

Madam Speaker Aagaard took the Chair at 10 am.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE  
Member for Drysdale**

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Madam Speaker, I seek leave of absence for the member for Drysdale for a further three days due to the reasons described earlier.

Leave granted.

**VISITORS**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 Durack Primary School students accompanied by Ms Natasha Jones. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**MINERAL TITLES (CONSEQUENTIAL  
AMENDMENTS) BILL  
(Serial 121)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

**Mr VATSKALIS (Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources):** Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Members of the Assembly will be aware that I introduced the Mineral Titles Bill during the April 2010 sittings, and it is being debated during these sittings. Following debate of the Mineral Titles Bill and its subsequent assent, there will be a need to amend other Territory legislation to ensure the linkages that exist under the current mineral titles legislation through the *Mining Act* are retained with the new Mineral Titles Act. For instance, all references to the *Mining Act* will need to be changed to the new title or refer to the Mineral Titles Act 2010.

I will provide the background to the review of the *Mining Act*. The *Mining Act* has been in operation for nearly 30 years and, since its commencement, has generally served government, industry and the community well. It provides a regime that is competitive with other jurisdictions and it takes into account issues unique to the Territory, such as the application of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*.

The *Mining Act* remains functional and continues to serve its intended purpose of providing a regime for the administration of titles for the exploration of the mining of minerals, although it is recognised that aspects of the

*Mining Act* are outdated and fail to take into account significant changes and innovations which have occurred since the commencement of the legislation.

The Mineral Titles Bill retains substantial parts of the *Mining Act* which have served the mining sector, although these parts are expressed in a contemporary manner and drafting style.

The repeal of the current *Mining Act* and its replacement with the new Mineral titles Act is intended to produce a more workable framework which is responsive to an evolving and growing Territory mining sector. Some of the changes in the new Mineral titles Act represent significant changes to the current legislation. Other legislative changes are secondary in nature and are fine-tuning of existing processes. This new Mineral titles Act enables:

- greater accountability for titleholders;
- flexibility in managing performance;
- continuation of transparency; and
- streamlined processes for exploration and mining in the Territory.

This is a clear example of the Northern Territory government's commitment to the sustainable and profitable resource development of the Territory.

The objective of the Mineral Titles (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2010 is not to implement new or significantly changed existing provisions. Its purpose is to maintain the integrity and linkages between the prime mining legislation and other Northern Territory legislation, as is currently experienced under the *Mining Act*.

The commencement of the new Mineral titles Act will impact on 27 other pieces of Territory legislation including:

- the *AustralAsia Railway Special Provisions Act*;
- the *Bonaparte Gas Pipeline (Special Provisions) Act 2000*;
- the *Geothermal Energy Act*;
- the *Lands, Planning and Mining Tribunal Act*;
- the *Mineral Royalty Act*;
- the *Mining Management Act*;

- the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*;
- the *Stamp Duty Act*;
- the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*; and
- the *Water Act*.

This impact is generally minor such as changing the reference to the new legislation or amending title types and ensuring the rights and obligations which currently apply are maintained, notwithstanding the commencement of the new legislation. To enable the continual advancement of the new Mineral titles Act all relevant legislation must be amended to incorporate the changes reflected in the Mineral titles Act.

I table this bill as a further step towards the continued growth of the mining industry and to its ongoing contribution to the sustainable growth of the Territory's economic development. Passage of this bill will achieve the goal of having Territory legislation which encourages active exploration on granted exploration licences and the continuous operation of granted mining tenements.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Mineral Titles (Consequential Amendment) Bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL OFFENCES AND PENALTIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 109)**

Continued from 11 August 2010.

**Mr CHANDLER (Brennan):** Madam Speaker, we all want to protect our environment. This side of the House will be supporting this legislation with a few amendments. I have been advised that the government is going to support those amendments today. I thank the minister and the government for their common sense in this matter.

It has taken the wind out of my sails in regard to the attack I was going to launch today and I had done quite a bit of research – damn, Karl. It would be remiss of me not to raise a few issues. I have been critical of government about a number of the processes which have occurred recently in our harbour - the spills at the port and the high levels of *E. coli*.

It is most important we have a strong legislative framework to protect our environment, and today's bill provides that framework. It needs to be backed with strategies and a framework behind the legislation which enables government

to protect the environment, and in the minister's words: 'Come down like a ton of bricks on polluters'.

In a statement released recently, the EPA said:

*The EPA strongly supports prosecution as one element of an effective compliance regime for the Territory's environmental protection laws. The proposed increase in penalties under the amendment bill is consequently supported.*

It went on to say:

*The EPA notes that it is insufficient to have large penalties without an underlying comprehensive compliance and enforcement policy. Adequate resources for the implementation of such a policy are consequently a crucial element in achieving compliance and enforcement.*

The EPA agrees with my sentiments. I hope the government takes on board that we need to have an effective law enforcement action behind the scenes to ensure our environment is protected to the best of our ability.

The only issue we had with this bill was the level of infringement notices. The penalties were substantially raised, fully supported, and I understand the rationale behind that, but I questioned why the same did not happen with infringement notices. That is what my amendments are about. I do not have to unpack that here to explain why. The rationale is used to raise the penalties substantially, to send the message to the general public, to government departments, and government business entities, that the environment is important and needs to be protected.

Our argument was the infringement notices did not increase in any substantial manner. Where an infringement notice is to be issued in lieu of a sometimes expensive prosecution, the infringement notice should increase to a level comparable with penalties to ensure the government's objectives in increasing penalties are met. I take my hat off to the government and the minister, as I know these amendments will be supported today.

I will point out some recent failures of government to do with the port and, in particular, the high levels of *E.coli*. We recently saw a good example of how this government uses spin to cover inaction. The Chief Minister provided a good news story with the opening of one of the bridges at Palmerston and, on the same day, the minister for Environment, Mr Hampton, had a good news story regarding ToadBusters. Both

were questioned on the high levels of *E.coli*, and both the Chief Minister and the minister for the Environment said they would release information that afternoon which conclusively ruled out high levels of *E.coli* being caused by the effluent being pumped into our harbour.

I patiently went to the Esplanade that afternoon expecting to see the Environment minister, or the Chief Minister, release those results, but they had a public servant release the results. I do not know how those results conclusively rule out that effluent pumped into our harbour is the cause of high levels of *E.coli*. What they showed me was that, in many cases, the high levels of *E.coli* were probably more likely to come from Power and Water outfalls than any other excuse, such as bat droppings and dirty nappies. It beggars belief why anyone would believe that bat droppings and dirty nappies could cause high levels of *E.coli* and *enterococci* in our harbour. The pathogens and nitrogens which are going into the harbour must have an impact on it.

Power and Water is spending tens of millions of dollars to close down the poo-shooter and re-route the effluent to Ludmilla, extend the pipe from Ludmilla further out into the ocean, and upgrade the sewerage system at Ludmilla. On one hand the government is saying effluent pumped into our harbour is not causing high levels of *E.coli* but, on the other hand, Power and Water is spending tens of millions of dollars improving the system so effluent, raw sewage, is not pumped into the harbour. My argument is you cannot have it both ways. You cannot say it is not the contributing factor, but you are going to spend tens of millions of dollars to fix the problem you say does not exist.

The former CLP government introduced the *Environmental Offences and Penalties Act* in 1996 because it wanted to protect the environment from damage. Today, we still see many cases where our environment is damaged and, in some cases, it is our own government, government departments or government business enterprises, causing some of this wanton pollution in our harbour.

I would like to understand a little more. Rather than go ahead and attack government, perhaps I could get some answers. We will use the Port Authority at this stage; we will call that 'entity B' and perhaps the Environment minister's department, NRETAS, 'entity A'.

'Entity A' is a taxpayer-funded government department and 'entity B' is a tax-funded organisation. If 'entity B' pollutes the harbour and 'entity A' decides to take action against 'entity B', it would involve a lengthy and expensive prosecution and would use a large amount of

taxpayer money. Then 'entity B' would need to provide a defence, perhaps an expensive defence. My understanding is that no department has a budget line that says: 'We will put some money aside in case we are fined'.

I do not understand, because if 'entity B' was prosecuted, a defence would be put together which could be expensive and could use a large amount of taxpayer money. The two departments would battle in court at great expense to the taxpayer. If the penalties awarded a fine, let us say \$500 000, I am sure the Port Authority would not have that money. I assume they would have to ask the government for a loan to pay the fine which would then be paid to the courts, which would then be paid back to government coffers.

What an amazing turnaround. If the minister explained how that can protect the harbour, how we can protect our environment when there is just a money shuffle between departments – there is no lesson learned there if that is the process. I could be wrong but I do not understand how one government department can prosecute another. If the offence is proven and a penalty is applied, taxpayers' money would have to be paid back to the government. How would a government entity learn a lesson if that is the process? I am oblivious to how that can have a positive effect on our environment.

Perhaps this is why more government services should be in the hands of private businesses. At least then if the government needed to fine someone you would have a situation where you are fining a business.

If I am caught speeding, I would pay a penalty to government because the police would fine me \$100 or \$200, or if I was caught not wearing a seat belt, I think the penalty for that is \$440. That comes out of my hip pocket, no one else's. If my neighbour, Joe Bloggs, is pulled over for speeding and is fined \$200 or \$300, that comes out of his pocket. But if a government department is penalising another government department, how is there a lesson learned?

There has to be a consequence. The Port Authority admitted guilt. They admitted not following the regulations. They did not report a spill at the port to the government department, as is their responsibility. I find it very disturbing that there appears to be no consequence and I said: 'In a court of law when someone pleads guilty a penalty is issued and we move forward'. I do not understand and I hope the minister can provide me with more information today.

I will raise the timing of this bill. I will not be too critical because it is a bill we support and the amendments we are putting forward are

supported. My job in opposition is to support government where they should be supported and, if I find fault, raise the issue, whether it is in the media or in this House.

The minister released a media statement recently calling me 'Chicken Little' and I thought: we have started name calling; that is the best we can do. There were many inaccuracies in that media release but I will not go into it today. I thought to myself that we have to do better than this. Surely we are above fifth grade name calling. We frown upon it at school, and we should be frowning on it in this House.

The timing of this bill reminds me of the political battle in the federal arena. Do not get me wrong; we support the environment any way we can, and I am grateful this has come forward. The most blatant use of government advertising money I have ever seen is the recent spate of green advertisements on television. If I asked Channel 7, Channel 9, and Channel 10 to give me information - which they probably would not - regarding how many of these green advertisements were aired between January and June this year versus how many were aired in July and August - and tell me that is nothing more than to support Labor's green image. Every second advertisement at the moment appears to be a green environmental advertisement. There are many Labor initiatives I fully support. However, questions need to be asked about how government money is used to support a theme; in this case these green advertisements at the time of a federal election. I guarantee if you look at how often these advertisements were on television between January and June this year it would be vastly different to what we have seen in July and August.

Madam Speaker, I had much more to say about where we could improve and where the government has let us down in regard to the environment, but I think it would be unfair to play that game today when I have a win for common sense. The government will support amendments put forward on legislation which we on this side support. Hear, hear to the government this time!

**Mr VATSKALIS (Primary Industry, Fisheries and Resources):** Madam Speaker, I support the bill. Each and every member of the Northern Territory Labor government is committed to the conservation of our environment as the Territory grows and prospers.

We understand our resources are finite and we must develop in a sustainable way. The Northern Territory can benefit from the lessons of economic development elsewhere as the world now turns to the Northern Territory for investment opportunities, particularly in our mining and

resources sector. The Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill seeks to double the penalties for pollution offences.

It is important our laws sufficiently deter bad practices. The *Mining Management Act* is a legislative mechanism which regulates activities and offences relating to the penalty regime in the *Environmental Offences and Penalties Act*. It covers any mining-related activity that constitutes a substantial disturbance of the environment. In practice, this means activities as small as clearing a small drill site right up to full-scale mining, and covers exploration as well as mining.

An authorisation is granted to undertake this activity which requires submission and approval of a mining management plan and 100% rehabilitation bond. The 100% rehabilitation bond was a reform of the Labor government after the mountain of disaster left by the CLP.

Offences under the *Mining Management Act* may attract penalties ranging from level 1 to level 4 depending on the severity of the incident. The bill before you proposes to double the penalties for serious offences; therefore, a maximum penalty could be \$2.5m for intentionally causing pollution resulting in serious environmental harm. This is a significant amount and is an appropriate deterrent.

I take this opportunity to outline some of the other measures being undertaken by the Northern Territory government to ensure the use of more contemporary mining practices which consider the environment. At an operational level, the mining management plan is assessed by my department of Resources for operational and environmental integrity. As part of this process, my department believes the proposed activity would trigger the *Environmental Assessment Act*, the Management Plan is referred to NRETAS for environmental assessment. Should NRETAS consider the activity requires assessment, it is undertaken through either a public environmental report or a full environmental impact statement.

Following this process is a public review process to ensure all decisions and activities are above board in relation to the environmental impacts of the proposed activities. I have flagged that the department of Resources is currently reviewing the *Mining Management Act* to increase its effectiveness in regulating the sector. This includes considering a process which allows a public release of the environmental performance of a company against the environmental management system under a risk-based process. Other areas we are considering include strengthening the reporting requirements for environmental incidents; adopting a legislated mechanism to support greater social inclusion

outcomes arising from mining activities; and ensuring the act is contemporary through the clarification of some elements. I look forward to bringing proposed legislative changes to the House.

The department of Resources is also working with NRETAS to review the current regulatory framework with a view to introducing universal environmental performance requirements for air and water, both on and off mining leases; consistent environmental regulation; and transparent reporting requirements. This is part of a suite of environmental compliance initiatives which I commend the minister for undertaking, including: reforming the *Environmental Assessment Act*; strengthening the role of the EPA and providing it with additional resources; systematic review and auditing of ports; establishing an environmental licensing regime; and additional resources for port inspection and compliance capacity.

As mining, fisheries and primary industries minister, I am acutely aware of how precious our land resources are. I support an environmental compliance framework which strikes an appropriate balance between economic development and environmental conservation. I have been around the world and seen many examples of bad practices. I have seen many examples of things not to do, especially when it involves mining. I have seen some of them here in the Northern Territory.

My department manages 2000 legacy mines with a minimal environmental impact, or a maximal environmental impact like Mt Todd and some of the other mines. We are the first jurisdiction in Australia to impose a 100% Environmental Rehabilitation Bond which is not determined by the minister; it is determined by an independent person. In some cases, that bond can be up to \$150m. We encourage companies to undertake rehabilitation while they are operating the mining lease so they can gradually reduce the environmental bond held in trust at the same time as rehabilitating the mine site.

At the end of the mining operation I do not want to see a big hole in the ground full of water; I want to see a rehabilitated site and some social and economic benefits flowing into the surrounding communities. This can happen during the operation of the mines with provisional jobs. This can happen at the end of the mine, for example, rehabilitating the site, revegetating the site, and maintaining the vegetation.

I have made it clear to the mining companies that while I am a very strong supporter of the mining industry in the Northern Territory, I will not tolerate any intentional breach of environmental or

mining regulations. In cases of unintentional breaches of the mining and environmental legislation, they have an obligation to report in a timely manner and to undertake all necessary measures to ensure the environmental impact is minimal. I have seen recent incidents at Gove. I have seen incidents at Groote Eylandt. I have sent a strong message to the industry that it will not be tolerated. My department has undertaken extensive research and investigation to find out if these were intentional or unintentional breaches of the mining and environmental regulations.

I am prepared to work with NRETAS cooperatively, not against them. This is not about building empires; it is about working together to safeguard the environment of the Northern Territory. If you lose something, especially the environment, you cannot bring it back. If you lose plant or animal species, if you contaminate the environment, it will cost an enormous amount of money to return to what it was.

In the past I have referred to Mt Todd because it is a very good example of how not to do business in the Northern Territory. I am seriously alarmed that water in the pit of Mt Todd is pH3. I strongly recommend you do not put your hand in it because this water has the ability to completely destroy the life in the Edith or Daly rivers. This acidic water can contain many heavy metals in suspension which can cause a problem for years to come. Companies have undertaken research to eliminate these problems. I am very pleased to say one company - which has my full support and I look forward to working with them in the future - has managed to rehabilitate water from pH3 to pH7 in a matter of months and to precipitate a lot of the heavy metals. Where we had an environmental disaster waiting to happen, we now have a solution to our problem.

I strongly support my colleague, the minister for NRETAS. I think he is on the right path. At the same time the stick-and-carrot approach is necessary. We are here to encourage investment in the Territory. We are here to support companies to do the right thing. Should they not do the right thing we have the right and an obligation to protect the rights of all Territorians; hence the penalties are high, and if I had my way, they would be higher. When people realise it will be costly when they do something wrong, they think twice before they are casual in their approach.

I reiterate my support for the mining industry. The mining industry is an intensive industry. It digs and takes minerals from the ground, but we should not accept that as a *fait accompli*; we should encourage the mining industry to do the right thing. Recently I visited Groote Eylandt and I saw how GEMCO is managing the mines and

rehabilitating the site. GEMCO is employing and engaging local people with local knowledge to collect seedlings and seeds to rehabilitate sites which have been disturbed.

Madam Speaker, I understand mistakes can occur, but it is the obligation of the company to safeguard the health of their employees, the community, and the environment. I am a strong supporter of the carrot approach, but also a very strong supporter of the stick approach when companies fail to take notice of regulatory requirements and have a casual approach towards the environment.

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### Visitors

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 Durack Primary School students accompanied by Mrs Phillipa Ludwig. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I support the amendments the minister has brought forward and the opposition amendments. The minister for Resources spoke about the revegetation of mining sites. The revegetation of extractive mining sites needs to be reviewed. I have been around Howard Springs for about 26 years and much gravel and sand has been removed from the Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and Middle Arm areas. Although I am always told there is a process for revegetating these areas, if you flew over this country you would have to ask where it is. I know this is not directly related to the matter we are discussing, but the minister for Resources raised it as part of an overall approach to dealing with mining and extractive industries.

It is an issue that has been let go to some extent. I would like to see a review of all the mining leases developed over the last 20 or 30 years and see what effort has been made in rehabilitating those areas, because it affects the environment. There is land where, because of its acidity and because gravel has been removed, very little vegetation, except weeds, has re-established. There has not been a constant management program in those areas.

I will move back to the essence of the bill. I wrote to the EPA asking for an opinion on this bill. The minister may have seen the response and it is a timely response. It shows the EPA is an independent body. I know there has been criticism about its independence, and whether it is funded enough, but I have the impression it is

proactive. It is looking at, and commenting on, what the government is doing. That is what needs to happen.

The response from the EPA mentions the penalties. It says there needs to be adequate resources to have proper compliance and enforcement of the penalties. I am interested to hear from the minister exactly what changes have been made. Has the government taken up this issue and what number of people have they put in place to ensure compliance and enforcement are adequate?

That also relates to a point the EPA raised in a paper titled *Environmental Pollution Laws - Offences Penalties and Regulatory Agencies*, by Jennifer Norbury. She says it is no good having compliance staff unless they are:

*... empowered, well trained, supported and numerous.*

If a matter goes to court, compliance staff have to be sufficiently knowledgeable of the law. If you are dealing with a large mining company they are not going to use local barristers from Cavenagh Street. They will use QCs from Queen Street in Sydney if they think they have a chance of defeating the laws.

We need to ensure our compliance people are adequately trained. They may need some scientific training in the area of pollution and some training in law. I do not know how easy it is to find people like that but it would be essential if you are going to do what you say you are going to do and: 'come down like a ton of bricks' on these companies. These companies may have some bricks to drop on you unless you have the ability to prosecute well, having the knowledge you need to win the case. That is an important area mentioned by the EPA.

The EPA also talks about the:

*... veracity of this renewed vigilance.*

In other words, while pollution is a hot potato at times with *E.coli* in the harbour and pollution at the port, then it becomes the headline, it becomes the in thing and, as soon as that is sorted out, we do not hear any more; it disappears off the radar. The EPA is saying you need to be continually vigilant and it is saying that from a political aspect. Not only is it the government's job to keep an eye on things but also the shadow minister's role. I know the member for Brennan takes his job seriously. He is part of the political system and it is for all of us as members to ensure we keep an eye on what is happening in our own back yard.

The EPA talks about consistency and transparency and says if we are going to have a program of prosecution it must be consistent. It cannot be one law for one company and one law for another. We cannot have an attitude to one matter that is different to the attitude we have to another matter. We must try to be consistent and make sure the public understands where we stand when we are prosecuting or when we make a statement about the environment.

The EPA notes say they recommend that:

*... the Territory prepare and codify prosecution guidelines as are in use in other jurisdictions. The guidelines make it clear to the public and to industry those circumstances that will amount to a prosecution being adopted as a means of enforcement.*

I would like to hear from the minister as to whether the government is preparing and codifying prosecution guidelines.

There is some disputation that if you use penalties only - and the EPA is on this side of the argument - you risk turning industry offside and becoming the enemy. Industry will fight the government all the way on everything that happens. On the other hand, and I quote from *Australian Pollution Laws – Offences Penalties and Regulatory Agencies*, article by Jennifer Norberry where she discuss how other states deal with pollution:

*Officials from other regulatory agencies were much less enthusiastic about prosecution processes or outcomes. They generally regarded prosecution as extremely time consuming of agency staff and financial resources, and as such a lengthy process that it minimised or negated any potential for deterrence.*

*Prosecution outcomes were criticised on two grounds; first, officials believed many magistrates viewed pollution offences as trivial and awarded minimal fines; second, officials believed that prosecution engendered antagonistic relationships with industry which were detrimental to achieving environmental protection. These agency officials believed that compliance with environmental laws was best achieved through conciliation, education and negotiation.*

If the government believes coming down like a ton of bricks means increasing the fines that is fine; however, if that is not balanced with good working relationships with companies created through conciliation, education and negotiation we

have all stick and no carrot. It would be good to hear what the government is doing with industries to see if they can achieve things without a great cost, not only to industry but to the taxpayer. I take up the point the member for Brennan made: when it comes to prosecuting a department you are prosecuting yourself and money goes around in a circle. How does it deter a department if they know they do not have much more responsibility than to ask the Treasurer for a Treasurer's Advance? It would be interesting to see how that would work in practice.

How can we educate companies to work with government so we do not have to prosecute them, which is very expensive?

The member for Brennan mentioned the port. Much was said when the port was discussed here and it seemed that something was going to happen. The way the newspapers reported the issues at the port gave the impression that someone was going to be prosecuted.

I would like the minister to explain what has happened at the port. Pollution at the port has been reported in the newspaper a number of times. Could the minister give us a report on what the newspapers said versus what actually happened, and what the government intends to do? I would like the minister's opinion on what responsibility CEOs and other people in government departments have if they, through their action or inaction, cause pollution. Should they take responsibility and take some of the burden instead of the taxpayer? I am not picking on the port here. I know I have been critical of the port, but I am talking about pollution in general.

If the transport industry has caused pollution and the truck involved is a government truck delivering government goods, the department would pay the fine. Therefore, I, as a taxpayer, pay the fine and I am the one who cops the penalty. There should be a personal responsibility within departments in relation to pollution. CEOs are paid a great deal of money and have a list of responsibilities. Surely non-pollution is one of those responsibilities. If the CEO does not take responsibility and the taxpayer picks up the bill then the only way the government is punished is through receiving bad publicity. The minister may have to fend off many questions but the minister will not be paying for the pollution that was caused by a chemical spill from a government truck. The taxpayers will have to pay the fine if the government department is found to be at fault.

Minister, these are important issues. This is an opportunity to tell us about the state of the so-called pollution at the port. It is not clear in my mind what has actually happened. Maybe you could give us an update on what is being done to

ensure the waterways around the port are not being polluted by various chemical or minerals that may be dropped into the sea.

I congratulate the government for supporting the member for Brennan's amendments. This is good and I wish it would happen more often. I wish we would get together more often and work through amendments instead of waiting two years and then deciding to adopt amendments with another person's name on them.

Instead of telling the member today that his amendments are going through, which gave him a shock, it would be good if someone had told the member earlier, as he had written a speech and then had to throw some of it away. That is not the real reason I am saying this; my point is that we should work together on matters we are all concerned about. I support the government taking on the matters the member for Brennan has raised, and I am grateful to the member for Brennan for bringing those matters to parliament. I congratulate him for doing that.

I support the bill before us today; however, there are many questions which still need to be asked. I do not want to see this go off the radar, as alluded to by the EPA. If there is not continual vigilance in relation to pollution then the next time we hear about it will be when something happens. What we want to have is no news. We know behind the scenes there are people working to ensure there will not be a headline because the vigilance has dropped off and because it is not the popular thing in the newspaper now. If the government is successful then we will not hear about pollution because they will be one step ahead of the polluters. Government will know the companies that are more likely to pollute than others. We know where the hot spots, or the industries which will cause pollution, are. First you should target those industries through an education and conciliation program. That is the best way to start this. Then you might talk to the general public as part of a program. You need to hone in on the types of industries, and the sensitive places where some of these industries operate, to make sure you target your efforts into the areas at most risk.

Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing forward his bill. I thank the member for Brennan for bring forward the amendments. I support the both the bill and the amendments.

**Mr KNIGHT (Essential Services):** Madam Speaker, I welcome the bill from the minister for Environment. His commitment will see the doubling of penalties to prevent the inappropriate practices and poor behaviour we have seen.

The Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill will ensure the penalties are not devalued by the passage of time by prescribing penalty units. The *Environmental Offences and Penalties Act* does not define environmental offences: it establishes offence penalty levels in a raft of environmental legislation including the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, the *Mine Management Act*, and the *Water Act*. It establishes four tiers of penalties to ensure a consistent approach across all environmental legislation when it comes to environmental offences.

The Northern Territory Labor government remains committed to conserving and protecting our environment. This government has made the largest-ever investment in infrastructure spending in the history of the Territory for the growth of Darwin and to protect Darwin Harbour.

We are closing down the raw sewage outfall. There is some background to the Larrakeyah outfall. The Larrakeyah outfall was established in 1965, and when the CLP government came to power in 1978 they inherited this infrastructure. From 1978 to 1994, nothing was done with that outfall. The conservative Liberal government presided over raw sewage streaming into the harbour. That was the position of the conservative government: not to do anything about that outfall.

In 1994, there was a Cabinet decision to do something about it: 'We want to upgrade this outfall.' From 1994 until they lost government in 2001, there was no money committed to it, and it did not progress past a Cabinet decision, and there was nothing done. The 2001 election, the 2005 election, the 2008 election – there was still no commitment from the CLP to do anything about the Larrakeyah outfall. From 1978 to 2010 they did nothing and were not interested in doing anything about the Larrakeyah outfall. There was no true commitment to it. There was no money for it. They did not develop any more plans than a Cabinet decision towards the process.

It shows the true bona fides of the conservatives on the other side of parliament about this sewage outfall. They are not interested in it. Natasha Griggs has lived in this town since the day she was born. Has she raised anything about the Larrakeyah outfall in her decades of living in this town? Not a single time has she said anything about it. She is a fraud, a liar, about her commitment ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Daly, I remind you that if you are mentioning people who are other than members of parliament, while we have freedom of speech ...

**Mr KNIGHT:** I will stick with fraud, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Excuse me, member for Daly, I am speaking. They do not have a right of reply in this House and I caution you in the way you speak about people.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Madam Speaker, Natasha Griggs does not have a commitment to this. She has not spoken of this in her entire life in this town, which has been a long time. She has never spoken about it. The party she represents has done nothing about it since gaining government in 1978; and now, lo and behold, they are the great saviours of the Larrakeyah outfall.

What do we see now? We see, on the death knell of an election, after 32 years, they want to close it. The strangest thing is that this government made a decision in 2006 to close it. Design work has happened since then - \$65m going into this project. We came to office in 2001. There was a massive black hole in the budget and no money to do anything. The Blanch report on Power and Water in 2006 said we needed to spend a great deal of money on power generation and on networking with the power and that is what we did. We committed hundreds of millions of dollars into that area.

From there we have consistently put money into Power and Water with a commitment to Power and Water of up to \$1.5bn, and \$65m of that is for sewerage. There are about 10 stages to the process of closing Larrakeyah outfall which include: closing down the outfall; rerouting the sewage from the CBD and Larrakeyah into the trunk line which goes to Dinah Beach, and out to Ludmilla treatment plant; upgrading the Ludmilla treatment plant to increase treatment and capacity; and extending the East Point outfall into deep water.

These are the studies which are going on now. That is our commitment. Of the 10 stages, we have completed about six and the rest have gone to contract. We have contracted to Macmahon Contracting. It is a \$12m contract for tunnelling under the city for the pipeline from the Larrakeyah outfall. They have tunnelling equipment being transported here now and the work will start next month when it arrives.

The CLP has recently said: 'We are going to fast-track the Larrakeyah outfall closure'. How are you going to do that? Apparently, you were going to stop those contracts, so how is that going to speed things up? The only way the CLP can fulfil that commitment is to turn the Larrakeyah outfall tap off. What does that mean for the CBD? What would that mean for the electorate of the member for Port Darwin and the people who live in

Larrakeyah, the Gardens, and the high-rises in the CBD? It would mean raw sewage pouring out of their toilets and taps, and basins overflowing. You would have sewage pouring down Mitchell Street and through the streets of Larrakeyah. That is the only way the statement you recently made can be fulfilled. It is unbelievable.

Making such statements, on the death knell of a federal election, knowing we have committed the money to it, is fraud. We have done all the design work, contracts are out and 60% to 70% of the work has already been done. It is hypocritical to make those statements.

The CLP candidate for Solomon has committed to a \$2m consultancy. We are spending \$65m on our plan for the sewage re-diversion. Part of that plan is the upgrade of the Ludmilla treatment plant. The upgrade of that plant will allow for greater treatment and quality of the discharge and will reach the secondary stage of treatment, which is a higher stage than we have now. It will also increase the capacity of flow through the Ludmilla outfall.

That is our commitment. We have money allocated in this year's budget and some from previous years. The money is there; it is being spent and contracts are being awarded. Natasha Griggs is promising \$2m for a study of tertiary treatment. There are only a few places in Australia that exclusively use tertiary treatment. Cairns has had a quote for it. Cairns has upgraded their sewerage system. They still pump into the harbour at times. For Darwin, tertiary treatment would cost about \$0.5bn. Natasha has \$2m for a study of tertiary treatment. Why is she not honest with Territorians and say it is a \$0.5bn project? You need to have a cheque from Tony Abbott for \$0.5bn before you even start the consultancy because, ultimately, how you design it and how it looks is going to cost around \$0.5bn.

Has Tony Abbott committed \$0.5bn to Darwin sewerage, member for Brennan? I do not think so. He has not committed any money to Darwin. It is not going to happen. It is fraud. Telling Territorians they are going to have tertiary treatment under the CLP is fraud, because it is not going to happen. There is no way Tony Abbott is going to spend \$0.5bn on sewerage in Darwin city ...

**Mr Chandler:** Perhaps that is what it will cost you; maybe we can do it for less.

**Mr KNIGHT:** You need to speak up strongly about it. I know you are an independent thinker, member for Brennan, and you need to study what your colleague, Natasha Griggs, is saying with that claim. It also raises the question of RAAF housing.

If the sewerage commitment is a fraud, I think the RAAF Base Darwin proposal is also a fraud. It is not going to happen. She was saying: 'We are going to sell the houses to fund the sewerage'. That was going to raise about \$100m; where is the other \$400m coming from? It is not going to come, and you are not going to get the houses because Defence is not going to let that land go. If you can get those houses, have a senior Defence person stand in front of the camera and say: 'Yes, no worries, we will give it away. Defence land - we are going to give away 400 houses'. There is no way they are going to do it. It is disgusting that she is trying to convince Territorians who have housing needs and concerns about the harbour. She is playing on those feelings and giving false hope to those people, because it is not true.

Another point I would like to raise with you, member for Brennan, now I have your attention, is you consistently criticise NRETAS staff, you consistently criticise Power and Water staff about ...

**Mr Chandler:** You are lying again.

**Mr KNIGHT:** ... their comments on the quality of sewage in relation to *E. coli* in the harbour. I receive advice; government receives advice from staff. Those staff are environmental scientists - not one but many environmental scientists with decades of experience in water resources and environmental protection. Then we have you; you can interject if you like, tell me what experience you have ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, please direct your comments through the Chair. It is not a debate with the member for Brennan.

**Mr KNIGHT:** The member for Brennan needs to tell me how many decades of experience and what tertiary qualifications he has in this field. He is calling those people liars. They are saying, as academics and professionals: 'This is what we know and this is what our view is'. He is saying: 'No you are liars; you are causing the problems in the harbour'.

It is quite rude. These are professional people; they are not political, they are doing a great job for Power and Water and for the community. They live in this town, they love this town, they use the beaches around this town; they are not going to risk their health or the health of their families or friends for politics. It is not true. I believe you owe them an apology for calling them liars. Several times you have accused them of not applying the correct quality standards. What are those standards you aspire to? What are the standards you claim should exist? Why are you accusing them of not doing their job?

When I toured the Ludmilla treatment plant - have you been there, member for Brennan?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, please direct your comments through the Chair.

**Mr KNIGHT:** I do not believe the member for Brennan has been through Ludmilla treatment plant and there are many professional people there who would like to chat with you, member for Brennan about your accusations about their professional integrity.

What I saw there was the process for treating water. The treatment plant is being upgraded as part of the new works. There are two massive incinerators there and I asked what they were for. They said: 'In the past we would get all the solids out of the sewage and we would burn it'. They put it in an incinerator and burned it, and all the vapour went into the sky. I asked: 'When did that stop?' He said: 'Nine years ago'. That is coincidental. For 27 years under the CLP, put all the solids into the incinerator and burn it up into the environment. Then Labor came to power, closed down the incinerator, and now we are treating sewage in a more organic and environmental way. It is a very different approach. Twenty-seven years of rule, another 10 years in opposition and no commitment to the protection of the harbour, allowing for the growth of Darwin.

There has been no commitment to sewerage. They are recent converts but it is too late. The work and the upgrades are already happening. There is a commitment from us to that work. Late next year, the Larrakeyah outfall will be turned off forever - unless the CLP is elected; they will probably turn it back on again. They love pumping raw sewage into the harbour. They did for 27 years and there was no commitment to change for 10 years after that.

We will have a very good sewerage system in Darwin but we will keep on working with the community to improve other outfalls and treatment plants. In time we will have greater water reuse in Darwin. We reuse our water in Marrara and Alice Springs. It is a very different environment up here. There have been calls asking why we cannot reuse water. For six months of the year we have torrential rain. If you did pump it to the households to try to use, why would they use it? They are getting rain from the sky and that rainfall is going into our treatment plants. The massive flows into Ludmilla come the Wet Season are incredible, and the way that plant handles that is significant. So, water reuse is not viable at the moment given our tropical environment. We do reuse water where we can.

Tertiary treatment is a way off because we are a very small city and it is a very expensive way to

go. Secondary treatment gets us a long way. The extension of East Point outfall is \$36m - that is a real commitment because those are real dollars. Professor Valentine of the University of Sydney is doing studies on the outfall now. The member for Brennan has criticised him. He is a professional person; he is not a political person. He has put dye into the outfall to find out which way it flows. He is doing a very professional job. This work will be there for decades to come so we want to make sure it is right. We want to protect the harbour. Since coming to office we have shown that commitment and that will continue.

Madam Speaker, I will put our record and our environmental protection of the harbour up against the CLP's anytime. They had a chance to do something about it for 27 years. They had a chance to commit to it for a further 10 years. They put no money towards it, and they have no commitment to it. This government came to office, and five years after coming to office, they made a decision to do something about it. It has done all of the design works, all the preparatory works, and work has commenced. It is two-thirds complete and, by the end of the next year, the outfall will be closed. Some months after that we will have the Ludmilla treatment plant upgraded. It is a true commitment from this government to protect the harbour and a failure of the CLP.

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### Visitors

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a third group from Durack Primary School accompanied by Ms Danielle Banicek. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Ms McCARTHY (Local Government):** Madam Speaker, the Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill 2010 is a strong new measure to protect the Territory's environment. This bill will bring about a significant change to penalties which can be imposed on individuals or companies breaching environmental standards. It will see penalties contained within all environmental offence levels doubled. As a result, the Territory will have some of the toughest penalties for pollution in Australia, behind only Victoria and New South Wales. Importantly, this bill reaffirms the commitment by the Henderson Labor government to responsibly care for our environment and to ensure we protect our unique environmental values for future generations.

During the second reading speech of this bill in June this year, the Treasurer highlighted that the

Territory Labor government inherited an environmental mess from the CLP. The reason the Henderson Labor government highlights this is not because we have not taken up the mantle of responsibility, as the member for Port Darwin suggested. Rather, we highlight it because the CLP's environmental legacy was so disastrous that it should not be forgotten. For 26 years, the CLP resisted the introduction of an EPA, leaving the Northern Territory far behind other parts of Australia.

It was the member for Goyder who led the public opposition to the introduction of an EPA. Another example is the CLP's Dundee Beach environmental disaster. A bund wall roadway has been built across the front of a swamp area blocking off creeks. Bulldozing and opening up other areas has changed the characteristics of the land. At the time, a list of documents was given to the Labor Party by public servants who were outraged at the reaction of the CLP ministers to breaches of legislation at Dundee across a number of portfolios. These departmental officers individually and collectively provided a list of the legislation breached at Dundee Beach. Remedial action needed to be taken. What did the CLP decide to do? They did nothing.

Another instance of CLP environmental vandalism occurred on Groote Eylandt. For many years on Groote there had been concern about potential loss of fuel. GEMCO's own environmental consultant was concerned that the amount of fuel used by GEMCO did not seem to coincide with the amount being delivered. The CLP minister at the time said there had been a departmental inquiry. Comments from the CLP minister implied that it was only overreactive Labor Party members and greenies raising concern about a mining operation. The CLP minister inferred that if it was a mining operation it could do no wrong. This non-event fuel leak turned out to be at least 3 million litres. Only after pushing and prodding by the Labor opposition and the community was there a prosecution in relation to this environmental disaster ...

**Mr Chandler:** You could bring up Montara.

**Ms McCARTHY:** History is very important, member for Brennan. Take note.

GEMCO, which had admitted the offence by that time, was fined \$45 000 because it admitted guilt and was doing something about it. This was an embarrassment for the CLP in light of the environmental damage that we now know occurred on Groote Eylandt.

And who can forget Mt Todd? The CLP overruled their requirements about an environmental bond. When Mt Todd was to be

approved, the CLP said the maximum environmental bond was \$900 000, yet the Mt Todd disaster has cost in excess of \$6m - not to repair it, but to maintain it in a condition that will not pollute the Edith River and the Daly River. The retention pond which was supposed to keep the water in Mt Todd was in such bad condition it could not hold the water and that water would run down Edith River. This was the environmental condition to which the CLP government allowed the Mt Todd Mine to deteriorate. As the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage told the House in April this year, the CLP's environmental record can be summed up by their Mt Todd experience: a major environmental disaster which this government has had to clean up.

In contrast to the CLP, the Territory Labor government was the first to introduce security deposit bonds to cover the cost of rehabilitating mines. We were the first Territory government to protect mangroves by legislation. We have also protected the Daly River and passed legislation to establish the Territory's first independent Environment Protection Authority. In doing so, we joined the rest of Australia in having an independent environmental watchdog.

The Environment Protection Authority provides leadership on environmental sustainability as we enter a new age of industrial development in the Northern Territory. As the Territory continues to grow and develop, the Environment Protection Authority has ensured, and will continue to ensure, our environment is not compromised along the way.

In February this year, we passed legislation which strengthened the Environment Protection Authority, giving it new powers and more teeth, allowing the EPA to comment on environmental impact statements and to strategically review how well environmental impact statement recommendations are taken up in approvals.

The EPA has also been empowered to receive and investigate public complaints over agency responses to environmental incidents. In addition, the EPA now has the power to monitor and report on accumulative impacts of developments on the environment. Budget 2010-11 has now boosted the EPA's budget to further protect the Northern Territory's unique natural environment.

As Tourism Minister, I know the importance of our environment to the tourism industry, which brings \$1.7bn into the Northern Territory economy.

As the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage told this House during his second reading speech in June this year,

when the *Environmental Offences and Penalties Act* came into effect in 1997 there were four levels of penalties ranging from approximately \$5000 at the lowest end of the scale, to \$1.25m at the highest end.

This bill will see the offence of intentionally causing pollution resulting in serious environmental harm being subject to a maximum penalty of slightly more than \$2.5m for a body corporate. I am especially pleased the bill will introduce penalty units as provided in the *Penalty Units Act*. This means the immediate doubling of pollution fines established through this bill will be kept up to date with adjustments to the value of a penalty unit.

As the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage told this House during his second reading speech, the regular updating of penalties means our pollution fines will remain a significant deterrent over the longer term.

This bill heralds a significant change to the penalties which can be imposed on individuals or companies breaching environmental standards. This is about ensuring we do all we can to preserve and protect our magnificent environment and cultural heritage.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill 2010 to the House.

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**Distinguished Visitor  
Mrs Fay Miller**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the former member for Katherine, Mrs Fay Miller, with her husband, Mr Mike Miller. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay):** Madam Speaker, I support the bill. We need to do more to protect our environment; part of doing more is to ensure more people respect our environment. Unfortunately, not all do; it is too much to expect people will do it out of the goodness of their hearts. We would love to have that, but it is important we put in place things people who do not respect our environment will respect. That is why we are doubling our penalties, making them some of the toughest in the country.

We need to improve the culture of disclosure and environmental compliance in the Territory. You cannot put a price on the environment, but

you can penalise bad environmental practice, and make the penalty steep enough to improve corporate culture.

This bill makes it easier to update penalties and ensure they keep their teeth. The member for Arnhem was speaking about the mechanism we have put into the bill to ensure we can keep our penalties effective. That is very important, because we want a system which ensures we have the teeth in place; so people respect the penalties and our environment by putting the right practices in place.

The minister, in his second reading speech, gave some examples of the increased penalties in this bill. For example, the offence of intentionally causing pollution resulting in serious environmental harm will be subject to a maximum penalty of slightly more than \$2.5m - which is a fair whack. I would certainly notice that if it came out of my bank account. The size of that penalty, \$2.5m, is sufficient to ensure better practice. It will ensure people put in place the right processes and practices and apply careful thought when working out how they will deal with things in their workplace.

We want to change corporate culture. We want to ensure people respect the environment and act appropriately, look after the environment and think about what they are doing. However, we have to realise that is not always going to happen and we need a penalty.

The best scenario for all is that we do not have to impose these fines because, if we do impose a fine, it means the environment has been damaged.

The intended effect of significantly increasing these penalties is to ensure people change the way they behave, the way they approach the environment. If they do not, the minister will come down on them like a ton of bricks, to use his words. The preferred outcome is that the increased size of these penalties will improve the culture of disclosure and environmental compliance in the Territory. We want to achieve an ongoing outcome by increasing these penalties.

The member for Nelson was asking if departmental officials only consider environmental issues when there is media attention. I do not believe they do. I have faith and confidence in the hard-working people who genuinely care about the environment and what they do. I am sure the minister will discuss that further in his comments.

In my area we are closing the macerator and diverting treatment to the Ludmilla sewage treatment farm. We are upgrading the Ludmilla

sewage treatment plant to deal with secondary treatment, and we are extending the East Point outfall.

According to technical engineers, those things have to be done very carefully to ensure sewage is treated the whole way through. You cannot shut one thing down and open another thing up; you have to do it in the right order. We have engineers who know how to shut down one outfall, put it through a treatment plant, upgrade that treatment plant and extend an outfall. There is some very careful engineering going into this, and it is happening as quickly as it can. It is going to be costly, but it is money which needs to be spent and will produce a very good outcome. I commend the minister for ensuring this is occurring. I know my electorate will welcome the outcome.

Madam Speaker, I welcome the opposition's support of the bill. The member has shown diligence in bringing issues to the table and we welcome that. The environment is important and we need to protect it. These penalties go some way towards that, which is why I support this bill.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, I support the Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill 2010 as tabled by the minister in the last sittings, and the opposition's amendments as put forward by the member for Brennan.

This important bill aims to amend the current act to increase penalties for those who pollute our environment, be they individual persons or a body corporate. These tough new penalties, which double the existing penalties, are intended to send a clear and strong message to our community which rightly expects government to create, uphold, and enforce laws, and review laws when it is evident they are not adequate or contemporary.

I note this bill works in conjunction with other specific environmental legislation, including the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, the *Mining Management Act* and the *Water Act*, and it is these acts to which the environmental offence levels are referred. As such, the current bill before the House is about penalties which apply when one of the other acts has been breached.

As the minister has already outlined in his second reading speech, spills in three of the Territory's ports, all associated with mining activity, occurred earlier this year, and this is of great concern. It is not acceptable to the government, the wider community, and community stakeholders who live and work in affected environments. We know it is not acceptable to the members opposite, so it is good to hear they are supporting this bill because they also recognise

the current penalties are not stiff enough to deter polluters.

I happen to live and work in a community where one of the spills has occurred. I am talking about the Rio Tinto Alcan operations in Gove, where it was reported in April that a quantity of alumina was offloaded from a ship loader conveyor and dropped into the pristine environment of Melville Bay. This incident remains under investigation, so it would not be appropriate for me to discuss this matter in any detail or to speculate on what did or did not occur. However, the incident did occur and the investigation and root cause analysis will look at the facts and the mitigating circumstances of this incident, and we would expect some assurance there will be no recurrence of such an incident.

As someone who was employed for many years by the mining company at Gove, under the original ownership of Nabalco, then the next owners, Alcan and, currently, Rio Tinto Alcan, I was concerned and disappointed to learn of this spill - disappointed and surprised, knowing the considerable investment the company has made in recent years to bring its risk management systems for safety, health, and environment up to very high standards.

Achieving and maintaining accreditation to international standards of best practice in environmental management, such as ISO14001, counts for little if organisational culture and attitudes do not translate into behaviours, actions and practices which support the best practice philosophy. The best corporate citizens of industry invest heavily in having the best systems in place, not only to be compliant with laws but because they have a vested interest in seeing the best return for shareholders. Corporate reputation is inextricably linked to those who want to see a steady and long-term return on their investment.

I note the comment from the member for Nelson about mine site rehabilitation. I agree with him; it is a very important aspect of the mining industry. A review of mine sites where mining has been completed may be warranted.

Given the negativity that Rio Tinto has attracted in my electorate, I put on the record the excellent reputation they have for their mine site rehabilitation program. It was a program pioneered in the early 1970s when mining commenced there. I can put my hand on my heart and say they are using world's best practice in restoring native forests there. Given the age of the revegetated forest at Gove, you can step into an area of rehabilitated land and, if you are in the older revegetated areas, you would not know if you were in a revegetated area or original forest.

The onus of responsibility has to cut both ways. Government provides legislation and regulations, and industry has a legal responsibility to comply with acts within which they operate. The fact we have seen three spills in three different Territory ports has indicated that industry has dropped the ball in meetings its responsibilities and obligations. One way government can address this is to use higher penalties as a deterrent. It is necessary, as the minister has stated 'for continued vigilance to protect our precious environment'.

We need to recognise environmental protection legislation is not just about penalties; it is also about having other mechanisms in place to drive compliance. The creation under this government of the Environment Protection Authority, and the more recent announcement in this year's budget of the creation of six environmental officer roles to be able to oversee, at the coalface, that industry is compliant with regulations, are both cases in point. It is an important part of the regulatory mix that we have other mechanisms, a layered approach which drives compliance.

Community stakeholders have high expectations of how industry operates to minimise the impacts upon the environment in which they operate. As we heard the minister for Resources say, we need to be able to strike a balance between economic development and managing and protecting the environment for future generations.

Those spills which are intentional and preventable and have the potential to cause significant environmental harm are serious and must be treated seriously through the penalties we allocate. At the other end of the scale are low-level offences. There was initially no intention to double the penalties for low-level offences because the new penalty units, as the minister described, would have increased them by approximately 15%. However, we will be accepting amendments put forward by the member for Brennan, as the shadow environment minister, and those penalties will also be doubled.

That the environment is important and needs to be protected is undeniable. The member for Nelson is correct when he says it is a good we are in agreement on both sides of this House about a matter we are all very concerned about, the environment.

Madam Speaker, this government takes its legislative responsibilities seriously and has a commitment to protecting our precious and pristine environment through strong policy and tough laws, including tough penalties. It is what the community expects of us as legislators.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.

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### Visitors

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of a fourth group of students from Year 5/6 at Durack Primary School accompanied by Miss Sam Duffy. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Mr HAMPTON (Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage):** Madam Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions to this very important debate. There is bipartisanship in how important the environment is to the Northern Territory and in getting that balance right between industry, economic development, and the environment. It is important to all of us.

As minister for Environment I can say this government's commitment, and my commitment, to the environment is absolutely second to none. I do not make any excuses for the number of reforms or green initiatives we are pushing through this year. There are no political motives in regard to the federal election, as was alluded to by the member for Brennan. It is vital our reforms and our green initiatives get through. It is what the community expects of their government.

We need to look at the important things that we have delivered, particularly since 2008. Some of the initiatives we are announcing now and some of the reforms we are pushing through parliament are from the 2008 election. It is not just about doing the right thing for the environment but it is also important for business and industry. It is important to deliver the election commitments of 2008.

We have given the EPA extra teeth. This government created the EPA. We have given them more teeth and more resources to be able to undertake the role we have given them through improved legislation. We gave them two important bodies of work. One was the review of the *Environmental Assessment Act*, which they have handed down; the other was the report on Ecological Sustainable Development in the Northern Territory, which is a very important report which government has responded to. We have also endorsed the integrated monitoring plan for the harbour put forward by the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee.

This government is absolutely committed to the environment. We are committed to working

with industry. The member for Nelson raised that as well as the member for Nhulunbuy, and the member for Casuarina in his portfolio responsibility as minister for mines and resources.

Last month I announced our response to the EPA's review of the *Environmental Assessment Act* and that is why I wanted to include industry in our response to the *Environmental Assessment Act* and harmonise the regulation of the environmental activity off and on mining sites. It is important we include those people when considering where to go in the future.

The member for Nelson raised the issue of extractive industries and mine sites which need to be rehabilitated. Rehabilitation of these sites has also been supported by the member for Nhulunbuy. We are looking at harmonising both on- and off-site environmental management of mining, and through that process I will ensure we consider the rehabilitation of extractive industry sites. It is important we bring the community and industry with us in these bodies of reforms. I have attempted to do that with some of these reforms, such as the reforms of the *Environmental Assessment Act*.

Speaking of the Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill, I want to ensure there is a commitment to instil a culture of compliance and disclosure within industry. One way of doing that is to double the penalties, and that is why I moved to introduce these amendments at the first opportunity. I also wanted to introduce these amendments because of the incidents at the port, Gove, and Groote.

I advise caution when making assertions about matters that are under legal investigation. The experience in Australia is that these complex legal and scientific investigations take a long time. We need to give due respect and let those people perform their job and investigate properly. It will come to me as minister to see where we go to further. I will not be making any direct comments about the investigations of the incidents at the port or at Gove. I will be let the public know the outcome at my first opportunity.

There were comments made about the EPA in relation to this amendment bill. We already have compliance and enforcement procedures and guidelines. We have given them extra teeth. We brought in amendments to the EPA act this year, and we also boosted their resources with \$800 000 in this year's budget to allow them to perform their duties.

After the incident in the Darwin Port we immediately boosted resources within my own agency. Recruitment of new compliance officers is under way. We have recruited four temporary

officers in the past three months. That is in addition to our existing operational staff as well as the authorised officers within the agency.

As I said when this occurred in April, my job as minister is to fix the problem; if there is a problem with the legislation or extra resources are needed to investigate issues. I have done that and the Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill is part of what I needed to do.

We support the member for Brennan's amendments to the infringement notices, but infringement notices are only one of many compliance options available to a regulator. They serve a specific purpose in the circumstances of offences of a relatively minor nature which are not controversial and where there are no complex matters to be investigated. They are used when appropriate. How many we issue is not the only measure of compliance activity.

Doubling the infringement notice penalties is within guidelines and will send a further message of deterrence to those who would pollute. That is the point: this should be about deterrence. We will support the amendment but not for the reasons put forward. The opposition says if infringement penalties are not increased the regulator will be less inclined to take matters to court. The logic of this argument does not hold true.

Where the option is available under the law, the circumstances where an infringement notice is appropriate depends on discretion firmly guided by compliance policy. For example, that policy would direct the use of an infringement notice only when the facts seem indisputable - as I said, where the breach is a minor one-off occurrence which can be remedied easily and the fine is likely to be a viable deterrent.

The agency would not use an infringement notice, even if available, where the extent of the environmental harm cannot be assessed immediately, the fine is inadequate for the severity of the offence, the evidence is legally contentious, or there are multiple related breaches or a succession of breaches. The guidelines and policies are quite clear. Infringement notices will never be seen as a shortcut where lesser evidence is required. The policy makes this very clear.

Madam Speaker, infringement penalties have a role to play and will provide a level of deterrence. We will be supporting the member for Brennan's amendments.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

**In committee:**

**Mr CHANDLER:** Madam Chair, I seek to relocate chairs.

Leave granted.

**Madam CHAIR:** Honourable members, the committee has before it the Environmental Offences and Penalties Amendment Bill 2010, Serial 109, together with Schedule of Amendments No 42 circulated by the member for Brennan, Mr Chandler.

Clauses 1 to 7, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

**Mr WOOD:** A point of clarification. The member for Brennan is bringing forward these amendments? Is that right?

**Madam CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr WOOD:** Am I still able to ask the minister questions?

**Madam CHAIR:** You can.

**Mr WOOD:** Madam Chair, the minister mentioned he has employed four extra people. The EPA recommended that staff be suitably qualified. My concern is, if a large company is taken to court, they will use a Queen's Counsel, so the people enforcing the act have to know what they are doing. Would the minister tell us what qualifications the environmental officers have which will enable them to carry out the functions of this bill?

**Mr HAMPTON:** Madam Chair, we have made sure we have resources in the budget to provide an adequate number of compliance officers. Positions have been advertised but, in the short term, we have temporarily filled them. We also have authorised officers. Those authorised officers are highly-qualified in areas such as science, environmental management, and engineering, and at least four officers have Certificate V qualifications in investigations. The department also works closely with the Department of Justice which has the experience to support us in legal matters.

**Mr WOOD:** If an infringement notice is challenged, especially now the penalty units have increased, does that mean the matter can go to court? Will the person who writes the infringement notice have suitable qualifications and knowledge of the law and environmental act to be able to back up what they are saying?

**Mr HAMPTON:** Member for Nelson, the authorised officers who are issuing infringements notices are always qualified to do that. It is everyone's right to be able to challenge an

infringement and, if they wish, to pursue that through the courts.

**Mr WOOD:** So the process is similar to that of a traffic infringement notice?

**Mr HAMPTON:** Yes.

Clause 8:

**Mr CHANDLER:** Madam Chair, I move amendment 42.1 standing in my name.

This amendment is to increase the penalty an individual will receive for a level 3 environmental offence if dealt with by way of infringement notice.

The four amendments I have here are based on the same argument and it is important to understand why I move these in the first place. I agree with government's rationale in doubling the penalties when it comes to a prosecution. My only concern was, when the original legislation was put forward, the same rationale was not applied to the infringement notices whenever an infringement notice was seen as being the tool to use when dealing with an alleged breach of the act. If you applied the same rationale, you would need to increase the level the infringement notices were actually worth

We were advised late that government had some technical, legal issues and may have had some amendments of its own today. I am interested to know what those technical, legal issues were, and why they are not here today.

**Mr HAMPTON:** There were other amendments we were going to bring forward. However, it is important to get these amendments through to send a strong message about compliance disclosure to industry.

I will be bringing those other amendments forward to parliament at another date, and I am happy to offer you a briefing on those issues as we work through them with the Department of Justice and Parliamentary Counsel.

**Mr CHANDLER:** I appreciate that. Had there not been a briefing offered, I would have another line of questioning; however, if that is the case, I am happy to let that stand.

During a briefing I was advised I would be told the number of infringement notices which have been issued. When you introduced the bill there was a line of questioning in Question Time - we know there were zero prosecutions in the last decade for pollution. My question at the briefing was: how many infringement notices have been used? Do you have that answer today?

**Mr HAMPTON:** In 2009-10 my department issued the following number of infringement notices: 22 were issued under the *Territory Wildlife Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* and 40 were issued under the by-laws. Twenty-one were issued under the *Bushfires Act*. Those two acts do not call up their penalties under *the Environmental Offences and Penalties Act*; their penalties are specified within the body of the main statute.

I reiterate that infringement notices are only one form of many compliance options available to a regulator and they serve a very specific purpose in particular circumstances; those being offences of a relatively minor nature, which are simple and do not have complex matters which need to be proven and which are not controversial.

**Mr CHANDLER.** I want to confirm with the minister that those infringements were issued for breaches of pollution? Many infringements can be issued in one of our national parks, and they could be for parking illegal camping, or a number of things.

**Mr HAMPTON:** Those infringements were issued for number of other offences which occurred in parks and under the *Bushfires Act*, so they are not always directly for breaches of pollution.

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Brennan, if I could just check with you? We have four amendments. Do you wish to go through each one individually? You can move them as a block.

**Mr CHANDLER:** If I can, to save time.

**Madam CHAIR:** You need to seek leave then.

**Mr CHANDLER:** Madam Chair, I seek leave to move the amendments together.

Leave granted.

Clause 8 agreed to.

Remainder of the bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill to be reported with amendments.

Bill reported with admendments; report adopted.

**Mr HAMPTON (Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage):** Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**  
**Development of Weddell - A Tropical,**  
**Sustainable, Liveable City**

**Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I speak today to bring the House up-to-date on the development of the Territory's next city, Weddell.

This is an exciting project and one of great importance for the future of the Territory. Not only will this project see the development of a new city, it will also see a tropical city being developed on 21<sup>st</sup> century principles of sustainability, with modern planning. It is a wonderfully innovative and leading-edge project, and one which will challenge us all. It will challenge our thinking and our vision; it will make us look differently at how we plan, design, and establish a community.

The opportunity to establish a city does not come along too often, and the government is very conscious of the need to make the most of this opportunity. The last development of this nature which occurred in the Territory was the development of Palmerston which had its genesis in the early 1980s. Whilst today it is a wonderfully vibrant family city, we want to establish a new city in a much more consultative way than the beginnings of Palmerston.

Before I go into detail of the planning that is under way for Weddell, I need to address why we are proposing this city.

Recently this decision, made and announced in February 2009, was questioned by some people, including the Lord Mayor of Darwin. I encourage public debate so I welcome their comments. I am happy to explain the basis of our decision.

The government came to the conclusion that a new city was required on the basis of the pace of growth in the Northern Territory. I established the Territory Growth Planning Unit after the 2008 election. One of the early briefs I sought from it was a view on the growth of Darwin and Palmerston. The work of this unit, combined with some excellent work done by agencies such as Treasury and the Charles Darwin University, produced evidence of the pace and extent of population growth in the Territory.

The overall population growth had leapt from less than 0.5% when we took office, to above 2% Territory wide in 2008. In Palmerston and its immediate environs, that growth rate has been running at approximately 4% annually. We believe this will be sustained for a decade or more. That population growth will see between 43 000 and 60 000 additional people in Darwin,

Palmerston and Litchfield over the next 15 years. These people have to be housed.

In addition to this population growth, changes in family structure wrought by modern life trends have caused an increase in the need for housing. These trends will continue over the next 15 to 20 years. For example, separations and divorces in families with children lead to both parents needing houses with enough room to accommodate their children.

Aged Territorians are staying in the Territory rather than leaving. Accommodation demand for town houses has leapt as a result. Young single women are in the housing market more than ever before. Couples without children are becoming a higher proportion of our population. To accommodate this growth we have released land at a rate faster than ever before. That is why we have six suburbs being developed, four of which are developing in Palmerston East. The government has pulled forward tens of millions of dollars of headworks to establish Palmerston East and house 15 000 people over five years from 2009.

Government and private enterprise working together will bring the housing market back into balance in 2011, but looking forward to when Palmerston becomes full in 2018, options need to be in place for the next major population growth areas. Darwin, Palmerston and the rural areas could not accommodate that growth even with significant changes and planning densities. It was obvious a new growth area was needed.

Some of the criticism of the Weddell proposal lies in opposition to urban sprawl. I understand this view; however, much of the national and international debate about urban design is driven by the pressures of very large cities. Urban sprawl is consuming enormous resources, driving the debate about increasing densities and changing urban design. Transplanting that debate to Darwin simply does not make sense. We do not have the congestion, the diseconomies of scale, or the increasing distance to utilities that are faced by much larger cities. Weddell is straight across the harbour from Darwin city and therefore quite close to the CBD by water.

Weddell is being developed closer to our water and electricity infrastructure, not further away. The water infrastructure is there. It is not in a lonely paddock; it will be surrounded by 40 000 people in Palmerston and 20 000 people in Litchfield. It is the third corner of our future growth triangle.

Finally, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can continue to grow Palmerston, support sensible density in key locations in the

Darwin suburbs and the city, and develop Weddell. We need to do all three to cater for future growth. That is the primary message: we need all three to cater for our growth - not just housing, but retail, commercial, and industrial land also. The government recognised this and, in February 2009, we made our public announcement about Weddell. It is worth noting the government has never said it is a choice between Weddell and the Cox Peninsula. Weddell is land we can access and develop quickly. I am confident the Larrakia and others will develop Cox Peninsula over time.

During the community consultations and the government discussions on the establishment of *Territory 2030*, the planned development of Weddell was clearly supported. What was clear, though, was the community wanted a say in the development of this city and they wanted the city to achieve two clear aims. The first was the provision of affordable land and housing, and the second was a tropical and sustainable city which has minimal impact on the environment. Both of these are legitimate aims and have been accepted by the government in our thinking on and planning for Weddell.

There are those who will argue these are contradictory aims. Certainly, sustainable projects to date demonstrate larger up-front costs, but work is under way around the world on how to balance the two needs, and we will be tapping in to local, national, and international expertise. Young Territorians - the Territorians who will be buying land and living in this city - have made it clear they want something different from the ordinary. They do not want the government to go through the normal process of planning and developing a city. The government is listening to this view.

I agree, in these times, the most up-to-date technology, the best possible essential services systems, and the most current thinking on sustainable cities needs to be applied in the planning. We welcome input from everyone because Weddell is so important to our future. However, one of the challenges for all of us is not to fall into the trap of telling future generations how they should live. Rather, it is about creating a city in which they want to live.

Developing Weddell carries with it an onerous responsibility. It is challenging to consult with likely future residents; many are still very young and still in primary or secondary school. We need to be tuned in to their needs and to avoid the trap of pushing our own urban design ideologies. My government will do that.

We have two core streams to our work. The first stream is the engineering, environmental, and

economic work necessary to create the framework for the city. The second stream is the urban planning, design, and sustainability task that builds a place to call home. In the past, much of that work would have occurred over as much as nine or 10 years. We can do better than that and we will.

We are running our two streams in parallel while still delivering on the immediate needs in Palmerston East. The government has established an internal task force charged with the responsibility of making this project happen. This is a big challenge for the people chosen for this task force, but I am confident in the calibre of the people involved.

The team delivering the new city is made up of very capable and competent public servants. There is a core team of 10 people - planning, engineering, environmental, and transport professionals under the direction of a senior project manager. Another 10 Department of Lands and Planning staff are providing regular support to the Weddell task force on a range of technical issues. Staff from agencies such as Health, Education and NRETAS are also providing expertise as required. The government also has a number of studies under way to ensure we know all we need to about the proposed site. There are 32 studies under way in all. These studies include:

- a gap analysis. This study is the starting point for the development of Weddell. It will identify existing and missing information, and confirm the suite of studies required, as well as their scope, cost and timing. The duration of this study is four months and has been awarded to the company, SKM.
- investigation of mitigation measures to reduce the effect of biting insects on the proposed development. This is a study building on the field work, which has been ongoing for more than 12 months, to identify and estimate the cost of mitigation measures. The duration of this study is 14 weeks and it has been awarded to a company called Arap.
- review of major infrastructure and headworks. This is scoped and managed jointly with the Power and Water Corporation and will build on an earlier study which covered the Cox Peninsula and Weddell precincts. It will include major engineering infrastructure services and headworks. For example, trunk sewers, pump stations, sewer treatment facilities, trunk water mains, alternative water sources and storage

and treatment options, electricity generation reticulation and substations, major road works, intersections, trunk drainage including water, sensitive urban design, and communications. The study's duration is 20 weeks, awarded to SKM.

- the contamination audit. This study will identify issues which may impact the initial stage of the development; the duration is six weeks and is yet to be awarded.
- heritage and archaeology studies. These will identify areas of concerns which may impact on the development envelope.
- marine habitat mapping. This is the baseline survey of marine habitat including characterisation and mapping of marine habitats, spatial distribution and condition of mangroves species, identifying presence of endangered species, identifying sensitive and high conservation value marine habitat; the duration of this study is 12 months.
- a baseline fauna survey. This survey will identify the presence of endangered species, map habitat condition and areas of high conservation value; the duration of this study is for 12 months and is an environmental assessment.

All of the above studies will be required to inform the environmental assessment of the development by Territory and Commonwealth environmental agencies. An environmental consultant has been engaged to prepare the notice of intent which is the first stage of an environmental assessment process. The notice of intent and Commonwealth referral will take approximately six months to complete, and the supporting studies towards the environmental impact statement will be ongoing over two to three years.

These are just six of the studies and I will not detail the rest of them; suffice to say that these studies are critical in our knowledge of what is required to make this city a reality.

I would like to think outside of the square. The government is committed to extensive community discussion and to bringing into focus ideas from Territorians, other Australians and experts from around the world on the development of this city. To do that we have undertaken some key steps designed to bring out all possible ideas, whilst at the same time maintaining a careful reality check measure in place.

On 20 July, I launched an ideas competition. This competition will give adults and children the chance to compete for individual and school prizes whilst also providing input into the design of the Territory's newest city. Competition entrants will be required to provide ideas in 500 words or less, or create an image accompanied by a 100 words or less. The competition will be based and assessed on four criteria:

- a future city community that meets the needs of future populations and has access to technology;
- a green city minimising impacts on environment, energy efficient with the best use of open spaces;
- a people's city, a vibrant, healthy, positive and interactive community with affordable housing options; and
- a river city capitalising on the river location and considering water transport.

I launched the competition at Darwin Middle School where Year 8 students had recently completed models, some of them 3D, on sustainable architecture. Winners and schools will receive cash prizes and individuals will be invited to share their ideas at the Weddell Conference and Design Forum where the top 10 entries in each category will be displayed. Territorians can go to [www.housingnt.nt.gov.au](http://www.housingnt.nt.gov.au) to enter the Weddell design competition. All schools have been sent information packs on how to enter, and the competition closes on 27 August 2010.

On 28 and 29 July, the Department of Lands and Planning held a two-day planning forum of around 50 members of the public service and the member for Nelson, aimed at providing a real situation. The group used the 300 ha Berrimah Farm and prison site for a training exercise to explore the design of innovative, liveable and sustainable urban areas in the Top End. The workshop was guided by several expert sustainable design facilitators. A number of different scenarios were explored including options for a city-wide public transport network, a walkable and liveable mixed-use town, and an industrial development option. The participants learned that, in collaboration with other stakeholders with diverse expertise, they could produce realistic, preliminary design concepts in a short time frame. The inquiry by design process used is a dynamic real time planning process. The Berrimah training workshop was successful in giving Northern Territory government staff skills in site responsive design and sustainable urbanism, and how to balance complex and competing opportunities and constraints.

The workshop was exciting and generated much positive energy and enthusiasm, and provided an excellent basis for the Weddell Design Forum.

The next big step in this process is the Weddell Conference and Design Forum from 27 September to 1 October. This forum will bring together participants from the Territory, around Australia, and around the world. Some of the national and international speakers and participants at the Conference and Design Forum include:

- Paul Murrain, an Urban Designer from London. Paul is an Urban Design Consultant and former senior lecturer and Course Chairman at the Joint Centre for Urban Design in Oxford, England. From May 2002 to April 2005 he was Senior Design Director at HRH the Prince of Wales Foundation for the Built Environment. Paul was appointed as a visiting professor at the University of Greenwich in 2007. He is now a Senior Fellow at the Prince's Foundation.
- Wendy Morris is the Director of Ecologically Sustainable Design Pty Ltd, an urban design and planning consultancy specialising in new urbanism, sustainable growth management and mixed-use development. ESD is known for its Enquiry by Design participatory process. Based in Melbourne, ESD practises across Australia and internationally.
- Stephen Bowers, Director of Novis Urban Pty Ltd. Stephen Bowers is a surveyor by profession and has over 25 years experience as the Managing Director of Jensen Bowers Group Consultants. Since 2001, Stephen has chaired Enquiry by Design projects at Noosa North Shore, Redland Bay, Lennox Head, Coffs Harbour and the widely acclaimed and awarded Wynnum CBD Urban Renewal Charrette.
- Chip Kaufman, Director, Ecologically Sustainable Design Pty Ltd. Chip Kaufman is an urban designer and licensed architect with professional experience in Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada, China and the UK.
- Peter Richards, Director, Deicke Richards Architects. Peter Richards is a registered architect with a Master of Urban Design. His expertise covers design at all scales and types from

regions to centres, places and buildings on the eastern seaboard of Australia from Cairns to Melbourne.

- Jim Higgs, Director, TTM Consulting Pty Ltd. Jim Higgs has considerable experience in planning for design management across a broad field of traffic engineering and transport-related projects in all eastern Australian states and internationally.
- Gilbert Rochecouste, Director, Village Well. Gilbert is recognised nationally and internationally as a leading voice in sustainable communities and business.
- Clive Alcock, Director, Annand Alcock Urban Design Pty Ltd. Clive studied and worked in Manchester, Oxford and London before migrating to Australia. He has been based in Sydney for 20 years where he specialises as an urban design consultant.

Territorians will participate in many ways. There are opening and closing seminars for ideas to be aired and outcomes to be examined. Territorians with expertise and professional interest in key areas of urban design and sustainable cities will be invited to participate for the full time.

The outcomes of this forum will be assessed and examined by a reference group and will form the basis of the criteria for the national design competition which will follow. The design competition will provide options for the master planning of the new city. The competition will be run in accordance with strict national competition rules. We have received advice on this from experts in the hosting of such competitions. The options which come out of this competition will be taken to the people for their comment. I expect the competition to be launched before the end of the year and the outcomes to be announced in the first half of next year.

The development of Weddell is an extremely important step in the growth and development of our Territory. The government is determined to involve Territorians in the planning of this new city. The government is equally determined to develop a city which meets our twin aims of providing affordable land and housing and developing a tropical, sustainable and liveable city.

I urge all members to have their say in this process. I am looking forward to the discussion today and I commend the statement to the House.

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

**Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for the acceptance of a Country Liberals' vision to have a network of liveable cities around the natural features of Darwin Harbour. Something did actually happen in those 26 years; unless you are so jaundiced you cannot see. Thank you, Chief Minister, for an acknowledgement that it is well past the time needed to move on with land release.

In acknowledging the truths in the plan, it is also important to acknowledge the Chief Minister's spin. The Chief Minister leaves the impression that population growth suddenly took off under Labor; that the greatest challenge to his government delivering for Territorians was the need to invest for an unexpectedly high rate of population growth in Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield; that a 2% growth rate in 2010 is breakneck speed.

Yet, when you look at the real figures - those figures that this government cannot spin - we see the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield local government areas increased population from 86 000 to 95 000 between 1991 and 1996. That is about 1900 people per year which is about 2.2%. From 1996 to 2001 there was an increase from 95 600 to 107 700 or about 2400 per year; that is about 2.5%. Is it any surprise then that the population growth from 2001 to 2010 is also in the same order of 2.2% to 2.5% per year? Yet, your government has failed to release land to deliver new suburbs and new towns.

Labor came to government with plans on the books, with towns on the horizon, plans for schools, parks, roads, railways and industrial development sites. It took that legacy in 2001 and sat on its hands.

I am glad the Chief Minister can see sustained growth of 2% in the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield local government areas because even blind Freddy can see it has been that way for the last 30 years. Chief Minister, blind Freddy has dragged this government to the conclusion Weddell is a suddenly needed development - crash course requiring fauna studies, flora studies, biting insects, mitigation measures, heritage, archaeology, soil contamination, soil sustainability, service headworks and infrastructure planning, and an urgent need for overall environmental assessment. To get to that point it is going to have to jump through a few hoops; it is going to push development further into the future.

This government is not short years away from developing Weddell, as I will outline later; it is the modern equivalent of the Northern Territory in the year 1973. This plan put forward for Weddell is not a new idea direct from Labor central planning;

it is a rebadged plan of the Country Liberals, just 10 years later.

It is with much irony I respond to the Chief Minister's, and his government's, assertion that they are releasing land at a faster rate than ever before. Ever, meaning before 2008, when land release was a statistical zero? Better than failing to deliver on the last new suburban school from 1998 to 2011? Better than having suburbs ready to go for 30 years, but not releasing the land? The only thing this government is pulling, in the words of the Chief Minister, is people's legs.

This is the first time in the housing debate the Labor government has committed to bringing the housing market back into balance by 2011. By making this statement, this government says 1400 dwellings will be delivered in 2011, 3000 Territorians will get new homes in 2011, land for 900 homes and for 500 multiple dwellings will be delivered in 2011. The Chief Minister does not address the nett structural deficit his government has been responsible for over the past 10 years: the structural deficit which sees people living in tents, sleeping in cars, and cramming into high-rise apartments just to meet the rent. It does not address the structural deficit of the 1400 dwellings not delivered last year, the year before that, or the year before that.

It is about reliance on lot subdivision and urban infill. The Labor vision is squeezing house blocks below 800 m<sup>2</sup> to 600 m<sup>2</sup>, 500 m<sup>2</sup> and now to 400 m<sup>2</sup>. Be mindful when comparing the development of Palmerston to the future development of Weddell. It is prophetic that the Chief Minister recognises the design of a new city would normally take nine to 10 years; prophetic, because in that time frame you can investigate the alternatives, weigh the priorities and plan your investments.

If I look back to the development of Palmerston in the early 1980s I am struck by the similarities. The area in which Palmerston was developed was acquired by the Crown in 1973, and that is where I put this government's planning steps for Weddell today - it has just started out in 1973. This development has years of studies, plans, assessments and developments in front of it; it has an EIS and probably a Commonwealth EPBC referral in front of it. The similarities between Weddell and Palmerston are eerie, but the lessons should have already been learned.

For example, the Palmerston Development Strategy of October 1981 stated:

*In 1980, the government of the Northern Territory established the Palmerston Development Authority to assume responsibility for the development of*

*Palmerston. The Authority was set up with two primary objectives:*

- (a) *to introduce greater competition into the supply of land and housing in Greater Darwin; and*
- (b) *to ensure private, rental accommodation is more readily available and is reasonably priced.*

Thirty years later and 10 years into the rule of the Labor administration, we face the same basic problems: lack of competition in the supply of land, and the constraint of unaffordable, private rental accommodation. I am not going to table the document. It is available from the Parliamentary Library. I am grateful for the efforts of Di Sinclair and the Parliamentary Library Service for assisting my staff in their research.

Similarities between the need for the development of Palmerston in the 1980s and Weddell today are striking - striking in that it appears this government has failed to learn the lessons of history and failed to move on when the time was available to bring Weddell forward. I quote again from page 4 of the document:

*The unsatisfied demand for permanent dwellings in Darwin at June 1980 has been estimated as approximately 2000 units. Through the year, population increase generated an additional estimated demand of some 1800 units. Against this demand it was expected a supply of some 1400 would be provided from turnoffs in the northern suburbs of Malak, Karama, Leanyer and Brinkin.*

If I substitute the suburbs Malak, Karama, Leanyer and Brinkin for the names Bellamack, Johnston, Zuccoli and Muirhead, the time machine takes us, once again, back to the 1980s. But in 1980, we had a master plan for Palmerston: 12 suburbs - Bellamack had already been named, Johnston and Zuccoli already identified - a university, a town centre, major roads, urban and rural living, infrastructure, railways, light industrial, all the needs of a modern city. It had already been planned. Yet today, under Labor, all we find at their major turning point for Weddell is that there is a failure to plan. We have the final Palmerston suburbs from a 30-year vision on the books, but we do not yet have the suburbs for 2040 described, assigned or delivered. By the time the plan for Weddell comes to the table, available residential land will again be exhausted. The pent-up demand will be even worse and new homes and houses will be out of reach for average Territorians.

I turn to the planning efforts of the Palmerston Development Authority. In the first annual report of the Palmerston Development Authority in 1980-81, it was reported that the Palmerston development team comprised eight full-time core members from the department of Lands, two seconded full-time core members from Department of Treasury and Department of Transport and Works, and 18 part-time members from government departments and authorities.

In this statement the Chief Minister says there is a core team of 10 people comprising planning, engineering, environmental and transport professionals; and another 10 Department of Lands and Planning staff are providing regular support to the Weddell task force. The members should also note that staff from other agencies, such as Education, Health and NRETAS, are also providing expertise as required. It seems to be déjà vu; it is the Palmerston Development Authority 1980, but it is supposed to be Weddell 2010. It is more likely to be Weddell 2020. Weddell 2020 will not deliver on one of the key performance objectives of the Palmerston development, a \$40 000 house and land package. Things have changed and we would not be expecting that. When we compare, \$40 000 in 1980 is the equivalent of \$150 000 today for a house and land package.

Madam Deputy Speaker, is it any wonder then that continuing delays to land release in urban centres, the delay in getting Weddell off the ground and the overall failure of Labor leaves Territorians once again facing record rents, record prices as a barrier to home ownership and a Labor record of failing to deliver?

**Ms LAWRIE (Treasurer):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the Chief Minister for the Weddell statement which sets out the process, the vision, the inclusion and the use of experts, which will go into a thorough planning process for the city of Weddell.

The contribution from the Leader of the Opposition belies belief when he says there is failure to plan. If he had read the statement, he would see: the recognition of 32 studies which are being undertaken; the planning sessions which have already occurred; the planning experts who have been involved; the ideas; the competition that is currently in the public domain, which targets students in particular; the task force that we have across government; and that there will be a conference for Weddell which will draw in international and national expertise, as well as invite input from Territorians. He would not say we are failing to plan for Weddell if he had bothered to read the statement rather than just deliver political rhetoric in the Chamber.

We need the new city of Weddell because the Territory is growing. We have a very strong economy; Access Economics says we are on the verge of being turbocharged. If you consider how we are going to support this growth, building the infrastructure is critical to supporting growth – infrastructure that delivers roads, schools, essential services - and a big part of that is the release of land to support more residential housing and industrial areas such as general and light industry. We need to continue to respond to the significant population growth and the increase in demand for housing we are experiencing due to the Territory's strong economy.

This is a very exciting stage of the Territory's growth, unlike the flatline, the 0% growth we had when the CLP was last in government. We are seeing a period where population growth has outstripped all forecasts. It is now sitting above 2%, and that rate of growth has been sustained for some time.

People are moving to the Territory. People from interstate are coming here for our lifestyle and our jobs. We have seen sustained interstate migration reach levels not seen since Defence moved north in the 1980s. The development industry and government are working together to respond to this significant growth. We have seen a transformation in the city of Darwin, with investment in city living. On the fringe of the city we have seen developments - for example, of the old Tank Farm, into prime residential space, and we have seen a renewal in the redevelopment of many old home sites into unit and townhouse developments across our inner suburbs. Since 2006, there have been some 2300 units approved in Darwin CBD, which is the equivalent of a suburb.

The opposition would have you think nothing has been done to meet the housing demand, and think there has been no development, which belies the facts. The facts are: 2300 units in the CBD alone since 2006. We have seen the establishment and growth of the suburb of Lyons, which was undertaken in a joint venture with Defence Housing. We have seen a significant interest in Lyons, which causes what I call a 'churn' through the marketplace. Many Darwin families who have been living in the northern suburbs purchase in Lyons, freeing up housing for purchase in the northern suburbs.

Palmerston is the fastest growing area in the Territory. Population growth there is at about 4%. Recent forecasts by Access Economics predict population growth in the Territory to moderate to about 1.8% on average; however, growth in Palmerston is expected to remain strong. On the development scene, Palmerston will reach the point where land options in and around Darwin will

be exhausted, and that is why planning for the new city now is necessary to meet future growth needs.

We are not sitting static. If you look at the land release under way in Bellamack, which will yield 670 lots, 200 have already been sold off the plan and the first titles have been released, housing construction can commence, and another 450 approved lots are under construction. In Johnston, there are 590 lots, land is being sold, and housing construction will start in early 2011. Stage 1 of 200 lots has 149 blocks sold. Stage 2, a further 293 lots, has been approved and a call for developers to construct the new lots has gone out. Two large lots for medium-density residential in Johnston have been sold. That will mean hundreds of new units for Territorians.

The next suburb of Zuccoli will yield around 1400 lots and the first stages of Zuccoli will deliver some 400 lots. This will be developed by the Northern Territory government's Land Development Corporation and we have called for a partner to develop Zuccoli. The lots will be delivered in 2011. Following Zuccoli will be the suburb of Mitchell.

In the private sector, Charles Darwin University is looking at 500 lots to be delivered in Palmerston, and Defence housing is carving up some 1000 lots in Muirhead.

This government negotiated a cap of 30% of the Defence buy-in of Muirhead, freeing up a significant chunk of that development for the private sector, but also ensuring that 15% of Muirhead will be set aside for affordable and social housing, which was a great win/win outcome.

We are not sitting still; there is a dramatic amount of development in the land release occurring in and around the growth areas of Darwin and Palmerston. In planning for Weddell, planners in 1984 under the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan identified the next city and the location was confirmed in 1990.

It was planned to progressively locate cities around the harbour, and the plan for Weddell has been reinforced in our government's *Territory 2030* plan. Under *Territory 2030*, we have committed to developing Weddell as a world-class green city and a model for future development in the Territory.

We are also focused on delivering affordable housing options at Weddell. Across government we have created a task force to focus on the enormous amount of work that has to be undertaken to deliver this new city. Engineering, environmental and economic frameworks form the

first stage. Urban planning, design and sustainability will follow. Planning a city is a unique opportunity. We want to take the best information available today to plan this sustainable city.

We want to involve the community in designing Weddell. Members of the House may have seen the advertising that the government has undertaken to invite community contributions to the planning of Weddell. The ideas competition is open to all Territorians to share their vision of what they would like to see in Weddell, whether that is about the style of housing, the liveability of the city, or sustainable measures such as energy and water use.

We have targeted the ideas competition at students to invite their creativity and thoughts, given many of our young people may be future residents of Weddell. This competition is an initiative towards engaging our community in planning Weddell. Weddell will not be planned in isolation of community input. The Weddell: Tropical, Sustainable, Liveable - *Territory 2030*: Conference and Design Forum will be held next month.

The forum will bring together national and international experts in the fields of urban design, architecture, urban planning, as well as educators, students and our local community. The forum will discuss good urban and sustainable design options for Weddell, including transport links and contemporary practice to make cities liveable for work and play.

The outcomes will inform the next stage, which will be the national design competition. The competition will be run nationally and invite options for the city master plan. From this process, Territorians will be able to see ideas on paper and in 3D models of how Weddell might look and interact with the surrounding environment, linking to the water, linking to Palmerston.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is an exciting time in the development of a new city for the Territory. I encourage all Territorians to get involved and to share their idea for our next Territory city. I commend the Chief Minister for his statement and update on Weddell today.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Madam Deputy Speaker, this statement reached my computer first thing this morning, which is barely time to read it, let alone digest it and respond accordingly. However, I will respond with the seriousness this kind of statement alleges to be covering, both as the shadow for Lands and Planning and as the member for Goyder. Whilst the Weddell area is not in my electorate at the moment, with

distribution and boundary changes it may well be in the future.

In the statement you say the last development of this nature was the development of Palmerston. Is this all you are doing now, simply creating another Palmerston? You make mention of the questioning of Weddell by Darwin's Lord Mayor, Graeme Sawyer, amongst others. He has every right to question you and your comments. Readdressing the issues of this proposed city is an excuse for belated responses and muddled thinking about the future of the Darwin region.

It may feel good to continuously use the buzz words '2030' and 'Weddell', but where is the employment plan? Where are the transportation plans? Where are the infrastructure plans? Serious infrastructure will be needed to support a city such as Weddell. Where is the planning for the future supply of water to this new city? I have not been able to find any plans. The statement gives an overall population growth for Palmerston and its immediate environs of 4% annually and, in your view, this will be sustained for a decade or more. That means about 1800 to 2000 new homes per annum; much pressure on a government that cannot provide anything like that number now, and has not provided anything to support it in the future.

The government is not turning off enough land, and to say it has released land at a faster rate than ever before is arrant nonsense. 'Must be stressed' applies to the Henderson Labor government's performance. Do not taint the Country Liberals with this brush. You have to pick up the pieces, government; you have to recognise the private sector is also being stymied by your lack of progress and lack of action in systematic land release.

Only yesterday, a developer in the rural area, in my electorate, advised our office that yet again he had been promised a decision a month ago, but no sign of it. No decision, no ability to develop land, and no new homes for people wanting to live in the rural area. This, despite the Chief Minister's claim in his statement that government and private enterprise, working together, will bring the housing market back into balance in 2011, which is fast approaching. I do not think so, Chief Minister. Your one-stop shop is scornfully referred to in the business community as the full-stop shop. Nothing comes out the other end; nothing moves forward.

Chief Minister, you state when Palmerston becomes full in 2018 options need to be in place; however, it is not clear why you chose this date. It is a big mistake to think capacity is available until the last drop. That is not true; you must take account of lead times. You will run out of land in

the market long before the final house is built in Palmerston East.

Chief Minister, you say Weddell will be surrounded by 20 000 people in Litchfield. It is already surrounded by nearly 20 000. There are 7500 rate-paying properties in the Litchfield Council; there is in excess of 20 000 people living within the Litchfield Council boundaries, and that is a guesstimate. From my discussions with council and people in the area, there are many properties - and you only have to drive around to see it - that have not only a house, but also a caravan, people sharing, families bunking in because they cannot get houses elsewhere in the Territory and are staying with friends and family in the rural area. That number could well be in excess of 20 000 ...

**Mr Wood:** Do not tell the planning people.

**Ms PURICK:** We will not tell the planning people; however, it is partly their fault - to pick up on the interjection from the member for Nelson - people are forced into the situation of having to share homes and their properties with friends and families.

Where are you planning for the future beyond Weddell? Do you have any other ideas at all? I would say not. You note opposition to urban sprawl because it consumes enormous resources; however, you miss a major point about land sustainability and availability in the Darwin region.

Chief Minister, you state Weddell is straight across the harbour from Darwin city. What a load of rubbish. It is not across the harbour, it is up the Elizabeth River - look at the map. The Darwin Harbour Strategy arrived in my mail recently. Page 10 has a map, and I can show members right in the middle is Weddell, which is a long way from the harbour. It is inland of the Elizabeth River, so, quite clearly, the Chief Minister does not even know where Weddell is going to be located. How can you map the Territory and its future if you cannot even read a map of the Darwin Harbour and its surrounds?

The fundamental issue of where Weddell is going to disconnect from Litchfield, Palmerston, and Darwin has to be solved first. Weddell will be either a stand-alone centre, focusing inwards, or it must have strong road, rail, and water links. There has been no indication from this government regarding where, what, and how they will be funded.

You say the community wants affordable land and housing, and a tropical and sustainable city. What exactly do those words mean? What about the many members of the community who invested their time in previous consultative

planning processes? Are they being ignored? Where have their comments gone?

Here I remind you of what my colleague, the member for Sanderson, said in the House last week that each of the RAAF Base houses:

*... incorporates a range of good design features adapted to Darwin's tropical climate ... An elevated home, rather than a concrete box with gardens and landscaping all well established ... an excellent example of sustainable living - homes that lend themselves to the use of cross-ventilation ...*

Tropo style:

*... not reliant upon the high and ever-increasing costs of air-conditioning.*

Be honest, Chief Minister. How many of the young public servants in your offices would dream of living in anything but a fully air-conditioned house or apartment, which means it must be sealed and, nowadays, 5-star energy rated? We know the temperatures are hotter these days than they have been before, so far more people are looking to air-condition their houses. Heaven help us if you suggest they walk or cycle to work. Most young couples insist on a car each, not even one shared. We only have to look on our roads to see how many cars are not shared by people.

For goodness sake, introduce some reality into the spin words 'tropical and sustainable city' and define it properly for our climatic extremes, and how people are actually prepared to live.

Here is a sorry state of affairs. You state: 'In February 2009 we made our public announcement about Weddell'. That is 26 years of contemplation. I refer you to the public document dated 1984, the Darwin Regional Structure Plan, a specific policy paper that was updated in 1990 with further detail. There is a land use framework for the city of Weddell already done, already paid for by NT taxpayers, and available all the time you have been in office. Where is it? Have you lost this body of work that is and was so invaluable?

**Mr Wood:** I have it here.

**Ms PURICK:** Obviously, the Chief Minister does not have a copy of it. On 4 February 2009, the Chief Minister issued this media release:

*Weddell to be the Territory's new city.*

*The Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, today announced that Weddell will be the Territory's new city.*

*Speaking to an audience of business and community leaders in Darwin, Mr Henderson said an estimated 10 000 blocks of land catering for a population of some 40 000 people would make up the new city ...*

*'Weddell will be the site of the Territory's fourth city. Planning for the development of the site is now under way with the first blocks likely to be turned off in five years', Mr Henderson said.*

I quote further:

*The Chief Minister briefed business and community leaders on the results of intense planning work undertaken by government.*

The Chief Minister was correct; there was a great deal of intense planning work. It had been done already and accomplished in the 1980s during the tenure of the Country Liberal government. Their plans for the expansion of the Northern Territory were well thought out and documented and then ignored for years by the Henderson government. Those same community and business leaders you briefed included many watching with concern the stagnation of planning and development in the Northern Territory.

As everyone could see, it took them almost 18 months for the next step. On 20 July 2010, the Chief Minister, master of hyperbole, issued a further media statement about the Weddell ideas competition giving adults and children the chance to win individual and school prizes while also providing input into the design of the Territory's newest city - ideas in 500 words or less, or create an image accompanied by 100 words or less; winners and schools will receive cash prizes, etcetera.

All very nice, but where is the experienced Northern Territory planning leadership? Where is the leadership by this government? What is the exact footprint? Clearly, you do not know that it is not on the harbour foreshore, but what is the measurement for impact on the environment? Is building a city up on the escarpment considered to have less impact on the environment than building on the coast? Does the river city referred to by the Chief Minister mean that a waterside location is considered environmentally sound and sensible? How can you have a river city when the river runs dry when the tide runs out? What are your water transport options then?

Both this statement and the media releases on Weddell are full of motherhood statements and do not stack up: 'Weddell is not a lonely paddock'; 'innovative, liveable and sustainable urban areas'; 'complex and competing opportunity and

constraints'. Chief Minister, what is conspicuously missing is leadership and vision. You make mention of an internal task force, and that the team delivering the new city is made up of very capable and competent public servants. That is their job; that is why there are departments called Lands and Planning, Construction and Infrastructure which are full of staff - it is their job to plan.

You say the government also has a number of studies under way - 32 studies in all. Have not a great number of these been done already? I know flora, fauna, biting insects, marine habitat and infrastructure studies have been done. Work has already been completed on all the ingredients you list as forthcoming consultancies. Many agencies produce digitised maps, aerial photographs and comprehensive materials. Refer to those and, where necessary, update them, but please do not throw more taxpayers' money at reinventing the wheel. The information is there already.

Why are yet more consultants being paid to redo baseline research? Where is the Greater Darwin Region Plan 2025, which cost over \$0.5m? The study into biting insects awarded to Arap - surely this is being monitored and managed in part by our local expert, Peter Whelan and his team? Why will the contamination study only identify issues which may impact the initial stage of development? Why not all ongoing issues from our urban development? How can you proceed with this study until your design instrument is complete?

Chief Minister, I call on you to advise all the studies you say are under way, how these companies were selected and by whom, and the cost of their consultancies. You should provide a full list and details of the studies by name and scope before your forum so that inadequacies can be picked up during the forum.

I would like to point out to the Chief Minister that he fills three pages of his statement with outlines of the speakers he has invited to the forum. I have no issue with that or the speakers who have been asked to attend. However, there should have been full pages outlining the city and the government's vision for the city. Are any of these speakers recognised in the tropical context? What is their real and relevant experience as related to our region? Where have they worked, what have they produced, and how much are they being paid to attend this forum for a week?

Chief Minister, you have left everything of substance out of this statement. It states the obvious: that Darwin is growing, and we need another city and we have to go further out. It is, once again, the sort of statement anyone could make, embracing everyone and applauding a

great department, but it contains nothing of substance. Anything to do with real vision and real planning has been left out. There is nothing new here; it has been debated since the 1980s. There is nothing in this. All you are saying is that you are faltering forward.

Where is the statement about how growth should be managed in the long term? What is beyond the next brick wall? Where are the connectivity and transport solutions, the recreation and employment solutions? This statement does not display strategic planning or thinking. This statement makes no mention of the vital employment base. Instead, it outlines another large suburb and uses nice words, another blob of housing, another reactive move.

Whenever professionals are asked to design something, they are provided with a full brief. Chief Minister, where is that brief? Where is the announcement of the details? Where is the demographic breakdown? Where are your facts and figures to determine what exactly you are designing for? You must have some ideas, as Weddell has been on the plan since 1985. What are your specific reasons for Weddell, beyond the immature comment: 'Well, we are growing, so we are going to need it'?

Are you simply sitting on the fence again, waiting for something to happen, for someone else to advise you, and then reacting instead of leading? Chief Minister, you claim that community consultations clearly supported Weddell, and young Territorians, and here I quote you:

*... who will be buying land and living in this city have made it clear they want something different ...*

Let me point out, Chief Minister, that makes those young people about 12- to 16-years-old right now, and they will probably be interstate by 2018. Where is the documentary evidence of these claims? What are the specific alternative options?

Chief Minister, the Northern Territory has been overwhelmingly occupied by, and its growth driven by, those who have come from elsewhere. For instance, have you any idea of the expectation INPEX has for its expatriates? After all the months and years the Henderson government has talked about Weddell, nothing has been resolved.

Instead of writing the brief, you are expecting it to be done for you. Classroom concepts and competitions are all well and good, but anything else on designing a city is nonsensical. At this rate you are heading towards a Litchfield scenario: a rural area without a swimming pool, a proper community library, a proper public transport hub, proper access onto the Stuart Highway from main

arterial roads such as Bees Creek and Virginia Roads, a full-time ambulance centre, or bus shelters for our schoolchildren. We still do not have these urgent, basic items of infrastructure for Litchfield, let alone Weddell. How long have you been in government and done nothing about it?

Madam Deputy Speaker, why is this statement full of fluffy words which anyone can write, instead of specifics? It seems a stopgap; a single step along a road which, for the sake of our Northern Territory, should have been much wider in its horizons and its vision. But it does not have vision because this government does not have vision full stop.

**Mr McCARTHY (Lands and Planning):**  
Madam Deputy Speaker, you have to stop and smell the roses at some stage.

What the Chief Minister has presented in this House is a vision of a city which will be for Territorians and by Territorians. It is a vision which is inclusive of Territorians, and any plan you might find in a cereal box is not what Weddell is about. You do not come to this House with a plan and tell Territorians exactly what is going to happen when you are building the newest city in the Northern Territory.

It is great the member for Goyder makes mention of the school kids, because her point is exactly right; when you are building a new city in the Northern Territory it is about our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, and the great Territorians who will follow on in our footsteps. That is where you need vision, and to be positive, and that is where the Chief Minister is when he brings this statement to the House.

It is with pleasure that I add my remarks to the Chief Minister's statement on the development of Weddell. As the Chief Minister noted, the development of Weddell is hugely important for the future of the Northern Territory because the Territory is growing and we need to plan for and manage this growth.

The Territory's population is growing by more than 2% a year. Palmerston is growing even faster - more than 4% a year - making it one of the fastest growing regions, not only in the Northern Territory but in the country. We will need 20 000 new housing lots by 2020.

There are those who say we do not need another city; that the demand for housing is not really there, or we should cram more people into the cities and suburbs we have now. Disappointingly, the Lord Mayor of Darwin, Graeme Sawyer, is one of the proponents for relying solely on urban fill to meet housing

demand. On 30 July, Mr Sawyer told the ABC and Channel 9 that

*Weddell is an absolute nightmare and shouldn't happen.*

His statement lacks a creative and true Territory vision for the future. While relying solely on urban fill for Darwin may mean more ratepayers for the Darwin City Council, it is an extremely narrow view which does not take into account the future needs of Territorians and the Territory. Darwin and Palmerston cannot accommodate the urban density which would be needed to house our expanded population. I would like to take a closer look at that.

As the Chief Minister noted, with a growth rate of more than 2% across the NT, and 4% in Palmerston, the population in the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield region is going to grow by between 43 000 and 60 000 Territorians over the next 15 years. To put that in context, the city of Palmerston currently has a population of 27 000, so the most conservative growth forecast figures predict an influx one-and-a-half times the size of the current population of Palmerston. At the highest forecast level, the population growth will be about two-and-a-half times the current population of Palmerston.

These Territorians will need access to a variety of housing choices including units in the suburbs, apartments in the CBD, and in greenfield sites on the traditional quarter acre. Government and private developers are maximising the opportunities for urban fill where appropriate. To highlight some examples around Darwin, the residential apartments in the waterfront development have proven very popular with those wanting an inner-city lifestyle.

There is the redevelopment of the Worrina public housing flats in Parap, the development of the old Tank Farm site in Stuart Park into units and now housing lots, and the Trafalgar development in Parap converting the old Telstra site into homes for Territorians. Not everyone wants to live in the CBD, or in a unit, or in a townhouse. For some Territorians, making the most of the great Territory lifestyle means a house with a yard for the kids to play, having friends around for barbecues, and space to park the boat.

Government has a central role in meeting the demand for land to build houses, giving Territorians choices for the lifestyles they want. That is why we are turning off land five times faster and developing the four new suburbs of Palmerston East. Government is putting its money where its mouth is.

In Bellamack, 450 approved lots are under construction. A further 200 blocks have been sold off the plan, and the first titles have been released. It is great that homes are now being built in Bellamack. The housing construction is another boost for our tradespeople. I encourage all members to drive to Bellamack, have a look at the suburb which is taking shape, and think about the families who will be moving in once the homes are finished. It is great news for the Territory.

While they are there, they should drive around the corner and look at the civil works being undertaken in the new suburb of Johnston. They will see two local companies working to deliver new lots of land for Territorians. A 490 lot suburb at Johnston is taking shape at a rapid rate and has been selling fast, with around 150 of the 200 lots in Stage 1 already sold. A further 293 lots will be developed in Stage 2, and I have called for developers to construct the new lots. The second stage includes a senior's village, parks, nature reserves, and a commercial area to provide services to local residents.

The subdivision was designed by officers from the Department of Lands and Planning and they have done a good job of protecting Mitchell Creek, taking account of the topography, and setting aside areas for public purposes. Housing construction is expected to start in 2011. Zuccoli will follow Johnston as the next Palmerston East suburb to be developed. It could provide up to 1400 residential lots, with 400 lots to be developed in Stage 1.

We want to see this program of residential development roll smoothly for the benefit of our construction industry and Territorians. That is why government committed \$20m in Budget 2010-11 to fast-track the headworks for Zuccoli. Expressions of interest closed last week for a private developer to partner with the Northern Territory government's Land Development Corporation to deliver the Zuccoli lots in 2011. I look forward to seeing the progress.

The development of Palmerston East complements the development of Lyons and Muirhead by Defence Housing Australia. Another exciting private sector development is the joint venture between Charles Darwin University, Canberra Investment Corporation, and the Larrakia Development Corporation to develop over 500 lots at the CDU campus in Palmerston.

Government and the private sector are delivering appropriate, strategic, urban infill to meet some of our residential demand in the near future. This government knows the importance of planning and managing the Territory's future growth. We know, based on extensive research and population forecasts, urban infill alone will not

meet the housing demand of an additional 43 000 to 60 000 Territorians over the next 15 years, which is why we need the new city of Weddell.

Weddell is an amazing opportunity for the Northern Territory. It will be the first city built in the Territory since the growth of Palmerston in the early 1980s. Weddell is an opportunity to create a tropical, sustainable, liveable city based on best practice, 21<sup>st</sup> century design principles. It is a city for the future and will be home for young Territorians who today are still in school or beginning their move into the workforce. The engagement and discussion about our new city must include those people who will be living in our new city. The debate cannot be dominated by lobby groups or those who will be judging the development from afar. Weddell is about housing our next generation of Territorians, giving them a start into our housing market.

Planning, designing, and building a new city does not happen overnight. Our economy is going well and we need to support business and residential growth, so we are not waiting for Palmerston to fill up before we commence on Weddell. Government wants Weddell to be a city where people choose to live, not just what is available. That is why we are keen to involve the Territory community in its development right from the start.

To get the community talking about Weddell and our young people involved, the Chief Minister launched an ideas competition in July. We are asking our school students and the community what a tropical, sustainable, liveable city means to them. Around the four criteria of Future City, Green City, People City and River City, we want to know in 500 words, or visually, what Territorians think Weddell could be like. It is a grassroots way of ensuring Territorians are part of this exciting development for our future, and a way for government to hear firsthand what the community wants from our newest city.

Staff from the Department of Lands and Planning are visiting schools in Darwin, Palmerston, and the rural area this week to talk to students and teachers and encourage them to submit their ideas. I am looking forward to seeing what imaginative ideas are put forward. Winners will have the opportunity to present their vision at the Weddell conference and design forum at the Convention Centre in Darwin next month.

The Chief Minister discussed the conference and design forum in detail in his opening statement. This will be an exciting five days, a major step forward for the development of Weddell. Never before has such a conference been undertaken in planning for the Territory's future. We will bring Territory professionals in

urban design and social and sustainable planning together with experts from around the country and the world. They will share ideas and discuss the challenges and issues to be tackled in the development of Weddell. Members of the public can attend the conference on its opening day, 27 September, and for a time period each night until closing on 1 October.

The strategies and concepts put forward through the conference will be assessed and closely examined. A short list will be made and will form the basis of a national design competition to develop options for the master plan for Weddell. Government will then ask for more input from Territorians. All of this work will take place in the next few months. It is an energetic work plan for an exciting, invigorative project for the Territory's future.

Not everyone is looking forward. From what I am hearing in this House the Country Liberal Party is already knocking the project and does not want to be part of the vision for the future of Weddell. They cannot bring themselves to acknowledge it is important to have Territorians involved from the start. Last week in the House, the member for Goyder showed an unwillingness to be a positive player in the development of Weddell. Already, the member is demanding a master plan for the city without recognising or understanding the huge body of work that must be undertaken to develop and finalise it. The member knocked the conference and its potential to gather the best ideas from around the Territory and the world.

Members of this House come from diverse backgrounds and professions; however, I can confidently say none of us have ever built a tropical, sustainable, and liveable city for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I want the best for the Territory, and I will not apologise for seeking the best ideas for Weddell from local, national, and international experts. I hope the member for Goyder comes on board.

There are so many positives about a tropical, sustainable and liveable city of Weddell. From the *Territory 2030* strategic plan, government knows Territorians want to be part of a model for a new city and new towns of the future. The community has told us Weddell should feature:

*environmentally-sustainable homes and buildings, good urban design, integration of broadband and communications infrastructure, public transport links, affordable and appropriate housing, and community spaces, gardens and parklands.*

Like Darwin, Weddell will be a water city. From where we are now, the future city of Weddell

is about 15 km across the water and up the Elizabeth River. We will ensure Weddell capitalises on its river location to enhance the lifestyles of people who will work and do business there. As part of building a tropical and sustainable city, water-based transport links will be closely assessed. People, like the member for Daly, who have the pleasure of travelling to and from work by water most days, are quick to tell you what a relaxing means of transport it is. I do not believe the member would trade the Mandorah ferry for quids. I want to see water-based transport as an option for Weddell residents of the future.

Weddell residents who do not want to travel by water will see the benefit of government investment in roads and supporting infrastructure. Weddell will be a business hub and many residents will work and live in there. To support a sustainable city, factors like public transport, walkability and rideability will be considered and developed to reduce the carbon footprint of this new city.

Budget 2010-11 provides \$1m for the Weddell Development Master Plan, and \$950 000 ongoing to implement the Development Master Plan. There is a huge amount of work being undertaken on preliminary studies for Weddell. The Chief Minister touched on many of them, including a review of major infrastructure and headworks requirements, heritage and archaeological studies, and environmental assessments. A project of this scale will necessarily involve hundreds of people over time. Maintaining a targeted approach in these early months requires a focused team dedicated to Weddell.

A core team of experienced public servants has been assembled to continue to drive Weddell forward. Ten staff from the Department of Lands and Planning are providing support to the Weddell task force, made up of engineers, planners, environmental and transport experts. They are also seeking input and advice from related agencies, including Health, and Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts. I take this opportunity to commend all involved in this important early work, particularly the team from the Department of Lands and Planning.

The development of Weddell is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for skills development and experience for our public service. Skills gained in the planning work for Weddell will be highly valuable in other engineering, town and social planning, design and environmental assessment work. As a government, we want to ensure Territory public servants have the chance to be involved and gain a long-term benefit from the works under way.

On 28 and 29 July, the Department of Lands and Planning held a two-day training exercise for 50 public servants. With guidance from expert sustainable design facilitators, the exercise explored the design of innovative, liveable and sustainable urban areas in a Top End context. Six very different scenarios were explored, including options for a city-wide public transport network, a walkable and liveable mixed-use town, with an option of a new hospital and an industrial development option. The exercise was a valuable experience in the development of viable, sustainable, urban design concepts in a short time period. The skills and enthusiasm generated at the training session were good signs for the conference and design forum in September.

The city of Weddell is an exciting opportunity for the Northern Territory to deliver a tropical, liveable and sustainable city for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Much groundwork is under way now and there is more innovative work to come in the months and years ahead. I am proud to be part of a government which will deliver a new city for our future generations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the Chief Minister for bringing this statement to the House.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very interested in the debate today. It was a pity the statement did not quite make the e-mails last night.

Weddell is a city which I have always hoped would become a reality, but it has taken an awfully long time. While I was president of the Litchfield Shire, for a number of years I fought the *Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan*, which overall is a very good plan of the previous government.

People forget that in the details of this book, which is missing a map at the back, the government had proposals. One of the options was:

*... the upper reaches of the west arm estuaries, where there are more extensive mangroves, could also be dammed as part of insect breeding control measures.*

That phrase refers to Woods Inlet, which is one of the most beautiful inlets in Darwin Harbour with some of the most fantastic mangroves. It also refers to two proposed dams on Bynoe Harbour and to the damming of the Elizabeth River, upstream from the existing railway and road bridge. It took 10 000 signatures of Darwin people to convince both the Labor government and the CLP government at the time, not to go ahead. Clare Martin and Denis Burke both agreed it would be removed from the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan.

That was one of the best results we had for Darwin. It protected Darwin Harbour. If these proposals had gone ahead, three or four major inlets in Darwin Harbour would have been dammed and all the mangroves would have been killed. That would have been a catastrophe.

I am passionate about Weddell because it can be built as a tropical city like no other tropical city. As was recently said at the Berrimah workshop, which I attended for a few hours each day, there are probably few cities in our latitude that have been designed. We have an opportunity to design a city in wet/dry tropics and do it in a way which is not only green, but also affordable. We have to find that balance.

I am glad this is starting to pick up momentum at last. I was very disappointed in the present government when I attended a forum on the future of Weddell and Cox Peninsula put together by the Property Council of Darwin about four years ago. I thought: 'I did not know Cox Peninsula was on the radar'. When I asked how far Weddell was from being built I was told: 'Ten to 15 years'. Thankfully, we have started to shorten that.

This should have been happening four or five years ago. Regardless of whether you could have built anything there, you would have had the design work done and the competition finished. This is a big project. Weddell varies in size depending on which map you look at. Weddell, if you look at the zoning map of Litchfield Shire, stretches from the Channel Island Bridge, over the Elizabeth River/Channel Island road bridge to Noonamah, and from Elizabeth River to Cox Peninsula Road. Some maps show it as about two-thirds that size. It also covers a large amount of private land - approximately one-third of Weddell is private land. A number of people own 8 ha blocks, and David Walker has a substantial holding near Noonamah. You have to ensure these people are brought along when you develop Weddell. The government has a competition running, and I wonder if anyone, even the school kids, know some of this land is not Crown Land. Before you start drawing up plans for other people's land, you need to talk to those people and bring them onside.

I have had a meeting with some of the planners. This book, and the idea of damming Elizabeth River, was put together by Graham Bailey, who is a great visionary planner. I do not agree with everything in this book but at least it set out a plan. This government still has not brought out a strategic plan. I have seen drafts of the strategic plan for Darwin; I do not know where they are, I know they are coming but they have not come out yet. Twenty years down the track we still have not reviewed this plan. I hope whoever is putting the plan together brings it out

soon. If we are going to build Weddell it needs to be part of a strategic plan. You need to know how it will fit in with the area.

I know the good mayor of Darwin, Graeme Sawyer, has said Weddell is not his cup of tea. I think Weddell gives us the opportunity to build a city as a city. The problem I have with Darwin is it is a capital city in a country area. We are trying to jam everyone into a peninsula. We are trying to put them in high-rise and say that is great. We need to build a city which is family friendly and has opportunities for people to work. This city has to be able to sustain itself. If people in Darwin and Palmerston are worried about having to travel there, then they are looking at it the wrong way. We need to make it a city that can stand on its own two feet. It is not going to be a satellite of Darwin or Palmerston. It is going to be a city of its own, which was the vision for Darwin. Graham Bailey had a number of options for the way Darwin should develop and one of those was to develop around the harbour.

I say to the Lord Mayor, that is fine if you are an economic rationalist and think everyone has to be jammed in because of the cost of services, etcetera. Whilst I understand that, there are kids and families and tropical lifestyles which need protecting. We do not always want to have everyone in 20-or 30-storey buildings; we need space. The crime figures for the rural area are lower by a mile than Palmerston or Darwin because you give people space, room for a few chooks and a dog, and kids a chance to breathe fresh air. That is why I do not want the Darwin rural area sliced up into little blocks.

We were talking about the National Broadband Network today and I jokingly said people are worried about downloading a movie. Well, big deal. We should be promoting people getting outside instead, breathing some fresh air, exercising, studying the stars at night, or bird watching. You can probably do those things on the National Broadband Network, but it is not as good as the real thin ...

**A member:** Health services?

**Mr WOOD:** Health service is fine; however, it is going to cost \$43bn and only some people can afford that. My computer only needs 1.5 MB to 2 MB; it does not need 100 MB, and my brain - you can talk about my brain later - can only take so much at one time. You can only absorb so much information at one time. I do not think technology should drive me; I should pick and choose what technology I want. We move away from the subject.

We have to ensure we do not lose sight of local government. Local government, love it or

hate it, is part of our cities and shires in the Northern Territory. When we are developing this city, ensure local government is involved. Who picks up the rubbish, who is going to mow the lawns, and who is going to maintain the streets? Let us ensure local government is involved. Sometimes we put it down as just local government; it is part and parcel of planning and should be part and parcel of the development of this city.

The government has spoken about issues such as affordability and being green. You are going to have to find the balance. If you go to the extreme of having everything sustainable and recyclable, it will be costly. You may be able to afford it if you do what some town planners suggest and spread the cost of infrastructure over 10, 20 or 30 years; you do not pass the cost of infrastructure onto people when they purchase their land as it makes land too expensive.

There has been much talk about recycling grey water. You can recycle sewerage water; that is an issue we can debate at another time. We know you can recycle grey water, but to set up grey water reticulation systems through a city is very expensive. It requires another set of pipes and another set of meters, and will have to be painted different colours. People will be able to use grey water if they want to and will be charged for using it. It is good to say 'green', but let us have a reality check and ensure those sorts of costs do not make it unaffordable for the average Territorian to buy a block of land.

Let us try not to squeeze people in as in Lyons and Muirhead, or some parts of Durack in Palmerston. Do not have a building envelope which covers the whole block of land. If people want a smaller house, give them a smaller block of land, but do not have a bigger block of land and take the house out to the edges.

Let us give people the opportunity to live without air-conditioning. I hate this latest legislation which says you must have 5-star energy efficient houses. I say, go away. I should not be told to do that. If I want to build a house with just fans and louvers, that should be my right. The enforcement of that particular – well, I do not call it legislation; it has been passed by COAG and everyone has agreed to it but the community has not had a say on whether they want it. If we are building a green city we should allow people to look at other options that do not include the use of air-conditioning, but still enjoy free flow of air. That is something we should look at to reduce the cost of houses.

In the last sittings, the minister said these new provisions will add 4.5% to the cost of a house.

That is a fair amount of money; it is getting up to about half your deposit. We need to rethink that.

A mistake we made with Palmerston is we built a city and forgot people live on the outside of it. If you go to Palmerston everything is self-centred. I give you a recent example. The intention is to build the new suburb of Johnston over the old Stuart Highway. The Stuart Highway goes straight through the suburbs of Palmerston and ends up in the CBD, but they do not want to use it. They said: 'We do not want any more accesses on the highway'. For rural people it is a perfect access directly into Palmerston without driving through the suburbs. At the moment, if you drive up Lambrick Avenue, you have to go up and around the roundabout and around another roundabout, turn right and around another roundabout, and then you get there. The old Stuart Highway is straight off the Stuart Highway and straight to Temple Terrace, into the centre of the city.

We have not done that because someone has decided there will be only two entrances and exits to the suburbs of Palmerston on the eastern side, Temple Terrace and Lambrick Avenue. I do not understand why we cannot use an existing road with a cutting. Do not ask me how they are going to fill the cutting in; there is a big cutting there. Why did they not allow that to happen? It does not mean there has to be a set of lights there. It could be a one way in and a one way out. It would allow the focus to be on the people who live in the area, and enable people living in Johnston to get out of Palmerston closer to the Stuart Highway, without having to go through the rest of the city. Sometimes there is too much of an internal focus in Palmerston and not a focus on it being a regional centre for parts of Litchfield.

It is the same situation with Weddell. Weddell will be surrounded by Noonamah, Bees Creek, Berry Springs, and the Darwin River region. All the people in those areas will need services. We should be looking at building a hospital in Weddell. My friends in Palmerston might have a coronary over that, but let us look at what makes sense. If you build a city of 40 000 to 50 000 people further away from the existing hospital, you are going to need a hospital. That hospital would also serve further south, places like Batchelor, Adelaide River and Dundee. There is an opportunity for the government to seriously consider not putting a hospital at Palmerston - they are going to have a super clinic. Put the hospital at Weddell, then Palmerston people can have a choice, left or right. Sometimes you have to move away from what might be a good idea parochially, to what might be a good idea in the long term, because hospitals are not cheap.

The government should decide to have government offices in Weddell so people do not have to work in the government offices in town. This was an idea many years ago with Casuarina. They put some government offices there, but all of a sudden it seemed to stop. I think they thought Darwin city would be devoid of people.

The member for Goyder mentioned public transport, and that is important. As I said, I went to the workshop at Berrimah recently, and there was much talk about transport and light rail, and about using the ferries. Graham Bailey's book, *The Regional Energy Structure Plan*, mentions that. Weddell needs volumes of people before you can say ferries are going to be worthwhile because, as I have been told by someone in the Navy, maintenance on boats and ferries is quite costly. It is not as simple as it sounds but it is an idea worth looking at.

With Weddell being close to Humpty Doo there should be a rail corridor to go to Humpty Doo and around the harbour in the future when there is another city built around the harbour.

The government has announced the competition. At the moment, it is for schoolchildren and they are putting forward their ideas. I have always been a fan of competitions, but although it is good to involve the community, when it comes to the development of a CBD we need experts. I have always been a great fan of Walter Burley Griffin. He not only designed the city of Canberra - although much of what he wanted was not done as the politicians got in the way because they were still arguing between Melbourne and Sydney - he also designed buildings. Some of these buildings still exist. He designed a suburb in Sydney; I think he designed part of Melbourne University. He belonged to a group of architects which came from the Prairie School which looked at developing houses that fitted in with nature.

There are certain architectural buildings which stand out in Canberra. You know straightaway it is Canberra, and the one thing missing in Darwin, except for this building here, is buildings with high architectural merit. There is an opportunity to develop the CBD, and have a competition for good quality town planners and architects to have input into the signature Weddell will need.

Mentioning the word 'Weddell', part of the competition should be whether we want to name it Weddell. Should we be looking for an Aboriginal word or another word? I am not saying Weddell was not a fine person, but that was selected by the Place Names Committee about 30 years ago. It is not a name that grabs me, but whether there is room for an Aboriginal name ...

**A member:** Wood's Hood.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, could be it. The idea of the bigger workshop in September is good. I notice a lady called Wendy Morris will be attending; she was here for the workshop in Berrimah recently. I met with the company that ran that workshop, and they showed me how they had used it in the United States. Stephen Bowers from Novis Urban, and the concept ...

**Mr STYLES:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I move an extension of time of 10 minutes pursuant to Standing Order 77 for the member for Nelson.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you, member for Sanderson. I met Stephen Bowers; he came from Sydney, or maybe Brisbane. He discussed the process they have for redeveloping cities which involves the community. One of the key points for this workshop in September is having not only experts, because you are looking to design suburbs and roads, but also community involvement.

I know they will have community involvement on the first day and are asking as many people as possible to attend. The government should select some people from that community involvement and ensure they are part of the workshop. As well as these people who come from all parts of Australia, and places like Oxford and London we need local input that relates to the local climate and conditions and, to some extent, local understanding of the way Territorians live; that is important.

The Berrimah workshop worked on the process of: here is a group of people from down south; we have our local planners, environmental people, and we have the health people. Put all those people together and, hopefully, out of that you have enough local input as well as professional input from the people from down south to come up with the right plan. That is what worries me. How many people have been to Weddell? How many people have driven down Jenkins Road or Finn Road to look at the country? How many people know what it looks like in the Wet Season? There is a huge wetland going right through Weddell. It comes off the private land - and a fair amount of it has been grazed - and it has the potential for a major lake.

One of the visions I have is that we build a major recreational lake, perhaps using recycled grey water, and build some nice buildings on the edge of that lake. There is room and there is land that will not be suitable for residential land unless you can get enough fill. We have options to develop some of those wet areas that have been

denuded by grazing and clearing. A competition for experts to design such options should be held, so when we see Weddell we know it is Weddell.

Palmerston has the water tower. Palmerston started off well. If you have a look at the photograph on the front of this book, it looked like it was heading for a plan. Then Kentucky Fried Chicken and Hungry Jacks popped up and then there was a supermarket next to another supermarket and, all of a sudden, we have Bunnings and a basketball court in the CBD. That is different; there are not many CBDs like that. That is what has happened to poor old Palmerston. We need to do better than that. We need to ensure this city is well planned.

There are two places the government has left off the map when it comes to developing the Territory, especially the Top End. I am not trying to leave out the Central Australia area or Katherine. I listened to Bob Katter and the other Independent, Mr Windsor, talking about the issue of population on the ABC late the other night. He said people do not realise about 95% of our population lives along the east coast and a few in Perth. The rest of the place is empty.

I am not saying fill it all up. What I am saying is why can we not build a city at Katherine? What Bob Katter Junior was talking about is: why is jamming themselves into the western suburbs of Sydney the only opportunity we are giving young people? Why are we not giving them an opportunity to live in smaller, decentralised towns where people have a better lifestyle? They do not have cars and buses everywhere. They have medium size towns in other parts of Australia. We really should be looking at Katherine. It is on the railway line, it is on the major highway; why can we not develop Katherine?

Another little area that is never on the radar and is just north of here is Murrumujuk on the Gunn Point Peninsula. If you opened it up tomorrow you could sell 10 000 blocks in a month - boom, boom, boom, they would just go. On this beautiful sandy beach which, hopefully, we will gain some control over if the Minister for Parks and Wildlife goes ahead with the discussions with NT Land Corporation, is the town of Murrumujuk, which has been planned since this plan came out at least 20 years ago, yet we have done nothing with it. Here is an opportunity to develop a small town which, to some extent, will be a cross between weekenders and permanent residents. We seem to have forgotten about it, and it is a great opportunity.

Another opportunity is opening up Cox Peninsula if the Kenbi land claim ever sees the light of day. I have no problems with that as long as it is well planned and will create opportunities

for groups like the Larrakia Development Corporation.

We need to think about the rest of the Territory. We developed an LNG plant in the middle of the harbour. I would prefer it never to have been there. It should have been at Gunn Point, or Glyde Point, or Port Keats. Let us decentralise our industry and take the people to the industry. Let us employ people in the local area, give Aboriginal people an opportunity.

We are talking about a city, and I believe this will be a good city. However, where are we going; where should our population develop, where should our industries develop? There is room for a broader debate on the development of the Northern Territory. Katherine has plenty of water, it has good soil, it is a crossroads between Western Australia and the Northern Territory and it has a railway line. Its population growth has been static for the last five, six, seven years. Could it expand? Are there opportunities there? That is also important.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement today; it is an important one. However we have to move the Weddell idea along faster. The member for Goyder asked if Palmerston will be full by the time it is off the ground. If Palmerston is full the price of land will go through the roof again. This has to be timetabled. You have to have targets. You have to say this will be developed in a certain time. If it needs extra people to develop it, then we need extra people to develop it, but let us not get behind, let us not drop the ball in ensuring there is enough affordable land for Territorians to purchase and live on. That is the problem we have now. For me it is personal because I have family at home and they cannot afford to buy a place.

Let us ensure Weddell is well planned, affordable, green, friendly and tropical. We can do something special if we are careful, if we think about it and involve the community, which is important.

**Dr BURNS (Public and Affordable Housing):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I respond to this important statement which will help meet the future needs of the Territory's growing population. The Territory government is delivering the new city of Weddell which will meet future housing needs of the Territory. According to Northern Territory Treasury population projections, a 30% increase in the overall population is expected by 2030, an increase of 1.5% per year.

In the Darwin region it is anticipated the population will grow faster than elsewhere in the Territory, with a 2.2% per annum increase,

representing a 44.4% increase by 2030. In Palmerston, the growth rate in recent times has been approximately 4% per annum. The population growth will see between 43 000 and 60 000 more people in the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield region over the next 15 years, and the Henderson government is delivering a plan for the future to house our growing population.

Weddell is an important part of catering for our growing population numbers and, in the lead-up to this, we have a range of measures under way to help make more Territorians homeowners and secure housing suitable to their needs. The Territory government is addressing housing supply and affordability through a comprehensive policy response. The Housing the Territory strategy will see the Territory achieve a balanced housing market across all market segments, taking us towards our *Territory 2030* objective to offer one of Australia's most affordable housing markets across all market segments.

Under our Housing the Territory policy, we are addressing housing affordability and supply on a number of fronts. As part of the government's strategy to supply new places to buy, the Territory is helping people to purchase their first home. The government's Home Purchase Assistance Scheme, Homestart NT, is helping low- to medium-income earners buy a home. This scheme has helped many Territorians buy their own home because it has features which make it easier to purchase a home such as a low deposit requirement of 2%, and access to funds to assist with the costs which come with buying a home, such as whitegoods, conveyancing and inspections.

The Territory government is also offering stamp duty savings for first homebuyers, and concessions for Territorians purchasing a principal place of residence who are not first homebuyers, and also senior Territorians, pensioners, carers and veterans seeking to downsize or buy a home.

The Territory is offering new places to rent by growing the Territory's affordable rental market with the affordable housing rental company to be established by the end of 2010, and new developments in the Darwin region offering a substantial number of dwellings to be available for tenanting by 30 June 2012 under a National Rental Affordability Scheme.

An expression of interest is currently under assessment for the development of a significant lot at Maluka Drive in Palmerston, while the Wirrina redevelopment in Parap will also deliver more affordable rental properties for Territorians. These are in addition to the 1200 new affordable rental properties announced for construction by Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the member for

Solomon, Damian Hale. These properties will cater to Territorians struggling to keep pace with the market rent, and will deliver significant increases in dwelling stocks in the Darwin and Palmerston regions.

Substantial funding is being dedicated to new public housing, with more than 208 new units of accommodation to be delivered through the stimulus package. This is a substantial investment of \$60m and was allocated to the Territory to build new homes for public and social housing. This important investment included repairs and maintenance to almost 300 public housing dwellings. Stage 1 of the initiative delivers \$7.12m to construct 22 new dwellings for public housing, with 16 dwellings now complete in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Darwin. Another six dwellings in Darwin are due for completion shortly. Stage 2 will deliver \$48.45m to construct 186 new dwellings commencing in 2010-11. Building work has commenced for 141 of these dwellings, and they are aiming for completion by December 2010.

These are important housing projects helping Territorians in need find accommodation and gain skills to move into long-term, successful housing arrangements. This includes 20 units under construction at St Vincent de Paul at Coconut Grove for supported, affordable rental properties, and 28 new dwellings to house up to 70 people with construction under way at Percy Court in Alice Springs for transitional accommodation. Another 18 dwellings are under way at Crerar Road, Berrimah, for transitional housing for people moving from bush to urban areas. Catherine Booth House is being redeveloped in Stuart Park for homeless women. Bath Street Lodge, Alice Springs, will house up to 40 visiting renal dialysis patients. Eight new units are being built in Malak to support people who have suffered from family violence.

There are more projects as part of this important stimulus package. In addition to the housing stimulus investment, the Henderson government is investing in building more public housing. Budget 2010-11 includes \$49m for 150 new dwellings over the next three years, which includes three new seniors' villages, in addition to the \$10m Bellamack seniors' village which is currently under way.

Another key component of Housing the Territory is ensuring we have sufficient land to grow. The government's 20-year land release program will see 4741 lots released in new suburbs in the Darwin and Palmerston regions, and more than 1800 lots released in the Territory's regional centres.

The release of land for the city of Weddell is an essential component of the Territory's strategy to meet housing demand. Weddell will see the release of 10 000 lots, in the order of 3000 ha of developable land, and housing for up to 50 000 Territorians.

Population projections suggest the Territory will continue to grow, and the ongoing strength and durability of the Territory economy has been forecast by Access Economics to have an average annual growth of 3.5% over the next five years, even without the INPEX gas project.

From a housing perspective, there are a number of considerations which will need to influence the planning and development of Weddell. We know from our demographic data the ageing population and changing household types will increase demand for medium- and high-density dwellings. Household composition has changed in the Territory and the current trend favours smaller households. One- or two-person households now comprise 54% of all households in the Territory. This trend is expected to continue, and access to appropriate and affordable housing is a priority for low- to middle-income earners. The Territory will work to achieve a balanced housing market which offers value for money and affordability across all market segments.

Affordable housing is aimed at assisting people on low to moderate incomes who have difficulty accessing accommodation in the private market. Income eligibility ranges from households on very low incomes who would be eligible for public housing, to working households earning around the medium income. Affordable housing is necessary for the social and economic development of the Territory to secure the services of key workers who are central to the social fabric of the Territory. If key workers are not able to afford the cost of housing, this will have an impact on service provision and economic growth.

The current requirement is that 15% of land in new residential land releases be allocated to affordable housing to be achieved as 10% of lots for affordable housing and 5% of lots for public housing. With the projected release of 10 000 residential lots at Weddell in 2014 and beyond, 1500 new lots will be available for affordable and public housing. A salt-and-pepper approach of integrating public housing developments with private ownership will be incorporated in the Weddell development.

Weddell provides opportunities for the development of additional affordable rental properties through the allocation of residential lots for development by the affordable housing rental

company which is being established. Through the development of Weddell, it may be possible to explore more innovative approaches to affordable housing, such as the establishment of housing cooperatives or community land trusts, the provision of lots for mixed equity developments, and the development of multi-dwelling lots for affordable sale. In addition, Weddell provides an opportunity for government to work further with the private sector in providing new, innovative and affordable housing developments.

The social development of the Territory is a clear theme influencing future urban developments. The aim of this theme is to build strong, cohesive communities made of strong networks of social relationships. Guided by the *Territory 2030* strategic plan, a social inclusion plan will be developed to ensure all residents of Weddell have opportunities to contribute; encourage greater community participation; improve community access to the range of land transport services to support access to health and community services; ensure residents have access to public open space to satisfy both active and passive recreational and leisure needs; increased levels of services and amenities; new infrastructure; and private sector investment which will lead to more jobs.

The government is developing principles, guidelines and policies for all aspects of the urban planning process across the Territory, with the aim of ensuring sustainable, sophisticated, appropriate and environmentally sustainable urban design and development. This includes a greater number of energy-efficient homes and buildings; reduced impact on the environment with more effective public transport networks which minimise the need for individual car travel; greater housing diversity, combined with safe and convenient movement networks; greater land use diversity; and access to services, facilities and employment opportunities will improve the liveability of neighbourhoods and minimise congestion, greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

A collaborative conference and design forum is planned for 27 September 2010 to provide designers, architects and the public with the opportunity to create a sense of identity and place, establish design principles and concepts, and develop options to inform the development of a design brief.

I look forward to the outcomes of this and encourage people to contribute. As well as our housing department playing a pivotal role in the development of Weddell and meeting the Territory's needs, the Education department is playing a key role in the planning process. In fact, it is Territory school students who have been asked to contribute design ideas for Weddell in a

new competition launched by the Chief Minister at Darwin Middle School last month.

The competition is open to both children and adults to provide ideas to shape this new city's designs. We have promoted this to our schools and encouraged Territory students to think about what they want in Weddell and to contribute their ideas. Our construction and education experts from the Department of Education and Training have already been involved in the development of Weddell and will continue to contribute to planning in the future. Given that we will be growing a substantial population there, more schools will be needed and this will be part of the design process.

Weddell is going to help meet the growing housing needs of the Territory. Not only will it meet private housing market demands, we will also see continued investment in public and affordable housing for Territorians. The Territory government is consulting broadly with the community to take their vision on board as well and get the best ideas on the design table.

Madam Speaker, I encourage Territorians to have their say on the exciting future of Weddell and I commend the Chief Minister's statement to the House.

**Mr CHANDLER (Brennan):** Madam Speaker, I wish to speak on the Chief Minister's ministerial statement about the future suburb of Weddell.

It is interesting that both sides in politics can have completely different views on one particular issue. It was interesting to hear the Treasurer say that if our leader, the member for Blain, had read the statement rather than just give a reply, it might have been better. I would like to point out that most of us received the statement this morning. It is very hard to detail and research information when we have such a short time frame.

Everyone agrees that planning is a good thing and that we should be planning for our future, but I worry about the record of this particular government as this is just another announcement, another glossy brochure, or another sign that says this is what we are going to do. When we look at how they deliver things, do they meet their deadlines? The answer is no. I know the other side of the House will have a different opinion on this issue. It is like the Labor side is led by Darth Vader and our side is led by Obi Wan Kenobi. That is my opinion. You may have a different opinion but I see our side as the good side and your side as the evil side.

There is one thing wrong in all of this and it was picked up by the member for Nelson earlier when he was saying to look around the suburbs now, particularly in Palmerston, Johnston,

Bellamack, with the future suburb of Zuccoli, and what is happening in Lyons. This all should have happened five years ago. If we were constructing, if we were taking the time, the effort and the money that is being put into development now, the Northern Territory would not be in the position it is today and we would not have such a bubble-type high market when it comes to rents and mortgages, and businesses struggling to find people in the first place, let alone when it comes to having people stay here.

I know many instances where good people are being brought from interstate only to find when they get here they try, they struggle and they soon realise that, even on better incomes in the Darwin/Palmerston area, they cannot afford to live here. I know the story of my own nephew who is a refrigeration mechanic and, let us face it, we could do with more refrigeration mechanics just as we could do with far more tradespeople in many technical trades. We need more of them, the place needs to grow. However, until we can find places for them to live at a reasonable price, we are in trouble.

I do not know how the place is going to grow and develop if we do not address this problem now. It is a big problem. Had the Northern Territory Labor government planned to meet the challenges of growth, and not sat on their hands for so many years, we would not be in this situation today. I will mention it again because this statement is similar to what we have heard many times in the last two years in this House. We hear statements time and time again, we have glossy brochures sent to our doorsteps, we see signs on the side of the road indicating they are going to deliver something and, time and time, again we see them failing to meet deadlines.

Look at the roundabout at Elrundie and University Avenues in Palmerston as an example. I recently raised an issue with the roundabout in this House, and to the minister's credit they put some signs on the roundabout to warn the surface is quite dangerous, particularly if the road is wet. Even in the Dry Season gardens are watered, and sometimes we have much water on the road. There was a sign placed there that two roundabouts on University Avenue will be resurfaced and work will commence in early August. We are now in mid-August and nothing has been done. We have the sign there so we know it is going to happen.

It reminded me of the sign on the road near City Valley last year. If memory serves me correctly, the original time frame to have that work completed was around August. Then we were given the excuse that they had found some underground cables they were not aware of. I do not believe cables were put under the ground

without any mapping or planning. I made an off-the-cuff comment that it would be Christmas before that section of road was completed, and I was right. Government has failed to deliver on so many different issues it is not funny.

This is a sad deflection away from the current situation this government has left us in through bad planning or lack of planning. Before the Labor side of the House congratulates itself on what they think is a marvellous statement of how great they are and the achievements they have made, I need to do a reality check. While you are congratulating yourself for your belated vision, it is important to put a human perspective on the current state of affairs this Labor government has placed the Northern Territory in, the reality for many people, the everyday challenges created by your government.

I spoke to Ms Noreen Raven recently. Ms Raven applied for a one-bedroom unit more than 19 months ago through Territory Housing and was advised the waiting list was around 19 months. She was prepared to wait and did just that; in fact, she waited longer. When she called Territory Housing last week to follow-up, as the 19 months had well and truly passed, she was told they did not think hers was an urgent case and she would have to wait another 52 months. That is in excess of 70 months for a one-bedroom unit in Palmerston. Ms Raven suffers from diabetes and has a lung-heart disorder caused by asbestos. She now requires a two-bedroom unit because she needs a carer, and has been told she will have to wait 70 months from the time she first applied. You congratulate yourself for doing what you think is good. You are hopeless - absolutely hopeless at planning and managing ...

**Mr Knight:** You sold it. Should not have sold those 2000 ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order, member for Daly!

**Ms Scrymgour:** Have to put some fire in the belly.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Arafura!

**Mr CHANDLER:** Seventy months! Can someone please explain to me how the Labor government got it so wrong? In a time of prosperity, where you were the recipient of a level of funding never before seen in the Northern Territory, how did you get it so wrong? Territorians deserve so much better and you should all hang your heads in shame ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr CHANDLER:** This does not include how the current government's mismanagement, or better to say lack of management ...

**Ms Scrymgour** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Arafura!

**Mr CHANDLER:** I might be getting up their goat, do you think? Maybe they are a little testy.

Good planning, vision and acting earlier may have prevented some of the pressures everyone faces today, such as the lack of available residential land leading to high rents and high mortgages because of the higher prices being paid for properties. There is a flow-on effect on businesses which cannot attract staff because of the lack of affordable housing. When they do, the new staff often leave because the cost of living is too much to bear compared to some southern jurisdictions.

I was talking to a business owner a few weeks ago. They have between six and seven staff members living in their home because they cannot find houses to live in. You talk about prosperous times, about a time when, yes, unemployment is low. You are talking about a time when the Northern Territory is on the cusp of, perhaps, its biggest boom time and, yet, we do not have houses.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with some of what the Chief Minister said today. There is nothing wrong with some of the planning and work that is being carried out in Bellamack and Johnston, and the future work which will occur in Zuccoli and Weddell. The problem is it is too little too late. You have caused the pressure in the market to grow to such an extent that people are suffering. I always thought Labor stood up for the average man, the average woman, the average family. Yet, you have created this bubble which has put so many people under pressure and you should be ashamed.

You will stand here in a minute - and I can see the minister nodding his head over there, rubbing his hands together, ready to jump up and have a go back. He certainly will; I heard it this morning. I had a prepared document in regard to an environmental bill and I threw it aside because I figured there was goodwill in the room. I was very tempered in my approach to that legislation because the good minister, the government, was going to support some amendments and we supported the bill, in essence.

But, what did we have? We had a minister stand up and rave on like a raving, biting dog. I thought: he has taken a liberty. I could have, and probably should have, attacked this government

on its environmental credentials and what has happened in recent times. However, I made a tempered approach. Perhaps our principles, our standards, on this side of the House are far higher than you live to on that side.

The member for Nelson mentioned Murrumujuk. Whether we like it or not, the Northern Territory is going to have to prepare itself for bigger times in our oil and gas industry. One day, the government - whether it is this government or a future Country Liberals government - will have to commit to providing an area for heavy industry. We know that. We know that INPEX will build in the harbour and we have the ConocoPhillips site there.

Whilst we will all look back and think that was a big mistake, we should have been prepared and it should have gone elsewhere, we will live with the fact we have two large LNG plants in the city. However, the future is huge for oil and gas in the Northern Territory and we need to plan for it. People will need places to live. I see a perfect opportunity to develop a small city in Murrumujuk in the next few years in preparation for an area like Glyde Point, which could become the next heavy industry site for the Northern Territory.

Those people will certainly need a home to live in, in close proximity. Not too close; you have to have a fair distance between heavy industry and people's homes. A lovely seaside village could be the starting point for families to live in, close by heavy industries in the Glyde Point area.

One of the biggest issues I can see in the area that has been gazetted as Weddell is sandflies. The member for Nelson mentioned the original plans to dam certain arms. I think he said Woods Inlet. I know that is on the other side, but towards the end of Elizabeth River. My understanding is you can dam particular areas without hurting mangroves. You flood them, but you do not kill them. It does have an effect on the midgies, mosquitoes and other insects from the area because you take away their breeding zone.

Correct me if I am wrong - I am sure the minister would love to do that - but my understanding is that Weddell has some great land for the city but, because of the midgies, the city may have to be moved back so far that a lot of land is wasted. If a flood mitigation dam was put in, the city could be built closer to the water's edge.

As the Chief Minister mentioned earlier, because Weddell will be close to the Elizabeth River, there would a perfect opportunity for a ferry service like the one between Mandorah and the city. Does the future of Weddell include a high-speed ferry down the Elizabeth River so

people can commute from Weddell to the city each day? Perhaps, but to move a city so close to a mangrove area - I know what it is like, I lived in Moulden for about 13 years and, during high tides, it was absolutely miserable. The interesting thing was next door was an elevated home, and you could sit on the balcony, and the midgies did not bother you. I do not know if that is a rare occurrence or a natural thing. They must be an insect that stays low to the ground.

I know it is even worse in areas like Marlow Lagoon. I worry that areas at the bottom of Bellamack will suffer the same, and perhaps more so in areas in Zuccoli. The problem of midgies needs to be addressed if we want to grow around our harbour. How we address the problem will be up for debate. However, much land will be wasted if we cannot get closer to the waterways.

I originally said Weddell was a lost opportunity. When we were talking about Weddell in a debate last year, I said there was an opportunity to allow INPEX to start the city, to put money in and have a sale and lease-back program, rather than have a workers camp. INPEX may, using a development company, construct one-, two-, three-bedroom homes, put in a golf course and facilities for all their workers. Those homes would then be sold back to investors. Those investors could be people from the Northern Territory, young families who cannot afford to buy a home; however, could afford an investment mortgage if they had a guaranteed lease for a while, like DHA has with their sale and lease-back program.

You could imagine INPEX moving in with a development company and starting a model city. I do not mean a whole city, but enough one-, two- and three-bedroom homes to cater for the men and women it will bring in. Those homes are then sold to investors, young people who have a dream of owning a house in the Northern Territory, with the security that those homes would be leased back to INPEX and used for their workers' accommodation for the next three to five years. Then the houses are handed back to the owners, being the young investors. Or workers who came for the INPEX construction phase might decide they want to stay and bring their families and might want to buy one of those homes.

I see so many advantages to that proposal. Jenkins Road could be bituminised and all the workers in INPEX's little city could travel down Jenkins Road and straight to the back of the INPEX plant. They would not need to travel from Howard Springs across one of the busiest intersections in the Northern Territory at the Howard Springs lights, through Palmerston and across the bridge to the INPEX site, with buses running at different times to cater for the workers starting and finishing their shifts.

INPEX could have been offered Weddell. The government would have benefited as the company would have started to pay for the basic infrastructure of a new city which the government could add to later, rather than have a workers' camp in Howard Springs and use government money to set up a new city. There could have been a compromise and it would have been a win/win situation. INPEX could have made money out of it, and its staff would not have had to travel a long distance from their place of rest to their place of work. Things like that seem to go by the wayside, and perhaps there is more to it.

Madam Speaker, Weddell will go ahead. I wish the government well. I am sure this side of the House will be left to manage the program and I wish it well.

**Mr KNIGHT (Business and Employment):** Madam Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's statement. I will pick up on a few points from the member for Brennan. I will reacquaint him with the public housing situation in the Northern Territory. In the last six years ...

**Mr GILES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I call your attention to the state of the House. I am sure the member for Daly has some ...

**Mr Knight:** I want everyone to hear it, member for Brainting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** A quorum is called. Ring the bells. A quorum is present.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Madam Speaker, I will reacquaint the member for Brennan with the issue of social housing in the Territory. In the last six years the CLP government sold 2100 public housing homes. Their mismanagement of the economy led to the selling of public facilities. Where would we have been if we had an extra 2100 homes in the system? We have some 5000 properties, I think. You can imagine an extra 30% of public housing homes in the Territory. Some 700 to 800 were in Alice Springs alone. There were about 100 in Katherine. The member for Katherine seems chuffed that his party sold public housing homes in Katherine. That is a little history of social housing in the Territory ...

**Mr Westra van Holthe:** Talk about Katherine. Let us talk about 54 Acacia Drive.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It talks about fixing homes. The member of Katherine chimed in there. Over the period of the Howard government, it reduced the grants for all of the states, the recurrent money which came from the Commonwealth, by 24% so state housing authorities were losing money for repairs and maintenance, for upgrades and the management of properties. That was the position

of the Liberal administrations, both federal and in the Territory. They did not support social housing; they did not see it as valuable. Because of the mismanagement of various administrations of the Country Liberal Party in government, they had to sell these houses to get some money back into the system. They were trying to sell Power and Water. They had a big fire sale of some of the most important parts of government infrastructure we have here; it was poor. That is how the parties are different. We are upgrading our social housing.

I am more interested in the Country Liberal's position, as mentioned by the shadow for the environment – he now has a plan to dam Elizabeth River. That is the first time I have heard it. It is interesting you have said that, member for Brennan. He has the idea you can put flood mitigation dams in the Elizabeth River. It is interesting to hear where the CLP stands on that. A ferry service would be good going down that river but damming it is very interesting. Palmerston has done quite well being away from the river. It is a vibrant city, as Weddell will be. It will not be encumbered by the midges there.

I am interested in the comment that young people who cannot afford a home should buy an investment property. Member for Brennan, their first desire would be to buy their own home. If they had enough money for an investment unit, which typically is a 20%-plus deposit, they would probably buy their own home. I do not know why you are making that statement; it seems ludicrous.

Weddell will be an exciting new project for the Northern Territory. The member for Goyder talked about having plans already; we have the 1980 study, why not go with that? I think the minister for the Environment will have more to say about the 1990 plan. Things have changed quite a bit. We are now in 2010; this is looking towards 2020 and 2030, and people moving into that area. Society has changed; the demographics have changed. Family units have changed. There will be a greater proportion of single parent homes as well as older people as well, either as couples or singles. The demographic has changed, and will continue to change. Why build something which suits the 1980s when you can look forward in time to where the demographic is going? You need to look at Palmerston and Darwin. There has been an evolution. With Weddell we have the opportunity to look forward in time, build a society and lifestyle which will suit the people living there in the future - people working from home, living closer to their work, living closer to services. You incorporate those things in the designing and planning of the development. Things are changing rapidly.

If we get the NBN, 1 GB into your home, things will change rapidly. There will be videoconferencing from the home, and with the announcement from the Gillard government today about linking the e-Health ...

**Mr Giles:** Videoconferencing in everyone's homes in Weddell, according to the member for Daly.

**Mr KNIGHT:** ... and the NBN where you can ...

**Mr Giles:** The member for Daly is putting videoconferencing in everyone's homes.

**Mr Chandler:** He promised it. I heard it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Braitling! Member for Brennan!

**Mr KNIGHT:** The members for Brennan and the member for Braitling would well know - they are fathers, I am a father - you have a child who is sick in the middle of the night and have to rush to the clinic or hospital. With Julia Gillard's plan, you will be able to link to a specialist doctor through high-speed videoconferencing. Your child will be able to have treatment in your home.

We are moving into a revolutionary society. Weddell is the opportunity to do that, and it will be a modern city. It gives us an opportunity to look at the services for power, water and sewerage starting from scratch: a blank page which we can plan. The member for Brennan is apparently an expert in sewerage; he has some degree and experience in sewerage. Now he is a planner, he has more qualifications. However, I will put my money on the community coming up with ideas, and giving those ideas to the technical people to make the ideas of the lifestyle they would like to lead a reality. That is the way it should happen. Let us build communities and cities for the people, not the other way - build a city and make people fit into it. It will be very exciting.

Weddell came about because of the growth rates of the Northern Territory. Under the CLP, there was a 0.5% growth rate when we came to government. People were leaving town. The biggest growth businesses in the Territory in 2001 were the removalist companies. People were packing up and leaving town, tradies were leaving town. The CLP had run the economy into the ground so the population growth was 0.5%, which was just the growth through the natural birth rate in the Territory. Now population growth is above 2%. That is a significant level; one of the highest in the country. In Palmerston the growth rate is 4% per annum.

Over the next 15 years, 40 000 to 60 000 people will move into the Darwin, Palmerston, Litchfield area. We have substantial growth, and that is why we need to look towards Weddell. Yes, there has been a plan in the past to grow around the harbour. The development of INPEX is something the Labor government has almost brought to reality and we will know next year about the outcomes and kick-off date. There will be thousands of workers in the construction phase and several hundred directly employed with INPEX once it is running. Then, all the service industries will come from that major project and goodness knows what other ancillary businesses will come once INPEX is here. Having a population close to major industry is a sensible way to go.

People talk about Cox Peninsula. That is where I live, so I am keen to see development there. It is not one or the other; they can both happen. Weddell is government land and we have a responsibility not only to the community but to develop the area. We fully support the traditional owners in developing the northern part of the Kenbi claim. Plans for that are well advanced, and I hope whoever wins the federal election can advance the aspirations of the traditional owners to start development, create jobs and options for people where they live.

Weddell will be a fabulous city, and people will live there for various reasons. Cox Peninsula also offers some alternatives. Then, we will be incorporating all that ferry travel. I love travelling on the ferry each morning. I probably see more of the harbour than any member in this House. It is great to see such a vibrant, working harbour with tankers coming in, LNG tankers going out, Navy ships going back and forth, and yachts and recreational fishermen. I see dolphins and dugongs out there. It is a vibrant and well looked after harbour. I can see in the future - with both the Blaydin Point development and Weddell, and other developments and the growth of Cox Peninsula - a ferry service operating around the city. There will be stops at the waterfront, the Fisherman's Wharf area and East Point. It will be a vibrant area.

Work is happening in Palmerston East with other developments. I was driving around Bellamack the other day. I love going out there and looking at what is happening. There are 670 lots at Bellamack and about a dozen slabs have been poured. They were the first titles of lots which have been handed over. It is exciting to go there and see houses being built. That area will fill in quickly, and all the tradesmen will be flat out there in the near future, as well as in the Johnston and Zuccoli areas. I was very interested to see the backbone road going up into Farrar. That will be an exciting area with more housing options

offered. It will see an additional 15 000 people going into Palmerston and supporting retail businesses and restaurants. It was great to see the new hotel being built in the Palmerston CBD. I am sure the member for Brennan will be the first in line for a big Hog's Breath steak. Yes, he is very excited, even though he is not supposed to be.

It will be great for Palmerston and there will be further developments. We are putting in a water park so all the kids who go to Leanyer now will have something locally. There are so many kids in Palmerston, including my children, and they will look forward to the precinct of the water park and the skate park. These are very exciting times for Palmerston.

Lessons can and will be learned from the development of Palmerston. The CBD area is a case in point; it is a little awkward to get around. Here we have the opportunity to look at not only what has happened in the Territory in the past but what has happened interstate. There is a big move in Melbourne to smaller living. The people who want to use public transport, who need to use public transport, want to work closer to home, want to be closer to shops and service facilities, and family units are smaller. You can plan for that with Weddell; it is a clean slate from which to work.

We are looking at works starting now. I am keen about the area because it is in my electorate. Jenkins Road, as the member for Brennan highlighted, is being upgraded. There are works being planned for Finn Road where it aligns with Jenkins Road. I have been lucky enough to receive some money to seal the southern end of Finn Road. I know many of the rural people are very excited; it will cut off some 30% of the drive into town. It will open the Berry Springs area, and provide for the opening of a commercial shopping area within Berry Springs. For the rural people there it will mean somewhere closer to go for services. The opening of the western side of the rural area, through Palmerston and into the city, is very exciting. It provides greater transport and shorter travel times.

We want government services there. I have the responsibility of NT Properties in my portfolio, and we want to have more services out there.

People can also look at working from home. With the new NBN, you should be able to work from home, using the video links to supervisors, or whatever it might be. These are exciting times.

The Chief Minister has talked about renewable energy, sewage treatment and a range of areas, and this does give us the opportunity. We know we have the growth rates. We know we have the

economy right because we have one of the strongest economies in the nation. We have jobs here, people are coming here and staying here, so we know we have those growth rates. We know Weddell is going to fill. We know we can invest in headworks and have modern, renewable energy sources and water re-use.

We are okay with water at the moment, being very cautious about our demand over time. The raising of the Darwin River Dam wall gives us an extra 20% capacity which pushes any need for the Warrai Dam into the future. Bringing Manton Dam back online is also an interim measure. No business overcapitalises in its operations, and Power and Water is much the same. We have plenty of water at the moment and when we need more, Power and Water will invest in it.

These are exciting times. I look forward to the public forums with the people of my electorate, who will express their views on how Weddell will interact with the Litchfield Shire and the part of Litchfield Shire which is in my electorate. To the constituents I have been talking to, Weddell is very welcome and it really is a chance to ...

**Mr CHANDLER:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! In accordance with Standing Order 77, I move that the member be given an extension of time. I am enjoying this.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Moving on to a few things that the member for Brennan said. It is very exciting when you get into parliament, to make the big decisions, to be in Cabinet, to be involved in steering the Territory in the right direction. This is a project which will go on for decades. Whoever is in power, whether you are in government or opposition, it will be exciting to be there, driving how this new city will look.

The member for Nelson had the old planning map from 1990 and a picture of the CBD of Palmerston. Palmerston has come a long way. I have seen the old photos the Palmerston Regional Business Association has. The area was scrub land; I think Albert Albany used to own the station there - a cattle station as far as I know. To turn that scrub land, cattle country, into the city that Palmerston is now was very exciting and that is what you will happen with Weddell. I have driven that back road many times and it is bush at the moment, but in the future there will be major arterial roads, parks, gardens, shops and lovely homes for the next generation. Perhaps my kids will be living there and their kids as well.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is very exciting and great to be part of it. I commend the Chief Minister for bringing the statement to the House.

**Ms McCARTHY (Regional Development):**

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the Chief Minister's statement on Weddell, the Northern Territory's next city. As the Chief Minister has told this House, this is a very exciting and innovative project to grow the Territory. It is also a project which aligns with *A Working Future* initiatives, a body of work now well-known and well under way across the Northern Territory.

Both projects demonstrate that the Henderson Labor government is getting on with the job, planning for the future and working to ensure all Territorians benefit from the Territory's continued growth and prosperity. Through *A Working Future* initiatives, we are investing in our growth towns so they can become the economic and service delivery centres for their regions. We have seen an incredible example of that investment in this year's budget where almost \$1bn has been allocated to the regions so we can see a massive influx of infrastructure and growth in the 20 growth towns.

This transformational work is about growing our regions, our workforce and, most importantly, our own. When I visit our Territory growth towns and travel through our regions - and I travel consistently - I sense a real buzz and optimism for the future in response to the opportunities which are being presented by *A Working Future*.

Residents of Ngukurr are gearing up for their own futures forum this weekend - the first for the Territory growth towns. It will be held Friday and Saturday. It is an opportunity for the people of Ngukurr to come together, with business and other government agencies, both federal and Territory, to look at how they wish to grow the town of Ngukurr: where they want to place their future housing, where they want to place their business community, how they wish to grow it based on cultural identity, the land, the history of the area and the way the people who live there would like to see it grow.

This forum will give Ngukurr residents the opportunity to develop bold plans for the future of their local economy, working together with industry, business, local government and the land council. It is an opportunity for the people of Ngukurr to come together and say: this is our country; this is the way we would like to see Ngukurr grow.

There are many important links and similarities between *A Working Future* initiatives and the new city of Weddell. *A Working Future* and Weddell both form a significant part of our Northern Territory 2030 vision. Both *A Working Future* and Weddell are about growing the Territory from the fringes of our capital to across our regions. *A Working Future* and Weddell share the goal of

bringing all Territorians together and taking a dynamic, inspiring and hard-working Northern Territory into the future.

Both these projects demonstrate the Henderson Labor government is planning, in a bold way, for the continued and sustained growth of the Northern Territory. We are not doing it alone; we are doing it with the people of the Northern Territory. There are factors which separate *A Working Future* and Weddell. *A Working Future* is about existing towns and communities, deciding how to improve services and facilities to their regions by identifying local people's priorities and the current gaps in service delivery. In contrast, the city of Weddell is being planned, designed and constructed from scratch.

Two themes stood out to me in the Chief Minister's speech. First was thinking outside the square and, second, working with local community. These two key themes highlight the links between *A Working Future* and Weddell.

When we embarked on *A Working Future*, we recognised to correct the neglect of previous decades and build a strong vision of hope and choice for Indigenous Territorians and all Territorians living in our remote regions, we would need to think outside the square and, most importantly, we need to work with local people to develop these places.

We recognise it does not matter how much money is put into any project or community if local people are not assisting in setting the priorities and developing ownership of the plans. While we still have work to do, I am confident we are on track. By working in partnership with local people as well as land councils, the shires, business and industry, we will make our towns and communities better places to live for all families across the regions.

We need to focus on what works and what does not work. Thinking outside the square and working with local community input does work. The planning for Weddell will continue this focus as a new city develops in an innovative and consultative way.

As Minister for Local Government, I want to speak about the important local government decisions we must incorporate as part of the development of Weddell. Weddell is currently within the boundaries of the Litchfield Council; however, the future local government arrangements for Weddell have not been decided.

Under the system of local government established by the *Local Government Act*, the Territory is divided into local government areas, having regard to geography and natural

configuration, the nature and density of population, and the viability and appropriateness of each area as a separate unit of local government administration. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services will be considering these issues as planning for the city of Weddell progresses. Key factors which will need to be taken into account in establishing future local government arrangements for Weddell include the future role of the current Litchfield Council, or other emerging local government body, to deliver services to residents, and the support required to establish local government services in Weddell. Deciding upon these future local government arrangements will be crucial. It will be a component in the development process for this new city, and we are committed to ongoing discussions to ensure we get these arrangements right.

As Minister for Women's Policy, I highlight the opportunity for women to play an important role in the development and planning of the new city of Weddell, particularly in leadership capabilities. Having women in positions of leadership and decision-making brings diversity, new voices, and new experiences to decisions made for the community. In our 20 growth towns, local women are providing important input on the programs, activities, and services needed to meet local priorities. I am especially pleased that in the local government sector women now comprise 37% of elected representatives, higher than any other jurisdiction in Australia.

In addition, a quarter of our mayors or shire presidents are women, and 20% of our local government CEOs are women. In these leadership roles, women are contributing significantly to the governance of their communities and, automatically, to the planning for the future for these regions. In the development of the new city of Weddell, the involvement of Territory women as leaders will be vital.

As Minister for Tourism and Minister for Indigenous Development I want to speak about another aspect of Weddell. This investment in our future is going to create a huge opportunity. The construction of the new city of Weddell will generate real jobs and training opportunities for our young people. In particular, the investment in Weddell provides the prospect for Indigenous Territorians who have gained construction skills in our growth towns by working on housing and infrastructure projects, to be employed, should they wish to do so, in the building of this new city.

The new Territory population which will live in Weddell will generate business and tourism opportunities within the city and, perhaps more significantly, existing Territory businesses and

tourism operators in the rural areas surrounding the new city will be able to capitalise on this population growth. For instance, families from the new city of Weddell will be able to readily access the Territory Wildlife Park. Again, as Tourism Minister, while we encourage visitors from interstate and overseas, we need to encourage our own people in the Northern Territory to visit parts of their Territory. Why not visit the Territory Wildlife Park? Why should those people who live in Weddell or surrounding areas, not consider those opportunities?

In addition, Weddell residents will only be a short drive away from the World Heritage listed Kakadu National Park and Litchfield National Park. Our \$3m investment in sealing the northern end of Litchfield Park Road will maximise this opportunity, giving Territorians and tourists more options when it comes to visiting the national park and other attractions such as the Berry Springs Nature Park and the Cox Peninsula. Weddell will also be closer to the wonderful attractions of Adelaide River, Pine Creek, and Katherine.

An investment in our future of this degree will create huge opportunities for Territorians. Perhaps there will be a possibility of holding a regional tourism forum to discuss and plan for these exciting opportunities. The Weddell conference and design forum in September will be an important step in the development process, and I encourage all Territorians to become involved.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend the Chief Minister's statement to the House and look forward to visiting Weddell.

**Mr HAMPTON (Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will start by commenting on the Q&A show I watched last Thursday. It started with Dick Smith and a documentary he put together called *Population Puzzle*. It was an interesting documentary leading to a debate about sustainable population growth. There were many questions in the documentary and the debate which I put in the context of the Northern Territory.

We have a growing population in the Northern Territory, particularly in our growth towns, and it was good to hear the minister for Indigenous policy talk about the initiatives of *A Working Future*, growing our big 20 Indigenous communities, acknowledging they are becoming towns in their own right, and holding *A Working Future* forums. It is important we include our Indigenous communities in the planning process as we move into *Territory 2030*.

The debate was interesting to watch and showed sustainable population growth is an

important issue for governments in Australia. Bad planning and not planning around a sustainable population figure has caused much angst down south.

In Alice Springs, the airport master plan has been approved by minister Albanese. It was good to be in Alice Springs, talking with Warren Snowdon, the member for Lingiari, and the Mayor, about the land releases there. The land could yield 4500 dwellings, supporting a population of 15 000 or more.

I learned much by watching that debate last week. It brought home the point that we in this parliament need to plan and the importance of infrastructure and the pressure it puts on the environment. We need to have a plan, not only for new cities such as Weddell, but for the 20 growth towns and for the Territory as a whole. What population number can be sustained in the Northern Territory? What can we sustain in regard to the economy?

I support the Chief Minister's statement on the sustainable city of Weddell. It is important for government, and I am proud to be part of this government which is committed to sustainability, and is not only saying it, but is acting on that commitment. This new sustainable city is a light on the hill which lights up the path this Labor government, under Paul Henderson, is taking toward ecologically sustainable development in the Northern Territory. We can build a new city which meets the triple bottom line test.

The test and the principles of economic, social and environmental needs are so important as we move forward. I am honoured to have the opportunity to be part of this fantastic new sustainable city, and to see it become a reality. We are fortunate, in the beginning of this process, that we can use the lessons learned from those who went before us.

I learned many valuable lessons watching Q&A last week. For example, in Sydney much good land which has been used for farming for generations is becoming part of the urban sprawl. In Queensland, which is often referred to as the boom state, 35 000 to 40 000 new dwellings per year have been built in recent times. It was important for Queensland to learn to incorporate sustainability into the initial designs of their built environments, because undertaking renovations and retrofits later on costs more.

There has been some discussion about our sewage treatment plants in today's debate. At the time it was considered reasonable to run the outfall pipe into the harbour. This government believes that is no longer acceptable and we are acting. We need to treat waste to a higher

standard. The aim should be tertiary treatment, but raw sewage is unacceptable. There is a resource that can be harnessed and we need to think more about re-use. Doing both of these things is good precautionary practice for growing cities such as Darwin and Palmerston, and for new cities such as Weddell.

That is a good enough argument for me. That is why this government is spending over \$60m to close the Larrakeyah outfall, upgrade the Ludmilla sewage treatment works, and extend the East Point outfall. The knowledge, technology and techniques we have now were not available to our predecessors when they put in sewerage systems. It is up to us to fix it and we are fixing it.

This is a very expensive operation and that is why it is so disappointing to hear the CLP grandstand on the issue but promise nothing in the way of a practical solution. With Weddell we have an opportunity to not leave issues to our children and future generations. Since the 1980s, we have come to understand our temporary role in the flow of history can have a long-lasting, detrimental effect on our kids and future generations.

In 1992, the Commonwealth government suggested the following definition for an ecologically sustainable development in Australia:

*... using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.*

The national strategy for ecologically sustainable development, endorsed by COAG on 7 December 1992 stated the goal as:

*Development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.*

The core objectives of the strategy were:

- *to enhance individual and community wellbeing and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations;*
- *to provide for equity within and between generations;*
- *to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and support life-support systems.*

Some of the guiding principles of the strategy were:

- *decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long- and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations.*
- *where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation ...*

*These guiding principles and core objectives need to be considered as a package. No objective or principle should predominate over the others. A balanced approach is required that takes into account all these objectives and principles to pursue the goal of ESD.*

The Henderson government understands and practices ecologically sustainable development. The target set out in this government's *Territory 2030* strategy directs how we can translate ecological sustainability into the design parameters of the new sustainable city of Weddell. In addition to developing Weddell as a world-class sustainable city and a model for the future, in my portfolios of environment and climate change this government's *Territory 2030* targets include:

- *ensure no deterioration in the health of biodiversity in the Northern Territory;*
- *reduce the impact of weeds and other invasive species, including feral animals and disease organisms;*
- *by 2030, the Territory will have a comprehensive set of connected systems protecting the terrestrial environment, making up 20% of the Territory's land area, and substantially increasing the length of coastline under conservation management;*
- *manage the Northern Territory's natural resources according to the principles of ecologically sustainable development;*
- *reduce the amount of water that Territory households use by 20% by 2015 and a further 10% by 2020, compared to 2009 consumption levels;*
- *ensure efficient use of water by business and industry;*
- *continue to meet or better national air quality standards across the Territory;*

- *energy and water efficiency in residential and commercial buildings in the Territory to meet standards in the Building Code of Australia;*
- *the Northern Territory contributes to the national target for greenhouse gas reduction;*
- *by 2015, reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity from power generation at the Power and Water Corporation's Channel Island and Weddell power stations by 10% compared to 2009 levels;*
- *by 2020, The Northern Territory will have replaced diesel as the primary source of power generation in remote towns and communities, using renewable and low-emission energy sources instead;*
- *by 2020, wholesale electricity purchasers in the Territory will meet their national 20% renewable energy target from Territory sources;*
- *reduce the impact on the environment through reducing reliance on private motor vehicles; and*
- *reduce the amount of waste being taken to our rubbish dumps by 50% by 2020.*

These are just some of the sustainability parameters which inform our design and construction of new sustainable cities such as Weddell.

Our targets set housing parameters to be considered which include: cost-effective over time; design for lifestyle; eco-friendly; comfortable; accessible to people of varying ages and abilities; appropriate for your needs and our tropical climate; low maintenance; healthy to live in; safe, minimising the occurrence of accidents at home; and secure.

They translate into practical designs such as: sitting a house on a block of land; orienting a house using passive solar design; capturing natural ventilation by employing the information from the site and orientation details; establishing vegetation around the house; managing resources through effective waste management and recycling; energy management; water management; and social issues associated with the choices made for orientation, fittings, appliances and access.

Ecologically sustainable development is about social and economic sustainability as well as

protecting our environmental resources and wealth. Coined by the Brundtland Commission, the most often quoted definition of sustainable development is:

*... development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs ...*

As we clean up problems left to us – like the sewage treatment system – we are determined not to leave a similar legacy for our children and future generations of Territorians.

I compare the Henderson government's approach with the CLP's plan of a few years ago, which we are reminded of in the *NT News* today, bottom of page 12: 'The CLP, in government, would consider constructing a dam on the Elizabeth River, then Transport and Infrastructure Development minister, Mick Palmer, said on this day 10 years ago.' What a timely reminder because they considered more than one dam. I have a map from the Cox Peninsula Land Use Structure Plan 1990 which shows the CLP, when they were in government in 1990, was to construct six dams around the Cox Peninsula. In the same year Australia adopted the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, the CLP policy was to dam every major waterway on the Cox Peninsula. This is the opposite of ESD. This is an ecological nightmare which would degrade the wellbeing of the environment for our children and future generations. The Darwin Harbour ecology would never recover from this type of development. This is the opposite of what we are doing with Weddell. We are doing the right thing.

Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the world's action plan on ensuring ecological sustainability achieves economic sustainability, Agenda 21 clearly identified information, integration and participation as key building blocks to help countries achieve development which recognises these interdependent pillars. Agenda 21 from the United Nations conference emphasised the critical role of everyone as both user and provider of information in achieving sustainable development. Agenda 21 emphasised the need to change from the old ways of doing business to new cross-sectoral coordination, and the integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes.

*Territory 2030* targets in my portfolio of Information Communications and Technology include, under Innovation:

*Territorians in major towns and communities will have access to*

*high-speed broadband and the Internet on the same terms as the rest of Australia as a matter of priority.*

The 2030 target relating to ICT, under Education, is:

*The Territory is recognised as a world leader in providing education and training in remote settings, built around evidence-based practice and maximising the innovative use of information and communication technology.*

Under Society:

*By 2012 the Northern Territory government to develop an approach to social inclusion, including a strong focus on joined-up government responses and a people-centred approach.*

The *Territory 2030* targets for the ICT portfolio under Economic Sustainability are:

- *dramatically lift the productivity of Territory businesses; and*
- *identify new solutions to the key infrastructure challenges in the Northern Territory ... by 2012 for high-speed broadband.*

A target under Knowledge, Creativity and Innovation and *A Working Future*, is:

*Increase the number of Territory Growth Towns with access to Australian parity broadband.*

By designing and building Weddell with ICT and the NBN as a cornerstone, we can achieve these targets without retrofit costs. Greenfield developments such as Weddell, around the nation and the world, are already doing this. The opposition does not understand the importance of fast, reliable, cheap broadband and the integration of access into the community. This government does and we will ensure it will be a key feature of the Weddell design parameters.

Agenda 21 also stressed that broad public participation and decision-making is fundamental to achieving sustainable development. We have paid attention to the experience of the world in working with Agenda 21. As the Chief Minister pointed out in his statement, we are joining the dots, ensuring economic, social, and environmental objectives are achieved in our new environmentally sustainable city. We are having consultations, engaging with the community to design the Territory's first sustainable city, and doing studies. The Chief Minister mentioned

some of the 30-plus studies required to do this job right. This gives us the knowledge base to develop Weddell in an ecologically sustainable manner.

Sports and active recreation form an important part of any community and parts of its social aspects, as well as ecologically sustainable design. In the new sustainable city of Weddell, we will ensure Territorians who love sports will have the level of services we have been delivering to the rest of the Territory. Our 2030 sports and active recreation target is:

*Territorians have access to a wide range of facilities and activities that enhance the Territory lifestyle.*

This target includes the following actions for the Northern Territory government:

- *government capital works programs include community facilities that enhance the Territory lifestyle.*
- *encourage more private sector investment in facilities and activities;*
- *continue to support large-scale events such as BassintheGrass, the Finke Desert Race, the Darwin Festival, V8 Supercars, and the Arafura Games and the Masters Games.*
- *continue to develop facilities that Territory families and children can enjoy together. The Leanyer Water Park and the Darwin Wave Pool are excellent examples of facilities that provide affordable fun for families.*

We know Territorians love their sport. It is an important part of the Territory lifestyle and provides significant health, social, education, and economic benefits for all Territorians. That is why this government is committed to developing comprehensive plans for the future investment in sport and recreation infrastructure for the city of Weddell ...

**Mr McCARTHY:** A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move that the member be given an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr HAMPTON:** I thank my colleague, the member for Barkly.

This will ensure all Territorians can continue to have access to a wide range of activities which enhance their great Territory lifestyle.

The Henderson government is spending \$33m to deliver first-class sporting facilities in Palmerston for tennis, netball, AFL, Rugby League and football, and \$13.5m for Palmerston's water park. In Alice Springs we have delivered Traeger Park, a world-class facility, as well as investing \$8m in the indoor pool, an all-year-round facility. In Marrara, a \$6.2m facility for netball and a world-class athletics track have been delivered.

This government delivers world-class sporting facilities and world sporting events, such as the Arafura Games, the new five-year agreement with AFL to bring competition games to the Territory, the three-year agreement to bring the Cowboys to the Territory, bringing the Brumbies to the Territory, the Superbikes, bringing all the NBL teams to play in the Territory - and the list goes on. This government delivers and will continue to deliver for the people of our new sustainable city of Weddell.

The third aspect of ecologically sustainable development is economic sustainability. This is an area where the Territory is well placed to take advantage of the opportunity Weddell offers Territorians. Territory companies, like the well-recognised and awarded Troppo Architects NT, have a strong role to play in building the city of Weddell.

There are also many great companies such as Corporate Express, Gold Medal Services, Edna's Cleaning Service, NT Supply Solutions, NT Controls and Automation Pty Ltd, Greening Australia, Bridge Toyota, Group Training Northern Territory, Darwin Solar, eco-Kinetics, eco options, Enjo, Evolution Furniture, Colemans Printing, and many more companies like these, which have contributed to the greening of the Territory and have much offer in developing the green economy in the Northern Territory and the city of Weddell. The new sustainable city of Weddell will offer opportunities for companies like these and many others. Green companies like these will need to step up to the mark and take advantage of this sustainable economic development.

The sustainable economic opportunities that Weddell presents have been noticed internationally. Earlier this month, our Chief Minister met with Hitachi Vice President, Koji Tanaka, in Tokyo to discuss potential renewable energy projects in the Northern Territory. At that meeting, Mr Tanaka expressed his interest in this government's plan to build a sustainable city incorporating renewable energy technology. The message the Japanese renewable technology industry is giving us is that they believe the Northern Territory is a growing dynamic, forward thinking and a great place to invest in ecologically sustainable solutions like Weddell. This government understands ecological sustainable

development. We understand the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental sustainability. We are putting that understanding to meeting the housing needs of Territorians in designing and developing the new sustainable city of Weddell.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, exciting times are ahead. I am proud to support the Chief Minister's statement today, and proud to be part of a government that takes ecologically sustainable development so seriously.

**Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their contributions to today's discussion, and my colleague, the minister for the Environment, for a very thoughtful and positive contribution.

I will not spend much time wrapping up this speech today. Suffice to say that the contributions of ministers and members on this side of the House were pertinent to the issues and relevant to the discussion, as was the contribution of the member for Nelson. These contributions showed vision. They showed an enthusiasm for the growth of our Territory, and enthusiasm for the future of the Northern Territory. Not every government in Australia is planning a new city, and that creates many exciting opportunities.

The contributions of the members for Blain and Goyder's would sour the milk of human kindness, in contrast to this side of the House, and the member for Nelson, being excited and positive about the future, showing vision for the future, and considering issues like sustainability and triple bottom line principles.

Cities are not about buildings; they are about people. There was an opportunity for the opposition to share their thoughts about some of the platforms and building blocks you could put together in building the city of tomorrow in the Northern Territory, which was what I hoped would come out of this debate. Instead, all we got was the same old, tired, whingeing, whining, rhetoric and laziness from the opposition which did not put forward a thoughtful contribution based on serious thinking and research. Their contribution can be summed up in a few words. In their view, the plan is done. It was done in the 1990s, and we should just go ahead and do it.

That is the extent of the vision of the CLP: do not engage Territorians, do not ask kids who are in high school or middle school, who will be the people who will buy and rent in Weddell, about their thoughts for the future city and what they would like to see incorporated. Do not engage with Charles Darwin University, and talk to the university about its thinking for sustainability and a new city of the future. The CLP wants to go back

to work which was done internally, probably under Col Fuller - who is in the Leader of the Opposition's office - and dust off the 20-year-old plan.

Technology has evolved in the last 20 years. Planning principles have evolved significantly in the last 20 years. Contemporary thinking in urban design has evolved in the last 20 years but, no, we are going to get this plan which has been there for 20 years, good old Col, and blow the dust off it. It will do; it will be right; just get on with it. Slap up some houses and it will be okay. That is the extent of their vision. What a pathetic bunch!

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Order!

**Mr HENDERSON:** Madam Speaker, they are probably running the copper wire out there. The copper wire is okay, it does not do a bad job. Forget small business, forget about attracting green businesses, just roll out the copper wire, whack up the buildings, slam the air conditioners in, and do not talk to people about the transport options. You could sit there in the city of Weddell clunk, clunk, clunk, downloading your latest movie off the Internet instead of putting fibre optics there. What a pathetic attempt!

In fact, the extent of the vision is well highlighted by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition who said no one will want to live in homes that are anything other than air-conditioned boxes so forget all of this sustainable stuff. That is the vision of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Forget about tropical design and environment sustainability; just whack up some boxes, jam an air-conditioner in there, set it at 18°C and it will be right.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has no vision. She might want to talk to the member for Brennan. I have to say the member for Brennan, at least, has some vision. He is thinking about the environment and sort of understands sustainability principles. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition is still there in the old Minerals Council: dig it up, ship it off and it will be right. Roll out the copper cable, whack in an air-conditioner and everything will be right ...

**Ms Purick:** I wish we could ship you off, ship you out to the desert.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Goyder!

**Mr HENDERSON:** Blow the dust off good old Col's 20-year-old plan. Dear, oh, dear! No vision from the opposition. It had an opportunity today but it is too lazy to do the work.

Let me reiterate what the government will be doing. We will be involving Territorians in the design of the city and the ideas which drive the city. We will not be dusting off good old Col's 20-year-old plan, blowing the cobwebs off it and saying it will be right; that will do; near enough is good enough; we do not need to engage with Territorians; we do not need to talk to Territorians, particularly young Territorians and Territorians only just born when the CLP planned this - well, they say they planned. They will be on the files somewhere. Tomorrow I will ask to dust off this plan. I want to see it. I will blow the cobwebs off it and see how good it is ...

**A member:** The dams.

**Mr HENDERSON:** Yes, and all the dams around Darwin Harbour. I will ask to see these good old boys' plans from the old CLP. You know the good old boys would have been there over a few glasses of red, as they used to do, planning dams on the Elizabeth River and right around our harbour. We will dig up these plans and have a look. Heaven forbid, that we should consult with Territorians. Heaven forbid we should talk to young people about what they want. Just dig up the good old boys' plan and it will be right.

We will be aiming to introduce new planning strategies which are being successfully trialled around the world and implemented in progressive places. What I like to think about our government is that we are a progressive government. We are looking at genuine community engagement, are serious about the triple bottom line and making sure we plan for a world-class city. In doing that, let us try to engage with people from around the world for a vision of a sustainable, tropical, liveable city of the future, and not just dust off the good old boys' plans of 20 years ago. Let us see what is contemporary and what is progressive.

I want the best for Territorians; I do not want a second-rate plan which was put together by a second-rate group of people 20 years ago. We will be ensuring we retain a sense of what is practical and affordable. I believe sustainable cities can be affordable; however, we have to test that. We have to work it through, and that is what we are going to do.

One of the reasons I met with Hitachi in Tokyo a couple of weeks ago was they are world leaders in smart grid technologies, greater penetration of renewable power into base load power stations and how that is managed across the grid. We have great Territory companies, and I pay tribute to Alan Langworthy and his company which is developing this technology in the Northern Territory. The university is starting to get serious about research and development of renewable energy, smart grid technology, and increasing the

penetration of renewable energy into base load power.

The CLP would not talk to Hitachi. This is all a waste of time. We will just dig up the good old boys' 20-year-old plan and it will be right.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition claims growth had not started in 2003. She is wrong. When we came to office in 2001, the CLP had brought the Territory to a standstill. The only growth business in the Northern Territory was the furniture removal business as the trucks were rolling out of town relocating people down south. Around 3000 people a year were moving interstate and population growth had slowed to around 0.1% to 0.3%. That was the legacy we inherited when we came to government. People leaving the Territory in droves because the CLP had ground this economy to a standstill, such was the great vision of the CLP of the day.

As a result of our investment in infrastructure, most particularly our investment in jobs, the population turned around in 2003. We went from 0.1%, barely keeping our head above water, which was predominantly due to the Indigenous birth rate, and 3000 people a year leaving the Northern Territory as fast as their legs could carry them, to 2.1% growth over a couple of years. It was an explosion in population growth. What is more, the population growth around Palmerston leapt to 3.64% and is now around 4.4%, one of the highest growth rates in the nation. Unemployment in the Northern Territory is down to 2.6%, the lowest unemployment rate the Northern Territory has ever seen. All the opposition can see is doom and gloom everywhere they look. They have no vision for the future of the Territory.

Our nett interstate migration growth turned positive. Apart from the numbers created by the military move to the north, until recently the Territory had not experienced any significant positive interstate migration growth in 26 years. The only nett interstate migration population growth sustained under the CLP was when 1 Brigade transferred from Victoria to Darwin, a decision made by Kim Beazley, a federal Labor Defence minister.

For 26 or 27 years there was no nett interstate migration growth in the Northern Territory. Recently, we had our seventh or eighth quarter of nett positive interstate migration growth. That is why we need this city, are releasing land so fast, are working to have more housing and infrastructure in place, and why the CLP's plan to slash the Territory budget is so worrying.

We are in a growth phase. We need investment in infrastructure in the Northern

Territory, not slashes to the budget. We need to grow our service delivery in health, education, police and environmental management across the Northern Territory. We need to grow this base, not hack it to death, which the CLP would do if it was in government. A greater population means more services, more infrastructure, and needs a government committed to growth, not to slashing the Territory budget.

The member for Nelson has urged us to release land use proposals and we are close to doing so. These plans have been the subject of extensive debate within government, and I wanted that debate to take place properly. It will also be the subject of extensive debate in the public because we will be releasing a draft document which is designed to attract public comment. We have public servants working on this. We are also bringing in outside sources of advice because we do not believe we are the font of all wisdom on these matters, unlike the good old boys of the CLP, who thought they were - and still do - the font of all wisdom on everything. We want to open up the doors and windows of this place to bring in outside and external advice. The CLP proved that governments which ignore outside advice do so at their peril.

Weddell will be a modern, tropical, sustainable and liveable city - another wonderful asset for our wonderful Territory. I am proud to be involved in the planning of it, and I am sure we will be proud of the outcomes as we look back over the years.

Most important was sitting down with the Year 8 students at Darwin Middle School and having a conversation with them about what they would like to see and what their aspirations are for a city they will be buying their first homes in, or renting their first apartments in. I am really looking forward to seeing what our students come up with, as they are the people who will be at the centre of thinking about the design of this new city.

Madam Speaker, I thank all honourable members for their contribution to the debate. I am very disappointed in the opposition and their lack of vision for the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

#### **PERSONAL EXPLANATION** **Member for Grotorex**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have given my leave to the member for Grotorex to make a personal explanation.

**Mr CONLAN (Grotorex):** Madam Speaker, on the 6 pm news on Channel 9 tonight, it was reported I will be lodging an informal vote this

Saturday at the federal election. I emphatically deny that. I do not know where that information came from. I put on the *Parliamentary Record* I will be voting this Saturday. I encourage all Territorians to lodge a vote and exercise their democratic right. I firmly believe in the democratic vote process, therefore, I will be voting on Saturday.

#### **MOTION**

##### **Note Statement - Building the Education Revolution in the Northern Territory**

Continued from 11 August 2010.

**Mr McCARTHY (Lands and Planning):** Madam Speaker, I continue my contribution and remarks to the debate.

The Henderson government took up the challenge and responded rapidly to the announcement and roll-out of the Nation Building Plan and BER. Stimulus action squads were set up in government agencies to have contracts awarded and projects delivered. The Department of Construction and Infrastructure took a central role in coordinating with other agencies.

Government moved to have the Development Consent Authority meet fortnightly rather than once a month. This meant the approvals process was sped up dramatically and work could start. The DCA is still meeting fortnightly in Darwin and Litchfield, and planning decisions are being made in a timely manner to bring contractors and subcontractors on-site and start projects. Eighteen months later we are seeing the benefit of the sound economic decisions made by the Labor government. Sound economic management, targeted and strategic spending, meant Australia was the only major advanced economy which did not go into recession as a result of the global financial crisis.

The Territory currently has the highest jobs growth in the nation and the lowest unemployment rate. Access Economics predicts the Territory will have the third highest economic growth rate in the country, behind the resource-rich states of Western Australia and Queensland. These economic statistics are testament to the strategic decisions made by Labor in the Territory and federally to protect the economy and jobs for Territorians and Australians. They were tough decisions to make, but they are paying off. Where would we have been if the Liberals in Canberra and Terry Mills and the Liberals here had their way?

The CLP had the chance to put the Territory economy and Territory jobs first, but instead they followed their Liberal mates in Canberra, including Nigel Scullion. We all remember it was the

Country Liberals who stood in this House in February last year and voted against supporting the national building stimulus package. The CLP voted against strategic investments which shored up jobs in our construction industry when times were tough. They voted against projects which have improved public housing and roads, and they voted against BER, a program which has delivered so much to Territory schools, including schools in CLP-held electorates. These projects have benefited so many children and school communities. I wonder how they explain their opposition to these projects to their constituents. Thank goodness the Territory and federal Labor governments stood up for Territorians.

It takes strong economic management and strategic government investment to keep an economy growing. This government's commitment to growing the Territory economy reaches beyond the stimulus response. In 2009-10, the Henderson government responded to a slowdown in major projects in the Territory. To ensure the Territory economy kept moving, we committed \$1.2bn to infrastructure projects, securing jobs for Territorians. In Budget 2010-11, this government again moved to keep Territory jobs safe and our construction industry strong, with a \$1.8bn infrastructure program. It is a program which is delivering now and investing for the future.

One of the most crucial elements for the Territory's future is our children, and that is why we are investing significantly to improve education outcomes for young Territorians, our future leaders. We are investing in our schools with \$886m in Budget 2010-11 towards education. This funding will support a range of measures, including \$14.1m for 60 new teachers, start-up costs for the new Rosebery Primary and Middle Schools, and \$6.4m to upgrade the Centralian Middle School at Gillen and establish a youth hub at ANZAC Hill.

As a teacher with more 30 years experience in the Northern Territory, I know how important direct investment is in our schools, our students, teachers, parents and the whole school community. That is why programs like Building the Education Revolution are so valuable to the Northern Territory and our 186 government and non-government schools. BER was designed to provide economic stimulus to keep businesses open in a period of economic downturn. It was also designed to deliver improved learning environments for children, and bring students, families and school communities together.

I am proud to have the Chief Executive of the Department of Construction and Infrastructure, Mr Alan Wagner, on board to drive the delivery of BER. Alan has a strong background in the

delivery of BER projects as the former Deputy Director General of the Department of Education and Training, Infrastructure Services in Queensland. There, he oversaw the delivery of more than \$1bn-worth of BER works, and I am pleased to have him in the Territory. In a pathetic show of politicising the public service, the CLP made it clear in debate last week that they devalued Alan Wagner and his wealth of experience. When statements are made which devalue NT public servants one can only wonder about the future of those NT public servants who currently work as part of the Henderson Labor government team, especially if the CLP came back to power.

Of \$268m to Territory schools for BER projects, \$135m has already been delivered into our schools and economy. More than 500 Territory companies have benefited from this funding and delivered BER stimulus projects, which means jobs in our construction sector, businesses continuing to operate, and Territory jobs. It must be noted, the recently released *BER Implementation Taskforce Interim Report* did not contain any adverse findings in relation to projects in the Northern Territory. Agency management and design fees in the Northern Territory were amongst the lowest in the country, at only 9% of the total cost.

These findings are a credit to the Territory companies which have worked on the BER projects, and the teams and government stimulus action squads managing them. The findings, which show where the BER program has delivered and its benefits for school communities, shame the CLP camp. Their comments are an attack on the integrity of all involved in delivering BER projects across the Territory from school principals and parents to construction companies.

As the minister for Education noted, BER projects were divided into three categories: Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, more than \$220m for Territory schools to build or refurbish large scale infrastructure; Science and Language Centres for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Secondary Schools, \$25m for Territory schools; and National School Pride, more than \$20m to refurbish and renew existing infrastructure and build new minor infrastructure.

As a former teacher, I know the difference a new classroom, improved gardens, or a covered learning area can make, particularly in our very remote areas. As with all infrastructure works, the Territory's geographic vastness presents unique challenges in delivering these projects and upgrades. That is why it has been so exciting to see the roll-out of BER projects across the electorate of Barkly and the Territory.

Elliott School is one school in the Barkly electorate which is enjoying works delivered under the BER project. A Territory business has benefited from the injection of funding into our economy. Murray River North Pty Ltd secured a contract valued at more than \$550 000 to construct a new covered, outdoor learning area and classroom, a project the CLP would have stopped. I have visited Elliott School since those works and I am looking forward to going back to Elliott to see the students, teachers and parents using those facilities. I am sure the covered area is being well used for class and sporting activities.

The remote community of Alpururulam is also benefiting from the BER in the Barkly electorate. To achieve best economies of scale, Alpururulam is receiving a new classroom as part of a seven school package of works. Finn Carpentry and Building Service is delivering the \$4.4m package of works - more jobs, more infrastructure and better results in our remote communities. Concrete is expected to be poured this week for the construction of a multipurpose facility at Borrooloola School. This is a \$1.6m contract which has been secured by Borrooloola business Cairns Industries - a local business and local jobs to deliver a project which will benefit the whole community.

As members would be aware, I was a teacher at Tennant Creek High School and I am really excited about the transformation under way at the school. A great element of the Building the Education Revolution is the Science and Language Centres for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Secondary Schools. More than \$25m in works has been awarded to 14 schools and Tennant Creek High School was successful in their bid. Territory business, Probuild (NT) Pty Ltd, won the contract for more than \$1.3m to deliver the new science and library centre. The Tennant Creek community is raving about this new facility.

Also under way at Tennant Creek High School is the construction of a trade training centre. The \$886 000 project is funded by the Australian Labor government and is another project which would have been scrapped by Tony Abbott and a Liberal government. Tennant Creek business, G.K. Painting Contractors Pty Ltd, is delivering the works, creating jobs and economic opportunities for locals. G.K. Painting Contractors Pty Ltd is also delivering a Territory government funded \$3.018m project for a multipurpose sports facility. The sports facility will be a great resource for the students at the Tennant Creek High School and a wonderful asset for the Tennant Creek community to use for public events.

The Building the Education Revolution works package is transforming Territory schools for the benefit of students, teachers, parents and the

whole school community. There are more BER projects planned for the future, such as a \$2.5m multipurpose facility for Tennant Creek Primary School. It is worrying that this project will not go ahead if Tony Abbott and the Liberals win the election on 21 August. Tony Abbott and the Liberals will pull the plug on these works and the CLP supports that. Under the Liberals, young Territorians would miss out on projects for their schools and construction jobs would be lost.

Madam Speaker, I have seen firsthand the excitement and benefits the BER works are bringing to our schools, including schools in some of our most remote areas. I am pleased to support the Building the Education Revolution project and thank the minister for this statement.

**Mr STYLES (Sanderson):** Madam Speaker, I note the ministerial statement Building the Education Revolution in the Northern Territory. Any significant funding boost to improve the effectiveness of basic school facilities and school infrastructure is to be welcomed across the Northern Territory. However, the minister's statement has failed to inform the House of how the program has helped to build future potential for learning and support improved student achievements. What a missed opportunity.

This is a government which has been verbose in the past about improving the achievement of student learning outcomes in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. The minister's statement has not provided a single example of how the BER program has contributed towards student achievements in these important areas. The 17-page statement is a missed opportunity to comprehensively inform Territorians of the true impact of this project on learning outcomes. The minister has included some case studies in his statement which draw a warm feeling to the program and its perceived impact on teaching pedagogies and learning outcomes.

The minister has forgotten this program was launched by the Prime Minister in a scathing attack on state and territory bureaucracies, where he put agencies on notice that the funding of the BER program was contingent on projects being completed by the end of the 2009 calendar year. Surely, it was not the Prime Minister's intention this government would simply fund its neglected and substantially unfunded Building and Asset Management System, (BAMS), and its delayed and ineffective capital works program with the BER funds?

It seems the rushed announcement and introduction of this project created the need for school communities and councils to make quick decisions to identify projects which would be eligible for funding under the program. Rushed

decisions on expenditure and school infrastructure have consequently wrought missed opportunities, and lack of strategic planning and intent, on school communities. The minister stated, on pages 4 and 5, \$14.5m has been expended to date on projects valued at a \$170m. This is a significant sum of money; 8.5% of the project value. How can this significant sum be justified? It is the expenditure on consultants and project managers, etcetera, which has been criticised across the nation. In the Territory we have not escaped this largesse.

What the minister is not addressing is the fact that significant components of the BER program conveniently funded an urgent backlog of maintenance needs which had not been addressed by this government for many years. It is widely known this government has not funded the routine Building and Asset Management System cyclic maintenance program for schools. It was this program which was relied on by schools in the past to fix basic aspects of their facilities. Why did this government allow basic amenities to fall so far below reasonable standards?

For instance, on page 16 of the statement, the minister challenges members to identify projects which should not have gone ahead under the BER. This challenge attempts to force the opposition to oppose suspending of BER funding full stop. Rather, the minister has failed to challenge discussion over the appropriateness of the BER projects. In response, I draw the minister's attention to projects which schools in my electorate were left with no option but to go ahead with. With the greatest respect to those schools, as a member of the school council I went to council meetings and listened to some of the issues discussed and later expanded on by members of the council as to how they felt.

I ask the minister how the funding of the upgrade, for instance, of toilet facilities at Sanderson Middle School could possibly be considered an appropriate project to be funded under the BER program? Surely, this was a backlog of maintenance, or simply an updating of facilities which should have been funded routinely by this government. The middle school council decided, in frustration, to allocate BER money to upgrade toilet facilities to Australian standards. These toilets and hand-washing facilities have been targeted for upgrade for about five or six years. Year after year, the state of these facilities was brought to the attention of those administering the BAMS program.

Over the past few years, the school has been overwhelmed by enrolment of large numbers of students from refugee backgrounds with significant English language issues. Where was

the support of Damian Hale when the school was notified that its application for a new language centre was unsuccessful? Surely, the strategic funding of such a facility would have led to the achievement of significant learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy? The construction of additional classrooms benefits learning outcomes for students. If you spend money on the right things the learning outcomes will be far greater and far more beneficial to students and the community in general.

I asked the minister about the planning provisions which have been made to ensure appropriate Northern Territory government resources are allocated to the future maintenance and upgrading of BER facilities. It is incumbent on the minister to ensure the state of Northern Territory school facilities is not allowed to fall below reasonable standards, as was the case prior to the BER program.

Much money has now been spent on many facilities. Where is the budget to maintain them? That is the burning question for government.

I have had communication with someone from the Numbulwar community, one of a number of people from the bush who have contacted me. I have chosen the information this person gave me to bring the issues with BER in the bush to the attention of this House.

This person said the situation with Building Better Schools is very interesting. There is a school in Numbulwar, in East Arnhem, with a possible enrolment of 200 students, but with attendances as low as 30 people at times. I am led to believe that under the Building Better Schools initiative someone, unknown to the people in Numbulwar, decided \$3.5m should be spent on a basketball court, a language centre, and construction of a new library. They do not know who in Numbulwar was consulted, but the decision was made.

This is despite the fact in the community there was already a basketball court under lights, a youth centre, newly-built facilities close to the school, and the school has an indoor facility suitable for basketball and soccer. There was also a library which was rarely used, given many students who enrolled did not attend. I agree we need libraries, we need books, and we need librarians to ensure students have access to the best possible education. The language centre is to be provided for a linguist and a couple of good local people to work on language revival projects for only one language group of the community. This suggests to me not all students are interested in learning and, as a result, English literacy and numeracy are not the priority of the school.

Existing classrooms for primary grades are in a shocking condition, with broken windows, being badly in need of repainting, and lacking facilities such as water bubblers. In mainstream schools in larger and urban areas, the parents, school councils and the community would not stand for these sorts of conditions. They would be up in arms if children had to put up with conditions which are inappropriate and an occupational health and safety risk.

No one seems to know who made the decision to construct another basketball court in the middle of existing classrooms, which people have observed is very disruptive to classrooms around it when students are out there having a good time. From my information, it appears the people in Numbulwar were not consulted about many things. I am also led to believe the construction began in mid-2009 and is still not finished. So why not build something the school could really use, they say, like classrooms ...

**Ms McCARTHY:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I would like the member for Sanderson to table the document he is reading from.

**Mr STYLES:** Madam Speaker, these are my private notes, and I have all sorts of notes written on here.

**Madam SPEAKER:** They are private notes. You may continue.

**Mr STYLES:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. There has been no improvement in attendance, and some people suggested it may even be in decline. This suggested to me that money could have been better invested in providing housing for teachers and reducing class sizes to improve outcomes for students. In providing better classrooms for students, they might enjoy going to school. To some people in Numbulwar it appears Building Better Schools has not produced anything positive for the Numbulwar community.

I listened to the member for Barkly ask how the CLP is going to explain a number of things to the electorate. Well, I ask the minister and the member for Barkly how the minister for this project is going to explain to the electorate why classrooms and things which are needed to improve literacy and numeracy are less important than building another basketball court and other facilities which they already have? Schools are in desperate need of upgrading.

Madam Speaker, issues like this need to be addressed. I would be very grateful if the government could explain to us why these things are occurring in these communities, why people are unhappy their tax dollars are being spent on things they have not been consulted about, and

which they see as duplications of facilities they already have. They would have much rather seen money spent on classrooms, which would have enhanced the learning abilities and the learning of their young people and their community.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, most of what I will say about the BER program relates to my electorate. If people had to give a percentage of the success rate of the BER program they would say about 75% successful. It certainly has contributed to assets which were long needed at schools. The replacement of buildings and the refurbishment of buildings have been welcomed by the general community. However, that does not mean everything is rosy. For instance, the minister's statement says in the guidelines: '1. Provide economic stimulus through rapid construction or refurbishment of school infrastructure'. BER did not necessarily meet those guidelines.

I have been told that in one case 15 schools were grouped together in one tender. You have to ask how that helped economic growth because it was too big a tender for one company; companies had to get together to work their way through it. Because it was such a big project, instead of having economic stimulus through rapid construction, it is now nine months behind schedule. I will be asking the minister to investigate and advise why the department put 15 schools together in one tender. That is a question to which some people in my electorate would like an answer.

Another part of the statement says: 'Build learning environments to help children, families and communities participate in activities that will support achievement, develop learning potential and bring communities together'. That is fine, but the criticism I have heard from school principals is that the BER program was inflexible and there was not enough input from schools. I have been told a school in my electorate now has two libraries. That is not a good thing. They are not using one of those rooms as a library, but they were probably told they had to build a library.

Input from schools is another area the minister could look at. We had the National School Pride program previously and, if you wanted nearly 100% satisfaction, you gained it through that program because schools had input from the beginning. Schools had a choice of managing their own projects or asking the department to do it for them. It is a pity the second round, through BER, did not use the same system because I have not heard any complaints about the National School Pride program. I have seen some of the work which has been done. A new wooden floor has been laid in the assembly hall of the Howard Springs Primary School, the canteen has been

upgraded, and there have also been other changes.

The National School Pride program should have been the benchmark because the second round of funds through the BER program has caused some frustration with builders and principals, and school input has not been as welcomed by the department as in the previous program.

It would also be worth the minister looking at the issue of the government using drafters to design buildings rather than architects. I understand there was a classroom built at Nightcliff which was drawn up by a drafter. It had to have holes knocked in the wall because there were not enough doors. There has also been criticism of the amount of money architects look for when they put their signature on buildings, which sometimes makes a building much more expensive.

I have a note here about the work on the outdoor learning facility at Millner School, which sounds like a very good initiative. I do not present these criticisms to bag the government; this is the feedback I have received from people who work in these schools. Surely, they are the people the government wants to hear from. It is not criticism directly from me.

Overall, it has been a good program. It has helped the economy and helped schools. That is why I think people would rate it as 75% successful. Good things have happened; however, there are areas the government should look at to see if they could be changed to make the program move along better. They have to involve principals and school councils more because then there would be community involvement and ownership of what is happening. That might frustrate people in departments at times but it is a better way to go.

**Ms McCARTHY (Regional Development):** Madam Speaker, I support the Building the Education Revolution statement. The Henderson Labor government sees education as a priority across the Northern Territory as we work to help all Territory students achieve better educational outcomes. It is an ongoing challenge. We do not deny that. We recognise, as a government, that we not only have to work on the challenge of attendance and getting our children to school in every school across the Northern Territory, we also have to work on the challenge of the infrastructure - recognising the remoteness in many of these places; the decades of neglect of the infrastructure; and that the CLP, when in government, refused to build any secondary schools in our regions or support the graduation of students in our remote communities.

That is why we fully support the objectives and important investments under federal Labor's Building the Education Revolution initiative. The BER initiative was an important component of federal Labor's economic stimulus package, beginning in early 2009 delivering a \$14.7bn boost to federal Labor's education revolution over three financial years.

This investment package aims to fund schools to build and upgrade facilities which can also be available for broader community use. That is an important part of this initiative - broader community use. It is a particularly important initiative in our remote regions where there is a need to use these facilities inside and outside school hours. It is so important out bush where we want schools to be a key part of community life; a place parents and families feel connected to and where children want to be. We understand the attendance issue is an incredible challenge; however, we must not forget the infrastructure challenges which are vital in these areas because of the decades of neglect of infrastructure.

Importantly, the funding for BER will continue to help stimulate local economies in local communities through the construction work being undertaken. It is about investing in our long-term future, improving the quality of education and creating jobs. We recognise the challenges. It does not mean we should walk away from it. It is great news that every one of the Territory's 187 public and private primary schools will receive new or upgraded buildings as part of the BER. As you have heard from my colleagues on this side of the House, there are currently 133 schools with projects under construction, 44 of which have reached practical completion and are being utilised by the schools. How can this be so wrong? How can it be so wrong to provide funding and infrastructure to these schools in a joint effort with the federal Labor government? The opposition see it as completely wrong.

The additional Commonwealth funding under the BER initiative complemented the \$118.9m for new education infrastructure in the Territory 2009-10 budget. In Budget 2010-11, \$101.9m was made available to continue federal Labor's BER program to upgrade Northern Territory schools. Budget 2010-11 provides \$213m to build better schools, continuing the Territory government's commitment to upgrade every government primary and group school over four years.

This funding includes: \$6.4m to upgrade Centralian Middle School and establish a youth hub at ANZAC Hill; \$6.8m to upgrade the Acacia, Henbury and Namarluk special schools; \$5m to upgrade Casuarina Senior College; \$1m to upgrade Sanderson Middle School; and \$0.3m

each to upgrade 21 primary schools at Anula, Bradshaw, Braiting, Canteen Creek, Girraween, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo, Jabiru, Kalkarindji, Karama, Katherine South, Ludmilla, Maningrida, Manunda Terrace, Nhulunbuy, Shepherdson, Tennant Creek, Wagaman, Waruwu, Yirrkala and Yirrkala Homelands. Works are continuing on the \$54.5m Rosebery Primary and Middle Schools with completion for the 2011 school year.

Budget 2010-11 also delivers *A Working Future* school upgrades, including \$17.6m to build children and family centres at Yuendumu, Gunbalanya, Maningrida and Ngukurr; \$5m to upgrade remote schools including \$2m for Yirrkala, \$1.25m for Maningrida, \$1.25m for Hermannsburg, and \$0.5m for Elliott; \$2m to upgrade homeland learning centres; and \$0.4m for an additional student counsellor office space at Milingimbi and Kalkarindji.

The CLP blindly toeing Tony Abbott's party line will disrupt this most important Building the Education Revolution investment in our schools across the Northern Territory. This critical investment in facilities and infrastructure for our students and teachers, which has and will continue to stimulate economies in local communities, is now at risk. It is a victim of Tony Abbott's preoccupation with undermining key initiatives of the then Rudd government and redirecting dollars to other purposes.

Tony Abbott has described the Building the Education Revolution policy as: 'a glorified training program for L-plate ministers'. This shows how focused Tony Abbott and the Liberals are on helping Territory students achieve better educational outcomes with better infrastructure facilities. Should the focus not be on the education outcomes we have committed to, and on delivering a better education for all our kids by building better facilities, as well as having teachers in schools who want to be there and who are working in an environment which they feel proud to work in? Tony Abbott's comment shows he does not recognise that in order to improve education outcomes we need to deliver facilities and infrastructure for our students and teachers across the Territory.

The CLP was the government which refused, for 27 years, to deliver secondary education to our regions. It is a very sad and sorry legacy the CLP left education with. Today, we have a timely opportunity to make a real difference. Those on the other side of politics, both nationally and locally, would rather rip into the BER initiative, disrupting work and failing our local communities rather than embracing its objective and the real opportunity it presents for all of us in the Northern Territory.

What plans does the CLP have to address the challenges of improving education outcomes? As the minister for Education said in February this year, there is nothing new in any of the CLP's education policies; in fact, our government has already implemented, or included, all of the CLP's so-called priorities in our A Smart Territory strategic plan. Terry Mills said he would inject nearly \$27m a year to improve education outcomes, yet, he does not seem to have a plan for working with the Commonwealth to deliver quality infrastructure for our students and teachers across all our regions in the Northern Territory.

There is no point blaming parents for not sending their children to school if the government is not providing the necessary education facilities and infrastructure. In my electorate of Arnhem, the Henderson Labor government, in partnership with federal Labor as part of the BER initiative, is delivering facilities and infrastructure for our students and teachers to improve education outcomes. At Milingimbi Community Education Centre, construction of an early childhood centre has begun, with footings and floor joists in place. When complete, the early education centre will provide a preschool, Transition and Year 1 classroom. The school principal, Gerry McKeown, and vice principal, Marilyn McGregor, have described this development as a very valuable addition to the school facilities. The construction of a new science lab at Milingimbi is also well advanced, with the exterior walls, windows and roof in place and awaiting the interior fit-out.

At Ramingining Community Education Centre, a new administration building has been completed, and construction of three new classrooms is under way, with footings and the floor frames in place. In addition, despite some delays caused by the late Wet Season, three new teacher houses have been constructed with a fourth under way, funded in partnership by the Territory and federal Labor governments.

In Gapuwiyak, a multipurpose pavilion has been completed at the community education centre with two new classrooms attached to it. A home economics building and a new Year 12 classroom are also complete. In addition, a new science building has been constructed and is awaiting the interior fit-out. This building will be named the Shirley Nirrpurranydji Science Centre in honour of the Gapuwiyak Community Education Centre's long-serving principal.

At Bulman School, construction of an early learning centre has been completed, with child-size toilet facilities, a kitchenette, and isolation fencing. The early learning centre has also been funded by the Ian Thorpe Foundation to provide an early education program for zero to three-year-olds, and includes a preschool run by

teaching staff for the four-year-olds. Although there were some delays in the construction of the early learning centre, the Katherine Group School's principal, Stuart Dwyer, says the school is very happy with the quality of the construction and believe they have received good value for money.

The principal at Urapunga School, who is also Stuart Dwyer, the group school principal, is pleased with the large library classroom which has been completed at Urapunga School, equipped with an electronic whiteboard, compactus, data points for multiple computers, and water bubblers outside. The infrastructure which has been built and is being built has been warmly welcomed and greatly appreciated by these schools and the children and families in these communities. It does not mean the challenges no longer exist. It means the Northern Territory Labor government, with the federal Labor government, recognises and respects that Australians in these regions deserve good schools, good infrastructure, and teachers who want to be there.

At the Ngukurr Community Education Centre, a contract has been awarded for construction of two classrooms, with a library and sick bay attached. The principal, Ric Eade, says facilities are sorely needed at Ngukurr and there have been some delays with the construction. I also know there is very real concern in Ngukurr that Tony Abbott and the Liberals may scrap the Building the Education Revolution if elected. This is a real concern for those schools yet to have construction completed under the BER initiative. This is the risk. Tony Abbott and the Liberals, and the CLP, oppose the Building the Education Revolution funding and the policy is at risk as part of Tony Abbott's slash-and-burn approach to initiatives of the federal Labor government. The Liberals and the CLP have shown they do not recognise that in order to improve education outcomes, we need to deliver facilities and infrastructure for our students and teachers across the Territory.

The member for Sanderson referred to Numbulwar. I will inform the member for Sanderson about Numbulwar. Construction of a multipurpose pavilion is now complete at the Numbulwar Community Education Centre. This is in addition to the Territory-funded library and the literacy centre, which are connected with a covered walkway. When I was at Numbulwar, all I heard from the people of Numbulwar was how incredibly pleased they are to have these facilities. The language centre was warmly welcomed by the women of the community, who are studying and teaching the language of Numbulwar to the children and to the Balanda who want to learn the language.

Numbulwar's Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service equipment will be relocated in that building, a fantastic asset for recording language and culture. In that new facility, funded by the BER initiative, is the service for the broadcasting facility. It is an opportunity for Yilila Band, the local band of the region, to record their songs. They are a well-known band across the Territory, Australia and even overseas, where they have toured with their dancers. This all stems from their music, songs and culture being alive and well and strongly encouraged in the educational process of the people of Numbulwar; hence the need to have a facility like the Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Service housed in the new buildings funded by the Building the Education Revolution initiative. How can that be so wrong? How can the CLP oppose such a good initiative and good investment for the people of Numbulwar? Numbulwar school principal, Brian Sheehan, says the school is looking forward to the official opening of these facilities some time in September.

The Milyakburra School was repainted last year, which was made possible by the BER funding as part of the National School Pride program. Funding has also been approved for a covered outdoor learning area/basketball court, though there is concern among the people of Milyakburra that they could miss out on this outdoor learning area if Tony Abbott and the Liberals are elected on Saturday.

At Angurugu Community Education Centre, construction has begun on the multipurpose pavilion, which will, like Gapuwiyak, have two classrooms attached to it. Work is also under way on upgrading the Angurugu school's kitchen, bringing it to commercial trade standards for the nutrition program. When complete, this kitchen will double as a home economics classroom. How good is that for the children of Angurugu? Yes, it is one of the places where we have an incredible challenge in getting the Angurugu kids to school; however, we have a tremendous amount of input from families, the school principal and the Anindilyakwa Land Council, who want to ensure these children go to school, use these facilities, and grow up to be the people who can work in the community or anywhere else they wish to work.

Umbakumba School has been repainted and construction of a new classroom is complete. Eight new teacher houses, under separate Territory and federal Labor government funding, are under way in addition to the BER. How good for the people of Umbakumba, who wanted the infrastructure for their children and teachers, to know they have been heard?

Construction of a new library has begun at Alyangula Area School. I am extremely pleased to inform this House of these exciting and overdue

developments in my electorate of Arnhem. In Arnhem, and across the Northern Territory, our government is working with federal Labor to improve education for our students by delivering quality infrastructure and facilities as part of the Building the Education Revolution policy. We have developed a very strong working partnership with our ministerial colleagues in Canberra and we have a plan for the future to deliver vital facilities and infrastructure for our students and teachers.

Of course, we have the challenge of attendance and we will continue to do everything we can to ensure every child in the Northern Territory receives the education they are entitled to receive.

Madam Speaker, this is a plan which has and will continue to help stimulate economies in local communities. Are Territorians willing to put this vital Building the Education Revolution investment in our Territory schools at risk under a Tony Abbott government? Working together with a re-elected Gillard Labor government, we will be able to continue to work towards meeting our shared objective of providing young Territorians with opportunities to expand their horizons, dream their dreams, follow their dreams, and fully participate in a rapidly changing world.

**Mr HAMPTON (Central Australia):** Madam Speaker, I support the statement on the Building the Education Revolution program and the benefits it is bringing to the Northern Territory.

As Minister for Central Australia, and a member for a large bush electorate, I see the tangible results of the BER investments whenever I am out and about in Alice Springs or in the remote communities in my electorate. The benefits to local businesses are apparent as are the positives in education outcomes. School communities, parents, teachers and students are enthusiastic about the significant new facilities built, under way or planned for their schools. They are providing not only extra educational resources; they are, in many instances, significant community assets. New halls are not only being used for school functions such as assemblies and socials, they are also important community spaces for sporting and community groups to conduct their activities.

In remote communities these facilities become a hub, providing a space for concerts, community barbecues and meetings, and sometimes after-hours sport and recreation activities. Communities have a great deal of pride in their new school facilities. For instance, in my electorate of Stuart, the largest electorate in the Northern Territory assembly, the school at Lajamanu has utilised \$2m from the BER Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program to fund a

multipurpose hall. I was there only yesterday, as well as a couple of weeks ago, and it is a boost not only to the school but to the community as well.

The Lajamanu Community Education Centre has also seen BER benefits with \$125 000 for an early childhood safe area. Both the hall and the early childhood safe area are great assets to the community, particularly with a high population of young people at Lajamanu.

The Kalkaringi Community Education Centre has a new roof over the basketball court thanks to \$125 000 from the National School Pride program of the BER and around \$2m has been spent on a new classroom block and resource centre also thanks to the BER. It was great to be there with the Chief Minister last month, talking about *A Working Future* and *Territory 2030*, and visiting those new facilities with the principal at Kalkaringi.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting Yirara College in Alice Springs with Julia Gillard who was then the federal Education minister. Yirara is receiving more than \$2m in funding for a sportsground upgrade which includes a paved area for skateboarding, new drainage around the swimming pool area, and renovation of the school's campground facilities for such events as the Bush Schools Sports. Work is also under way on an upgrade to the school's administration facilities, and an upgrade to the library is expected to start in coming months. It was wonderful to see the students enjoying their sports day when we visited, and to see the support from the school for the work being undertaken to improve facilities. The Clontarf Football Academy at Yirara College has also been able to move into new facilities and make space for more classrooms and teaching areas.

Improving school facilities will help improve education outcomes for Territory students. The Ntaria School at Hermannsburg in Central Australia has done some fantastic things to lift school attendance and outcomes, particularly the audio upgrades to some of their classrooms. It was great to be at Hermannsburg recently to see the ever-growing facilities at the school, particularly the early learning childcare facility. On the horizon is a trade training centre which would be a fantastic asset to the community of Hermannsburg, and to the future of building new homes there.

The improvements and enhancements will make schools a better place for students and teachers, providing a better learning environment. Some of the BER funding is being spent on projects which beautify the schools, making them a more pleasant place for students, teachers and parents.

At Docker River School, more shaded areas, new carpet and improved signage will help make the school more appealing, while at Harts Range, an outdoor learning area will add an extra dimension to the facilities. At another school of Nyirripi in my electorate, a new shaded play area and equipment will give students another space for outdoor activity, while at Imanpa School they have decided to install a water tank. Laramba School is another community installing an outdoor learning area, and at Mutitjulu a shade area will provide an all-weather, outdoor assembly area, and teaching and learning area.

I am sure the member for Greatorex will be pleased to know that Ross Park Primary School in Alice Springs is using the BER National School Pride funding to refurbish student indoor and outdoor areas, and Sadadeen Primary School, a school I am very familiar with, is using the money to enhance school facilities. It was great to be at Braitling Primary School some time ago with the Chief Minister to launch the Constable Care program. The member for Braitling was there, and the launch was held in their new hall and multipurpose building. It was fantastic to see it being used. More than \$2m is being spent at each school, including Gillen and Bradshaw, and I am looking forward to the opening of a new facility at Gillen Primary School in the electorate of Araluen next month. I have been invited there by the principal, Mr David Glyde. The school is having a double celebration, its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday and the opening of the new multipurpose hall. It will be a fantastic day.

At Larapinta Primary School a new classroom block is being built with their \$2m, and at OLSH in Alice Springs a magnificent new school hall is almost complete at the Sadadeen campus. I drive past it nearly every day. Their new hall, worth around \$3m, is funded through BER.

In the electorate of Greatorex, the library has been refurbished and a new \$1.9m language centre is nearing completion at the Centralian Middle School at Gillen. At the Alice Springs School of the Air in the Braitling electorate, teaching areas and the staffroom have been upgraded and the library will be extended. These upgrades were badly needed and will be well received by staff.

Our special schools are also benefiting from the education funding with \$30m being spent to improve these schools across the Territory: Acacia Hill School, another one I am very familiar with in Alice Springs, just around the corner from where I live, will receive a total of around \$5.6m to construct new classrooms, refurbish and extend existing buildings, install a hydro pool and replace outdated demountables. I know from visiting Acacia Hill how desperately these new facilities

are needed, and how they have been enthusiastically welcomed by the school community.

I have already touched on a few projects; however, there are so many more which will make a real difference, particularly to our bush schools. Under the Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century component of the BER, Ampilatwatja School, which used to be in my electorate of Stuart, will have a new resource centre; Alcoota School has upgraded their resource centre; Areyonga has a new covered outdoor learning area, as does Bonya, Finke, Harts Bluff and Titjikala.

In my electorate of Stuart, Amanbidji School has a new playground facility, and Manyallaluk is investing in an outdoor learning project area. A multipurpose hall will be built at Ti Tree School, which will not only be of enormous benefit to the school but will also provide a very useful facility to the whole Ti Tree community. Wugularr School will have an innovative grey water system installed and a new sports storage shed, while at Willowra School a new ablution facility is being built.

Many schools are seeing the value in building or upgrading resource centres. As I said, schools like Amanbidji, Barunga, Bulla Camp, Kalkaringi, Manyallaluk, Yuelamu, Pigeon Hole, Pine Creek, Timber Creek, and Yarralin, all in my electorate, are beginning to see the value of this important infrastructure. The list of schools goes on. These projects not only represent improvements to the schools but also to jobs and economic drivers for the regions.

It is something this government is proud to support, together with our Commonwealth colleagues. I am proud this government has supported the BER. During my travels around the Territory, I see firsthand the benefits of this type of investment. It is so important to continue to grow the infrastructure in our schools, along with some very important education programs. The BER has supported many local building and construction firms in Central Australia, which I know are very happy with the increased work opportunities.

The BER programs represent an enormous investment in our schools, an investment that builds on the considerable funding this government has dedicated to improving our school facilities. I look forward to the rest of the year, going to some of these schools and opening some of the fantastic facilities. Next month, Gillen is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and will be opening their new school and I look forward to attending that celebration.

Madam Speaker, these things can only happen when you work in partnership with a government in Canberra which understands the

needs of schools in the Northern Territory and in remote Northern Territory. Post-21 August, when I hope there is a Gillard government returned, we can continue with this investment and continue to support bush schools.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of the statement on this important subject, delivered by the Minister for Education and Training in this House last week.

The minister stated education was neglected for decades under the CLP, especially infrastructure. Knowing the reaction we had from members opposite during last week's debate around the ministerial statement on infrastructure - and they are in a world of hurt on the other side, when they cried out they needed some credit for their 26 long years in government - I am willing to concede a couple of things.

When I came to the Territory in 1987 as a graduate teacher, I taught at the new Palmerston High School, a brand new campus. When I transferred to Katherine High School, we were fortunate to move to the new high school campus in the newly created subdivision of Katherine East, which had been established to accommodate families from RAAF Base Tindal in 1989. A little way down the road in Katherine East was the new Katherine East Primary School and a childcare centre. Well done, CLP. You did build new schools, as governments need to, and must do, when communities like Palmerston and Katherine grow. It is no different to the Labor government responding to growth and building new schools in places like Rosebery and planning for the education needs of the new city of Weddell. However, what you did neglect for decades was education, especially education infrastructure in the bush.

Apart from the Building the Education Revolution initiated by the federal government last year, in the Territory we witnessed something of an education revolution when the Labor government came into power in 2001. This government has a vision and a commitment to Territorians which stretches much broader than the length of the Stuart Highway and reaches well out bush. Under Labor, this government has built new schools in the bush including secondary education facilities; something which was never high on the agenda of the CLP, as evidenced by the fact that during their 26 years not one Indigenous student from a remote area ever graduated with Year 12.

This government, with the support of the federal government, has also addressed teacher housing in remote areas. Where we have schools, obviously we need to have housing to

accommodate teachers. \$18m is now delivering much-needed accommodation across nine remote communities including, in my electorate, six duplexes at Galiwinku for Shepherdson College, and six duplexes at Yirrkala for Yirrkala Community Education Centre. The CLP provided the initial education infrastructure for communities in the bush, but it was a case of set and forget, followed by decades of neglect of repairs, maintenance and upgrades.

Homeland learning centres have probably fared the worst with CLP neglect, but under this government, we are committed to funding for upgrading and building schools in remote homelands, and we are doing it. I could give you a few examples, but the best example is the \$3m which has been invested at Yilpara. Yilpara is home to around 150 people and the largest of the Laynhapuy homelands. The Baniyala Garrangali School now has small school status as opposed to Homeland learning centre status, which means teachers are permanently based there. Two teacher houses were built more than a year ago, and the existing school infrastructure, which included two classrooms, was inadequate for the growing community so a new school building was built. It houses the secondary program and encompasses a double classroom and an area separated by concertina doors so it can be opened up to create a larger space for meetings and assemblies. A music room, office space, breezeway and verandahs are very welcome additions, and an ablutions block completes the necessary infrastructure for a school which has small school status.

During a visit to Yilpara last September when the new school building was under construction, I was pleased to see members of the community engaged in employment on the site. The employment aspect was a big part of the driver for the economic stimulus package and the BER program. Let us not forget that keeping people in jobs, keeping Territorians in jobs and keeping Territory-owned companies afloat, is what helped Australia stave off a recession. The BER program, which was not supported by the Coalition or members opposite, has been a singular success in the Territory in providing employment, and in providing funds to refurbish schools and build new school infrastructure for the benefit of teachers, students and communities across the Territory, regardless of where they live. The benefits have definitely been delivered in my electorate.

On Saturday, 7 August, I attended the official opening of Nhulunbuy Christian School's new library complex, a school just 10 years old and offering Transition through to Year 9 to a student population of around 175. It was a great honour to be invited to participate in the opening with my

federal colleague, the member for Lingiari, and to cut the ribbon with School Captains, Ashley Baker and Jack Tracy. The magnificent \$1.7m building, funded through the Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century part of the BER, encompasses not just a sprawling library area downstairs with administrative and office space, a separate breakout room and a computer lab, but upstairs other rooms including a meeting room and another IT area.

At the opening, both the school principal and school council chair spoke of what a welcome gift this new building is to their school community and how, from beginning to end, the process was smooth and without fault, and they were amazed at how quickly it was delivered. Everyone at Nhulunbuy Christian School welcomed the news when they heard funding had been made available to build a library, but they did not envisage the library would be the size and scale that it is.

The member for Lingiari, when addressing those gathered at the opening, spoke about the schools he had gone to as a child, and later in life as a school teacher, highlighting what dynamic places modern schools are, which is so clearly evidenced by this magnificent piece of architecture.

Madam Speaker, this is a photograph of the huge library complex. I seek leave to table that document.

Leave granted.

**Ms WALKER:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As an ex-teacher, I too concur with the sentiments of the federal member, and as a parent of school-aged children, my husband and I welcome the upgrades which have been delivered at our children's schools, Nhulunbuy High School and Nhulunbuy Primary School.

Nhulunbuy Primary School is one of the older primary schools in the Northern Territory, having been built around 1970, and completed and opened in 1972. It served for many years as an area school, taking students from preschool to Year 10, until a separate high school campus was eventually constructed, by the CLP. The original primary school was built by Nabalco as part of the establishment of the township of Nhulunbuy all those years ago.

Nhulunbuy Primary School's current enrolment figure is in the vicinity of 500, plus some 90 preschoolers who are located on a separate campus, making it one of the biggest primary schools in the Northern Territory. Given the age of the school, nearly 40 years, and the size of the school, Nhulunbuy Primary School has welcomed

the federal government's stimulus package. Under the National School Pride program they were eligible for the maximum funding of \$200 000 which has seen the refurbishment of a number of classrooms in the 2009 mid-year break.

Principal, Cindy McGarry, told me students were arriving for the first day of school at the start of Term 3 as the tradesmen were walking out the front gate, which highlights the challenges schools constantly face in trying to conduct repairs, maintenance and construction with minimum disruption to school programs and student learning.

The refurbishment of the classrooms included the installation of new cupboards and shelving, new carpets and a coat of paint. In addition, long overdue electrical works were carried out to install additional power points. With the advent of, and reliance upon, electrical items such as computers, power points were at risk of being overloaded with additional power boards and the constant presence of extension cords presented a safety hazard. The last part of the \$200 000 saw the remainder of the school, including the library, recarpeted and, to avoid disruption to classes, that work was completed at the end of last year during the six-week school holiday break.

Nhulunbuy Primary School also qualified for \$3m under the federal government's Primary Schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which will see the school's covered multipurpose area upgraded to an enclosed hall. I have seen the plans for the primary school's upgrade which are very similar to the upgrade for Millner Primary School. The floor will be resurfaced, the adjoining stage area refurbished, louvered panels will be installed to provide weather protection, and massive ceiling fans will be installed to keep the area as cool as possible, whether there are PE classes in there or school assemblies.

Initial scoping of the planned works had indicated that the refurbishment of the multipurpose hall area could be completed for less than the allocated \$3m and the school is hoping to use leftover funds for the refurbishment of the school's entrance in the belief that first impressions are very important. It is also hoped that funding will cover the cost of the refurbishment and facelift of the staffroom area in the belief school staff also deserve to be in an area which is comfortable and modern.

The school's community is extremely excited at the prospect of this work. However, works have yet to go to tender and, should Tony Abbott become our Prime Minister following this weekend's election, it is likely this work will be axed. The Coalition at federal and Territory level has never supported the economic stimulus

package; they have never supported the BER; they do not see the value in it and, if elected, will deny one of the biggest and possibly oldest schools in the Territory, its students, teachers and families, a new hall.

Nhulunbuy High School, a place which has been a big part of my life as it was where I moved to many years ago to take up a teaching role, is very important to me. My husband continues to teach there and I also have a son there. Nhulunbuy High School has around 295 students enrolled in Years 7 through 12 and Jill Millar is the principal. It has received its slice of the stimulus package, \$131 000, which has seen two outdoor projects completed. One of those is a double cricket net for the benefit of students and the second is two handball courts, both of which will have shade structures to keep users safe in our tropical climate. This accommodates a growing need for outdoor play areas, especially given the increase in student numbers following the middle school implementation which saw Year 7 students arrive on the campus in 2008.

The high school's business manager, the very competent Lorraine Loftus, has overseen this project and said it is part of the way the school does business that the contract was awarded locally. As such, Peter McCue from KP Carpentry (NT) Pty Ltd was successful in bidding for the work.

Of schools in my electorate outside of the township of Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala Community Education Centre has a current enrolment in excess of 200 students from Yirrkala and Gunyangara, and staff and community are working very hard to see attendance levels increased at that school. It is a vibrant school community under the stewardship of new principal, Geoff Perry, who arrived just after Easter this year. There also exists a very strong relationship with the Yambirra School Council which is chaired by Mrs Marpalawuy Marika. The council oversees both the community education centre and Yirrkala Homeland School.

Yirrkala CEC has been a hive of building activity. New classrooms, which were not part of the stimulus package, have been built. This \$1.8m project was only recently completed and the keys handed over to the school. Apart from the school and students benefiting enormously from new classrooms I would like to highlight the successful contractor was Delta Reef Pty Ltd, a company well known in my region. The company is owned and operated by Michael Martin, who is a fluent speaker of Yolngu Matha and trains and employs Indigenous people to work with him.

Under the stimulus package's National School Pride program, Yirrkala CEC also benefited from a

\$125 000 upgrade to the covered outdoor area, which is a popular area for sporting activities as well as school assemblies. Further upgrades to Yirrkala CEC from the National School Pride program will see the construction of a new preschool at a cost of \$2m. With the elevation of the importance of early childhood in schools following the review in the Department of Education and Training, and the subsequent adoption of the recommendations and the DET strategy for 2009 to 2012, this is a critical part of the school's program for the little ones. It is an important part of closing the gap and, on top of this, there are further funds allocated for new classrooms.

Yirrkala Homeland School oversees the delivery of education to students living in traditional homeland communities, and does this through what are known as homeland learning centres. These centres see visiting teachers fly to homeland communities and work with Yolngu teachers and Indigenous education workers based in the community to deliver teaching programs. These visiting teachers stay overnight in anything from a swag to a VOQ (visiting officer's quarters), where those communities are fortunate enough to have them. This government has always actively supported education for students in remote and very remote locations and recognises the challenges this presents in remote service delivery.

Today, the member for Macdonnell asked a question of the minister during Question Time about what funds had gone to homeland learning centres. In my electorate, \$2m has been delivered to Yirrkala Homeland School, and the school has identified this funding will be split four ways given their campus is spread across the Lanhupuy homelands, and will see four new classrooms built at Gan Gan, Garthalala, Waruwu and Dhalinbuy. Lanhupuy, the homeland resource agency which supports around 1000 residents on its homelands, is also contributing to this project to enhance these buildings so they can serve as training facilities for the benefit of the broader community, which will be an excellent use of these facilities.

Shepherdson College at Galiwinku on Elcho Island is one of a handful of schools to receive a science laboratory with a program through to Year 12. It is a great asset to that school, as will be the multipurpose hall which is currently under construction and will double as a cyclone shelter which is much needed in this island community. For their Primary School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the school chose to refurbish its manual arts area, which is great news for school and students.

All these contributions under the federal government's Building the Education Revolution

have been warmly welcomed by the schools and communities and are, where those works have been completed, the source of much pride. We need to remember if the Coalition, including the CLP, had their way our schools and kids would never have received these projects. Territorians would have lost out on jobs, and the very real threat is those projects which have not yet started may well be axed, including \$3m worth of works planned for Nhulunbuy Primary School.

Madam Speaker, this Henderson Labor government is singularly focused on, and committed to, delivering the very best facilities and the very best education we possibly can to all students and children across the Northern Territory irrespective of where they live. I thank the minister for bringing this statement before the House and commend it to the House.

**Dr BURNS (Education and Training):**

Madam Speaker, I thank all members who have contributed to this very important debate. A thread has been characterised in the debate by the enthusiasm of members on this side - an enthusiasm I believe is genuinely reflective of the enthusiasm in the electorates across the Territory for this wonderful project. The exception on the other side was the member for Brennan, who acknowledged the importance of these projects and the positive nature of them. He did have some reservations, but the member for Brennan probably reflected what he is finding with these projects at his local school community level.

The Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blain, talked about slogans, referring to what he believes is sloganeering around the BER and the stimulus package - the proposition put forward by the federal government that the stimulus package was necessary to avert the roll-on effects of a global financial crisis within Australia, and a recession and its effect on business but, mostly and importantly, on jobs within Australia. It is very interesting that, in the last day or so, a group of about 50 eminent economists have supported the thesis or proposition put forward by the federal government that this spending was necessary to avert and ameliorate the effects of the global financial crisis on the Australian economy.

The member for Blain rings hollow when he talks about sloganeering because the BER project has involved sloganeering on the part of the CLP locally, and the opposition Coalition parties nationally, particularly within the Northern Territory. I see the ads for the candidate for Solomon, Natasha Griggs, taken straight out of the national catalogue of Coalition ads, talking about the school hall waste. Not one member opposite has been able to characterise or illustrate one single example of waste in a school hall. They have not named one example. This is

empty sloganeering on the part of members opposite. The member for Blain talked about hollow men and slogans. Well, they are quite hollow because, if they were actually listening to their electorates, they would know the positive nature of the BER.

The member for Blain talked about how he wants educational outcomes measured in better results and value for money versus education, and how it is not enough to just spend money, you need educational outcomes. I agree with the member for Blain on that point. However, this is a government which has a strategy. It has a framework, a policy, and funding for supporting education and better educational outcomes for our kids in the Northern Territory. The member for Blain can try to move sideways and say: 'Well, where are your educational outcomes?' Of course, we all want that, but it is a cop out for him to do it.

To try to assert the projects in his electorate are not going to flow on to education outcomes: \$2.5m for a library in Gray Primary; assembly hall upgrade including general learning areas and associated covered walkways, \$1.45m; \$1m at the Moulden Park Primary School for a library extension; and \$2m at Woodroffe Primary for classroom blocks. There are refurbishments and hall extensions in his electorate. Not once has he talked about an assembly area in his electorate or any other infrastructure he says was not value for money or may not contribute to better educational outcomes for kids in his electorate. What a cop out!

As I said around the time of estimates, they all come out and say, 'Oh, this BER is evil, it is very bad, it is terrible', except when it is in their own electorates. I wonder how the member for Port Darwin felt when he saw the article in *The Australian* which seemed to indicate that the member for Braitling was critical of the works at Larrakeyah Primary School.

The member for Braitling says at no time did he say he was critical, or intimate he was critical, of the works at Larrakeyah Primary School. At no time did he compare them to a McDonald's restaurant, and say McDonald's was better value for money. We have all been in this game long enough, we know how articles get in the paper, we know how it works - his name was there front and centre and, as far as I am concerned, the suggestion was the works at Larrakeyah Primary School were not value for money, that there was better value at a McDonald's. The article failed to mention the new classrooms, all the works that I am sure the member for Port Darwin is very familiar with, and the pride the school council at Larrakeyah Primary School has in those works.

I challenged the member for Braitling to speak on this issue. He has been conspicuous by his absence. I know he has had much on his plate in the last week, and there was a little incident here last week, and there has been a bit going on this week too, but I thought it would have been important for him to talk about BER projects in his own electorate at least, and also rebut the challenge I gave to him last week about the article which appeared in *The Australian*.

The member for Blain, or it might have been the member for Goyder, talked about the library at Taminmin, etcetera. My understanding is that the school prioritised what they wanted, and the library was not part of that. That was the decision made, as I understand it, and I have been advised by the school council and the principal. This government is investing heavily in infrastructure in our schools, and I believe there will be more opportunities for Taminmin and their library in the future, particularly if Julia Gillard is elected on Saturday and keeps investing in infrastructure for our schools.

The member for Brennan said he believed there is much political spin around the BER, but the bottom line is, and I have noted here, that he likes it, or that his school community likes it. At least the member for Brennan has been quite direct about things.

There was a theme with members on this side. They talked about what was happening in their electorates and the way in which their school communities had participated in and welcomed the BER projects within their schools, which is very positive.

The members for Barkly and Nhulunbuy have both been teachers and they talked about their long background in the Territory as teachers. A number of members on this side acknowledged there might have been some infrastructure investments by the CLP, but one glaring omission over many years was the lack of one secondary student graduating in the bush. Those of us who have been around long enough know that was a driving passion for Syd Stirling, the former member for Nhulunbuy. He made it an aim of his to support secondary education in the bush and I commend him for that.

He alluded to some remarks made by the member for Goyder about Mr Wagner who is taking up a position within the department. I will leave that to the *Parliamentary Record*. The member for Goyder needs to think about what she says about public servants and prospective public servants.

The member for Barkly talked about all the classrooms, the covered outdoor learning areas,

the increased amenities in schools in his electorate and, most importantly, about the jobs, infrastructure and regional training these projects have brought about in the bush - not only these projects, but other spending by this Northern Territory government. I thank the member for Barkly for his contribution.

What a sad offering from the member for Sanderson. Never in this place have I heard a bigger grumbler than the member for Sanderson. I am glad he is on your side of the House because all he does is moan about everything. He even tried to moan about the member for Arnhem's electorate. He is like a lightning rod of negativity. You could write a science fiction book about: it is like all the negative forces in the universe are channelled to him. He is almost like a medium for negative forces in the universe. I urge the member for Sanderson to change his cosmology; to get some joy in his soul; to whistle - not whistle in the Chamber, but metaphorically, whistle. Let the joy of life and the joy of being a member in this place come through, because there is joy in being a member in this place.

I know the opposition has a job to do, but as local members we can all help our school communities and the people we represent. In many ways, I try to work with members opposite, particularly on housing issues. I have been trying to be helpful to a number of members on the opposite side because, in many ways, we are united about wanting a better life for people and, if I can help people, I will.

The member for Sanderson talked about missed opportunities. Missed opportunities! Obviously he has not availed himself of what is happening in the electorate of Sanderson under the BER. Wagaman Primary, \$2m for the library, and he talked about lack of outcomes. I have been on that school council; I go to that school council's meetings. I was not there this week, but I get there as often as I can and usually the member for Sanderson is there. I do not get the same message when I go to the Wagaman Primary School council meeting, and I am not trying to politicise it. What I hear is genuine interest and enjoyment in participating in the design, construction and fruition of this project, but it does not seem to get there with the member for Sanderson.

He is so negative. I give a word of warning to the member for Sanderson: he enjoyed an extremely big swing in the election in 2008 and he holds that seat by a margin of about 6.4%. I would not get too complacent with the swing you received, member for Sanderson, because you hold it by 6.4%, but I reckon it is much less than that. Given the circumstances which accompanied the last election in Sanderson, I

believe you are sitting on much less than 6.4%. I believe you are sitting on a knife edge, not a big swing.

I think the Labor Party will find a really good candidate for Sanderson and the current member for Sanderson might be in a great deal of trouble. I live in the section of Wagaman which has become part of the electorate of Sanderson and what I hear from people - everyone knows I am a doorknocker - they see me and say: 'We never see this other bloke, and when we go to his electorate office we are not made to feel welcome'.

So, member for Sanderson, do not sit back with a big grin on your face because of the big swing you got in 2008. You have to be working very hard, particularly with your negative attitude. People want their local member to listen, be attentive, advocate for them, but they also want some positiveness. They do not want a great, big endless hole down to hell and depression. They want someone who is solid and has the right attitude.

You talked about infrastructure spending and repairs and maintenance spending. Obviously, you did not read the budget papers for 2010-11. I have them here. In Budget 2009-10, repairs and maintenance spending was \$27.3m. In 2010-11, it increased to \$32.3m. Those increases have been consistent through this. Maybe he was not listening during the budget session when I spoke of a record infrastructure spend on education in the Northern Territory. From memory, it was somewhere around \$213m. This is a government which is investing heavily in infrastructure in our schools, aside from the BER.

He may also recall, if he wants to get over the grin about his swing in 2008, we were elected and we have a policy of better schools for our students and teachers. We promised a \$246m investment, and at least 74 primary schools and large group schools will receive a \$300 000 upgrade over the next four years. That is a very important commitment over and above the ordinary repairs and maintenance budget.

I read here there was a \$1m upgrade for Sanderson Middle School. The member for Sanderson talked about a toilet block. Maybe I misunderstood what he said; however, I thought he was saying it was part of the BER program. If he cares to read what the BER program is about for the Sanderson Middle School, it is about a COLA - a covered outdoor learning area - not a toilet block. I will inquire about the issues the member for Sanderson has raised regarding the toilet block and the school's wishes in that regard. The bottom line for the member for Sanderson is, get out of this negativity.

By contrast, it was a joy to hear from the members for Arnhem, Barkly, and Nhulunbuy; particularly the member for Arnhem, in response to the negativity put forward by the member for Sanderson about Numbulwar School. She outlined what she hears when she goes to Numbulwar School is all positive: how people in her electorate are really enthusiastic about the BER projects, and projects are not only contributing to better education outcomes but better community outcomes in music, providing a language platform where non-Indigenous people can learn about language and culture. What a wonderful thing. I commend the member for Arnhem.

The member for Sanderson seems to have forgotten the BER has delivered \$205m worth of infrastructure for Northern Territory government school communities and \$65m for non-government schools. I am hearing positive things from the non-government sector about what they are receiving. There might have been problems with the BER nationally in other jurisdictions; however, I do not believe we have encountered those problems. The member for Sanderson is a magnet for problems. He is a magnet for negativity; however, what I am hearing is positive. With such a large number of projects there will be things which may need to be revised. Everyone understands that, but the member for Sanderson does himself a disservice by being negative. His margin is not as fat as he believes it is - 6.4% - and I believe it is much slimmer than that. He needs to be very, very careful in the next couple of years ...

**Mr McCARTHY:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move that the minister be given an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

**Dr BURNS:** Madam Speaker, I will start wrapping up now. I have already detailed what the Leader of the Opposition said in his response to this statement on BER. Blow me down! The day after he delivered this about hollow men and sloganeering and 'you might be spending the dollars but where are the education outcomes', he asked me a series of questions in Question Time. One of them was about the timing of the projects: 'Are they not over time now?' I came back before the end of Question Time and said because of the special circumstances of the Territory in a number of areas extensions had been given in a number of categories of projects. He also talked about monetary blowouts in projects.

He has to come away with egg on his face because, in each one of those schools - some of them in his electorate - the school has said, 'We want this', the works have been scoped, and they

have been costed at significantly less than what was allocated under the BER. The schools were then told: 'You can put more things in your scope. What else do you want?'. The schools came forward with more. The member for Blain seems highly critical of schools for spending what they have been allocated on essential infrastructure for schools and our kids.

As I said in Question Time, is he going to go to schools in his electorate and other electorates and say: 'Oh, you should not have spent what you were allocated. You should have only spent the amount for the work you first asked for? School councils would laugh him out of their meetings. He would be lucky just to be laughed out of the meetings because I know school councils. They would think to themselves, as they did in Millner where they have a wonderful project around solar power as an educational tool: 'Well, what else can we get which further supports our project?' All schools have done that.

He mentioned Kalkaringi as a school which had gone over budget. As I explained on the day, the school had the works scoped. They were told they could have further works done. They had further works done. They were still \$500 000 under what they had been allocated, and the school principal insisted around \$200 000 or \$250 000 of that \$500 000 be allocated to the special school in Katherine. That was a wonderful gesture, and I am sure the special school parents, teachers and community are grateful.

However, the member for Blain - and I think I used the words 'mean' and 'shrivelled' in his outlook - along with Tony Abbott, would not want that to happen. He reckons that is no good; that is waste. I do not think it is waste; it is investment. The BER has been a wonderful investment in the Northern Territory by the federal Labor government. That is why I hope this Saturday Julia Gillard and the Labor government is returned. I hope Damian Hale is returned in this electorate. I hope Territorians living in Solomon will see through the shenanigans which have gone on here today. I know Territorians are better than that. We will see this Saturday whether the tactics which have been employed by the member for Blain and his cronies work. It will be a sad day if they do.

I will finish on a positive note, and say I do commend the BER; it has been a wonderful thing for the Northern Territory. It improved our school infrastructure. It has built on the ongoing investments we have made, as a government, and our commitment to have better education results for our kids across the Territory.

Madam Speaker, I commend the statement to the House.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Mr VATSKALIS (Health):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

I had the privilege of presenting the Northern Territory 2010 Paramedic of the Year Awards at Parliament House on Monday, 9 August. The Paramedic Awards were established by the Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise as a way of acknowledging the work done by St John Ambulance paramedics. The awards are now in their 11<sup>th</sup> year.

It is a wonderful opportunity to publicly recognise paramedics who perform their role in often difficult and extreme circumstances. This yearly award provides a forum where there is an acknowledgement of the occasions they face and the individuals demonstrating the highest standard of professionalism and compassion.

The 2010 recipient was Samantha King. Samantha's move to the Northern Territory began as part of an eight-year career with the Defence Force. Like so many others who have come to the NT for a short time, she chose to remain here and sought employment in a variety of other areas, including Assistant Promotions Manager at Palmerston Sports Club.

In 2007, she decided to pursue another career and commenced a St John Ambulance Paramedic Traineeship. Samantha was awarded her Diploma of Paramedical Science in 2010, together with the achievement of Student of the Year. I applaud Samantha for her commitment and dedication, and wish her all the best with her future career as a paramedic.

On a sad note, on 19 June, a plane crash in the remote West African nation of The Democratic Republic of Congo claimed 11 lives, including the entire Board of Directors of Sundance Resources, one of whom was recently appointed Non-Executive Director, Mr John Jones. John had many past and present Northern Territory connections, and his 30-plus-years-contribution to the mining industry deserves recognition.

John was born and educated in Melbourne, and after qualifying as a civil engineer, moved to the Northern Territory in the late 1970s to work for BHP on Groote Eylandt. In 1979, the then Henry and Walker Pty Ltd employed him as Project Manager of their civil works contract at the new Ranger Uranium Mine site at Jabiru. After the company became publicly listed in 1981, John worked on major projects on the Great Northern Highway, and at the Argyle Diamond Mine in northern Western Australia, before returning to

Darwin and being promoted as the company's General Manager, leading the civil contractors push into mining via projects at Goodall, the Tanami and Mount Bonnie.

During this time, John's three children were born in Darwin, and their education commenced at the then newly-established parent-run Montessori School at Ludmilla, now the Essington School Darwin, of which John was a great supporter.

In 1989, John moved his family to Perth, where the renamed Henry Walker Eltin further expanded their mining division with successful major contracts, such as BHP's Yandicugina.

At the time of his death, as well as his Sundance Resources Directorship, John was working with Leighton Contractors Pty Ltd as the Chairman of their New Future Alliance, Northern Territory strategic Indigenous housing program, and held the position of General Manager Indigenous Strategy and Business for Leighton overall. He was an advisor to HWE Mining, an Inaugural Director of the WA Miners' Promise Trust, a Director of Ngarda Civil and Mining, and sat on the Perth Brightwater redevelopment fundraising committee.

His support of AFL saw him mentor the Kimberley Colts Football Carnival via the Indigenous Kimberley Spirit team and Perth's Claremont Football Club in Perth. He was recognised after his death by his hero, Kevin Sheedy, former coach of John's much-loved Essendon team, in the form of a personal letter which was read at his funeral.

John continued his direct association with the Northern Territory, returning when possible to visit his many friends and enjoy his passion for fishing. He is a huge loss to the mining industry and will be greatly missed by all his friends and work colleagues, both past and present, who remember him for his intellect, his ability as a communicator with people of all ages and levels, and his work with Indigenous youth.

John is survived by his wife Ann, children William, Emma and Courtney, parents Jean and Curley, and sister Pam.

I turn to my own electorate. Pedestrians and cyclists will be happy to know there is a fantastic new addition to the Casuarina Coastal Reserve, which will be very popular with locals and visitors. The elevated boardwalk between Rocklands Drive and Casuarina Coastal Reserve has just received a \$150 000 upgrade, which was completed by local company, Kyoto Contracting. The new boardwalk is 100 m long and 2 m wide, and links Rocklands Drive to the beach.

The boardwalk replaces the old deck boardwalk and is expected to have a much longer life, with fewer requirements for ongoing maintenance, as it has been made from Replas, which is 100% recycled material and consists mainly of recycled printer cartridges.

The Casuarina Coastal Reserve has always been a very popular spot for locals and tourists. It has a bitumen cycling track, picnic tables and walking tracks. The new bridge will be safer for bike riders, reduce ongoing maintenance of timber slats, and is more aesthetically pleasing amongst the natural wonders of the Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

I am very happy to advise that the Casuarina Coastal Reserve will have a new regional playground along the Brinkin foreshore soon. I met with Darwin City Council Aldermen, John Bailey and Garry Lambert, to discuss suitable sites for the playground, and have seen the proposed plans for the playground, and it looks fabulous. It is going to be built in the beating heart of the reserve, near to where most families have their picnics each weekend and watch their children kick the soccer ball and football around. I know it will be the focal point for every Territory family that visits there in the future.

Alawa Primary School recently had some bad news with a fire attributed to an electrical fault but, I was advised by principal, Fathma Mauger, and my electorate officer, the Alawa Primary School officially launched the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program which was a huge success with Stephanie Alexander attending the launch. The Alawa students and community have embraced the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program, together with the Alawa Farm and both have become a huge part of the Alawa Primary School ethos.

The students are taught to use the compost bins which are placed at every door and they learn to care more for each other through caring for the plants and animals. They can see where food comes from and can value it. This will help the students to embrace the pleasures and health benefits of growing, collecting, cooking and eating fresh produce while they are young, preparing them for a happy, healthier lifestyle in their future.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will speak of a serious issue in regard to the Family Planning Welfare Association which I will refer to as Family Planning. They are completely and utterly frustrated with their dealings with the Northern Territory government and the Minister for Health and his office in regard to their service agreement.

They had a meeting with the minister's advisors on 29 June about their agreement which is meant to be from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2013. They have not received any advice from the minister or a letter regarding their service agreement. The Department of Health and Families is demanding that this association open their clinical services in Alice Springs and close some services in Darwin and/or Palmerston to cover the full cost of the Alice Springs service, yet they are not offering any extra funds to put the services in Alice Springs.

The association has twice phoned the minister's office, the second time last Monday on 9 August, and spoke with a senior advisor who listened and said she would get back to the association, but the advisors of that office have not yet called the association.

The Department of Health and Families funds \$609 000 to Family Planning each year which accounts for 60% of their total operational costs. The association generates the remaining 40% through Medicare, membership and course fees. They cannot sustain their services any longer. They need the Department of Health and Families to fund a further 15% to stay open in the next few years. This does not factor in the Alice Springs service which they estimate will require a further \$100 000.

This is a very important association which provides integral and valuable services to our community in Darwin and Palmerston. They did provide the services in Alice Springs but could not continue to do so as they lacked the funds, could not attract staff, and could not compete with the private sector.

The Department of Health and Families proposed a new service agreement from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2013 requesting they deliver clinical services to Alice Springs, yet they are not providing additional funding support. The department has said that to deliver services in Alice Springs they understand some services would have to cease in Darwin and Palmerston. They would review the Alice Springs service with Family Planning in six to 12 months but no guarantee is given by the Department of Health and Families to provide extra funding to meet the shortfall. The department and the minister are demanding that this association provide clinical services, sexual reproduction services, and advice to women on a range of personal and medical issues, but they do not want to provide the funding.

In 2008-09, the core funding was a \$472 960 Commonwealth grant, and \$130 280 from the Department of Health. Family Planning generated \$480 000 from other small grants, Medicare and

membership. Core funding from the Commonwealth in 2009-10 was \$480 481 and \$110 280 from the department of Health. There were 7889 client visits to Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine clinics in 2008. The Katherine clinic has around 180 client visits each year. Fifty-five per cent of all clients are under the age of 29, which is the age when people most need advice and assistance in their personal and medical care. The Royal Darwin Hospital has told Family Planning they make around 20% of all termination referrals.

Family Planning is the only sexual and reproductive health clinic open on Saturday mornings for drop-in youth under 25 years, and Monday evenings at clinic choice. Family Planning offers specialised intra-uterine device (IUD) clinics and they understand only one other GP is attending to IUD insertions for clients in the Darwin region.

Family Planning opened a specialised vasectomy clinic in Darwin in May. No Darwin or Palmerston GPs offer this service.

They are providing vital services and advice which is needed in our community. Community education in tobacco, drugs and alcohol is offered to government health groups, parent groups and school nurses. Education is delivered to other NGOs across all sectors. One thousand seven hundred and eighty-one community people attended family planning, education and health promotional events.

Professional education programs are offered in Nhulunbuy, Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin throughout the year. Approximately 200 professional people attended training in the Northern Territory during 2008 and 2009.

The problem is the minister's office is not talking to this important association, they are told someone will get back to them but they do not. Their new service agreement has not been signed. The minister's office is falling very short in its funding for this important association which delivers integral services across the communities, and is demanding they provide services in Alice Springs yet are not offering any funding support; instead they are advised to cut back services in the Darwin region which are needed and necessary.

It is a disgrace, and I hope people in the minister's office who are listening to this pick up the phone tomorrow and talk to the Family Planning Welfare Association to have the service agreement signed so it gives them certainty and funding to not only offer the services in Darwin where they are badly needed, but to ensure when they provide services in Alice Springs they are

funded appropriately. They are expecting these NGOs to provide services on the sniff of an oily rag. It is a disgrace.

I encourage the minister and the government to get their act together and ensure they allocate proper funding so this organisation can continue to help people in our community.

**Mrs AAGAARD (Nightcliff):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I pay tribute to the late Mrs Margaret Brown who passed away on 9 May 2010 after a long and courageous battle with ovarian cancer. Margaret, and her husband Merv, or Brownie as he is better known, lived in Clematis Street, Nightcliff for 46 years but moved to the Tiwi Gardens Retirement Village five years ago.

Margaret, a nurse, came to the Territory in 1958 on her way to England but, like many other Territorians, decided to stay. She met and married Merv and had three children, Karen, Alison and Gary. Margaret and Merv celebrated 50 years of marriage in March last year. Some of their reflections would have included honeymooning at the old Seabreeze Hotel, and later at Mandorah.

Margaret's legacy to the Northern Territory includes serving on numerous community and school committees; however, it is her unstinting work for the Northern Territory Cancer Council, where she contributed 30 years of voluntary service, which stands out. In 1985, she was the driving force of the committee which organised the first of what was to be many fundraising lunches for the Cancer Council. These popular lunches, often four per year, continued until 2006, raising thousands of dollars for the Northern Territory Cancer Council.

In 1991, she represented the Northern Territory in Brisbane for the inaugural launch of the National Daffodil Day campaign and returned, determined the Territory would be an active participant in the campaign.

A handcrafts expert and prolific donor for fundraising, Margaret's decorated yellow coat-hangers became a regular item on the Nightcliff shopping centre Daffodil Day stall. Later her handcrafts, particularly the decorated coat-hangers, were again at the forefront of trading tables when Australia's Biggest Morning Tea began in the Territory.

In 2001, Margaret was awarded life membership of the Cancer Council Northern Territory and a commemorative plaque was always proudly on display at the Brown's home.

Margaret's bubbly personality, generosity of spirit and steely determination will be sadly

missed in our community. I know many of the groups she belonged to, the Northern Territory Sports Club, the Evergreens of Nightcliff, of which I am the patron, and people in general who have lived in the Territory for a long time, will be very sad about Margaret's passing. I extend my deepest sympathy to Margaret's wonderful and very caring family: her husband Merv, Karen, Ali, and Gary, and to Margaret's grandchildren, her extended family and many friends. Vale, Margaret Brown.

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I speak about issues which have already been covered in this House during Question Time today. In all the noise and hubbub of the past few days, bearing in mind there is a federal election campaign on foot, I want to turn my mind and the House's mind to the issue which I believe lies at the heart of the Leader of the Opposition's thinking and questions in parliament today.

I state my concordant support and complete agreement with the position the Leader of the Opposition has taken in relation to domestic violence in the Northern Territory, with particular reference to the Country Liberal Party candidate for the seat of Lingiari, Leo Abbott

I express my extreme disappointment in the way that has occurred. The public has a right to know, in detail, about the character and nature of the people who seek office, both in the Northern Territory and in our national capital.

If you look at the law of defamation in this country - and I quote from *Defamation Law in Australia* by Patrick George, page 61. I believe it is the current edition:

*In 1994, a majority (4-3) of the High Court found in the context of a defamation action an implied freedom of communication or 'guarantee' in the Constitution to publish material discussing government and political matters.*

*The High Court made this finding in the context of discussion about members of parliament relating to their suitability and performance as members of parliament. The court held that the publication of such matters would not be actionable under the law of defamation if the defendant established that it was unaware of the falsity of the material published, it did not publish the material recklessly and that the publication was reasonable in the circumstances.*

What the High Court was asserting - and it finds its origin in the common law - was, in the public domain, the normal rule surrounding

defamation and such things is held in abeyance because there is another principle at work. In matters political, there is a public's right to know which is why the laws of defamation are held in abeyance because the public's right to know is a priority.

This draws my attention to the answers given by the Chief Minister in relation to the questions set by the Leader of the Opposition today. The public does have a right to know about the character and nature of the people who represent them. Sometimes, sadly, the private domain falls into the public arena - as it has done with the CLP candidate.

Moreover, considering the Northern Territory government's position on domestic violence, the circumstances surrounding the domestic violence order made against Damian Hale, the member for Solomon in the federal legislature, is also a matter of public interest. I understand the distinctions made during the Chief Minister's answers to the questions today.

However, section 18 of the *Domestic Violence Act* outlines the circumstances in which a domestic violence order may be granted. It says in section 18(1):

*The issuing authority may make a DVO only if satisfied there are reasonable grounds for the protected person to fear the commission of domestic violence against the person by the defendant.*

It goes on to say that those reasonable grounds, the test in the motives, the balance of probabilities, the civil test - no suggestion of criminality. If the protected person is a child, the authority may make a DVO, and it talks about those circumstances.

So, even when you have a situation where a domestic violence order is issued by a court, in the circumstances described in the legislation, which enables a joint domestic violence order to be made, it still may only be made if the court believes that some form, to the balance of probability, of domestic violence has occurred or is at risk of occurring.

Section 5 of that act says that:

*Domestic violence is the following conduct committed by a person against someone with whom the person is in a domestic relationship,*

- (a) *conduct causing harm;*
- (b) *damaging property, including injury or death of an animal;*

(c) *intimidation;*

(d) *stalking;*

(e) *economic abuse;*

(f) *attempting or threatening to commit conduct mentioned in paragraphs (a) through to (e).*

The one thing which sits at the core of this particular issue, excepting the clear distinctions made by the Chief Minister in answer to the questions he was asked today, is a simple matter. That simple matter is that the laws of defamation are held in suspension because there is a public right to know what is going on.

What is at the heart of this issue is not whether a domestic violence order was issued, or whether a domestic violence order was breached. At the heart of this issue is a single question for Damian Hale, the member for Solomon, and it is one the voters of the Northern Territory have a right to have answered before they are asked to go into a polling booth on Saturday and choose who should represent them for the next few years. The question is this: what actions did Damian Hale engage in that led to his spouse seeking a domestic violence order against him? From reading the legislation we know the court was sufficiently satisfied, to the balance of probabilities, that it was one of the criteria outlined in section 5 of the *Domestic Violence Act*.

It is a matter of such serious public concern that the highest court in the land has placed the laws of defamation in abeyance because of the public's right to know. Therefore, I ask the question of Damian Hale, the member for Solomon: what did you do which caused the court to issue a domestic violence order? It is that simple. What actions were taken? Once you remove the issues of who breached the order, what the terms of the order were, all those other things, any observer on this debate would consider that to be a fair and reasonable question.

**Mr McCARTHY (Barkly):** Madam Deputy Speaker, as the member for Barkly and Cabinet minister in the Northern Territory Labor government, I cover plenty of kilometres travelling throughout my electorate, and between Tennant Creek, Darwin and Alice Springs. I would like to talk about some of the Territory I have been fortunate to have travelled across recently.

On 13 July, I headed east from Darwin into Arnhem Land country I had not seen before. Traversing Cahill's Crossing, it is like someone has flicked a switch; the beautiful country transforms into a mix of escarpment meeting floodplains and is quite spectacular. My mission

on this trip was to look at the Northern Territory government's commitment and investment in roads infrastructure and regional transport improvements in the Top End. The Territory government's road map for the future was forefront in my mind. This Labor government's investment and delivery in 2010 will be delivering for the decades to come and is part of our vision; our *Territory 2030* strategic plan.

The steps in the government's journey towards improving services in the bush this year include \$21.3m towards regional transport initiatives. This includes \$6.2m over three years to upgrade five barge landings across Top End coastline; \$3.1m over two years for bus trials; \$7.5m to upgrade three airstrips, and \$4.5m over five years to support shires operating our bush airstrips. The purpose of my trip was to look at some of the areas where we will be investing this money. The contrast in the landscape between the central and southern parts of the Territory and the Top End were obvious. It was July and the numerous creeks and river crossings to negotiate along the road to Maningrida were still flowing freely, and the road had only been open for a few weeks.

I acknowledge my colleague, the member for Arafura, for providing me with points of contact and background information relating to her electorate which I was travelling through. Maningrida is a dynamic community located in a truly beautiful part of the Top End. While in Maningrida, I was able to meet with representatives from the West Arnhem Shire and the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation. As Minister for Arts and Museums, I was also fortunate to view the arts centre in Maningrida. The cultural influence of living in different areas of the Territory is no more obvious than in the arts.

I visited the barge landing which is earmarked for an upgrade in Budget 2010-11, and met with the outgoing manager of the marine rangers, who are doing a great job along the coastline. I even changed a punctured tyre in Maningrida. I had the tyre repaired by locals who fitted a bung for \$50. I would say that is competitive anywhere in the Northern Territory. I also had a coffee and a toasted sandwich in Maningrida. As one of our 20 growth towns identified under this Labor government's *A Working Future* vision, Maningrida is well placed for future development.

I extend a very big thank you to Don Wilton, a traditional owner, and family for their hospitality in allowing me to roll my swag out that evening less than a stone's throw from the Arafura Sea in a truly magical place Don calls his home. The following morning we hit the road again towards Ramingining, and thank you to the member for Arnhem for her advice. In Ramingining I met members of with the East Arnhem Shire and

travelled about 30 km to their barge landing, also earmarked for an upgrade. I was then made to feel very welcome at the Ramingining Arts Centre, where work was in full swing for the upcoming Garma Festival.

It was then back on the road heading for Nhulunbuy. I thank the member for Nhulunbuy for the time she dedicated to my second visit to her home town. I was able to meet with local businesses and government agencies while I was there and gathered important information relating to my portfolios.

Leaving Nhulunbuy I visited Yirrkala and toured the Yirrkala Arts Centre; an absolutely amazing place. I thank the arts centre coordinator, Mr Will Stubbs, for a terrific tour and briefing about the centre.

It was back on the road again, the Central Arnhem Road, and I saw the creek and river crossings the Northern Territory government, in cooperation with the Australian Labor government, is delivering \$14m to upgrade in Budget 2010-11. Work on a bridge over the Mainoru is scheduled to begin this Dry Season, which is great news for locals, transport operators and tourists alike.

The next stop was Katherine just in time for the show, which is always a great event. The government agency show stands were first class, and I extend a big thank you to the public servants who dedicated time to the show circuit.

In Budget 2010-11, the Territory government is investing a record \$331m to seal and upgrade Territory roads. During this trip I travelled around 2000 km through some of the more remote areas of the Territory. I know the challenges we face to connect our towns and communities with all weather access. I also know it is a Territory Labor government, in cooperation with a Labor federal government, which will provide the best opportunity to achieve this result for the benefit of all Territorians.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.