of other things. His decision to back the Chief Minister is nothing short of a bandaid on a wound that requires amputation. His decision today is short-sighted; what we need now is a change before this government has the chance to cause any further damage to the Northern Territory. Short-term pain for long-term gain is an expression I use regularly, and I use it today. Short-term pain is an election called as a result of the passing of this motion; the long-term gain is the stability that would come from the results of that election, whichever way the vote swung.

I respect his right to make the decision he has, however, I implore the member for Nelson to reconsider his position; and I would like to extend that to all members opposite. You have heard what the member for Macdonnell has said in this House this afternoon. I believe, as do most

Territorians, that she speaks the truth. The strange thing is, all of you on the other side also know the truth and veracity of what the member for Macdonnell has had to say, yet you sit there and defend your government's position not to advance the true welfare of Territorians, but save your own political skin.

If you have a shred of decency you will depart from the spin which has become the hallmark of your government and do the right thing by the Territory and support this motion. You have an opportunity. You would be respected for the courage you would show.

I will go one step further. I call on the Chief Minister to depart from the spin; I call on the Chief Minister to finally show some honesty and integrity. Go to the Administrator and tell him you have a dysfunctional government and you can no longer provide good government for the Territory. Put the people of the Northern Territory ahead of your own desperate need to hold onto power, for that, at the moment, is all you have.

As my colleagues have said, over the past 12 months Territorians have paid the price of Paul Henderson's failed approach and divided government ...

Mr ELFERINK: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move an extension of time for the member to complete his remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Labor has had the chance to change, but they cannot, and they will not. A vote for Labor is a vote for a government which failed to deliver and has no plans for the Territory; the sad thing is when they do deliver outcomes for the Territory, it is late and over budget. Labor cannot manage the budget, and now the tough times are here, they are in trouble. They are a paralysed and dysfunctional government.

The member for Nelson had a chance to back real change. The member for Nelson had a chance to give the Territory a new direction and get things moving again. Despite saying otherwise, he has now moved into the Labor Party and has backed more of the same, which is a pity. After eight years, Paul Henderson has had his chance, he does not deserve further opportunity.

Ms McCARTHY (Children and Families): Madam Deputy Speaker, I speak against this motion of no confidence in the Henderson Labor government. I acknowledge the Larrakia people

on whose land we come to debate this very significant ...

Mr Elferink: Then why did you take them to court and deny them their natural justice at Nguuu? That is outrageous.

Ms McCARTHY: On behalf of the people of Arnhem, I ...

Mr Elferink: You took them to the High Court to deprive them of native title.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause, minister. Order, member for Port Darwin, thank you!

Ms McCARTHY: It is an honour to represent the people of Arnhem Land. In preparing for today, it has given many members – certainly on this side of parliament – an opportunity to reflect and have a good look at what we have achieved and what we, the Northern Territory Labor government, want to achieve. It has been an incredibly difficult time.

One thing I would like to place on the *Parliamentary Record* is a thought for members to consider: what if today, 14 August 2009, was more than just a story in regard to a no confidence motion against a Northern Territory government? When you look at what has happened over the past 10 days - indeed, over the past couple of months – with the coverage of the issues in the media by the journalists, the commentary, and how this has been covered; in my own professional experience as a former journalist for 16 years, I want to put another perspective on the parliamentary floor for members to consider. What if today is about the Westminster system and how the first people of this country are trying, have tried, and will continue to try, to work within a Westminster parliamentary, democratic system which is, in many regards, immovable, institutionalised, and set by centuries of tradition? What if the real story here is about how politicians who happen to be Indigenous bring to this parliament their cultural beliefs, their cultural differences, and their cultural values? What if the real story here is not about how we, as parliamentarians, treat each other and our differences, but how the wider Northern Territory community treats us?

What if the real story here is actually about our country, Australia, and the many members of parliament and the many members of the Australian Labor Party who, for 100 years, have tried to battle for the battlers, and stand for the disadvantaged and the most vulnerable Australians? What if today the real story is about this parliament acknowledging and respecting when a member who stands before you is

Indigenous; they can think for themselves. They bring with them their own cultural background, their language, their culture, and they do not necessarily have to agree with each other. What if the real story here is about how we accept and respect those differences?

It is a great honour to be a member of this parliament and, in my four years in this parliament, to work beside the members for Macdonnell, Arafura, and Stuart, the previous members for Barkly, and Millner - all members who are Indigenous. Let us have a look at the article that caused some concern.

As a former journalist, one of the things I would like to ask of all media is to remember the incredible responsibility you have in the way you report, in the way you question, in the way you direct your stories. As members, we each represent not only our constituents - whether they be Aboriginal or otherwise. We bring our backgrounds with us but, when we stand in this parliament we are each capable of making our own decisions, of arguing, agreeing, disagreeing, like any other member of parliament. Do not put us together because of the colour of our skin and expect we will solve all Indigenous problems. Do not expect we will always sit together and agree - because we will not. Just as this country had hundreds of Indigenous nations prior to white settlement, and still has those Indigenous nations and clans right across this country, there will forever be agreement and disagreement.

What is the one thing we should remember as we stand as representatives in the democracy of our country? The one thing we need to carry and never forget is the respect we must hold for each other; the respect for our differences, acknowledging our strengths and our weaknesses, knowing we may not perhaps fully understand what the other member, or our own colleague, may be saying. Do not let our limitations as human beings give up on what, I believe, is the true democratic nature of this parliament. Do not let our own limitations blind us to what hope there is. Do not let our own limitations ignore the achievements that have been made. Do not let our own limitations squander what good future there is for the young people of the Northern Territory.

Closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and ensuring Indigenous Territorians, especially those living in the bush, have every life opportunity they want for their families, is one of the greatest challenges for our government. We acknowledge we are not perfect and we have stumbled, but we acknowledge that we stand strong together, because it is only when we do this that we can move forward together.

I have had my own struggles within this parliament and I appreciate deeply the words of the member for Macdonnell. I recall the many struggles, not only as the member for Arnhem, but also as a member of the Australian Labor Party, wanting to bring within this system a better understanding of my own culture. Up there all my family sat, in every row. They came to this parliament and they sat outside, and they sang the *gudjiga* - the story, the map - the very real story which is passed on for generations and generations about the mighty McArthur River. I spoke about the importance of that *gudjiga* to my parliamentary colleagues. It was hard for them to understand, but I had to persevere, because I truly believed my colleagues would, one day, understand.

When I saw my brother before he died, one of the last things he said to me was: 'My sister, why are their hearts in there so hard; why are their hearts in that parliament, that system of law, so hard?' This is the struggle that hits at the heart of many Aboriginal people who come within the Westminster system in this country. How each of us chooses to walk through that, teach others around us, and share that knowledge, is an individual choice.

My choice was to continue, to persevere. Even after the death of my brother, and then the death of my mother, I persevered. I did not ask anyone to come with me; I did not tell anyone to do that. That is each person's own journey. My heart goes to my *gudjiga*; to the member for Macdonnell, whom I greatly respect. We said to each other that day she left: 'This is my journey with the Australian Labor Party. I am neither ashamed nor afraid of standing strong for a party I believe, though not perfect, will endure and persevere for the good of all the people of the Northern Territory'.

I need to have a look at my role as a minister. The Henderson government is committed to the care and protection of our children. We have launched a range of initiatives aimed at improving the safety of our children. Amongst other things we have introduced the Territory's first Child Abuse Task Force, engaged the Territory's first Children's Commissioner, put in place sexual assault referral centres, and committed significant funds toward the development of the Territory's first secure care facilities for young people in Darwin and Alice Springs. Eight years ago, we could not even talk about domestic violence; would not talk about domestic violence. Now, today, we have the Henderson Labor government which has committed \$15m for the next three years and made it mandatory to report domestic violence. It is a very real change in the day-to-day lives of many of our people on our communities, in our towns, and the city of Darwin.

It is not the only thing, but it is going to go a long way to making a difference for the children of today. Let their problems be something different - something else, but not violence. I am absolutely committed, as the Minister for Children and Families, to follow through on what I see as a very real, genuine belief in changing a system and a structure that has forever suffocated many of our young people.

The child protection plans are working towards the establishment of an Aboriginal-specific organisation focused on child protection. As part of this plan, I visited the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care agency, VACCA, which does this work in Victoria with great results. We will continue the expansion of services already making a real impact, including the Child Abuse Task Force, the Sexual Assault Referral Centre and the Remote Aboriginal and Community Workers Program. We do not hear too much about those Aboriginal community workers, but we certainly will be hearing more about them in the coming months.

Providing support services to children leaving foster care is likely to include supporting them in rental accommodation, study or career paths. Because a child in foster care turns 18 does not mean they no longer require assistance. This government is committed to providing the necessary supports for children exiting foster care, attracting more Aboriginal foster carers and recognising the work of kinship carers, and retaining and attracting more child protection staff and establishing the secure care facilities.

On my recent visit to Groote Eylandt, I had an opportunity to look at SIHIP's progress. The community is Umbakumba; six houses have their foundations about to be laid, or the cement poured. Is that the same thing? Perhaps not, but there is pouring of cement ...

Mr Vatskalis: Foundations.

Ms McCARTHY: Foundations, thank you. Richard Bara is a local person working on the plumbing; Roelson Mamarika on construction; Bernard Mamarika on construction; Jason Mamarika on construction; Titus Mamarika on construction; Constantine Mamarika on construction; Elston Mamarika on construction; Daniel Bara, plant operator; Andrew Balawurrla, carpenter; and Kieran Jaragba, carpenter. In Angurugu, the construction workers are Clive Lalara, Leon Murrungun, Deon Mamarika, Gregory Mamarika, John Maminyamanja.

It is a start - it is a very real start. Yes, the process must be monitored. Yes, the money must be monitored. Yes, we will be monitoring that very closely. These people are very real people, and they are there ready to begin.

Let us have a look at some of the areas our government is focused on. In my short week in the role of Indigenous Policy minister I have had an opportunity to get briefings, initial briefings about the work being carried out. I take this opportunity to thank the member for Macdonnell because it is a wonderful concept, *A Working Future* policy of the Labor government. A tremendous amount is being done between the Territory and federal governments ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! I move an extension of time for the minister for complete her remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Ms McCARTHY: A tremendous amount of work is being done, and I sincerely thank the member for Macdonnell for her leadership in this area. I look forward to working with her continuously to see a better way of life for Indigenous people in our regions.

The relationship between the Territory and federal governments over *A Working Future* policy is integral to a change right across our regions, as we have seen with the local government reforms. As difficult as those reforms were, they were so very necessary. They are just over a year old, and we know there is more work to be done. Again, it has taken this government to have the courage to show a new direction for the people of our regions.

I point out the success of the Kenbi land claim, the work and the relationship with the land councils, in particular; the continuing work over Blue Mud Bay; the Northern Territory implementation plan for the remote service delivery of the National Partnership Agreement; *Closing the Gap* in the NT National Partnership Agreement; *A Working Future*; the town of Elliott native title claim consent determination, and the whole-of-government approach to leasing of Aboriginal land to underpin government infrastructure. We are growing the Territory within our Territory growth towns. We have worked, and will continue to work, very closely with the federal government.

Before I close, I would like to highlight something in my constituency regarding the importance of secondary education. We need to give the young people in our regions hope. I firmly believe the Henderson Labor government is the government to do that. Kids are looking forward to lives and careers in the mainstream with all the attendant benefits of pride, self-esteem, good salary, and life opportunity. Young people like Gina Wanybarrnga, who is planning a career in health; Kylie Gaykamangu,

planning to attend university; and Rudolph Wurragwagwa, the first Year 12 graduate to complete studies at Numbulwar Community Education Centre - real people, real results.

Mr CHANDLER (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I support the no confidence motion in the Henderson government. I would dearly love to stand here today and spare Territorians the grief that their government – the Henderson Labor government - has failed them on so many levels. Sadly, I cannot do this as the reality is Territorians see, every single day, the failures of this government. The Henderson Labor government has failed you.

Listening to the Chief Minister's rhetoric earlier, I was amazed he criticised the Leader of the Opposition for not having a plan, and went to do nothing more than promote his own government's failed policies, standing on their performance to date. Where was his plan? Surely he was not going to stand here on his own platform of a failed delivery schedule? What arrogance. And they will change? Not on your Nellie. Just when I thought the Chief Minister was going to come out of the box fighting, after hearing an honest and passionate speech by the opposition leader, the Chief Minister's speech was underwhelming at best; the speech was uninspiring, and it has made me even more intent on moving change here in the Northern Territory.

The Chief Minister, rather than stand up as a leader, appeared to be pleading for a second chance, trying to articulate that he would now listen. How many chances does this Chief Minister deserve? His uninspiring pep talk demonstrated a tired and dysfunctional government, demonstrated sheer arrogance, perhaps because he already had the numbers. Perhaps he had already sold out his own Cabinet to secure his position, with the help of the member for Nelson.

Now it is clearly apparent the Independent member for Nelson has sided with the Henderson administration, I question the need to continue with any debate at all. Do we not all know the outcome? Why is each of us debating and prosecuting the case? Why are we wasting this House's time, where the government gets to grandstand on their performance; gloat, if you like, and request extensions so we can hear another version of the long-winded ministerial statements we are forced to endure during sittings each and every time. Why are we here if the outcome has been predetermined? This House has already lost three business days this week, all because this government did not want to face scrutiny.

Let us not pretend for one moment it was for any other reason; pretend it was for the dignity of

this House. It was for one reason, and one reason only, to hide from the truth, to keep the truth from Territorians. Why are we here if the outcome has been predetermined in some backroom deal? I will tell you why. Because while this House rested this week instead of offering Territorians the chance to see their government scrutinised in an open and accountable way, their leader was negotiating a backroom deal, promising the world in order to get support from the member for Nelson.

I hope it was not lost in any of today's debate that the member for Nelson's agreement with the Chief Minister was a lifeline. Do we all understand how this deal affects the Labor Cabinet? Do we understand the Chief Minister has pulled off perhaps the most significant coup I have ever seen? By a sleight of hand and the insertion of a line, the Chief Minister, through support of the member for Nelson, has secured his own future. He has, in one smooth move, crippled any leadership challenges from within his own Cabinet. My question is: whose interest was the Chief Minister looking out for when he signed up to this agreement – Territorians, or his own? This does not look like the act of someone who has the best interests of Territorians at heart. It is another example of the inner focus he and his government has on himself. The focus this Chief Minister has is all about self-protection, self-interest, and a spin machine so powerful it has completely sucked in the member for Nelson.

What we have heard here today is no different from what we hear every day and from what Territorians see in glossy brochures - words, well crafted and styled, but words, nothing else but words; and it is the same every month.

I am amazed at the agreement made between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister on more than one level. Amazed at the concessions, the issues, the projects, all but signed off on agreement between both parties; amazed that, in under a week, so many issues, so many projects, and even long-standing Labor policy changes have been agreed to. What a meeting this must have been. I half expected to hear they had solved world peace while they were at it, given the number of issues and policies and projects involved.

Unless I have been completely wrong about the Independent member for Nelson in all the years I have known him, I cannot believe he has fallen for this. I cannot believe, having been witness to this government's track record, witnessed policy failure after policy failure, witnessed the horrendous track record of service delivery and budget blowouts, witnessed the absolute neglect of anything south of the Berrimah line, including his own electorate; and, most

importantly, witness to a government falling apart, a government in which the majority of the general public today has lost confidence.

I cannot believe he has fallen for the word of a failed Chief Minister and a failed administration. The tragedy in all this is the stark reality the member for Nelson is a party to all these failings. By supporting a failed and dysfunctional administration, a failed Chief Minister, a dead man walking, he has now become entrenched in their web, which has been described here today in detail for all Territorians to see, of deceit and a culture of power at all costs.

How can any fair minded person seriously have any confidence in the Henderson administration? An administration falling apart at the seams of spin, an administration headed by a person already labelled politically as a dead man walking by yet another minister who has the courage to leave the inner sanctum because she has had enough; enough of the self-serving and self-interest mentality, the endless focus on spin and very little substance. For any minister to walk out on an institution like the Labor Party is not only courageous, but clearly demonstrates to Territorians that not all is well within the hallowed halls of that institution.

That fact alone should have alarm bells ringing right across the Northern Territory. How can any fair minded person have confidence in an administration that has failed on so many fronts, an administration which was sent a clear message at last year's election, a message the Chief Minister said he had heard loud and clear. The performance of this government over the last 12 months clearly demonstrates to everyone he and his Cabinet have not listened; it has become blatantly clear they continue to focus on themselves instead of Territorians. How can a fair minded person have confidence in an administration that has failed on law and order issues, health, dental, ambulance services, education and school funding, public housing is a disgrace, and the impact they have created through their cleverly crafted policies which have led to a high cost of living facing Northern Territorians.

The cost of land, the cost of houses, houses the average wage earner has no hope of meeting in this current market. With signs interest rates will rise again, what hope do we have of attracting young families to the Territory after yet another failed Labor policy? What hope do we have in keeping long-term Territorians from leaving for interstate due to the cost of living under a Henderson government? A government that has failed to maintain even the most basic services like our road infrastructure; drive on many of our roads today and you will find dangerous edges,

broken seals and general road decay. Why? Because of little or no maintenance.

Then, of course, we have Power and Water and their run-to-fail mentality. Let us wait until the mums and dads start to receive their next power and water bills, due out soon, which will include new, higher charges because this government needs to raise money to cover for their failure to adequately maintain infrastructure. Where is the planning for our future? What are our goals? Where is the vision where dreams can materialise? Where has common sense gone?

We are here today because 13 members of this Assembly felt strongly enough to give notice of a no confidence motion in this government - 13 members of a 25-member Assembly. If the majority of members felt so strongly about this issue, so strongly about having no confidence in this government, I find it remarkable that a vote can go any other way but to lower the mast on this administration. I find it remarkable to consider the position of any one of the 13 members can change from taking such a courageous, perhaps unprecedented position, and be manipulated into a position of trust in under a week. That is a smooth move. We know this has occurred and, therefore, today's proceedings have all been predetermined outside this House through manipulation, promises and, I might say - more spin than a roulette wheel. I want to know what the cost will be, and what is the penalty all Territorians will end up paying?

The reality is democracy does cost us, but the cost should only be the cost of allowing Territorians to have their say. Today, Territorians have been short changed and denied this opportunity. In my opinion, this government has lost its way, has no fresh ideas, and certainly has not delivered results, unlike what their slogans say in their glossy brochures. It is my opinion we are now bearing the fruit of an out of control spin machine. Territorians can only be fooled for so long. There is only so much time one can continue to pull the wool over our eyes, there is only so much time before cracks appear in a building where there is no solid foundation. There is only so much time before the average person runs out of patience and demands to see where their money is going, what it is being used for and starts to question and scrutinise the very people they trusted with the important responsibility of managing their interests.

What the Henderson government has delivered, however, is an endless supply of political spin, clouds of cleverly crafted spin, vortexes of spin, and all emanating from the fifth floor and solidly backed up by some of our local media.

I sincerely hope the decision here reflects the wishes of the community today, not last year, but today. Let me tell you, there is a move out there and that move is because of current events. Quite frankly, people have had enough - had enough of the spin, smoke and mirrors, and the endless promises. I truly hope the decision made by a long-standing Independent member here today has not been interfered with by a very dangerous and self indulgent machine.

We know that machine is the Henderson Labor government. It has demonstrated time and time again it will use whatever tactics are necessary to remain in power; to influence a decision and ultimately be returned to power through empty promises. The member for Nelson just does not understand; he just does not get it. They should not be trusted, they cannot be trusted. If this is the case, I truly do not understand the decision; the decision is wrong, it is wrong because this administration has demonstrated time and time again it does not deliver on its promises, instead it moves the goal posts, or hides the facts through even more spin.

I sincerely hope the member has not been seduced by this wicked web of deception and made a deal with the devil that will cost Territorians dearly, all Territorians, black and white.

I had the opportunity to speak with an Indigenous elder recently and he was quite frank in saying he hated the previous CLP government, but you knew where you stood with them; you never expected anything out of them because they were the enemy. In 2001, when the Labor government was voted into power he, and many Indigenous people, thought all their prayers had been answered.

Aboriginal people have been let down by this government, and the elder told me so. He said the worst thing about all this is when the CLP government was in power and he did not trust them, he thought at least you knew where they were coming from; but when your friends are in power and you cannot trust your friends, we have some real concerns. Aboriginal people have been let down by this government, their lives ruled by a welfare driven mentality fully supported by the Henderson government where Indigenous people are not offered a future.

This would change under a Mills' Country Liberal government, and this is an issue which has to be addressed. I continue to see the results of this administration every single day as people visit my office with details of serious oversights and fundamental failures in delivering services to our community. This administration has lost touch with our community, lost touch with some of the

most important and fundamental issues faced by our community. So where is their focus? I have already said it - it is on themselves.

Is the real reason this government, the Henderson government, will do whatever it takes to hold onto power because they are broke? Have they syphoned off money from one program to pay for another? Is this the real reason? Is this government so frightened of this side of the House, that all Territorians will uncover the reality of the Territory's financial position that they will all but promise heaven and earth to hold onto power? Conversely, a Country Liberal government lead by Terry Mills can and will, not only provide a plan of action, but provide key direction and a real plan which has a real vision for the Northern Territory.

Despite this government spending almost double on health care than the national average, and having more beds per 1000 population, Territorians are being forced to wait longer and longer for elective surgery. Lack of beds is the most common problem with elective surgery waiting lists, and RDH and the Alice Springs Hospital both operate at over 100% capacity.

What is needed is a plan, and the Country Liberals have a plan: the solution, a new 130-bed hospital at Palmerston which will deliver more beds, in the first instance, and additional surgical facilities on its completion. More than any other issue, Palmerston residents have been pleading for is better medical facilities, and a hospital will deliver this.

There has been an epic failure in education. Attendance has been blamed as a contributing factor for the abysmal 2008 NAPLAN testing. The recent Ladwig and Sarra report identified the current measuring of attendance is insufficient as it only measures the school's average attendance, and not the daily individual student attendances.

Immediately prior to becoming Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, who was the minister for Education on 22 October 2007, announced a campaign to boost school attendance at Sadadeen Primary School. Since the launch of that campaign, attendance at that school has dropped by 6%, from 86% to 80%. The Chief Minister, with the then Education minister, Marion Scrymgour, announced on 2 February 2009 that teachers and principals would be held accountable for improving the performance of every child in their classrooms. This included setting a target for all school of 90% for attendance rates. This was further qualified in the NTG Smart Territory Strategic Plan to 80% in remote and very remote schools, and 90% in provisional schools. When a policy fails, it would appear this government just lowers the bar.

A Country Liberals government has a solution. There are provisions in the *Education Act* in relation to truancy and non-attendance, as well as other DET internal policy, which are not being enforced. The Country Liberals will establish an office of truancy which schools, business owners, and the public can contact if they are confronted with school-age children running amok in school hours. An SMS notification system will be implemented, and all schools within mobile phone coverage will notify parents of their children's non-attendance. If a school does not receive sufficient response from parents whose children are repeatedly absent, then truancy officers will be called in and the *Education Act* enforced. A Country Liberals government will investigate more robust reporting guidelines, as recommended by Ladwig and Sarra, to ensure the majority of students attend school more regularly. The Country Liberals will encourage and support business in implementing their 'no school, no shop' policy across the Northern Territory.

As a result of this government's failed education policies, Territory students returned the worst results for reading, writing and numeracy in the 2008 NAPLAN testing. The Northern Territory also recorded the least reliable statistics, with most having an error margin of over 6%. This compares to other jurisdictions' recorded error levels of only 1% to 3%. A Country Liberals government would provide a range of support measures for teachers - we have the solutions - students and parents would be supported. From the very first year of schooling, students will be screened for audio and visual impediments which can be the catalyst for disruptive behaviour in the classroom, and parents and teachers will be supported in the management and treatment of these conditions if they are identified.

More specialist teachers will be recruited as librarians and PT teachers to free classroom teachers up to concentrate on teaching their students the academic basics. A Country Liberals government will examine ways to provide more in classroom ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr CHANDLER: A Country Liberals government will examine ways to provide more classroom support staff and ways to secure their tender, so the students who are most in need of extra support can consistently access it throughout the year.

Let us look at violence in our schools. During the 2009 Estimates Committee, the Chief Minister stated, to date, there were 648 suspensions across the Territory, with 195 being for assaults against staff and physical or verbal assaults against other students; and 453 for dangerous substances, disobedience, etcetera. The Country Liberals again have a solution. We have announced we will look at introducing a last-chance school for students who demonstrate continuous and high levels of violent and destructive behaviour towards staff and other students.

I also hope the Independent member's decision today has not been influenced by the fact some of the members on this side of the House are only entering their second year in parliament. If so, that dimensions the backgrounds, the corporate knowledge and experience, not to mention life skills that new members can bring to this House. In fact, I put it to you that new members offer both the energy and drive necessary to ensure good governance, unlike a tired, self-serving administration.

I stand by the notion that our new members still remember why we made the commitment to our community to enter the political arena in the first place. I hope this fact is not lost on the decision being made here today.

As my colleague said, over the past 12 months Territorians have paid the price of Paul Henderson's failed approach and divided government. Labor has had their chance to change, but they cannot, and they will not. A vote for Labor is a vote for a government that failed to deliver, and does not have the plans for the Territory. The sad thing is, when they do deliver outcomes to the Territory, it is late and over budget. Labor cannot manage the budget now the tough times are here. They are certainly in trouble.

This Labor administration is paralysed and it is dysfunctional. We have evidence of that over the last 12 months, in particular, with ministers walking out, and starting to give people a real insight to the inner workings of this Labor administration. The member for Nelson did have a chance to bring back real change. The member for Nelson had a chance to give the Territory a new direction and get things moving again. It is a pity he is unlikely to support this side of the House, or go to an election because, after eight years, Paul Henderson has had his go.

Madam Speaker, are the Country Liberals ready to govern? Damn right we are.

Mr HAMPTON (Regional Development): Madam Speaker, I am proud to today be counted

as a member of the Henderson Labor government and of the Australian Labor Party. I am also proud of this government's achievements, and I am committed to delivering the plans and policies I was elected to do 12 months ago by the people of Stuart.

As the Minister for Regional Development, my mission has been to ensure all Territorians have a stake in our economy. To my mind, this is crucial for all our futures and, particularly, to give our children hope. I would like to repeat something I said in my first speech to this House in October 2006:

There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society, with a large segment of people in that society, who feel they have no stake in it; who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society, protect that society, but when they don't have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.

Those were the words of Dr Martin Luther King.

A *Working Future* policy aims to ensure Territorians living in remote areas have a stake in society by encouraging real towns, real jobs, and real opportunities. We have identified 20 of our largest remote communities, the towns are: Wadeye, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Angurugu/Umbakumba, Borroloola, Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak, Yirkala, Lajamanu, Daguragu/Kalkarindji, Elliott, Ali Curung, Yuendumu, Papunya, and Hermannsburg. These are our Territory growth towns. This is where we are targeting our resources with a focus on employment and economic development.

Seven of these growth towns: Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Ramingining, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak and Yirkala are on the route of the 800 km long fibre-optic cable we have laid across Arnhem Land in partnership with Telstra, Rio Tinto Alcan and the Northern Land Council over the past 12 months, providing these towns with access to high speed broadband which results in better communications and service delivery across a range of areas, including health and education. Also, the business applications are limitless.

Regional development is about equality of opportunity, it is about a decent future for our kids and, as I have said before, it is about jobs. Under the Indigenous Business Development Program, we have assisted in the creation of 100 businesses and 170 jobs. The establishment of the Tennant Creek Foundation to manage the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre at Battery

Hill Mining Centre is about providing Indigenous employment and economic development opportunities in the Barkly.

We listened to the people of the regions through the nine economic development committees in Alice Springs, the West MacDonnells, Anmatjere, Tennant Creek, the Gulf, Katherine, Timber Creek, the Tiwi Islands and East Arnhem. We have completed the Economic Profiles of Alice Springs and Katherine, while the Tennant Creek, and the Barkly Economic Profile is due to be released next month. Meanwhile, the Economic Development Committees are working on projects identified in the completed profiles, and it is clear there is much more work to be done in our regions.

We are also developing plans for growth for Katherine, Tennant Creek and Ti Tree. We are working with each Territory growth town to provide them with an economic development plan to map out their economic future.

We are also developing a new Indigenous economic development strategy, which aims to create 3000 jobs in the next three years. Only last week I went to Pine Hill, in my electorate of Stuart, and joined the Anmatyerr traditional owners to celebrate the Federal Court consent determination of native title in the Pine Hill native title claim. The Territory government agreed to settle this native title claim by entering into an Indigenous land use agreement and consent determination. This will lead to horticulture developments over part of the claimed land.

Budget 2009-10 also commits \$3.5m towards completing access from the Stuart Highway to the Pine Hill Horticulture District along with Centrefarm Aboriginal Corporation to develop the area and provide jobs for local Indigenous traditional owners. It really does show what can be done when people work together to negotiate and not go through the court process.

For the past year, I have been the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and the Labor government's record this year is impressive. We brought test match cricket and AFL premiership matches to the Territory. We are also backing the Territory Thunder team as they take on the Queenslanders. A good thing about the Territory Thunder is their policy to ensure each player has a job, and I am proud to say they have a 100% strike rate there.

We have built Larrakeyah Park, the home of Territory soccer - something the opposition did not deliver. Just around the corner we built the new home of Territory netball - 10 new courts and an administration building. We have invested more than \$75m into our sporting facilities.

In Palmerston we built the Recreation Centre, and work is under way on the sporting complex and water park. In Alice Springs we have invested heavily in Traeger Park, Ross Park, the Aquatic Centre and the drag strip. In Tennant Creek we have invested more than \$1.5m in Purkiss Park; while Katherine has received more than \$1.25m for various facilities over the past 12 months.

Behind the scenes we work hard to support all levels of sport, from the NTISF leagues at the elite level, and all the way down to the grassroots level. We provide funding for a wide range of peak sporting and recreational organisations from shooting to swimming; from motor sports to horse riding; from the Red Cross to the YMCA; from the Scouts to the Guides, and to Life Be in It. Over 50 organisations get our support.

We are also in the process of developing our first ever Sport and Active Recreation Policy, following extensive public consultations. One of the greatest threats to our health and lifestyle in this modern age is physical inactivity. As a government we are committed to promoting involvement in sport and active recreation. The health benefits are obvious, but there are also the social, economic and educational benefits. Another great program this government has delivered is the Clontarf Football Academy, which is getting real results for real Territorians. The aims of the Sport and Active Recreation Policy have been clearly spelt out - a foundation for future planning, a framework for identifying priorities, and a solid base for decision making.

Turning to Central Australia, I am proud to say I was born and raised in Alice Springs and I continue to live and raise my family there. As Minister for Central Australia, I listen to all the views and opinions of my fellow Centralians, and I ensure their voice is heard at the Cabinet table, and in government. As I always say: 'My door is always open' and if I am not in my office or in my electorate, I seem to be bumping into the member for Braitling down the street, or the member for Araluen at Woolworths, or the member for Greatorex at the airport.

My priority as Minister for Central Australia has been to get on with the job. I am proud that we have delivered the Alice Springs Youth Action Plan to support children and families, and to deal with antisocial behaviour.

I am proud we have delivered the Alice Springs Police Beat, and boosted police numbers to record levels. I am also proud we have delivered residential land releases in Alice Springs through respectful negotiations with the native titleholders. We are in the process of establishing the Centralian Middle School, uniting Gillen and

ANZAC campuses. And we have launched the No School No Service code of conduct to improve school attendance, an initiative that has been welcomed by local business.

We are also upgrading the Alice Springs Police Station, and we have allocated \$5m for the revitalisation of the Alice Springs CBD. At the top of our agenda is the transformation plan for the town camps, something I am committed to delivering with this government.

I have been the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, including Parks and Wildlife, for less than a fortnight, so I will not be claiming any credit. However, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the member for Macdonnell and her work during her time as the minister. I have had a lot of great feedback from people in those areas for the great work she has done, and I congratulate her on the past 12 months.

The environment is everyone's business, and we believe the community's voice should continue to be heard, that is why we provide operational support to non-government environmental groups; that is why we established the Territory's first Environmental Protection Authority, independent and legislated. I know not everyone agrees with the model we have chosen, but anyone who reads the EPA's paper on environmental impact assessment will see it is making a valuable contribution and is certainly not doing the government's bidding. None of this existed before Labor came to office in the Northern Territory in 2001.

A large part of our approach to the environment is backing those people in the community who are doing their bit, whether it is pulling out weeds, picking up rubbish, or managing fires. We established the Environment NT Grants Scheme in 2004 to help these people get on with their job; it is fair and open to everyone. We have provided more than \$2m to schools, environmental organisations and community groups through these grants. We have also provided funding to Cool Mob and Frog Watch - over \$1m in total.

Yesterday, I announced the 2009 Environment NT Grants, and a further \$700 000 in grants going to worthy organisations as diverse as Keep Australia Beautiful and Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation. Tomorrow, I will be back at work delivering on our commitments such as the Arafura to Alice Eco-Links, the world's first transcontinental conservation effort; the joint management of 27 parks and reserves directly assisting more than 30 Indigenous ranger groups across the Northern Territory; our development of a comprehensive

biodiversity strategy, and a marine protected area strategy and a parks development plan. Our parks are a great part of our Territory lifestyle. They also support tourism and provide regional development opportunities. We are committed to expanding and improving these parks.

Meanwhile, our plans to improve crocodile management are well advanced and will better balance conservation, public safety and industry development.

In the first legislation of its type in Australia for over 30 years, our plan for cash for containers will get litter off the streets, improve recycling and put money in the pockets of kids and community groups.

This week we have seen climate change dominate the agenda in Canberra and, as a nation, our carbon emissions must come down and we need to make some tough decisions. Here in the Territory, the government has supported really innovative programs like the West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project. We are also seeing the delivery of jobs on country by reducing greenhouse emissions. It is also clear that land clearing for development must be carefully managed, and there is no room in the future for the massive clearing from horizon to horizon which was allowed in the Daly; new land clearing guidelines are being finalised and we are developing new land clearing laws to cover all land tenures. Clearing rates are coming down, but we cannot be complacent.

Madam Speaker, in my maiden speech to this House, I spoke of looking forward to the challenge of working as a member of the government team. It certainly is a challenge, not only working in the government but also as a member of a team - it is just like being a member of a family in some ways. I am extremely proud to be a member of this Labor government and the Labor Party family. I have 100% confidence in this Labor government, and certainly have faith in our Chief Minister. He has my total support; however, this motion does not.

Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I support this motion. If I had any reservations at the outset as to whether I supported this motion or not, since listening to this debate and hearing it progress, those reservations have disappeared in the way that an aspirin would disappear in a bucket of acid.

This whole motion of want of confidence in this Chief Minister and his government is about the capacity to show judgment. I listened very carefully to the words of the Leader of the Opposition as he described a litany of decisions which reflected extremely poor judgment - such

poor judgment that we have had a 'revolving door' policy of ALP members as this government has limped along, particularly since the last election. Even prior to the last election, we saw the cracks appearing with the departure of the former member for Barkly, whose disgust at the way this government conducted itself left him so bereft of faith that he could not bring himself to come back and join this government after the last election.

Since that time, we have seen the member for Arafura leave the Labor Party in disgust. So desperate was her disgust that she said she would never ever return to the Labor Party - only to have the member for Macdonnell leave the Labor Party a short time later. The only thing that brings the member for Arafura back into the Labor Party is her fear of a return to conservative administration in the Northern Territory. Be that as it may, the presence of the member for Arafura in a party which she described as so bad she could never return to it, only demonstrates the deepening divisions that exist within this party.

This is a matter of judgment, and the member for Stuart's speech, as a minister, is an example of how spin has triumphed over any form of reality. We are told this administration in the Northern Territory is a good and sound administration because they built a water park - according to the member of Stuart. We are told this administration in the Northern Territory is a good and sound administration, simply because they brought test cricket to the Northern Territory. The link between the spin machine and the utterances of these ministers is undeniable. If we walk in here as ministers and talk about test cricket and water parks, no one will notice the fact the government is in disarray and falling apart.

The minister has not even asked himself what is the logic of delivering this speech in parliament. He has just walked in with a speech that has been prepared by the dark forces - as we have heard from the member for Macdonnell - and delivered the speech. It is an almost incomprehensible speech when you think of the motion before this House.

This government is crippled, and the minister said: 'We built a water park'. It is unfathomable. It is small wonder this disconnect between the spin machine and the reality of what happens in the world is starting to percolate into the community. How can you run a defence like that, and claim good governance is based on test cricket and a water park?

The spin machine also does not tell the truth. I heard the member for Arnhem start her speech by acknowledging the Larrakia people on whose land we stand. This minister sits in a government that hounded the Larrakia people all the way to the

High Court of Australia to argue the case and, I might add, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process - to ensure that native title was denied. If the minister is going to come into this place with a shred of integrity and say the Larrakia people should be acknowledged, then she should not sit in a Cabinet which spent hundreds of thousands of taxpayers' dollars denying the very ownership she seeks to acknowledge in this place. That is the spin machine. The truth is the casualty of spin. They actually believe this stuff themselves, and that is the tragedy.

We heard the Treasurer talk about the non-litigious approach of the government to native title, and the non-litigious approach of this government towards Aboriginal people. Did I not see a full-page advert several days running in the *Northern Territory News* reassuring the people of the northern suburbs they would fight all the way to the High Court of this country to claim the Blue Mud Bay case? Did they not spend hundreds of thousands of dollars arguing the decision arrived at in the Blue Mud Bay case was wrong? Did they not lose? But that is another point.

The fact is, they say they are the representatives of Aboriginal people and they negotiate - they do not litigate - when, on every occasion it suits them, they go all the way to the High Court. Then they come into this place dripping in hypocrisy and say: 'I would like to acknowledge the Larrakia people on whose land we stand'. Outrageous. But that is the spin, the dress-ups, that is how we convince Territorians we are such good people, because we just keep saying things over and over again. We buy advertisements to say we are the better people. What people do not realise is parts of Palmerston exist because we did acknowledge the rights of native titleholders, as a former government, even before it was challenged and, as a consequence, real jobs were created, and the Larrakia Development Corporation goes from strength to strength.

This agreement we saw tabled by the member for Nelson today has already been breached. I will quote from the agreement. It says:

Agree to the following ..

Inter alia:

- *Against any no-confidence motion in the Government, except in a proven case of corruption or serious maladministration.*

I heard an ex-minister of the Crown, who was sitting in Cabinet but a few weeks ago, say there are all sorts of sweet deals going on; arrangements are in place so the right people get the consultancies and the jobs. We have a

process of determining who gets consultancies through the procurement process, yet a former minister of the Crown - who was in Cabinet two weeks ago - described arrangements which are directly indicative and, in my opinion - from her lips to this House - proof of maladministration.

A member who was a Cabinet minister a few weeks ago has stood in this place and identified maladministration. On the strength of that alone, this agreement, this arrangement - whatever it is - has already been breached. It has not survived a few hours, and it has already been breached. You consider bringing these types of very serious motions into this House because of incompetence; you believe it is a big thing to tip out a government for incompetence. Now they have gone the extra step - this is no longer an issue of incompetence - this is an issue of ethical conduct.

When you make an arrangement like the one we had delivered here today between the Independent member for Nelson and the Chief Minister, in which the Cabinet is, essentially, sidelined and the processes of the parliament are ignored; it is an arrangement that - if the looks on the faces of some of the members opposite are a guide - has everything wrong with it.

There are also questions about whether it even conforms to the operation of the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act*. I have just had a look at section 33, and I have some problems which will require legal advice. The parliament has not signed up to this, so it is not a committee of the parliament; is it a committee of the Cabinet? I went to the source and asked the source what exactly this committee is. I called the member for Nelson aside and said: 'Mate, what is this thing?' He said: 'I do not really know'. Literally, he said: 'I am not sure yet'.

The Chief Minister, in a deal with the Independent member for Nelson, ignoring the rest of the Labor Party Caucus - who were probably told about this only 10 minutes before they walked into the room - has entered into an arrangement in which Cabinet might be sidelined. All of these decisions, 11 pages of demand - it would not be surprising if they threw in a space program for good measure - have to be ratified by the Independent member for Nelson. If the Independent member for Nelson and the Chief Minister, by his own suggestion, are an open and transparent government, can anyone answer this question for me: why was it no one on this side of the House was advised of this arrangement until this arrangement was dropped on the table in this place? Why was it that none of the members opposite, I suspect, were privy to a deal which put in place an arrangement where the Labor Party could not choose its own leader?

This is exactly what the Independent member for Nelson has railed against all these years. This is a deal, a backroom deal, that hands power to one person - the person who is under the microscope right now. It is a deal designed to hand the power - to the exclusion of even Labor Party members - of the Chief Ministership to one Paul Henderson MLA. That matter is exactly the type of thing the member for Nelson has railed against year in, year out. Today, the Independent member for Nelson became a politician.

This government claims to be a good financial manager. It came into power when the Territory's budget was \$2.2bn per annum. It is now over \$4bn per annum. Yet, in all that time, and with all that extra money they have received, and it is billions - it is \$1.2bn of unexpected, unbudgeted money, plus all the extra GST they expected to get - have they been able to reduce debt? No, they have not. If you take the nett debt situation of the Northern Territory and combine it with the unfunded superannuation liabilities of this jurisdiction, this jurisdiction is in much graver trouble than it was when the budget was a mere \$2.2bn per year.

They claim to be good fiscal managers. No, they are not. Simply returning a surplus on an annual basis is not evidence of good fiscal management; it is evidence of falling into a swimming pool and managing to get wet. They have had more money piled into this jurisdiction than they could possibly imagine - and you can see it in the budget papers. They always get substantially more, year in, year out, than they budgeted for at the beginning of the year. They spent the lot, and racked up debt in the process. Good fiscal managers, my eye.

They are incompetent people who have the good fortune to receive vast amounts of money, and they have managed to spend the lot. It is conceivable they could have eliminated the nett debt of the Northern Territory with the income they received over those years. Where is the passion and the vocation to bring the budget under control in the good times so, when the bad times come they do not need to worry about having to borrow as they do now? This year alone, their budget is already on track, according to their own budget paper, to be \$200m on the wrong side of the ledger, and it will get worse. It was not so long ago - and I am talking a matter of weeks - that the CEs and CEOs of departments were pulled in and told to get their budgets under control.

This is not a competent government. This is a government which has been able to enjoy the largesse of a tax system which they actually objected to and, then, showered themselves in glory, but has not been able to demonstrate any form of fiscal restraint or fiscal responsibility. As a

consequence, we find ourselves desperately scratching around for the pennies now, because we have failed to save effectively for the day we have seen coming for such a long time.

It is not as though they have not been warned. Opposition leaders and other members of parliament have said: 'Save for the rainy day, the rainy day is coming. Save for the rainy day because it will come and you will be unprepared'. And what were they when the global financial crisis happened? They were unprepared.

The other issue I would like to discuss is Essential Services, the other portfolio area I hold. If this was a competent government, surely, when they were told their Essential Services infrastructure was under threat they would have done something. But, no, they kept on taking their dividends out of Power and Water and continued to restrict the repairs and maintenance budget of the Power and Water Corporation - to about \$40m a year, year in, year out. The Minister for Essential Services, after the northern suburbs fell into darkness because the Casuarina Substation exploded, said: 'We are upping the amount to \$50m a year for the next five years or thereabouts'. And he was genuinely surprised when I said: 'You are actually setting yourself up to make the same mistake again because, if you restrict the repairs and maintenance budget to \$50m for the next five years, as you expand the infrastructure you will be pulling that budget broader and longer over a larger piece of infrastructure, and you will end up with the same problems'. He was genuinely surprised when I made that suggestion to him.

In my electorate alone we have seen the devastating stupidity of this government when it comes to planning. For some astonishing reason the minister for Planning has taken it upon herself to amend the 1999 Planning Scheme, which has a tiered system of development over town, so it can be ignored and replaced with a 90 m high CBD, all around the CBD. Some of the effects of this have been: massive public confusion and outrage; if this goes ahead, all blocks in the centre of the CBD will be seriously devalued; blocks on the fringes of the CBD will suddenly go up in price enormously; there will be boundary-to-boundary construction at every opportunity; architecture would be reminiscent of the Soviet era; and people will be affected because those who have already bought, relying on the 1999 plan - that is, those people who have bought into Mantra Pandanas or Evolution buildings and are in debt to cover the costs of buying those apartments - will suddenly have those apartments devalued. Why? Because all of a sudden they can be built out - where the 1999 plan said they could not be. Those people have been deprived of certainty. It is very possible they have used those purchases

to cover off their superannuation, and now may not even have an asset which covers the borrowings; simply because this minister thought: 'Ooh, that would be a good idea'.

It is as if this government believes they operate in some sort of vacuum, and there is no consequence between the decisions they make and what ripples out into the community. A CBD plan has been established for quite some time. Yes, it had some problems with merit - okay, then we will deal with merit - but you do not undermine the whole plan simply because it takes your fancy at the time. What you do when you put these types of things out for discussion, is you cause massive public outrage and upset. I can tell you, because I am one of the outraged, and I am one of the upset.

The other thing that we see after years of promises about all of the ...

Dr BURNS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member for Port Darwin, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ELFERINK: I thank the honourable members for their kindness, particularly the Leader of Government Business.

Madam Speaker, itinerants in my electorate are a major problem. When Labor came to power we arrested, for protective custody, about 11 000 people a year in the Northern Territory. Last year, according to the Police Annual Report, that number had reached 30 000. The government say: Oh, we have more police on the road and we are arresting'. That is their excuse, but the fact is they are sending a lot more grog into the community - that is what is happening, - and we have more drunks on our streets than ever. People are frustrated beyond imagination. We came up with a solution, which was adopted by the Martin government in the 2005 election campaign, of habitual drunks' orders. The moment the government was elected they abandoned habitual drunks' orders and went straight back to just arresting drunks and putting them through the spin driers.

The Country Liberal Party is dedicated to bringing about change through habitual drunk orders as a health intervention, as much as a law and order intervention. The two are inseparable.

The member for Nelson's plan which, according to the member for Nelson is designed to give us stability, will do precisely the opposite. It will destabilise the already fractured Australian Labor Party's Northern Territory Branch even further. It is not just members of parliament who

have been deceived by their own Chief Minister because they were not told about this sweet little deal, it is the true believers who passionately believe in the cause of the Australian Labor Party - people I have always had regard for, not because I agree with their political philosophy, but the underlying desire to do the right thing is there. However, this has gone, as I said before, from mere incompetence to tawdry deals. It has taken an ethical step in a direction even the true believers will find awfully hard to swallow. It is not about the future of the Northern Territory; it is about the Chief Minister trying desperately to grab more power, the drug to which he has become addicted. It is a nasty, horrible drug to which he is addicted, and this motion is an attempt to introduce him to at least a modicum of rehabilitation.

Over the past 12 months, Territorians have paid the price for Paul Henderson's failed approach and divided government. Labor has had its chance to change, but they cannot and they will not. A vote for Labor is a vote for a government which failed to deliver and which does not have any plans for the Northern Territory. The sad thing is, when they do deliver outcomes for the Territory, it is late and it is over budget. Labor cannot manage the budget and, now the tough times are here, they are in trouble. Labor is paralysed and dysfunctional.

The member for Nelson has had a chance to back real change. The member for Nelson had a chance to give the Territory a new direction and get things moving again. Despite saying otherwise, he has now moved into the Labor Party and he has backed more of the same. It is a pity because, after eight years, Paul Henderson has had his go. Oliver Cromwell, in 1653, walked into parliament of England and said:

You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go.

Mr McCARTHY (Transport): Madam Speaker, less than a year ago I stood for the first time in this House and spoke about a young Territorian who inspired me to come to this place; a young Territorian who stood three foot nothing and spoke of his family and inspired me in more ways than one. That is why I stand here today. That young Territorian gave me an insight. Our government and our Chief Minister added the siblings who came before that young Territorian, and the siblings who will come after him, that young Territorian's parents, grandparents and elders alike. It was a holistic view. Therefore, I stand against this motion raised and support our Labor government and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory.

In this House, I learn from everyone, I have taken a great deal of time and effort to learn from everyone. The shadow for Corrections, the member for Araluen - a learned woman - has enlightened me as well, that the new era in Corrections did start in 2001 with the former minister Toyne. The new era in Corrections was when the Botany Bay school of corrections and the turnkey philosophy of corrections were cast away. The new era of corrections, where we do something in education, rehabilitation and training for disadvantaged Territorians, came into being. The Chief Minister, my Caucus colleagues, and the Cabinet have charged me with the responsibility to move it forward.

I can quote here from a speech, member for Port Darwin, many statistics that take us forward. I can also reflect on that journey forward, and the former member for Barkly, Elliot McAdam, who has been mentioned a number of times, and put it on the record that the former member for Barkly nominated me for this position, mentored me to stand for election, supported me in that election, and said to me a number of times: 'You must stand for two terms' minimum. You must strive for excellence, you must strive to support Territorians and stand for two terms'. That was my objective and I have achieved that, and I am standing down after two terms. I am sure members of this House know those things he passed on because he is a man of honour, and that should be remembered.

Let us talk about the new era of Corrections, and what we need to do. Not only do we need innovative, new infrastructure to support our disadvantaged Territorians, but we also need outreach programs, which the Henderson government is designing - not will you, not planning to - but get out there and do it.

Let me tell members on the other side, the wheel of government is big, the biggest wheel I have ever put my shoulder to, and let me link that with the job that has to be done,

I hear 'the fifth floor' and I hear 'spin'. Well, I would like to put it on the floor today: on the fifth floor I work with Territorians who are dedicated to the same philosophy we all are, Territorians I call upon for research and guidance, and who work in our office, not my office. Those Territorians represent our government - people from across the Territory, Indigenous Territorians, non-Indigenous Territorians, people who have lived in the Territory far longer than me, and people who are newcomers to the Territory. I have a person in our office, where I work, who goes way back in Darwin - well before the cyclone - who fought hard to get back here with her new baby after the cyclone. When I need good research on Darwin, as a minister of the Crown, with Darwin as my responsibility, then I

can go to this person. That is not spin, that is history - a real Territorian advising a minister of the Crown. I am proud to put that on the record.

If we take that one step further, we have hard-working public servants whom I have spent a great deal of time encouraging to feel valued for the work they do. The Henderson government, the Caucus and the Cabinet are continually designing policy, and the hard-working public servants put it into practice. I am out there as many times as I can, on the floor, in the offices, in the field, talking to these hard-working public servants who feel proud of what they do, who are proud that a minister comes to talk to them, and are rather offended by the spin that comes from this House, ridiculing them and putting them down. I will take the insults, I will take the names. I have been a teacher for 30 years; I am well versed in dealing with schoolyard bullying and name calling. However, I remind those hard-working Territorians that is not for them.

Transport is in a mess. I have come into Transport after some very competent Transport ministers. I have been there a short time and, in that short time, what can I bring to this debate today? Let me tell you what I can bring to this debate today: new bus services, extended free buses for seniors, students, and carers, extended bus services for special events which act not only for safety, but also to keep people off our roads, so they can enjoy our lifestyle.

Let me talk about safety. Let us talk about transit officers, CCTV, secure taxi ranks, and a government with its shoulder to the wheel driving major reform in the commercial passenger vehicle - and the commercial passenger vehicle industry welcoming that. Let us talk about an industry which wants to move forward in rapidly growing cities like Darwin and Alice Springs, and in the Territory across the board. The Chief Minister, my Caucus and Cabinet colleagues said: 'You have been in the bush a long time, go out there and start to develop a regional transport strategy'. A consultancy has hit the ground, Territorians have been consulted and I am following behind that and if I want advice, I go to Territorians. These things do not just appear; this is work in progress. This is what this government does, and this is why I am standing here with passion today ...

Mr Tollner: In future when you want advice you will have to go to Gerry.

Mr McCARTHY: I can pick up on those interjections, but I would like to stick to the point of why I am supporting our government.

Let me link my new portfolios, the Arts, to 2030. We talk about plans on this floor; this is a

plan for all Territorians. Let us talk about 2030, already identified in my arts and culture, not only community wellbeing, and holistic development of the community, but economic benefit, with great economic returns to the Territory. That is what this government is striving for and driving.

I inherited the portfolio of Senior Territorians. Member for Port Darwin, I have pages of statistics here that demonstrate this government has its shoulder to the wheel for senior Territorians. I have been to two major senior Territorian functions, and also to The Ghan to present a prize to a senior Territorian. I had a senior Territorian tell me she is righter than Maggie Thatcher but, with a tap on the shoulder: 'Get on with your job, lad. Do not let this frustration disturb you. Get on with the job'. I took that advice.

I have been given the portfolio of Young Territorians. Young Territorians are the future, and the Chief Minister has recognised, as have my Caucus and Cabinet colleagues: 'You have a background in this, you understand young minds. Go out there and collate that for good governance'. These portfolios are work in progress with Territorians, and with people in this House as well.

Without touching this wonderful speech I have prepared with people from our office, I will conclude with: I am a God-fearing man, and today I thank God the member for Nelson was called. I thank God the lot fell to the member for Nelson because, after hearing the member participate in this debate, he is a Territorian of substance who has guts, who has withstood enormous pressure, and who will make his decision for the Territory. No spin; he is a man of principle.

Mr GILES (Braitling): Madam Speaker, it is hard to talk to this motion. I found it very difficult to find a point to raise because there are so many failures with government. I was interested to hear the deliberations the member for Nelson has gone through to make the decision he announced earlier today. It is a bit of ransom. It is a little like dragging the Chief Minister along with a noose around his neck like some rancid dead dog. You cannot come into these things in a negative light, you have to recognise the positives.

I reflected on advice I was given several years ago about politics, and what winning and losing in politics is. The very important point I learned was you can win in politics even without coming first. You can have a swing to you, you can win a booth, you can do this, or you can do that. I take a win out of what has happened today; I believe the Opposition Leader and the Country Liberals have come out on a very positive note.

We have identified many flaws in government. We have been successful getting on the floor a no confidence motion which we are debating now. It has shown a success in the parliamentary process that we are able to debate that. I commend both parliament and the Opposition Leader for allowing this to happen. I will focus on the people who are losers in this debate - and they are the people of the Northern Territory. Many people in the Northern Territory have lost a great deal in many areas. Such great failures made it difficult to itemise and structure a speech relating to the different areas I have heard my colleagues speak on today.

The member for Drysdale spoke about the housing crisis, and we are all well aware of how hard it is to get into a house, whether purchasing or renting. We are also well aware of the constraints within housing in the land release approach right across the Northern Territory. In my electorate of Braitling, in the quarter between March and June, the price of units rose by 29.3%. In Larapinta, in a three-month period, we had a 19.5% rise in the price of houses. We hear a lot about affordable housing, and what the government is doing to assist the young. When we are having rises of 30% for a unit for a first homebuyer, it is just not good enough.

We have this good Buildstart program to help people get into a newly-constructed property. Well, in Alice Springs there is no land where they can build a house; there is physically no land. They cannot build a house, so they cannot even access the program. I am aware of one person who owned a block of land who could access that.

Housing is not the only thing I want to talk about. Labor in opposition - and we saw this federally before the 2007 election - were very big on spin about petrol prices and what government can do. Now they are in power, nothing. They will commence an inquiry, they will make a few noises, but nothing happens, nothing changes. Now government are not talking about petrol prices. As the opposition spokesperson for Transport, it is my job to talk about petrol prices. I am aware of some things government can do to reduce the impact of petrol prices, but they have not done it.

If we look at the FuelWatch site prices from last Friday: 137.9¢ in Darwin, 140.9¢ in Alice Springs, 130¢ in Katherine. These are impediments to families in the Northern Territory. It is a stern indication, I believe, of how government has lost control; lost control of inflation in the Northern Territory, lost control of housing prices, lost control of petrol prices - and the list continues to go on.

The member for Drysdale spoke about the decrease in housing stocks since 2001. The Emery Avenue redevelopment involved \$1.2m of public money, but ownership is now out of the first homebuyers' capacity even though they have the Homestart NT scheme. Rental availability is extreme - more than \$700 to rent properties in Darwin.

It is not only about those things, which are simplistically cast aside by government. Let us look at failures in infrastructure, because the list is long and large. They like to laud themselves in a \$1.3bn infrastructure program. Actually, it is only a \$1bn infrastructure project. They will only spend half of it this year, if we are lucky. They like to promote that, but they carry all the works over to next year. Last year, they spent \$300m and carried \$400m over, in round about figures.

The member for Port Darwin spoke of the grubby deal and how bad the budget is - \$200m when we went into the budgetary process. We are hearing rumours that has already blown out 'exponentially'. I wonder, out of this grubby deal, how is the government going to pay for the extras that have been put on the menu, and accepted by the member for Nelson? The member for Nelson may have a good deal for his electorate - and good on him; that is who he is elected to represent - but if you live south of the Berrimah Line outside the rural electorate, there is nothing there.

He will blow the budget, dragging along the dog on the chain. There is nothing for the people of Alice Springs, nothing for Indigenous Territorians. They are going to conduct a review of a housing program.

This is a bad day, and this is part of the problem with the confidence in this government. Government management in projects has seen overruns and delays - example, the waterfront which has been scaled back in the delivery of infrastructure, yet continues to be a milestone on government finances through operational expenditure. The Berrimah Road extension is months overdue, the Tiger Brennan Drive, Amy Johnson and Woolner Road duplication, months away from being completed. The only time things start is when we put out a media release and suddenly we see the workers out there with the witches hats. I know the Tiger Brennan Drive has started, but go back years to when the member for Fong Lim was the member for Solomon - he got the money to start the project in the first place ...

Members interjecting.

Mr GILES: This is your incompetence. While the member for Casuarina likes to have a bit of a laugh, in his other guise as the Health Minister, he

would be aware of his government's incompetence regarding the oncology unit. The money has been sitting there, but you could not do it. You still have not done it. 'Oh, it is on its way and I will not focus on that'. Where is the member for Daly? The government has failed dismally in delivering gas supply to the Territory power grid. The Blacktip pipeline project, due for completion in January 2009, is still not completed. I am told it will not be completed this year. Fifty million litres of diesel is being used at Channel Island Power Station to keep the lights on - when they are on. We know that the member for Daly, the minister for Power and Water, cannot actually keep the lights on. Surprise, surprise!

For a government that is committed to a greenhouse gas reduction strategy, the unrelenting guzzling of diesel is a farcical outcome, let alone the additional tens of millions of dollars that it costs. This is the Labor environmental green extinguisher.

We have all heard about the CPRS in Canberra yesterday. I have not heard this government talk about the impact of the carbon pollution reduction scheme in the Northern Territory. What is it going to do to the price of concrete and bricks and all the infrastructure that has to go into SIHIP houses? How much is the CPRS going to increase the cost of SIHIP houses? We already have the \$1m Taj Mahal.

Let us not forget about the other phase of infrastructure by this government - the lost opportunities for Infrastructure Australia to get money for the port. I notice while all this political turmoil has been going on in the Northern Territory, the member for Solomon is missing. We have not seen him in this debate at all. I think he was the person who stuck the knife in a little while ago and screwed it around.

While the federal government was keen to put money, through Infrastructure Australia, into the port in Western Australia, they have let go of the Northern Territory. What has the Northern Territory government been doing with the port? I do not quite understand that. What is happening on 17 August 2009, when work will commence on the western end of the shipload. That will see work continuing until 2 October, virtually shutting down the port in Darwin. The member for Nelson is quite happy to support this incompetent government that cannot keep the port running while they fix the crane - a crane that should be replaced. The port of Darwin will be virtually shut down for two months, but that is this government.

I will not even get into the major project status of many of the potential developments in the Northern Territory - for example, the additional rail line in Tennant Creek to get more ore out through

the port - because it does not seem to matter at this point in time, when the port is not working and the minister for Infrastructure has gone missing.

The government continues with the inability to plan in the Northern Territory. The impasse, and the future heavy industry development, means a long-term site has not been progressed. There is no certainty, after INPEX. What comes next and where does it go? I could ask the future Chief Minister, but he is not here at the moment.

The Weddell development, moving Berrimah prison and selling Berrimah Farm, is a poorly planned outcome to deal with rehabilitating criminals. People in the Corrections system need to receive training. I know the member for Barkly is a passionate achiever in that regard. They also need counselling to support and break the cycle of alcohol abuse and violence. Nothing is going to happen in that regard under this government. They will not address alcohol. They will not address prison rates. I have said before in this Chamber the only way this government can house Indigenous Territorians is buy building a gaol. That is the only way they can house these people.

Government representatives develop projects that prefer to be reactionary rather than visionary, such as the Arafura Harbour Development and the Frances Bay improvements. They need proper scrutiny by the environmental impact assessment process, rather than being rejected out of hand or implemented without consideration.

The list goes on regarding this government's incompetence. The member for Daly liked to talk about his commitment to building a bridge over the Daly. It was his election commitment in 2005 and he still has not done it. Even when the federal government has offered to put money in, he still has not done it. Mereenie Loop, Alice Springs, has not happened. The East Arm port redevelopment - I have spoken about that. The Alice Springs Hospital, revoted works - they announced it one year, carried over to the next year, the next year, and so on. They do not deliver. You would remember these announcements from your previous ministerial role, Madam Speaker.

In planning, I can tell you the Country Liberals will establish the Territory Housing Land Corporation to deliver public housing and develop public land. A rolling construction and development plan will be put in place with one-, five-, 10- and 20-year markers, so we know where we are heading. We will commit to a long-term gas future, particularly in power generation, and meet a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020. We will commit to redeveloping Berrimah prison. We will ensure the EPA is truly independent, rather than the current process where it is not

independent - it is directed by government, member for Stuart.

The member for Barkly spoke about the development of a regional transport strategy, and how he has a review going; he has a consultancy. This goes to the heart of your blatant incompetence. You are spending \$360 000 on a consultant from Adelaide to do a review. What about buy local? This is where you lose out. You spoke about the commercial passenger vehicle registry. You have done a review. You spent \$186 000 - I think it was - on a Melbourne-based consultant to do a review, and now you have released a synopsis to go back out and consult again. At some point in time, decisions have to be made and things have to happen. This is not even buy local - there is \$500 000 at least that has gone interstate, and still nothing has happened.

Drink-driving is a major contributor to death on Territory roads. In the five years 2003 and 2007, there were 244 fatalities on Territory roads; 55% of these fatalities were contributed to by alcohol. Between 2005 and 2007, of the 6169 reported drink-driving offences, 1130 people had been caught drink-driving previously. High-level drink-driving is a major problem in the Territory, with 2308 people, or 37.4%, recording blood alcohol content readings of more than 1.5%. If that happened in any other state or territory in Australia it would be front page news. In the Territory, you can be 0.3% and it does not even hit the papers.

Last year, there were 75 road fatalities, with a high proportion again attributed to alcohol, and also seatbelts. I have spoken about this before in this parliament. I can tell you again the Country Liberals will be reintroducing legislation so that repeat high-level drink-drivers will have their cars confiscated. I will also be introducing material into this parliament to the effect there will be mandatory minimum sentences for those who kill or maim while under the influence of alcohol.

We are all aware of how poorly maintained our roads are. Roadside verges have been allowed to become dangerously overgrown, restricting drivers' vision of roadside hazards, so that wildlife and other elements, man-made structures and so forth, are hit. These are issues that actually kill people on our roads. Fatigue is a major issue for both tourists and professional drivers. Many of the Territory's highways do not have rest stops with adequate facilities or space to provide regular rest stops to prevent fatigue. We have not heard anything from this government about fatigue management. They will not do anything for the tourists either. I can tell you the Country Liberals will construct roadside stops at 100 km intervals, with hard-standing toilets, lighting, covered

seating and facilities for caravan grey waste to be disposed of. This will benefit both the recreational and tourist drivers, as well as professional and long haul drivers employed by the industry. That is our approach. That is how we are going to start tackling fatigue management. Nothing from government.

The Territory relies on regular upkeep and development of our major arterials for delivery of goods to supply Territorians and industry. Many of our major highways have been allowed to fall into disrepair with funding to road infrastructure not spent, and continually finding its way into the revoted works column in the budget papers. The Country Liberals will work with the councils, industry and road user groups to prioritise roads spending, particularly in the areas that have been allocated funds, but the work never happens.

Forward planning to access Auslink funding will enable the responsible planning of road maintenance before the roads become as degraded as has been allowed to happen under the failed Henderson Labor government.

I could go on about transport and infrastructure: Virgin Blue coming and going; Garuda gone; Darwin airport expansion shelved; Labor neglect; the member for Solomon, neglect as well. All part of a family, albeit not happy. Regarding the Arnhem Highway, Stuart Highway, when did the central Arnhem Highway become a road? What happened to the three carriages now down to one? We have changed a policy so now there will be more traffic on our roads and it is going to cost more for goods and freight at the other end. How does that help people? I do not understand.

If I can touch on some of my other portfolios, mainly around Indigenous issues, because I note that SIHIP has been a matter of great concern to parliament while we have been out of parliament for a lazy two months.

Reflecting on the grubby deal done between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister - not the Deputy Chief Minister or anyone else just the Chief Minister - when all those promises are paid for, I wonder how the funding formula for Indigenous affairs will look next year. In 2006-07, 52.4% of the budget was, reportedly, spent on Indigenous outcomes. It is very hard to work out exactly how much of this year's current budget will be directed towards Indigenous Territorians. I am aware that significant amounts of money have come to the Northern Territory for the purpose of addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

When we are building aquatic centres in the rural area and trying to address youth

clubs - which I support - and all these other things that were made in this promised document, I wonder where the money is coming from. I wonder how much the budget is going to blow out? I wonder what the proportional amount of money which will actually go to Indigenous Territorians will be?

Let us get to the heart of some of the issues surrounding the need ...

Mr BOHLIN: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member to complete his remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr GILES: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We need to house people for a number of reasons that we would all understand, especially Indigenous Territorians living in the bush. I am not a great supporter of the welfare tack of continued government housing. I believe in a model of public/private community housing. That goes to the heart of land tenure, and a number of other issues which I am not going to now. The fact remains if we let people live in squalor in the bush, those people will do one of two things. They will either not have an impact on the Closing the Gap initiatives that are run around the country, or people will move to Darwin. I have no problem with people shifting. People should be allowed that freedom; that supports my liberal philosophy.

We know there is no land in Darwin. We know house prices are \$700 a week, that there are multimillion dollar mansions people cannot afford in Darwin. Unless we want to have more and more people moving into Darwin, more and more people moving into the northern suburbs, creating homelessness and overcrowding and antisocial behaviour because they do not have places to live, we have to address this issue of housing in the bush.

I reflect on a comment made by the former Indigenous Affairs Minister, Amanda Vanstone, many years ago - and she was widely castigated and I will probably be castigated too. She said that unless we start to address some of these problems in these Indigenous communities all we are going to do is treat Indigenous people in a environment of a cultural museum. Something like in a zoo. That is what she was making reference to. That is what we are doing here. We are not addressing providing people access to goods and services and facilities in the bush. That is exactly what is happening with SIHIP.

What is happening to things like improving access to newspapers in the bush? What are we

doing in lobbying the federal government to make sure we have digital TV with an Imparja footprint right across the Territory? Some very simple things. What are we doing about ensuring we have better access to mobile phones or radio across the Territory, so we can get ABC right throughout the Territory on the highways? These are some very important things, because it provides people with an opportunity for education, whatever means that is.

I am very keen for the government to look at solutions in different areas. I am sure people are aware the region of Utopia is not a growth town, it is not a place where there are going to be new houses. There needs to be a focus by government on delivering services. I know the member for Daly is a non-performer, but I have a photo of the store. You may be able to see it is the community store; that is where they hold the childcare, and that is the sewage that sits out the front that kids play in. That has been there for four weeks.

The member for Daly is in charge of this, his portfolios are Local Government and Housing. The people have played in sewage for four weeks - there are skateboards, nappies and toys! I table that document, Madam Speaker, the member for Daly might like to ...

Madam SPEAKER: You need to seek leave to table a document. Is leave granted?

Leave granted

Mr GILES: Madam Speaker, this place should have SIHIP action. There is no reason children should be allowed to play in sewage outside the shop, and outside the childcare centre. It is an absolute disgrace! The Chief Minister should sack you; but first you should resign ...

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr GILES: What about Wadeye? Let us talk about Wadeye. At Wadeye they have a concrete batching plant and they have a factory where they build tilt up houses. They are currently building the last two tilt up houses. There are seven Aboriginal workers in the factory run by TDC; they are building two Catholic Education houses. The member for Katherine was there with me recently. They only have two more contracts. They want to be part of the SIHIP process - the failed SIHIP process that the member for Daly so incompetently cannot do anything about.

They need to move the concrete batching plant closer to the factory. On 11 June 2009, a media release was issued by Warren Snowdon and Jenny Macklin. There was a raid of \$690 000 on the Aboriginal Benefits Account - an account, for

those who are unaware, that comes out of mining royalties. It says:

\$691 000 will be provided to the Thamarrurr Development Corporation to purchase a mobile concrete batching plant to allow the community to tender for SIHIP contracts.

That is a pretty smart idea for economic development. If you talk to the corporations they say: 'The government said they do not like the type of houses we make, so we cannot get SIHIP funding to build any houses'. Talk about an employment program! Now they have to put off seven Indigenous staff, and waive \$690 000 on mining royalties to build a concrete batching plant. This is ridiculous.

Let us look at another raid of the ABA while we are here. This is for the member for Stuart, who is also the Minister for Regional Development. In my June budget speech, I made note there was a decrease of \$441 000 in the Regional Development budget, which provided funding to Indigenous business development and start-ups. It was highly embarrassing that the member for Brainting found that. On 11 June, just a few days later, \$500 000 will be milked from the ABA going towards the Northern Territory government Department of Regional Development to add support to Indigenous business development programs.

We have taken \$441 000 out of the Northern Territory government budget, milked it out of the mining royalties account, and given it back to the Northern Territory government. It is here in black and white, member for Stuart. I am going through some levels of incompetence so you can understand.

Let me quickly talk about Tennant Creek and SIHIP. Let me explain how some of the employment services work. I have done it before and I will do it quickly again. An organisation like Julalikari in Tennant Creek can get a CDEP contract, a job network contract, and be a registered training organisation. They get paid to manage every CDEP place. They might have 100 places; they get paid to run those. If you are smart, you get all those CDEP people to sign up to be in your job network, because you get paid \$2000 every time one of them signs up.

If you are an RTO, there is big bucket of money where you can spend on those people in your own organisation. If you are really smart, you can find that person a job in your own organisation. If you know how to manipulate the system, you can actually get a wage subsidy to employ them. So, you get paid from CDEP for getting them a job, you get paid for the job network, you get paid for running them through

your own registered training organisation, then you get a subsidy off the government to employ them. If you are really smart, you can work that out.

I saw an article in today's *The Australian* that jogged my memory. It spoke about how Julalikari is the preferred employment service provider in Tennant Creek. Before I came to this parliament, I had a role doing employment advice to the Territory government - before I was told that, because I vote CLP, I should not work there, member for Daly.

This article in *The Australian* - I do not have the exact words - said that it would be interesting to know how much Julalikari was paid for finding employment for employees under the alliance contracts in Tennant Creek, where we know they are spending \$36.5m and not building a house - \$36.5m of our taxpayer dollars and not building one house. It beggars belief.

Going back to that time when I was told that no other employment service provider could get involved in Tennant Creek; it was going to Julalikari. Julalikari has a good model now. They are not breaking any rules by doing what they do regarding the funding model; that is how the system works. I do not agree with the system; I believe it is completely wrong. I believe there is collusion within that model. I have to ask how Julalikari can be deemed to be the only employment service provider in Tennant Creek? To me that is - I do not know if 'corruption' is the right word. To exclude any other businesses from being able to provide those services so Julalikari can get the sole money from a government contract is wrong.

I remember what the member for Port Darwin said when he spoke about No 1 in this agreement, dot point No 2, regarding corruption or maladministration. This seems to fall somewhere within that. While I am really unaware of this quasi committee the member for Nelson - the new Deputy Chief Minister or whatever his role is - has set up, I ask him to have a good look at this. It is very important to understand exactly how Julalikari got exclusive rights to provide employment services for the SIHIP contract, under the alliance contracts, in Tennant Creek where they are spending \$36.5m without building a house. It smells like it, it looks like it, it tastes like it; I am not sure if it is it. I am pretty sure it is.

Madam Speaker, I condemn this government for its failures. There is no confidence in this government to deliver. The dealings of this government seem hairy, and I support this motion ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Braitling, your time has expired.

Mr VATSKALIS (Health): Madam Speaker, I speak on the motion of no confidence that was moved by the opposition. I make it clear from the beginning, I will not be supporting that motion.

The motion put before the House today is one of the most serious that can be placed before any parliament. The consequences for all Territorians are so fundamental. There is no other issue that could be more important because it is the very foundation of our democracy.

The key issue for all Territorians is whether the Henderson Labor government can provide stability in governing for all Territorians. The answer is yes, the Henderson Labor government can. This side of the House continues to hold the most number of seats of any party. The convention, in our Westminster system, is the party with the most number of seats should be given the opportunity to govern. There are many examples around the world that show minority governments can govern. The member for Nelson mentioned Canada. The Chief Minister gave the example of South Australia. I remind you that since 1949, the Republic of Italy has not had a majority government. Minority governments can provide stability, deliver commitments and provide good governance.

The Northern Territory is one of the most diverse and multicultural societies; a setting in which people from all races and cultural backgrounds are accepted and recognised, and one which was built on diversity in a positive and productive way right across the Territory. Our parliament here today is a reflection of our community. We are confronted with challenges this diversity brings. We have done a lot, but there is still more to do.

As the Chief Minister and other members of this House outlined, we are implementing the most comprehensive program in the Territory's history in seeking to make a difference when it comes to Indigenous disadvantage. Territorians have the right to ask what we would deliver, to ask what this government's record is when it comes to delivering those commitments, and what plans we have for the future.

A little over 12 months ago, we went to the people of the Territory and outlined what we hope to achieve over the next four years. Delivering for Territorians has been possible, due in large part to the strength of our economy. In doing so, this government has demonstrated its economic credentials in delivering six surplus budgets in outcomes. Yes, we have gone into debt, given the global financial crisis, but economic growth

forecasts for the Territory remain the most positive in the nation.

We have demonstrated the Territory is the place to do business, and that business can have confidence in investing here, which creates opportunities for all Territorians. Yes, we have increased the number of public servants. We have put 300 extra police on the beat, we have recruited more teachers, we have provided more doctors and nurses than ever before, and implemented policies committed to by this government.

On a personal level, I reflect on my ministerial portfolios and the government's commitment and achievements in these portfolios. I would like to start with the Health portfolio, which is considered one of the most important portfolios.

When we came to government in June 2001, the budget for the whole Health department was \$425m. To date, the budget stands over \$1bn; a 117% increase since 2001. We have employed 197 extra doctors and 632 extra nurses. We have also made a record investment in our hospitals of \$421m. That is an increase of 118% for the Royal Darwin Hospital. Its budget now is \$245m, and it employs 252 doctors and 883 nurses.

In Alice Springs, the budget is now \$118m, an increase of 120% since 2001. Alice Springs Hospital now employs 104 doctors and 409 nurses, nearly 50% more than when we came to power. We have increased the capacity of Northern Territory hospitals with more than 120 extra hospital beds. We now have the second-highest number of public hospital beds in Australia - 3.6 beds per 1000 population, just behind South Australia.

We have established a 24-bed Rapid Admission Unit at Royal Darwin hospital. We have re-opened Ward 3B with 13 fully-funded beds; a ward that was closed 15 years ago by the CLP. We opened a new department in critical care and operating theatres at RDH in 2003. We are expanding resources in Alice Springs Hospital in intensive care and coronary care, with an additional \$11m recurrent from 2004-05. We now have a 12-bed hospice at Royal Darwin Hospital at a cost of \$4.25m. The Royal Darwin Hospital has now been established as a National Critical Care and Trauma Centre with the Australian government.

We have created more options in maternity services. We have a state-of-the-art birthing centre at a cost of \$2.5m that was opened in 2007. We introduced the home birthing service and community midwifery practice in Darwin and Alice Springs. We made a major investment in renal services in 2007, with \$24.4m to provide

more dialysis stations in urban and remote areas, and additional renal and chronic disease staff. This builds on our previous \$12.5m investment in renal services in 2003-04.

We have Stage 1 of the Super Clinic in Palmerston, which we launched in December 2008. To date, 6000 patients have received treatment there. That has helped the emergency department at RDH.

The construction of the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre is nearly 70% complete. That is a complete cancer care centre for all Territorians. Currently, they have commenced recruitment for appropriate staff.

The Child Health Initiative, with a recurrent budget of \$2m, is the largest expansion ever of child health services across the Territory. We are working together with the Australian government and AMSANT, and we are rolling out the largest expansion of primary health services in remote communities with an additional \$100m over two years. We established the NT Health Direct 24-hour telephone health advice line to assist families with health information and referrals anywhere in the Territory. Not to mention the e-Health initiative. We are ahead of the nation at this stage. Even the federal government is looking at the success of this program to implement Australia-wide.

We have plans for the future. We are committed to a new emergency department for Alice Springs Hospital with a short-stay unit, fast-track unit, isolation beds and new medical imaging department. The legacy of the CLP with the Alice Springs Hospital? We are still in the courts with the construction company ...

A member interjecting.

Mr VATSKALIS: We are still in the courts with the construction company because of the mismanagement and incompetence of the CLP government. They gave the contract to design and construct and, of course, at the end, they did not actually look at what was delivered.

Construction of a new facility for the Palmerston Super Clinic has begun with a local company, Norbuilt, awarded the tender in July 2009. The Palmerston Hospital is going to happen soon - not in the never-never like the CLP. The contract for a tender for the planning study was advertised earlier this month.

We are about to release a tender for the refurbishment of a new 26-room patient residential facility here in Darwin for patients undergoing cancer treatment. We are working with Flinders University and Charles Darwin University for the

establishment, in 2011, of the first-ever Northern Territory Medical School to grow our own doctors.

We have commenced an upgrading staff accommodation project of \$4m at Royal Darwin Hospital. We have allocated \$1.5m for a dental blitz to reduce the general dental waiting list.

Our hospitals are the busiest in the country, but we are committed to reducing waiting lists for elective services. This is not without its challenges. We have nearly three times the number of hospital patient admissions compared to the national average, with 510 admissions per 1000 population compared to 184 admissions nationally, and we have the busiest emergency department in Australia - one admission in the emergency department every 10 minutes; the busiest in Australia ...

Mr Chandler: The longest waiting list in the country.

Mr VATSKALIS: Member for Brennan, as a matter of fact the longest waiting list is in Western Australia. I was there when it was on the front page in the Western Australian newspapers. Our hospitals, despite the fact that we are busy hospitals, are dealing very well with emergencies, and continue to improve and reduce the waiting time for emergency procedures. That, combined with the fact we have half the number of GPs in the Territory than in other places in Australia, creates enormous pressure for emergency departments with everyone because of their inability to access a GP at the time they turn up to an emergency department. These facts directly impact on our ability to perform elective surgery. Recently, we had the swine flu epidemic, with enormous pressure on hospitals, causing elective surgery to be cancelled.

In 2007, the government allocated \$2.3m for a five-month elective surgery blitz which reduced the waiting list by 16%. In 2008, the Australian government provided \$5.3m to the Northern Territory government, with the demand to perform 500 extra procedures. We actually exceeded that target. We performed 638 additional procedures. In total, we have reduced the elective surgery waiting list by 31%. I have now asked the department and the hospital to further reduce the waiting list, and they have started with the waiting list for endoscopies. One hundred and twenty patients will have that procedure done this fortnight. Additional procedures will be performed on Saturdays, and Darwin Private Hospital facilities will be engaged where needed. The opening of the new operating theatres this month will greatly assist in reducing the backlog. This will be repeated with elective surgery.

One of my portfolios is Alcohol Policy. It is not necessary to say the use and abuse of alcohol is one of the most fundamental social and economic issues facing the Territory today. My statement at the Estimates Committee about the cost of alcohol to the community, and how much Territorians drink, believe it or not was reported as far away as Ethiopia. The *Ethiopia Times* reported: 'It is official; Territorians are the biggest drinkers in the world'. It is nothing to be proud of. Alcohol has its social and economic cost, and we have done a lot to reduce alcohol consumption by controlling the availability and supply.

In Alice Springs, we have seen a reduction of sales of alcohol by 2000 litres every day. Five hundred 4 L casks are not sold every day in Alice Springs because of the measures we put in place. These measures have now been adopted voluntarily by the industry. Now, the clubs and nightclubs in Darwin are adopting the electronic scanning system that we imposed in Alice Springs so they can control the clients and they know who is drinking and who is not drinking. I recall very well the opposition opposed the alcohol plan we put in Alice Springs, but it was the member for Greatorex who was asking that we impose the same system here in Mitchell Street, Darwin.

It is not going to be fixed tomorrow, but unless we try something we are not going to find the solution. There is no silver bullet. It is cooperation between the community and the government to find a solution.

I turn to the Primary Industries, Fisheries and Resource sector. We have a strong economy, and a strong economy means we can deliver outcomes for all Territorians, and it creates opportunities for people in our region. We are not immune to the financial crisis, but if you go outside this building today you find we are doing much better than other states in Australia. We continue to support our mining and energy industry, a sector that employs more than 4000 Territorians and generates more than 25% of the gross state product. Our four-year \$14.4m Bringing Forward Discovery, together with a China Mineral Investment Attraction Strategy has done miracles for our energy sector, especially for the small and mid-sized explorers and producers. We have several agreements between Territory mining companies, Japanese companies, and Chinese companies. We have seen a significant number of Chinese investors visiting the Territory and we have seen a number of joint ventures between Chinese companies and miners in the Territory being signed.

We are the first government ever to establish a 100% security deposit for rehabilitation of exploration and mining activities. Mount Todd is a very good example of the incompetence of

previous CLP governments. In 2008, the Northern Territory was ranked as the eighth best place in the world to do business relevant to mining by the highly regarded Fraser Institute. It is not only the minerals and energy sector that is important to the Territory.

One of our major export industries is the live cattle trade. We have been working to expand our profile in existing markets, and seeking to explore new markets, including Sabah in Malaysia, and Vietnam. In 27 years of CLP government, there was only one market for live cattle export - Indonesia. We had all our eggs in one basket. If something went wrong with that basket, our eggs would probably be an omelette. Since then we have expanded. We have signed agreements with Malaysia and the state of Sabah; we provide technical expertise and help with the development of the Sabah New Technologies Centre; we helped with the management of the farms; and we helped with the humane slaughter of animals in Malaysia.

The new market we are focusing on is Vietnam. We are helping with technical expertise and with the construction of feedlots, and very soon the first shipment of cattle will occur from the Territory to Vietnam.

In 2007-08, horticulture contributed \$157m to the Territory economy, an increase of about 8% from 2006-07, so we must be doing something right.

The Territory government is now working collaboratively with the Western Australian government, and the federal government, on a coordinated approach to current and future development opportunities in the Ord Region. Previously, there was contact between officials. This contact has been elevated to a ministerial level, and I have had several meetings with my counterpart in Western Australia, the minister for Agriculture, with regard to the Ord scheme. I am pleased to report the Territory is the partner and we are working very closely with the federal government and the WA government with regard to the Ord region.

I turn to fishing. I heard, with great interest, the member for Katherine telling us what we have done for fishing. To hear that from a person who opposed the closure of Fog Bay due to the recent incident - a person who actually supports strongly the commercial sector rather than the leisure sector - is very surprising.

We have closed the McArthur River, the Adelaide River, Darwin Harbour, and Shoal Bay. We reallocated resources from the commercial sector to the recreational sector. Now, we intend to close Bynoe Harbour and the Finniss River.

Very soon a decision will be made. I have instructed the Barramundi Advisory Group to look at which other areas should be closed around the Territory, with priority given to Fog Bay.

We have bought three commercial barramundi licences, and we are committed to buying another three. In buying a licence, the sellers have to be willing to sell, and quite a few people are still holding on to their licence. Slowly, they realise there will be a time commercial fishing will be moved further out from the Darwin region, and they are now willing to negotiate.

We have made the difficult decision to change bag limits to protect our fishing stock. Jewfish is one, salmon and barramundi others. We have done that in consultation with the industry, both the commercial sector and the amateur sector. The closure of Bynoe Harbour and Finniss River was an outcome of a strategic planning workshop that involved AFANT and the Seafood Council.

When it comes to Blue Mud Bay, we have a plan to deliver a win/win outcome for all Territorians. Our position on Blue Mud Bay is clear; we want to negotiate an outcome involving all stakeholders.

Of course, the most important people are my constituents in the electorate of Casuarina. I have worked hard to deliver for my electorate, including a new Police Beat shopfront and CCTV at Casuarina Square. The Casuarina Police Station has been rebuilt and is now open for business. Lights have been installed along the Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

We had two upgrades at Nakara Primary School worth \$4m, and two upgrades at Alawa Primary School at another \$4m. One of the teachers commented the other day that he cannot believe he is coming to the same school where he commenced employment 10 years ago; it is a different school. Alawa and Nakara are two of the most modern schools in the Territory. Now we have the plans in place for a \$3m upgrade of Dripstone Middle School; the Leanyer Recreational Park; the Larrakia Soccer Stadium; the Marrara Fire Station - plans for the future. There will be an upgrade for the Leanyer park, \$5m for the upgrade of Casuarina Senior College, a new international tennis centre, and the green heart at Rapid Creek.

In closing, I give my full support to our Chief Minister and the Henderson Labor government in what history will show is one of the most important motions to come before the Territory parliament.

Madam Speaker, in 2000, when I was preselected, I signed a pledge that I would be a team member and would support the Labor Party,

and I will not go back on that. In 2001, I entered parliament to represent my constituents in Casuarina. I entered this parliament as a Territorian, as I have chosen to make the Territory my home. In my time here in the Territory, I have become fully aware of the potential, the dynamics, and the weakness of the Territory. As a member of parliament, I have worked very hard and, with the support of my electorate, I pledge to do so in the future, in realising the full potential, effect the dynamics in a positive way, and ensure that the weaknesses of the Territory turn around.

Mr STYLES (Sanderson): Madam Deputy Speaker, the member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, has made a choice here today to do a deal with the Chief Minister - not the Labor government but the Chief Minister. I believe it is the wrong decision for the people of the Northern Territory. The member for Nelson had a choice between Paul Henderson's same failed approaches that have paralysed the delivery of government services to the Territory, or backing the Country Liberals' strong plans that would have secured the Territory's future. He had a choice to endorse a broken Chief Minister with a divided team that cannot deliver outcomes for Territorians. We all know this current government is unstable and a dysfunctional team. It is supported by the member for Arafura, who only recently said that she could not trust the Henderson Labor government.

The Henderson government, over the past eight years, has made numerous promises, commissioned reviews and reports numbering in the hundreds, employed numerous consultants, and has still only been able to deliver a couple of positive outcomes to Territorians. I hear the Treasurer continually saying her government spends more on everything.

I have heard the member for Casuarina also state they have spent more themselves, than anyone else, on all sorts of things. I have heard the member for Daly, who is the Minister for Housing, make claims of spending far more than anyone ever has, and even more than they had. I suppose any government that received around \$1.2bn over and above the income expected would be able to spend more than it, or its predecessors, did previously and be in a position to produce surplus budgets.

I liken it to this: you win Tattsлото, and you go to your neighbour and you say, 'Well, neighbour, I am spending more on my kids now than you are'. One would expect if you have a windfall you would be in a position to spend far more than had been done in the past. All this from the rivers of gold, from the GST. In the eight years of Labor, the debt for every man, woman and child in the Northern Territory has risen from approximately

\$16 000 per person in 2001, to approximately \$23 000 in 2009, and that is estimated to go up to \$26 000 in 2012. In the best economic period that Australia and, in particular, the Northern Territory has seen, the Henderson government has been sending us backwards.

The Treasurer will tell us the financial troubles besetting the Territory are a result of the global financial crisis. My parents, and indeed, financial advisors, planners, and university lecturers always taught me what I believe to be sound financial planning: in the good times you retired debt, so when things take a turn for the worse, you are in the best possible position to survive the tough times. A clear example of this was the Howard Coalition government's responsible and successful financial management. It not only paid off \$96bn of inherited Labor debt in 1996, it handed the incoming Rudd Labor government a zero debt and \$26bn in the bank. It is a shame for the Territory the Henderson Labor government has not, and is not, following sound financial management practices that have led to Australia being in a far better placed position than most other developed countries.

I urge the member for Nelson to ask himself how he believes things will change now. The Chief Minister criticises this side of the House for not articulating a plan during this debate today. This is the same old Paul Henderson whose own former colleague described as 'running a government that was rotten to the core'. We have heard here today, from the member for Macdonnell, a description of the Henderson government. This is the same Paul Henderson that, in government, has failed to take action to fix some of the real issues facing our local community.

There are real issues facing the people, not only from my own electorate, but all Territorians - real issues like housing. The government has stated the Northern Territory needs 700 dwelling units per year to deal with population growth and interstate migration. In 2009, the government has committed to the release of 270 house blocks in Bellamack and additional housing for the Lyons development. Only 90 of the Bellamack lots have been sold to the public or set aside for government housing use, and no other lots have been sold to the public or set aside for government housing use, and no lots in addition to those are on the market as yet to reach even the 270 lot release.

Public housing stocks have decreased since 2001. The Emery Avenue redevelopment involved \$1.2m of public money, but has priced ownership out of the first homeowner buyer capacity, even under the government's Homestart scheme. On 30 June 2000, the Northern Territory

government had 7451 dwellings. On 30 June 2007, that number had decreased to 5352. That is a reduction of 2099 dwellings. It is a shame, because we have seen an enormous rise in waiting times to get public housing. There are people out there far less fortunate than us who need the assistance of government, yet what we see, over that period, is over 2000 homes or dwellings being reduced off the public housing stock. Rental availability is extreme. The average rent for a three-bedroom house is \$550 a week, an appalling figure if you are on base grade salaries many Territorians are on.

Housing development is constrained in Alice Springs with a limit on development. The people there have the same issues and problems people in the Top End suffer. The member for Daly, the Housing Minister, stood here today and said they had grown housing - had allocated \$390m of new public money, more land, and more affordable housing. I find it hard, when we are going backwards, that the minister can make those statements to this House. Waiting times for public housing, and the less fortunate, is going up. I find people coming into my electorate office, especially seniors, who are just begging to get some relief because they are on the pension. They are paying most of their pension out in rent, because rents have just skyrocketed for these people who are not able to get into the public housing domain. They qualify, but the waiting lists are enormous.

A constituent came to see me and described to me what I believe is a quite distressing situation for him. He has four children, and his entire family unit is in Darwin. Two of his children recently had to move from the Northern Territory to Adelaide because they cannot afford to rent a home, and they cannot afford to purchase their home. So they had to move in order to try to gain some rent relief, and to start saving for a home. Who knows whether those people are going to return to the Territory? I have used this example before in the House, but it is very relevant today that we ask the member for Nelson to consider this, and many of the other things that have been and that will be said, before this debate is finished.

We lost, as part of that family, a teacher, a motor mechanic, a nurse, and a psychologist. These are the very people we are trying to attract. I note the advertising campaigns through interstate newspapers and the Internet are saying, 'Come to the Northern Territory. It is a great place to live; it is a great lifestyle, a great place to raise your kids'. We are desperately short of skilled labour and when INPEX come we will be even worse off, yet these are the very people who are being forced to leave the Northern Territory.

That brings me to law and order. I listened as the member for Karama told us the Labor

government has made great advances in law and order. I find it very difficult to understand. The gaols are overflowing. There do not appear to be many deterrents. Police officers are telling me they feel sometimes they are fighting a losing battle out there, and there does not appear to be a great deal of support. Where are the deterrents? The Henderson government is failing to crack down on hooning, drink-driving and speeding in the streets of our local neighbourhood. I go and stand at my local supermarket every Saturday morning, and people come along and say: 'There are people speeding down my street continually. We ring the police and the police say they will try to do whatever they can about it. Unfortunately, it continues and it seems to be getting worse'. Police I know tell me that they are bogged down in putting information into the PROMIS system. There needs to be some streamlining there because we have the highest paid data entry people in the country.

The government failed to implement diversion programs that actually work so they can fix the serious problems we have with gangs, truants, and graffiti. Recently, I heard the Brahminy Foundation near Batchelor had 20 positions available and only six there. I know from other sources there are far more than six people who need to be there. The system does not seem to be working and helping, not only the community, but also these young people who find themselves in conflict with the law.

The Henderson government has failed to maintain and properly light local parks and places so local families, and especially women, trying to walk and exercise in the evening, can actually feel safe. I noted this morning women out walking and the street lights are turned off when it is still dark. People out there are walking in the dark through heavily wooded areas and they say to me: 'Can you try to get the lights on?' That is a new mission I have; to get the lights on for a longer period of time.

People ring my office on a regular basis complaining about laneways. Much has been said, but there is still antisocial behaviour going on through these laneways. The poor police officers out there who work extremely hard under difficult conditions to do their job do not seem to be supported through the courts or by the government. These are just some of the issues.

In shopping centres, defecating, urinating, and smashing phone boxes occurs. Two weeks ago, I was at one of my local supermarkets and the people across the road came over and indicated to me what had been going on at night. They call the police, the police come when they can - the police do a fabulous job, they say, they get there as often as they can - but these people go off and

hide and come back later when the police are trying to deal with a myriad of other issues and problems.

Elderly people I talk to are scared in their homes. They are scared to come out at dusk, let alone dark. These people, especially elderly women, will not use automatic teller machines, even during the day time. They see these groups of youths hanging around, obviously truants. Whether or not, they are a problem and are waiting to rob these people. These elderly women say it is fairly tough on them when they have to get on a bus, go to the bank, take their money out, then have to secrete the money on their person in some unusual places just to feel safe that they will retain their money to get to the shop to buy food and other necessities.

We have seen an increase in violence in excess of 80%. Three weeks ago about 7 pm, a young man went to the ATM just outside my office at the Northlakes shops and was set upon by eight people who kicked him half to death. His father came in to my office on Monday morning crying. Talking to his friends, this is not the first time this has happened to our kids. I had to sit there for an hour to convince him to go to the police station and report it. His child is in hospital, and I have to convince someone to go to the police station. He said: 'Why? The police cannot do anything about it'. We see it all the time. These are some of the issues this government has failed to deal with.

Coming to this House this morning, I saw about three people run red lights. You can sit back in a line of traffic and look down and see you have a green light but the line cannot start moving because there are still cars coming onto the intersection. It is an appalling state of affairs.

I heard the Transport minister talk about buses and timetables. I have people coming into my office saying the timetables do not connect; you have to wait around. It takes half a day to go to the hospital. There are people out there who are struggling to find houses. Improved bus services, and free bus services are great if you have people who live in your neighbourhood and rent places and use the services. People in caravan parks within my constituency have trouble with connecting buses.

I heard the member for Barkly mention he is now the Minister for Senior Territorians. What about the rebate scheme? At the meetings I have been to, the seniors are concerned about the Pensioner and Carer Concession Scheme. The rebates have not been put up for years. The government has had eight years to address those issues, and take note of some of the issues and concerns senior Territorians are expressing.

Young Territorians: education, direction, role modelling. Where are we going with that? The education system seems to be failing many young Territorians.

Power and Water: the lights are still going out in the northern suburbs.

Drunks: between 1 July 2008 and 31 May 2009, 32 678 people were taken into protective custody. What an appalling situation! What a consumption of resources the community has available to use. There is a hard-core group that is repeatedly taken into custody throughout the year. The Territory government needs to assess the educational level of these prisoners when they first enter the system, and then provide practical education solutions to address the areas that most need attention. Rural prison farms need to have real skills education programs that will focus on equipping prisoners with the skills employers are looking for.

Assaults: violent assaults increased by 25% in the last 12 months - that is overall, since this government came into office - with in excess of 80% violent offenders. There needs to be some restructure in the police force, so there are more police on our streets - and still increase the numbers. I also note the police recruit training squad scheduled to commence in February 2010 has been cancelled due to insufficient funds. Well, that does not surprise me.

Offenders found guilty of violent offences need to understand they are going to go to prison. This needs to occur. Repeat offenders who cause harm also have to receive mandatory sentences. Presumption of bail will need to be reversed. These are all issues this government needs to look at and take into consideration.

Violence in schools and the high number of suspensions - 1524 in 2007, 2024 in 2008. What is it going to be this year? During the 2009 Estimates Committee, the Chief Minister stated there were 648 suspensions across the Territory, with 195 being for assaults against staff or physical or verbal assaults against other students, and 453 for dangerous substances and disobedience etcetera. The Chief Minister may do well introducing last-chance schools for students who demonstrate continuous and high levels of violence and disruptive behaviour towards staff and other students. For too long, a small minority has taken up the valuable teaching time of classroom teachers and assistant principals.

School-based police officers ...

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move an extension of time of 10 minutes for the

member for Sanderson to complete his comments, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr STYLES: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. That brings me to school-based police officers. Having been a school-based police officer in my former working life, I recall at the end of June 2005 the very popular Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program - commonly known as DARE - was withdrawn and another program implemented, which was not even finished at the time. My understanding is it was never completed. It took school-based police officers out of classrooms. I am probably biased, but most people I have spoken to in the community believe these school-based police officers did a fantastic job of role modelling, building rapport with young people, and being proactive.

The key words in all this are 'early intervention'. They are the key words for so many things governments are required to do these days. My mother, I recall, taught me when I was very small 'a stitch in time saves nine'. It is still valid today. I do not think this government learned some of those sayings at a very early age, and it appears they still have not learnt them.

I am still waiting for things that were promised at the election prior to 2005 regarding schools, such as air-conditioning the assembly areas. Well, we are still waiting for them.

Drink-driving: problem drink-drivers are a major contributor to death on Territory roads. I am sure people on the other side of this House have children, some of whom have driver's licences, and I am sure some of them have partners who have children driving to and from school. I fear every day for my kids and my grandkids driving on the roads. As a former police officer, I find the situation out there absolutely appalling when you wait at traffic lights and see people just sail through red lights unabated. You see people speeding past you while you do the speed limit. It is an appalling situation which, obviously, leads to deaths, maiming and all sorts of costs to the community.

In the five years from 2003 to 2007, there were 244 fatalities on Territory roads; 51% of these fatalities were attributed to alcohol. Between 2005 and 2007, of the 6169 recorded drink-driving offences in the Northern Territory, 1130 people, 18.3%, had been caught drink-driving previously. High-level drink-driving is a major problem in the Territory, with 2308 people, or 37.4%, recording blood alcohol content readings over 0.15% in the same period. Last year, there were 75 road

fatalities, with a high proportion, again, attributed to alcohol.

Road safety - well, I do not know what the young people are getting these days. I was very fortunate; I got some really good training in road safety. I believe that contributed to my following good instruction and good rules as an adult. I ask you to remember it was the Labor government that closed the Road Safety Training Facility in Parap and Alice Springs. There are so many issues with road safety that I thought it would have been imperative you would want to teach young people as much about road safety and the dangers as you possibly could. This brings me back to school-based police officers in classrooms, in schools, doing proactive work, as opposed to trying to supplement the rest of the police force to do reactive work.

We must remember that Paul Henderson has had eight years to fix many of these issues, and the outcomes have only got worse. We hear from other members on this side of the House the increased statistics of waiting times, the increased costs. You hear the government say: 'Oh, but we spent more money'. I have listened time and time again, and contributed in telling the Treasurer that spending money is an input, it is not an outcome. It is outcomes we need to have for the people of the Northern Territory.

It is sad that the delivery of outcomes to the Territory is usually late and well over budget. Over the past 12 months, Territorians have paid the price for Paul Henderson's failed approach and divided government. Many of the issues the member for Nelson has put on his wish list are very similar to those that form part of the plan the Country Liberals have espoused in this House time and time again.

The Chief Minister this morning accused the Leader of the Opposition of not having a plan. I thought we were here to debate the very serious issues of why the Henderson government finds itself in the situation of having to face a want of confidence motion. We are not here to articulate a full plan for an election campaign. The member for Nelson has articulated many of the values and issues the Country Liberals have, and Labor has had the chance to change, but it cannot and will not.

Here we have a Chief Minister who has agreed to many issues the Country Liberals have been advocating for a long time. Only in his desperate attempt to retain power has he agreed to pursue many of the Country Liberals' ideals and policies; more efficient service delivery, faster decisions, less red tape and less waste. No decisions and excessive consultation - people have told me they

are sick to death of being consulted and what they want is real action.

I will give some examples of paralysis that has beset the government. Regarding the definition of an indoor and outdoor smoking area, there are numerous businesses out there begging the government to give them a definition of what an outdoor smoking area is. There is a list of procedures and requirements that will take an enormous amount of time to get through. We only have five months left, yet this government cannot even give a simple definition. I have suggested to them they could ring some of their Labor mates interstate and say: 'Can you e-mail us?' We have e-mail and fax machines now. You can get it up here in a flash. Why not ask them for their definitions? Pick one. At least make a decision and give businesses something so they can start the process.

The other example is different standards for citizens. We have people applying for liquor licences, and because someone who was there previously committed an offence, you are blamed for their actions. I find it absurd you are blamed for the actions of someone else. That is double standards in our community.

The member for Nelson had a chance today to back real change. He had a chance to give the Territory a new direction and get things moving again, despite saying otherwise. He has now moved into a deal with the Labor Party and has backed more of the same.

The Chief Minister made a statement this morning there is no more important issue than the one currently being debated here today: a want of confidence in the government. In an attempt to hang on to power he said he would try to make his government more transparent and accountable. I would have thought the Chief Minister would make a commitment to the people of the Northern Territory that he would make his government more transparent and accountable. It appears the Chief Minister is still not listening to the people of the Northern Territory. I fear we are in for more of the same, and face an uncertain future, with an unstable and dysfunctional government.

Today the member for Daly stated the only way forward was with a strong Henderson Labor government. I agree with the part 'the only way forward is for strong, stable government'. The other part is the part I struggle with; when he suggested the only way forward is with a strong Henderson Labor government.

The Chief Minister could not deliver stable government when he had a majority, how is he miraculously going to achieve that in a minority government where there is deep division? What

the government seems to be doing can be likened to the definition of insanity; that is, when someone continues to do the same thing over and over again and expects a different result. What we are told is they have a plan. I assume it is the same plan they had yesterday. What I see is the Labor Party, led by Paul Henderson, doing the same thing over and over again expecting a different result. I ask the people of the electorate make a judgment of the Henderson government's approach to doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I stand here today on behalf of the people of the Territory, my constituents in Sanderson, my partner, my children and my grandchildren. I ask all members to support the motion for a change for a fresh, strong, well-led team to give the much needed stability and security to the Territory. I commend the motion and ask members to support it.

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not support the motion. Today's motion is a serious one. It is the most serious motion I will ever see debated in this Chamber. When you put your hand up to be a member of parliament you do not expect this. Every election, I believe, provides a mandate.

My election as member for Fannie Bay gave me a mandate to represent the people of Parap, Fannie Bay and Stuart Park. As most people know, my seat is the most marginal in the Territory: 78 votes decided my seat in the last election. I am very aware of the responsibility I hold, and that I will be measured against the work I do in my electorate. I believe a member has a responsibility to represent all constituents. As I said in my first speech in this House, for those people who did not vote Labor, I will still work as hard as I can to ensure what matters to them and their families is what matters to me.

The size of our electorates provides an immediacy and intimacy to politics that can only be healthy for our democracy. It places the onus on all local members to be accessible. It requires us all to be approachable. Some call it grassroots politics; I call it accountable politics. We must have an open office door, we must have an open mind in order to best represent the people we have been elected to. That is what I intend to do for Fannie Bay, Parap and Stuart Park. Once you are elected you move forward. You have a job, you do it the best you can, and that job is to represent the people living in your electorate.

My election also gave the Chief Minister a mandate to lead a government that will take the Territory forward. I have every confidence in the Chief Minister, in his Cabinet and in my Caucus colleagues. I have every confidence the Chief

Minister has the best interests of Territorians at heart, that his Cabinet is trying to be the best government it can be, and that as a government team, we are taking the Territory forward. That is because we have a plan.

The Chief Minister clearly articulated that plan today. It is a plan for the whole of the Territory, for all Territorians. That is one reason why I have confidence in this government and in this Chief Minister. I have known the Chief Minister for 15 years. His leadership in the last couple of weeks, during what has been a very difficult time, has been outstanding. I have never been more certain in my confidence of his ability to lead the Territory. He is an excellent Chief Minister, and he confirmed that again today with a positive speech that outlined our plan for the Territory.

There is a reason the Territory has a strong economy and has been insulated, to a large extent, from the global financial crisis, and has a growing population. It has been the sensible, progressive leadership of successive Labor governments from the former member for Fannie Bay and the former member for Nhulunbuy, to the members for Wanguri and Karama. That is why I have confidence in the stewardship of the Territory by a Labor government. We do not always get everything right. No government does. I know, and have confidence in the ability of our Chief Minister, to provide a positive direction to Territorians; to make tough decisions and to deliver a stable government.

Over the last 12 months in my electorate, we saved East Point; we are about to knock down Wirrina; we have dollars for the Parap Police Beat - we just have to find a shopfront for it; we have a new seniors village for the old Waratah Oval; we have reopened the Road Safety Centre at Holtze Street in Parap; we are part of the rebuilding effort that will save the Railway Club; and part of the team that will rebuild the rock wall at Vestey's for the Sailing and Trailer Boat Clubs. We have forged a partnership with council to make sure the Parap recreation area, the old netball courts and the pool, remain for community sporting infrastructure. That is why I am a very happy member of a Henderson government team. I am happy to be part of that team. That is why the Chief Minister and his Cabinet, and my Caucus colleagues, have my complete confidence.

Mr CONLAN (Greatorex): Madam Deputy Speaker, I support this motion. I, like the member for Barkly, also was motivated and inspired by a young Territorian to do whatever I could to make the Territory a better place. It did not quite propel me into this job, but as a flow-on from my previous job into this line of work. The difference is that the young Territorian I am talking about is highlighted

today in the Coroner's report which has just been tabled. I take about young Jenissa Ryan.

The Coroner's report says Jenissa Ryan suffered a swollen left eye, a bruised right eye, laceration inside the lip to the left and bruising, bruising to the second and third left ribs, bruising to the right ribs, bruising to the left ear and a closed head injury. It was the opinion of the forensic pathologist that the direct cause of the deceased's death was a blunt force head injury. That occurred in January 2006. She died as a result of those injuries, being airlifted to Adelaide hospital.

When I heard the story a young Centralian who had been savagely attacked in Alice Springs, I was absolutely horrified. When she died as a result of those injuries a few days later in Adelaide, I was heartbroken. She was only 14 years old. That propelled me and gave me some inspiration to find a platform to make the Territory a better and safer place. There is no greater obligation a government has than to protect children. We have to re-establish law and order, and that has been the biggest single weakness of the Henderson Labor government. We have to give women and children in these communities the offer of physical security and some hope that, if they are abused or attacked, they can complain with the confidence their complaints will be investigated. While they are being investigated, they will be protected from further abuse.

These are things the rest of the country take for granted; they cannot be taken for granted in many communities around the Northern Territory. Until those basic conditions of security and safety are established, we cannot hope to address many of the other problems facing us in the Northern Territory.

Some of the greatest disappointment in listening to the member for Nelson during the course of the week was when he said this now went beyond his electorate of Nelson. He is now thinking about the broader Northern Territory, how this decision would affect it, and what he could do to improve the broader Northern Territory community.

There is no mention in his demands for improvement to all the Northern Territory - very much exclusive to the Top End. Those of us representing regional areas can only be left flat. I wonder what the constituents of Greatorex and the residents of Alice Springs and, indeed, the residents of Katherine, Nhulunbuy, and Tennant Creek think about these demands that the Chief Minister has succumbed to.

Even in Western Australia, we saw the Nationals lock in a watertight deal with the Liberal government in the form of the Royalties for Regions Program in an effort to resource regional Western Australia. We have seen nothing like this in these demands, or concessions or whatever you like to call them, put forward by the member for Nelson and accepted by the Chief Minister.

Has this decision secured more police for Alice Springs or Tennant Creek? Will we see any more police on the streets as a result of this deal done between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister? Has this decision secured more land release for affordable housing for low- to middle-income earners across regional Northern Territory? I will turn to some figures from the REINT which show the average weekly rental on a three-bedroom house in Alice Springs is \$430 a week. It is up 8.9% from the previous year. A two-bedroom unit in Alice Springs is in excess of \$350 a week. That is up 4.4%. I do not see any commitment by the Chief Minister or the member for Nelson to secure affordable housing and land release for regional Northern Territory. We again see the failure of the Northern Territory government to provide such land release, and affordable housing for Territorians, particularly in Central Australia. They have turned off 80 blocks in five years - 80 blocks in five years in Alice Springs.

Has this decision ensured the sealing of one of the Northern Territory's most important and vital infrastructure projects, the Mereenie Loop Road? There is nothing in there about the vital infrastructure project which is the Mereenie Loop Road, which the government has promised to seal for God knows how long. We have seen a change in language by the government, by the Treasurer; they will now seal the inner loop but not the outer loop etcetera. However, the government is still prepared to put \$300 000 into an IT Red Centre Way electronic tourism project, or whatever it is. It is very hard to put the finger on exactly what it is. This is the project where the tender went out of the Northern Territory; was given to an interstate contractor. We are setting up and putting money into such projects, but we are not providing the on-the-ground support by sealing the Mereenie Loop Road. It is supposed to be mobile ready and Internet ready. You cannot even get reception out there. I do not know how that is going to work. In this decision and the deal brokered between the Chief Minister and the member for Nelson, will we see the sealing of the Mereenie Loop Road? There is nothing in that 11-page document today.

Has this deal protected Centralians with cancer seeking support to have their treatment in Adelaide, despite the completion of the radiation oncology unit here in Darwin? Nothing on that at all. Has the decision cemented a private hospital

in Alice Springs? Nothing about that whatsoever. We are looking at hospital occupancy rates in Alice Springs at 107%. Hospitals have to run at somewhere between 80% and 85% to operate properly and efficiently. The hospital in Alice Springs is operating at 107%. It is an absolute no-brainer that the way to ease some of that congestion is to invest in private health care across the Northern Territory, something this government has refused to entertain and will not even consider. It is very disappointing the member for Nelson has not put that forward. I do not see a lot to do with health care across the Northern Territory in the 11 pages of demands put to the Chief Minister, which he readily accepted.

What about our sporting facilities? An ablution block at Traeger Park, for example. Where is that? What about an indoor netball facility for Central Australia? We have the highest number of registered netballers in the Territory in Alice Springs.

What about a detox facility? Where is the detox facility for Central Australia - more renal dialysis chairs? It is costing the Northern Territory \$170 000 per person for renal dialysis treatment. There are currently around 200 to 250 people requiring renal dialysis in Central Australia at \$170 000 per person. They are driven from their communities - wherever it might be, Hermannsburg or Areyonga - into Alice Springs three times a week over absolute shocking roads. Again, it brings me back to the Mereenie Loop.

The health care situation in the Northern Territory is almost insurmountable, but certainly will become unsustainable. We cannot sustain this. Where is the commitment to the health care of Territorians in this 11-page document between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister?

Importantly, will we see more Aboriginal people living in remote communities become job ready? Where is the commitment to get Aboriginal people off welfare and into jobs? There is nothing. There is nothing in this parliamentary agreement between the Chief Minister and the member for Nelson to tackle this very serious issue of getting Aboriginal people off welfare and into jobs.

Will we see the Northern Territory government actively pursue leasing arrangements so these economically deprived communities become fiscally self-sufficient? You cannot expect those living in remote communities, where there is no employment - you subsidise them through welfare and expect they will not turn to alcohol and other drugs. It is ridiculous. There is nothing in here regarding remote and regional Northern Territory.

I have said on a number of occasions in this House the one thing we should be doing, as a parliament in the Northern Territory, the one thing we can be leading the way on and punching above our weight, is outcomes for Aboriginal people. The Chief Minister has signed his life away to save his political neck, yet there is nothing in here on positive outcomes for Aboriginal people. Nothing about getting people into jobs, nothing about getting people job ready, nothing about actively pursuing leasing arrangements with traditional owners, so we can set up a tannery - for goodness sake, anything. You want 2000 m² in Central Australia to build a tannery, so those 40 or 50 young Aboriginal men aged between 18 and 35, who are fit, off the grog - they are all on welfare, they are being subsidised through welfare. What if we could get them into a real job? There is nothing in this agreement to tackle those issues.

I have said it before publicly, governments of both persuasions have failed, over the past 40 years, to provide any real inroads into issues facing Aboriginal Australia. The Labor Party of the Northern Territory should hang high on the wall of shame. The former Chief Minister, Clare Martin, failed to act on a report that forced the federal government's hand and, therefore, we had the intervention. What sparked the intervention was the former Chief Minister, Clare Martin's failure to act on the *Little Children are Sacred* report.

That is at the core of what SIHIP is all about. SIHIP was all about providing emergency housing. It was not about building million dollar homes throughout the regions of the Northern Territory. It was about providing emergency housing. It was, as the member for Fong Lim articulated to me in private yesterday, a bit of a stop gap. The money was there to provide emergency housing so those people living in overcrowded dwellings, with very poor outcomes, who were susceptible to abuse, would be given appropriate accommodation. That goes to the heart of this whole debate. That is why we have seen what has happened with the member for Macdonnell. That is why she has turned her back on the Labor Party.

We have not really heard anything in the debate today. Some of the members such as the members for Arafura and Arnhem, have articulated some issues facing Aboriginal Northern Territory, but nothing else. We have heard from the member for Stuart, who talked about getting test cricket for the Northern Territory. It is not about that. It is not about getting test cricket or building wave pools. It is about providing housing for the underprivileged. That is the majority of people living in remote and regional Northern Territory.

The government has failed to deliver emergency housing right across the Northern Territory. Why? The Chief Minister is caught up in his own issues instead of those issues facing the Northern Territory. The Labor government is so arrogant, they are so tired; they are a no-action government.

We can look back at some other broken promises. This is why this motion of no confidence has so much merit, perhaps not amongst those on the opposite bench, but resonating through the community of the Northern Territory.

In 2007, the government promised to keep power prices in line with inflation. In 2008, they actually promised to bring power prices down. The fact is that in 2009, power bills are up by 25%, almost \$1000 per household - another failed promise. It is a government lie. In 2008, they promised to keep the Territory budget in surplus. This year, they announced a \$201m deficit for 2010-11. In March, they promised 230 blocks would be turned off in Bellamack this year. In June, they revised that to just 90 - another broken promise. In March they promised 200 house blocks would be turned off in Johnston. So far no announcement, no plans for a new suburb have been made.

The government promised to introduce mandatory rehabilitation for repeat drunks. It has never been delivered on. They promised to hold judges to account - that has not happened. They promised to consult with Top End residents over the location of the INPEX workers' village - they failed to consult. They promised to bring gas from the Blacktip field onshore from 1 January 2009. We are still waiting as millions of dollars worth of diesel powers Territory generators - another broken promise.

The government failed to honour a pledge to reduce crime in the Northern Territory to the extent crime is so bad that business owners are actually sleeping on their premises as a last ditch effort to protect them against rising and spiralling crime. They failed to honour a promise to improve education standards for Indigenous Territorians. NAPLAN tests have shown that education outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians are actually going down. In fact, they are rock bottom - another broken promise.

The law and order issues just continue. They failed to stamp out gang violence across the Northern Territory. In one week, in Palmerston, nine people were assaulted - in one week. That is more than one a day.

The government failed in its efforts to secure a private practitioner to operate at Palmerston. The list goes on.

Will this agreement provide better outcomes for those living in the regions and remote parts of the Northern Territory? This agreement has stitched up a number of deals for the rural area, and the Top End. The rest of the Northern Territory appears to miss out.

I turn to Health problems. Despite spending almost double on health care compared to the national average, and having more beds per 1000 population, Territorians are forced to wait longer and longer for elective surgery. Lack of beds is the most common problem, with elective surgery waiting lists at RDH and ASH both operating at over 100% capacity. We do have the longest waiting lists in the country. It is getting worse. We were, last year, just behind the ACT and Tasmania. We now have the dubious honour of having the longest waiting lists in the country. People waiting at our hospitals are plagued by bed block, access block. That is defined as people who are waiting longer than eight hours in the emergency department for a bed. As I say, 107% occupancy rate at the Alice Springs Hospital and well above 100% at the Royal Darwin Hospital. In 1998-99, the NT ranked second in the country with 92% of people getting their elective surgery. Now we are ranked sixth with 69% of people receiving elective surgery.

We had some solutions, we still have some solutions - a new 130-bed hospital at Palmerston will deliver more beds in the first instance, and additional surgical facilities by its completion in 2023 ...

Mr TOLLNER: Madam Speaker, I move an extension of time of 10 minutes for the member for Grotorex to complete his comments, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr CONLAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Emergency department waiting times are also suffering due to dangerous bed occupancy rates, which I have just highlighted: well over 100% at Royal Darwin and Alice Springs Hospitals. In 2001, 60% of ED admissions were seen within the recommended time frame for their category. In 2009, only 52%, with a medium time wait of 43 minutes - that is the worst in Australia on both counts. We have seen that patients were treated in the back of ambulances. Despite the Territory Health budget increases well in excess of 90% since Labor first came to office in 2001, patients are still being treated in the back of ambulances.

The first stage of Palmerston hospital would be an emergency department with 30 beds and an emergency surgery theatre. This is to divert the majority of emergencies from Palmerston and the rural area to this ED rather than Royal Darwin Hospital.

Improving recruitment rates is a big problem. The Northern Territory government boasts about the amount of nurses they have recruited since coming to office. Health workers have the highest separation rate of any sector in the Northern Territory labour force. Every year, 44% of our health workers leave the Northern Territory. These departures are only just being offset by the number of new recruits.

Again, it is government spin, much like their police officer numbers and they put more police on the streets, but there is no mention of the attrition rates. Look at what they do, not what they say.

The collection of data for hospital funding is a great concern. It is blanket funding right across the Northern Territory; that is, last year's budget, new initiatives, inflation, minus efficiencies - that is clearly not good enough and it is not working. We see the situation with hospital boards - we still have three hospitals in the Northern Territory that are working illegally. They are still working outside the act.

The Minister for Health said he will look at the act. I believe that has been tweaked in some way to allow the minister to oversee the hospital, or at least to submit a report. I do not know how that is going to work - the minister will submit a report to himself? I do not know how that is going to work, or if it will work - perhaps it will be the member for Nelson.

The *Hospital Management Boards Act* and the hospital boards have to be reviewed, and we need to see the three hospitals - that is Tennant Creek, Katherine, and Gove - become compliant with the *Medical Services Act*, so we can get some local knowledge of what is required for our health care in the regions. Again, nothing in this parliamentary agreement - nothing about regional and remote Northern Territory. These hospitals are left to operate outside the act and the biggest losers in that are those living in these regions - in this case, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Gove.

I talk about the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme all the time and never miss an opportunity. We believe there is another model. The government has failed in its compassion for people in Central Australia wanting to utilise Adelaide hospital, despite the completion of an oncology unit in Darwin.

As my colleagues have said, over the past 12 months, Territorians have paid the price for the Henderson government's failed approach. They are a divided government; there is no question about that. The Chief Minister has pulled off the deal of a lifetime. He has, effectively, secured his Chief Ministership. I know the member for Karama must be absolutely disappointed, shattered, heartbroken that she will not be able to stick the knife in and seize the Chief Ministership for herself. The member for Nelson has ensured that. This is a great tragedy for the Northern Territory, and almost a great win for the Northern Territory because, as they say, perhaps better the devil you know ...

Ms Carney: They have been saved from Delia Lawrie.

Mr CONLAN: Yes, yes. Labor has had their chance to change, but they cannot change. They will not change. A vote for Labor is a vote for a government that fails to deliver and does not have any plans for the Northern Territory.

It is all whiteboard grandiose plans, reviews, committees and announcing media releases. We are not seeing anything happen; we are just seeing announcement after announcement. They announce media releases. 'Look at this media release'. Then, they word the media release: 'We are delivering'. You are not delivering anything; you are attempting to deliver. You are not actually delivering. Labor cannot manage the budget; that is very clear. Labor governments are hooked on debt. They love to rack up debt, and rack it up they do. They are paralysed and absolutely dysfunctional.

The member for Nelson had a chance today. This is what is so extraordinary; it is unbelievable to a point. The member for Nelson said this is a move that will create stability and certainty, but it is absolutely quite the opposite. This government is now paralysed by an Independent member of this parliament. The situation is completely untenable. The deal was done to keep the Chief Minister in power. It is absolutely astonishing - absolutely. It is simply to keep the Chief Minister in power. It is a pity, because the member for Nelson had a chance today to do something for the Northern Territory. No one expects anything on a silver platter. We do not expect to be handed government on the floor of the Chamber, but we know what people are thinking out there in the electorate. They have had an absolute gutful. You have reinforced it over the last couple of weeks with this divisive government that you are.

An election would have been a very good option. The member for Nelson had an option to do that today; to hand it back to the people. He

did not. So, after eight long years - eight long, long years - in government, the Henderson government, and the Martin government before that, have failed to deliver for the Northern Territory and, in particular, have failed to secure positive outcomes for regional and remote Northern Territory. Mr Henderson has had his go, Madam Speaker.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I speak against the motion brought before the House calling for a want of confidence in the Henderson government. I am both proud and humble to have been elected to this House 12 months ago, and equally proud to be part of a strong and stable government led by Paul Henderson, our Chief Minister. I am very proud to be part of the continuation of building on the eight years of hard work that Labor has already put in and delivered for Territorians.

As elected local members, it is our responsibility to travel throughout our electorates to talk to people, to listen to people, and see where they live and the challenges and the day-to-day issues they face. This is key to bringing back into this parliament what it is our constituency is telling us, and this feeds into the development of policy as to how we can best address the issues and meet the needs of Territorians, regardless of who they are or where they live. As the member for Nelson said in his address this morning, we are all here to do one thing; that is, do the best and work as hard as we can for Territorians.

It is certainly not an easy job, and it can be a daunting job, even a thankless job, and constituencies can and do have very high expectations. At the same time, it is also a very rewarding job. One of the challenges that all politicians face is finding the balance between their loyalty to those who elected them and the loyalty to a party. It is a burden which all of us at some time feel and it has, obviously, weighed very heavily on the shoulders of the member for Macdonnell. I respect her for the decision she has made. It is a big responsibility for those of us in this House who are elected to represent bush electorates. At the last election, there was a clear message about which political party Territorians living in the bush electorates wanted to be represented by in the Northern Territory parliament, with all seven bush seats going to the Labor Party.

This whole issue of representation is not about race, but about whom the constituency thinks is best positioned to represent them and be their voice in the parliament. In last year's election, my CLP opponent was Mr Djuwalpi Marika from Yirrkala, a fine man and a leader of the Rirratjinju clan. I certainly felt a little daunted to be running

against a traditional owner, but through our democratic process, the majority of the electorate chose me and Labor over CLP.

During the condolence motion in June to honour Mr Hyacinth Tungutalum, our first Aboriginal member of the Legislative Assembly, I listened with great interest to the subject of representation which the member for Port Darwin spoke about, and reflecting on his time as the CLP's then elected representative in the seat of Macdonnell. He said:

I have noted on many occasions in what are called 'Aboriginal seats' in this place; non-Aboriginal candidates have defeated Aboriginal candidates. The reason that has occurred is that Aboriginal people determining who their best representative is do not determine that based on the colour of their skin but on that person's capacity.

This is the very thing the member for Arnhem spoke about.

A key element in the debate on who gets voted in and who does not to represent Territorians is the ideological basis, the platform, the vision from which political parties and political representatives - not wanting to overlook Independent members from Nelson and Macdonnell – take their stand.

In returning to the very subject of this debate, the message which comes through clearly from my constituents, and especially my Indigenous constituents, is they did not and do not want a CLP government. These last few weeks have been an unsettling time, and an uncertain time for all Territorians, including the people of my electorate, and especially my Yolngu constituents. It has been a very public debate, and one which an organisation in my electorate weighed into last weekend.

On 6 August at the Garma Festival, the CEO of Laynhapuy Homelands, Ms Yananymul Mununggurr, issued a media release on behalf of the 1200 people which Laynhapuy Homelands provides services to. She said:

Our communities have been stressed and disrupted to the point of harm by the constant policy and administrative changes of recent years. The very last thing we need now is another change of government and direction. It is the CLP, not Labor, who was primarily responsible for the state of major communities that gave rise to the intervention. It was the CLP that was in government with absolute majorities for 23 of the 29 years prior to the intervention in 2007 and did nothing to address service

and development needs and allowed the massive backlog of housing need to grow. The Henderson government is strongly supported by Yolngu because we have been supported by good local members, not because we are their natural constituents or because they are faultless. The CLP has never supported homelands, the education of our children, our land and sea rights, or the permit system that protects our property rights, or our CDEP programs. What vision does the CLP have for our future, because they have certainly not consulted with us?

I was disappointed to see the media release from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition a few days later responding to Laynhapuy Homelands as well as the Northern Land Council. To suggest these Indigenous organisations are the lapdogs of the Labor Party and the Henderson government is simply wrong. It highlights the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's understanding is lacking of how these organisations work. They are beholden to nobody, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has made it very clear they are certainly not the friends of the CLP.

Since the launch of the Northern Territory Emergency Response in 2007, it has been an overwhelming two years for Yolngu people, together with most other Indigenous Territorians. While I have a view about the political motivation behind the Northern Territory Emergency Response, what it has done has put the spotlight squarely on the decades of neglect in remote Indigenous communities, and brings with it long overdue funding to close the gap on indigenous disadvantage, to see unprecedented spending on health and education and infrastructure.

With Labor governments at both federal and Territory level, we have a unique opportunity in partnership to move forward and improve the lives and living standards of Indigenous people, for families and for children. My Indigenous constituents have every right to expect the same levels of health, education, housing and opportunities for employment and training as my non-Indigenous constituents in the wealthier town of Nhulunbuy.

Much has been said about SIHIP in recent weeks, and indeed, in the House today. I am confident it will deliver new and refurbished houses over the five years of the program, and the administration costs will be at 11.4% and, hopefully, less. We all want to see new houses on the ground as fast as possible; however, the reality is a project on this scale was always going to take time.

The member for Fong Lim said this morning SIHIP is not a training program; this is a national emergency. One of the reasons SIHIP has taken time is because of the consultation involved with communities and traditional owners, and the negotiation of leases and formation of housing reference groups to talk about where these new houses should go, what they should look like, and how we can involve people living in these communities, and equip them with skills, training and employment, and jobs they will have for life. It is much more than a housing program. It is a training program, and it is a program which is about capacity building.

Consultation in the bush, and in Nhulunbuy electorate, was something the CLP was not well known for, let alone capacity building. The CLP cries long and loud about local government reforms and the introduction of shires, but it is an area which was completely neglected for 27 years.

The Local Government bill introduced by this government 18 months ago sought to deal with the performance of a large number of councils in delivering core local government services, and recognised that service delivery had been poor, and accountability standards often not met. In relation to these councils, a change had to occur, and change to a better system is what this government is delivering. Change is hard and change can be slow, but change in this area was essential, and it is happening.

The sealed roads in the community of Galiwinku, home to around 2000 people, are in a terrible state of repair. They will be fixed, but I can assure you they have not been in this state since 1 July 2008. They are in this state due to years of neglect under poor governance, under outdated and very ineffective legislation.

I could cite many improvements in my electorate in just eight years of Labor across health, education and law and order: an increase in police numbers, a permanent police presence, with a new police station at Galiwinku, and a takeaway liquor permit system, which has seen a dramatic reduction in antisocial behaviour, and which has become a model for other jurisdictions around the Territory and indeed interstate. There has been a \$900 000 upgrade to the Yirrkala health clinic, and on top of that a self-care renal dialysis unit installed alongside. The high school has an air-conditioned gymnasium and multipurpose hall – indeed, the very last high school in the Northern Territory to receive one, and only delivered when Labor came to power in 2001.

On the subject of schools, as the Chief Minister said this morning, in 27 years of CLP

government not one Indigenous student graduated Year 12. Last year at the homeland community of Garrthalala, in my electorate, seven Yolngu students graduated with their Year 12 Northern Territory Certificate of Education. If I had not been here in parliamentary sittings, I would most definitely have been at what I understand was a very moving and certainly landmark ceremony.

This government is forward looking. This debate today is about continuing to move forward, delivering on the many initiatives it has started, and doing all it can to improve the lives of Territorians, and doing all it can to put in place parliamentary reforms to ensure we have a government that is open, transparent and accountable. Today is also about providing certainty to Territorians about the future; about this government having the support of the majority of this House to move forward.

The member for Nelson has had a very difficult decision to make today, but he is a man of great integrity who is, and always has been, intent on doing what is best for Territorians.

Madam Speaker, this government is of that same view, and I do not support this motion.

Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, obviously, I am going to support the motion, because I believe this government has to go. It is bad news for Territorians and particularly bad news for Indigenous Territorians. They have been pulling the wool over too many people's eyes for far too long.

What prompted this debate we are having is the member for Macdonnell's complete - and I believe completely justified - exasperation at the way this government is handling the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program. We have heard some debate about that today - not a great deal. Ministers and members on the other side are sitting there blowing their trumpets saying how good they are. I suppose somehow they need to defend their record in government. You have had members on this side of the House highlight how much spin and hot air there really is. Very few people on the other side of the House have stood up and tried to defend their role in this housing debacle, this complete failure, to any effort at all.

Given the unique circumstances I come from, I thought I could shed some light on how we got into this situation in the first place: the lead-up to the intervention. As a member of the federal parliament from the Northern Territory - there are probably only two of us in the Northern Territory who have had an inside view and input into how the intervention was structured, put together, and

all the causes. I refer to both myself and Senator Nigel Scullion, who was also very much involved with Indigenous Affairs minister, Mal Brough, and John Howard at the time.

As the Opposition Leader said this morning, the intervention was a creature of a report that was commissioned by the Northern Territory government, the *Little Children are Sacred* report, and all members here today are familiar with that report. The report outlined horrific conditions, horrific situations, and horrific problems occurring in Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory.

As the Opposition Leader said this morning in his opening remarks to this debate, the Chief Minister at the time, Clare Martin, received the report six weeks before it was made public. She had a full six weeks to dwell on that report, and how she would respond to that report at the time. She released that report publicly on 15 June 2007. The federal minister at the time, Mal Brough, made this statement on 15 June after he downloaded a copy of that report from the Internet. He was not given the courtesy of being provided with that report by the Territory government; he had to dig it up from the Internet. He said:

Although I was not provided the report or its findings ahead of its public release today, I am committed to working with the Northern Territory government to do whatever is necessary to bring an end to this insidious behaviour in Indigenous communities.

He went on:

I urge the Northern Territory government - and other governments - not to be afraid to take the tough and sometimes difficult decisions desperately needed to end this appalling abuse of children.

He said that on the day the report was publicly released, after having found it himself.

There was no courtesy shown to him by the Northern Territory government. The Northern Territory Chief Minister was, at the time, the minister for Indigenous Affairs. Having had virtually no contact, no dialogue with the Chief Minister after attempting several times to speak with her about this issue, a full six days later - sorry, I should say in that intervening period, minister Brough and the public were told by the Chief Minister, on the release of that report, the Northern Territory government would issue a response within three months. She sat on this report for six weeks saying nothing, then said publicly: 'We will respond to this report within

three months' - a full three months, an absolutely scandalous situation.

Six days after getting that report off the worldwide web, Mal Brough and the Prime Minister announced the National Emergency Response to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory - an Emergency Response. It was seen that this was a national emergency. Kids were being sexually molested, they were living in absolutely horrific conditions, they had appalling education outcomes, and they had terrible health outcomes. It was just a national disgrace.

We in the Northern Territory would have to be a bit silly not to be aware that some of these problems existed. I suggest all of us in this Chamber have visited various remote Indigenous communities over the years, and we have seen some of the degradation and squalor these people live in. I put it to members here the *Little Children are Sacred* report lifted the lid on circumstances and acts of depravity that were occurring, that even the most toughened of us would have seen. It highlighted problems from the top to the bottom, to the east, to the west, of the whole of the Northern Territory. What was the Labor government's response in the Northern Territory? It was to try to sweep the problem under the carpet - try to hide the problem.

What happened then? Six days after minister Brough was aware of it, the federal government announced the National Emergency Response. The day before that announcement, Mal Brough issued a media release titled 'NT response - Underwhelming and poses more questions than it answers'. It started off:

Federal Minister for Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, said today the NT response to the Little Children are Sacred report left a number of unanswered questions.

Mr Brough said the quantum of funding was not a lot over five years compared to the resources the NT gets for Indigenous people and compared to the Commonwealth response to the Emergency.

Again, the word 'emergency'. It was seen as an emergency, similar to the bushfires in Victoria or Cyclone Tracy when it hit Darwin, or the earthquakes in Newcastle.

There is only a commitment for 16 extra police ...

This is August in 2007:

... 16 extra police over five years, which begs the question as to what commitment the NT is giving to the ongoing law and order needs of the 73 communities affected - both now and beyond the Emergency.

All the NT could come up with was 16 extra police. The report clearly identified that the rule of law had broken down completely, and the best the NT could do was provide 16 extra police.

Mr Brough said that he felt the miserly commitment to education was not consistent with Clare Martin's lecturing about longer term plans and her undertaking to ensure that schools were properly resourced.

A mere 26 extra teachers and 15 classrooms would seem to cater for 300-400 students. Given Clare Martin's admission that there are some 2000 kids not even enrolled, never mind the massive number not attending, there appears to be a substantial capacity commitment still outstanding.

He said:

I also wonder what the \$0.5m over five years is going to do for alcohol rehabilitation and what additional commitments they need to make.

Part of the report identified alcohol as a major problem. What could the Territory government do? They put up \$500 000 over five years ...

Mr Conlan: \$100 000 a year.

Mr TOLLNER: \$100 000 a year to rehabilitate people with chronic alcohol problems. Brough said:

I am underwhelmed by what was promised to be a big bang, long-term commitment. It seems underdone, given the magnitude of the problem that the report uncovered.

It is hardly a long-term commitment to the safety of children - in fact, like the report, it is light on with regard to the immediate safety needs of the current generation of children.

That is what minister Brough said in August. On 18 September, minister Brough put out a media release headed 'Funding for major Indigenous housing projects'. In it, he said:

The Howard government will invest a huge \$793m in Indigenous housing, which will go a long way to addressing the backlog in unmet housing need in Indigenous communities across the Northern Territory.

Further on it said:

During the period of the emergency response, the Australian government is committed to bringing the quality of housing in remote communities to acceptable standards as quickly as practicable, and rents charged will recognise the actual condition of the premises ...

Madam Speaker, the *Little Children are Sacred* report identified there were massive problems in Indigenous communities. The rule of law had broken down. Alcohol abuse was a major problem, along with drug abuse and pornography. It was identified that a lot of this stemmed from massive overcrowding in houses. The Emergency Response focused on getting houses into these communities quickly. It looked at the picture and it said it would put immediate five-year leases on townships, do away with the permit system on townships and the main roads going into those townships.

It would put in place government business managers; that is, tsars of government, people who had the ability to direct both Territory and federal government departments the way they wanted in those townships, so bureaucracy could not get in the way. It also did a number of other things, setting aside the *Racial Discrimination Act* - bearing in mind this is a national emergency that we are dealing with and we need houses built fast. We need lots of houses built fast. That is why all that was done, because we needed to get rid of the roadblocks that inhibited building houses quickly.

Over the weeks following, Mal Brough, Senator Scullion, and anybody else who was interested, started scouring the country for cheap housing options. We looked at flat pack houses out of South Australia. We looked at shelters that came out of Cape York. You could build a shelter for somewhere around \$30 000 to \$35 000. Very simple, no kitchen facilities, no bathroom facilities, but it was there to meet an emergency need. We even looked at our local inventor, John Waldmann, who won the New Inventors Award for his panel. He could build a house relatively cheaply, under \$100 000, to lock-up stage, very quickly on an Aboriginal community. That was the focus. That was the focus because we had identified there was chronic housing demand in remote communities. What happened then? Well, for a whole range of reasons, which I will not go into now, there was a change of government.

We saw the new federal Labor government come in. Federal Labor, during the election campaign and afterwards, said they supported the National Emergency Response; the intervention. They were committed to keeping it going. They had some different ideas on how Howard and Brough handled the response. They said Aboriginal people had not been consulted on five-year leases, on whether they should do away with the permit system, etcetera: 'We, unlike Brough and Howard, will consult'.

The other thing they said was, if we are going to spend a whole heap of money on houses, let us get some other outcomes apart from housing. The thing is Labor failed to realise - and deep in their hearts have never really thought - there was an emergency out there in the first place. The desire to act quickly and decisively has never been with Labor. In fact, there are elements within Labor who want to see the intervention fail. They are setting it up to fail because, when you look at the key performance indicators in the building contracts, it is not how quickly you can build a house, how cheaply you can build a house, how quickly you can get people to do it; it is about how many Aboriginal people you have employed. How many Aboriginal people have you trained? How many Indigenous businesses have you left as a legacy in those communities? It is not about getting houses on the ground quickly and fixing up the needs, and meeting the chronic shortage of housing in these communities.

It sickens me, sitting here, listening to that drill across the other side, the member for Daly, going on about training programs. We are dealing with an emergency. I take my hat off to the member for Macdonnell. She is one person who goes out into the community and sees her electorate. I do not know how any member who has a large number of Indigenous people in their electorate can walk into their communities, see people living in chicken coops under bits of tin, 20 people to a house, and can come into here and say: 'Oh no, just hold back, we need to consult' ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member to complete his remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr TOLLNER: It blows me away to listen to the member for Nhulunbuy going on about all these training programs. What about the need for housing? What about what was uncovered in that *Little Children Are Sacred* report? The degradation, the filth, the sexual molestation - all that sort of stuff - is disgusting. To sit there and somehow justify that after two years you have not built a single damn house is appalling. You have

to go. You have to go on principle. You are not up to the job. That is why we are having this debate

The member for Macdonnell has had a gutful, and I take my hat off to her. In the last week I have changed my opinion about the member for Macdonnell 180°. I now believe that she is a woman of principle. We are not going out the back and having a smoke and she is saying how terrible things are and these people do not understand. She has actually done something about it. She has called attention to the failure of this government. That is what she has done. Every time we come into this parliament, every time we pick up the newspaper, we look at this litany of spin the government puts out - a litany of deceit.

The government is deeply divided. The member for Arafura - one minute she is in, the next minute she is out. We all know the member for Arnhem has the knives out. We all know the divisions that are happening in the party. No, it is one big happy family as far as the spin line goes out.

During the last sittings we had a debate about Land Development Corporation. You sit there and ask question after question. What have you planned? 'No, we have no plans, just pass this so we can make plans, so we can do the foundation work; I will get surveyors out there to look at something or other'.

We reluctantly passed the legislation with lack of information. Three days later, bingo, you announce a whole heap of 150 m² blocks of land. That is deceit - absolute deceit. The member for Nelson was the one copping the end of it. Tell me he wants 150 m² blocks just down the road from his electorate. He is copping it, and I cannot understand how he can do a deal with such a deceitful mob. It is just crook - absolutely crook.

You talk about paralysis; cannot make a decision. The classic one is Tiger Brennan Drive. In 2003, the bill for Tiger Brennan Drive was estimated to be approximately \$27.5m. Argue for a few years, 2009 and now it is \$110m. You have cost taxpayers almost \$80m because of your prevarications and dithering.

The oncology unit, promised in 2001. In 2002, you allocated \$14m in a mini-budget, it disappears somewhere. Now, you are getting an oncology unit built by the Commonwealth for \$35m and you have not put one single red cent in yourselves. Disgraceful - absolutely disgraceful.

During the last election, in my own electorate, big problems at Bagot. 'We are going to build a police station'. Where is the police station?

Where is the post? Where are the police who drive out there? It seems that every night or every second night I am taking phone calls from people saying: what about the noise, what about the rubbish, these people are drunk. There are signs everywhere saying 'prescribed area, no drinking here'. Every Territory Housing place has a big sign on it: 'prescribed area, no drinking here'. You are not allowed to drink. You walk one foot inside and look around, there are stubbies and casks, broken bottles, and vomit in the stairways.

You ask what about Territory Housing and you are told Territory Housing does not tolerate any antisocial behaviour, not at all. Ask anyone who has a Territory Housing residence in their electorate if antisocial behaviour is tolerated there. It is a joke - an absolute joke.

My electorate office, a classic one, 100 m², takes 12 months to do a basic fit-out. I do not expect any special treatment, but we are members of parliament. We think people like to go into an electorate office, visit their member of parliament - 12 months. I expect the furniture might arrive in the next three to four weeks. Good to have some furniture in there. I have an office now. Put a bit of levity in things.

My good friend, the member for Port Darwin, dropped this on my desk a minute ago, tabled today: Northern Territory government logo up the top, very proudly done - Pastoral Landlord Annual Report 2006-07. What do they have to say? Feral camels in Central Australia. Feral camels occurring in SA, WA, Queensland and the NT and are an emerging pest. Kevin, in Canberra, has decided to dispatch about 400 000. We find out today they are an emerging pest. This one is going to top it all off. I do not know how long ago this came in, whether it was 10 minutes ago, an hour ago. It comes from the Chief Minister: 'Chief Minister Paul Henderson said today's vote in the Assembly sets the Territory up ...

Members interjecting.

Mr TOLLNER: Goodness me! We have not had the vote yet. He is already putting out media releases. This is arrogance to the max - absolutely arrogance to the max! How can this government be trusted? How can it be trusted?

I look at my good friend, the member for Nelson. I really have questioned myself about his judgment over the last couple of days, particularly today. I cannot understand the deal he has done - this grubby deal that he has cooked up with the Chief Minister. I look at the member for Nelson's electorate. When he ran in 2001, out of 3525 votes, the Labor Party picked up 9.7%, which is 343 of the primary vote. In 2005, Labor

picked up 470 votes out of 3771 formally cast votes, which is a massive 12.6%. In the last election, Labor was in with a real show. There were 3774 votes, of which Labor got 292, which represents 8.7% Labor voters. In the last three elections, the best Labor had done in the electorate of Nelson is 12.6%!

He said: 'Oh, I thought long and hard about this. I talked to God, sat on it, and I consulted here and there, and I talked to my electorate'. Well, 12.6% of them might have told him 'Jump in bed with the big fella, keep him in there'. I know what the other 87.4% would be thinking! I would be surprised if they were saying 'Jump in bed with this shambolic, useless, deceitful government!' I would be very surprised at that. Over the past 12 months, Territorians have paid a high price for Hendo's failed approach and his divided government. It is an absolutely disgraceful government.

Labor had their chance to change. Hendo said he would listen ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, I remind you that you refer to members by their titles.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes, Madam Speaker. The Chief Minister said he would listen. He said he would hear Territorians, but he has not. A vote for Labor is a vote for the government that failed to deliver, which does not have any plans for the Territory, cannot be trusted with the plans they have, and will certainly not deliver on any of them. The sad thing is when they do deliver outcomes, they end up happening years later at massively increased cost.

Labor cannot manage a budget. Every single Territorian now is in debt \$26 000 per person - absolutely terrible. They are paralysed and dysfunctional; they have to go. That is why we must support this motion.

Dr BURNS (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I will be the last speaker for government, and I will try to wrap up the debate from the government side. I can say, as other speakers have, it is a very serious debate. Overwhelmingly, it has been a debate that has been had in the right spirit within this House. Given the serious nature of it, given the passions, the commitment, the issues involved, this House is to be commended for the way in which it has approached this debate.

The important elements of the arguments have been outlined by the Opposition Leader and by the Chief Minister. The Opposition Leader talked about recent contemporary events, the member for Macdonnell leaving the Cabinet and the

Australian Labor Party and going to sit on the crossbenches, and the important issues the member for Macdonnell has raised. On both sides, we have acknowledged important issues around SIHIP the member for Macdonnell raised.

The Leader of the Opposition certainly alluded to many issues, starting in 2001, particularly around the *Little Children are Sacred* report and reports from the Mutitjulu community on national television about sexual abuse. A number of members have referred to the Northern Territory Emergency Response. That is a very important program and continues to be, and is supported by this government.

Naturally, there are different viewpoints on the Emergency Response, and it is something that has become highly politicised. The member for Fong Lim alluded to some of those elements previously. A number of people have referred to former Chief Minister, Clare Martin. I say, in her defence, I believe she is an honourable, decent person who always had, and continues to have, the best interests of the Northern Territory at heart. I know, from being in Cabinet at that time, it was her aim to respond to the *Little Children are Sacred* report through a comprehensive, holistic approach through all Northern Territory government departments, with a budget allocation behind it. It can be argued that was tardy and was overwhelmed by the Commonwealth. People will have their own viewpoints on that. I put on the record here one aspect of what this House needs to take notice of.

I listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition, and I have to say that I was dismayed by his references to the former member for Arnhem, Jack Ah Kit. He is another person in my book who has always had ...

A member interjecting.

Dr BURNS: Well, I must have misunderstood what you said. There were talks about consultants, there have been articles in the newspapers, and I took that to be the former member for Arnhem. I also believe he is a decent man. He has a long history in Indigenous affairs and has fought long and hard in that area.

The Chief Minister, naturally, outlined the achievements of the government, right from 2001 with Clare Martin as Chief Minister, and also when he succeeded Clare Martin in 2008. There are a range of achievements of this government, and governments going back to 2001, which he rightly pointed to, around parliamentary reform and the economy. The Chief Minister alluded to the fact the economy is not about numbers, it is actually about people. This is a government that has paid

a lot of attention to the economy, to business and to safeguarding jobs within the Northern Territory.

Many speakers have commented on their portfolio areas. I do not intend to go into much detail about that tonight, except to emphasise what the Treasurer, the member for Casuarina and others said; this is a government that supported business. There is no doubt, when we came to government in 2001, the Northern Territory economy was in pretty poor shape. We have weathered a few things regarding the economy, the tourism industry and 9/11, the collapse of Ansett, SARS, and now the global financial crisis. There has been a range of issues I believe government has stepped up to the plate and tried to address, and has successfully safeguarded our economy.

We are also a government that is working very cooperatively and collaboratively with the Commonwealth government regarding the stimulus package, which I believe is delivering results in our economy, in infrastructure, particularly for our schools, and sustaining employment across the Northern Territory.

The Chief Minister also put front and centre this government's commitment to closing the gap. Indigenous issues and Indigenous affairs are always an area where people have strong and passionate feelings, and that has come out here today. The member for Macdonnell has put her views and her feelings squarely on the *Parliamentary Record*. The other Indigenous members on this side, and also the member for Brainting, have also put their views. It is plain, from what the Indigenous members on this side said, they are fully supportive of this government; they are fully supportive of our Chief Minister.

I particularly pick up on what the member for Arnhem talked about. This day is something more than a story in the newspapers, something more than a vote on the floor of this House; it is about unity, and it is about a journey. She alluded to the fact that the member for Macdonnell has determined what her future will be, and it will not be with the Labor Party. She also spoke very clearly of her admiration and respect for the member for Macdonnell. I know all members on this side feel that way. We do feel that way. We recognise the strong feelings the member for Macdonnell has on this issue, and justifiably so. She has made her feelings known within this parliament, and within the broader community of the Northern Territory, and beyond. There is a very important issue that was raised by the member for Arnhem and others; that is, the recognition of Indigenous members with an Indigenous background. We need to be able to recognise that.

This Westminster system has a long tradition of hundreds and hundreds of years, and I believe it is a robust system. I believe some of the pain and feeling and strong views on certain issues come about because of people's experience - and it is a deep experience; we all recognise that. The challenge for us, as a legislator, and members of this Assembly, is to recognise that. As the members for Arnhem, Stuart, and Arafura said, the demography of the Northern Territory is changing.

The numbers of Aboriginal people are increasing within this Territory. I think it was the member for Arafura who said when you look at it as a percentage of people who stay here more or less over a lifetime, it is probably even a larger percentage. We are in a state of profound social change within the Northern Territory, and within this legislature, and there will be pain, suffering, and disagreements, but it is up to us, a mature legislature and a mature Northern Territory, to work through those issues, and to work for the betterment and welfare of people of the Northern Territory.

That brings me to the member for Nelson, who made it very clear the oath he took as a member of this Legislative Assembly means a lot to him. Obviously, he has agonised over the last week or so about what position he will take within the vote we are about to take after the Leader of the Opposition has summed up his motion. It is a crucial vote. I know it has been very difficult for the member for Nelson - and I suppose there has been a lot of discussion about that. I commend the member for Nelson. I have not always seen eye to eye with the member for Nelson, but I respect the member for Nelson, and I respect his sincerity.

I can understand the disappointment on the other side of the Chamber. I can really understand that, but to make accusations that the member for Nelson has, somehow, joined the Labor Party - everyone rejects that. Everyone who knows the member for Nelson knows he is a fiercely independent person who thinks for himself. He has come to his decision on the way he will vote today - and he outlined it very clearly earlier today - and he took his responsibility he has sworn on oath. He has also taken the legislation that governs us and that we all supported here in amendments to the Northern Territory *Electoral Act*. There are very specific provisions within that act around a special general election, and the considerations that have to be taken into account.

I am sure the member for Nelson received the same advice as I did from the Solicitor-General. The first option is to try to form a government without going to a special general election. That

was the last option foreshadowed by the Leader of the Opposition. That was his public position, and it was also the position on this side that a general election was the last option.

It concerns me that I have heard a number of members opposite move away from that and say they thought an election was the best option. That is, to some degree, at odds with the position that has been taken consistently by the Leader of the Opposition. I do not want to comment further on that, but I believe it was very noticeable in what was said here today.

I was also concerned at some of the words that were used about grubby deals - grubby deals around this agreement that the member for Nelson has signed with the Chief Minister about a way forward for stable government. We acknowledge there has been a period of instability, and the member for Nelson also publicly commented on that. He has been looking very carefully at this team and whether we can offer stable government over the next three years. I can assure this House, as other speakers have done, that we are a strong united team of 12. We are ready to move forward and meet the challenges of the next three years, and I believe the member for Nelson looked at that.

The member for Nelson also outlined that he saw a proposition between the government that was elected 12 months ago which has a mandate in partnership with one Independent, compared to the CLP with 11 members and having to be in partnership with two Independents. He did not reflect adversely at all on the member for Macdonnell, but he said he believed that was a more stable relationship.

In the agreement that has been signed here, there is nothing unusual about this. This is the sort of agreement that has been entered into in other states and territories within Australia. The example of the ACT, and other historical examples and contracts, were given by the Chief Minister and other speakers here tonight.

Let us look at the aims of the agreement:

- *provide for stable government for the people of the Northern Territory.*
- *enhance Parliamentary democracy and to ensure an accountable and transparent government, public service and Parliament.*
- *provide for Mr Wood to be consulted in areas of government policy and also issues where he has specific interest*

More importantly, under No 2:

2. *To enhance inclusion and transparency in decision-making, in consultation with opposition and other MLAs, the government shall: (i) form a Council of Territory Cooperation comprised of 2 Government Members, 2 Opposition Members and at least one Independent member; (ii) commit to reforms of Parliamentary procedures; and (iii) progress the matters in Appendix A and any matters added by agreement.*

I believe that is a crucial part of this agreement. It is all public; it is all transparent. Its aims are clear and it involves this whole House. It involves a new way of doing business and moving forward with government, and it is one that has been embraced by the Chief Minister that government is committed to - not only in word, but also in spirit. As a minister, I will be looking to cooperate not only with the member for Nelson, but also with the Council of Territory Cooperation. I believe that is very important. I believe the member for Nelson has also made it very plain and put this government on notice. He was very plain in what he had to say on the floor of this parliament; that if this agreement is not adhered to, if there is instability, if things are not done in the right spirit and there is not proper engagement, he will terminate that agreement. He made his options very clear on the floor of parliament today. That is either a partnership with the CLP and another Independent, or going to a general election. There is no mollycoddling in this agreement. The member for Nelson has made his views very clear and has put this government on notice against this particular agreement that is there for all the public to see. I believe that is a very important issue that needs to be taken into account.

I have already alluded to a few of the speakers. I do not want to tarry on what I have to say. Quite enough has been said already here today, but all speakers from this side have demonstrated unity of purpose. They have also demonstrated the diversity of experience and, moreover, an important commitment to the people of the Northern Territory in the very large issues that confront us.

I will finish by picking up something the member for Brennan said about new members and their commitment. I can see that. I can see that in the member for Brennan; he is a very keen new member. I compliment the member for Brennan for his offering here this evening, and also the member for Katherine and, believe it or not, the member for Greatorex spoke very well here today. The member for Brennan said we should not hold anything against younger or newer members. I certainly do not have that, and

I welcome the contributions made by new members on both sides of the House.

I reiterate my commitment as the member for Johnston. I have been proud to represent the people of Johnston over eight years. Madam Speaker, in your offering you talked about the people of Nightcliff. I assure the member for Brennan I have not run out of steam. I am at the markets every Sunday come hail, rain or shine - and there have been a few bits of hail and rain in the last couple of weeks and months. I am there every Sunday, and I am still out there doorknocking and representing the people of my electorate. I am still listening to what they say and still trying to reflect what they say on the floor of this parliament.

Madam Speaker, I will not be asking for an extension of time. I believe tonight government has demonstrated a unity of purpose, a unity of will. I have indicated my respect for all offerings of members opposite, and both Independents. I am acknowledging there have been difficult times; there have been mistakes. I believe this is a government that should continue to govern. We do have plans; we have foreshadowed them. The Chief Minister has foreshadowed them. The member for Nelson has come under a lot of criticism, but there has been a method to the decision he has made. He has also made it very plain he wants transparency, results, and adherence to the agreement that has been signed.

Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting this motion. I believe I have presented, on behalf of government, the reasons why we will not be supporting this motion.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it has been stated on numerous occasions during this day how important this motion is. At the outset, we have to be clear about what we have been discussing. A lot of discussion has centred on the decision that has been agreed between the Chief Minister and the member for Nelson. However, we need to take the initial step; what brought us to this position. It is a want of confidence prompted by a problem that has been quite clear and demanded a response. I acknowledge the contributions made from both sides, those who stood and drew attention to the problem; being an administration that has lost its way. That it is plainly and clearly divided cannot be concealed. It is plain to see, the evidence is there for all: the failure to deliver results; the statements that have been made publicly; the shock result of that last nasty campaign that was run some 12 months ago when the community said 'Enough is enough'. They spoke very plainly then. That was a mark in the sand. That should have rung alarm bells.

There was, of course, the statement 'From this point forth, I shall listen'. From that point forth, it began to unravel. What is the purpose of all this? To advance and prosper the true welfare of all Territorians. That is what brought us to this point. We have had these discussions before. I feel I give the same speech every time, but now government is listening. Why are they listening? Because their political lives depend upon it.

Before going down that path we need to recognise we are actually talking about a problem and a solution. The problem, however, needs to be dwelt upon. Does this solution that has been agreed to by two parties here make the problem go away? That is what has to be tested. Will it work or not? We now have the job of testing this to see whether the underlying problem will be addressed.

The member for Nelson has weighed this very, very carefully. I have known the member for Nelson for many years, even before coming into this Chamber. I will continue to work with and trust the member for Nelson. I understand what the member for Nelson is endeavouring to do. I have some reservations. Whilst I acknowledge and have no reserve in my recognition and respect for the process the member for Nelson has gone down, I still have the underlying reservation, because in the explanation that was provided I did not get the sense the true nature of the problem was referred to. More reference was given to the solution. Without clear definition, and clear addressing of a defined problem, we cannot be certain the solution applied - in this case, a deal between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister specifically - will work. That is my concern.

As the Opposition Leader, the member for Nelson and I both know we share similar interests in bringing about reform and change, respecting that my team and I will endeavour to see what progress can be made, because, mark my words, that which has been agreed to now by this Labor government has been put on the table again and again, and rejected - and rejected outright.

At the time the concerns were being raised and the community was deeply concerned about the handling of Indigenous Affairs, an offer was made by the former Opposition Leader, with the support of a very small opposition, that was treated with contempt and a joke. An offer was put on the table to work together, something bigger than the parliament. It was rejected. Now, you are interested. Things that you would not consider before, now you will consider. The prison - no consultation; steadfastly refused to even consider an alternative location - until now. Have you really changed?

Labor has refused to consider essential reforms to the functions of parliament - until now. What has changed? Have you changed inside, or are you just adjusting your position? That is the question that remains to be answered. Is there, in effect, essentially, genuine change that we can see? How will we see the change? By results that benefit Territorians. They are fed up to the back teeth with spin. The deceit has been exposed, quickly to be covered up. I cannot believe this terrible oversight of putting out a media release saying the vote has already been secured; announcing it as though the parliament is just an appendage of some spin machine upstairs - how dishonourable is that?

On the very day when your integrity is in question, out comes the spin machine, presuming upon the parliament, making this just some kind of annexe to other serious operation upstairs; that our words have no effect. The words will remain. They will remain on the record, and the deal has been struck between two. The problem, I believe, is still question out there. I am not sure whether this solution will address the core problem, because the warning signs are there already. That media release may be a small thing, but it is a big thing for me. It speaks very loudly on this day.

Labor has repeatedly denied that its toothless Environmental Protection Authority needed reform - until now. Now, there is a change; now there is a consideration. That is what concerns me. That is why the appetite, the desire, the interest in change, has increased within the community. Please listen to what the community is saying. Listen to the people out there. What they want to see is significant change, measurable results, an administration to actually work.

What troubles me is, I understand, the agreement has been brokered between two; it was not brokered with the Cabinet. They were unaware of it. This agreement has questions over it. Perhaps there are answers; I do not know. Where does authority now rest? Does it rest with the committee? Does it rest with the Cabinet? Does the Chief Minister carry authority, or has the authority been outsourced to the member for Nelson? Will it feed that central question in a positive way regarding stability? Will this construct produce results? Will it build a house? Will it take down law and order? Will it effectively change the culture of the parliament, which we have desired, and I have argued for years? Will it change the culture?

I compliment you, member for Johnston. Your contribution gave me some cause for hope because the manner in which you responded to this debate showed a change of tenor. Can it actually be sustained? I keep going back. I have

an underlying sense that the actual problem remains, that you are just changing position to satisfy a desire for power and bugger the consequence. It is not until the difference is made that it can be measured in someone else's life - that you feel safer in the street, you have a house built, or education standards improve - that the champagne corks should be popping. That is when the celebrations should occur, and that is what I, and my team, will remain watchful of.

This most serious of motions, which was prompted by a very serious problem, not overstated, was not approached in a way that they thought here is an opportunity - never, never. There was an opportunity the media referred to when there was a similar crisis not so long ago over this Labor administration; we did not go down that path. We were caned for it because some people think - the media in particular, one agency specifically - this is some kind of blood sport, some kind of competition.

It is far more serious than that because the results must be measured in the lives of other people. That is why, on that other occasion I thought not. However, on this occasion when there was the second disruption, significant disruption - as a politician who gets up and reads the *NT News* every day, if this business started happening on this side, what would be the response over there? How would it be portrayed in the *NT News*? I cannot believe what is happening in front of me. The community is looking at this incredible dysfunctional family outing one another, saying the most horrendous things, they are being rotten to the core, 'Do not trust this person they are a liar', and my colleagues are liars. This insidious business is going on - backstabbing and all sorts of stuff going on - and our community is standing there asking: 'What the hell is going on here?' Now, it has been fixed miraculously.

I will occupy this space and my team will too. That which has been put on the record by my colleagues today has been a response to the underlying problem that is manifest in so many areas, principally in the issue of a failure to build houses.

My compliments specifically to the member for Fong Lim for a very good analysis of the heart of this problem: the failure to build a house to provide shelter in a time of need which was prompted by an emergency. The care and protection of the vulnerable has now been changed, and there is this casual approach. You may be privy to certain things that I do not understand, but this casual response to something so horrific - I still cannot come to terms with. I saw it. If this was to occur in my electorate, in a number of houses, it just would not be able to be

conceived. It would shock us all. However, it happens far from here, and the response seems to be casual.

Member for Macdonnell, as I have said on a number of occasions, I have observed you, and I have been able to discern someone who knows what principle is, and has found a place on that principle. I was moved by your contribution today, member for Macdonnell. Your quiet words should bear a testimony and witness over how we respond from now on. Though the media will read this, and many in the community will read this, you have now been sidelined because the power has shifted.

This is a warning for us. If we think in those terms that the power balance has shifted, and so the issue the member for Macdonnell has raised is now no longer important, we will have all failed and missed the point. There is a silence now, perhaps, of this issue. If we do not respond and listen more keenly to those who are silent and far from this place, we will have failed. More importantly, that issue the member for Macdonnell has brought to our attention - of not responding to the silent cries of those far from here - the media in some cases - and in one in particular - has portrayed in a most unfair way ignoring what sits underneath.

That is what has troubled me about this whole discussion; ignoring what sits underneath. That is what troubles me about this administration. We concede we have, perhaps, allowed us to continue on by ignoring what is underneath. We cannot, and I am staying in this job.

The member for Wanguri and I had our 10th anniversary not so long ago. I remember we came into this Chamber on the very same day. Who would have thought 10 years later we would be standing face-to-face; Opposition Leader and Chief Minister. However, there is more to come. Madam Speaker, I will continue with the member for Nelson and my team, whom I admire greatly for the way they have come together, shown their resolve, and strengthened in their task over a very short time. We will occupy this space, encouraged by the courage we have seen in the member for Macdonnell, and ensure that which has been silent and unheard will be responded to.

We will hold you to account, and we will endeavour to work to change the culture of this Chamber. I will say it again: there has been much put on this table to provide that opportunity in the past, but it has been ignored; it has been dismissed. In one particular case, when it was an Indigenous issue, we were discounted because we are the Country Liberals; we have this horrendous record. You have this imprint. Talk about prejudice, talk about prejudging, talk about

stereotype - you carry it with you to justify your ideology and your failure to deliver, and your failure to actually care. You care more about ideology than changing people's lives in serving their best interest - trapped in ideology.

The equine flu influenza - you remember that day? Equine flu galvanised across the country instant action. 'We dealt with that problem so quickly and so swiftly, and are so proud of the way this administration kicked into gear'. However, when it was children and mothers, you found every reason under the sun to find fault with the intervention. This way and that way, you were fighting a cultural war against John Howard. You did not care two hoots about the kids; you wanted to fight an ideological battle: 'Bugger the kids, forget them; we are fighting another battle'. There was that plain dishonesty there that would have evaporated if you stood in the presence of these young ones. That is what I found very difficult - very difficult. Has that changed? How did it change? The numbers are fewer ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member to complete his remarks, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MILLS: I guess, to the nub of it: has there, in fact, been change? The member for Nelson desires cultural change in the Chamber. Perhaps the circumstances will create that. I will not be in a position to threaten that, but to assist that with the full knowledge the underlying problem needs also to be addressed. However, at the end of day there has to be change. Change is measurable.

Let us get back to the problem. The problem is the administration warrants the want of confidence of this Chamber, not because we do not like you, or because we had a disagreement and we think here is a political opportunity, but because the results have not been produced. We have gained insight into this Chamber, and its operation behind the scenes, that has resulted in a manifest way in the departure of those from this administration - the valued resources have been consumed in this administration on internal business. We see that evidenced in the community and in the failure to produce results.

I concede I was disappointed with the solution announced today. I understood the arguments. I understood the path the member for Nelson had walked. However, I was of the understanding this journey commenced with an agreement the case was so strong - as still is in my view - and this want of confidence in this administration should be supported.

I do not and will not move from that position until I see a change. If there is no change, the position will remain, because the community is watching, the member for Nelson will be watching, and we will be watching and endeavouring to work with the way this has been constructed as a solution to a problem.

Solicitor-General, I am very pleased to see you are here, because I believe we are going to need your assistance in working out how this bit of machinery will work. However, will it address the underlying problem? I still have my reservations.

That is the talk about the solution. The problem itself warrants this motion to be supported. It should be supported. The case is so strong, judging by the evidence that has been presented by the members who have described the deficiencies in the administration - do not take this personally; you have a job to do. I believe you should be sacked. I believe that is the end. I believe you had your opportunity, and I believe you have failed. I believe the community would stand in support of the position I have taken. I will not leave this position; I will occupy this position. I believe members of this Chamber should support this motion. I believe you deserve this motion, and members should support this want of confidence motion in this government, because you have been found wanting in your administration.

I urge honourable members to support this motion and, Madam Speaker, I put it to the vote.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 12 Noes 13

Ms Anderson	Mrs Aagaard
Mr Bohlin	Dr Burns
Ms Carney	Mr Gunner
Mr Chandler	Mr Hampton
Mr Conlan	Mr Henderson
Mr Elferink	Mr Knight
Mr Giles	Ms Lawrie
Mr Mills	Mr McCarthy
Ms Purick	Ms McCarthy
Mr Styles	Ms Scrymgour
Mr Tollner	Mr Vatskalis
Mr Westra van Holthe	Ms Walker
	Mr Wood

Motion negatived.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr BURNS (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.