

Madam Speaker Aagaard took the Chair at 10 am.

**TABLED PAPER**  
**Auditor-General's February 2010 Report to the Legislative Assembly**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General's February 2010 Report to the Legislative Assembly.

**MOTION**  
**Print Paper – Auditor-General's February 2010 Report to the Legislative Assembly**

**Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I move the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

**MOTION**  
**Note Paper – Auditor-General's February 2010 Report to the Legislative Assembly**

**Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I move – That the Assembly take note of the report, and that I have leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

**TRADE MEASUREMENT LEGISLATION**  
**REPEAL BILL**  
**(Serial 81)**

Continued from 26 November 2009.

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Madam Speaker, this will be a short speech from this side of the House. We indicate, at the outset, that we support the bill. There is nothing arising which causes us any major concern. The intent is basically to nationalise, for lack of a better word, the weights and measures which are used by all our trades across the country.

Over the last 100 years or so we have seen a growth in transport, communications, and all manner of other processes which has led to a national and, ultimately, international requirement for the standardisation of certain weights and measures. The issue of weights and measures, and their international standardisation, has become an issue of international import particularly in relation to contracts and those types of things, and a great deal of time and effort goes into thinking about weights and measures.

I notice the old Parisienne platinum metre has now been abandoned, as I understand it, for a very complex formula by which a wavelength of

light of a particular frequency measures the standard metre more accurately than the original platinum metre. The reason being, although the original platinum metre was kept in a sealed environment at a set temperature, there were still concerns it was capable of shifting a few microns one way or the other, thus being less accurate than the formulaic approach.

Notably, in the Louvre, I believe there is still a standard weight for a kilogram, which is one litre of water at sea level. However, there has been a debate raging in the past - I do not know whether it has been resolved - whether they should wipe the kilogram clean, because they are more concerned about taking atoms off it by wiping it clean than they are about the amount of dust which accumulates on it, despite the fact it is in an hermetically sealed environment.

The purpose of these comments is only to point out how fastidious the international and national community is about weights and measures. Clearly, the technical issues surrounding these trade measurements are a matter of national and international concern. I suspect the Northern Territory would, in terms of its trade measurement instrumentalities, rely on scientific data done in other jurisdictions. It is only reasonable, if we have a nationalised approach in dealing with these issues, the nationalised approach should be applied. Consequently, we lose nothing by this process, and I hope the nation gains a more accurate way of measuring its trade measurements.

**Ms LAWRIE (Justice and Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I, too, will be brief because this is part of the COAG reform agenda for the seamless national economy. It is reasonable to do it, and obviously it can be done quickly, swiftly and easily by all governments.

What we are doing today is repealing the current scheme under the *Trade Measurement Act* and the *Trade Measurement Administration Act*, which will be replaced with a Commonwealth law regime based on the model uniform trade measurement regime operating in other states and territories.

The Commonwealth will commence administration of the Trade Measurement regulation across our nation on 1 July this year. The *National Measurement Act* includes transitional arrangements across states and territories, including staff appointments, infrastructure, and work schedules, before the Commonwealth begins its enforcement responsibilities.

I can advise four staff within the Department of Justice are affected by this change. Those staff

have been offered employment with the Commonwealth, and they seem to be happy to take up that opportunity. The transitional arrangements do not cover matters other than - I was particularly interested to find out wellbeing and welfare of those public servants who have been performing a good job was considered. The Commonwealth is picking up four competent public servants. As the member for Port Darwin pointed out the Territory, as a small jurisdiction, relies on other bodies of experts in trade measurements.

We feel very satisfied the four staff in Darwin, and the one officer in Alice Springs, who have been conducting the verification programs for measuring instruments used in trade will be acquitting their skills appropriately for the Commonwealth. Territorians will continue to be beneficiaries of their hard work to date. That being said, it is good to see the COAG reforms progressing, and that the states and territories can work with the Commonwealth to put in place measures which would provide for a far more seamless national economy,

Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed; bill read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

### **RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 84)**

Continued from 26 November 2009.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, the intention of this bill is to insert specific protection and processes for owners and tenants of caravan parks. The important words are 'owners' and 'tenants'. It is important to remember there needs to be a balance for both sides - if there are sides in any legislation - and not favouring the side of the tenant.

Sadly, this legislation will not achieve proper protection for permanent tenants, and will place additional costs on van park owners, who may elect not to have permanent residents at all. At a time when we are smack bang in the middle of a housing crisis, there is the very real possibility of upwards of 500 people - families, couples, elderly, some disabled people - being forced to find alternative accommodation.

Given van parks are often the last resort accommodation for some people, I am concerned as to where these people may go if a van park chooses to change its business operation - as is its right - based solely on this legislation, which is flawed, before it has started. We hope it does not commence and then returns to the drawing board to get it right.

In 2000, the CLP government repealed the caravan parks act in order to introduce more comprehensive and industry-focused legislation. The repealed legislation of 1975 was originally introduced to cover caravan parks within 26 km of Darwin which sprang up after construction work following Cyclone Tracy. The Martin opposition at the time supported the repeal and raised concerns about what legislation would cover caravan parks in the interim. It was agreed the legislation would be Territory specific, and suit the conditions and demographics in the Northern Territory, and not be an import from down south where van parks are a very different style and nature, and are generally specific tourist destinations.

The legislation to repeal the caravan parks act did not commence until 31 August 2002. According to the Department of Justice's Caravan Park and Mobile Homes Legislation Issues Paper dated June 2008, the amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* were supposed to be introduced in 2002 to provide specific provisions to cover caravan parks. Why it was not done then - who knows? It was probably because this government is hopeless, and could not organise a pub chook raffle, let alone attend to serious issues and legislation such as we are debating today.

This left caravan park owners and tenants without clear legislation for seven-and-a-half years. The first publicly released issues paper was released in June 2008, followed by this bill to amend the *Residential Tenancies Act* in November 2009. In arriving at the position today, I make comment on the consultation processes to date, or lack thereof. This government likes people to think it consults fully and properly with affected stakeholders; however this is far from the truth.

When the discussion paper came out in June 2008, the third one on this subject, I must add, the last point in that discussion paper read:

#### *Further consultation*

*The Department of Justice has released this issues paper for the purpose of preliminary consultation with stakeholders. Following receipt of submissions, a report will be prepared containing recommendations for consideration by the*

*Minister for Justice and Attorney-General,  
the Hon Dr Chris Burns MLA.*

*There will be further opportunities for participating in this process after the report has been prepared.*

I particularly note the words 'preliminary consultation' and 'There will be further opportunity for participating in this process after the report has been prepared'. This is not what happened.

I note the minister presenting the bill on 26 November 2009 said, 'Additionally, there has been further targeted consultation during this time' - while drafting the bill that is. I would very much like the minister to specify who received targeted information or consultation, because the NT Caravan Parks Association Incorporated has not found any targets amongst its members. The membership of that association is wide and all encompassing, and members are strong in their views and communication.

The association has not seen the report, and they have not been consulted further. On more than one occasion, the NT Caravan Parks Association was advised departmental officers handling the legislation would speak to a meeting of the Caravan Parks Association on this important topic. I have been advised by the association that, on more than one occasion, the officer did not turn up to the meetings - it was a no show. This is a deplorable situation, and goes to the core of this government's arrogance in dealing with any industry.

Indeed, on behalf of the van parks in my electorate, of which there are four and one under development, I provided comments on the Issues Paper. I did not receive either an acknowledgment of my submission, nor did I receive any feedback - or further feedback - from either the department of the minister's office. I can understand fully the frustration of the industry association; they have been disregarded totally, and shown a high level of disrespect by this government. So much for working with the industry - a big fat pile of claptrap!

Previously, the industry association was consulted about van park legislation and was listened to. Of course, we know the member for Nelson introduced a private members' bill in 2007, which was resoundingly defeated by the present Labor government. I point out to members, and to people listening to this parliament through the Internet, Dr Chris Burns, in his speech on the Wood's bill on 20 February 2008, was highly critical of the member for Nelson's proposed legislation, and yet this legislation is almost a carbon copy of that legislation. What is going on? It sounds a bit hypocritical to me.

Furthermore, the caravan park act of 1975 which was repealed in 2002, referred to by the current and immediate past Attorneys-General, to the best of my recollection, contained nothing about the relationship between owners and tenants. It was drafted after Cyclone Tracy to ensure caravans were somewhat cyclone proof, and specified such things as toilet/tenant ratios. It had nothing to do with tenancy at all. This Labor government is trying to rewrite the history books, and every time it does it shows them for what they are - incompetent and not fit to govern.

Shoddy consultation aside, I want to highlight much of the premise of tenancy-type legislation revolves around accommodation being a basic human right. It is true that safe, secure accommodation is a basic right for people everywhere. However, if this is indeed the case, it is the community's responsibility to provide that accommodation, not the responsibility of a business which merely provides a service for fee. Many aspects of tenancy legislation, in effect, work on that principle - the responsibility of landlords of any description to bear the burden of providing such accommodation at any cost, to anyone who asks.

While this may sound callous, one aspect of tenancy demonstrates this quite clearly. Occupants who choose not to pay their rent are no more than common thieves, and should be dealt with accordingly. They are no different to someone who drives off without paying for petrol at a service station, or walks out of a restaurant without paying the bill. In all those cases, you can call the police and they will take action. Police are not interested in people who do not pay rent at a caravan park. I have spoken to van park owners over the last six months, and they have stated this to me very clearly on more than one occasion. This is not intended to be disrespectful to police, however it highlights the difficult issues surrounding tenants in van parks.

Under most tenancy legislation, the van park owner has to go through all sorts of red tape to get them off the premises. This is wrong and unjust, and we do not want this situation to exist in the Territory. Why does a person believe they do not have to pay rent and then think there should be a law to help protect them? Clearly, this is not right.

If someone is paying rent and behaving in a normal and decent way, why would a van park owner want to introduce laws to evict them? Of course they would not. However, if a person is not paying their rent, behaving badly and upsetting other park residents, eviction is because there is no alternative. Bad tenants do not help anyone, and can cause harm along the way. The van park owner should be able to evict them in a

very short time in order to protect property, and other tenants' rights.

Caravan parks can and do cater for a range of people from permanent town residents, travellers, grey nomads, families, winter drifters, seasonal workers and those who cannot find other accommodation. It is well recognised within the industry that Territory van parks have more permanent tenants, and this is attributed, in the main, to the housing crisis across the Territory brought about by this Labor government's failure in public housing and land release.

With this cross section of tenants, it makes the running of a van park harder than normal. I am concerned this legislation, if passed in its current form, will ultimately penalise those people who perhaps need van park accommodation more than most. I know, from talking with industry, we have already seen van parks removed, or permanent residents asked to leave the van park. One such park is in Alice Springs, where 50 permanent residents have been asked to move. In Darwin, a van park is looking to move 30 residents.

It was not all that long ago the member for Daly was on ABC radio telling Territorians he was about to consult with caravan park owners to take in more workers. I get the impression very few, if any, NT parks would accept anyone for more than 89 days in future, workers or otherwise. This legislation has too many grey areas, and the potential impost on the park owners will mean permanents are not worth the trouble, or perhaps the cost.

We know the background to this legislation; after repealing the legislation of 1975, new legislation may have been needed. That related to occupants who had to leave a van park as it was closing down, and who could not move their van as it had not been maintained, and was unstable and unroadworthy. Logical thinking and common business sense would tell us if a business closes its doors that is the way it is. If the van park closes, the occupants need to find another place to live. Whether the tenants of the closing park had been there more than 90 days or fewer was totally irrelevant, as it is today.

Regardless of how many days someone has resided in a caravan park, if they are in a caravan park or motor home which has wheels and is mobile, and is not built into a solid annex or similar, an immediate eviction notice is not the impost the minister alluded to in her speech of 26 November 2009. The issue of eviction is about how difficult it is to move, and more importantly, where you are moving to. If your worldly possessions have wheels under them the vehicle can be moved, particularly if the person is not paying rent and behaving in an inappropriate way.

I turn to some specific comments. Under the legislation we are debating today, there are two types of tenancy agreements. One is the Caravan Park Site Agreement, which is a site agreement covering the lease of a piece of land within the caravan park, and allows a person to place a caravan, or similar vehicle, on that site for residential purposes.

The other type of agreement is a Caravan Park Tenancy Agreement. This allows a person to occupy a site with a caravan made available by the park owner, for residential purposes. I am not sure why there is a need for this type of agreement; from talks with industry and caravan parks, there are very few parks which rent vans. Despite the knowledge caravan parks are providers of long-term housing for many Territorians, caravan parks have figured poorly in housing research by this government. Try as I did, I could not find any research undertaken by this government, yet the caravan industry is one of the growth industries in the Territory, from a holiday and permanent perspective. There is very little information on growth patterns in the caravan industry, little information on the demand for caravan park developments, and little information on short to long-term demand for caravan park accommodation. With so little information researched by government, I will be very surprised if they really understand what impact this legislation will have on caravan parks and the caravan industry in general.

I did receive a briefing from the minister's office and I thank her for that, and also to the department for providing answers to some of my questions. There are upwards of 100 van parks in the Northern Territory, with about a dozen on the drawing board. There are at least 4500 powered sites, and some van parks have 20% to 30% of occupants being permanent residents. Many of these van parks also have cabins. It should be noted the bulk of a van park's business is from the tourist trade, and it is very seasonal. Again from my discussions, most van parks experience only three to four months at 100% occupancy, meaning much of the year a van park is mostly empty - not much income. Additional costs resulting from this legislation could have a serious impact on businesses.

Back to the rental agreements: these agreements are applicable only to persons who occupy a caravan, or site, in a caravan park for a continuous period of at least 90 days, which can include a break of less than seven days. It will not cover accommodation exceeding 90 days, which would be considered holiday accommodation. However, the definition and interpretation of a tourist is unclear. The term 'tourist' nowadays is such a general term that, for this legislation to be clear, we need to know exactly what a tourist is.

Is a tourist a backpacker who picks up work along the way for a period of a year or two? Is it a 'wwoofa' - a willing worker on organic farms - who also travels around getting work? The example given in the legislation is of Bob, who comes to the Northern Territory for a holiday, then gets a job and stays more than 90 days. The definition of what is considered a job is not clear at all. Is it a full-time job? Is it a part-time job? Is it shiftwork? Or, is it seasonal work such as fruit picking? A person might be a continual traveller in life who picks up work along the way; they might stay 70 days, they might stay 120 days; the traveller might be a night worker. What does the definition of job mean exactly?

There are references to exemptions at ministerial level; what does this mean, and under what circumstances would an exemption be given?

The other concern I have, which is not clear in the legislation but has come up in discussions with industries, is along the Stuart Highway, and other highways, there are small van roadside stops which have ablution facilities, shade and water. The minister needs to explain - as these sites are maintained by the government - if someone chooses to live there more than 90 days, will they be covered by this legislation and be required to sign an agreement? One situation could be when people fossick across the Northern Territory.

There are issues when a van park is sold to a new owner. As I understand it, the new owner will be required to take permanent tenants, even if they do not wish their business to operate that way. I do not believe that is right; the new owner should have the capacity to start from scratch with tenants, and have different types of leases. This smells to me like the government interfering with business and commerce.

Sub-tenancy agreements will be fraught with danger as this legislation is taking control of the business away from the park owner, and giving it to a tenant who wants to sublet a caravan, or a bed in a van, and does not have to involve the park owner. There is no protection for the park owner from default in rent if the 'subby' person does not pay the van owner, who then does not pay the park owner.

Other matters: there is reference to houseboats throughout legislation, however, no definition as to what is a houseboat. The preamble says the legislation does not cover marinas. It seems messy to me. I ask the minister why marinas are not included in the legislation but, somehow, houseboats are included.

Serious misconduct has an issue surrounding it. What happens when the misconduct is of a sexual nature? There does not appear to be any wording covering that type of misconduct. The reason I raise it is a park owner had an issue with a tenant who behaved inappropriately in front of children in the park. The van park owner had a responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment, and this person should have been evicted - no questions asked. Sadly, the police were not too interested, I was advised, as they believed it was private property. This legislation, if it is to be good, needs same-day eviction, clear, concise and abrupt. Why does the van park owner have to confirm to the commissioner, in writing, an eviction, and why three days? If the owner does not give notice within three days, the person can move back in, despite being a sexual pervert. I do not believe that to be right, or acceptable.

Park rules: why is it enshrined in legislation how rules should be developed, and on what matter? The list says: 'Only about the following'. Why is there exclusivity? It does not consider, for example, small house-based industries such as ironing or clothing repairs; and there could be others. Why is the legislation so limiting? Why does an ex-resident have a say as to park rules?

An ex-resident may apply to the commissioner for a declaration on a caravan park rule. What is the definition of an ex-resident? Is there a cut-off time when an ex-resident is an ex-ex-resident? Is it three days; is it one month? Surely, there needs to be a specific time frame in the act so as not to leave the system open to abuse.

Further, in section 122E(2), the commissioner must consider the application in a way the commissioner considers appropriate. What is the definition of 'appropriate'? What would be the benchmarks? How will the commissioner arrive at what is considered an appropriate rule or not?

Van park committees: I believe this is a section fraught with troubles, as it smacks of a tenancy association. Whilst I have no issue with tenancy associations, or any associations, the legislation seems to indicate there are privileges, but no responsibilities with a van park committee. It is not clear how it would be set up - is not clear how it would operate. I believe that section needs to be completely rewritten.

The last point I would like to raise is the section regarding relocation of vans. There are two parts to this. One, if a caravan park owner wishes to relocate a van for a particular reason, he needs to give the resident notice to this effect. I have no issue with that - it says why it needs to be moved. However, in one part it says the owner is responsible for the cost of relocation. I question

why? If the owner of the caravan park moves the caravan and it is damaged, what are the insurance implications?

The second section deals with options after giving notice about relocation; the caravan park owner is giving notice, in writing, the tenant is to move, for whatever reason. However, then a 'relocation agreement' has to be set up. We already have a tenancy agreement but, because the caravan needs to go from A to B, a relocation agreement is required.

It is also not clear how we will deal with cyclones, when there sometimes is a quick and decisive need to relocate caravans to ensure safety for the park and tenants. Those two sections, I believe, are cumbersome with too much duplication. I have no issue with giving the tenant advice they need to relocate their van because they need to improve the park, or there is a problem with the water system, however it seems the duplication is adding more to the cost of running the caravan park.

My colleagues are going to speak more on this legislation. We are having real difficulties with it because of lack of proper consultation with the industry. This has been put to us quite clearly by the association, and the caravan parks. It concerns me the government has very little understanding of the industry and how it operates, and the future of it, given we know the types of people who travel around the country are different to what they were 20 years ago. Compared to the southern states, there does not seem to be any research done. I did find research from other states relating to the caravan park industry and its contributions to the economy, its demands, and the changing nature of the caravan industry. I am also concerned, on behalf of the industry association, with government's role in setting up free caravan parks. My colleagues will talk more on that.

Madam Speaker, I ask the minister to address some of the issues and concerns I have raised, and also whether the government will consider deferring this until there has been proper consultation with the industry.

**Dr BURNS (Public and Affordable Housing):** Madam Speaker, I spoke, as the member for Goyder said, in the original debate of the private members' bill the member for Nelson introduced into this parliament some years ago. As people would be aware, the member for Nelson introduced the bill after the announced closure of Sundowner Caravan Park. Many of the permanent residents in the Sundowner Caravan Park found themselves in the situation of being evicted, or having the park sold from underneath them. The member for Nelson, being a diligent

local member, introduced a private members' bill to this parliament.

It is also true that I was critical of the member for Nelson at that time on a couple of bases. One was the structure of the bill he brought into the House. As I understand it, it was a stand-alone bill, not directly part of the *Residential Tenancies Act*. However, my understanding is the bill introduced and being debated today is part of the *Residential Tenancies Act*, and aligns more closely with that act. In that way, it is a different bill. There are some changes within the bill originally introduced by the member for Nelson, compared to the bill today. I believe those differences are important.

I was also critical of the member for Nelson at that time regarding the consultation process he had embarked on. I note the member for Goyder is still critical of those consultation processes today. There is no doubt there is some opposition within the industry to this particular legislation. That is regrettable, because what this bill is trying to do - and it was something I supported in the original bill the member for Nelson introduced, and also within this bill - is protect the rights of tenants, or permanent residents of caravan parks.

The history, as I understand it, and as the member for Goyder alluded to, was laws were brought in post-Cyclone Tracy when there were many people in Darwin living in caravan parks, and quite a number of caravan parks within Darwin. Many of us can remember those parks. Changes were made to the *Residential Tenancies Act* in 2000 under the previous government, and when that occurred, the rights of permanent residents of caravan parks slipped out of the relevant acts and they did not have coverage. In fact, basically, they had no, or very few, rights under law.

The member for Goyder needs to acknowledge that, at the time of those amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act* in 2000, the former CLP government should have ensured the rights of permanent residents within caravan parks were protected. It is a bit rich for the member for Goyder to come to this House and assert somehow the CLP was blameless, and criticise government over this issue. It has taken some time, however, I found it a little rich that the member for Goyder seemed to be saying landlords should have no social responsibilities. I will have to read the *Hansard*, however I believe that to be the tenor of what she was saying; why should government be interfering with commercial interactions between landlords and tenants? Everyone has a social responsibility - that is why we have laws, that is why we are amending this act, to ensure people have natural justice, people

are not prevailed upon unnecessarily, and both sides of the equation have rights.

The member for Goyder also said the government has little understanding of the caravan park industry. I have had a long association with the caravan park industry. In fact, I have had what is called a holiday van in New South Wales, for 25 years. It is the same poor old van that has been there 25 years. It has a vinyl annex on it, and that is where I go for my three week holiday every year. There are quite a number of permanent residents there, whom I have come to know very well over the last 25 years. These are often pensioners who are living in the caravan park for a number of reasons. They certainly enjoy living in the caravan park. There is an economic dimension to it; however, they also enjoy the friendship, the conversations, and the social interaction of living in a caravan park. I certainly enjoy them when I am down there for my three weeks' holiday every year, and some great friendships have grown up around that caravan park.

In New South Wales, there are permanent residents committees within the caravan parks. I am an honorary member of the Permanent Residents Committee of North Beach Caravan Park. I receive their newsletter, and I am aware of the discussions they have on management of the park over a whole range of issues. It is a very important forum, for both owners and residents, to be able to discuss matters, not only about the amenity of the park, but also the obligations of residents. I do not see it in the negative way the member for Goyder has alluded to. I believe such a forum could be very constructive for both sides of the equation.

I know the member for Goyder was quite critical of consultation during this process. I understand there has been some consultation. In mid-2008, an issues paper regarding caravan parks and mobile homes legislation was publicly released and posted to over 100 caravan parks in the Northern Territory. It was also placed on the Department of Justice Internet site. Advertisements were placed in the *Northern Territory News*, and through community service announcements. A copy of the Issues Paper was also sent to the member for Nelson.

There were 10 submissions; three were residents, two were caravan park owners, one was of unknown origin, one was a member of the Legislative Assembly, and three were from stakeholder organisations. There has been consultation. Everyone may not have received what they wanted, however the amendments are part of the *Residential Tenancies Act*. They align with that act, and I believe that is very important.

The history is people did not have many rights in tenancy, now they do, and I heartily applaud that.

To run through some of the amendments this act goes to, I will quote from the minister's Explanatory Statement. The amendments provide for:

- *the application of the act to long-term tenancies in the caravan parks;*

It has been determined that should be 90 days.

- *transitional arrangements concerning the application of the act to caravan park tenants as at the time of the commencement of the legislation,*
- *provisions to ensure condition reports entered into at the beginning of a tenancy remain valid for the whole of the period of occupation...*

There are some amendments relating to the Commissioner of Tenancies, who now has his power clarified and amended. The commissioner will be required to take into consideration the fact the tenant may have agreed to a breach of the act when determining the extent of any compensation payable to the tenant. The commissioner will also have the power to pay reasonable costs of obtaining a valuation in order that the tenant may pursue a claim of excessive rent, in a case which has sufficient merit.

I believe those are very sensible amendments. They are obviously not going to please everyone. I am sure there will be further discussion when my colleague brings this to the committee stage. There are three amendments, as I understand it. I think they are very important, and certainly I support the amendments as foreshadowed by the minister.

In summary, yes, it may have taken longer than some people would want, but here we are today debating this. It is a very important act. There are a higher proportion of long-term permanent residents in caravan parks in the Northern Territory compared to elsewhere in Australia. I believe that has probably always been the case, particularly after Cyclone Tracy. I believe these amendments link the rights of residents of caravan parks to the *Residential Tenancies Act*. In that respect, I believe it is a stronger act than the one originally proposed as a private member's bill by the member for Nelson. Nonetheless, whilst I was critical of the member for Nelson when this bill was last debated, I have always acknowledged the passion of the member for Nelson in safeguarding the rights of people who live in caravan parks. In some ways they are often people who are disadvantaged, people who

might be down on their luck, and people who need protection.

The member for Nelson's original bill grew from the circumstances at the Sundowner Caravan Park, and I understand the member for Nelson's passion on this issue. I am pleased to say government will be supporting this bill.

**Mr GILES (Braitling):** What hypocrisy, Madam Speaker. This is the member who, only a few years ago, deemed he would not support similar legislation. The protection of tenancies is a very popular view, and I support protecting tenants, however this is a populist policy which has turned into a poor legislative instrument. While we all want to ensure caravan park residents, and many others in our community are protected, this legislation will not achieve that. This legislation will make it more difficult for owners of caravan parks, and long-term residents of caravan parks.

I understand this bill. I have spent some time researching this bill, talking to caravan parks owners throughout Central Australia; and my colleague, the member for Goyder, has spent much time talking to caravan parks owners in the Top End.

I listened to the member for Johnston speaking about the consultation process. We know there was a poor consultation process, because a number of the caravan parks we spoke to said it was a terrible consultation process. They advised government of their dissatisfaction with the consultation process, specifically the government's lack of willingness to listen to or take on board the comments they made. I listened to the member for Johnston name the people who provided responses to the consultation process run in 2008, and I did not hear him once speak about a resident of a caravan park who actually said they support this process.

If the government did some doorknocking in a caravan park asking if people would like more protection, residents would obviously say yes. When this bill is explained, and what impact it will have on caravan park residents, they are not supportive. They are not supportive because, ultimately, this legislation will drive up costs for operators of caravan parks.

The cost of having to sign lease agreements; to conduct inspection reports; to set up special bank accounts to keep the bond; to go through the process the member for Goyder described in relation to the Tenancies Commissioner, and the process around evictions. These are costs on business, and there might be some very large caravan parks able to absorb those costs,

however there are many not large enough to do so.

I have had specific meetings with MacDonnell Range Caravan Park, Temple Bar, Wintersun and the Stuart Caravan Park, located on Larapinta Drive in Alice Springs. I have also spoken to the Tennant Creek Caravan Park. Many have said they have had a downturn in business in the last few years.

One in particular has had a significant downturn; that is a caravan park which does not take tenants at the higher level of the social scale, tending to lease their properties to people who are from a lower socioeconomic, disadvantaged group. They explained on many occasions those people have to be evicted at short notice. They may be there for six months, nine months and be very good tenants, however visitors come and those people have to be removed. Under this legislation, that will not occur, and the caravan park in question has signalled to me this will break their business; they will close down.

That is not exploiting their comments or going over the top - that is their words to me. They explained they do not own many caravan parks, the cost on their business will be significant, and they cannot afford to employ someone to manage the new procedures. They will not be able to afford the extra costs. The additional costs coming from the implementation of this legislation will be in renting caravans, or cabins, or sites.

We already know the failure of the Northern Territory government to properly manage housing, specifically as it relates to land release and the construction of housing, has seen rents and house prices rise, and this will further increase the cost of housing in the Northern Territory.

In this example, it will increase the cost in caravan parks. People will have to move from the caravan park because of increasing costs. If those people move into the private rental market, providing more competition on the demand cycle - and we know the supply cycle is poor - that will drive costs up, or we could see people potentially becoming homeless. The member for Goyder spoke about people in Alice Springs who had been asked to leave caravan parks. I can tell you there is one caravan park which had 60 permanent residents and has reduced to 10, and they are going to remove the remaining 10. Caravan parks are very keen to remove permanent residents.

They are even talking about on the eighty-ninth day driving people out the driveway and, then, letting them drive back in. While I recognise that is probably a silly proposition, it is the lengths people will go to, to ensure they do not have this

cost burden. You have this populist legislative instrument, however when it is implemented, it is going to have a negative effect on not only the business owners - who I know Labor does not like - it is going to have a negative effect on the residents.

The 'grey nomads', or the tourists who decide to stay for six months, will be asked - as we have been told by park owners - to leave the caravan park after 89 days and come back. Who does that actually benefit? The law is only good as long as it is monitored. Who is going to ensure this is occurring? Are we now going to have caravan park police? Is that how this is actually going to work?

Another thing not been made clear to me is - and I would like the minister to answer this question - how this legislation impinges on the Territory lifestyle? You used to be able to get a caravan, now you cannot. How will this work in leasing caravans or sites? If it is a house property - the house is identified by its number, street, suburb and so forth. How will you identify caravan park lots regarding income received from a lease? There are no boundaries. Caravan parks are not subdivided, so how do you determine what someone is actually leasing? You can call it a lot number; however what boundaries does that incorporate?

Are we moving to the position where we have separate water meters, power meters, and sewerage charges for tenants, as you might do in a house? This is the direction we are moving to. These will be more costs on business, which will drive up the cost of caravans.

I see this as being defeatist. I recognise there was an issue with a caravan park many years ago - and it sounds good on the radio when you talk about it - but we have to understand the impact of this. Ninety days to have a three-month tenancy which will apply on cabins in caravan parks. It will apply on accommodation facilities on a vehicle, which could be a trailer with wheels. It could apply on a houseboat, but does not say where. It does not say it will apply to moorings. Will it apply to motel-type accommodation in a caravan park? You might have a block with five units in it, which could be called a motel if it was in a separate location, but in these places are called caravan parks. As I understand it, a lease will now be required on motel-type accommodation within a caravan park. However, if you stayed at the Quest Apartments for four months - which many people in the Northern Territory do because there are no houses available - you do not have to sign a lease. Where, in the legislation, is the equality across different industry sectors?

Unlike this government, I have spoken to many long-term tenants of caravan parks. This is where it impacts on the Territory lifestyle, because we just do things. We do not have to have government in our lives over-regulating us all the time. There are many caravan sites where long-term residents have built structures around their caravans. We know the Northern Territory government is not very good on certifying things, but none of these structures are certified. If they were on a caravan a tenant had been renting for a long time, who had built a deck, a carport, some sort of arch or canopy around the caravan or cabin, what happens now the lease is signed? This is the Territory lifestyle stuff - we leave it; we just get on with business. However, under this new model, if a lease is signed for that lot, all structures within that lot are now going to be the responsibility of the caravan park owner.

Caravan park owners have advised me they will not take on legal liability for additional structures in the park. Quite definitely, those permanent residents will need these structures removed, otherwise they will have to pay thousands and thousands of dollars for a structural engineer or certifier to determine whether they safe. If those structures put up by long-term residents are not safe, they will have to be removed. How does this legislation help those tenants? How does this legislation help the people we are encouraging to come to the Northern Territory - the backpackers who come here, no money in their back pocket, and decide to work fruit picking? They cannot afford bond money, rent in advance, and all these other obligations that come with caravans. They have a hard enough time getting transport to where they are going to pick the fruit. We are putting an impost on these people to come up with money immediately.

This will have another negative effect on our economy; it will be harder to get fruit pickers in the Northern Territory. It might not be across the board, and it might not be 100% of all fruit pickers, but it will have some effect. That is why it is important to consider populism before it moves into policy. It is important to ensure there are legislative instruments which will have the positive effect we want.

What we have at the moment is a bill which says anyone staying longer than 90 days will have to have a lease. There are so many issues with it. This is the most appalling legislation I have ever seen come through this House. Fair enough, I have only been here 18 months; however I have seen an amount of legislation. There is not one person happy with this legislation, except maybe the Chief Minister, who gets to keep his job by bringing it in, I suppose.

I will not be supporting this legislation - not at all. On behalf of every caravan park owner I have spoken to, whether in person or through correspondence, I will vote against this, and on the basis of my conversations with residents of caravan parks, particularly those who do not want their structures removed from their cabins or caravans. I will vote against this because it is an impost on business; it will contribute to a negative impact economically in the Northern Territory. I will vote against this because I will not support populism just to become legislation - just as a feel-good type of thing.

If this legislation had any merit at all, I am happy to hear it. The member for Goyder started speaking, and all of a sudden we have some amendments placed on our table. We were not even given the courtesy of seeing the amendments before we walked into the Chamber today.

Madam Speaker, I declare I will not be supporting this. I believe it is terrible legislation indeed.

**Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Katherine):** Madam Speaker, at the risk of stating the bleeding obvious, what a bunch of hypocrites across the other side of the Chamber. My understanding is the member for Nelson has attempted to introduce similar legislation no less than three times - I will stand corrected on that. Nonetheless, for the times it has been voted down by the Labor government, here we now see it in its new incarnation.

Let us call a spade a spade: the only reason this bill is before the House and is being debated is because it forms part of the agreement between the member for Nelson and the Chief Minister to keep the Chief Minister in power. I hope the people of the Northern Territory who are listening to this broadcast today, and people who read the *Hansard*, note that. That is the only reason this bill is before the House.

I will not support this bill. It is poorly drafted, and I will not go into the minutiae of that, because I believe the member for Goyder has done a very good job of bringing out some of those specific issues in the legislation. I thank her for the very thoughtful submissions she has made today.

If you go back to the premise for the member for Nelson introducing similar legislation in the past, it was based around the issues which arose from the closure of the Sundowner Caravan Park. My understanding is the caravan park closed; therefore the permanent residents, and others, had to be moved on. I do not know how on earth this is going to fix a similar situation. If I own a caravan park, and I have permanent residents in

it, whether they are on an agreement or not, if I go to the wall, or for some reason I decide to close my caravan park, they would not have a leg to stand on. People who stay there will not have a leg to stand on, notwithstanding the introduction of this legislation.

On that basis, the original premise for bringing this legislation before this House is quite irrelevant to the legislation in its present form. As I pointed out, it is only here today because of the agreement which keeps the Labor government in power. I really find it disingenuous to the extreme to hear the comments from the other side of the House; how they are supporting this legislation now, even though in the past they have not.

The *Residential Tenancies Act* covers fixed dwellings - I suppose you would call them houses and units. There is a vast difference between a house or unit and the structures, or caravans, or whatever you want to call them, which exist in caravan parks; that is stating the bleeding obvious as well. However, there are reasons for saying that. If you have a property, tenants either side of you, you have at least a couple of walls, a dividing fence and usually some land, I suppose, unless you are buying a miniature block this government might dare to release to us. However, in a caravan park the situation is quite different.

The walls we speak of are probably an inch thick; there is certainly no substantial structure between caravans, no dividing fence as a general rule, although if there is it would probably be a bit of pig wire - the proximity is usually quite close. There are some very significant differences between the layout of a caravan park and houses and units.

This necessarily means caravan parks need to be treated differently. You cannot introduce laws which make a situation in a caravan park worse than it is. That often happens when things go awry between neighbours, which occur in houses and in units. When things go awry in a block of units between tenants, I do not have to share the same ablutions as my neighbour. I never have to be in such close proximity to them, and this is why caravan parks need to be treated differently.

People who live in caravan parks are generally in different circumstances to people who live in real property. People who live in caravan parks fall into many categories. Perhaps they cannot afford to rent real property in the Territory, perhaps they have been kicked out of real property, perhaps they cannot get references to get into real property, perhaps, in the Northern Territory, they cannot even find any real property to rent. As pointed out by the member for Brainting, perhaps some are temporary workers; people who come to do fruit picking. They are

mostly good people but, of course, in amongst the good there will sometimes be bad eggs. Why should the good people who are permanent residents of caravan parks and, for that matter, the tourists who might be living right next door, be forced to endure the bad behaviour of the few?

I go back to my experience in my former career of dealing with some of these issues; perhaps it will help paint a picture. I am thinking about a caravan park in Katherine, one I visited early in 2002-03, just out of town. All the caravans there are in close proximity. I mentioned earlier a dividing fence might be a bit of pig wire, well, that was the case here. There were people in the very bottom corner, about as far away from the other caravan park residents as you could get. Their behaviour on one particular day was so bad it necessitated police having to attend, and I was one of those officers. It involved alcohol, it involved drugs, and it involved children in need of care. Not only did the police attend, we had to take FACS workers with us to care for the children because the adult behaviour was so bad. They were permanent residents. However, their behaviour was so bad, for the safety of the remainder of the residents, and certainly the caravan park owner, because he lived nearby, and the safety of the children, those people needed to be evicted, and they needed to be evicted forthwith.

I shudder to consider being greeted with that situation, only to discover those people were protected by a tenancy agreement which prevented them being removed forthwith from the property. It is that type of behaviour from the very few people - and they are few people, that is the point here. We are not talking about legislation which is going to protect thousands of Territorians; we are talking about legislation which will affect, in a positive way, very few people.

I am quite bemused. I cannot understand why the member for Nelson, and this Labor government, would bring on legislation which disadvantages the majority of people for the supposed advantage of very few. On top of that, this will create an impost on the owners of caravan parks; these are business owners in the Northern Territory.

I recently spoke with a caravan park owner in Katherine, who tells me when this bill comes in - because I have no doubt it will pass into legislation today - he will be faced with increased administrative costs. In fact, I jotted some notes down - I might check my notes. He will have to pay for preparation of leases if he does not do it himself. If that is not allowed, he will have to pay for leases through the Real Estate Institute. On top of that, he has no way of finding out - this was interesting; there is a black list of tenants in the

Northern Territory, certainly in locations. I do not know if that is formal arrangement in the REINT, or whether it is a local arrangement between real estate agents. As he is not a member of the REINT, and has no affiliation with real estate agents in town, he will not be privy to the black list. That is a list of people whose behaviour is so bad they have had to be evicted, or have defaulted on rent, or damaged property - those types of things. He will be expected to sign a tenancy agreement with a permanent resident without the benefit of accessing the information real estate agents have when they take on a new tenant.

The other side of this is most caravan park owners are, in fact, quite reasonable people. I do not know of any cases where good residents - the people who perhaps should be protected under a private agreement - have been evicted for no good reason from a caravan park. Most caravan park owners are reasonable people.

Talking with another caravan park owner in Katherine recently, he said he has a system - which I believe is quite reasonable - for tenants with behavioural issues; he looks at the history of that person in the caravan park and their behaviour to date, and issues them with a warning for further bad behaviour. If those warnings go unheeded, then he gives that person one week's notice - out! That is how it should be; the owners of the caravan parks should be able to move bad tenants on at short notice.

I have cited an example of a tenant needing to be evicted forthwith. There are certainly times when people should be given the benefit of some kind of notice. I do not think that is an unreasonable approach, and you will find most caravan park owners operate under that regime already.

I do not intend to dwell too much on this. This legislation will pass today. As the other members who have spoken on this have pointed out, the consultation certainly has been lacking. I can cite information I have received where meetings were set up with representatives from the Department of Justice, and those representatives failed to turn up. Any assertion from the Labor side of this House that the consultation has been good, fair, and up-front and everything else - well, you can draw your own conclusions on that, I guess.

This legislation will cause grief to our caravan park owners. It is, as I say, an unfair impost on them. Caravans, and caravan parks, are quite different in the way they are set up, the demographics around them and, necessarily, should be treated quite differently. Owners should be given far more scope to deal with recalcitrant

tenants. This legislation limits their capacity to do that. It is wrong; I am surprised.

If you look at this legislation, it is very left, I suppose. It is heading down that path, is it not? It is regulating to the point of ridiculousness. I am surprised the member for Nelson has shown colours in that direction. When he was elected, he was elected as - I suppose the assumption was - a relatively conservative Independent. He certainly seems to be steering down a quite different path to that expected of him when his constituents voted him in.

**Mr BOHLIN (Drysdale):** Madam Speaker, I speak on this matter after hearing the extraordinary amount of concern coming from industry. You come into this Chamber thinking everyone is happy, everyone wants to see it happen, but in reality, the industry is far from happy. It is a typical demonstration of this government's failure to deal with, communicate properly, and negotiate with the industries relevant to this matter.

It has already been noted today the member for Johnston has previously, vigorously objected to this bill being passed. It is hypocritical of the member to say he wishes to support this today.

If we go back, we know in 2000 the CLP government repealed the caravan parks act. It was a dated piece of legislation; it planned to replace it with appropriate legislation relevant to the Northern Territory. It was not a duplication of southern legislation. At the time this was debated the Martin opposition supported the repeal; however the Martin opposition did raise concerns about what legislation would cover caravan parks in the interim.

I note in the last 10 years this Labor government has done nothing. It has sat around, flapped its jaws, failed to consult and, at last minute, when it suits their political agenda, attempts to push through legislation which is greatly opposed by the industry. If you are not governing for the industry, but the occasional tourist, or a long-term resident, what are you doing? Do you not care for the industry you should support? I note the opposition is not only from the caravan park industry, it is also from the tourism industry.

You have had 10 years to put together something which you have jammed into the fire and spat out, in what seems to have been only days, considering its lack of true consultation. I find it hypocritical, again, for the member for Johnston to blame the CLP for not correcting this years ago, when you have sat idle for so long. As I said, to suit your political agenda you are pushing through this legislation, however, if you

took time to negotiate properly with those concerned, you perhaps could have produced appropriate legislation.

I personally do not oppose legislation which gives good guidance and governance to this industry, and I believe I would be on par with most of the industry - they are willing to have legislation. You have sat on your hands for nine years. You then come to this House and say: 'Well, the CLP did it - they took it away'. What a hypocrite. I am disgusted by that behaviour. Grow up and accept your ministerial responsibilities.

One can say it is driven as populist policy, however, ironically, I say it benefits very few people. It certainly does not benefit the industry. Industry people are telling me they have tenants who are concerned about this. They have long-term tenants they value, who are concerned by this legislation.

There is some talk this is here to prevent acts similar to Sundowner Caravan Park. If I owned a block of flats which were not in the best condition, as a business, I should have the right to redevelop that site. As owner of the land I should have the right to redevelop it in whatever way I like, and not be controlled by some persons, or group, who say I cannot take that rotted mass away.

I will highlight a case, this Labor government had accommodation they owned and had control of, and decided they were going to bulldoze it and deal with the residents later. It suited your political need, perhaps, to do so. That is Wirrina flats. It was in poor condition through lack of maintenance by this government, and aged. You have had nine years at the helm. I get rather concerned with the house I have lived in for around four years; I do not do enough maintenance, and I see that minor neglect. You have had nine years and failed to maintain these properties, of course they will need to be replaced. No, you will blame us. You will say 10 years ago we cut the budget, we did this, and we did that. Mind you, we had the recession you had to have, and all those other great Labor happenings.

This government has a block of land in Parap, the flats are not quite as pretty as they would like, they are not really doing the best, let us bulldoze them. We will bulldoze them. Where is the plan? You bulldozed them, and you have not replaced them. If you had any idea of what was happening you would have a plan, then bulldoze them, so they can be replaced immediately, and support given to the displaced people.

I know we had a stir from the other side. The member for Fannie Bay was aghast; I know he enjoyed taking his pizzas there. A similar style of apartments, on a smaller scale, existed in Emery

Avenue. You decided to renovate it and then sell it. However Wirrina flats, for whatever reason - I am not saying they were a great, I am not saying that at all - you bulldozed it, and have failed to do anything with it. You might go through the planning consent approval, put something out advising what is going to be built, and be ready to build immediately. Bulldoze it, do not take the machinery away, and replace the building straightaway. No forward planning! I cannot believe you went down that path without having a future plan. I will probably cop some flak on that later; so be it. The realty is you bulldozed it, and the land is still vacant - you removed what was there.

Other landholders have the right to bulldoze their sites for future planning. Ironically, now there is a big store there, and thousands and thousands of people every year use that store. Many people get the benefit of the discount pharmacy there; it is actually benefiting many people, one could say.

I am going to draw the attention of parliament, and the record, to the general meeting of the Northern Territory Caravan Park Association held Wednesday, 10 February 2010 at 11 am - not long ago. I cannot table this document. I know the government will probably say: 'Table it. Table it', but I definitely have notes on it. It is a public document, so it is not an issue.

For the record, I will list the caravan parks at this general meeting. It is then in *Hansard* these people were present, and are generally not happy with this: the Wintersun Cabin and Caravan Park, the Alice Springs Heritage Caravan and Tourist Park, the Temple Bar Caravan Park, the Free Spirit Resort Darwin, Lee Point/Malak and KOA Caravan Parks, four representatives from Tourism NT, Stuart Caravan and Cabin Park, the Macdonnell Range Holiday Park, Lakes Resort Caravan Park, two apologies from the Hidden Valley Tourist Park, and the Shady Glen Tourist Park. Let the record show those people attended this meeting on Wednesday, 10 February 2010 at 11 am. Certain issues pertaining to this bill were discussed at the meeting, and considerable concern was shown.

Also at the meeting, for the record, were Mr Robert Bradshaw, Director of Legal Policy, Department of Justice, and Gary Clements, Commissioner of Consumer Affairs.

I am now going to read several small excerpts from this, because I believe it is important to get on the record what was said amongst the people, and for it to be clearly understood. On page 2 of 6, fifth paragraph, a direct excerpt from the minutes: Mr Rod Kramer stated his views that the changes created an additional layer of bureaucracy and administration; and that the new

legislation did not help anyone. Rod further stated the association was given an undertaking of consultation, but this did not occur, and the bill subsequently passed. Brendan Heenan concurred.

That is the first issue of consultation raised in these minutes, and it goes on further. I have to say, it smacks of typical hypocrisy and arrogance by this Labor government. They say they are going to consult, and they have had 10 years to do this consultation, and have failed to do it in any substantial matter. It is disgusting.

I will read 3.4 of the minutes on page 3 of 6, and it is entitled 'Consultation'. I will read in full the first paragraph of that section: Maria Purvis asked Robert Bradshaw to outline - Robert Bradshaw is a representative from the Director of Legal Policy of the Department of Justice.

**Ms Lawrie:** He is the Director of Legal Policy.

**Mr BOHLIN:** I am reading from the minutes, so be quiet for a while.

*Maria Purvis asked Robert Bradshaw to outline the consultative process which had occurred with parks by way of background. Robert stated that a substantial review of tenancies was conducted in the 1990s ...*

Twenty years ago:

*... with caravan parks lobbying against the proposed changes and subsequently being removed at the last minute.*

He further stated that:

*Approximately two to three years ago, the member for Nelson, Mr Gerry Wood, attempted to introduce further changes to the legislation but that this was rejected by government at the time.*

Robert stated that in 2007-08:

*A discussion paper was distributed to all operators but that there was no follow through.*

That clearly demonstrates an abstract failure by this government to follow through and do anything except to rest on a review which occurred in the 1990s. This is sloppy policy at best; it does not represent the people it should, and it will not do the job.

I will make further comment on the following paragraph on page 3 of 6 again. It is the last paragraph on this page, the last three lines:

*There was continued lobbying by the NTCPA - Northern Territory Caravan Parks Association – and the association was promised consultation with Katherine Marr which never eventuated, following several no shows at key meetings which she had been invited to, including the NTCPA AGM in October 2008.*

You absolutely failed with this legislation. You failed the people it is expected to represent. It is a disgrace you bring it into this Chamber and attempt to rush it through for your own political gain. I am absolutely disgusted by it. It is very short-sighted. It has the ability to be amended appropriately with proper consultation. You have had 10 years, and you failed to consult. That shows absolute arrogance - absolute arrogance to sit on your hands for 10 years and do nothing. Then, for your own political gain, at the last minute smack it through. If it is not for political gain, I apologise - terrible of me to be a cynic. However, if you have had 10 years and that is the best you can come up with, against extreme opposition to the legislation, it can only be for political gain. It is shameful! I thought by now this government would have learnt a few things. They obviously have not.

One message we keep passing on in this Chamber is, of course, the lack of consultation, and that the Labor government seems to consult by 'I tell', not by 'I wish to hear'. 'I wish to hear' is consultation, not 'I do tell'.

It is disgusting to see legislation in this form, against great opposition. Many people are going to be disadvantaged by it. My colleagues have mentioned some. I support the member for Katherine's comments regarding his time as a police officer. I have many similar stories during my time as a police officer attending caravan parks. Caravan parks need flexibility. If they do not have it - and it appears if this legislation goes through they will not - then you will see dramatic changes that will not benefit either party. It is not going to be beneficial to our tourism industry, and is merely short-sighted – 10 years to consult, and not a thing!

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I should say this to Annie, who will be listening and has waited so long for some form of protection for people who live in caravan parks - today is a good day!

People living long-term in caravan parks are not just a minority. They are not a group of people a left-wing person is sticking up for – so-called left wing. They are citizens of the Northern Territory. They have the same rights as others. They have a right to shelter, and they have a right to be

protected in that shelter. That has been avoided in this debate.

I feel the people who have spoken have not understood. When this legislation was brought forward, I had four large caravan parks in my electorate. There were many long-term residents. What people forget is for many of those long-term residents that was their home. Why should that home be any different to me having a room in a flat which was rented from a landlord? What difference does it make? They were homes.

**Mr Tollner:** Homes do not have wheels on them. There is a big difference.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order, member for Fong Lim!

**Mr WOOD:** Obviously, the home I know of does not distinguish between whether it has wheels, a foundation, sits on water - it is a home. Perhaps the member for Fong Lim should watch *The Castle*.

**Mr Tollner:** *The Castle* is about a house.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order, order!

**Mr WOOD:** Madam Speaker, there is a total misunderstanding. A home is not necessarily made of bricks. A house might be, but a home is not. A home is the concept, where you raise your family, whether it be in a tent ...

**Mr Tollner** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order, member for Fong Lim!

**Mr KNIGHT:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Every speaker has been given the courtesy of others to be heard in peace. I believe the member for Nelson should be given that courtesy.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Standing Order 51:

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

Member for Nelson, you have the call.

**Mr WOOD:** Madam Speaker, when I first came into parliament, I probably did not know anyone in caravan parks. I got to know people in caravan parks through one incident, which is the reason I introduced this legislation. People have given their thoughts on what was the main reason - it may have been another thing to add to

my reasons for introducing legislation to protect people.

However, I received a phone call from some residents at the Sundowner Caravan Park. They were told their rent was going up \$10 a week because they did their washing in their own washing machine, and if they did not want to pay \$10 a week, they had to use the owner's washing machines, which were coin-operated ones. The reason they had been given was because of the extra cost of water, etcetera. I said: 'That is pretty unfair. You have your own washing machine. You have been there for ages. Surely there must be something you can do about it'. I looked up the act - there was nothing. The 55 people living there had absolutely no protection over what was really an unfair increase in their rent. I thought something needed to be done.

Soon after, a decision was made by the owner, based on the fact a new big shopping centre was to be built next to WOW - and I would invite everyone to go past there today, three years or more later, and find we have a vacant block of land with weeds growing on it. A decision was made that those people would have to leave in the middle of the Wet Season.

I know the member for Drysdale was saying landholders should have the right to reinvest in their property - absolutely agree. This legislation does not say that. This legislation says, because of the circumstances surrounding long-term caravan park people who live in a home in many cases - Annie was in Sundowner for 15 years; she lost their place there. She left because of what happened; because she was not protected. They were going to get kicked out in the middle of the Wet Season at a whim - a moment's notice, and I believe that was unfair.

This legislation at least gives them time to pack up. People are right when they say they have gardens and infrastructure, and it might be illegal. Perhaps the caravan park owners are to blame because they let it happen. However, the reality is, many of these people lived there for such a long time, they grew gardens, they had a pergola, they might have a little annex. There were even people there who sublet their property. The person who leased the property paid around \$30 000, only to be told one month later, the caravan park was closing down. So, \$30 000 down the tube! There needs to be, as far as I am concerned, some protection for these people. They are not all down in the dump people; they are not all drug addicts or lonely hearts club people - some might be, so what? I do not know where the word 'citizen' distinguishes between your background and your social status in life!

Many of these people enjoy living in caravan parks because of the company. They have their own little spot in life, but they know next door is someone they can talk to if need be. You have to experience the caravan park. How many people drove past Sundowner and said: 'What a dump, shade cloth along the front'. Go inside and feel the humanity there.

They are not perfect in some cases, of course. As the member for Katherine said, there are problems at times. There are problems in flats as well. There are problems in Housing Commission houses too. A caravan park is not exclusive when it comes to problems with tenants; ordinary people are there who have not had protection for nearly 10 years.

When Tim Baldwin was minister he said something would have to be done about it when the act was repealed. It is in here - you can check *Hansard*; but nothing was done. There was an intention to have something done, and it has taken this long for it to happen.

Yes, I was cranky with the Labor Party for rejecting my bill. I did not mind if they rejected it because the process is government passes laws, and opposition does its best. However, they objected to it, and the minister knows why I believe that happened. It was not because it was no good; it was because at that time there were political ramifications coming back to me because of the resignation of Elliot McAdam.

Be that as it may, the legislation has now come forward. This legislation is about protecting people's homes. There has been discussion that people will be kicked out of their homes. We are talking about people who live 90 days or more in caravan parks. These are the people, in many cases, caravan park owners rely on for income in the off season. If owners are saying: 'We do not like this legislation so much we are going to kick people out', then I say we should have this legislation. If people are going to be kicked out on the whim of someone because they did not like this legislation, I believe we need legislation. Is that fair?

I do not believe the government has introduced anything here that is a great burden. You can make a mountain out of a mole hill if you disagree with this, however I do not see huge costs associated with this. These are normal things which apply in caravan parks throughout Australia. Long-term residents in caravan parks are found throughout Australia, and long-term residents in other states get protection. Are we second class citizens when it comes to our long-term residents? Do we treat those people as second class citizens because caravan park owners do not want these regulations?

I believe most of these regulations are fair. I imagine there will be more discussion over the workability of them, but in the end they work for the owners of a caravan park in that they set out their responsibilities, and the responsibilities of residents of caravan parks.

I could go through the clauses put forward today, and those people who want to argue the technicalities of this legislation, may argue it. I would rather spend time putting the philosophy behind what has been put forward today. Surely, even if it is a minority of people, they should have the same rights as other people. We should not put them down as a second class citizen because that is what they are under the existing non-legislation. They did have some protection once; it was removed, and was never replaced.

If it was good enough in the 1990s to have some protection, why is not good enough in 2010? To me, people like Annie are the salt of the earth. People in caravan parks are good people who need protection. They are not all bad. This legislation does allow for people to be kicked out of caravan parks. I have spoken to many caravan park owners. I have a file with a tick for every caravan park I visited in the Northern Territory. Tell me who else has visited every caravan park in, except for some at Borroloola, some at Douglas Daly and a few at Uluru? I have surveyed all those people.

I only had limited resources, and I did my best to bring back legislation. I knew caravan park owners did not necessarily agree with it; some caravan park owners did not have any qualms about it because they do not take in any long-term residents.

For instance, Free Spirit used to take in long-term residents, now it does not - that is what I was told. Somehow it does not exist. I have had complaints about Hidden Valley. People have said they paid what they thought was standard rent, and as soon as the Dry Season came the rent went up considerably, and they had absolutely no protection. They had to live with the rent and then leave. A major issue concerning the residents has been protection. It does not mean rent cannot go up. It is giving long-term residents some stability in charges; they will not go up until a certain stage, over a certain time. I believe that is good, and is not unreasonable.

I feel disappointed. There is no doubt caravan park owners have some issues. I note the people previously in charge of the Caravan Park Association live in my electorate - they are good people. I understand where they are coming from; however, the reality is we have to find balance, and I believe this has found a balance.

We cannot leave people without protection, and we have. We have argued, in this case, if you live in a caravan, wheels or no wheels, sitting on blocks or not, you are somehow different. I do not believe you are different. I believe you are a citizen of the Northern Territory, you deserve similar rights to someone else, and I believe that is something all politicians should support.

Madam Speaker. I have no hesitation in supporting this legislation.

**Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, that was the greatest load of nonsense I have heard in my life. To suggest he is emulating the actors from the movie *The Castle*, I find absolutely amazing. The family in *The Castle* owned their own house; they owned the land underneath the house. It was not a caravan, it was not a boat, and it was not temporary accommodation in a caravan park. They actually owned the house, and they were fighting for the right to keep their house where it was. They were not located in a caravan park, or a marina. Do we extend this legislation to marinas; is that what the minister is going to do? The member for Nelson sees no difference between a marina and a caravan park. What about people who live on boats in the harbour? What happens there? We may have a big ship coming through, or a cyclone coming and someone decides they do not want to move their boat because it is now their home, and they own this plot of water. How absolutely ridiculous is this whole thing?

Back in 2007, when the member for Nelson first introduced this nonsense legislation, there was quite an extensive debate, and the government sang a completely different tune. At the time, the member for Nelson was quite offended by the government. He said this was nothing but bloody-minded politics because of the nasty hatchet job the member for Nelson had done on, at that time, the member for Barkly, and his insistence on amalgamation of councils. The member for Nelson was not particularly liked by the Labor Party at that time. He said the Labor Party were out to get him, similar to what we are hearing him now say about the Country Liberals. It is only a couple of years ago he was singing the same tune about this Labor government.

I looked through some of the speeches, and I read the member for Johnston's speech. There is nothing in the speech he gave on 10 October 2007 - two-and-a-half-odd years ago - which led me to believe he was attacking the member for Nelson because of the hatchet job he had done on his colleague, the member for Barkly, over local government reform. There was nothing in there at all. However, I did read some very valid reasons why that legislation should not be supported.

I have to say - and I have always said - the member for Johnston is quite an accomplished parliamentarian. He did a real number, in that debate, on the member for Nelson. He pulled him to bits like a clock, as some may say. He demolished the member for Nelson's arguments - absolutely, utterly and entirely - leaving the member for Nelson nowhere to go except to harp on about his friends in the Sundowner Caravan Park who could not move their caravans because they had no wheels because they had been there so long, and the business had closed down. He believed, for some reason, despite the business closing down, these people should have had more time.

The member for Johnston highlighted a range of different areas, such as very little consultation. The consultation the member for Nelson had done occurred before he put out his draft bill, so the people he consulted with were not aware of his proposal. The member for Johnston said he had contacted a range of people involved in the caravan industry, from park owners, to the caravan park owners association, to residents in caravan parks and, almost unanimously across the board, people were absolutely opposed to that legislation. He said he understood some people in caravan parks could require some protection, but it had to be done in a workable way.

There was one quote in here from the member for Johnston I thought was absolute gold. Here it is, and he absolutely, utterly demolished the member for Nelson by quoting Montaigne. He said:

*... as Montaigne once said:*

Saying is one thing, doing another. We must consider the sermon and the preacher distinctly and apart.

This is the quote. He then said:

*I will say that again because it is a very wise saying that all of us as parliamentarians should heed. He said:*

Saying is one thing, doing another. We must consider the sermon and the preacher distinctly and apart.

He went on to say:

*As a government, we have a responsibility to introduce legislation that is workable.*

I will quote the again minister:

*As a government, we have a responsibility to introduce legislation that is workable.*

I have done my own surveying - a couple of quick phone calls here and there. Only a few minutes ago I was on the telephone to Sylvia Wolf, President of Tourism Top End. She was absolutely and utterly outraged this legislation is before parliament. She said to me: 'What are the chances of getting this defeated?' I said: 'Unless some member of the government decides to cross the floor, or the member for Nelson decides to vote against his own legislation, I do not think it is going to be defeated. We are going to be stuck with this'. She said to me: 'Oh, that is dreadful. Where do you think our seasonal workers stay when they are in Territory to work in the tourism industry? It is hard enough to recruit people now'. Yet, you are introducing legislation to make it harder.

I have heard from a caravan park owner in Alice Springs; he is gearing up to remove at least 60 long-term residents of his caravan park because he cannot comply with this legislation. We have 60 residents from just one caravan park who are now going to be thrown into the private rental market, in the worst housing and rental crisis the Northern Territory has ever experienced. I have been informed they are being moved on this weekend.

That is just is one incident. We are seeing it happening already because these people understand this legislation will be passed. Whilst the member for Nelson's heart is out there for one poor family who were asked to move from a caravan site because it was to be redeveloped, or something was to happen with it, we are now seeing masses of people being moved out of caravan parks across the Territory when we have the worst housing and rental crisis in the history of the Northern Territory.

I am hearing these stories everywhere. I had three caravan park owners come to me two weeks ago absolutely outraged at this legislation, saying they will move out all of their permanent residents. They say the impost this will create on their businesses, having to go to court, having to evict people, is not worth the headache considering the amount of rent they receive.

The member for Nelson jumps up and down and rants on about a washing machine, for goodness sake. They had their own washing machine which broke down, now they have to spend \$1 in the caravan park owner's washing machine - well, big deal. When our washing machine breaks down, we go to a laundromat and pay \$1, or more. That is just a reality. I could not actually understand what his point was, apart from the fact he had an issue with washing machines. The fact is, he compares a house on a block of land to a caravan or a boat, saying they are the same thing, and we should be able to live on a

boat; no one can tell you to move your boat, and no one can tell you to move your caravan if you have lived in it for a certain period of time. What an absolute load of nonsense!

The member for Johnston was correct; he was absolutely dead right when he said the government had a responsibility to introduce legislation which is workable. He demolished every single argument the member for Nelson had for introducing his legislation. He demolished him, and a very well thought out speech; he had obviously done his research. He had turned his mind to it, and I say congratulations, member for Johnston, you did a good job, because you analysed something.

We have seen ministers table legislation they have no idea about. However, in this particular case, we saw the member for Johnston armed with facts, armed with real information, and have a good time demolishing the arguments of the member for Nelson. In that speech, he said government has a responsibility to introduce legislation which is workable. What has changed? They were all ready to throw mud and slurs at the member for Nelson in October 2007. They were all prepared to do that; however we find, in February 2010, the landscape has completely changed.

This bill today has nothing to do with the rights of residents, or caravan park owners, or making workable legislation. We know it is not because the member for Johnston did a very good job, several years ago, of showing everyone what a joke the legislation is. Why is the government doing it? We all know why the government is doing it. It is because the Chief Minister, and the member for Nelson, cooked up a grubby little deal which keeps the Labor Party in government. I will say it again: the Chief Minister and the member for Nelson cooked up a grubby little deal which sees the Labor government stay in power. They now desperately need the support of the member for Nelson to remain in government. One of the demands of the member for Nelson, for this government to stay in power, is to introduce unworkable legislation.

I have a list of what is expected of Gerry Wood's agreement with government - October 2009, legislation was to be introduced to protect permanent caravan park tenants. Admittedly we are in February 2010; we are only four or five months late.

**Ms Lawrie:** Introduced in November, you clown.

**Mr TOLLNER:** All right, only one month late. Call me a clown, okay; only one month late, but it is the first cab off the rank.

**Ms Lawrie:** Second.

**Mr TOLLNER:** This is the first item on the grubby little deal between Gerry Wood and the Chief Minister. It is a grubby little deal because it is unworkable; it undermines the whole concept of parliament. It does not matter to these guys because they are only interested in one thing: holding on to power. The interest of responsibly introducing workable legislation has gone out the window because now only one thing matters; keeping the member for Nelson happy irrespective of how stupid, weird and wacky some of his ideas are. They have proven it, because they came to this House in October 2007 and highlighted how stupid, weird and wacky this particular bill is. They highlighted that.

The introduction of this bill now by the government is a sign of their sheer desperation. This is nothing but sheer desperation of a morbid, fettered, filthy, smelly carcass of a dying government. This is a sheer act of desperation for this pathetic, useless government to somehow hang on to power, and they will do absolutely anything to hang on to power.

How does the member for Johnston feel coming into this House and having to now stand on his hind legs and argue for something he did such a fantastic job of two-and-a-bit years ago utterly demolishing. It must be completely soul destroying! I will be honest here. I get on well with the member for Johnston, and I find him a wonderful character. I do not believe he has many character flaws. It must grate when you have come into this House and ...

**Dr Burns:** I volunteered.

**Mr TOLLNER:** You volunteered? You can sit here and smile; we know it is all a show for you guys. You come into this House and understand what you are doing is wrong, however still argue for it, not because of anything the member for Johnston has done, but because of the deal his boss, the Chief Minister, has cooked up with the member for Nelson – some undemocratic, flawed, pathetic, grubby little deal.

This is another sign of how grubby this deal is because now, out of sheer desperation to stay in power, this Labor government has to turn its back on all those things it said in the past. They ignore all of the wonderful, well crafted arguments they had for not introducing this, and come to this House and say: 'Well, we had a rethink. Yes, what we said in the past was really not right. We made a few nips and tucks to this, and changed it around a little'. Fundamentally, it is the same deal! Fundamentally, it is the same as that introduced in October 2007.

Why are you doing it? Simply because your government hangs on it! The member for Nelson said recently he would not vote for anything the Country Liberals put up. He is never going to oppose the government; he believes it is the government's right to introduce whatever it wants, and at worst, he will abstain from the vote. If he finds what you are introducing is so abhorrent or so bad, he will not vote. Why would you even contemplate this? He has already told you he is not going to kick you out of office; we are stuck with you for the next two-and-a-half years. He has caved in. He has crawled out of the place like a dog with his tail between his legs. He does not stand for anything.

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! The member well knows you cannot refer to members. He is referring to members in the Chamber.

**Dr BURNS:** Furthermore, Madam Speaker, I believe Standing Order 62 in relation to offensive and unbecoming words. I believe we have been very tolerant with the member for Fong Lim. Apart from the reference to whether someone is present in this Chamber, the words he used were offensive.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Fong Lim, I will be asking you to stop your speech shortly, because we go to the lunch break. Perhaps when you continue your remarks, you remember the standing orders a little more clearly.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Given it is after 12 o'clock and there are some committee meetings, I ask you to continue your remarks after Question Time.

Debate suspended.

#### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**Mr Neville Perkins OAM  
Mr Abdul Khan**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of the former member for Macdonnell, and former Deputy Labor leader in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from 1977 to 1981, Mr Neville Perkins OAM, together with Mr Abdul Khan of Alice Springs. On behalf of honourable members I extend to you a very warm welcome.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE Member for Araluen**

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Madam Speaker, with the agreement of the Leader of Government Business, I move that the member for Araluen have leave of absence for this sitting week, 23 to 25 February 2010.

Leave granted.

#### **RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 84)**

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim):** Madam Speaker, we were talking about a bill which was first introduced into this parliament by the member for Nelson in 2007, and we are discussing how, at that time, the then Labor government was completely opposed to this bill; they said it was absolute nonsense, they said it was unworkable.

At the time, the member for Johnston was quite surgical in the way he cut to pieces the member for Nelson's argument. I have read the transcripts of those debates, and I have to say what the member for Johnston was saying still stands. The caravan park association does not want this legislation; residents we talked to do not want this legislation. This legislation will not be good for the Northern Territory and it is, as the member for Johnston said previously in this Chamber, completely unworkable.

To recap, the member for Johnston quoted Montaigne and went on to say: 'As a government we have a responsibility to introduce legislation that is workable'. They have a responsibility to introduce legislation which is workable. However, two-and-a-half years later, they bring in the same legislation because they made more workable? No! We have heard time and time again the caravan parks association still hate the legislation. I have received reports caravan parks are now starting to move their long-term tenants out simply because they do not want the hassle of dealing with them. This was signalled some time back by the member for Johnston in his speech. He said:

*Of much greater concern is the sporadic and haphazard consultation the member for Nelson apparently conducted with affected parties, with the result that caravan park owners across the Territory have strongly condemned the bill and warn that it could actually lead to long-term residents being forced out of caravan parks; that is, this legislation carries the very substantial risk of producing an outcome which is the exact opposite of its stated intent.*

That is what the member for Johnston said on 20 February 2008 in relation to this legislation. It still stands today. Some of the reports I have seen prove long-term tenants are being moved out. I would hate that would be the case, but it seems to me it definitely is.

You have to ask the question, if this was so abhorrent in February 2008, and it was unworkable – it was seen by everyone at that time to be unworkable. Even the former member for Braitling, Loraine Braham, said she could not support the legislation. She said:

*Madam Speaker, I let the member for Nelson know that I am not supporting the legislation.*

She said she was not supporting the legislation. No one in parliament in 2008 was supporting the legislation, however, here we are in February 2010, with the same legislation in front of us, this time being ushered in by the government. Why? You have to ask the question why? What has changed since 2008?

What has happened is the government has gone into meltdown because, with the in-fighting, and their failure to manage, they are now barely a rump of a government. As I mentioned earlier, they are a decaying carcass of government gripping with absolute desperation to the reins of power. That is what they are. This act of desperation means they have to support the member for Nelson - no matter how wacky, how loopy, how crazy, no matter how many tenants they put on the streets in the Territory's worst ever housing crisis - they have to support the member for Nelson.

In 2008, there was no such desire whatsoever. During that debate, there was much heckling with the member for Nelson. So much so, in fact, the member for Nelson thought he was being picked on. The member for Johnston interjected during the debate, after the member for Nelson said it was nothing to do with the bill they were talking about; they were just attacking him. The then Treasurer Syd Stirling, said: 'Yes, it is all about the bill'. The member for Nelson said: 'No, it is not'. Then member for Johnston chimed in and said: 'It is about your credibility'. Then the member for Nelson said:

*No, it is not. It is about you getting back at me. You can get back all you like but I will tell people what this is really about: all you are interested in is having a go at me.*

The member for Nelson believed this was an attack on him for unravelling the government's local government reform. He was concerned people were not debating the bill. The fact is they

were debating the bill. When you look at what the member for Johnston said, he had obviously done his homework; he knew the issues. He was very surgical in the way he attacked the bill, and he could not do that if all he wanted to do was attack the member for Nelson for the stand he had taken on local government reforms. It was well thought out. This bill was discussed, it was looked at by government, and government, in all honesty, had to reject it. Why? It was a dud; it was unworkable. It was unworkable then, it is unworkable now. The only difference is the Chief Minister and the member for Nelson have since concocted this grubby little deal, where the Chief Minister can now cling to the reins of power in the Northern Territory, ably assisted by his comrade, the member for Nelson. For that reason, they are not going to rock the boat.

One thing I can say to government members is all is not lost. The member for Nelson ousted himself last week. He ousted himself, and he muted himself, because the member for Nelson informed the public he would not support anything the County Liberals did, regardless of how worthy it seemed. He was not going to support any motion of no confidence in the government; he would not do anything to upset the apple cart, so we can all forget it.

The fact is, from last week, the member for Nelson has muted himself - he copped out, he has his tail between his legs, he scooted out of this parliament and told the public he is not up to it, he is not up to scrutinising legislation unless, of course, it is government legislation, and if he does not like it, the best he will do is abstain. He will not vote against the government, he might abstain, and we all know what that means - that means legislation is successful. However, with this grubby little deal he has cooked up with the Chief Minister, this horrible deal which undermines the very essence of democracy, undermines our whole parliamentary system, this grubby little deal dictates the government has to introduce this legislation, and because of their desperation to stay in government, they ignored it.

They have said, 'stuff the tenants in caravan parks'. They might be thrown onto the street; that does not matter because we are in government. That is really all that matters, and they will swallow this crock, this absolute, abhorrent unworkable legislation, as the member for Johnston said some time ago - they are prepared to do that in order to ...

**Mr BOHLIN:** Madam Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member for Drysdale for being so responsive and perceptive that I may be able to continue these remarks. I promise I will not continue much longer.

The point needs to be made, and it is a point which should be laboured, and government should be made to wear responsibility for this. The government did all the hard work for the opposition in this debate. It is actually government's argument we are using against this bill, because they were quite right, back in 2008, to be opposing it.

It is unworkable. It is a nonsense piece of legislation. Caravan park owners do not want it, tenants do not want it; it is overwhelmingly unpopular. People do not want it. It is bad news, and it is happening at a time when we are in our worst housing and rental crisis in the history of the Northern Territory, and are going to be throwing people onto the streets.

I mentioned earlier the anecdote from Alice Springs - pray it is not correct. However, if it is, it is a terrible thing that 50 or 60 long-term residents are being moved from caravan parks because owners are so concerned about this legislation they will not allow tenants to stay because of the nightmares and problems it will create.

The member for Johnston, back in 2008, had identified this problem. He had identified it, and he spoke about it. I will play it again because it is worth hearing.

*Of much greater concern is the sporadic and haphazard consultation the member for Nelson apparently conducted with affected parties, with the result that caravan park owners across the Territory have strongly condemned the bill and warn that it could actually lead to long-term residents being forced out of caravan parks.*

That is what the member for Johnston said back in 2008. I will carry on:

*... this legislation carries the very substantial risk of producing an outcome which is the exact opposite of its intended consequence.*

The exact opposite of what is intended - to protect residents. It is not protecting residents; it is putting residents onto the street. I would not say it was easy in 2008; however, I imagine it was easier to find accommodation than it is in 2010. We see newspaper reports stating we are the fourth most expensive city in the world; Darwin is the most expensive place in Australia to buy or rent a place - this is appalling. We are in a crisis!

Everyone acknowledges we have a housing crisis. Government is doing what it can, scrambling where it can to pull pieces together; release some land, get something happening, it does not care what, it has to happen. In the middle of the housing crisis, government will put people from caravan parks onto the streets. Why? Because the member for Nelson has some weird, cracked view a caravan is the same as a house, or a boat - you have a tenement to a piece of water - or a long-term caravan park resident, even though he does not own the ground under his caravan, or his caravan might not have wheels, it is the same as a house. He said it is the same as *The Castle*. It is very different from *The Castle*. In *The Castle* the bloke owned the house and the land. The government was trying to compulsively acquire that land. Here there is no ownership of land.

You cannot say to a person: 'You have a right to a berth in the marina because you are living on your boat. You have a right to this spot in the caravan park because that is where your caravan is'. It is nonsense; it is ridiculous. It is absolutely ridiculous! It was outlined that way in 2008. The government saw it for what it was - an unworkable piece of legislation.

Here we are in 2010, because of this shoddy deal, this grubby deal put together to ensure the Chief Minister - I see the Treasurer smiling because she does not like this deal - not one bit. It has put her ambitions on complete hold. She knows she cannot stick the knife into the Chief Minister because where he goes, she goes, and probably three-quarters of the government will be wiped out. The last thing they want is an election. That is why they have to be nice to the member for Nelson, unlike two years ago, when they were quite prepared to jump into him, boots and all, and kick the daylight out of him because of this legislation.

I believe Territorians should be appalled at the depths this government will plumb to in order to stay in power. The member for Nelson has muted himself. He is saying publicly he will not support anything the Country Liberals introduce, irrespective of its merit. He is never going to throw this government out of power - never! He had a bargaining chip until then; he has nothing now. He has nothing! He is completely irrelevant. The only thing of minor relevance is he continues to prop up this dodgy little deal; this shambolic, grubby deal he has made which so much undermines democracy, and the parliamentary system we have in this great country of Australia. That is what it does; and we are seeing the effects now.

We have seen a government on its knees, dying, desperately trying to find something, anything, to hang on and stay in the game. That

is the reason they need the member for Nelson. However, try defeating this bill and see if he does run you out of office. I believe he will not; he has said he would not. This is not a vote change for Gerry. The only thing which will change his vote is if the member for Karama runs a dagger straight through the Chief Minister - a political dagger - I was not speaking literally. I would not want to withdraw that.

We know she has been sitting there sharpening her political knives for a long time now, ready to do him in. Wanted it; desperately wanted it, but, no, she cannot have it now because of this little deal the member for Nelson has made with the Chief Minister. It has not only upset the entire Northern Territory; this deal has upset the entire Labor Party, because 99.99% of the Labor Party has been left out of it. There is only one man who is in it, and he has to stay in it otherwise buggerlugs from Nelson will pull the pin on him.

**Dr BURNS:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! The language is becoming very common.

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is nearly the end, Leader of Government Business. Please continue, member for Fong Lim.

**Mr TOLLNER:** I apologise, Madam Speaker. I know the member for Johnston is a man of culture. I would not want to start talking like a commoner around him. This legislation stinks. It has a smell of corruption all about it; corruption of our parliamentary system.

Do not jump up!

**Dr BURNS:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I know the member for Fong Lim is trying to push everyone's button, however, he is crossing the line all the time, and it is parliament. Let him go outside and say it.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Madam Speaker, I did not refer to any individual. I talked about a corruption of the parliamentary process. That is what I spoke of. I know the member for Johnston loves to get up and interrupt me. I was not trying to be ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Fong Lim, if you could withdraw that last comment and then continue for your short period of time.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Whatever it was, I will withdraw it.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**Mr TOLLNER:** This is a dereliction of the parliamentary process; this is complete abrogation of the parliamentary process. This is shameful to

everyone who comes into this House because it shows how this government is prepared to sacrifice those things they believe in to grip onto the reins of power, and you should all hang your heads in shame, every single one of you who vote for this.

**Ms LAWRIE (Justice and Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I thank members for their contribution, especially the member for Drysdale.

I have never heard legislation described as an 'abstract failure' before. I guess he meant abject, however, it was an interesting debate. It was a debate where some members went to the substance of the legislation we are debating, other members chose to grandstand in front of their mates and literally embark on political rants, and some members dealt with the history of this legislation. Everyone had their own prism through which they dealt with it.

I will endeavour to do a combination of thing: talk about the legislation, pick up on the questions and issues raised by members opposite and put them context, and talk about why we need this legislation.

I want to go back to, philosophically, where we are coming from. Citizens often need protection. In a Nirvana environment, you would like to think, you do not have to put laws in place to provide protection for people. The reality is, laws exist across a range of areas to provide protection to the people of the jurisdiction - our citizens. The *Residential Tenancies Act* certainly provides protections for renters and, what we are doing is amending this to ensure we are capturing people who are renting in a caravan park environment.

I will go to the issue of houseboats, because there appears to be some confusion amongst members opposite. If you listen to the contribution of members opposite, the sky is falling in and the world as we know it is going to change with the passage of this legislation. There will be a great calamity, and people will be turfed out of caravan parks. I do not believe that would be the case. I am not taking idly the threats which have been slung across the Chamber by members opposite regarding a caravan park owner in Alice Springs threatening ...

**Ms Purick:** It is not a threat; it is fact.

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... to evict 50 people.

I will pick up on the interjection from the member for Goyder. Member for Goyder, if there is someone who has told you that, I will follow up post this debate - as soon as I am out of the Chamber; I have two other debates - as to who that is, and I will contact them directly. I cannot

imagine that, morally, someone would want to embark on that course of action. I do not suffer any misapprehension that there is absolute tension amongst a few caravan park owners regarding this legislation. That has been simmering for many years, and I will talk to that.

I also believe there has been scaremongering from members opposite regarding the legislation, and how onerous they may believe it to be. When you get to the detail of it, and some of the issues around cost - which I will go through as well - it is actually not that onerous. If a caravan park owner does not want to go to the extent of individual agreements, etcetera, there will be a default agreement sitting in the regulations. That is an important issue for the caravan park owners who have long-term tenants. Of course, many do not want to go to the extent of creating the agreement themselves. I believe it is important for the industry to work with our Commissioner for Tenancies, his delegates, and our legal policy people to create the default agreement. That will be the agreement owners and tenants can rely on in the event a notice needs to be given. The default agreement is very important to the industry. That work will occur between now and late this year, when this legislation is intended to commence.

We are having a lengthy commencement period to allow for officers of government to work very closely with caravan park owners on the implementation, the awareness of the obligations, and how to set up a smooth transition into the operation of this legislation when it commences late this year. That being said, I put on notice I am prepared to change the commencement date if there is extreme action occurring. I would hope calm heads prevail; that discussions occur, as they should occur. However, in the interest of the discussions that need to occur, I am saying it is our intention to commence this in late 2010.

We would be hopeful this legislation passes today. We will then ensure caravan park owners are given all the information they need regarding the legislation; the awareness they need. It is critically important they participate fully in the discussions on the default agreement in the regulations. That is critically important to them. I have made my views on that known to officers of my department.

I am not going to say the consultation which has occurred to date has been perfect. I do not believe it has. I believe it could have been better. That being said, there was consultation. A great amount of effort was made - not necessarily a great amount of response coming back to government which, in part, has been an issue. Due to the limited response, there was not a robust and fulsome face-to-face engagement

occurring in the meantime. I will go to the consultation process.

I am saying up-front it is the responsibility of members of parliament opposite who have made the threats to provide the government with details of who they believe will be evicting long-term tenants. I will follow that up as soon as I am out of the Chamber today. I will have my staff start to follow it up. Put the details before us and we will pursue them. There is absolutely no intention by this government to see any battler, in any caravan park, adversely affected by legislation which sets up a framework of rights and obligations and responsibilities - a framework existing everywhere else in Australia except the ACT. In all the other states of Australia the sky has not fallen in. Caravan parks exist; they exist with long-term tenants.

The Leader of Government Business mentioned his experience every year at a caravan park in New South Wales, predominantly made up of long-term tenants. These are great places for many of us to visit as holiday makers, and they will continue to be. There is certainly the Aussie battler who loves living in caravan parks. We are talking about the Aussie battler, and this legislation is about giving them a fair go. It is not overly onerous. We have sifted through the workability of the legislation to ensure it is as workable as any legislation can be which sets up a new set of rights and obligations.

We have some committee stage amendments which have come through because we have been listening to people as we have gone along. The technical amendments before us today go to the heart of that.

There was an allegation from the member for Braiting that the amendments landed on the desk today. Yes, they are distributed on the day of debate of legislation. However, two weeks ago my staff ensured the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Attorney-General received the amendments proposed at that time - two weeks ago - which is the normal course we follow in advising the opposition of amendments coming forward. Further, yesterday, my staff ensured the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Attorney-General were sent the updated schedule of amendments.

We can have a philosophical argument about whether this legislation is required. We can certainly argue whether the government has been fulsome in its consultation. We can argue over the details of the legislation, but do not come into this Chamber and tell mistruths about the amendments, when we follow a process, long established, about providing them to the opposition.

The amount of mistruth flung in this Chamber by the opposition is increasing by the day. They come into this House and say anything because it sounds good coming out of their mouths. Take your responsibilities as parliamentary members more seriously, is what I would say. We might have more robust, reasonable, and serious debate in this Chamber.

The legislation is a framework designed to benefit both long-term residents of caravan parks, and also the owners. There are some things in here regarding setting the rules, and everyone knowing the rules, which, used well, will be very useful. It will provide a level of security and certainty in long-term caravan park agreements which certainly did not exist in the Northern Territory, to this extent, previously. We believe it is important, in the current economic climate with the rising cost of housing - there was debate around that - to have these provisions in operation in the Territory.

Long-term caravan park tenants and caravan park owners will be treated consistently under this legislation with other tenants and landlords and will now have, generally, the same rights and obligations. If it is okay as a tenant of a flat, why is it not okay for a long-term tenant who chooses to live in a caravan park? Some people refer to them as trailer parks instead of a flat. What is the difference, if that is their home; if that is where they are living? Fifteen years was the example the member for Nelson used. What is wrong with providing someone notice they will have to move? It is not about saying you cannot close the park, or you cannot sell the business, alleged by both the member for Katherine and the member for Drysdale - it is not saying that. This legislation does not prevent the sale of caravan parks, it does not prevent the closure of caravan parks; however it does say, if you have a long-term tenant, you have to give them notice.

It does not prevent caravan park owners from summarily evicting someone who is causing trouble. The member for Katherine went on, and on, and on, about disgraceful tenants he came across as a police officer. Clearly, he does not understand the legislation. It provides for an eviction under those circumstances; not a notice, evict. Of course that eviction can be tested through the Commissioner of Tenancies, as it can be in other rental situations.

It would be useful if some members would start to understand the legislation we are debating rather than come into this House and make things up. I have been in this parliament since 2001 and I am increasingly curious as to the level of make believe occurring from members opposite. Some members are going to the effort and extent of getting briefings, going through the legislation and

posing questions. The member for Goyder did that in her contribution. Others are simply saying whatever they want to say, with no basis founded in the legislation we are debating, or the reality. Little wonder the greater public have a dim view of politicians if that is how they are behaving.

There are technical amendments relating to condition reports. This will address the operational problems which arose in 2008 associated with condition reports for continuing tenancies, and whether the commissioner can take into account the extent of a tenant's agreement to a breach of a tenancy agreement by a landlord. These technical amendments will clarify the position and make life easier for landlords, tenants and real estate agents. As I mentioned, they were certainly provided to the opposition two weeks ago, and again as early as yesterday.

I will go to the questions raised in the debate. The member for Goyder asked about insurance consequences for caravan park owners having to move vans which they did not own. The advice I have received is there should not be any insurance consequences. The act does not change the underlying legal relationship between the owner and the resident; it just sets out certain rights and responsibilities.

The member for Goyder also named a policy officer who was a no show at various meetings. The officer named is aware of the accusations, and vehemently denies ever being invited to attend those meetings. It was the subject of discussion at the AGM. The meeting was attended by Department of Justice officers. It was very much a 'He said, she said'. My officers did not enter into that; they were more interested in discussing the legislation itself.

After comments were received from the 2008 Issues Paper, a bill was drafted and sent to the member for Arafura, the member for Nelson, the Law Society, and the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory for targeted consultation. After the bill was introduced, the Department of Business and Employment consulted directly with stakeholders through November and December 2009.

I want to go to the issue of consultation and, historically, where this has come from, because some people have claimed in this House that it is grubby and it is only in response to the agreement. Of course we are introducing it in response to the government's agreement with the member for Nelson. We make no bones about that, and I will talk about that in a media release issued.

That being said, it was on the government's legislative agenda. During the 2008 debate, the then Attorney-General - and surprisingly skipped over by members opposite - not mentioned when they were quoting members of government. Back in 2008 the former Attorney-General, Dr Peter Toyne, gave an undertaking to develop policy and reform in this area. He assured the Assembly this was progressing, and government would keep working to standardise and clarify the rights and obligations of residents and operators.

I will quote from some aspects of that debate; however they certainly stayed right away from what the then Attorney-General had to say. I will go to this issue of consultation. I said at the outset I believe it was not everything it could have been; lessons have been learnt from that. I want fulsome consultation regarding the regulations, particularly that default agreement.

In mid-2008, the Issues Paper regarding caravan parks and mobile homes legislation was publicly released by the government. The paper was posted to over 100 caravan parks in the Northern Territory, and it was placed on the Department of Justice Internet site. Advertisements were also placed in the *Northern Territory News*, and through community service announcements. A copy of the Issues Paper was also sent to the member for Nelson.

There were 10 submissions to the Issues Paper. Of those 10 respondents, three were residents, two were caravan park owners, one was of unknown origin, one was a member of the Legislative Assembly, and there were three from stakeholder organisations.

A report was then prepared and submitted to Cabinet, and drafting of the bill was approved. On 22 July last year, a copy of the then draft bill was sent for comment to the member for Arafura, the member for Nelson, the Law Society of the NT, and the REINT. Consultation with stakeholders, as I said, intensively occurred between November and December through the Department of Business and Employment, and Tourism NT. A fact sheet was prepared and provided to caravan park owners.

The Department of Business and Employment e-mailed details concerning the legislation to 120-odd e-mail addresses for caravan park businesses of various kinds, noting sometimes multiple addresses for perhaps one business. The e-mail contained a fact sheet, and a summary to the effect the main point was the legislation did not apply to tenancies under 90 days.

The four responses received from the industry came from Rod Cramer, Dave Fuller, Yvonne Briscoe and Lyn Freeman. As a result of the

earlier consultations, the qualification period of long-term resident was changed from 60 days to 90 days. The government was saying we define a long-term tenant as someone who has resided for 60 days. The feedback we received was it was too short; we put it up to 90 days, which was in line with the original private member's bill from the member for Nelson.

Looking at that time period, as Attorney-General I looked at the time frames for similar legislation around Australia. At the greatest, long-term tenants are defined as 90 days. Other jurisdictions vary; in some it is down to 42 days, some are two months. No jurisdiction is longer than 90 days, so we chose the greater extent of the time period.

I might seek additional time from colleagues.

**Dr BURNS:** Madam Speaker, I move that the minister be given an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms LAWRIE:** We moved the definition to 90 days, picking up on the feedback we received from caravan park owners - the four who responded at the time. Further consultation took place; departmental officers addressed the association once they had a meeting schedule for 2010. There has been some toing and froing around this, but there certainly was a desire and intent to meet with the association. My advice is it was a case of getting the meeting schedule dates set for 2010, which conquered that first meeting, which was about a week ago.

We provided briefings to members of parliament throughout the Christmas period of 2009. We provided a briefing, in December, to the member for Goyder; she raised issues at that briefing which we were able to go through with her.

I want to go through some of the specific things she said. She raised an issue Rod Cramer had raised in his correspondence to me, essentially calling people who are not paying their rent 'thieves'. I provided a response to Rod, and also to the President of the Caravan Parks Association, and I will provide one on the record today to the member for Goyder.

The law does not see people who default on rent as thieves. That is the same for any tenancy; not just caravan parks, that is how the law sees it. Nothing we are doing in the amendments to this legislation will aid or abet people not paying their bills. There are processes landlords can follow in recovering debt - which is arrears in rent - and they are well established processes. I understand

Rod's concern in seeing people as thieves; however the law has never recognised people who are in rent arrears as thieves. I guess it is a recognition that, sometimes, people get into rent arrears through financial hardship rather than a deliberate attempt to shirk their responsibility to meet their rent payments. Regardless, there is a well-established process for dealing with rent arrears which can be pursued, for free, by caravan park owners.

Regarding the commencement of the *Caravan Parks Act Repeal Act* creating a void, I am advised that was not the case. The caravan parks act only regulated health and safety issues. It did not provide protection to long-term residents. The void was created when the CLP repealed the *Tenancy Act* provisions.

Regarding the question of definition of 'a job' and of 'holiday accommodation', the definition of 'job' is irrelevant to the operation of these provisions. The act does not currently apply to residential premises provided for the purposes of holiday accommodation, and this does not change. It is up to a caravan park owner to make it clear premises are provided for holiday purposes, or are not.

If the caravan park is sold to a new owner, the question was raised as to whether they are forced to accept the long-term residents. The purchaser is obligated to honour existing agreements within the act in respect to how that applies when all tenancy properties are sold. If the purchaser wants residents to leave, give them the appropriate notice; that is, the 28-day notice period for termination. The notice period required for a lease with no end date is 42 days. Normal circumstances apply there. If the new owner does not want them, they give notice of termination in line with the 28-day notice of termination.

Houseboats were mentioned, and the question was whether they are being defined. The act currently applies to residential premises. Residential premises currently are defined to include houseboats. This has not been changed and, as such, has nothing to do with houseboats and the definition being changed. In the absence of a definition of such a term, a commonsense approach is taken in determining whether a premises is, indeed, a houseboat.

I turn to the member for Braitling. He said the legislation will drive up costs, forcing people to sign leases, take bonds, do condition reports, etcetera. I do not agree with him. I contend it will not necessarily drive up costs. We have made it clear there is no requirement to do condition reports, or to take bonds. That is an option for park owners. To say it will drive up costs when it is not mandatory is curious. As I mentioned, if

they do not want written agreements, or go to the extent and expense of written agreements themselves, there will be a default written agreement in the regulations. That is not a cost imposition on the owner. Our provisions ensure landlords are not acting unreasonably when it comes to bonds and condition reports. It talks about reasonable behaviour in the operation of those, rather than the mandatory aspects.

How this will work in identifying a lease boundary of a lot was another question from the member for Braitling. Most caravan parks have a mud map and site numbers. This can be used to identify a site a person may have an agreement over. It is certainly similar to renting a flat, or a shop, by a number. That would be a practical way to apply it.

Does the legislation apply to cabins or hotel-type rooms? The provisions will only apply if that accommodation is not provided for holiday accommodation, and the resident remains for longer than 90 days. If the owner indicated the accommodation is for holiday purposes only, then this act will not apply.

He talked about structures erected by long-term tenants. As the member for Nelson suggested, this is a shared problem in parks. Ownership of such should be covered in a written agreement; however, the act does alter the law concerning who really owns, or is responsible for, structures on the land, and the common law applies.

Regarding certification, it is certainly a *Building Act* issue, and this act will not change how this would be dealt with in accordance with the *Building Act*.

The opposition contended not one single person is happy with this. The member for Nelson mentioned someone he knows. We had the legislation before the Darwin Community Legal Service, which runs the Tenant Advisory Service. They indicated they are happy with the legislation. They know this legislation will mean they can now assist long-term residents in caravan parks if they are, indeed, being treated unfairly, which they were unable to do previously.

To answer the questions around seasonal workers, owners can always give residents a termination notice. They need to give appropriate notice and will need to, therefore, plan in advance when they want sites vacated. Owners can also have fixed-term tenancies which end at the appropriate time; that is, if they are expecting an influx, they could have fixed-term tenancies with an agreed end date, to recognise that. Provided the resident is given appropriate notice, they have no means of complaint. It all goes down to a test -

the great old Aussie test of what is fair. What is a fair go; what is a fair way to treat someone in a fair society? It is not an onerous test; it is a fair test, giving notice.

The member for Katherine, as I explained before, was simply wrong. He does not understand the immediate termination provisions in this legislation, which include causing serious interference with the reasonable peace, comfort or privacy of persons living in or near the park. If a resident is immediately evicted, the owner must refer the termination to the Commissioner of Tenancies within three days. This is simply a safeguard to prevent abuse of this power.

The member for Drysdale was pretty strange in his comments. Of course, owners could go ahead and redevelop their property; they simply would have to give notice whereas in the past they did not. He said different rules are being applied here than for land being redeveloped, for example, the Wirrina flats. Well, he is wrong. In both cases, even under the current law, the lease or licence under which a unit, a house, or a caravan site is occupied has to be determined in accordance with the agreement. A change in ownership means the new owners would need to give notice of termination if they wanted to redevelop; an existing owner needs to do the same. In relation to the business going bust, I have covered that. Of course, a failed business would mean either a new owner, or a closure, and that is about providing notice.

There was much discussion around the Caravan Parks Association Annual General Meeting attended by officers of the Department of Justice. I want to point out, yet again, despite sending out over 120 e-mails to caravan park owners, only four responded, and their issues were subsequently covered.

In closing, I am going to go into committee stage for amendments. However, even in 1999, the then CLP minister stated, in repealing legislation, there has to be some provision in the future to look after tenancy arrangements in reference to caravan parks. This issue of repeal has been around the Territory since the late 1990s. It has been a long time coming; it is fair and reasonable legislation. We will work with the park owners ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Attorney-General, your time has expired.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

**In committee:**

**Madam CHAIR:** Honourable members, the committee has before it the Residential Tenancies

Amendment Bill 2009 (Serial 84), together with a schedule of amendments No 31, circulated by the Minister for Justice and Attorney-General.

Clauses 1 to 22, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 23:

**Ms LAWRIE:** Madam Chair, I move amendment 31.1. Clause 23 of the bill proposes a new section 122A. It provides it is an offence to not have a written tenancy agreement between a caravan park operator and a resident. The maximum penalty for this offence is 20 penalty units. Caravan park operators have pointed out there is no such offence for any other residential tenancies. For other residential tenancies, section 19 sets out what is required in written agreement and, if there is a written agreement, provides for penalties if the landlord does not give a copy of the written agreement to the tenant. However, if no written agreement is entered into, or the written agreement does not comply with section 19, then a default agreement, prescribed by regulation, applies. There is no actual criminal penalty in section 19 for not providing a written agreement.

The government accepts there is little policy justification for there being this kind of difference between the two types of residential tenancies. It was not the intent to treat caravan park owners differently from other landlords, except where necessary. Accordingly, clause 23 is to be amended by removing proposed section 122A. In its place, section 19 of the existing act will apply. A note to this effect is to be included with the new section 122A.

New section 122A is now a statement as to the general purpose of the Part 13A. Clause 23 also provides for a new section 122B. This states caravan rules, as provided in new sections 122C to 122F, are taken to form part of the written agreement. The amendments concerning section 122A mean there will no longer necessarily be a written agreement. Accordingly, new section 122B is to be removed, and replaced so the caravan park rules are taken to form part of a written agreement, if there is one, or the default agreement provided for in section 19(4).

**Ms PURICK:** Madam Chair, can I seek points of clarification?

**Madam CHAIR:** Member for Goyder, you will need to seek leave, as you are not at your usual desk. If you will ...

**Ms PURICK:** I seek leave to sit here.

**Madam CHAIR:** That is fine. Hansard is aware you are now sitting at that desk. Yes, you had a question.

**Ms PURICK:** Madam Chair, I wanted to seek clarification regarding the definition of caravan and, assuming the tenant is signing an agreement, in the legislation it says: 'the meaning of a caravan is a caravan prescribed ...' etcetera, however it also includes, 'an immovable dwelling situated in a caravan park'. Are these agreements going to apply to people who live in cabins in caravan parks for extended periods of time?

**Ms LAWRIE:** Yes. If they met the 90 day rule, yes.

**Ms PURICK:** If they are a tourist living in the caravan park - under the legislation people who are tourists or travellers are excluded?

**Ms LAWRIE:** Yes.

Amendment agreed to.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Madam Chair, I move amendment 31.2, proposed new section 122C providing for caravan park rules.

Proposed new section 122D provides a process for amending the rules. Neither provision cover the making of the original rules of the park; that is, the rules which already exist. This amendment will change section 122C so the same processes applying to the amendment to rules, applies to the making of the rules.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 23, as amended, agreed to

Clause 25:

**Ms LAWRIE:** Madam Chair, I move amendment 31.3. The current bill has no provision which governs the status of caravan park rules in existence at the time of the commencement of the new legislation. Proposed new section 164A provides that current rules will continue to apply as if made under section 122C.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 25, as amended, agreed to.

**Madam CHAIR:** If I could return to clause 24' forgive me, I will put the question.

Clause 24 agreed to.

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

Bill reported with amendments.

Report adopted.

**Ms LAWRIE (Justice and Attorney-General):** Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### MOTION

#### Note Paper - Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2008-09

Continued from 20 October 2009.

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Madam Speaker, may I say, at last. It is almost like going into the annals of some ancient library, and discovering on the notice paper in some ancient hieroglyph, a requirement for this Chamber to dust off the 2008-09 Treasurer's Annual Report and speak to it. The one true thing that can be said of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Year 2008-09, is it is an ancient document. The government will be in final throes shortly of preparing its budget for the financial year 2010 -11, and we are still in February of the year of our Lord 2010 debating the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report.

What can I tell you about that, but to say it does not reflect, in many ways, the original budget at the beginning of the year? I am not going to suggest for one second a budget, and an annual financial report, should match each other completely simply because they will not; they are living, breathing documents, until such time as they die of old age, as this one has. These living, breathing documents change over the course of the year, and no one would be so naïve as to suggest these documents do not change over time. It is notable, however, there are some changes worth commenting on.

In the general government sector cash flow statement of the 2008-09 budget, predicted income for the Northern Territory in the financial year 2008-09 was to be \$3.783545bn. It is interesting to note, in the final Treasurer's Annual Financial Report the figure was actually \$4.232116bn, substantially more; some \$450m more than they expected. It is also interesting to note, with the income of \$3.7 to \$3.8bn they expected, at the beginning of the financial year, to produce a surplus of \$9.316m, and in actual fact they produced a surplus, in spite of getting an extra \$450m, of \$135m.

It is important to note they managed to spend it all. Why? Because they are committed to spending it all.

I listened with great interest, on various media outlets, to the Treasurer pontificating about great economic management. The first thing we have to correct the Treasurer on is she is not an economic manager so much as a fiscal manager when it comes to the Northern Territory budget - a distinction which continues to escape the Treasurer. In economic management, the current financial year is a better year than was originally predicted, which is due to things such as the price of commodities in China. These are economic management issues, and we are talking about fiscal management. Regarding the extra income the Territory received, it is important to note - as the Treasurer well expects me to note - the 2008-09 cash surplus of \$136m was a \$127m improvement on the original budget, and a decrease of \$75m from 2007-08. As with the operating result, improvement since 2009 estimate is largely due to Commonwealth revenue received late in 2008-09, and increased mining royalties, though this was offset by a decline in GST.

What a surprise; the Treasurer gets more money in her budget in the last minute of the financial year and, suddenly, claims a wonderful surplus, and she managed it. Nonsense! The federal government managed it, and put money into her budget at the end of the year. The problem is, when that money hits - I think it was about a third of \$336m, if I remember the document correctly, however, the extra money then has to be expended in the following financial year. That should then flow into a deficit in the following financial year. It flows into a deficit in the current financial year because we can see it.

At the risk of anticipating a debate - because I believe the next item for debate in this House deals with the mid-year report - there was a predicted budget cash deficit of \$200m. The mid-year report has identified that as a cash deficit of \$250m-odd - I think \$249m is the number. We find ourselves in a situation where the Treasurer will be falling over herself to describe, in the next debate, how it was the requirement to spend money from the Commonwealth that has led to this outrageous deficit position, and the underlying income has actually improved. She will say it would be worse if it was not for 'our good fiscal management'. That is all predictable; it is what this Treasurer does - she is most selective in describing her deficits and her surpluses in two different ways.

A success has 1000 mothers; a failure is an orphan. The Treasurer, in this debate, will describe how good the surplus is, it is all down to her and, in the next debate, she will say it is down to requirements of federal expenditure. The fact is she cannot have it both ways. She is either a good fiscal manager and produces a good

surplus, or she is a bad fiscal manager and produces a deficit, or she simply admits the truth when she fronts the camera.

What concerns me coming through this debate, are some of the other issues which occur, particularly in the notes to the financial statements. I draw the Treasurer's attention to something which leapt out at me, on page 90 of this report, in relation to contingent liabilities. I ask the Treasurer to explain this contingent liability a little more fully. I am not sure if I understand why we are preparing for this liability by having a contingency in place. I quote from page 90, and it is note 35 in relation to the financial notes. It says:

*There are risks in relation to the Darwin Waterfront Development project that may result in payments being made by the Territory. These risks relate to discriminatory changes in law, native title and environmental clean-up costs.*

Madam Speaker, I hate to break it to the Treasurer, however, the native title issue over Darwin has been settled. I am a little surprised she is unaware of that, because it was her government, and the Cabinet she sat in, which chose to continue funding the battle against the native title claimants, the Larrakia people, over the Greater Darwin area, and they were successful in resisting that claim. We can all remember the court had determined native title had not survived continuously during the period of settlement, and thus native title was extinguished over Darwin. That received more than a little press, because the minister would have been aware of this as, subsequent to that time, Cabinet would have signed off on more expenditure during the appeal process which ultimately ended up in the High Court. The High Court, as I understand it, upheld the decision of the Full Bench of the Federal Court, which upheld the decision of the Federal Court, which determined native title had been extinguished.

The *Australia Act 1986* eliminated appeals to the Privy Council. I am curious to see what appellent body the Treasurer expects native title to be appealed to when the High Court has finally ruled the Federal Court was essentially correct. The Treasurer is still preparing for the contingent liability of a native title claim which has no higher appellent body to go to. I am surprised the Treasurer, who would have been in Cabinet when decisions to recess these native title claims were made, and when advice had been received that these native title claims had been dealt with, is preparing to deal with a contingent liability rising out of a non-existent claim.

Perhaps the word we are looking for is 'oversight' on the part of the Treasurer. We know she has a history of coming into this House without having read the documents she is debating ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr ELFERINK:** Well, she is admitting she has not read the material. I am curious to see her explain why she allowed this in the document, when a native title contingent liability should not be there. That is an interesting question.

I am also intrigued by some other issues in the document and notes, not least of which is key assumptions are being built into further liabilities being carried - under note 29 - not least of which is the salary rate of 4.5% pushing into the future. Whilst I realise the position this government has painted itself into in expanding the public service, the government now finds itself in a situation where it cannot even meet pay rises to the level of the CPI. They are still assuming, in the long term, they will continue expanding the amount paid to public servants, and they are assuming, at a long-term rate, a growth of 4.5%. That is note 29. That is what they will be factoring in to deal with superannuation costs.

That takes me to another issue in the financial report which relates to Territory superannuation liabilities. Something which has disappeared from the government's various documents, particularly annual financial reports, is a graph I found on page 12 of the 2004-05 TAFR, which deals with the superannuation liabilities and emerging costs for 2003-04 and 2004-05. It shows a substantial increase in both the superannuation liability and the emerging costs, from a position where, in 2003-04 the expected peak for the superannuation liability would be in 2005, with a liability of about \$1.4bn, and the emerging costs in the year 2003-04 would peak at about 2012-13, with a liability of \$1.2bn.

In that document you can see both those lines go up substantially and the superannuation liability is predicted to peak at just under \$2bn in about 2012. During the briefing in relation to this document I asked for that graph to be reproduced, because I cannot find it in these documents. It has been reproduced by Treasury officials. Now I compare the figures - and I will talk less about the emerging costs and more about the superannuation liability, which will now peak at about 2016, with the liability increasing to over \$2.5bn. It pushes out, I suspect by the line - the line is not complete - however, it will push out beyond the year 2065.

I am aware the government does not have control over many factors which deal with the

superannuation liability, and the huge debt burden of the Northern Territory in relation to that liability. The government cannot control how long people will live. What they can control are wage rises which have run beyond their budgets repeatedly. In fact, it was so serious a few years ago that when the budget was exceeded by 12% the Auditor-General was critical of it. Something I hope the Chief Minister has had explained to him is the decision to increase current wages does have a flow-on effect into the liabilities into the future. There is an expectation by Treasury that will increase, on average, according to that note, by 4.5% into the future. Whilst this financial year the government is expecting to deal with a superannuation liability arising out of a 2.5% increase in the current cycle, the fact is Treasury expects the government will once again lose control of its numbers and its negotiating processes, and the long-term rate to be applied into the future will continue to be 4.5%.

The government, I suspect, will say: 'If you compare the budget to the current superannuation liability, you will see it is coming down'. We appreciate that, but it will not be management on the part of government which drives the liability down. It will have more to do with the 10-year bond rate, something the Treasurer switches on and off when it suits her. She continues to switch these things on and off, and will even tell journalists how she has things under control, however, she will not describe how - and that is the 10-year bond rate. I am wondering how the Treasurer will announce to this House she has the 10-year bond rate under control, and how she sets that rate. If she is not the person responsible for setting that rate, she is being a little cute by half in how she expresses these things.

Note 9 - Other Royalty Revenue, is the cavalry the Treasurer did not expect to get, because in the financial year 2007-08, royalty revenue was \$95m. Royalty revenue jumped the following year to \$224m, and one of the reasons it did is the exchange rate changed with the global financial crisis. The exchange rate heavily favoured the commodities from an Australian perspective, and, whilst there may have been almost no change in the amount exported, the exchange rate saw a sharp jump in royalty income. I am wondering if the Treasurer would care to explain to this House how she was able to convince China to continue purchasing metal and other things from the Northern Territory. I am interested to hear how she brought that influence to bear. Other than that, if it was a case of happening to be in the right place at the right time, once again it has less to do with economic management and more to do with fiscal management, namely, pushing the numbers through the books.

It is important to note there was a drop-off in GST during this period, which was to be expected. However, this is a gravy train the government has been all too happy to jump on in past, and not engage in any serious debt reduction whilst facing a substantial growth in their superannuation liability, whilst the Conditions of Service Reserve, the COSR, to deal with the superannuation liability, has been shrinking. It is hard to judge a government on a single year's effort. One has to look at how a government has engaged in its financial strategy over a number of years to see how they have performed in relation to their stated achievements.

That is where this government really does fall down, because the revenues this government has achieved, particularly through the GST since coming into office, have been substantial. This Treasurer's Annual Financial Report provides us with a snapshot, which the government is reluctant to talk about, which is why they leave it buried on the notice paper until February the following year. The Auditor-General see it, he makes a report on it, that report hits the table, sits on the Notice Paper, gets debated before the report itself gets debated, which shows you the government is not too serious about this. Of course, being such an ancient document, it will not receive any press.

To cut a long story short, this government has been awash in the rivers of gold which have flowed to the Northern Territory, particularly through the GST. They have had an opportunity, particularly through unexpected income; this is the windfall referred to, to reduce debt in a serious way. They have used the conditions of service reserve to mask the nett debt situation of the Northern Territory by using that financial asset to demonstrate nett debt is coming down. It is as if they are suggesting they can use that asset for reasons other than superannuation costs into the future which, I suppose, they technically can, which is how they do the justification of using the COSR to mask the nett debt of the Northern Territory. However, to do that they would have to incur more borrowings, so it is borrowing one way or the other.

Rivers of gold, and the government has taken advantage of those rivers of gold to spend, spend, spend their way through their years in government. Now the bill is being presented, and that is the reason we find the government scratching around trying to cut corners left, right and centre. This is not a government which has positioned itself well considering the advantages they have been given. It is reflected in this document, and it will be reflected in the next document under debate.

**Ms LAWRIE (Treasurer):** Madam Deputy Speaker, a very predictable contribution from the member for Port Darwin. He comes into this House, poses questions with his theories, and completely ignores the advice provided in briefings by Treasury officials.

I will take you through the contingent liability in regard to the waterfront. You raised this during the briefing you had on TAFR by Treasury officials. They advised, as is not unsurprising in Treasury - they take a cautious approach to these matters.

**Mr Elferink:** It was after the High Court had made a decision.

**Ms LAWRIE:** He cannot help himself.

They had been in discussions with the Auditor-General, bearing in mind he audits the TAFR ...

**Mr Elferink:** Yes, and who do you think raised it with him?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... in relation to whether or not it would be appropriate to remove that contingent liability. I am looking forward to seeing it removed in the future. It is not a not a big issue. It is appropriate to take a cautious approach to contingent liabilities. That is what Treasury officials do with contingent liabilities, not only in the Territory, but everywhere.

I note the member for Port Darwin cannot even stay and listen. I withdraw mentioning he has left the Chamber. However, that goes to show how predictable his contribution to debate really was.

He runs his rivers of gold argument; we have done nothing - been in receipt of rivers of gold; and done nothing as a government to prepare ourselves for the tough times ahead. He recognises 2010-11 is one of those tough times in reduced revenue.

I would say seven consecutive surpluses in a row, which has driven down the debt the Territory government inherited under the CLP, has been a pretty effective way of dealing with increased revenue. Not only have we reduced the debt burden we received from the CLP, we have also dramatically expanded and increased services at the same time. We have been doing both. Yes, we have been receiving additional revenue year-on-year from the Commonwealth - a combination of significantly increased GST revenue. We are into the down cycle of the GST, which governments predicted when the GST debate was occurring. Of course, the minimum

guarantee is the floor is no longer there. That puts all state and territory governments in a difficult position regarding GST revenue flows. The minimum guarantee is no longer there.

Increased revenue in special purpose payments is something we have been negotiating hard for. We have been at the forefront of negotiations with the Commonwealth. We make no apology, whether it is in regard to the GST, the special purpose payments, or even using the opportunities of the national partnership payments, to fight for what the Territory ought to get - and more. We make no apology for the fact we are a small jurisdiction over a large geographic land mass, which has the challenge of diverse communities at great distances you need to provide services to - services all Australians quite rightly expect to enjoy. When we receive revenue, and fight for more revenue from the Commonwealth, it is for a reason. Territorians are Australians, and they deserve the services you receive and enjoy elsewhere.

The fact is we have a very small population, therefore a very small pool from which we can tax - our own source revenue being about 20% of our revenue base - and we are historically reliant on Commonwealth funding. We inherited a Commonwealth deficit of services in remote and regional Northern Territory. It was a Commonwealth administered jurisdiction prior to self-government. We have 23% of our road network sealed; we inherited dirt, to a large extent, from the Commonwealth.

Regardless of whether you are a CLP or ALP government, you have to build the services across the regions for the quality of life Territorians quite rightly expect, regardless of where they are living. We have record health expenditure, we have record education expenditure, and record law and order expenditure, both in Police and Justice. They say: 'Well, it has been rivers of gold'. It has been revenue we ought to have received; not one cent less than was our entitlement. Every minister in this government will fight for more; we should receive more. We have greater challenges with our vast geographic distance, and our large number of disadvantaged Indigenous Territorians who have inherited the deficit of infrastructure.

There is no apology for the GST revenue we received, and certainly no apology for trying hard to increase the Special Purpose Payments. The TAFR shows that. The TAFR shows the growth in those SPP areas, which it glosses over. That is not the result of sitting back and thinking everything is hunky dory and the money will flow from Canberra; quite the opposite. Every minister negotiates extensively. I know the extent of negotiations I undertook as Treasurer when we were negotiating the SPPs and the formulas

around them - when the other states were trying to rip us off on the formulas, when some officials were trying to rip us off on the formulas - and saved hundreds of millions of dollars for the Territory.

It does not come by sitting back and saying: 'That is all good; we are going to get that payment from the Commonwealth', particularly in SPPs. We have to fight and argue to not be ripped off on the formulas, and the NPs are about our action, and working with the Commonwealth to get those national partnership agreements in place to secure the funding growth we need to improve the services, at the same time delivering surplus budgets, driving down debt - a debt burden we inherited from the CLP. It is nonsense for the man to come into this House and put out the same old bizarre and weird meanderings he does, debate after debate, exactly the same thing every debate, and nitpick around a contingent liability Treasury officials have already explained to him.

Nett debt as a percentage of total revenue in 2001, under the CLP, was 61%. In the 2008-09 result, we drove it down to 20% nett debt as a percentage of revenue. We have been driving down debt. We have been increasing services, and have been fighting for every cent the Territory, by right, ought to get, and more. We make no apology for that whatsoever. How do you get more police on the ground, more teachers in schools, and more nurses in clinics and hospitals to treat people with the complex health conditions Territorians have, without getting the resources to fund those positions.

It is absolute nonsense. What we fight for, in the distribution dollar coming out of the Commonwealth - the GST, there is an argument going on about that right now in relativities.

**Mr Elferink:** You bet there is. Tell us what you are doing about it?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms LAWRIE:** It is going on right now. I am not going to say: 'Thank you, Commonwealth. We are awash in GST dollars'. What a nonsense argument to run from a Territorian. No, actually, you go to Canberra and say: 'Give us more, because we actually need more to service Territorians' and it is every single bit of our entitlement. New South Wales will be fighting us, Victoria will be fighting us, they will all be fighting us, and your mates in WA will be fighting us, and you sit there as apologist about it, saying: 'No, no, rivers of gold. We do not need it'. What a load of rot. You are absolutely selling the Territory short in every stupid, ridiculous debate you make on this subject. You do not understand; you do not get it. You have not been a minister in a

government. You simply do not get what it takes to fight for the revenue from the Commonwealth.

**Mr Elferink:** Is that what qualifies a person to be a minister? You have to ...

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

**Ms LAWRIE:** We have a population of just over 200 000. We have a taxable base of around 100 000. Our source revenue is always going to be insufficient to meet our needs. Our requirement on Commonwealth revenue is always going to be significant to the Territory and, at a time when we are having arguments with officials from the Commonwealth Grants Commission, sending messages to the federal government that we need more, not less, that clown over there comes in here and says: 'Rivers of gold'. I thank God they do not listen to what he says.

**Mr Elferink:** This is the tax you opposed.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms LAWRIE:** I thank God they do not pay attention to what that idiot says.

**Mr Elferink:** This is the tax you opposed.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Port Darwin, cease interjecting, please.

**Ms LAWRIE:** What a fool! We have driven down debt; we have delivered seven surpluses in a row; we have increased services to records never previously thought of - \$1bn to improve the health of Territorians; \$808m to deliver improved education services across the Territory - more teachers; more housing for teachers; better conditions for teachers, and better rates of pay for teachers to be competitive and attract teachers; more police, and more police stations; more equipment; improved IT services to support those things. They just do not get it. They do not get the importance of going hard ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... going hard to get Commonwealth revenue to improve services for Territorians. They just do not get it.

**Mr Tollner:** We do not see any improvement.

**Ms LAWRIE:** They want to say: 'No, no it is okay. It is okay, New South Wales, it is okay New South Wales ...'

**Mr Tollner:** We do not see any improvement.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms LAWRIE:** 'It is okay, New South Wales, you have the Territory's slice because we do not want to be awash with rivers of gold'. What nonsense! Rivers of gold! Sorry, the only gold which exists in the Territory is the gold that naturally occurs in the ground which miners are digging up.

The TAFR shows we received additional unbudgeted Commonwealth funds which resulted in an improvement in 2008-09, and a worsening in 2009-10. I said it at the time, tabled the report, talked about it, and the fanciful member for Port Darwin ...

**Mr Elferink:** Yes, but did not tell anyone about the extra injection.

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

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... the fanciful member for Port Darwin would have you believe ...

**Mr Elferink:** Madam Speaker, she is being very provocative.

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... this is only occurring in the debate in February. No, wrong. I issued a media release in October, tabled the TAFR, talked about it ...

**Mr Elferink:** Where was the confession in the media release that it was all Commonwealth extra funding?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... on 20 October, '*improved Commonwealth Grants*'. Talked about it.

**Mr Elferink:** Yes, yes, when was that.

**Ms LAWRIE:** He would have you believe nothing was said; that the TAFR was secretly tabled in October and we said nothing about it. What nonsense! We tabled it, we wanted questions during Question Time, but they did not go there. We would have welcomed questions on it, however, no, for some reason the opposition muzzled him. After listening to that debate I am not surprised.

We know we had a general government operating surplus of \$136m in 2008-09. We know this is due to the timing of tied funding from the Commonwealth. We know we have a significant capital investment in the general government sector of some \$676m at that time, equating to three times the level of depreciation expenses on capital infrastructure - proof of a significant

investment. Against the backdrop of a \$158m fall in GST funding due to the global financial crisis, which resulted in the contraction of the national pool, however, at the same time we saw an increase in mining royalties of \$135m, due to increases in price and volume of commodities.

The TAFR shows we are not only delivering consecutive surplus budgets, we are retiring debt. As I mentioned, our nett debt to revenue ratio for the general government sector dropped to 20%, down from a debt burden of 61% nett debt to revenue ratio under the CLP.

We are still projecting increases over the forward estimates in debt through predicted cash deficits. That is a result of a contraction in GST, and the flow through issues related to the global financial crisis.

The nett financial liabilities to revenue ratio for the general government sector of 90% are certainly an improvement compared to the previous period.

The Auditor-General gave us an unqualified audit opinion, which was very welcome, even though in the weird, fanciful mind of the member for Port Darwin - you know, ferret around, deal with the 10-year bond rate. This is the same person who said we had a blowout in superannuation liabilities when, in fact, it was an adjustment in the bond rate. The bond rate affected our superannuation liability. Previously we have had arguments over superannuation liability and actuarial advice affecting it. However, one thing is a given: it took a Labor government to inject money into the superannuation area to bring it down. Yes, the bond rate fluctuates; yes, the bond rate is significantly affecting it between reporting periods. Yes, we are seeing a large increase in the estimate of the present value of our liability under that period because of the bond rate. Yes, we have made recovery because the bond rate is recovering. I never claimed I was affecting the bond rate, unlike the fanciful suggestion from the member for Port Darwin who, when in doubt, makes it up.

We make no apology for arguing for the Commonwealth revenue you see flowing into the Territory, not just historically through the GST, with contraction now occurring in GST, but importantly and significantly, through tied grants, particularly those SPPs and MPs. It is about delivering improved services, and through that period we have managed superannuation well. We have certainly driven our debt down significantly, and delivered surplus after surplus.

**Mr Elferink:** Surplus because of extra Commonwealth money.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Cease interjecting please, member for Port Darwin.

**Mr Elferink:** Tell me about the surplus in the current financial year?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Port Darwin, this is not Question Time.

**Ms LAWRIE:** An unqualified audit opinion from the Auditor-General on TAFR will go into the mid-year report, which will discuss developments through 2009-10. Yes, like every Treasurer around the nation I am bogged down in the next budget, which will be delivered in May.

This debate regularly occurs in the February sittings of the parliamentary year; it is not unusual. The member for Port Darwin would have us think it unusual; it regularly occurs in the February sittings of the calendar year. That means it does regularly coincide with the debate on the mid-year report, which is not such a bad thing. It is good to keep fresh in your mind, I believe, where revenue has been coming from, where expenditure pressures have been, the movements between the financial years, where the trends are headed, and where the liabilities and pressure points are coming from. That is a good and worthy debate to have, not the fanciful, weird nonsense which comes from the member for Port Darwin.

I commend the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report to the House.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

**MOTION**  
**Note Paper - Treasurer's Mid-Year Report**  
**2009-10**

Continued from 26 November 2009.

**Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to speak to the mid-year report tabled in October last year for the financial year 2009-10.

I am glad we are doing these two back-to-back because one could be forgiven for thinking the Treasurer has something to complain about when she is talking about opinions of members on this side - we go to Canberra, we fight for this, we know Victoria and New South Wales are ganging up on us on the relativities, we are in there battling for the Northern Territory; so you should! The fact is, so are Western Australia and Queensland. You are standing shoulder to shoulder on this issue. We return surplus after surplus after surplus. Yes, surplus when we did not think we would get one, however we got a Commonwealth grant at the death knell of the financial year.

The following year exactly the same thing happens. However, the point is by delivering cash in the way they have in the last financial year, in this financial year they have to return a deficit of \$249m. We will pause for a second to think about it. I remember when they fabricated the great big black hole of \$120m, and talked the Northern Territory being in that position.

**Ms Lawrie:** That is because you hid it.

**Mr ELFERINK:** The fact is it was a \$12bn deficit, and it was your mini-budget which created the black hole. How did they achieve that? They made spending decisions - decisions to not sell things like NT Fleet, which was factored into that budget. 'No, we are going to fabricate ourselves a little black hole, and then we are going to say: '\$120m, shock, horror, it is dreadful. That dreadful bunch of people in the CLP left us with this huge black hole of \$120m'.

The deficit - the black hole for the current financial year - according to the mid-year report, is \$249m, or twice the amount of the fabricated black hole left by the CLP, and delivered by this government. If they were releasing media statements, and having professors from south whinge about the black hole in the Territory budget in the year 2001-02, where is the professor for the \$249m black hole - twice the size of the one you were whinging about in 2001-02? The reason is because 2001-02 was an exercise in discrediting a former government. That is all it was - a disgraceful attempt to discredit a former government.

This is the beauty of the way this Treasurer reports to this House. As stated in the 2008-09 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report:

*The cash surplus in 2008-09 primarily resulted from additional tied funding being received from the Commonwealth late in the financial year which has resulted in a worsening effect on the 2009-10 revised estimate compared to the 2009 budget.*

Let us pause for a second. The budget they brought down to the current financial year had an expected deficit - because of their spending choice - of \$200m. The mid-year report, delivered halfway through the year, has an expected deficit of \$249m, which is \$50m more than they originally budgeted for. And here is the cute little line:

*... which, when the effect of the carryover of expenditure from 2008-09 is excluded, is an underlying improvement of around \$100m.*

We introduce a budget which has a \$200m deficit; halfway through the year it is a \$249m deficit, and there is an underlying improvement of \$100m. I understand how you can make that assertion because, in truth, if the Territory's income has not improved by \$100m, the deficit would now be \$349m - and counting. However, this government got lucky - again. They were in the right place at the right time, and the grim expectations of the global financial crisis had not manifested itself in the way Treasury predicted, so they had a \$100m improvement in their income. What they do not say, and what the Treasurer will remain silent on - and guess what - I can hear the language now: 'The member does not understand, he comes here with his flights of fancy, and he is making this up, he does not get it, he does not listen to briefings, he is the laughing stock of the public servants in Treasury', and all that rubbish. What you do not hear is a careful and detailed explanation of how this works. Why? Because that would be the truth!

I found it curious in a debate today, the Treasurer was saying how members from the Country Liberals come into this House, sit there making it up; they clearly do not understand, they make it up. You listen to the rubbish which comes from her mouth when it comes to painting the Country Liberals into a corner. They started doing it in 2001 and they have been attempting to rewrite history ever since.

I sometimes get concerned when I hear: 'Oh, gosh, the shadow Treasurer has made a mistake', and I think: 'Oh, god, have I?', because she has the formidable support of the whole department of Treasury. Then I listen to her rationale of why I made a mistake - and the classic is the contingent liabilities for native title, where native title has been determined by the High Court not to exist. You cannot say it was a simple oversight. You cannot tell the truth, because that is what it was. It was a simple oversight. If you go back over various papers, that same note is a cut and paste. It has cut from one budget and pasted into the next, and someone simply did not notice.

Is the Treasurer capable of saying: 'It was an oversight. It was a cut and paste and was left in as a contingent liability. We figured the High Court had made an impossible liability for the Northern Territory'? No: 'the shadow-Treasurer does not listen to the briefings. They are just being cautious in Treasury'. How cautious do you have to be in Treasury when the High Court has made a determination and there is no appellate court to go to? It is just not honest.

There are reasons why some of this should be dealt with as good news stories by the Treasurer. The fact is she is busy painting this picture of her as this financial knight in shining armour, charging

down to tackle the great dragons of New South Wales and Victoria in the Grants Commission relativities debate when, in fact, she looks and sounds more like Don Quixote tilting against windmills. The truth is yes, we do want to fight for our relativity, and I imagine we would be involved in those discussions every step of the way.

That would be the least you would expect from a Treasurer of the Northern Territory. However, she seems to think she is doing some great favour to the people of the Northern Territory, in that she is condescending to climb off her pedestal and walk amongst the unclean down south to show she can fight for the rights of the Territory. That is the job you put your hand up for when you became Treasurer. It is not some great, remarkable achievement, and trust me, I believe the Territory will continue to do well, but I certainly hope that New South Wales and Victoria do not get their way. As the former Treasurer and much more capable person, Syd Stirling used to say, what is happening in Victoria and New South Wales would erode the arrangements of horizontal fiscal equalisation.

**Ms Lawrie:** The glue that binds the states.

**Mr ELFERINK:** The glue, and how often did we hear it?

**Ms Lawrie:** The glue that binds the states.

**Mr ELFERINK:** The glue that holds the federation together. Sadly, it is all about dressage and less about fact. The fact is \$249m is a worse predicted deficit outcome than \$200m from the budget. I know why things have improved and why things have not improved; I understand that. You can say: 'He does not understand'. The black hole made by this government is twice the size as the one you claimed to have inherited.

What was not explained then, when the rewrite of history like an Orwellian 1984 department of truth rewrites the whole of history - when you are busy rewriting history, you do not have time for the truth. If you listen amongst the abuse for the statements of fact, they are thin on the ground. The Treasurer may incant the names of public servants, or faceless public servants - they are all laughing at you, and we laugh about you, you can do that all you like, however I will not be intimidated with anything but the truth. That is why I remain in this House utterly and completely unimpressed by this Treasurer.

**Ms LAWRIE (Treasurer):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I am delighted to hear the member for Port Darwin is not intimidated by me. I would be surprised if he were. The mid-year report, even though he was mostly stuck back in TAFR land in

his contribution, because he was so upset by what I had to say in my contribution ...

**Mr Elferink:** Touché, you got me.

**Ms LAWRIE:** Come in, spinner - mostly in TAFR land, touched on the worsening position as outlined in the mid-year report, which is a combination of factors. Significantly, we have had reducing revenue in GST, but we made no apology; we set it out, and I clearly articulated it in our determination to ensure we have a record spend in infrastructure to get us through what we know is a period of tightening and contraction in the private sector. Public sectors have to step up. We are not the only government to do that.

Knowing we are walking into a worsening situation in the 2009-10 budget process, we could have chosen to reduce the capital program. That is the easy thing to do in those circumstances. Industry, as a whole, congratulated us for making the tough decision, making the tough call to continue with our infrastructure spend, to continue to fund construction jobs while we sort out private sector contraction. In fact, road construction jobs were some 2500. If you look at where we have come in employment data, we have created an extra 6000 new jobs as a result of government action, stepping up and seeing the confidence flowing through in Territory businesses - 69% of business confidence - the highest in the nation. That does not come by working through your budget papers, working out where your flows are, and what is going to happen with your books.

It is a strategic and considered decision-making process which involves where you are going to spend, how you are going to spend, why you are going to spend, what the outcomes are going to be, and what are the pressures when you are making those decisions, particularly the pressures around - as you see in this mid-year report - recognising we are going to be going into a deficit situation. No government will embrace that, no government wants to, however wise, considered decisions by government will step you into that period of deficit, and increase your debt as a result, when you need to ensure the underpinning confidence of your economy through the creation of jobs, and the opportunities at the end of the day for Territorians to provide for their families.

It is not just about numbers and, as Treasurer, I will pay very close attention to the numbers. I will work extremely closely with my Treasury officials, who frequently provide me with advice and updates as we go. I rely on the senior members of my staff to keep their eye on the ball all the time. I will never lose sight of the outcomes required and the changes it can make in people's lives in the Territory.

I will talk about some of the things reported in the mid-year report regarding where movements have been. If you look at public safety-related increase, there was an increase of \$35.6m due to further contributions relating to the Northern Territory Emergency Response. That is a change which is reported in the mid-year report in operating revenue, in the NPs are coming through, but, what does it mean? What it fundamentally means is yes, we are spending - we are receiving and spending \$35.6m more in that area - it means people can be safer living in their communities. Debates raged for years around having police in remote communities, and the results have been delivered through the partnership between this government and a Labor Commonwealth government.

In education-related increases, there is \$59.5m due to *Closing the Gap*, teacher quality, enhancing literacy and funding. Also, there is stimulus package funding under the Building Education Revolution. I know the CLP did not want the stimulus funding. They had their man in Canberra vote against it; however, there is a real change at school level getting those facilities into every school across the Territory. School communities are embracing the new facilities, whether it is learning centres or science labs, and they have taken the opportunity of that stimulus funding to build critical infrastructure. This will be legacy infrastructure for their school which will help children in their learning outcomes, and help teachers with their conditions, and provide for that aspiration of increasing and improving the outcomes of every Territory student which we have so clearly articulated in our *Territory 2030* statement.

The health-related increase of \$26m is due to Indigenous early childhood education, preventative health, family support package, and the Royal Darwin Hospital emergency department upgrade. You cannot argue against the critical importance of Indigenous early childhood education spending. Looking at preventative health, I know the acute demands in Health are so significant it is always a tough task for government to fund at the preventative end of the scale, and to get funding into that area is critically important.

The family support package, you talk about families who are struggling, families in crisis, getting funding there. Of course, RDH does an amazing job with the emergency department receiving funding. As articulated in the mid-year report, to show where that spend is going is important.

We are indicating that whilst we have an operating surplus across the forward years, we have a deficit situation. I am proposing a step-out approach to the deficit, which is in line with our

responsibilities to ensure, whilst we are meeting the demands of increased service delivery, we are also trying to return the budget to that healthy surplus situation it has been in under the Labor government.

It was a tough decision to make but we made it deliberately to ensure we were building the Territory, building services, increasing job opportunities for Territorians at a time where we knew the private sector would be contracting as a result of the global financial crisis. Industry wholeheartedly endorsed the 2009-10 budget, and understands, as I gave updates through the mid-year report process, and I continue to give industry updates, and the rationale of a budget strategy of going into deficit, and having a step-out approach to that.

We pointed out timing differences which resulted in the Commonwealth receipts of payments, and the carryover. We saw how that contributed to a \$53m increase in the forecast deficit, bringing it out to \$249m. We are up-front with that information - the difference between what we are doing in our budget papers with the figures published, as well as the information attached within the papers to explain the figures. We are up-front, and I will pick up on what the member for Port Darwin said about the black hole, the difference is the CLP pretended they would have surplus that year. We came into government - if you read the budget books you would think they were tracking for a surplus. I was not in Cabinet at the time; I very happily enjoyed my first four years as a backbencher getting to know my electorate well, getting to understand the Territory so I was better prepared for the task of Cabinet.

However, I listened extremely closely to that debate at the time, because I was aghast to think politicians had exerted pressure, where pressure should never have been exerted in presentations of budgets. We introduced the *Financial Management Act* as a result; it could never happen again. However, the PAC inquiry with the Percy Allan report showed a manipulation occurred; the pretended surplus was never going to be a surplus, and the people who would have known that, the Treasurer of the day, and senior ministers involved, participated. That is why it is referred to as a black hole, because it was not flagged as a deficit.

We thought we were inheriting budget in surplus mode - quite the opposite. We introduced the *Financial Management Act*, and very carefully ensured we were representing the figures good, as they had been, and bad as they had appeared in the mid-year report, in full and honest knowledge so Territorians can see where the movements are, why they are occurring, what the dollars are coming in for, what effects they are

having on subsequent financial years, and how we are managing our way out of it, because we are managing it - it is not just happening by remote control somehow. I spend a great deal of time working on this with my Cabinet colleagues, with my Treasury officials, and with my staff.

We made a deliberate decision to go into deficit; we provided the record \$1.3bn construction program to support jobs and see good employment figures come through. They say that might be the input, what about the outcome? The outcome - 6000 jobs created in the last 12 months. That is an outcome. The majority of those 6000 jobs are full-time. We are not fudging those figures. They are not a plethora of part-time jobs; the majority of them are full-time jobs.

An outcome for a family means a person with a job can provide for their family's needs. Ask someone whether they want the government to stay in surplus, the government to pay off debt and slash services and jobs, or whether they want the government to step up in the tough times and support jobs, albeit go into deficit ...

**Mr Chandler:** You created the tough times.

**Ms LAWRIE:** ... and increase debt, and I am confident they will say; 'Give me the job'. Governments can go into deficit and manage their debt. Households manage debt all the time; governments are absolutely capable of managing debt.

It is the serviceability of the debt. If you look at the serviceability of our debt, our debt to revenue ratios, the serviceability speaks for itself. It is there. In slashing the debt, we have made it more serviceable. I make no apologies for making those tough decisions with my colleagues, to go into deficit to prop up jobs - jobs for Territorians through the tough times.

I heard the interjection from the opposition, 'You created it'. I have to say I am gobsmacked. I know the opposition were wrong when they said the Territory had gone into recession - the member for Goyder called that. Wrong! The member for Port Darwin got caught in that one. Wrong. We were not in recession. The nation, arguably, dodged the recession. We dodged the recession. What was affecting everyone was the global financial crisis, the global economic downturn. No, member for Brennan, we did not create this one. Not even CLP spin could say the Territory government created the global economic downturn.

It was interesting last week, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, Glenn Stevens, address the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on Economics, and spoke on Australia's economic

position following the global financial crisis. In reference to that crisis he said:

*... the challenge was to sustain confidence, to support the economy and the financial system through some exceptionally demanding circumstances. By and large, I think those efforts were successful.*

The mid-year report is a pretty telling example of how we took on those challenges. Yes, it has cost us in predicting deficits - worsening debt as a result of predicting deficits. However, if you look at the economic growth of the Territory, at the Access Economics predictions of being the strongest growing economy in our nation for the next five years, at the confidence business has - the 69% business confidence, highest in the nation - I would say Governor Stevens was summing up the situation in the Territory, and the tough decisions the Territory government made through these particularly tough times.

We are not out of the woods; as Treasurer I will keep saying that. I know how tough it is going to be to manage potential reductions in revenue going forward as a result of the relativities review by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Until we see health returned to the GST pool - it is returning; recovery is strong. It is not at the extent it was.

We have a bright economic outlook regarding the Asian economies, the rebounds there, predominantly in China. We are a major beneficiary of growth through Asia, through the mineral and the energy commodities. We had this debate, and we will have it again at the next estimates; we are fiscal managers but we have nothing to do with the economy. I disagree. Government fosters and supports economic growth through the decisions it makes.

I will give an example, in the mineral growth area where we are seeing a boom in resources in the Territory. We have a highly competitive - I maintain best - royalties regime in the nation - profits based rather than ad valorem.

When we came to government, we provided an ideological change - a seismic change. Hundreds, of exploration licence applications were sitting on the desk of the minister for Resources. We took government, and processed those mineral exploration licences. We have had numerous innovations in funding programs to support the exploration industry in the Territory. You cannot encourage those economic drivers by having a hands-off approach and not putting in effort, even through the tough times - even in the toughest times of the 2001 to 2002-03 recovery period resources were seeing improvements in their budget, their programs, and their innovations

when other agencies were doing it tough. We knew we needed the private sector to help us out with revenue potential to the Territory, job opportunities for Territorians, and regional economical development for Territorians.

There has been a \$60m-plus infrastructure expenditure in the port in the last year or so. That is not talking about the money we expended to improve port infrastructure, as well as putting in the bulk mineral loader. These decisions have paid off for Territorians with economic growth and opportunities. Chasing oil and gas opportunities, and clinching and finalising the deal with ConocoPhillips and Wickham Point for LNG, are critical to industry confidence when looking at the real potential of Darwin for those industries. Chasing INPEX when everyone said: 'What a joke, Western Australia has it, why bother?' Well, look at where we are now! They are the actions of government. We were managing economic growth, not just fiscal responsibility. They are real actions. We will have this debate time and time again; it is an important debate to have.

As I mentioned, there are tough times ahead in managing deficits, however, opportunities ahead in economic growth, predicted by Access Economics to be the strongest in our nation for the next five years - that is Access Economics, not me - and noting we are between major projects, noting 2011 will be the toughest of those five years in economic growth, noting INPEX is critical, and we are working hard on that.

None of this was achieved by accident. We are focused on attracting investment and protecting jobs. We have had the highest growth in the nation, at 2.6% in the 2008-09 financial year, compared to the national average of 1.1%. That was post-GFC when everyone was hurting. All other developed western nations went into recession except Australia, and we came out ahead in economic growth.

The mid-year report, to me, is good reading and, yes, it contains good news stories. I always ensure I go to the media immediately I have a report and explain the detail of the information, and provide briefings where required. I commend the hard work of Treasury staff in putting together not only budget papers every year, but also the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, and the mid-year report update.

I commend the hard-working officers of Treasury, and also commend the ministers I have the pleasure of working with around the Cabinet table for the discipline they show, and the recognition they have of the critically important areas where spending is needed - health, education, law and order, opportunities for regional economic development, *A Working*

*Future* - and to show restraint, where necessary. We are not all care and no responsibility.

When you look at the ridiculous debate we have had with the opposition regarding our wages policy - how can we expect people to accept wage constraint at 2.5%, when they complain about the superannuation liability, even though it has been explained to them it has already been factored into the actuarial considerations. Hypocrisy from the opposition has been reeking in these debates.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend Treasury officers for the hard work they have done on the mid-year report. I know it is going to be a tough 2010-11 but we have been flagging that all along.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Climate Change Challenge**

**Mr HAMPTON (Climate Change):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I address the Assembly today on the global challenge of climate change, and the decisive action the Northern Territory government is taking, through the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy, to address this most important issue in the Territory.

We have all heard the debate played out in the media regarding the effects of climate change. Is global warming real? Will sea levels rise in my lifetime, or the next? Are the bushfires plaguing our southern neighbours the result of climate change?

It is true, there remains much uncertainty amongst scientists about exactly how much, and when, the planet will be affected by climate change. However, the resounding consensus from scientists across the globe points to clear conclusion greenhouse gas emissions will affect the planet's climate, and this will impact on the Territory during our lifetime.

It is this resounding conclusion that has prompted governments across the world to take decisive action on climate change. The Northern Territory government has shown strong leadership, backed by the community, through the release of the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy. This comprehensive policy demonstrates real action to tackle this complex and critical issue, and will give Territory businesses and industry, and our community, the tools to face the issues head-on. In tackling this issue head-on and taking early action on climate change, the Northern Territory will also be in a better position to take advantage of the many opportunities which will come out of the carbon constraint world of the future.

On 18 December 2009 I had great pleasure, as the Minister for Climate Change, and the Minister for the Environment, to join the Chief Minister in announcing the release of the much anticipated Northern Territory Climate Change Policy. The policy was launched at the premises of PowerCorp at the Darwin Business Park. The Chief Minister and I were joined at the launch by Mr Alan Langworthy, Managing Director of PowerCorp, who highlighted how renewable energy technology solutions were being developed by local industry and applied in Australia, and also exported overseas. It is an exciting area, and it was good to see it firsthand.

The Northern Territory Climate Change Policy was developed over a two year period, with significant input from Territorians of all walks of life, including environment and community groups, Indigenous organisations and business and industry. The policy released last year was the combination of a broad program of community consultations, including the release of the discussion paper on the Northern Territory Climate Change Issues in 2008, and consultation workshops held in Darwin and Alice Springs.

Sixty six submissions were received from across the Territory on the discussion paper, and the consensus from Territorians was that climate change demanded action. Regular consultations were held in 2008 and 2009, with community based focus groups on climate change who represented a broad cross section of Territorians, and who also provided valuable advice and expert input into the final design of the Territory's Climate Change Policy.

The government also drew on discussions undertaken during the development of the *Territory 2030* framework. The community based focus groups included members from the following organisations and groups: the Environment Centre of the Northern Territory, Arid Lands Environment Centre, Minerals Council of Australia, Northern Territory Resources Council, the Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory, Darwin City Council, Alice Springs Town Council, the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, Northern Land Council, the Tiwi Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council, the Central Land Council, Engineers Australia, Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, Unions NT, North Australia Land and Sea Management Alliance, the Desert Knowledge CRC, the Centre for Appropriate Technology, the Alice Solar City Project, CSIRO and Charles Darwin University.

**Mr CHANDLER:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I call attention to the state of the House. I believe climate change is a serious issue.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you. Ring the bells, please. Thank you, we have a quorum.

Minister, you have the call.

**Mr HAMPTON:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take this opportunity to formally recognise these organisations, and thank them for the hard work they have done to let government know what climate change issues are important to them. Through these groups, and through the community's response to the discussion paper, the way forward for Territorians to collectively and positively tackle this issue was established.

Government has committed \$34m to undertake priority actions outlined in the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy. With 40 targets and 118 actions, the policy will guide decisive action in the areas of government leadership, green energy, land management, building green cities and towns, waste, green business and industry, green communities and living with change. There are five headline issues in the policy which demonstrate government's genuine commitment to taking this leadership role, and tackling climate change.

First, the Northern Territory government has committed to become carbon neutral by 2018. This target clearly demonstrates the government's leadership on climate change in the Territory community, and will transform government's operations towards a sustainable future.

As the biggest service provider and employer in the Northern Territory, the government is well placed to reduce emissions. We have already implemented a number of initiatives to reduce emissions in our own back yard, such as a green fleet policy, which sets an interim target of reducing emissions from our fleet by 20% by 2014, and 50% by 2020. We have also implemented the Energy Smart Building Policy, which aims to reduce energy intensity of government buildings by 10% by 2010, and by a third by 2020.

These targets are supported by the \$6m Government Energy Efficiency Program, or GEEP, which assist government's larger energy users, such as hospitals and schools, to make energy efficiency upgrades. An example of the GEEP program in action is the energy efficient lighting upgrades at the Royal Darwin Hospital, valued at around \$0.5m, which will save 450 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, and up to 60% of the energy used by old light fittings.

Madam Deputy Speaker, \$0.5m is also about to be invested in energy efficiency upgrades at the Alice Springs Hospital, predicted to save

440 tonnes of carbon dioxide per annum. These upgrades range from optimising air-conditioning and heating controls, to light sensors, to low-flow showerheads which save water and energy, and greenhouse gas emissions. The project is funded through the Northern Territory government and Commonwealth contributions to the Alice Solar City Project. With a payback period of less than four years, this project should save 6% of the hospital's energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. Katherine Hospital is also undertaking similar energy efficiency upgrades.

What we see here is not an ideological debate about climate change, but real action on real projects which have a positive cost benefit assessment and, quite simply, make good business sense. Government's carbon neutral target outlined in the climate change policy includes travel, use of fleet vehicles, and the energy consumed in government buildings, and will mean government will consistently and steadily achieve greater energy efficiency ratings in the way it operates. For those greenhouse gas emissions we cannot avoid through energy efficient practices, we will invest in carbon offsets in Territory based projects, with regional and Indigenous community benefits.

Demonstrating our commitment to the National Strategy for Energy Efficiency, which all governments signed up to in July 2009 through the Council of Australian Governments, we have made significant inroads into energy efficient practices in government operations already. Only this month, government has installed a \$0.5m high technology, highly secure video-networking system called Telepresence, which will be used by Territory government staff instead of travelling interstate for inter-governmental meetings. Not only will this new technology save on travel costs and greenhouse emissions, it will also improve productivity through less travel time and increased work-life balances for government staff, who will not be called away from their family or home to attend interstate meetings. Estimates suggest the use of the Telepresence network, as well as other technology solutions, could cut greenhouse gas emissions from interstate air travel by Northern Territory public sector staff by 50% by 2020.

The Department of Construction and Infrastructure, and the Department of Lands and Planning, are working on a range of measures to further progress their commitment under the national strategy for energy efficiency, including phasing in of mandatory disclosure of the energy efficiency of commercial and residential buildings, and improving the environmental performance of government owned and occupied buildings. In addition, the Department of Business and Employment is implementing the Green Office Buildings Policy, which will result in significant

reductions in greenhouse gas production, energy costs, and consumption for government-leased office buildings. Already, two commercial buildings in Darwin leased by government - the Mitchell Centre and Darwin Plaza - have been accredited for achieving 5-star National Australian Built Environment Rating System energy efficiency ratings. This is equivalent to international best practice.

It is the case buildings which have achieved 4.5-star NABERS rating or above, consume approximately half the energy, and produce half the greenhouse gases of the average office building. Given government leases about 65% of the Territory commercial building space, best practise energy efficiency achieved in government leased buildings will flow through to the commercial property market and, over time, will result in the transformation of our property market.

I am pleased to inform the Assembly commercial property owners are also being highly proactive in this area. The owners of four commercial buildings in Darwin leased by the government have recently been awarded grants under the AusIndustry Green Building Fund to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings. They are Paspalis Centrepoint, 9-11 Cavenagh Street, Harbourview Plaza and the RCG Centre. This example demonstrates if we are to tackle climate change - the major challenge of our generation - business, community and government must work together. There is much more to do, and we look forward to working with all our local suppliers, and the community, to set the example.

The second headline issue in the policy, and one I am particularly excited to be involved with as Minister for Climate Change and minister for the Environment, is the removal of at least four million tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere per year through innovative and sustainable land management practices. With the introduction of a price on carbon internationally, and in Australia through the proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, opportunities will flow to protect the carbon stored in land and vegetation through carbon offset schemes. A carbon offset scheme, in simple terms, is a project in which greenhouse gas emissions are reduced over a baseline period for a specific activity such as planting trees.

This reduction in emissions creates a carbon offset credit, which is a tradeable commodity companies can use to negate or offset their emissions from greenhouse gas emitting activities. The offset market represents a significant potential investment product in the Northern Territory, with offset markets in Australia and overseas already huge and growing rapidly. In 2009, the global carbon offset market was valued

at \$US126bn, which is almost double that of 2008. This is despite the global recession.

A formal emissions trading market in Australia, as proposed through the introduction of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, would enable the market to go from strength to strength. An early example of a successful offset scheme in the Territory is the West Arnhem Land Fire Abatement Project, known as WALFA. WALFA is a collective partnership between the traditional owners and ranger groups, ConocoPhillips, the Territory government, and the Northern Land Council. Through the project, Indigenous ranger groups undertake controlled burning practices over a huge 28 000 km<sup>2</sup> area during the early Dry Season. This controlled burning negates the prospect of hotter, uncontrolled fires in the late Dry Season, and has been proven to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from burning which would have occurred in the absence of the project. Already, the project has reduced greenhouse gas emissions from the area by over 100 000 tonnes per year since it started in 2005. To put this into perspective, that is equivalent to the emissions produced from 31 000 cars each year - quite an achievement.

While the greenhouse benefits of this project are quite staggering, there are other benefits which cannot be so easily quantified but mean a great deal to the communities involved with the project, and contribute much to the economic and social development of the Northern Territory. These benefits include the preservation of culture and conservation values, Indigenous employment, and associated economic and health benefits through working on country, and managing the important biodiversity networks in the land.

The WALFA project has been so successful others are following. In the Gulf, ranger groups have already begun to change fire regimes to reduce emissions, and are planning to join WALFA as a potential supplier of carbon credits. The Central Land Council, Aboriginal landowners and community rangers, CSIRO, and Bushfires NT have completed a joint pilot project over 40 000 km<sup>2</sup> of the Northern Tanami Indigenous Protected Area on a strategic fire management project to reduce greenhouse emissions, while enabling cultural enrichment.

In addition, the Australian government has committed \$10m to the North Australian Land and Sea Management Alliance to work with traditional owners across four project areas in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia on more fire management projects. The additional interest from private commercial investors in these projects is a measure of the multiple social, economic and environmental benefits the projects deliver.

Savannah burning offset projects are a genuine example of where the Territory is leading the way, nationally and internationally, and I am proud to be part of this movement. I am especially proud to announce today the Northern Territory government will provide \$400 000 over three years to ensure the survival of the Northern Australian Fire Information website, which provides up-to-date satellite imagery to map fires, in real time, across northern Australia. This website is a critical support tool in the emerging savannah burning offset market.

A further mechanism to protect carbon stored in our vast land tracts is through the third headline issue in the policy, which is the commitment the Territory will remain a low land clearing jurisdiction, through the introduction of native vegetation legislation in 2011.

There is no doubt the Territory has a vast natural landscape, with just over 1% of our land cleared for development. Unlike our southern neighbours, we have the opportunity to ensure our land is sustainably managed now, and into the future. I would like to make it clear this does not mean the Northern Territory government is against using our land resources for economic development and job creation.

We are saying, through the climate change policy, government will ensure the carbon bank in the Territory's landscape is protected through orderly, well managed and sustainable development, based on scientific assessment, which includes greenhouse gas considerations. In fact, we look forward to working with landowners involved in various forms of production to see how they might diversify incomes through engagement with the carbon economy. Despite the federal opposition's obstruction of Australia's CPRS, there are many opportunities in voluntary markets.

The fourth headline issue in the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy will transform our energy markets so, by 2020, the Territory will become a world leader of renewable and low emissions power in our remote communities. We know the Territory is unique, and this is particularly the case for the unique needs of our remote communities in the provision of essential services, such as electricity.

Currently, the electricity needs of the Territory's major urban centres are all sourced from natural gas. However, remote communities are primarily serviced with diesel fuel. There are exceptions, of course, with natural gas-fired generators used to provide electricity to Elliott and Newcastle Waters, and six solar power plants which supply electricity to the communities of Bulman, Jilkminggan, Kings Canyon, Hermannsburg, Yuendumu and Lajamanu, in my

electorate of Stuart, as well as a number of outstations which have received solar systems over the last ten years. However, diesel continues to be the main source of power in the Territory's remote communities. Diesel is a known offender for greenhouse gas emissions, and has a higher carbon footprint than gas. There are severe economic and technical difficulties in linking our remote communities to the Territory's gas-fired electricity grids because of the distances involved.

This represents a great opportunity for the Territory to take the lead across the world in delivering green power in remote communities. Under the climate change policy, the Northern Territory government has established a Green Energy Taskforce, with high level expertise to drive change in this area. The task force is chaired by Christine Charles, who may be known to many members here, who also has extensive experience in the mining sector, government, the World Health Organisation, the community sector, and as an academic. Other members of the Green Energy Taskforce include Mr Alan Langworthy, Wayne Wood, Dr Stuart Blanch, Scott Perkins, Lyndon Frearson, Walter Gerardi, Professor Mary O'Kane, Anthony Wood, Jennifer Prince, Andrew Macrides and Alastair Shields.

In 2010, the task force will set the pathway for government and Territorians to replace diesel as the primary source of energy with renewable and low emissions fuel sources in remote communities by 2020. The task force will be supported in its work by the Centre for Renewable Energy at Charles Darwin University. The centre, to be operational in the first quarter of 2010, will support the Territory's local capability in renewable energy, a capability required as our energy mix is transformed.

The Power and Water Corporation is contributing to the goals of the Territory's Climate Change Policy by implementing a strategy to reduce reliance on diesel power generation in remote communities. This strategy incorporates the substitution of diesel with renewable and low emissions energy sources, such as pipeline gas and liquid petroleum gas (LPG). Concrete examples of early action by Power and Water under this strategy include a proposal to replace the diesel fired power station at Wadeye with a new natural gas power station connected to the Blacktip pipeline, the substitution of diesel with natural gas at Hermannsburg, and a tender process to be set in motion shortly for the supply of LPG to up to 20 remote communities. A trial of the conversion process at Hermannsburg has delivered a 14% reduction in greenhouse emissions.

Power and Water is also negotiating a tender for a 1000 kilowatt solar power station in urban

Alice Springs as part of its contribution to the Alice Springs Solar City Project. Central Australia is certainly a place where opportunities for solar energy are substantial. With funding from the Australian government, Desert Knowledge Australia has developed the solar demonstration facility to showcase a range of fully operational solar energy technologies, such as solar panels, solar water pumping, solar thermal and solar water filters. It attracts visitors, and is a place of learning and training for students.

I am pleased to announce the Northern Territory government has committed \$4m towards a \$14m showcase of renewable and low emissions energy in the remote communities of Alpururulam, also known as Lake Nash, in the Barkly electorate, and at Ti Tree and Daguragu/Kalkarindji in the electorate of Stuart. This project is well under way, with tenders received by Power and Water Corporation on 2 February 2010.

Not only will projects such as these benefit remote communities in providing reliable and clean power, they will also improve living standards and economic opportunities for Indigenous Territorians, contributing to the Territory government's commitment to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, and developing the 20 growth towns.

As well as reducing our greenhouse gas emissions, the Territory's climate change policy sets firm strategies to protect our unique natural environment, and build community and environmental resilience to the unavoidable impacts of a changing climate, including sea level rise, hotter temperatures and more intense cyclones in the Top End.

We have already set in motion major initiatives to protect the Territory's unique flora and fauna, Territory Eco-Link will ensure a 1600 km conservation corridor from the tropics to the desert is established, providing our national parks and ecosystems with a buffer that species need to adapt to climate change. A whole of Territory adaptation plan will be developed by 2011 to identify, assess, and prioritise climate change risks to the Territory's natural environment, as well as our communities and infrastructure.

Sea level rise is a particular threat to the Territory's priceless coastal wetlands. The Territory's climate change policy makes a major commitment, as its fifth headline issue, to save the best of these wetlands through specific intervention to reduce salt water intrusions, protect fishing and save biodiversity. This includes the rehabilitation and protection of the Mary River freshwater wetlands, and their carbon stores, from rising sea levels. The Northern Territory

government has committed \$2m under the policy on intervention strategies for the Mary River, and other important sites, such as through the use of submerged barrages placed in locations determined according to high tech sonar imaging.

There is no doubt the 40 targets of the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy are ambitious. To be successfully achieved they will require a partnership between government, business, and the community as a whole. We must all do our part and support each other in changing the way we do things; whether it is small things like turning off appliances that are not being used, or bigger things like developing the Territory's renewable energy industry. It all counts towards a sustainable future.

The Territory government is ensuring the community and, particularly, our small to medium business sector, has the right level of support to make these changes. To 'future proof' Territorians the government already offers a range of rebates and incentives such as the Energy Smart Rebate, for the purchase of energy saving appliances and the solar hot water retrofit rebate.

The Territory government also continues to provide financial and in-kind support to community based organisations such as COOLmob, who do a great job in helping Territorians adopt more energy efficient behaviours. I would like to acknowledge the good work of the COOLmob staff in providing practical help to everyday Territorians.

We are also assisting Territorians reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfill. Along with the members for Nelson and Fannie Bay, considerable progress has been made into the design of the Cash for Containers Scheme, which is legally, financially and regionally viable. Government remains committed to bring legislation forward this year, and for the scheme to be in place in 2011. Cash for containers will increase our recycling of materials such as aluminium and glass, which use a large amount of energy in their production. To assist, for example, government has provided Alice Springs Town Council with \$935 000 to purchase a glass crusher and reuse glass waste for concreting paths, kerbing and guttering.

This year we will also legislate to phase out the single-use, plastic shopping bags across the Northern Territory. Certainly the green bags are very popular; I use them every week when I do my shopping in Alice Springs. I am advised when sufficiently reused, they generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions. The Territory is only the second jurisdiction in Australia, along with South Australia, to implement these fantastic initiatives.

Another example of government working with the community to tackle climate change is through the Energy Smart Schools Program, which has been delivered to 60 schools across the Territory, including those in remote areas. The program has developed a culture of sustainability into schools' teaching and learning, actively engaging students and teachers in energy investigations, and reduced energy usage and associated greenhouse gas emissions from participating Territory schools.

I would like to make special mention of Nightcliff Primary School, which has embraced the principles of energy efficiency and implemented student-led shutdown and facility management practices. The school has been very active in seeking advice on appropriate energy efficiency changes to system services, and has been keen to take part in technology trials. Since the start of the program, the school has consistently achieved reductions in its monthly energy use. It is this collective, community spirit which will lead to effective action on climate change, and I applaud the students and teachers of Nightcliff Primary School for their continuing efforts.

The Territory government's ecoBiz program is another great initiative which offers advice and rebates of up to \$20 000 to Territory small to medium sized businesses to become more energy efficient. Business is obviously concerned about the bottom line; the bottom line is energy efficiency means less costs and better profits for business. The ecoBiz program has already been successful in cutting costs for a number of Territory businesses, such as A&H Panel Works which by replacing a compressor, an air-conditioner and lighting, will reap annual savings of \$6500 in electricity bills, 48.5% of energy consumed, and 27 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. This example clearly shows it makes good business sense to respond positively to climate change.

There is smart technology to tackle climate change being tested, trialled and released almost daily, ranging from things like electricity sourced from algal blooms, to solar air-conditioners and windows. Given these accelerating developments, the Territory's response to climate change must be fluid and flexible in its approach, and we must continue to test and trial these new developments to determine if they fit within the Territory's needs.

Progress of the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy will be reported through the annual Climate Change Forum, a community event which will be held, for the first time, in Alice Springs in October this year. The forum will allow for new technologies, research, and innovation in climate change to be explored and showcased, and for

the community to engage with government on what climate change means to them.

The Territory government has taken a firm stand on climate change through the release of the Territory's climate change policy. These challenges are real, and the issues we must all face as the effects of climate change are felt in the Territory will be significant. Climate change does not have to mean our community, business and the environment are disadvantaged. Instead, we find ourselves at a turning point, and the climate change challenge represents a pivotal opportunity to transform our economy, society and environment into a green economy for the future. It is a turning point faced by government, by business and by the community.

Through the Northern Territory Climate Change Policy, all Territorians will be provided with the tools, incentives, information, and advice and market development to embrace the challenges of climate change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I commend this policy to the House. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

**Mr CHANDLER (Brennan):** Madam Speaker, today I join the minister in the statement on climate change, to give some measured thought, and to enable discussion on this important area. I must say from the outset that was not my original objective. I read the statement last night and started to, in my mind, pick it to pieces, tear it apart, and do all things oppositions do. However, climate change is too important, and to do that would have lessened my approach today.

Second, reading through the statement there were many good sections and, indeed, the government's policy. I particularly liked the Telepresence idea. I really hope this is taken up by not only staff, but also CEOs of departments and ministers, where possible. They are genuine savings to the Territory and the environment, of the carbon which would otherwise be in the atmosphere if these trips were taken.

I also noted in the statement today, and in the policy, many of the ideas seem to mirror the Country Liberals' policy. To throw mud at it is probably not a wise idea, because our ideas, and ideas picked up the government, are good ideas. I thank the minister for listening to the Country Liberals' policy on climate change.

The subject of climate change is an area of discussion which will have a lasting legacy on the way in which governments identify, develop, and implement policy settings that will have an immediate and long-term effect, at some level, on everyday Territorians.

I note a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme - the big fat tax as envisaged by the federal government - is a scheme designed to shift the basis on which companies make their decisions to invest in plant, equipment, factories, farms, electricity generation, and water transport. I know this is so, because the cost of doing these things the same way is going to rise. To stop pollution, to stop excess carbon emissions, the financial incentive is to be thrust upon business, taken up by government, and brought into the community. However, the solution to climate change is not only about changes to the taxation regime; it is about changing the mindset of ordinary Territorians, ordinary Australians, in their home and workplace.

We will need to be smarter and better prepared to manage the climate change debate and the climate change economy. It is with this mindset the Country Liberals have, since 2008, stood on a policy of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, and when it gets down to the nub of it, showing leadership on climate change. Leadership is the role of a government. A government needs to implement strong and sound public policy, and not be at the whim of any single individual or group, or to champion an out of step change as an outlet for ambition.

This government has a clear track record of failing our environment. If they were so serious about climate change and dealing with the important issue, why did the Chief Minister remove himself from the responsibilities of climate change? Obviously, it is not important to him, or is it true he appreciates the can of worms it perhaps involves. Whatever, it certainly lacks true leadership on the matter, and undermines this statement today.

The time it has taken this government to deliver a climate change policy should also be noted - another example of how important it believes the issue to be. The government has taken far too long, and has only announced its policy after being dragged and kicked, screaming by the Country Liberals.

Another very important point to raise is the importance the Country Liberals place on this issue. It can be clearly demonstrated that, even with our extremely limited resources, we have worked tirelessly, and I take my hat off to our very small but dedicated team who worked tirelessly on this matter. The government, with all the resources available, it could not deliver a policy earlier than the Country Liberals. In fact, I heard the minister suggest the Country Liberals had stolen their policy - our policy - a policy that did not even exist, however, we stole it. It makes an interesting analogy.

Consider for one moment a future where carbon dioxide could become a tradable commodity – air - you will be suggesting I have stolen your air. I had it a minute ago, where has it gone? I worry about this type of program. I worry that if there is a buck to be made someone is going to be screwed over in this society; that is an absolute certainty. The reality is, even with our limited resources, the Country Liberals were able to introduce a policy which not only provides practical steps, it is fully costed, and has perhaps passed the ultimate test of all, to get the tick of approval from environmental lobby groups.

The Henderson government has sat idly while Territory pollution levels rise, happy to let the Commonwealth drive debate while it shirks leadership on this crucial environmental and economic issue. It is ironic the Territory government's department of Natural Resources and Environment was the biggest greenhouse gas emitter in the public sector last financial year. This is another clear example of how serious this government takes the issue of climate change.

A Country Liberals led government will be committed to sound climate change policies, including reducing government carbon emissions. The Country Liberals want to lead Australia in the push to cut pollution from our environment. This includes reducing climate affecting carbon emissions. While our carbon footprint is having an impact, change must occur through a coordinated global effort. Carbon dioxide should not be seen in isolation as the only pollutant released into our environment. This why our policy - the Country Liberals policy to combat climate change and protect our environment - will focus on our land, our water and, of course, our atmosphere.

The Country Liberals policy outlines practical and commonsense approaches to reduce our impact on the environment through a culture shift, and by providing a time frame which is measurable and achievable. The Country Liberals policy covers six core philosophies: the development of a green energy efficiency; ensuring government introduces practical measures and sets benchmarks to change community behaviour on reducing pollution; reducing the impact of savannah burning; supporting green business and industry; develop a green workforce; and, promoting green communities.

I have here a few of Labor's policy points and, indeed, the Country Liberals, and I thought I would break them down a little. Labor policy: by 2020, at least five cogeneration projects will be operational, supplying smarter power for major Territory government infrastructure; by 2020, the Territory will have replaced diesel as the primary source of power generation in remote towns and

communities, using renewable and low emissions energy sources instead; the Territory government will contribute \$4m to a \$14m showcase of renewable and low emissions energy in the remote communities of Ti Tree, Lake Nash, etcetera.

Our position allows investment is available for smaller projects in remote towns, however we can explore solar, geothermal and wind alternatives. We recognise 100 megawatts of generating power is in the order of 20% of Territory generating capacity. The Territory government is resting on its laurels with the existing programs, without a future goal, and with no idea of the amount of generating capacity. One megawatt or 10 megawatts per set - an unclear goal at the very least.

Point two: the Labor government wants to provide technical advice to coordinate applications by all Territory schools for the National Solar Schools Program, an Australian government program offering grants of up to \$50 000 to schools to install solar or other renewable energy power systems. Also, as new energy efficiency and small-scale renewable energy products such as solar air-conditioners come onto the market, encourage testing in the Territory for local use.

The Country Liberals want to establish a five year \$5m renewable fund to promote development of renewable energy sources. Our commitment is to promote entrepreneurial investment in energy. We want to seed investment in the Northern Territory so private capital is applied to our renewable seeds. The Territory government is relying on Commonwealth programs, on Commonwealth money, and Commonwealth ideas.

The aspirational goal by the Labor government is 60% of carbon emission reductions by 2050, on 2007 emissions. By comparison, the Country Liberals want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the Territory by 60% from 2009 levels, by 2050. The 2007 figures for the Northern Territory were 17.2 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. The jury is still out, however 2009 was supposed to see the Territory on a natural gas energy footing, and balancing a steady economy. While the numbers are still out, if 2009 emissions are lower than 2007, then the final end point will be lower than that which government proposes. It is unlikely to be significantly higher, so the Country Liberals target is a contemporary achievable goal, not an aspirational one.

By 2020, wholesale electricity purchasers in the Territory will meet their national 20% renewable energy targets from Territory resources - that is Labor policy. By comparison, the Country Liberals have a 25% renewable energy target by

2025. The Territory goes along blindly with the Commonwealth set piece. There is no initiative and no aspiration in this 20% mandatory target.

The Labor government wants to implement the Green Office Building Policy which will reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas production for each building that adopts the standards by around 50% by 2012. It is non-binding. By comparison, the Country Liberals want to provide a 50% emissions reduction in government leased buildings by 2012. The government goal is non-binding, particularly as it talks about 'those that adopt' the standard. Government, as a purchaser of goods and services, has a clear role in driving the best value for its investments.

The Labor government says existing leased office buildings will be encouraged to achieve a 4.5-star National Australian Built Environment Rating System by 1 July 2012. New leased office buildings will target 5-star green star design standards, and 5-star NABERS base building energy standards through a NABERS commitment agreement. By comparison, the Country Liberals want an attainment of an 8-star energy rating on all new government buildings by 2017. If you do not set yourself a stretched target, how can you expect the community to follow?

Another point from Labor policy, all public housing will have an energy efficiency audit by 2015, providing essential data on energy efficiency requirements in the Territory's public housing stock. By comparison, energy efficiency audit of all public housing by 2015. We are on the mark with that one. I believe our policy was out shortly before your policy, minister.

It is a basic commitment to drive energy efficiency into the community by setting standards which enable business to change processes, and get better value for the dollar invested in housing.

Labor policy says they want to reduce emissions from the Territory government's passenger and light commercial fleet by 20% by 2014, and 50% by 2020. By comparison, the Country Liberals want to cut 50% in the NT Fleet emissions - 50% - by 20% in the first three years, and by 50% in six years. Our target is brought in years in advance of the governments, and demonstrates a lack of commitment by government.

Another point in Labor policy, all Territory schools will have a solar panel installed by 2015, where technically feasible, and will be adopting best practice sustainability measure. By comparison, the Country Liberals want a solar capacity in all Territory schools by 2015. This is an equivalent commitment, however, we question

the effectiveness of some of the programs which have been implemented so far. How effective has the Millner School solar collector been in power produced for money invested? This government fails to plan.

The last point we will talk about is the Labor government's policy says the Territory government will use its purchasing power and buying decisions to demonstrate that climate friendly goods and services are efficient and effective, both environmentally and economically. Country Liberal policy mentions a procurement weighting given to green-focused business tendering for government work.

Our key platform is government leads and business follows when it comes to setting these benchmarks. Our policy has always been as a key purchaser of goods and services, the Northern Territory government sets a benchmark on environmental performance.

One last area of Country Liberals policy versus the government's attempt at dealing with the notion of climate change is we would have the EPA as an independent authority, and provide a written report card on our progress, as a government, in reducing our carbon emissions.

I hear discussion from this government regarding the administration being carbon neutral. I welcome that statement. I know though, a carbon neutral government is not actually synonymous with a carbon footprint reduced government. I can well imagine a situation where the carbon footprint of government is much larger than it is today, but emissions are offset by some other means, by carbon credits for instance. Of course, to devolve responsibility to the literal coalface, we need to empower our people with change. Government departments, as individual groups, need to have clear, unambiguous challenge targets. Only as a combination of its parts, does an organisation have true strength and purpose.

The Territory has always been, in addition to the delivery of government services, a resource-based economy. Our challenge with climate change is the same burden Australia has as a nation. How will our industries compete? How will we expand our economic base? How will we do all that when we are facing a global commitment to reduce waste, reduce pollution and reduce the potential effects from climate change?

These are all questions not answered in this ministerial statement, or in the government's climate change policy. The truth may well be, if the federal government gets its way, we will do that by making our customers pay. That is the problem with the current CPRS; the big fat tax, as

described nationally. The problem, of course, is if your real objective is to reduce energy, to change people's habits, you must convince them to change their habits through providing clear evidence they can save money, and can be provided with incentives to assist in this transition, or you provide an incentive through higher prices. What you cannot do is introduce a new big fat tax, then give it back to the masses, and expect they will reduce their energy consumption. Why should they? Why would they? Mark my words, there will be absolutely no environmental improvements unless we can convince a majority of people to change their habits, including reducing their energy consumption and joining the journey of transition to a renewable energy future.

Many of the ideological debates within this ministerial statement are both national and international issues. What I am concerned about, what I am focused on, is what practical measures we can take in the Northern Territory to protect our environment, and ensure we have done our bit in regard to climate change. What the minister appears to be focusing on is energising a federal debate in support of his federal colleagues. It is like a word from above has come down and said: 'You will focus on climate change and convince the masses the federal government CPRS policy is our only saviour. It is the planet's only saviour and Big Kev will save the world'. What a load of crap! If the minister wants to fight the federal battle ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Member for Brennan, that is not appropriate parliamentary language.

**Mr CHANDLER:** What part, Madam Speaker – 'crap'?

**Madam SPEAKER:** The last part, member for Brennan.

**Mr CHANDLER:** Do I remove the word 'crap'?

**Madam SPEAKER:** Yes. It is also not necessary to keep repeating it, thank you.

**Mr CHANDLER:** Yes, Madam Speaker. If the minister wants to fight the federal battle, I suggest he put up his hand for Lingiari, win that seat, and take his battle to Canberra. Most Territorians I speak to do not really give two hoots about what Canberra thinks; what they care about are local issues. This is, of course, of critical importance. We need to focus on practical applications and encourage people, through well-thought-out and measured incentives, to assist in reducing their energy needs.

Global climate change can only be managed through a global solution. The Copenhagen Summit did not reach that goal and, perhaps,

provided insight into how complicated the issue has become. I note, in today's statement, the minister refers to governments across the world taking decisive action on climate change. I am not sure if the minister has seen any of the media coverage of the Copenhagen climate change outcomes, but I do not believe you can call this decisive action on climate change. The reality is, in isolation, any changes we make here in the Northern Territory, any improvements we make, will account for less than a single raindrop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool. I hope, however, in future we are provided with a clear and transparent foundation for dealing with global climate change.

Of course, the most immediate need for the Territory is our investment in northern Australia's gas industry. Whether that investment comes in the form of Greater Sunrise, Ichthys or further Bayu-Undan works, an expanded gas industry would blow out of the water the Territory's contribution to emissions and, by extension, its contribution to the acclaimed driver of climate change; that being, CO<sub>2</sub>.

While we might seek, as a community, to decrease our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from around 17 million tonnes in today's figures, to the equivalent carbon offset/neutral target of less than 10, a single expansion of our gas industry would be several millions of tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> on the addition side of the ledger. Taking this into the equation, will Territorians be comfortable with the change to both our - and of those across the Chamber - position on the level of Northern Territory emissions? This is a question we must ask, and I am certain a debate we shall have.

While we talk about the effects of man-made climate change on weather patterns, on the heat island effect, on the long-term measures required as a consequence of over-zealous land clearing in southern Australia, we must face one of the key contributions to our component to Australia's climate changing processes; that is our savannah and woodland burning.

The 200 000 Territorians in a country of 22 million, in a world of over six billion individuals, have Mother Nature to thank for a huge and variable contribution. That, of course, is a natural fact. The millions of square kilometres of Territory woodland, pasture, rainforest, and desert have a symbiosis in the cycling of greenhouse gases through and across the years. A natural balance existed from before the arrival of humans to this country, and continued through to the present with established land management practices, particularly the application of fire and the vagaries of Mother Nature.

Do I say now the science of fire is not perfectly understood? I say yes, that is so. I know there are obvious implications to the diversity of vegetation and animal communities if humans start to manipulate, in a different way, fire management across the Territory. I know, though, if we increase the cycling of carbon into long-term stable storage, we can achieve a rolling back of climate change drivers, and can be better served by our land.

As our policy position on climate change, we acknowledge savannah burning as an integral part of our environment to be managed. With a third of Territory emissions, say nearly five million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> released by Dry Season fires, it is imperative investment in enhanced management of forestry and farming will be needed to reduce emissions and increase rates of carbon removal. We see the availability of land, and the Territory's human and intellectual capital as a potential building block of a carbon offset industry.

Activities we see as necessary for dealing with our challenge include increasing carbon sequestration through re-forestation; enhancing soil carbon levels through managed farming and reforming fire management practices. Fundamentally, it is the people of the Northern Territory who are the key, with government providing additional resources to educate land users and provide for research. However, we cannot rely on dealing with savannah burning or the carrying capacity of our land for government to be carbon neutral.

If science demonstrates in the future we are a jurisdiction where our wetlands and coastal regions, our deserts and woodlands, will suffer from a changing climate, we need to act. Again, it brings us to a global theme. The world is producing too much pollution. Our coastlines, our towns and cities have been affected by wind, rain, storm surge, floods and, of course, a drying continent. We, as a small community, must lift our voices to the call for a changed approach, however, we need global action to deliver that change. As I have mentioned, any action in isolation will amount to nothing more than a single rain drop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

I urge the Commonwealth to invest in new technology, and to support the Territory's endeavours to change ours. I urge the Commonwealth to support solar energy developments and geothermal exploration. We have the space, from the Commonwealth we need commitment, and the Territory needs a government which will lead the charge. While we can be swayed by the globalisation of change, we must ensure we make changes ourselves. We do need to promote better house design, more efficient use of our resources. We need Smart

Home design, energy efficient and cost-effective three-bedroom housing costing less than \$300 000.

Madam Speaker, in summing up, I encourage the minister to back this up; no more talk, no more spin, take the issue seriously, rather than with the introduction of this statement, what appears to be a diversionary tactic to take the focus off a depleted second-rate administration, and the mess they have created for Territorians. Unfortunately this statement, and the Henderson government's climate change policy, does not live up to expectations, or provide our community with the necessary confidence to become part of this journey.

**Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay):** Madam Speaker, I support the statement and I support the policy. In the shadow minister's opening remarks, it was very good to hear him express support for both the statement and the policy. He went into some detail later in statement, which I am sure the minister will address. However, it is good to hear those supportive comments right at the top of the statement.

Of course, why would you not support this statement? \$34m, 40 targets, 118 actions: this is a policy which will deliver results, and I believe the minister should be commended for that. It is targeted at practical, achievable goals which will make a difference.

To achieve lasting reforms, the policy recognises that we need a partnership between government, business and the community. I believe that makes sense. Compared to other parts of Australia, with population, economy and carbon footprint, we are a small part of the national show, and we are definitely a small part of the international show. It is important we do our bit, and I believe this policy recognises that. What is our bit? It is \$34m, 40 targets and 118 actions; I believe it is a very well drafted policy.

The big target, our aspirational goal, is a 60% reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 based on 2007 emissions. When you consider the rapid growth of our economy and population - we have had many debates in the Chamber around that - our emerging industries, our existing growing industries, it is probable over the next few decades our emissions will grow. Also, 2050 is four decades away, however, our emissions over the next two decades, you would think, would grow. For us to achieve outcomes, we need that partnership between business, community and government.

We need to look at investing in new technologies, and find new ways to do things. The only way to achieve that is for everyone to

invest, it cannot be government alone. It has to be government working with the business community and the general community. We need to recognise government plays a leadership role in the Territory. Often, where government leads, business and the community follow. Government does need to set an example, and we have seen government has significant influence over what cars are driven in the Territory, for example, through fleet decisions. Target two, page 8: reduce emissions from the Territory government's passenger and light commercial fleet by 20% by 2014, and 50% by 2020.

That is a target I believe we can achieve. We are going to do it. In having an effect on the community, the cars we buy filter through to cars in the general community. That has a significant impact on what cars you see driving around Darwin, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Katherine. The cars on the road are often as a result of what cars we buy in the Territory through out fleet.

That will have a significant impact on what you see happening in Darwin over the next few years and all the way to 2020. As the report states, that has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up 2300 tonnes in 2014, which is the equivalent to the emissions produced by about 700 cars in one year, and it has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 3500 tonnes in 2020, which is the equivalent to emissions produced by about 1100 cars in one year. We are going to achieve that. We are going to have a lasting impact, through what cars we buy, which will flow on to what cars you see on the streets in Darwin, Palmerston, the rural area, Tennant, Katherine and so on. In many respects, the flow on from that decision will also be picked up in targets five and six, regarding offices housing government workers.

We will implement green building performance standards for all buildings leased by government by 2020 - that is target five; and target six, by 2020 energy intensity in Territory government buildings will be reduced by a third from 2004 baseline, with progressive energy savings being achieved after this, which has the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 41 000 tonnes in 2020, which is the equivalent - when you compare it with cars - to the emissions produced by about 12 500 cars in one year. That decision will flow on, I believe, into office leasing. What government wants and gets will have an impact on the broader commercial office space.

The Mitchell Centre and Darwin Plaza are to be congratulated. They have been accredited with the 5-star NABERS energy rating. The minister gave them a rap in his speech; that is top stuff; that is international best practice. It is an example of business being proactive. Other

businesses are proactive too - I know the minister mentioned them - Paspalis Centrepoint, 9-11 Cavenagh Street, Harbourview Plaza and the RCG Centre. It is excellent to see business looking at improving energy efficiency, which impacts in many ways.

The minister expands on targets five and six from the policy document in his ministerial statement, and picks up on the point of the government fleet; where government leads it does have a broader impact.

It is the case buildings which have achieved 4.5-star NABERS rating, or above, consume approximately half the energy, and produce half the greenhouse gases, of the average office building. Given government leases around 65% of the Territory's commercial building space, best practice energy efficiency achieved in government-leased buildings will flow through to the commercial property market and, over time, will result in a transformation of our property market. I believe the minister is right; I agree with him completely on that point.

If a building is 4.5 stars or above, it consumes approximately half the energy. That is a significant result, and is something we should be looking at achieving in all office space. The flow-on effect is going to be huge; it will produce half the greenhouse gases of the average office building. Significant results, significant achievement. Something we need to work on, as with the government fleet. They are really simple things where government decisions can have a lasting effect on the general community.

We are also working in our schools. Target eight speaks to it specifically - implement the Energy Smart School Program which will reduce the overall energy intensity of Territory government schools by 20% by 2015, from a 2004 baseline. I have two primary schools in my electorate, and I discuss issues with them all the time. The issue of energy efficiency comes up at school council meetings from time to time; what can you do around the school, climate change and so on.

I spoke to both principals to get an update on what they are doing at the moment - this is not necessarily related to target eight; it is what schools are doing. Mick Myers is principal of Parap Primary School. It has a goal of letting students develop ideas of their own on how to best save power and water. The students are able to put their learning into practice. That is important. Making your own decisions and putting them into practice is a better result than being told what to do.

The school has a Sustainability Group made up of students who regularly audit the school to find improved ways to reduce power consumption. It is important they have that tracking mechanism; they are looking at what they do, and constantly looking at ways to improve. That is a very good system to have in place. The students are turning off the timers on the airconditioning units and controlling them manually, when needed. They did this all through the Dry Season. The Sustainability Group turns off lights around the school when they are not being used. I believe that happens everywhere, not just in the schools. Parliament House has a very good system which cost quite an amount to install, where lights are determined by motion. You really can reduce the capacity to have lights on. Light meters in the classroom ensure lights will not be on when no one is in the room. The students also have electricity meters to measure how much electricity a device is using. Students love getting hands-on experience, and are very enthusiastic to do more this year. I believe that is an excellent result from the school. It is exciting for the students, and they are enjoying it; they do want to be hands-on. I imagine the electricity meter is quite interesting to them, and it is good to see them becoming involved and achieving results in their school.

They are not alone. Stuart Park Primary is also in my electorate and principal, Bernie Bree, gave me an update today. Again, another great school, doing a great job! The school has used the Rudd stimulus money to install underground watering systems, which will dramatically reduce the amount of water used by preventing evaporation.

I mentioned electricity at Parap Primary, however, water use is also important to reduce costs. It is hard to believe in the Top End we might have water problems, however we have the potential to use a great deal of water, and it is something we need to watch with our growing population; we do not quite have the same concerns as they have down south, though.

The school had an energy audit at the end of 2009, with many interesting facts coming from the report. The school is planning to reduce the use of the air-conditioning timer, and change to more energy efficient light bulbs. The school is applying for a grant to install solar panels. Stuart Park School Council, at the beginning of last year, discussed things they had done two years previously, one of which was an audit of the school. They tracked down all the hot water urns installed over time in different parts of the school - they found them in some quite strange places where no one was using them - still drawing energy, and they turned them off. That is an example where, especially, in a school, practices can be established over a very long period of time,

people forget, and things sit there chewing up power.

The students attended a one day workshop on how they can best use less energy. The students are going to lead the charge on climate change, and do as much as they can this year to save energy. The students also have the energy measuring device, which shows them how much power a device is using - I mentioned that in relation to Parap earlier. The school has regular meetings with teachers and students on environmental issues, and hopes to put a bigger and better plan in place this year. Similar to Parap Primary School, they are all quite excited about the work they have done so far, they are getting involved, and they all want to do more this year.

That is recognising our policy in some respects. Over time, the more people know about what is happening, what they can do, the more they get involved, and the more results you will see.

At a practical level, that is what it means in the two primary schools in my electorate. I have not spoken to principals from the middle school and high school today, however I know they are also involved in finding ways to save power and water. That is what students and staff in those schools are doing to impact on climate change, and what they are doing by looking at underground water which was mentioned before, and applying for grants.

It is a good result. It is great to see kids and schools get involved, and it is great to see, minister, parents who work in the public sector are going to be able to spend more time with their kids.

In your policy document you mentioned we are going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from interstate air travel by Northern Territory public sector staff by half by 2020, compared to 2008-09 which has the potential to reduce greenhouse emissions by up to 9000 tonnes in 2020, which is the equivalent to the emission produced by about 2700 cars in one year.

One of the outcomes of that target - and I believe you mentioned in your statement - will be to improve the work/life balance of staff in the public sector who travel often. I know it can be an issue when it takes you away from your family, which is a little in jest; it is a possible outcome from the target.

I have used teleconferencing, which will be the key measure in halving interstate air travel. With current technology and new technologies emerging all the time, teleconferencing will only

get better and easier over time. The minister mentioned a certain technology in his speech:

*Just this month government has installed a \$0.5m high technology, highly secure video-networking system called Telepresence ...*

I do not think I have used that one; there is every chance I have not. You do not always ask what videoconferencing system you are using. This technology, as you said, will save in travel costs and greenhouse emissions, also improve productivity through less travel time, and increase work/life balance for government staff who will not be called away from their family. We have all done the Canberra trip. We have direct flights now, I believe. In the past, we went through Sydney, Brisbane, or Melbourne. Often, when travelling south, you have to catch the midnight flight, land, and go straight to your meeting.

At the moment, travel out of the Territory is not necessarily conducive to business travel. I believe videoconferencing is a genuine option. It will reduce the impact on people travelling, and will address that work/life balance. It will probably be the easiest way to ensure we halve those greenhouse emissions from government flights. Catching that midnight flight is not the easiest thing to do when you have a meeting at 8 am. As ministers, those 8 am meetings are not: 'How is your coffee?' They are important meetings to fight for more dollars or resources for the Territory, or to settle critical policy issues.

It is always worth thinking about the public sector and when they travel. Conversations over teleconferencing will be just as effective, and just as do-able and will save us time, money and energy. It also means they are more productive because, after the meeting, they can go back to work.

I recently represented the Chief Minister at the Volunteer of the Year Awards, which were held in Alice Springs and attended by the member for Braitling. About 40 or 50 people were in attendance in Alice, and the head of Volunteering NT and I were in Darwin. It was all done over Skype. I am sure most of you know about Skype. It is an Internet application you put on your desktop, or you can put it onto iPhones now. It is an Internet protocol with videoconferencing and telephone calls through the Internet. It was set up, it worked, very cheap, not necessarily highly secure, however it is an example of something which is robust and easily available. You can download it for free. You pay for your Internet connection, but you can do things through Skype. It is a quick and easy way to save money. It worked for us. I did not realise initially I

would be presenting to someone in Alice Springs. It was fascinating to use Skype.

One area where volunteers are helping us meet targets and address climate changes is the installation of photovoltaic cells. The use of the word 'volunteers' is a little misleading; there is a return on investment however, at this stage, it is very much in the field of early adoption. The return, while it can be expected to improve in future years - I believe it will improve in future years - is not quite there yet. The decision to install photovoltaic cells is not necessarily a financially viable one yet. In some respects, they are volunteers, but there are people who are making community decisions - this is the part where the community comes into play - with the best interest of the environment in mind.

COOLmob has an excellent paper on their website explaining photovoltaic cells. If members do not know, it is basically putting solar cells on the roof of your house which generate power back into the electricity grid, and Power and Water purchase it from you from the grid. That is it, simply. It is a separate issue from putting solar cells for hot water. This is a distinct solar cell to return power to the grid. Fitting a photovoltaic solar panel involves paying for the panel and inverter, paying a connection fee and, possibly, an extra power meter to measure production, in some cases a frame to support the panels, which must be engineered to cyclone code, and an accredited electrician to fit the panels. It is not necessarily an easy process.

There are some initiatives from the federal government for meeting up-front costs. If you want to put these cells on your roof you have to decide whether (a) you can afford it up-front, and (b) you have to work out how that will amortize over time; whether it is worth it. I have friends in my electorate who have one on their roof, and have worked out how it will pay itself off. They have a slightly different model to the one COOLmob measure in their paper - they talk about a 1 kilowatt an hour system. This person has gone for a 4 kilowatt an hour system. They have measured it will take about 25 years to pay off on current terms, but with the climate change policy conversation, there is every chance that is going to change. In some respects they are gambling it is going to change, however over time, that period of repayment may change. They have invested in the environment knowing, on current terms, that it will probably take about 25 years to pay off. That is a decision they have made.

Most people do not know if they will live in their home for 25 years. If you are going to make that kind of investment and you know you can pay it off over 10 years, it may be something you are quite comfortable with. Twenty-five years is too far to

plan ahead; I believe people are comfortable with 10 years.

As I mentioned earlier, we are definitely in the early adoption area of that technology. Not a large number of people in the Territory are using it yet. As it starts to be adopted, which might depend on what the Commonwealth does, you may see Power and Water policy change however, at the moment it is a very small area. I believe it is an important area, and it is quite capable of growing. If you are interested, the COOLmob pack provides maths to work out whether it is worth it or not. For example, during a Wet Season day - and they say you should budget for seven months of Wet Season - I do not think that is quite right; in sun hours it might be right - four-and-a-half sun hours in the Wet for seven months, and six-and-a-half sun hours in the Dry, and you should plan around that.

When you go away your solar cell is generating power. It does that whether you are in the house or not, however if you go away it will be producing energy and selling it to the grid. It is a permanent source of energy for the grid, which is a good thing and something worth exploring down the track, especially as people get more involved in it.

COOLmob do a great job. The minister noted that in his statement; they work hard to provide practical help for people making their homes more energy efficient, and saving money on power and water bills. I am thinking of some of the information on their website. My favourite - and I have used this when getting into friendly arguments around barbecues - is their fact sheet on fans; fans are cheap to run. People believe fans are cheap to run and, in some respects, they are, but if you leave your fan running, it can cost about \$600 per year. That is something from their fact sheet, and is based on one to two fans per room. That is quite an amount of money.

Myth two: fans keep the house cool; they do not. They keep you cool if you are in the house, because it is moving air; they do not necessarily keep the house cool. Also another myth: you have to leave the fans running to stop mould growth. That is something I believed. I would leave my fans running during the Wet when I was out, making sure not to get mould growing on the walls. That is not true, and COOLmob bust that myth on their website. As a long-term Territorian, there were some myths I believed, however COOLmob fixed those.

The fact sheet on air-conditioning is also interesting. I fall into the category of a Territorian who has an old house with a breeze; I am lucky, I do not use the air-conditioner - I do not need it to sleep, I do not need it during the day. Friends

over during the day watching the football might beg you to put the air-conditioner on, however I do not necessarily need to use it.

COOLmob have tips on their website on saving on air-conditioning costs - the temperature to run it. They say 30% of Darwin residents sleep without air-conditioning in the Wet Season. When I get into that conversation most people say they use it. I am not sure if it is 30%. I know I do not, however that is a decent figure. There are ads running which say set your air-conditioner higher, 24, 25, 26, 27 degrees, and have the fan on - you do not really need to set it at a 22, 21 degree level. That will use more power, and ultimately put a strain on the main system. So, if you are going to turn it on, have it up high, have the fan on. It is even better if, like me, you have an elevated house.

Other information, and something most people know now, is standby power. People know if you do not turn appliances such as microwaves, televisions, DVDs - I would not recommend the fridge or the freezer - off at the power point ...

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr Wood:** That will increase climate change if you keep talking.

**Mr GUNNER:** You are welcome to criticise me in your contribution, member for Nelson. Thank you, member for Johnston.

If you do not turn off your appliance at the power point you are using energy. For a long time people believed the red light was standby; it used power, although less than if the television was on. If you turned the television off and removed the red light, people thought they had stopped using power, however that does not. If it is plugged in and the power is on, it uses power. You have to turn it off at the power point.

**Dr Burns:** Is that for computers, too?

**Mr GUNNER:** That is for everything. The thing most people forget - and I forget too - is if you have your mobile phone charger switched on but no mobile phone plugged into it, it chews power - not heaps, but it ticks away chewing up power. That is something people forget. I always forget to check if my phone charger is turned off.

COOLmob gives a formula to work out how much standby power you are using in your home. It looks a little complicated. It might be when you do it, it is simple. You turn off all appliances -

lights, fans, air-conditioners, fridges, hot water heaters and pool pumps. You measure the time the wheel in the electricity meter takes to go around once. You record the number of revolutions per kilowatt hour written on the meter face. From this, you calculate the instantaneous power use of the house in watts. You multiply the standby power used for the estimated number of hours householders are using the appliances, multiply that by the yearly energy standby use of 0.15, or fifteen cents. I believe it is safer to assume standby chews up power and if you can, turn it off. People are welcome to use the formula, however I would rather accept the fact standby uses power and act accordingly.

Other practical examples of things people notice in their daily lives is the decision by government to phase out plastic bags. It is listed as target 24, page 11 of the policy document: phase out single use plastic shopping bags and move to multiple use shopping bags with a smaller carbon footprint. I think it is a great decision. It is one of those interesting ones. It takes a level of implementation at the shop, and Woolworths and Coles are working with their staff, and the unions, because there are issues with the green bags. I have some; I like them. They can carry more which is good; you can put more in fewer bags. However, you do not think about the check out operator working for eight hours, carrying a heavier bag; it can have an OH&S impact.

They are working out how to roll that out into stores. There are also hygiene issues. Once you buy a green bag you do not want to throw it away but it can get a bit dirty. That is another issue being worked through. You can appreciate people do not want to buy 40 bags because of the cost - they want to buy X number and use them. It is a small thing, and an issue which can be worked through. It is an example of the little things that can happen when new things are implemented. It is something unions, shop owners and staff are working through.

Another government initiative which will have an impact on people at the fundamental level is the Cash for Container Scheme. I believe the member for Nelson will mention this in his statement. We need a scheme which is legally robust, financially robust and regionally robust.

**Mr Wood:** I have not spoken yet.

**Mr GUNNER:** No, it is something you know about; you were on the reference committee. You can speak about it if you like, member for Nelson.

We need a scheme which is legally, financially and regionally robust. We have to get it right. There are some complicated issues involved in a Cash for Container Scheme, however nothing we

cannot overcome. I believe the Cash for Container Scheme will have a big impact in the Territory. I know having one is target 25, however target 26 is to develop recycling options for the Territory, and target 27 is reduce the amount of waste being taken to our rubbish dumps by 50% by 2020.

I believe the single thing which will get us there for those two targets is a Cash for Container Scheme; it does create a recycling culture and people get into the habit of recycling, it also means you start getting enough base material to make recycling worthwhile - you are getting enough through the front door to do it. That is target 26, and target 27 is reducing the amount of waste being taken to our rubbish dumps by 50%. There is no doubt people are getting into the habit of recycling litter, and taking things such as screen doors, computers, batteries, whatever it happens to be, into recycling; it does reduce land fill.

**Mr Wood:** Do not grow palms.

**Mr GUNNER:** As someone who has a rather large block with Royal palms on it, I understand completely what the member for Nelson is saying picking up on the interjection; palm fronds create much green waste, and a great deal of work on Sundays.

I believe a Cash for Containers scheme will have a big impact of reducing land fill, on reducing litter, and will definitely create a recycling culture in the Territory. South Australia does it, and they do it well. South Australia also does the shopping bag, and they do it well. We are going to follow South Australia's footsteps; we are going to be the only two jurisdictions to have a Cash for Container Scheme, and a ban on plastic shopping bags. That is excellent. It is really good work, minister, and I commend it.

I note target 23: plan and implement an integrated public transport system which sees 20% increase in the use of cycling, walking and public transport across the Territory by 2020. As a government we have said we need to increase demand for public transport; that was one of the big drivers behind our decision to make public transport free for seniors, students or anyone holding a pensioner concession card, from memory.

Making public transport free was about (a) it should be free to those groups, (b) it also increases the demand for public transport, and by increasing demand, you improve the system. That was a big impact of that decision; there was a large driver behind it. I have mentioned in the House previously we are the only place in Australia to provide free transport. Some places

in Australia free public transport within the CBD, however to say free public transport for seniors and students was a huge decision, and will definitely build demand for public transport.

Linking cycling, walking and public transport; in my electorate this has involved a conversation with Darwin City Council - it is not something government can do alone. We say you must have a partnership with business in the community, and that is clearly one where we will need to have a partnership with Darwin City Council. People have raised with me the idea of secondary bike paths; it is something they have taken to Council because it involves using Council roads. The theory is recognising people like to ride on straight routes when they can. Sometimes people use main roads because they know it will get them there; they are not necessarily familiar with the suburb they are riding or walking past.

However, the idea of secondary paths is to link main roads through suburbs; people on bikes, and pedestrians, know they are going a certain way through a suburb they may not be familiar with, which will definitely get them to where they are going faster, and it takes people off the main roads. I believe that is something that is worth exploring ...

**Mr Wood:** We live in hope for the rural area.

**Mr GUNNER:** I was talking about my electorate, member for Nelson - and I do believe that is a good idea for people. As mentioned, \$34m, 40 targets, 118 actions. This is a policy which will deliver results, and a policy which recognises to achieve lasting performance we need to have a partnership between government, business and the community. It is targeted at practical, achievable goals which will make a difference. I believe the policy, and the minister, will deliver that; \$34m, 40 targets, 118 actions - a great policy - and I am happy to support the statement and the policy.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, climate change, what is it? Naturally, it is changing of the climate. Is it occurring? It seems so; look at some of the weather patterns in parts of Australia, especially in Western Australia. However, is the process natural, caused by man, or a combination of the two?

Every time you read the paper you will find different points of view. From my perspective, is it simply the case of whether we are polluting our air and water? If so, we should be doing something to change that situation. After all, we drink the water and breathe the air and it makes sense to keep them as unpolluted as possible. If that means having a positive effect on the climate that is a bonus.

If we consider the air, and we pump many things into the air from a range of sources; some of those sources are the basis of our modern lifestyle - motor cars, electricity, manufacturing industry and moo cows.

If you look at the pie chart on page 16 of the Northern Territory Government Climate Change Policy, you will see four main causes of greenhouse gas emission: savannah burning, 33%; stationary energy, 25% - if you add that to transport, which is a form of use of energy, it is 9% - and agriculture and land use, 18%. The government has an action plan to reduce greenhouse gases; in fact it has 40 goals, 40 targets, 40 actions and 40 outcomes.

What I would like to do tonight with the time available, is concentrate on the three main issues in this pie chart; savannah burning, energy, and agriculture. Looking at the pie chart, you will see that covers a fair amount of the greenhouse gas emissions for the Northern Territory. If we can reduce those, surely, we go a long way to meeting targets. However, we have some issues in relation to that. Under Gold Green Energy we have target No 11, which says: the Territory will have replaced diesel as the primary source of power generation in remote towns and communities using renewable and low-emission energy sources.

However, if you go to page 20, to see the description of a low-emission energy source, you will see the government has made the following statement: 'Our supply of low emission fuel sources such as natural gas and uranium ...' If you read that into: the Territory will have replaced diesel as a primary source of power generation in remote towns and community using renewable and uranium energy sources. I do not know if that is a new Labor Party policy, however I hope someone is, at least in this discussion, allowing the issue of nuclear power to be debated. Regardless of whether you support it or not, it certainly needs to be looked at.

The reason I am talking about this is we know 34% of our greenhouse gas emissions come from stationary energy and transport services. If the 25% stationary energy component of that comes from a non-greenhouse gas emitting source such as uranium - it could be geothermal - first, we would have reduced a large source of greenhouse gas emissions and, second, used that source of energy to encourage either the use of electric or hydrogen-driven cars. That 9% transport component of greenhouse gas emissions would also be reduced.

This policy talks about the use of electric cars however, until you use a form of energy producing that electricity which does not produce carbon, all

you are doing is moving the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. You are not achieving anything. We need to be careful not to trick people into saying electric cars are terrific. They might stop a small amount of pollution in the city, but they probably increase it out at Channel Island, because that is where the electricity will be made. It will be made using gas as the energy source to drive our 'green car' - electric car - when in fact it still produces carbon emissions. We have to be careful we do not make policies which, when you look into them a little deeper, really do not change anything.

That applies to the comments made by the member for Fannie Bay when he was talking about how, in the workplace and in schools, we tell kids to turn off the lights, turn off the photocopier, and to ensure there are no red lights on chargers. That is fine, but we would be more honest to say that will reduce our electricity bill.

Last year at the Estimates Committee I asked Power and Water how much was required to be turned off in Darwin to make a difference to carbon emissions. If I turned the switch off in this building, it makes absolutely no difference to the amount of carbon pushed out at Channel Island. It might make us feel good - look at what we are doing for the world - but, in actual fact, the electricity comes from Channel Island. When I asked Power and Water how much electricity would need to be turned off in Darwin, they said 15%. That would require one generator to be turned off.

If the government thinks we can reduce our carbon emissions, make the goal 15% reduction in existing power use; then we will have achieved something. If we get 14%, we will have achieved nothing; if we get 10%, we will have achieved nothing. We will have saved on our fuel bill, our power bill, and I believe that is not bad, and we would probably have learnt not to waste energy, which is a good philosophical approach I like. However, until we get 15% reduction in total usage of electricity in Darwin, we will have not made one iota of difference to carbon emissions, and I believe we need to tell people that.

It is no good having this feel-good attitude about the climate if we are not doing anything. It is the same with cars. Electric cars are fine if they run off a source which will not produce carbon. We promote the Prius, fine! There is a diesel car now, the Econetic Ford, the Astra, and the Mini Cooper. They all went in the green solar challenge in Adelaide and produced fewer emissions than the Prius. Do not forget the Prius runs on lithium batteries which have to come from somewhere and require energy to produce them. It is complicated when you talk about reduction in carbon emissions, reduction in energy usage.

Undoubtedly we need to promote sustainable energy sources, especially solar at remote communities. I am interested to know if the Hermannsburg solar facility is still operating. I was there late last year. Wind power in the Barkly has always been spoken about as an option.

**Mr TOLLNER:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! The member for Nelson has many very interesting things to say. I draw your attention to the state of the House.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Ring the bells, a quorum is required. We now have a quorum.

**Mr WOOD:** We need to promote sustainable energy sources, especially solar in our remote communities. I am interested to know whether the Hermannsburg solar facility is still operating. I heard it had closed down. Wind power in the Barkly has been an option for some time, however, it seems not to have much attention lately in the Territory. I have spoken about the wind turbine at Epenarra, which is standing there, sadly, not operating, as far as I know. Perhaps it is symbolic of our attempts to move into wind energy.

There is also a proposal to place tidal turbines under the sea at Clarence Strait into my electorate, and it is certainly something worth looking at. However, I wonder if the government, as part of its greenhouse gas reduction plan, will be offering assistance to the company to ascertain feasibility.

The other area we are talking about is savannah burning, and this is an interesting area where we can reduce carbon emissions. The idea in the document is that, using land management as a tool, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by four million tonnes in 2020, and one of the main methods is by reducing savannah burning. I quote from two books I was looking at recently. One was *Culture, Ecology and Economy of Fire Management in North Australian Savannas* by Jeremy Russell-Smith, Peter Whitehead and Peter Cooke. They said reducing fire frequency reduces the emissions of greenhouse gases from savannahs - frequency, by the way - because more of the litter is decomposed biologically following pathways that, compared with savannah fires, produce fewer emissions per unit of litter consumed.

They also talk about land management actions to reduce the severity of fire regimes on Aboriginal land in Arnhem Land is taking place against a background of, one: considerable potential for improvements to fire management; two considerable expertise in traditional and non-traditional management of savannah fires; three, a well developed understanding of the

impacts of fire and vegetation, fauna, carbon budgets and greenhouse gas emissions. There is also a more recent book called *Savanna Burning: Understanding and Using Fire in Northern Australia*, and it was written by Rodd Dyer, Peter Jacklyn, Ian Partridge, Jeremy Russell-Smith and Dick Williams. They also talk about the requirement to have small and less intense fires and traditional practices, which maintain more diverse habits than large late fires.

As I understand it, they are saying we still need burning however, we need to have it at a stage where, I suppose, it is less damaging to the environment, where we are not going to wipe it out altogether. At present, we are getting wildfires late in the year - in September - which are doing an enormous amount of damage to the environment and causing an increase in emissions. Of course, as we know, we are bound to trade off those emissions. Some groups in Arnhem Land have an agreement with ConocoPhillips as an offset, and I believe that is a good use of land not suitable for agricultural production. The second part of this goal, that is using land management as a tool, relates to target 37 which states that:

*The Territory will be a low land-clearing jurisdiction...*

and:

*The rate of land clearing will be contained.*

This raises some serious questions in relation to agriculture and horticulture in the Northern Territory. A major part of our economy comes from live cattle. One area which has enabled increased production is the use of good pastures and cell grazing, especially in the Douglas-Daly. The increased productivity will be curtailed if a limit on clearing becomes the policy of this government. The live cattle trade is one of our most successful industries. I am interested in hearing the view of the minister for Primary Industry on this clearing cap. This is what the Cattlemen's Association say:

*The NTCA does not support an ETS or the inclusion of agriculture in a cap and trade emissions trading scheme.*

That is to start with. But further down, more specifically in relation to target 37, it says:

*Target 37 is problematic because it offers a simple, perhaps even simplistic (and I would agree) solution to a complex issue. It is based on the premise that reducing land clearing will reduce emissions. The target, and its related actions, ignore the fact that the Territory is already a low land*

*clearing jurisdiction with less than 1% of the land mass cleared. Land clearing is already contained. There is no requirement for specific legislation, native vegetation management, or increasing complexity but rather the need for balanced interaction between production, conservation and biodiversity.*

*Setting a limit on the number of hectares that may be cleared is meaningless and inappropriate. (1) There is no evidence it would deliver any environmental guarantees whatsoever. (2) It gives no-one, government, industry or community, room to move to meet changing environmental, economic or social needs. If there is to be any clearing, it needs to be integrated into an informed planning process at catchment, regional and Territory levels. (3) Land that is developed for pastoral crops will have a different emissions profile where there is no burning. The ability of pastoralists to sequester carbon has been shown to exceed that of mature forests. (4) Capping clearing means landowners are being asked to bear a disproportionate amount of the cost of reducing emissions. They are being penalised through a loss of opportunity to develop and take advantage of changing and growing markets. Strategically planned land development, including clearing, is an essential element in diversifying land use.*

The other area we talked about is horticulture, which does not get much of a mention. Regardless of what some of the soft-handed academics say, there is the capability for parks in the Northern Territory to grow good quality fruit and vegetable crops. That is already happening in Katherine, Darwin rural and Central Australia and, of course, in the Ord. How does this new land clearing policy fit into the development of this industry? Are we saying we are going to lock up the Territory and not grow any more food? We cannot eat gum leaves; with good soil and good water, we can grow fruit and vegetables.

It should be remembered we already have strict clearing guidelines, and a new set of guidelines is on the way. It is not about uncontrolled land clearing, nor should it be about no land clearing. It should be about sustainable and sensible land clearing to allow for intelligent development of our horticultural industries. May I quote from a paragraph written by the Northern Territory Horticultural Association in relation to land clearing guidelines:

*The guidelines appear to be directed at making land clearing prohibitively difficult rather than promoting sustainable*

*development. The premise of sustainable development has apparently been largely rejected, suggesting instead that all land clearing is environmentally destructive almost regardless of the methods and purpose of clearing. The Northern Territory Horticultural Association strongly maintains that sustainable horticultural development is both achievable and the best possible outcome for all stakeholders. We encourage the department to review the guidelines in light of these comments and make land planning a more cohesive, collaborative and constructive process.*

Could I also read from another document? I certainly would be interested in what the minister for Primary Industry thinks, however from a government point of view, how does this fit in to the government document, Growing Our Primary Industries? If you stop land clearing - I am not saying we should have miles and miles of land clearing - if you put a cap on it, how does that fit in with Growing our Primary Industries, a document recently published. I quote from a paragraph on page 23 under the heading, Resource availability and use:

*The clearing of native vegetation for farming operations, ground and surface water utilisation for irrigation of food crops and land management, that maintains soil health all require a policy response which is evidence-based and pragmatic.*

Pragmatic, that is what we need. We do not need nice global touches which, to me, are driven by the extremes from the environment groups who think the whole of the Territory should be locked up. We are already going to have large areas of the Territory with the corridor from the sea to South Australia that will be part of an environmental semi-park through Australia. Only 1% of the Territory is cleared, yet we have areas in the Territory we know will produce food. If you do not believe me, if you do not believe what has happened in Katherine, go to the Ord, where there is water, and look at the crops growing there.

There are other issues I would like to touch on which make it difficult to believe we are trying to make a real difference in a real, practical way. The statement says we are big users of air-conditioning - we probably are - however, the government, through its planning laws, allows block sizes to get smaller, and houses to get bigger with little or no use of natural breezes. We worry about 5-star or 6-star house design; what are they designed for, the tropics or down south? Houses are so close together you need an air-conditioner because you need to shut the windows so the neighbours cannot hear you have a chat, or whatever - if you know what I mean.

Go along the Stuart Highway past Farrar and see the black, red, blue and the green roofs. I really wonder where the sense is. I was in Mt Isa recently, and I did not see any houses like that. I saw white roofs. Amazing! Someone there has some sense, because the difference in temperature using coloured roofs is quite substantial. Yet, we are not out there telling the developers.

I know people have a choice, and I believe people need to be given a choice, not be told there is a covenant on this subdivision which requires your house to face this way, not to have louvers - at least not too many - to have a black roof so it matches the green roof up the road, etcetera. We may be making it look nice, however it is expensive to maintain, from an energy viewpoint.

We worry about plastic bags; I have worried about plastic bags from an energy perspective; does that make much difference? Always the good look statement. My concern about plastic bags has not necessarily been energy. It makes hardly any difference at all from a Northern Territory perspective; however it was a form of litter which would get into our waterways and almost into the sea. It basically ...

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr WOOD:** Thank you member for Johnston, I can now get accused also of increasing the carbon footprint.

**Dr Burns:** You have small feet.

**Mr WOOD:** Regarding plastic bags, over the years we have developed - and I am one of the people who expect to get plastic bags. They give them away, so we take them; of course we do. Companies have done that to help the customer; the problem is we probably take more than we need, and because they have no value, we do not care. It would be better to put a value on those bags, and the money goes into an environmental fund like in Ireland. That would be good, and could be put into cleaning up some of our coastline.

So, a small charge for plastic bags might reduce the number we have. I am not a great fan of wiping them out altogether; they are useful, and they give people an option. Not everyone - as I found out when I went to Sydney - carries green bags with them. You go to a shop where the locals know there are no plastic bags, but you have to find a box somewhere, or you have to buy

another reusable bag. They come in handy where necessary, however, a charge on them would make it better.

The member for Brennan mentioned the energy cost is in producing new bags. Is it cheaper to produce plastic bags, or produce reusable bags? I do not know. If people are worried about bags get dirty, I still remember string bags. You do not see them anymore, but you certainly could carry a large amount of food in a string bag. That is in days gone by.

I also note there is an integrated public transport system by 2020. I will be happy to see a rail link from Humpty Doo to Darwin. People say: 'Oh, we are going to have a bus service', etcetera. You have a railway line running through the middle of Weddell and Palmerston. It already exists; you did not have to build it, although I suppose we are paying for it. However, it is there. We talk about light rail; all sorts of things. You could put a branch to Humpty Doo and make the effort to take that corridor into Darwin. I know we sold the old Darwin railway station site – the previous government did - but if Perkins or Toll go one day, there is room to take a corridor into town to take suburban-style trains from Humpty Doo into town.

There is talk about saving the numbers of cars on the road by encouraging people to use public transport. I congratulate the government for making transport free for pensioners and school kids, and for the cheap fare. That is good. I also congratulate if for putting – well, it is not there yet - the park/ride system in the rural area. However, the proof of the pudding will be if it is attractive enough. Start counting cars now. Watch how many cars travel past the Howard Springs lights every morning before you introduce this system, and come back in four years time to see whether you have convinced people the public transport system is good. Unless you do that, you will not know if you are changing people's habit. It is good to have public transport however, if you really think it is going to work start collecting the figures now.

Green tourism is being promoted. I wonder if that will have a bad effect on the Territory. If you say to people: 'Do not travel because you are producing a carbon footprint'. We get many grey nomads in this part of the world. We do not want a movement saying; 'Stay within your state'. That is the last thing we can afford; we want people to come to the Northern Territory.

However, we are saying you are going to increase the carbon footprint driving all the way from Melbourne to Fannie Bay. That is a large amount of fuel. Is there going to be a movement to say stay home? I hope not, however we have

to balance that with needing an economy. It is the same with horticulture and agriculture - we need to eat; we have to keep things in perspective.

Conserving water - I will give you a classic example. Why are we planting exotics at Coolalinga? It has been a favourite bugbear of mine. Why do we plant exotics in the middle of our roads? We tell people to save water; government departments do the opposite. That is not the way to go. I have planted native plants beside advertising hoardings at Howard Springs. Not one drop of water was given except when I first planted them. The rest have survived naturally; they did not require water. They are local native plants. It can be done, and the government needs to take the lead on it - there needs to be more of it. We are still working on Coolalinga.

Solar power is great stuff, but we have to keep it in perspective. My sisters-in-law live out bush. Solar power for them is fantastic. There is no other form of power for them. You can run a small fridge and a small freezer, and gives them fans and lights. As long as it is maintained, it is okay. That is their electricity. However, if you have an electricity grid going past your house, you have to say to people: 'If you can afford it, and you think you are doing something good for the environment, and you want to put solar panels on your roof - terrific'. However, what is the cost? It is good for the environment, however if it costs you \$15 000 to put the panels on, you produce some electricity and, in 10 years time you have to replace the \$15 000 panels - or whatever it is - have you actually gained \$15 000 worth of electricity? The economics are just as important.

For some people money might not be a problem. However, if you are trying to convince the average person to put solar panels on the roof, someone has to look at the life of the solar panels, and the advantages. It is like telling people to turn off the lights - it makes no difference. If you are not achieving anything, we should be careful what we say. By all means, if we can promote solar, terrific.

When I was on Litchfield council we looked at putting solar lights in the rural area. The electricity went past. However, from a ratepayer's point of view you would not put a solar panel up; it was not worth it. Again, it is good put in the right place. In remote communities we should be promoting solar; we should be promoting wind. I believe that is the way we should be going.

Waste and Cash for Containers, it is coming. We have had to deal with a complex legal matter because legislation has to be right. It will certainly take out much of our land fill waste and material. The member for Fannie Bay mentioned palm

fronds; I was not being silly because many of us do not want palm fronds around our garden - even the five-acre people do not want palm fronds, so they take them all to the tip, where we have a great big machine pushing out carbon emissions like you would not believe it, to chop it all up to take home and put on the garden. Why not leave it at home and mulch it, or leave it in the garden; do something with it. I know your you-beaut houses in Fannie Bay might not like it too much - it will affect their beautiful lawns. However, we are our own worst enemy when it comes to building up waste at our waste facilities.

This mentions the government seeing opportunities for us in the Territory, and sees a key role for LNG in reducing global greenhouse gas. Whilst that might be good for the globe, the Territory produces the cleaner gas and, in doing so, pours a large amount of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere at Wickham Point. I believe we have to be careful here. Yes, we are looking after the globe; Japan gets the brownie points and we get the bad end of the system. I am not so sure about the opportunities; we are doing things for Japan, I am not sure we are doing things for the Territory when it comes to carbon emissions. That is the way the system works, of course. I believe we need to be careful, when we write up LNG, we do not say it is the perfect gas, because we are the people who have to live with CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Finally, I understand all the effort and work which has gone into this Climate Change Policy. Much effort is needed to prove these facts and figures. If the government really believes this is all going to happen, I would like to see an annual report with targets. If these targets are not met, I will be asking why. I believe some of this is a bit out there. If you are going to have a glossy look, you ...

**A member:** Ambitious.

**Mr WOOD:** Yes, ambitious, that is the right word, ambitious.

I really believe until we change the source of energy - the base power load energy in the world, we will continue to have carbon emissions. We will not use base power only for solar and wind. When you can manufacture a ship using solar power and batteries, let me know. Until then, we need to produce and look at uranium as a possibility for the world.

**Mr KNIGHT (Business and Employment):** Madam Speaker, some very poignant remarks from the member for Nelson. We are lucky in the Territory at this stage, we do not have the load to build our own nuclear reactor here; we are lucky we do not have to deal with that subject.

I support the Minister for Climate Change in his statement - it is a very good statement. It is generally now agreed governments worldwide should not only be planning, but acting on climate change issues.

Importantly, the climate change message is increasingly about embracing the issue, particularly by business. I am pleased to say this includes Territory businesses. The Department of Business and Employment is committed to working with Territory business to ensure the best possible climate change outcomes.

I will move to the Power and Water Corporation. The corporation is playing a significant role in helping the Territory achieve a carbon neutral status by 2018. Over 95% of the Northern Territory's electricity is generated using natural gas, which is a relatively clean form of energy. New electricity generating plants at Weddell and Alice Springs Power Station use technology which is more efficient, and will produce fewer emissions than the existing plant. These new generators although more efficient, are a little temperamental - certainly more efficient, though. Power and Water intends to reduce average emissions per megawatt hour of electricity generated by about 10%. That is about 100 000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every single year.

Power and Water Corporation is a key shareholder in the Alice Springs Solar City project. In May 2008, the first of the 200 rooftop photovoltaic systems were installed on homes as part of this program. The current initiative aims to install 100 rooftop systems in 100 days. An additional 300 solar hot water systems are also proposed. A power purchase agreement for a one megawatt solar farm at Ilparpa is awaiting final approval in October this year. This will provide access to solar power for residents, particularly those in rented accommodation.

Power and Water Corporation is using solar power to produce electricity at Bulman and Kings Canyon with flat plate solar photovoltaic collectors, and Hermannsburg, Yuendumu and Lajamanu with solar dish concentrators. I pick up on the point from the member for Nelson: those systems he inquired about are being used. These projects equate to a reduction of about 1200 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> every year, with up to 400 000 litres of reduced diesel consumption. There is a solar buy-back program where the gross production from rooftop solar panels is purchased, and Power and Water offers generous prices for renewable energy certificates attached to solar hot water systems. I recently installed a hot water system; they are quite expensive, and it was good to get that rebate.

Power and Water Corporation purchases renewable energy from the landfill gas-fired power station Shoal Bay. This one megawatt power station produces about 9000 megawatts a year. It is an interesting operation. Students from Kormilda College have recently looked at Shoal Bay, and at the power station there. So, young people are getting very interested in alternative forms of energy.

Wind monitoring data logs are collecting information on wind regimes in remote communities across the Barkly Tablelands to determine the effectiveness of wind to generate electricity - another point raised by the member for Nelson. I lived on the Barkly Tablelands at one point, and it was quite windy from time to time. It either blew hot or cold however, apparently, the wind regimes are a little intermittent as well. Those studies will show whether you can effectively put up turbines to produce enough power.

Our research includes using biodiesel at the Daly Waters power station, and sponsoring five years of university research into tidal power in the Aspley Strait.

The introduction of a carbon pollution reduction scheme in 2011 will be a key driver for mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. Power and Water is working to identify methods to manage the impact of CPRS on its business. It will result in an increase in energy tariffs for all Australians, so it is certainly something to be very conscious of. Future capital investments by Power and Water will include technologies to result in reduced emissions, reusing waste water where possible, and internal reduction in power and energy use.

The annual MRET, or mandatory renewable energy targets established for all electricity wholesalers on grids exceeding 100 megawatts, have been satisfied by Power and Water, primarily through purchasing renewable energy certificates from owners of new hot water systems. Satisfying the MRET target is becoming more challenging as the target increases significantly each year until it reaches 61 500 megawatt hours, in 2010. The Commonwealth government passed legislation in August last year to expand the MRET target as part of its intention to achieve 20% renewable generation by 2020. It seems the MRET target for Power and Water will be in the order of 300 000 megawatt hours in 2020.

To satisfy this economically, it may be necessary to purchase RECs on the open market. If the REC price is \$40, the annual investment in RECs could be \$12m in 2020. Current expenditure is around \$2.5m per annum; it is certainly something Power and Water is keen to focus on. The Chief Minister is having ongoing

dialogue with the Commonwealth government. We are a small utility, a small user here, a big land mass, a big network of power reticulation, and it would be good to get some concessions to bank these RECs and put that money into a significant renewable energy project rather than just paying the annual fee.

My Department of Business and Employment has made important contributions to the development of the government's climate change policy. DBE is responsible for the implementation and oversight of a range of targets, actions and outcomes within the climate change policy. Amongst other matters, DBE is responsible for the government's green office building policies; greening the government fleet; green procurement; greening information, communication and technology; and green industry development, and our ecoBiz strategy.

With respect to the green office building policy, this applies to leases of more than 2000 m<sup>2</sup>, and is designed to achieve significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and power costs for both government and industry. While the green buildings policy contains specific provisions for new building developments, it also addresses existing buildings.

We will be working to encourage all Territory business owners to adopt the National Australian Built Environment Rating System from 1 July 2012. This rating system is a performance-based measure of the efficiency of commercial buildings energy usage. It is pleasing to note a number of building owners have agreed to work on energy efficiencies as part of the future lease renewal negotiations. Two commercial buildings in Darwin, leased by the Northern Territory government, have been accredited as achieving five stars - which is NABERS energy efficiency based buildings - which is equivalent to international best practice. The buildings I refer to are the Mitchell Centre, and Darwin Plaza.

The old Admiralty House Towers building in Darwin is accredited at 4.5-stars NABERS energy and efficiency. Buildings which have achieved 4.5 stars NABERS energy efficiency, or above, consume approximately half the energy and produce half the greenhouse gas of the average office building, which is quite a huge difference between the old and the new buildings.

On average, office buildings are around 2-star, so it is quite a jump. The owners of four commercial buildings in Darwin leased by the Northern Territory government have been awarded grants under the AusIndustry Green Building Fund to improve the energy efficiency of their buildings. They include Paspalis Centrepoint

Building, 9-11 Cavenagh Street, Harbourview Plaza and RCG Centre. That is great news.

The majority of buildings leased by the Northern Territory government in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs are covered by agreements whereby the building owners have agreed to upgrade the energy efficiencies of their assets to 4.5-stars NABERS, or even higher. The implementation of the green office buildings policy will result in significant reductions in greenhouse gas production and energy costs. If the agreed performance targets are reached, it will result in a reduction of greenhouse gas production within these leases by some 50%. These are very important steps in meeting our climate change commitments.

In the ICT area, the strategy and policy division have developed a green ICT policy. This policy aims at 10% energy savings by 2012. As a default, all ICT equipment must meet gold category of the international standard Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool, or EPEAT. Through this planning, the total cost of ownership will be considerably reduced with the improved environmental performance. Other simple measures include enabling blank screen savers, and shutting down computers when not in use. For government employees measures such as reducing travel, and working from home, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions, will be supported by modern technologies such as Telepresence, teleconferencing and teleworking. There are certainly great ideas for the future.

Within the department, we initiated our Green Fleet Strategy in July last year. Since introducing the Green Fleet Strategy, the Northern Territory government has increased the number of vehicles with a greenhouse rating of 7.5 or more by some 75%; that is an excellent result. We have also decreased the number of Northern Territory government passenger vehicles with a greenhouse rating of 5.5 or less by 23%, and we have reduced the number of Northern Territory government light commercial vehicles with a greenhouse rating of less than 3.5 by almost 50%; this strategy is working. The strategy has a target of effectively reducing the greenhouse gas emissions by 20% from all government vehicles within the next five years, so we are well on target. We are aiming for a significant reduction.

Under the first two-year phase of the strategy, we want to cut the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 1850 tonnes, which is equivalent to taking more than 400 cars off the road. When we move to the second phase of the strategy, we will be reviewing the levels that need to be reduced, and we will be increasing those green fleet ratings to achieve the 20% reduction. This 20% target represents a total CO<sub>2</sub>

reduction of 2640 tonnes, which is quite a significant reduction.

With our green workforce, the project is scheduled to commence in mid-2010 to assess the green industry's skills gaps and requirements. This work will be completed by 2011, and will be used to provide training opportunities for the industry sectors. As a result of this work, industry priorities will be clearly identified, and market opportunities to deliver green training initiatives in the Northern Territory will be maximised.

My department also provides services facilitating inward investment by interstate and international investors. This has included green industry opportunities such as solar power, biofuel production, tidal energy, mining and processing of rare earths processing - these are critical components for making a green product such as permanent magnets and lithium batteries for hybrid electric cars - green waste energies and plasma arc waste disposal, which is a very interesting subject. I have had it explained to me several times; it is very interesting. I will be delighted to see plasma arc waste disposal work. These investments have the potential to strengthen and develop the Northern Territory green industry opportunities to deliver great greenhouse climate change products and services to help everybody lower their emissions.

The Northern Territory government also aims to minimise greenhouse gas emissions through environmentally friendly and sustainable procurement practices. In 2007, the Australian Procurement and Construction Council Inc, of which the Northern Territory is a member, developed an Australian and New Zealand government framework for sustainable procurement. The framework includes the following four principles as a guide for public sector agencies: first, adopt strategies to avoid unnecessary consumption and manage demand. Second, in the context of whole-of-life value for money, select products and services which have lower environmental impacts across their life cycle compared with competing products and services. Third, foster a viable Australian and New Zealand market for sustainable products and services by supporting businesses and industry groups that demonstrate innovation in sustainability. Last, support suppliers to government who are socially responsible and adopt ethical practices.

The Department of Business and Employment has commenced updating tender and procurement documentation to ...

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

Motion agreed to.

**Mr Tollner:** The biggest diesel user, you might as well let him speak.

**Mr KNIGHT:** We are powered by gas.

**Mr Tollner:** You are powered by hot air.

**Mr KNIGHT:** Come on, you have been very well behaved - let me finish. The Department of Business and Employment has commenced updating tender and procurement documentation to address initiatives under the government's Climate Change Policy.

ecoBiz NT is a Northern Territory government program which has been operating since March last year. ecoBiz NT works with small to medium-sized businesses to help them achieve savings by reducing their carbon emissions. This often means reduced cost through a reduction in energy consumption. ecoBiz assisted 25 businesses with energy audits in its first four months of operation. The ecoBiz initiative has also resulted in 16 of those businesses achieving grants worth a total of more than \$300 000. This will produce a significant benefit for those businesses through reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

A further 126 businesses, which have been involved in the scheme this financial year, are expected to save a combined total of 1 271 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> following their own energy audits. I have previously mentioned A&H Panel Works and Asian United Food Services as being beneficiaries of the ecoBiz strategy, as well as outstanding examples of what is possible under this particular initiative. A&H Panel Works replaced a compressor, an air-conditioner and lighting. This small investment will reap an annual saving of \$6500 in electricity bills - 48.5% of their energy consumed. That also equates to 27 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions. That is a great result. The total reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be equivalent to taking six cars off the road.

The renovation of Asian United Food Services old premises was supported by ecoBiz. The renovation will create an efficient and effective chiller plant for approximately 1000 m<sup>2</sup> of freezer and cool rooms. This major investment is expected to save approximately 1218 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> which equates to some 270 cars being taken off the road, and is expected to generate business trade of \$1.1m.

According to Friglec, the company that commissioned the new unit, it is the first of its kind in the Territory. These examples clearly highlight the success of the ecoBiz program in assisting Territory businesses, and shows it makes good

business sense to take smart action on climate change.

These are some small examples of positive and real action being taken by the Department of Business and Employment, to engage the Territory business community with the Territory climate change policy. There is no doubt challenges posed by climate change are real and substantial, and through careful forward planning, mitigation, adaptation and innovation, we can all make a difference, whether it is in the community, business or as individuals.

The Northern Territory government is taking sensible, positive and effective action in response to the climate change challenges we face. We have achieved real results already, however there is still much to do in this area. The Northern Territory Government Climate Change Policy lays out a plan of action. As the minister highlighted it is ambitious, however it is a significant problem. We have to be bold and hit those targets because the world is not going to stand still on this. There is much public feeling about making change; we have to make things more efficient. Things are expensive, and if business can reduce its energy consumption, as highlighted in those examples, you can save money whilst doing your bit for the environment.

I congratulate the minister on his policy. I am sure there will be regular reporting on this - perhaps not in a glossy brochure as alluded to - it could be recycled paper.

**A member** interjecting.

**Mr KNIGHT:** It might be in an e-newsletter - that would be more efficient. I am sure it will take into account everyone's views. This is a great subject to be talking about; we have to keep it on the agenda - we all have to do our bit for the environment. Congratulations, minister, and I look forward to regular reports.

**Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim):** Madam Deputy Speaker, it is an interesting statement we are debating today. I thought the member might have taken note of the pillorying the government received last week, and certainly the federal government has received in recent times over their failed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme legislation. Kevin Rudd has egg all over his face; he has made a fool and a complete dill of himself in front of the Australian people on this issue. He, of course, wants to introduce a great, big new tax which he is going to levy on all Australians through higher food prices, higher fuel prices, higher electricity price. With all the tax money he was intending to raise, Mr Rudd was going to send that money overseas to other countries that would, goodness knows what, sequester carbon

into the ground. Mr Rudd's plans, of course, hung on ...

**Mr GILES:** A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! I draw your attention to the state of the House.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** We are lacking a quorum. Ring the bells. A quorum is present.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, Kevin Rudd wants to instigate a great, big new tax that he is going to levy on practically everything. All Australians will pay for it, and he wants to send that money overseas to developing countries so they can plant trees and sequester carbon into their soil.

Obviously Australians have seen through this; they thought they were being duped. However, Mr Rudd's whole new, big tax depended on an agreement from Copenhagen where we would see an international carbon trading system implemented. We know Copenhagen was a complete farce; no such agreement was arrived at by all of these countries, and Mr Rudd's international carbon trading system lies in tatters. There is no way known he can get his ETS - his Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme - up, because Australians are not going to swallow it. They are not going to swallow a great, big new tax on everything. They are not going to be slugged in the hip pocket and see money go overseas, particularly when there is no trading system for carbon credits.

It is an interesting thing, a large proportion of the minister's statement focused on an international carbon trading scheme. I would have thought after last week, receiving a belting the way you guys did, you might have stopped for a second and thought: hang on, we might have to vary our environmental policies; we might have to refocus, because it is not likely, in the near future, we are going to see a great, big new tax on Australians and all the money being sent overseas; it is just not going to happen. There is going to be no international carbon trading system for at least the short term, medium term, and the foreseeable future. Most developing countries do not like the idea of taxing their citizens to the hilt and sending that money to other countries. It does not make sense. However, comrades on the other side obviously do not notice this.

There are several quirky little things which are going on in our environment. I was interested to see the member for Arafura shuffling around in the Chamber. My attention was drawn to a speech she made on 18 August 2004, when speaking on the Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Bill, and, in the second paragraph of her speech, she said:

*In the event that a national nuclear waste disposal facility is proposed for the Northern Territory, the bill provides the minister with the capacity to seek an injunction to prevent such action. If works on a facility have already been taken, the minister may authorise action to remove the facility and make good any environmental harm. This bill does not relate to the transport, storage and disposal of radioactive waste produced within the Northern Territory.*

It is about interstate waste.

It was interesting in Question Time today, when I drew the Chief Minister's attention to the deceitful campaign Labor ran at both the 2004 and 2007 elections. I held up this beautiful pink poster designed by someone in comrade headquarters, where Labor said they were going to stop a nuclear dump. Federal Resources minister, Martin Ferguson, seems keen to progress the idea of Muckaty Station. I saw him on the news tonight saying it was their preferred option, providing the TOs were happy. He is talking about the TOs. Someone forgot to tell him the Northern Territory government has a law in place preventing him from doing this when he repeals the Commonwealth legislation. If Mr Ferguson thinks he can use Muckaty Station he is sadly misinformed, because it is illegal once he repeals that Commonwealth bill, to transport nuclear waste into the Northern Territory.

One of two things can happen if he wants to use the Territory as a nuclear waste storage facility: (1) he can re-enact legislation which overrides Territory law, or (2) this government can repeal their *Nuclear Waste Transport Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act*. It will be interesting to see what happens, and why the Chief Minister has not made it abundantly clear to Mr Ferguson he is off on a weird tangent, even talking about Muckaty Station, if he repeals the legislation the former Coalition government put in place.

I will explain a little of what happened. I recall when the minister at the time, Brendan Nelson, proposed the act we are talking about into federal parliament. The act was simply allowing the Commonwealth to go to three proposed sites. At the time, I said: 'This is not particularly good. We are not happy about having this nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory, however, I understand the reasons. We have to be responsible for waste; we have to store it somewhere. If the Northern Territory is going to be the place, so be it. However, Territorians should be allowed to have some say on where it goes within the Northern Territory'.

I introduced a private member's bill - an amendment to the legislation - into the federal parliament. That amendment, in effect, allowed the Northern Territory government, and landowners, to nominate sites. If the Northern Territory government, or landowners, were not happy with those three sites, they could propose something different. At the time, and even now, people were jumping up and down saying something about science - the science had not been done. To my knowledge, ANSTO has been to the three sites, along with the Muckaty Station site, as has ARPANSA, the regulator of that industry. It has done assessments on the other three sites; all sites pass muster. The science has been done.

The Chief Minister, when saying science has not been done, is being a little cute! Irrespective of that, I am very interested to know what scientific studies the Northern Territory government has done about the positioning of a new nuclear waste facility. I remember when I introduced those amendments into the federal parliament, the then Chief Minister, Clare Martin, said: 'We do not care what you do; we are not proposing a site. We do not want it in the Territory - full stop' - irrespective of, I might say on another note, we have a problem with own nuclear waste.

We have nuclear waste being dumped all over the countryside. The government has no idea where it is being dumped in many cases. It would be good to know where the isotopes go from all the exit signs. I believe a fair amount end up in our rubbish dump at Leanyer, in the Chief Minister's electorate - or it might be the Treasurer's electorate, however, somewhere out there. We know waste is being stored in shipping containers in Kakadu. We know it is stored in boxes etcetera at Royal Darwin Hospital, however this government continues to say: 'No, no waste dump in the Territory'.

The coming days are going to be quite telling, because if this is as dreadful for our environment, as we are told, it will kill our tourism industry, kill our agricultural industries, ruin our environment completely - if the government seriously believes that, the Chief Minister should be on the steps of Parliament House holding media conferences, informing the public once this legislation is repealed it is illegal for the Commonwealth to even consider bringing waste into the Territory. That is unless the Commonwealth is quite prepared to once again overrule laws initiated by the Martin government to stop this occurring. If Clare Martin did not enact this legislation the federal government would not have been overriding any Territory laws.

However, this Labor government has instigated these laws. It is standing on our

statutes; it is a law. As the member for Arafura said at the time, the minister has the capacity to seek an injunction to prevent any such action, and the minister can also take away any work or equipment left on that site for those purposes. I believe it is incumbent on the Chief Minister to inform the federal Resources minister, Martin Ferguson, he should not even be talking to the traditional owners.

I was looking on my Facebook site tonight ...

**Mr Henderson:** It is very entertaining, I can tell you that.

**Mr TOLLNER:** It is very entertaining. I was on the site of a very good friend of mine, Justin Tutty. We all know Justin - he is an entertaining character. He would arrive at my office with 44 gallon drums with nuclear signs on them, and overalls and masks, protesting about this type of thing. It would be fair to say Justin Tutty is a pretty anti-nuclear type of person. For Justin Tutty, of all people, to say: 'Oh well, do not give up. The fight is not over. We can still stop this thing at Muckaty Station. All we have to do is get an injunction on the Northern Land Council to stop the poor Aboriginals from accepting this, because obviously they have been bribed or not been heard; it has been a big conspiracy where their views have not been represented'. I was thinking come on Justin, why belt up on the poor Aboriginals? Come on, fair go!

The reality is, Justin, the Northern Territory government has a law making it a crime to transport waste into the Northern Territory. There is no reason whatsoever to go belting up the Aboriginals who made the decision they are prepared to accept a nuclear waste facility on their land. They have been completely sidelined by the legislation introduced into the parliament in August 2004. That law will stand and have priority, and the Northern Territory government can go to court with its federal Labor comrades, and thrash it out. They can get an injunction, they can take all their federal Labor colleagues equipment, buildings etcetera, off that site and restore it to its original form so not to cause any harm to the environment.

It will be interesting to see tonight. I believe the Chief Minister might comment on this statement. He may well have other comments to make, however I will be all ears waiting for the Chief Minister's comments on how he is going to take his mates, Kevin Rudd and Resources minister, Martin Ferguson, to court to prevent them from transporting nuclear waste into the Territory. That is what we are talking about - I have to laugh sometimes about the tangled webs we weave. They did this out of mad populism. Stop Tollner's nuclear dump, vote Labor! They

did that out of mad populism hoping people were not informed on the issues. They tried to tap in to that sentiment in an election campaign.

As I mentioned in Question Time today, they spent more than \$1m misinforming people on the impacts of a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory. Here is a classic thing, a petition, 'Help stop Canberra's Nuclear Waste Dump in the Territory, Say No. The Commonwealth government has announced it wants the Northern Territory to be the home of the nation's nuclear waste dump'. Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of the petition.

Leave granted.

**Mr TOLLNER:** It goes on and on, full of misinformation. On the back is a petition, which they encourage people to sign to tell Canberra we do not want their dump. Not only did they do this, they ran ads on the television, they filled the newspaper with information, they had an army of people working on it. At that time, people like Justin Tutty were their good mates. They enlisted Justin Tutty to barge into my office in his overalls and his 44 gallon drum and do media stunts.

They encouraged anti-nuclear protestors to sabotage the Prime Minister's visits when he came to the Territory, and they spent more than \$1m of taxpayer money. We are fast approaching another federal election, and I would like the Chief Minister to outline a budget for this great big protest campaign we are going to run at the next election against the federal government. I want to see him telling Territorians we are not going to take this nonsense - we are going to spend more than \$1m fighting the evils of Federal Labor because that is what this is about. To be fair - and you should at least be that - this is above politics.

If you seriously believe we should not have this get on the radio tomorrow, on the TV, get on a plane and say to Kevin Rudd: 'Look, Ruddy, we are not going to take this, mate. We are going to get you in court. I have \$1m in a bank account ready to run against you in the Territory. We are going to see the back of Wazza, we are going to see the back of Damo, and if you are really unlucky, we might even see the back of Trish!' That would be something?

On that note, this statement is a complete and utter fraud; it is a joke. There is no international carbon trading system. It appears Muckaty Station will be home to the nation's nuclear waste dump, unless we see some consistency from this government, which is highly unlikely. Talk about consistency - today we were discussing a caravan park bill and not more than ...

**Mr GILES:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the member be given an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr TOLLNER:** Thank you, member for Braiting.

As I was saying, consistency seems to be out the window. We have been discussing caravan parks legislation today, something they riled about two-and-a-half years ago. The member for Johnson did an excellent surgical job of deconstructing the member for Nelson's argument of two-and-a-half years ago. What has become an amazing consistency is their complete inconsistency, if you can follow that; they are consistently inconsistent. Today they have introduced the same legislation they opposed vehemently several years ago.

The word I was thinking of was vivisectionist. The member for Johnston is a great vivisectionist, and he did a good job of carving up the member for Nelson two-and-a-half years ago, however, here we are today promoting the same legislation the member for Johnston did such a good job of opposing two-and-a-half years ago. Today we see the lie being made with these signs - the lie being made of something like that. 'Stop Tollner's nuclear dump, vote Labor'. Poor old Damo, he had a big job today; he has had to say he is going to introduce a private member's bill. I believe that was something I saw on Justin Tutty's site. He is saying he is going to introduce a private member's bill to stop it - I do not know how he is going to do that.

A classic one by Warren Snowdon, 25 media releases on: 'Deceit on Waste Dumps Confirmed', 'Please Explain, Senator Scullion', 'If Dump is so Safe Why Isn't it in City', - these are all the headlines of his media releases - 'Dump List as Obsolete as Territory Rights', 'Would-be Rainbow Warriors Clutching at Straws', 'Local Community Rally Proposed Against NT Nuclear Waste Dump', 'Territory Kicked in the Guts Again', 'Territory Sold Out by CLP as Waste Dump Bills Pass', 'Nuclear Waste Dump for NT, Now it's the Law', 'Downer Ups the Ante on Waste Dump', 'Scullion Verbals Himself with a Quid Each Way', 'NT the World's End Waste Dump, No Thanks', 'CLP Dogs it on Nuclear Waste Dump'.

You have to give Warren his due; he has a way with words. However, I have counted 25, and that was only from a quick glance at his webpage. What do you think he has done since the 2007 election? How many do you think Warren put out? How many has he put out today on this issue? You might be right if you suggest a big fat zero. He is quiet; he is not saying a thing.

You do not see Trish Crossin saying: 'Oh, I am going to cross the floor in the Senate. I am going to oppose Martin. I support the Territory in their legal fight in the High Court' or, 'Dragging Rudd kicking and screaming into court, putting an injunction on the government. We are going to rip out all the buildings they put on the site. We are going to return it to its pristine environment'. We have not heard anything like that today.

I am curious to know who is going to back down in this great fight - will it be Hendo, or will it be Rudd? Will Rudd impose another law on the Northern Territory, or will Hendo repeal this *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act 2004* now. Which one will go to ground? My gut feeling tells me it will not be Mr Rudd. I believe Mr Rudd has an election coming, and I believe Mr Rudd also has some nuclear waste returning from Scotland and France which has a definite time on it, and he may have to make a decision quickly. I cannot see the Commonwealth tearing up all the work, all the science done to date because their comrades in the Northern Territory have this law. I believe they are discovering what they say in opposition is much easier than when they have to make decision themselves - federal Labor has discovered.

I felt sorry for Martin Ferguson because I know him very well; we were both on the Industry and Resources Committee for six years. Martin Ferguson is a good friend of mine, and I know he has understood, from the start, the reasons Australia needs to have a nuclear waste facility. I know privately, over those years, Martin Ferguson was not at all happy with the way things were unravelling in the Northern Territory, and the stand Clare Martin was taking. It was only a matter of time before the pendulum was to swing back, and we would see a Labor federal government faced with exactly the same decisions as the Howard Coalition federal government.

That is where the Labor federal government is now. The clock is ticking; they are running out of time; they have to make a decision. The last thing Kevin Rudd wants is to see the Northern Territory create so many problems for him. I believe the Northern Territory government has proven an embarrassment for Labor right around the country. In fact I am certain of that. I have been told, in private conversations with federal Labor Party members, they would much rather it if there was not a Labor government in the Northern Territory. With the intervention, not building houses, the child protection issues, this government is a national embarrassment, and is something federal Labor politicians feel acutely.

Every time there is a story about the Northern Territory government in the *Sydney Morning*

*Herald* or in *The Australian* - any one of those national papers - these guys cringe - and they are sick of cringing. However, Kevin Rudd is not above blame himself. Look at his ETS - his famous carbon pollution reduction scheme. Poor fellow, you would think he might have seen the wood for the trees; no, he charged on. At the time, it seemed so wonderful; they all seemed so clever, they were faced with a bunch of deniers and sceptics; people they were ...

**Mr Elferink:** Non-believers - heretics!

**Mr TOLLNER:** Heretics yes - people who were so easy to belittle and made to look like luddites and fools. Sooner or later, people had to ask what Kevin Rudd plans were. As those plans emerged, and people started to realise Kevin Rudd was secretly planning a great, big new tax - because, fundamentally, that is all it was; a great, big new tax. He was going to send all the money he raised overseas to poor countries for them to grow trees. Goodness me, I think ...

**Mr Elferink:** It was not tied.

**Mr TOLLNER:** That is it; it was not even tied. It was just to hand to these countries. I believe that whole aid argument has died a little in recent years. The catchcry these days is more 'trade not aid'. These countries will come out of poverty if we open up and reduce the trade balance. That is where the game is these days in international politics.

However, the minister has made this statement. He does not seem to care one iota how bad he, and the government, look. He can go back to Alice Springs and say: 'Gee whiz, I gave an awful beating. Their fists are all smashed around by my face. These poor fellows are not going to be writing for a week. Their hands cannot even hold a pen. Such was the way I gave it to them'. That is the way this government is. They stand here with their stupid puff pieces, which are completely meaningless in the scheme of things and waste time in this parliament when we should be talking about real pollution reduction, and things where we can move the Territory ahead.

**Mr HENDERSON (Chief Minister):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I really enjoy following the member for Fong Lim. I will take a few of the adjectives which came from his mouth whilst debating this statement. They can certainly be applied to the member for Fong Lim, as I will gleefully demonstrate over the course of the next 20 minutes. A few of the jibes he, quite entertainingly, throws across the table: fraud, joke, cringe, and meaningless. All those can be applied to the member for Fong Lim, absolutely fair and square.

I support my colleague, the Minister for Climate Change, in his statement today, and I will get to the details of that.

Let us pick the first of those adjectives - fraud. The member for Fong Lim loves the theatre of this House. Since his ideological soul mate, Tony Abbott, has finally taken control of the Liberal Party - the dries and the conservatives have finally taken control, the soul mates of the member for Fong Lim. Let us look at the great theatrics. He worships at the feet of Tony Abbott, picks up on his mannerisms, uses his language. He is not clever enough to create his own language, he picks up on the mannerisms, uses the language, about this great, big new tax. This is where we go to the core.

The member for Fong Lim was the member for Solomon, as I recall, who went to the last federal election supporting the Howard government's position of introducing a CPRS. That was the position the member for Solomon, and John Howard, as the Prime Minister, took to the people of Australia - under a Howard government, they would support a CPRS. They would support a tax on carbon. They would support an emissions trading scheme. Did we hear the fraudulent member for Fong Lim distancing himself from John Howard, saying: 'I do not support that. That is going to be a great big new tax on all Australians'.

**A member:** He is Pauline Hanson's mate.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr GILES:** A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! Unparliamentary reference to the member for Fong Lim. I ask for it to be withdrawn.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr Tollner:** It does not bother me. I am quite happy for him to keep going.

**Mr GILES:** A point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker! I could not hear you. Did you rule that calling the member for Fong Lim 'fraudulent' is acceptable?

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The word had already been used ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr TOLLNER:** I am not offended by it at all, however surely you cannot allow the precedent to go unnoticed.

**A member:** Well, sit down and shut up.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Member for Fong Lim, I will confer with the Deputy Clerk.

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr HENDERSON:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I will withdraw.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Thank you, Chief Minister, you have withdrawn.

**Mr HENDERSON:** I will point out, at the last election, the then member for Solomon, the now member for Fong Lim, was an absolute supporter of a CPRS, and an Emissions Trading Scheme. He was a supporter of putting a price and a tax on carbon. However, the theatrics of politics moves on - he has done a 360° circle. He is going round and round and round and round. Let us think about Malcolm Turnbull, who was a colleague of the member for Fong Lim's in the Howard government. I quote Malcolm Turnbull, 8 February 2010:

*Until 1 December last year, there was a bipartisan commitment in Australia that this carbon price, this exercise in reducing emissions, should be imposed by means of a market-based mechanism - this emissions trading scheme. At their core, therefore, these bills are as much the work of John Howard ...*

In brackets, I will insert 'and David Tollner':

*... as of Kevin Rudd. The policy I am supporting here today as an opposition backbencher is the same policy I supported as John Howard's environment minister. And why did we in the Howard government believe an emissions trading scheme was the best approach? It was because we, as Liberals, believed in the superior efficiency of the free market to set a price on carbon."*

So there you go. That was the position of the member for Fong Lim. Did we see him out on the hustings campaigning against John Howard's position, saying this would be a great, big new tax? The member for Fong Lim's head has never been violated by an original thought. All he can do is echo his soul mate in Canberra, the new Leader of the Opposition, Tony Abbott, in much as manner as words. I could use the word 'hypocrite', but I will not; that would be unparliamentary. The word 'fraud' comes to mind; I will not use that. It is certainly a 'joke'. The member for Fong Lim's position on this is an absolute joke.

Another word he mentioned was 'cringe'. Every member on the other side, who might be looking at the member for Fong Lim as potential

leadership material, must cringe with some of his behaviour and the positions he takes.

Another word was 'meaningless'. How can anyone take the member for Fong Lim seriously on this issue when he went to the last election supporting a carbon pollution reduction scheme - an emissions trading scheme with a price on carbon? He went to the last election saying to the people of Solomon: 'Vote for me. This is what I believe in. This is what I support'. However, things change, times change, and now he no longer supports ...

**A member** interjecting.

**Mr HENDERSON:** The member for Fong Lim has had more positions on this than the karma sutra. In regard to the statement on climate change, unlike the CLP and their Liberal mates in Canberra, we believe in taking decisive action on climate change. We are doing this because we believe climate change is one of the most important issues to face us in modern times. We believe that, however it is evidenced the CLP do not believe it. I believe there are some people on the other side who do think this is a serious issue, however, I do not think they are in the majority.

It is clear the member for Brennan has been overruled by the climate sceptics in his parliamentary wing, and the CLP is backing away from any sensible policy on climate change. In fact, they are not backing away from it; they are running away from it as fast as their legs can carry them.

Let us look at the evidence for this. Senator Nigel Scullion, the CLP Senator for the Northern Territory recently acted to block the federal government's legislation tackling climate change. That was in total opposition to the Liberal party position at the last Australian election. It goes to show how fickle the CLP are on this issue. The member for Fong Lim has stated quite clearly, and it is on the record he does not believe global warming is caused by man at all. In fact, he said global warming occurs on Mars, Jupiter, Triton, Pluto, Neptune and others. We are here at planet Earth. The member for Fong Lim is right out at the far reaches of the solar system, rolling around in the universe on the Starship Enterprise with Dr Spock looking for evidence of climate change. What a joke!

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr HENDERSON:** He compared the sites on climate change to the erroneous scientific consensus which said the Earth was the centre of

the universe, and to the voices of scientists who oppose Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

The member for Fong Lim is not a climate change sceptic; he is a climate change denier. He should not try to hide it - it is his honest position, and it is a position he is entitled to. In his famous dissenting report tabled at great embarrassment - must have been a great embarrassment to the Prime Minister at the time - called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, he wrote: 'Climate change is a natural phenomenon that has always been with us, always will be. Whether human activities are disturbing the climate in dangerous ways has yet to be proven'. Do you believe the IPCC, or if you believe the member for Fong Lim? I know who I would believe.

My third piece of evidence for their lack of seriousness is the refusal by the CLP to deal with the issue of land clearing in their policy. There is no doubt land clearing, and management of native vegetation, is critical in managing greenhouse gases. We know the vast majority of emissions in the Northern Territory are burning ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr HENDERSON:** ... of the natural flora and fauna, however no mention of this in their policy; not a word. The CLP knows this is a critical issue, and have been very quiet on this. Our position is clear - we will keep the Territory as a low land clearing jurisdiction, and we will put a management framework in place through native vegetation legislation.

The fourth piece of evidence is the refusal by both the Territory and federal conservative parties, to put a price on carbon. I believe I have done this to death. They did support a price on carbon; they changed their leader, and now they do not support it. They have no consistency on this issue at all.

The fifth piece of evidence to show they are full of climate change sceptics and deniers in the party is the report I tabled in the Alice Springs sittings. This was pedalled around the business community by the CLP as to why an emission trading scheme is not necessary. It is by some fellow - I do not even know what his name is - a brief summary compiled by Leon Ashby, and there are some ridiculous statements in here: the ETS is not fairy tale stuff; it is likely to be budgeted into Australia this November; it did not happen; it will mean Australia's economy will become the equivalent of Cambodia's within 10 years.

What a lot of rot; what a lot of hogwash, and this type of tripe was distributed widely through

the Territory's business community by very high profile CLP people.

It is also worth noting the climate change policy of my government was launched by me, as Chief Minister and leader. Along side me stood our minister for the Environment and Climate Change; I appointed Karl as Minister for Climate Change after the launch. Where was the Leader of the Opposition when his climate change policy was launched? He has been very quiet on this issue. Because we have the climate change believers ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Mr HENDERSON:** ... the member for Brennan, he believes this. We have the climate change deniers - other members - and the Leader of the Opposition is wedged between the two and he will not show any leadership on this; he is nowhere to be seen.

I have made it clear my government will take a strong stand on this issue. Mandatory carbon trading schemes to halt the rise in greenhouse gas emissions have been established in the European Union, and in New Zealand. In the United States, the North Eastern States Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Trading Scheme was launched in January 2009, whilst a voluntary carbon market was established in October 2008. In all, there are 35 nations across the world that either have an emissions trading scheme in place, or have announced an intention to do so. The United States Federal Climate Change Bill is currently before the US Senate, and President Barack Obama has recently committed, in a submission to the United Nations, to reduce United States greenhouse emissions by 17% by 2020 from 2005 levels.

Major economies around the world are putting in place measures to transform their economy through placing a price on carbon. In Australia, it is blocked by the Senate. Despite the shenanigans of the federal opposition and the CLP, the Territory government does not use these blockages as an excuse to stand still on climate change. Instead, the government has decided to get on with the business of tackling climate change, developing our local renewable energy industry, and embracing the opportunities of a green economy.

Our climate change policy is designed to incorporate a future emissions trading framework, and prepare Territorians for the impacts of an ETS. The policy sets an aspirational, overall emissions reduction target of 60% emissions reduction by 2050 ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr HENDERSON:** ... from a 2007 baseline. This is also the Australian government's - they do not like to listen, Madam Speaker.

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr HENDERSON:** Go back to Triton.

**Mr Tollner** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Fong Lim!

**Mr Tollner:** It is all right, Madam Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER:** No, it is not all right, actually. Standing Order 51, cease interjecting.

**Mr HENDERSON:** The member for Fong Lim could be like Elton John's Rocket Man and disappear into space to have a look at climate change.

Our climate change policy is designed to incorporate a future emissions trading framework and prepare Territorians for an ETS. My government also fully supports Australia's expanded renewable energy target, which requires 20% of Australia's wholesale electricity purchases to be sourced from renewable energy by 2020. The transitional scheme, which runs to 2030, will assist Australia transform to a low emissions economy. The renewable energy sector presents significant emissions reductions and economic opportunities for the Territory, and I am committed to unlocking the potential of the renewable energy sector as a major resource-based industry in the Territory.

The Territory government is already encouraging the development of solar and geothermal energies and technologies. The Alice Springs Solar City Project, of which the Territory government is a major funding partner providing \$3.44m, is world leading and proving very successful. Since March 2008, 1644 households have participated, 1416 home energy surveys have been completed, 90 businesses have registered, \$4.9m worth of incentive vouchers have been issued, \$1.735m worth of funding provided the solar energy efficiency measures, 144 solar photovoltaic systems installed, 324 solar hot water systems installed, and 276 smart meters have been installed in homes. I congratulate the residents of Alice Springs in really embracing this particular project.

Another exciting development under the Alice Solar City Project, which was recently announced

by my colleague, the Minister for Climate Change, is to call for tenders for the solar air-conditioning project at the Araluen Centre. The Territory possesses all the fundamental requirements for geothermal systems to generate hot rock geothermal electricity generation. I know that is something the member for Nelson is really keen on, and brought to this House quite some time ago. My colleague, the Resource minister has also been out to the market, and there is significant interest in geothermal electricity generation in the Territory. The *Geothermal Energy Act*, which was passed in 2009, provides tenure for investors to locate and develop geothermal energy.

There are other solid examples of renewal energy opportunities being developed in the Territory. Several studies have been carried out to explore suitable locations close to Darwin for tidal electricity generation systems. I am confident we can meet the 20% energy target by 2020 set out in the policy, by driving forward commercial investment in the Territory's renewable energy resources.

A key focus of the Northern Territory Government Climate Change Policy is to become a world-leading provider of green energy in remote communities by 2020. Under this strategy, I have appointed the Green Energy Task Force chaired by Christine Charles, former Regional Director of Environment and Social Responsibility, Newmont Australia, who has extensive experience in the mining and energy sector. The task force also has representatives from a range of renewable experts from governments, the Northern Territory Minerals Council, Power and Water Corporation, the Chief Scientist of New South Wales, the Clinton Foundation, Powercorp, the Environment Centre, the community, and the private sector.

In 2010, the task force will develop detailed plans for replacing diesel generation with renewable and low-emissions energy in remote communities, and provide an evaluation of available renewable technologies to be used in the Territory, including geothermal, solar, biomass and tidal. Power and Water is already moving towards the goals of the climate change policy through the implementation of a suite of renewable and low-emissions energy initiatives. This includes, for example, the substitution of diesel fuel with natural gas, or LPG, in several locations.

As we make a conscious, strategic decision to drive investment in the Territory's renewable energy sector, I recognise it will be critical to ensure we have the underlying local support systems and capability in skills, workforce support, and training infrastructure. In order to support the

renewable energy research education and training needs of the Territory ...

**Mr McCARTHY:** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move that the minister be given an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr HENDERSON:** Thank you, honourable members. In order to support the renewable energy research education and training needs of the Territory, the government has committed, through the climate change policy, to fund \$250 000 a year over five years for the establishment of the Centre for Renewable Energy at Charles Darwin University. The growth of the Territory's renewable energy industry will be further supported by local innovators, researchers, and businesses such as the Centre for Appropriate Technology's Bushlight program, CAT Projects, Powercorp, Delta Electrics, ECOEnergy, SunTech Solutions, Perry Brothers, Lee Point Electrical Services and Ogdan Electrical Services. These Territory-based organisations are already providing robust energy solutions in renewable technology suited to the Territory's environment, and even exporting this technology interstate and overseas.

Another support mechanism this government has put in place to drive the Territory's energy transformation over the next 10 years is the establishment of the Energy Policy and Climate Change Unit in the Department of the Chief Minister. This unit will have carriage of coordinating climate change initiatives across government, supporting the Green Energy Task Force, and developing policy options in relation to energy security and sustainability for the Territory.

The Northern Territory Climate Change Policy will also help Territory business and key industry sectors such as tourism and primary industries make a successful transition to the green economy of tomorrow. Tourism NT has already been actively supporting tourism operators across the Territory through innovative projects, including a carbon offset project which enabled three Central Australian tour operators to be carbon neutral in 2008-09, and a funding program for nine remote-based tourism businesses to enable them to make the switch from diesel generated power to solar.

The Tourism Environmental Enhancement Fund was launched in November 2009, and five businesses have recently been informed their applications for assistance to implement projects to reduce their carbon footprints were successful. Additionally, our important small-to-medium business sector is able to access the ecoBiz NT program, which has been successful in its first

year of operation, and continues to provide support for Territory business through free audits and significant incentives to upgrade their business to become energy efficient.

There will also be changes to workforce skills required as our economy makes the green transformation. The government will maximise opportunities for the Territory's workforce to participate in the green economy through green skills and training packages, particularly in the building and construction industry, which will see 10 000 Territory apprentices graduate with core sustainability skills by 2020.

When growing new communities, the Territory's Climate Change Policy will ensure sustainability will be front and centre of planning considerations, such as the new city of Weddell, which will be built as a green friendly city and a model for the future. New housing and commercial developments in the market will be progressively more sustainable, in line with nationally agreed changes to the building code of Australia, commencing with the 2010 version.

The Northern Territory Government Climate Change Policy builds on the overarching goals for environmental and economic sustainability set out in the *Territory 2030* strategic vision for the future. The Assembly will also note the Territory government's response to climate change will bring about positive outcomes in regional, social and economic development under *A Working Future* framework.

The government has recognised the impact and challenge of climate change, and has put forward real and concrete responses as set out in our climate change policy. We have listened to the community, and to Territory business. We have delivered a comprehensive action plan on climate change to support all Territorians to collectively address even benefit from our response to climate change.

Although the nuclear waste dump was not mentioned in the climate change policy, I do have to respond to the theatrics from the member for Fong Lim on this issue. I would like to thank the member for Fong Lim for bringing the poster to Question Time today, and reminding all Territorians of his support for the siting of a nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory. He reminded everyone of it today - come in spinner. I suppose the key difference between members opposite and this side of the House is they support the imposition of a nuclear waste dump on the Northern Territory. They support that; that is their policy. We oppose it.

We have been consistent, and will continue to oppose it. I am looking forward to the Leader of

the Opposition explaining to Territorians why the CLP support the imposition of a nuclear waste dump on the Northern Territory. I look forward to the CLP campaigning for this waste dump to come to the Northern Territory. As the member for Fong Lim mentioned, we are going to have a federal election this year, and there is a new Country Liberal Party candidate - someone I know well. I like Natasha, however, it will be interesting to see the CLP candidate campaigning for a nuclear waste dump to come to the Northern Territory and be imposed on the Territory. The battle lines are very clearly drawn. We oppose a nuclear waste dump being imposed on the Northern Territory; the CLP support it. It is very clear - black and white. Territorians will have their say.

I also remind members opposite, when we talk about the rights of all Territorians, and the right of this House to implement legislation for the benefit of all Territorians, it was the member for Fong Lim who voted, in federal parliament, to override Territory legislation. He voted against it. He seconded the motion. Not only our legislation which prohibits the transportation of nuclear waste into the Territory, he also voted to override the Territory's environment legislation. He voted to override the Territory's heritage legislation. The vast bulk of that legislation was probably on the books when the CLP were in government and he, to his eternal shame, voted against Territory rights, Territory legislation, legislation that, to a large part, had been crafted by previous CLP governments, for a cheap political exercise.

Actions speak louder than words and the member for Fong Lim, and the CLP's Senator in the federal parliament voted to take away Territorians' rights, the rights granted under self-government to enact legislation for Territorians on behalf of Territorians.

I am pleased, and I congratulate the Australian government in moving to repeal Howard's bill - they will repeal the legislation, as I understand. I have not seen the details of the bill to restore the Territory's rights; I believe it is a good thing.

Where I disagree with my colleagues in Canberra is I believe we should open up the siting of what is - and I agree with the member for Fong Lim, the nation does need a nuclear waste repository, and it should go where science proves is the safest place ...

**Members** interjecting.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Order!

**Mr HENDERSON:** ... in Australia for this facility to be. That is where we diverge.

I believe we need to go back to the reports commissioned and produced over 15 years. Over 15 years of science was conducted around Australia to identify geologically and environmentally the most suitable place for this nuclear waste facility. We need to go back to that, and if there is to be an expression of interest process entered into, where people can nominate potential sites for this facility, that should be opened up to all Australians - not the federal government alone look at one nomination from a small group of people in a remote part of the Northern Territory and say: 'We need to exhaust that process before we open up the process to other Australians'. That is where we disagree.

I believe it is responsible and incumbent on all of us as leaders to support a scientific, evidence-based approach for the most suitable place in the country for a facility; certainly not for it to be imposed on the Northern Territory. The battle lines are drawn here. The CLP will go to the federal election campaigning for this facility to be built. They will go to the election campaigning for this facility to come to the Northern Territory, where we go to the election opposing it.

**Mr TOLLNER:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! The Chief Minister is quite delusional. He is not in a battle with us any more. He is in a battle with federal Labor.

**Madam SPEAKER:** There is no point of order. Resume your seat. Resume your seat, member for Fong Lim.

**Mr HENDERSON:** Madam Speaker, they support it. They have been consistent. They have been all over this. They voted to block Territorians' rights in having a say in this. Those rights are being restored, as announced by the federal government today and I welcome that.

Regarding where this should go, this should be open as a national debate. I was not going to speak on this issue, however, I was provoked by the member for Fong Lim ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, your time has expired.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Madam Speaker, I wish to comment on the ministerial statement tabled by the Minister for Climate Change policy. I have read it, and reread it to see if there was anything dramatic in it; sadly there was not. Twenty-four pages of not much at all, which could have been condensed into two or three pages. From what I read, there are not any real initiatives in this document. What it seems to be doing is pooling several existing programs together and putting them under a climate change banner, with some vague idea of extending some of them into

the future. There is reference to sustainable land management, managing our burning and our burn-offs better, protecting our fresh water and, of course, phasing out diesel. All good things, and things we would all aspire to, but they are no-brainers in their own right, and are already captured in the existing programs of government and/or in community, and/or non-government organisations.

There is reference to forest fires, or bushfires as we call them here, and when it comes to the Territory and, of course, Australia, we are way off the scale compared to other countries around the globe. In the end, there was much debate in Australia as to whether these should be included, and bushfires were excluded from this carbon dioxide count. I am not quite sure how this government can claim to be able to count a reduction in something not included in the base measurements in the first place.

The policy discusses - and links to the statement - the removing of 4 million tonnes from the atmosphere. You cannot remove it from the atmosphere; it has already gone into the atmosphere. I believe what the minister, and the government, is trying to say is they will have offsets to emissions into the atmosphere.

The aim of being carbon neutral by 2018 is an exceptionally ambitious target. I am not sure the government will be able to achieve it, and they do not give any great detail as to how they will, or how they will be reporting along the way with progress reports regarding achieving carbon neutral by 2018. The reference to making the Territory a place of low land clearing signals alarm bells. How are they going to achieve it when there is obviously going to be massive land clearing for the new city of Weddell? It could also go directly against the potential of our agriculture and horticultural industries, not only here in the Top End, also in Central Australia. I would like to see details on how the government intends to keep a low level of land clearing however, on the other hand, wants us to move forward, grow and develop, and particularly grow and develop our industries.

The government also wants the Territory to be a world leader in renewables by 2020; that is only 10 years away. I would like to know how they will achieve that, given the majority of renewables do not work very well, and it is very expensive technology. I am not saying it is something which should be completely discarded, however I believe we have to look at the facts, it is expensive technology, and it is not very well tested in Australia. One of the biggest issues regarding renewable power, perhaps from solar, is how are they going to store - they need to store at least 16 hours of power to provide constant power

supply from renewable energy such as solar. The base load power station will need to hold at least 16 hours of power to maintain constant generation of power to communities or towns.

There is reference in the statement to salt water intrusions; ensuring our fisheries are kept vibrant and safe and, of course, maintaining good biodiversity in our coastlands as well as our rivers. Any problems should be attended to now, not put under the banner of climate change. The Country Liberal government, in 1987, commenced the attack on the salt water intrusion with barrages at the Mary River. In the beginning they did not work well, which had nothing to do with politics. It was due to science, and also there were key issues with salt water intrusions and barrages; obviously our high rain fall, our tidal issues, and stabilising the banks of the rivers. There has been some success, and we have had some of the wetlands and the paperbark swamps return to fresh. However, if there are problems in those areas, they should be tackled now. Do not lock them under climate change.

I believe they are going to be issues, and there is no indication in this document on progress reporting on any of these targets. There is no reference to cost saving and benefits, and how long for return on investment - there is absolutely no detail whatsoever in that regard. The policy discusses, towards the end, establishing water plans for towns, particularly remote communities, however it does not reference any future key water supply issues, particularly in the Top End, also Central Australia.

I would like to have seen more detail regarding water supply, and encouraging people to be more conservative in water consumption. Yes, the government has given a rebate on water tanks to people in Central Australia - that is great - however, they really need to extend it to all the Northern Territory, and encourage and reward people to put fresh water rain tanks on their properties, particularly rural properties.

Every other state - let us use the argument the government uses all the time: We are the only state where the government has X. We are the only state which does not have a water tank rebate. It is high time government bit the bullet, got onto it, and started to plan for the Northern Territory to utilise rain water tanks.

That is all I want to say at this point, Madam Speaker. It is a start, however not a very good start. I would like to see more detail in reporting verification of the data collected, how it is going to be measured and, more importantly, the outcome based on the data collected.

**Dr BURNS (Public and Affordable Housing):**

Madam Speaker, I support the minister in his statement of an action plan for climate change policy adopted by this government. There has been much talk tonight about climate change, and the reality or lack of reality around climate change, depending on which side of the debate you are on. There is a debate in the wider community. There is also a debate within the scientific community. It is fair enough to say the consensus amongst the scientific community is climate change exists, and it is anthropogenic in nature. In other words, it is caused by man - by human beings. I have done some reading on the subject, and I am convinced that is the case.

The major question is to what degree could climate change influence our lives? To what degree will the sea level rise? To what degree will the impacts of climate change affect our planet? It was very interesting, going back a few years now, when John Howard and his government were being labelled as climate change sceptics. At that time I was Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and I attended a ministerial conference in Adelaide attended by Philip Ruddock in his role as the federal minister. There was a presentation by a quite eminent scientist attached to the ANU, who was also associated with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

The most telling part of his very comprehensive presentation was a graph showing the oscillation in temperature change over the centuries, from data derived from core ice samples within the Antarctic. These went over millennia. One could see, yes, there is a natural oscillation in the earth's temperature, and there have been ice ages at various times. However, what was clearly apparent, with the time line involved, was the gradual increase and startling rise in the mean, if you like, of those oscillations, particularly correlated with the industrial revolution in Europe. The gradient was increasing as industrial activity increased throughout the world. It was very interesting to observe Philip Ruddock, who asked quite a number of questions that day. I had a feeling - I did not speak to him about it - the presentation given that day was quite an eye opener for him. He was listening attentively; he asked some very important and pointed questions the presenter answered in much detail and authority.

You will always get people - even scientists - who argue against a consensus view. I am of the opinion, both in the scientific community and, I believe, in the wider community, there is consensus around climate change. People are looking for governments to play their part in addressing issues on with climate change. The community also, very importantly, recognises it has a role. Industry, generally, believes it has a

role, and there is some quite major cooperation throughout Australia looking at energy saving measures, not only in climate change and carbon dioxide emissions, but also in their bottom line. They do not want to be wasting energy, they do not want to be wasting money; for them it serves a dual purpose. It serves the purpose of addressing issues on their bottom line, and also their wider responsibilities to the community.

That is why I commend the minister for his action plan. Right at the outset, it highlights it is a partnership between government, business, and the community as a whole. Specifically in relation to the Northern Territory, it says while we recognise the size of our economy and carbon footprint means we are a small part of the national and international profile, we will play our part to combat climate change. This is the tension for the Northern Territory; we are a small economy. Unlike the southern states, we are not heavily industrialised, although we do have the potential for industrialisation through the gas deposits which exist to our north. I believe everyone who has a fairly balanced view understands the Northern Territory needs some capacity to industrialise for a range of reasons, however it has to be balanced with our obligations to climate change. This is set out very clearly in the document we are discussing tonight.

I will address a number of issues. Certainly, the goals are clear. The government believes the Northern Territory should aim to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2050, compared to 2007 emissions. That is the goal. It goes on to set out we need to take care balancing reduction of our emissions with giving some capacity for further development for the Northern Territory, and our economy. We have to look at innovative ways of doing that. The plans outlined by the minister - the nine key elements in the Northern Territory Government Climate Change Policy - show government leadership on climate change. This is a government which has demonstrated leadership on this issue.

I commend the member for Brennan. He has also put forward some very good ideas on climate change. I believe the problem the member for Brennan has, both in this and issues such as the container deposit legislation, is in convincing some of his colleagues this is the right way to go. I say more power to you, member for Brennan - I believe you need to prevail in some of those arguments.

A focus on green energy is what we want. This is something the Northern Territory is very well placed to capitalise on - solar energy, geothermal energy. There is a debate about nuclear energy, and I believe the issue of climate change has probably put another prism on nuclear

energy, and the use of nuclear energy, worldwide, not only in Australia. That is a very important step forward; we need to re-examine our position on things. The Australian Labor Party has done that with its mines policy.

There is a range of things happening in the Territory. Hopefully, I will have time this evening, or when I resume my comments at a later time, I will be talking about things I saw when I was the minister responsible for the Power and Water Corporation. Under the current Power and Water minister solar energy, and advances in solar energy technology within the Northern Territory has continued. Northern Territory companies are at the leading edge of some of those energy requirements.

We also have Powercorp; Alan Langworthy and his company is looking at wind power. There is much interest from around the world in what Alan Langworthy and his company is doing. From the Antarctic to Europe into Asia, that company is really punching above its weight in other forms of energy.

Land management, a unique Territory offset opportunity. This is a government that, from the time we came to government in 2001, has looked at the whole issue of land management through a different set of eyes. I know when I was environment minister, and also minister for primary industries, looking at the whole issue of the Daly region, the Daly River, such an important iconic river to the Northern Territory. This is a government, I believe, that has taken bold steps, and I believe we have also put the major stakeholders together; the pastoral industry, the environmentalists and, of course, the Indigenous landowners in a region like the Daly River, and the reference group that was there to determine what science should be applied to drawing water off the Daly, what sort of science should be applied to land clearing in the Daly.

There has been a quantum leap forward in the debates we have had in the Northern Territory. People who are in groups that were poles apart, they will still have their differences, but they are now engaged in dialogue, and the debate is a rational one and it is a contest of ideas. People need to be complimented for that, and I believe this government has provided the framework for that debate to occur, and led the debate, and come under some criticism over time on some of the actions we have taken.

Building green cities and towns is a big challenge. However, we have an opportunity because we are a developing jurisdiction. We have Weddell coming on in 2015-16. It is this government's aim to make Weddell a green tropical city. It will be at the vanguard of energy

saving, of waste management, a range of green sources of energy, which is government wants. That is the path we will be going on, and I believe the Northern Territory will be the envy of other jurisdictions in that regard.

Rethinking waste and the issue of container deposit legislation is a path government is going on. I commend the minister and the group working on container deposit legislation. It has been looked at a number of times, however I believe now is the time to move forward in rethinking waste. The minister, and other speakers, mentioned plastic bags. I was in Adelaide recently, and I note they have already banned the use of smaller size plastic shopping bags. I believe the South Australians are leading the way, and I believe we in the Northern Territory can take a leaf out of their book on a range of things.

Expanding green business and industry is all about the bottom line we need to foster in the Northern Territory - developing a green workforce and promoting green communities. This relates to our building code - we are the largest tenant, I believe, in Darwin, of office space. I have been minister for office space on several occasions, and during my last round I believe developers have the message they will be moving to a 4-star rating, and are making plans in their new buildings to capitalise on that. We will be giving that preference, and also will be giving some leeway to those who are upgrading existing buildings to 4-star.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Minister, it now being 9 pm do you wish to continue?

**Dr BURNS:** I will continue my remarks at a later date.

**Madam SPEAKER:** At a later hour you would prefer to do? Okay.

**Dr BURNS:** Yes.

Debate suspended.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Madam SPEAKER:** Pursuant to Standing Order 41A, I propose that the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, tonight I pay tribute to a good friend, long-term constituent and legend of the Northern Territory Rugby League who recently passed away. Mr Frank McPherson passed away peacefully at his Alawa home at the grand age of 85. Frank was a very well respected and loved man within the Darwin Rugby League community.

He was the fifth person to be granted Darwin Rugby League life membership in 1962.

Frank wrote the famous book, *Rugby League in the Northern Territory*, which was launched in 2003, and he was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2008 for his immeasurable services to the sport of Rugby League.

I have known Frank and his wonderful wife, Jean, for many years. Frank had a great sense of humour and I remember the first time I was at his house he told me that he was going to introduce me to Elle McPherson. I was very excited until I met Elle McPherson - Elle was a small Chihuahua belonging to the McPherson family, so they called her Elle.

I know Frank will be dearly missed by Jean; his daughters: Lynne, Susie, Fleur and Bronwyn and their families; and his extended family and many friends. My heartfelt condolences go to Jean, his daughters, and the McPherson family on the passing of a wonderful husband, father, grandfather and friend.

From 3 to 5 February, I took a trip to Indonesia to meet the new Minister for Agriculture, Mr Suswono, and the Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources, Mr Saleh; and the Minister for Transportation, Vice Admiral (Retired) Freddy Numberi. The purpose of the trip was to continue to build relations between the Northern Territory and Indonesian government; to improve relations with the Northern Territory cattle and live export industry; and to further cement the Northern Territory government's support of live export from the Northern Territory; and to invite Dr Saleh to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Indonesian Mining Procurement to be held at the Darwin Convention Centre on 29 to 30 April 2010.

I thank the Australian Ambassador to Jakarta, Mr Bill Farmer AO, and his staff. They gave us a comprehensive briefing about the situation in Jakarta, about the potential for exports to Jakarta, and the problems we may face during our meetings.

I met with the Minister for Agriculture, Mr Suswono, who was a very friendly person and we developed a very good relationship, despite the fact we met for the first time. I understand there are some problems in Indonesia with regard to live cattle exports. Indonesia wants to restrict the maximum weight of cattle exported to Indonesia to 350 kilos per animal. At the same time, they want to build a self-sufficient herd in Indonesia in order to feed a growing middle class with a large disposal income who want and demand better quality protein, and turn to meat. Our strong point in selling cattle to Indonesia is we are a foot and mouth disease free country; we are

the only developed country whose animals are free from foot and mouth disease.

We discussed a number of issues with minister Suswono. He told me he wished to see some investment from our industry in Indonesia; and I agreed with him. He told me that he was actually looking for technical advice, expertise and assistance in order to increase the herd and to produce better quality animals. I invited minister Suswono to the Northern Territory to attend the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Cattleman's Association, and his first indication was that he would like to come if his commitments allowed him. I also met his staff and they were very keen to come to the Territory and take part in the AGM and conference.

I met with the Minister for Transportation, Vice Admiral (Ret) Freddy Numberi. I had met Freddy Numberi many times before when he was Minister for Fisheries, and I know he likes Darwin and when he gets the opportunity he comes here. He told me he loves the ice cream in Australia and every time he comes here he enjoys it.

He is the Minister for Transportation and showed a very keen interest in reinstating air links between Indonesia and Darwin. He told me he will discuss this issue with the national airline, Garuda, in order to reinstate a Jakarta/Denpasar/Darwin/Cairns link. Minister Numberi also saw merit in a Bali/Timor/Cairns link and may look to pursue this. He is also very interested in yacht racing between Darwin and Indonesia and, hopefully, this will become a reality in the future.

I met with the Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources, Mr Saleh and we discussed a number of issues of common interest with Indonesia, especially the oil and gas fields between Australia and Indonesia. I gave him a letter from the Chief Minister inviting him to Darwin to attend the 3<sup>rd</sup> Indonesian Mining Conference, and he expressed a very strong interest. That interest later translated to a phone call from Mr Saleh to my CEO asking how quickly he could arrange the visas and what he had to do to arrange to come to Darwin.

Following the meetings with the ministers, I had an informal meeting with the Indonesian Feedlotters' Association and visited a feedlot operation in Jakarta. I was very impressed by the size of the operation, and the fact they manage to get cattle from Northern Territory and, within 30 days, fatten the cattle by an extra 150 kg. That is where they make their money, at the same time providing significant employment to many people who live in the village around the feedlot.

In conclusion, it was a good visit; I had the opportunity to meet with two new ministers I had

not met before, and also strengthened the relationship with Freddy Numberi. I have said before that I will do anything possible to promote our live cattle industry and our live cattle export industry and, hopefully, when the ministers come to Darwin and see the operation in the Territory with their own eyes, they will realise the good quality of the animals we export to Indonesia.

**Mr CHANDLER (Brennan):** Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight I wish to speak about my concern regarding a letter I received from a constituent, and I want to read that letter out tonight. It is regarding the travel system we have in the Northern Territory when people need to travel interstate for medical treatment. The letter says:

*Please find attached a summary of events that occurred between 8 and 20 December 2009. I felt that I needed to bring this matter for your attention, as it has caused my whole family extreme distress. I do not wish this kind of treatment to arise again to another family.*

It is very clear we sometimes talk about the big things in government, but it is very important that experiences individuals go through as a direct result of the service level provided by government be brought up now and again.

*To whom it may concern.*

*My husband was admitted to Royal Darwin Hospital via Accident and Emergency on 8 December 2009. He was told on 11 December that he needed a triple bypass, and will be sent to the FMC early next week. He was not permitted to go home because he was deemed too risky after having had a couple of heart attacks. Three arteries were blocked, 90%, 99% and 100%, and his operation was considered high priority.*

*Our oldest daughter contacted the Marion Holiday Park to tentatively secure accommodation for me on 14 and 15 December 2009. On Monday, 14 December, my husband was moved out of CCU to a four-bed ward. One Indigenous woman slept next to her husband's bed and was given a gown and three meals a day. She also showered in the same shower as the sick people in the ward.*

*Tuesday 15 December. I rang PATS to try to find out when we would be leaving for Flinders Medical Centre. I had people moving into our house to care for it; I needed to organise care for our two dogs,*

and I also needed to pack a suitcase for my husband and myself. I spoke to a person who told me they were trying to get us out of Darwin on Thursday, 17 December, but they needed to get an aircraft trained nurse as well as seats on a Qantas flight. She told me that they should know that day and would let us know. I contacted the Marion Holiday Park and changed my arrival date to 17 December.

Wednesday, 16th. I asked the doctor if he had heard anything because I still had not been contacted by PATS. He said he did not know and, when I asked him if we would leave before Christmas, he did not know that either. I was very upset at the uncertainty and lack of communication. I went back to PATS still believing that we would be leaving the next day. However, later in the afternoon, I received a call from my husband saying our eldest daughter had gone to PATS, at his request, and spoke to somebody.

When our daughter explained how worried I was becoming and how this, in turn, was upsetting my husband who was supposed to be kept stress free for obvious reasons, the PATS staff member told her that my husband and I would not be leaving until the 18th, and that the operation was scheduled for 23 December. If they had this information, why were we not told earlier?

When our daughter commented that this was supposed to be a capital city and this really was not good enough, the girl told her that living in Darwin was a lifestyle choice ...

And we have heard that quite often from the Labor camps – a lifestyle choice:

*At this point, our daughter ended the conversation.*

*Thursday 17 December. I went to the hospital. At this point, no one had told us that we were not leaving that day. I spoke to yet another doctor who did not know what was happening, but when he saw how distressed I was and how distressed my husband was becoming, he went and got the nurse who liaises with CCU patient travel. She told us we were not leaving until Sunday 20 December because they had been unable to get seats on a Qantas flight.*

*I was very upset and pointed out that I had rebooked my accommodation twice and our*

*daughter had changed it twice; we had people moving into our house and on the 19<sup>th</sup> that my husband had been in hospital for 10 days already and only had a total of five weeks' sick leave. She apologised for the fact we had not been kept informed and that Sunday 20 December was, hopefully, the day, but that nothing was definite until we were actually on the plane.*

*That afternoon, both my daughters went to PATS to find out why there had been such a delay and if the flights had been secured. The girl from the previous day left the office as soon as they entered and another female spoke to them. She was very aggressive and blamed everyone but PATS. When asked what the hold up was, she claimed it was because no seats were available on Qantas. My younger daughter told her she had a friend at Qantas who had informed her they had been holding six seats since Wednesday 16 December. A friend also phoned PATS herself to be told they were not expecting to send anyone before Christmas.*

*The person from PATS told my daughters: 'Don't rock the boat'. Which could only be interpreted as a threat. When they asked again if the flight was booked, the girl who had left the room earlier called out they had just got a booking. They were also told that they were free to lodge a complaint with patient advocacy. By Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> at 6.30 pm, no one from the hospital had contacted me or my husband to let us know if a flight had even been booked, although my daughter's friend said it had been booked.*

*I managed to have my accommodation changed again, and the people who were to move into our house were made aware of the situation. At 7.45 pm, my husband phoned to say that he had been told by the head nurse that she had our paperwork and we were flying out on Sunday 20 December, 13 days after my husband was admitted as a high risk patient.*

*I went to the hospital, time passed, and still nobody had come to escort us to the airport. We were supposed to fly out at 12.15 pm, which meant that we should have been at the airport at 11.15pm at the latest. At 10.15pm, the specialist nurse who was to escort us came to the ward to prepare my husband for the journey. She had not been told on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> that she would be escorting a patient to Adelaide, but every time she rang to check the details, nobody knew anything. The last*

time she phoned the hospital was the evening before our scheduled flight, and still nobody could give her a time or a day and, of course, PATS do not work on the weekend. A ward staff member phoned her at approximately 9.45 am to ask where she was.

With my husband prepared, she went to CCU to pick up a resuscitation kit, only to find that half the medications were out of date and the batteries in the defibrillator were dead. By the time she had corrected these problems, it was becoming very late to catch the flight. The nurse, my husband and I went down to the front of the hospital, only to find that nobody had arranged a taxi to get us to the airport. Fortunately, we managed to flag one down.

My mobile phone rang and it was my daughter asking where we were because Qantas were about to close the baggage check in. I told her we were on the way and had just left the hospital. I received another phone call shortly after asking where we were again, and I told her that we had just turned into the airport road. I could hear her relaying our location to someone in the background.

It turned out she was telling my younger daughter, who was relaying information to her friend, who was, in turn, relaying it to the check in people and telling them not to close baggage check in because we were almost at the airport. My husband and I were rushed through all the checkpoints after saying goodbye to our girls, and were safely seated on the plane and heading to Flinders Medical Centre.

My husband had open heart surgery, spent seven days in ICU due to complications, and we both had the worse Christmas of our lives.

The patient travel allowance of \$35 a day barely made a dent in the cost of accommodation, food and taxis. All up, we paid in excess of \$2000, not really good enough, when we had absolutely no say in the matter and the operation could not be performed in Darwin. A lot of unnecessary stress could have been alleviated if PATS had been a little more compassionate and less concerned about themselves and their Christmas.

This situation came out of the blue and we were in shock. Nobody should have to go through the indifferent treatment that we encountered from PATS, and the lack of

communication between the various departments in the hospital. In saying that, we cannot fault the treatment my husband received while he was in the RDH, but communication and bad attitude by administration staff left a lot to be desired.

I must admit, I was most concerned when Flinders told me I had to ring Darwin PATS to get our flights back home, but fortunately we were booked on a flight without fuss and arrived home Tuesday 5 January, 2010.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just a quick story to let people know how ineffective processes, and perhaps not very compassionate government, can affect people in their daily lives. It is a very stressful time for people to go through, and I believe we should be doing all we can to make that transition as good as we possibly can.

**Mr BOHLIN (Drysdale):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to make mention of the Palmerston Australia Day Awards, and the nominees for 2010 Citizen of the Year.

First, Citizen of the Year for the Australia Day Awards Palmerston nominees: Andrew Cripps, Maggie Schoenfisch, Mark West and Merilyn Wilson. For that category I am very proud to announce that the winner was Maggie Schoenfisch, a lady I know extremely well. She comes to my office often many times a week and is heavily involved in our community in every possible way she can. I would like to send her good wishes at the moment because her family is currently going through some personal troubles. I wish her the best and hope to see her soon. Well done Maggie, for your very hard-earned Palmerston Australia Day Award.

**Members:** Hear! Hear!

**Mr BOHLIN:** The second category is the Palmerston Australia Day Young Citizen of the Year. The three nominees are: Courtney Blackwell, Bobbi-Jo Carroll and Felicity Wardle. The winner for the 2010 awards is Courtney Blackwell. Courtney is another person I have known in excess of seven years and is the young lady at Riding for the Disabled helping out in Palmerston to get things moving along. She works fantastically well with the young children and people with a disability there, and she has also chipped in to ensure they bring that facility back to life. I believe Courtney is a very worthy winner of the Youth Citizen of the Year Award for Palmerston.

The last category for the Palmerston Australia Day Awards was the Event of the Year. There were two nominations for Event of the Year: the

Palmerston Ministers Fellowship Carols and Palmerston Regional Business Association Restoration of Riding for the Disabled. I am very proud to say that the winner was the PRBA's Riding for Disabled Restoration.

Although I was not at this particular event, many members of the Palmerston Regional Businesses Association got together and put in a great effort to put back together a really great piece of infrastructure, Riding for the Disabled for people with a disability in the Northern Territory. They have done a great job and this really ties in well with the fact Courtney is part of the same group for which she won her award. It was fantastic to see two like minded events and people getting awards this year. It shows when you put in your help your reward will come.

The judging panel for this year was Palmerston Lord Mayor, Robert Macleod, who often frequents this lovely venue; Joe Fernandes of Betta Electrical Oasis, and me. I am very proud to say all those nominees really deserved their nominations; and all those who won really deserved their awards. It really shows what a vibrant community Palmerston is, and when the challenge is there, people will chip in and do what they can for their area. The winners again are: Maggie Schoenfisch, the Citizen of the Year; Courtney Blackwell, Young Citizen of the Year; and Event of the Year was PRBA Riding for the Disabled.

**Mr HAMPTON (Stuart):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish to inform parliament about some fantastic education initiatives happening in the schools in my electoral of Stuart.

The first one is Kalkarindji School, which has been doing great work inspiring adult education and motivating teenagers to how important going to school is for everyone. Last year an art group was formed for adults in the community with the aim of encouraging teenagers to re-engage in school.

The prerequisites for joining the art group were the adults should re-enrol in school and they understood they were joining a class which, if they passed, would gain them credits towards completing their NTCE in 2010. The group of women spent five hours a day over six weeks in the Daguragu Hall working towards the Arts Stage 1; and the stories behind their art, colours, dot sizes, techniques and documents will support their art like a certificate of authentication.

They discussed work by other local artists and documented objects depicted in their paintings with photos and stories. With support from the local council, the Arts Centre in Daguragu, which

had once been a thriving enterprise, but closed when the CDEP funding was lost, was reopened.

I would like to thank Ms Nazeem Chetty from the Victoria River/Daly Shire who supplied canvases and paint for the opening of the Arts Centre to start the women off where the school had finished. Batchelor College was also approached so women in the group could continue their education this year by taking up the opportunity to attend the college, or have a tutor visit the Arts Centre, to learn new craft skills such as silk screen and printing.

An exhibition was held in Katherine in December 2009, the idea of the Principal, Pamela Hepburn, to give the group another valuable experience and exposure to a wider audience. The women are very positive about their experience and look forward to developing their work into a local business which will allow them to sell their work without having to pass it onto a gallery in Katherine or Darwin.

The adults in the local communities of Kalkarindji and Daguragu also took part in a VET Certificate I in Engineering, and VET Certificate I in IT at the school during 2009. The school welcomes all adults within the community to join any VET classes which are hosted by Kalkarindji School during 2010, and will be academically supported right through to their graduation and completion of their NTCE.

I would like to congratulate the art group on their achievements, and some of the artists include Kathleen Sambo, Lorna Berd, Pauline Ryan, Rosemary Johnson, Syliva Inverway, Tanya Rook, Theresa Yublony, Topsy Dodd, and Violet Wardril-Donald. Also, congratulations to all those involved with the program, in particular the Kalkaringi School community and Principal, Pamela Hepburn, and teachers, Anne Broadbent and Leah Leaman.

Also, Kalkarindji School has commenced Families as First Teachers with their first playgroup of five children and their mothers taking part; it is working well and, with the development of a school-based crèche, is a really good and important outcome. In conjunction with this, the school is also offering the seniors Certificate II in Children Services; there are new T-shirts developed by the Student Representative Council, teachers and students last year, and is now part of the school uniform.

Moving on to Bulla School, along the Victoria Highway in my electorate, Principal, Zoe Cairns, reports a 95% attendance rate at the school, which is a fantastic start to the school year. Some students making a great effort are: Jaih Long, Irene Hector, Jet Long, Deborah Archie, Brodie

Alwoyn, Abraham Barbara, Brianna Barnes, Clarissa Retchford, Lavassa Birman, Layla Lerry. Congratulations to everyone, that is a fantastic start to the school year for the people at Bulla.

Moving to Mataranka, just past Katherine, in my electorate, and big congratulations to Echo Martin who received the Australia Day Award there. A great school initiative they have under way means nearly all the 17 senior students have a Dell 2001 laptop computer to work with – a great initiative. This year the school has 41 students including 17 seniors, 17 juniors and 7 preschool students.

Finally, of my schools in the Katherine region, to Barunga School has implemented the Good Reading Program with parents and students involved in daily reading. The message of going to school is a very important one, as we all know in this House, and students have been attending with some excellent results to show for it. I was there about three weeks ago talking to the principal and there are some fantastic results particularly in the secondary school, and great attendance.

In Transition I would just like to recognise Georgina Runyu; in the Middle School, Ryan Barnes and Keenan Martin and, in the Secondary School, Peter Farrell, and NT Open Education Centre, Keithan Bonson. All these students have made big improvements in their school work thanks to their attendance. Well done!

The Principal at Barunga School, Anita Camfoo, is delighted to have two new teaches this year who have already made a considerable impression on the Barunga School; Sally Long in the Junior School and Dawn Maree in the Middle School. Both teachers have impressed with their great teaching styles and relationships with students. Congratulations to you both, and I look forward to getting down there soon.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk about child protection which was debated solidly here last week. I would like to put some of my viewpoints.

Child protection must be one of the key priorities of any government. Without doubt, the present government has not handled this priority well. Yes, it has poured extra money into the department and changed some legislation, but the outcomes expected have not eventuated. It is obvious from reading reports published in newspapers, and from coroners' reports, there have been some horrific cases of child abuse in the Northern Territory; of which no one can be proud.

The big question is: how that can be turned around? I am not an expert in this area, others are, and it is those people I have had to rely on to give me a better understanding of the issue.

When this issue was raised last year by the member for Araluen, the response by the then minister was to ask for a report on the intake services of the NTFC by the Children's Commissioner, Dr Howard Bath. When I was asked for my response to the minister's statement, and having just stepped off a plane from Dili, I said the report was adequate. I was then contacted by my good friend, Lesley Taylor from NAPCAN. Lesley has been a constant advocate for the protection of children for many years, and I respect her thoughts and comments. To put it bluntly, she told me the report would be inadequate, and only a broad inquiry into the whole department and its operations would suffice.

I also discussed this with the AMA, particularly Mrs Bauert - Mr Bauert, the President of the AMA, was overseas at the time – who, after discussing this with other members of the AMA, also came back with comments supporting an inquiry. I passed all these comments back to the minister and, after many more phone calls between the minister and her office, Lesley Taylor, and the AMA, a board of inquiry was established with references developed by the group. They also had input into who would be appropriate members on the board.

I believe this inquiry holds a real hope for fundamental change. I have already met with members of the inquiry and have been impressed by their understanding of what they have been asked to do. The board is made up of the following people: Professor Muriel Bamblett AM, Dr Rob Roseby and Dr Howard Bath. These people bring their own expertise to this inquiry, and they are backed by people in the field of child protection as people who have the knowledge and experience to carry out this inquiry. I urge all people who are in any way involved in child protection and have a story to tell, or have ideas on how positive change can occur, to get in touch with the inquiry.

I have a much faith in the stewardship of Dr Howard Bath. I have met him a number of times, and believe the criticism of him is unfounded. He seems to me to be a man with a passion for looking after and protecting our children. I believe he is independent, which can be seen in his balanced and critical reports and comments and from my personal contact with him. To think otherwise, I feel, is a slight on his integrity, sincerity, humanity, and professionalism. We must back the inquiry because he is dealing with an issue which should be above party politics.

Sometimes when we look at child protection we seem to look only at the physical and psychological abuse. I wonder whether we give enough attention to the more subtle abuse children absorb through TV, movies, radio, books and magazines, and even music and video games. Children see all types of images around them from explicit sex to graphic violence. How much does that affect a child? Is our multimedia industry guilty of child abuse, or do they not care? After all, is it not shareholders and freedom of speech that is most important? I wonder about the owners of TV stations, designers of video games, service station owners who sell pornographic material near the checkout, the hip-pop lot who sing about everything below the belt with an accompanying video to match. Do they ever wonder about their role in child protection?

Child protection is not just a role for the Health department staff, social workers, the police, or the government; it is about us as a community - whether we are parents, neighbours or business people. Child protection is about promoting families and good parenting so children can be raised in a loving, safe and secure environment which they will, hopefully, pass on to their children.

We all have to do our bit.

**Mr McCARTHY (Barkly):** Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight I am saddened and disappointed by today's announcement by Martin Ferguson. As the member for Barkly and a minister in the Northern Territory government, I will continue to oppose a nuclear waste dump being forced on to the Barkly. I love the Barkly and I love living in the Barkly. I have lived in the Barkly for 30 years, and I have worked there the entire time; I have raised my family there. Many constituents will be angry with today's announcement that Muckaty Station in the Barkly is the only site to be considered, in the first instance, for a nuclear waste dump.

The Territory government's position has not changed, we have always opposed a nuclear waste dump being forced on the Territory, and we will continue to do so. We have always said the siting of a nuclear waste dump should be determined by science, not politics. Earlier today, I welcomed the repeal of the Commonwealth *Radioactive Waste Management Act 2005* which could have forced a nuclear waste dump on the Northern Territory. The Howard government legislation has removed the rights for the Northern Territory government in relation to environmental and heritage assessments, and the normal rights of administrative appeal. However, the sad reality remains the same: with no other volunteer sites currently on the table, a nuclear waste dump could be located in the Northern Territory.

The federal minister stated that proper consultation will be held, and a significant and robust environmental process will need to be undertaken. However, I believe science should determine where the nation's nuclear waste dump should go, and multiple sites must be considered. An expression of interest process should be put in place across the country whereby landowners can nominate sites to host such a facility.

Together with my Territory Labor colleagues, I will continue to oppose a nuclear waste dump being imposed on the Northern Territory. I believe singling out Muckaty Station is wrong. The decision about where our nation's nuclear dump is situated is too important to get wrong.

I pick up on a number of interjections from the member for Fong Lim who showed leadership from the other side today in entering into the debate. The first one was: 'got to have a nuclear waste facility'. I agree with the member for Fong Lim. I believe we have entered the nuclear age to a degree where we must be looking at it as Australians, and that is what it is all about, a very important Australian debate based on scientific principles and good decision-making.

Another interjection from the member for Fong Lim was: 'got to go somewhere, mate'. Well, that is exactly right and, once again, I believe that decision is an Australian debate, and should be debated across the nation as one of the most important elements of the way forward in a nuclear age, not only for the safe storage of the material, but also as a matter of national security.

I pick up on a third interjection from the member for Fong Lim. He said: 'nothing to do with us, nothing to do with us'. I am very disappointed to hear that on the other side because, as an Australian debate, I believe it has got to do with everyone, and particularly the members of this House who should be showing leadership and not playing politics.

The last interjection from the member for Fong Lim I would like to pick up on: 'Martin Ferguson is a good friend of mine'. Well, I would urge the member for Fong Lim to join with many of my constituents in the Barkly in making representation to minister Martin Ferguson to ensure we have the debate on a national level, that the debate is clear and coherent, is based on scientific principles, and the member for Fong Lim will be able to come to the Barkly and guide us all with his wisdom and his close friendship with Martin Ferguson.

To conclude, I figure, if you are not against it, you must be for it. Most Territorians do not want the nuclear waste dump; the Henderson government does not want it; and I certainly do not want it.

**Mr STYLES (Sanderson):** Madam Deputy Speaker, tonight I want to talk about the 68<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin which many members here attended at the Cenotaph on the Esplanade.

I thank the Darwin City Council and the Northern Territory government for facilitating the event; it was a very professionally run event, and with all the visitors who came to Darwin, there was not a person who was not impressed with the way the event was run or the significance it was given by the Darwin City Council, the Northern Territory government and the people of Darwin.

I spoke to some of the veterans there and later at a reception held in the main hall of Parliament House here. I talked to some of the Darwin Defenders and some nurses who were here during World War II when the bombing occurred.

At the actual event it was fantastic to see the F18s from Tindal doing a flyby and, in absolute contrast to the F18s was the DC3, operated by Hardy Aviation, a flying museum as they call it. I put on the public record my thanks to the pilot, Greg Hardy, and his co-pilot, Nick Bloomfield, who not only fly this fantastic machine but also maintain it and put in many hours of work, as do a number of volunteers, to keep this fine piece of World War II history flying in the skies. The Darwin Chorale, as usual, did a fantastic job, ably assisted by the Australian Army Band. It was fantastic to see so many people and especially so many young people in school uniforms present.

On the morning prior to this event, I was very fortunate to address the assembly at Wagaman Primary School and talk to them about the Bombing of Darwin and explain some of the history. It was interesting, because often at school assemblies a few young people get a bit restless and have a little chat. But talking about the Bombing of Darwin, we seemed to strike a chord with these young people and you could have heard a pin drop as we explained the significance of the event. In fact, Wagaman Primary School had a contingent of students from Year 5/6 led by their teacher, Ms Fox-Woodford, a I was fortunate enough to talk to them after the event, and they were so enthralled and excited about what they had seen and what they heard. In particular, I spoke to one young person who described the entire event as 'awesome'; and they were just in awe of the flyovers, the planes, the re-enactment by the young soldiers in similar conditions and weather they would have had fighting off the invaders on this very day 68 years ago.

The Wagaman Primary School was ably represented in the Army Band by Sergeant Juanita McNeill, a reservist musician in the Army

Band, and also a teacher at Wagaman Primary School. The students were proud they had someone actually taking part in the event.

The other great pleasure when we came across to the Great Hall was speaking to Max 'Moo Cow' Murphy, who was guest speaker at the event on the Esplanade, about some of his escapades and his memories; it was a fantastic honour to talk to someone who had a significant part to play 68 years ago.

For those who may not know, Max was 15-years of age when the war was breaking in the Northern Territory, and he said he knew something was going on. He was paid five shillings a week in his job at that time, and the Army offered him five shillings a day. He thought that was a good deal, and his country needed him, so he put up his hand and put up his age as well. So, at 15-years of age Max turned up here in Darwin to be one of the Darwin Defenders and went out to an antiaircraft gun located at Berrimah. For those who are interested, you can still go out to these sites at the back of Berrimah. If you know where you are going and you have a guide, you can go to the very sites. They are still there, and you can see where they were in relation to the surrounding areas where the Catalinas were based. For history buffs, it is a great trip and I recommend people go and see what these people were doing, where they were located, how they slept out in the bush next to their gun emplacements, and how important it was for them to be there looking after things.

To hear the story again from various people, in particular the Administrator who spoke of the 260 aircraft which attacked Darwin in two raids. He spoke of the 243 known fatalities that occurred, those at the post office, the wharf and other people who were unfortunate enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. There were 400 known injured, and speaking to some of the veterans, they expressed sadness because they believe there were more casualties that no one ever found. There were indications that more people may have died, and that really concerned them. Not only was the bombing of Darwin kept secret, but no one actually knew the extent of the true losses. The official records only account for 243 at this point.

I recall sitting at the event on the Esplanade and watching the DC3 ambling through the air, and you contrast that with the F18s travelling at about 10 times the speed, and you wonder how any of those planes survived when they travelled at such slow speeds and may have been a target. Whilst that was occurring, the re-enactment was happening - the gunfire, the smoke. One recalls how difficult it has been to explain over the years,

and you can actually see it with these young soldiers re-enacting the event.

The day, the 19<sup>th</sup>, was not unlike it was 68 years ago with the humidity and the rain; the roads must have been atrocious. I recall when I did my trip to Gallipoli a couple of years ago and experienced the bitter coldness of Gallipoli, and I am sure some of the people who came here for this event who were here during the actual event experienced the humidity and the heat that occurs in this part of the country. Those soldiers had no air-conditioning, no tents, not a great deal of food, not a great deal of ammunition and they struggled with everything. I recall my father telling me what it was like - he was not in Darwin during the bombing but shortly after - of the shortages of everything they had up and how difficult it was to be in the front lines on such a large continent as Australia.

As I watched the re-enactment I could not help reflect on how lucky we are these people fought for our country. They came here, they defended Darwin, they stopped, with others, what could have been an invasion of Darwin, but they fought admirably and can only be commended for their efforts and, unfortunately, some never returned home.

It is a time we reflect on our lifestyle, on our freedom, and the debt we owe these people; and we should never forget what they did. I hope, if it has not already been done and if those people have not been spoken to that, very shortly, as a community we could get their stories on tape for time immemorial so we can all reflect upon how fortunate we are to have these people fight for us, to defend our freedom and ensure we can maintain, as the next generation and those who follow us, the freedom and lifestyle we know today, especially in Darwin and the Northern Territory.

**Dr BURNS (Johnston):** Madam Deputy Speaker, the Territory government continues to implement our Housing the Territory Policy as outlined to the community in March 2009. The Chief Minister and the Minister for Lands and Planning outlined the land release program we have in place; a program which will see 15 000 people housed in Palmerston over the next five years.

Part of that announcement has been the decision to establish an affordable housing rental company. This is the first time such a policy has been pursued in the Northern Territory. We have examined the issue very carefully and I am pleased to advise members that advertisements will be placed next week inviting expressions of interest from organisations to develop this company.

The company, once established, will manage affordable rental housing and increased rental stock through the acquisition of new affordable housing by purchase and/or construction. There is an extensive set of selection principles applied that will guide our selection of the organisation which will, ultimately, fulfil this role.

This call for expressions of interest will be extensively advertised throughout the Territory and Australia. We have indicated our preparedness to seed the company with units of accommodation or land, and we have identified the units of the new Wirrina development as one likely source.

The department has been scrupulous in its examination of this whole policy issue: what the company should look like and what it should do. We have taken time to consult extensively with stakeholders and researched the operation of similar organisations interstate to ensure we put together the right proposal because this is such an important housing decision. With the Wirrina project now at developer selection stage, we felt we had time to adequately examine these matters before we require the company to take up the unit option at Wirrina.

I am pleased we are now delivering on yet another element of our Housing the Territory Policy.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.