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Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Member for Casuarina**

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 224, I move that leave of absence for the duration of the week be granted to the Member for Casuarina due to personal reasons.

Motion agreed to.

**SPEAKER’S STATEMENT**

**Talk Up Campaign**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, you will notice the package of materials for Talk Up campaign on your desks. These tools are available to members in their electorate offices. It relates to an initiative to ensure that people with disabilities are aware of their rights, particularly the right to complain about poor service.

This material will be formally launched by the Minister for Health on 27 September in parliament and will be distributed both here and interstate.

**LIQUOR AMENDMENT (MINIMUM PRICING) BILL**

(Serial 55)

Continued from 9 May 2018.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, before I move the second reading, I wish to update the House that there are some amendments to this legislation. These have been circulated to all members. I also contacted members yesterday to provide them with a briefing, if they wished, on these amendments. I thank members for taking my calls and for their consideration.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill 2018 be now read a second time.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I begin by stating that, no matter what, with alcohol harm minimisation measures we need to keep in mind a couple of core principles.

First, any new measure that is introduced must be independently evaluated within 12 months of introduction. The days of ‘set it and forget it’ are done. We cannot continue to invest Territorians’ resources on policies that do not work, or only partially work. If something is not working, it must either be modified to make it more efficient, effective or equitable, or scrapped altogether in favour of something that will work.

We are reaching this point with the BDR—the point where it has not improved so it makes things better instead of worse. It needs to be modified or done away with. Since the introduction of the BDR, alcohol-related assaults are up 20% to 30% in most areas across the Territory; hospital admissions have increased; and the problems of the BDR, such as secondary supply, have necessitated the formation of a special task force, Operation Haven.

It is significant that the problems have required the diversion of police resources at a time when more than $30m in additional budget cuts, ordered by this Labor government, threaten to further deplete the Territory Police Force.

Second: compliance. With new measures and laws, the regulations and policies that we already have must be paramount. Over the years countless initiatives have been put forward to deal with problem drinking in the Territory. Some of these work really well, yet they are not being utilised or are only selectively enforced. This includes the paperless arrest powers provided to police, the two kilometre rule and the suspension or revocation of liquor licences where multiple serious violations are documented.

It was encouraging to finally see some movement in this area last week with the invocation of the Commissioner of Police’s power under section 48B of the Liquor Act to suspend the liquor licence for 48 hours where it is necessary to, among other things, remedy a breach of the peace or threat to public safety.
The great weight of public evidence reveals that the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek licences were suspended for doing the wrong thing. They were not following the rules and observing RSA requirements. This should serve as a stern warning to others doing the wrong thing that they need to clean up their act or face the consequences.

Third, the policies that are most likely to succeed must be given priority over those that are more speculative or unsupported by objective evidence. We have all witnessed the embarrassment that was the 400 square metre floor space ban—the Dan ban—and the subsequent legal action and awkward backflip by the government.

The time has come to put aside wholly political decisions that are motivated by political expediency rather than evidence or common sense. It has been 10 months since the Riley review report was handed down, yet we have only seen action on three recommendations. One, the liquor inspectors, and they have yet to be deployed. There are serious concerns surrounding their duties, safety and resourcing. Two, reinstatement of the Liquor Commission, which had its own issues, including determining the scope of the jurisdiction and availability of public hearings. Three, today’s legislation about the floor price.

The progress is far too slow, and there seems to be a lack of priority and urgent attention being placed on measures that will have the greatest impact, such as supply reduction, the introduction of alcohol and drug courts, and increased treatment solutions for chronic alcoholics.

We also need to start addressing things like the issue of density. Everyone agrees that there is a strong correlation between density of liquor outlets and alcohol-related harm. Australian and international peer-reviewed studies reinforce the view that assaults, domestic violence, general crime and antisocial behaviour are all related to density of liquor outlets.

Decreasing density requires clear and strong policy from the government. In areas where there are too many licences, the government should get serious and possibly buy back some of those licences. Similarly, licensees that do the wrong thing consistently should lose their licence.

It is with these principles in mind that the opposition conditionally supports the passage of this bill, with a caveat that it must be independently evaluated within a reasonable amount of time and accompanied by some other solutions that will act in concert to decrease crime and antisocial behaviour.

The opposition has consistently recognised that the Territory has an alcohol problem. Many people drink responsibly; some do not. Those who do not drink responsibly are our concern. From the steps of Parliament House to the Central Desert, the effects of alcohol-related harm are plain for all of us to see. The Territory has the highest per capita consumption of alcohol in Australia, and to match, the highest rate of domestic violence. This is no coincidence.

One of the first motions I brought to this session of the Legislative Assembly concerned the need for a bipartisan approach to alcohol. That motion was rejected by the newly minted Labor government. I have continued to attempt to find common ground where it can be found on this issue because of the significance it holds over the lives of Territorians.

Territorians are 400% more likely to be the victims of domestic violence-related homicide or assault than any other Australians, with one child each day being subjected to some sort of domestic violence. In addition, it has been estimated that 1.7 live births per 1000 in the Territory are children suffering from foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Statistics for Aboriginal births are estimated as high as 4.7 per 1000, almost 235 times higher than the rest of the country.

These numbers are simply unacceptable. The CLP has always been in favour of new initiatives and solutions to reduce alcohol-related harm. The Living With Alcohol initiative was introduced by the CLP government in 1991. It included a 3% volumetric levy on all alcohol products, which was introduced in 1992. Many people would not remember that, but I can. The levy applied to all drinks evenly, raising the retail cost of such products by about 5c per standard drink. The tax was efficient and equitable, and the proceeds were used to fund other programs to reduce alcohol-related harm.

Unfortunately, the levy was labelled a tax and declared ultra vires by the High Court. It was abolished in 1997, while other features of the program continued to operate until 2002.

A subsequent study of the program revealed that the levy, along with other aspects of the program, reduced acute alcohol-related deaths and reduced alcohol-related harm overall. A volumetric levy or tax is more
desirable than a floor price. Floor price disproportionately impacts a certain group of consumers, particularly those on low or fixed incomes. The impact will be relatively small but certainly noticeable to pensioners and those on fixed incomes.

The floor price will not raise the price of any beer in the Territory. For example, a carton of Great Northern costs about $52. That carton includes 26.5 standard drinks, so at a floor price of $1.30 per standard drink, the Great Northern carton would cost $34.32. However, the retail price is already well over that price at $52, so there will be no change. The same is true for any other beer or cider product for sale in the Territory.

The same is also true for spirits. For example, a one-litre bottle of Jim Beam contains 22 standard drinks, which would put the minimum price at about $28.60. However, Jim Beam one-litre bottles sell for about $49 at Territory retailers. There will be no impact from the floor price on that bottle.

The only category in which floor price will have an impact is the cheapest of the cheap wines. For example, Chancellor & Co Shiraz—never heard of them, Madam Speaker—has eight standard drinks and currently sells for $6 per bottle. The introduction of the floor price will increase the price of Chancellor & Co Shiraz to about $10.40 per bottle; an increase of about $4.40. The increase in price of the cheapest wine may cut down on the number of bottles purchased by problem drinkers. It may shift them to other products such as mid-strength beer and that may reduce the alcohol-related harms.

It is true that responsible drinkers do not deserve to be punished for the harmful behaviour of a minority of alcohol abusers. However, the effects of low-cost alcohol on the community are also hard to ignore. Territorians pay for this. It costs the government millions of dollars per year to deal with the effects of alcohol, and a disproportionate amount of police, emergency services and health resources are taken up dealing with problem drinkers.

We are all harmed by the antisocial behaviour that harms business, appals tourists and makes the Territory generally a less wonderful place to live. The impact on children and families in the Territory is devastating and leads to lifelong problems. If a floor price reduces the harmful effects of alcohol by even a small amount, we will all benefit. Of course, the floor price may make no difference at all and that is why evaluation is so important.

There should be an independent evaluation of each method that is put in place so the effects can be clearly identified. If the only effect is that the responsible drinkers are being forced to pay more to have one or two glasses of wine per night, with no corresponding reduction in alcohol-related harm from the floor price, it should go.

This brings up one of the imprecise effects of the bill that we are debating. Part of evaluation is the data collection. In fact, the Riley review final report devotes a significant amount of ink to dealing with the evaluation, data collection and information collection. Assumedly, this is the reason that section 118K was included in the bill, which states:

\[ \text{A licensee must keep the data prescribed by regulation in relation to a liquor sale prescribed by regulation.} \]

What is curious is that the regulations have not been provided and I have been informed that nobody, including liquor retailers, has been informed of what sort of data will be required; what format that data will be required to be in; and what, if any, additional software, procedures or time commitment will be necessary. Data collection is a necessary and important part of evaluation, but it needs to be the right information to help inform the policy and to be done in a manner that is convenient to business and government.

As written, the legislation does not even identify the purpose of the data collection. We hope that the data collection will be used to determine whether the floor price is either causing a reduction in the sales of low-cost, high-alcohol wine or a switch from wine to beer or other alcohol.

In addition, it should be used to test the theory set forth by Justice Riley in his final report that research reveals that the heaviest consumers of alcohol, and those most at risk of harm, disproportionately rely on the cheapest alcohol. The authors conclude that any increase in price will reduce consumption and consequently alcohol-related harm.

However, whether this or other questions will be answered by the data collection remains unclear at this point.
Given the seriousness of the problems we face with alcohol abuse in the Territory, the introduction of a floor price is a worthwhile experiment. However, it should be treated as just that, an experiment. If the experiment is shown to have failed, it should either be improved or scrapped altogether in favour of solutions that will work.

In this instance, the impact of a floor price on lower-income consumers will only be accepted if it pays dividends to Territorians in the way of decreased assaults, antisocial behaviour and crime.

Madam Speaker, the opposition will be supporting this piece of legislation.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to finally stand in this parliament and talk about this government's proposal to introduce an alcohol floor price.

All I can say is welcome to the nanny state, everyone. We have finally arrived. I look at the front page of the NT News today, 'Boundless Possible'. No. It is 'welcome to the nanny state'. An introduction of an alcohol floor price will achieve nothing but affect every person over the age of 18 years who decides to have a drink and, usually, drink responsibly.

This government has decided to pursue something that will be deeply unpopular and, ironically, probably affect mainly the people they represent: the people of Darwin. You and your constituents will be most affected. I find this a very confusing and somewhat irrational decision to pursue something that has very little evidence to support it.

I believe in liberty, freedom and minimal government intervention. I do not believe in social control. This is a great example of a government policy that is intended to control how we drink. I do not think for a minute that it will succeed.

This is what I loathe about Labor governments: taking away the rights of those who are responsible and respectful rather than taking the courageous step of targeting those with a problem. This broad-brush approach to alcohol policy will not work and will not wash in the Northern Territory community.

What percentage of the Northern Territory population actually drinks irresponsibly? I do not know the answer to that. From my years of experience in this place it would be no more than 1% of the population, yet here we have a policy that will affect each and every one of us who enjoys a drink. What it says to our community is that we cannot be trusted by this government. This government thinks we are all a bunch of fools and we cannot moderate or control our drinking. We have to be charged a premium and that, in some way, will deter us from drinking alcohol. I am sorry, I find that whole argument implausible and irrational.

The underlying premise that we are all problem drinkers and alcoholics is ridiculous. Most people throughout the Northern Territory, whether they are visitors or residents, will find this rather insulting. We are not all tarred with the same brush, but this government is trying to tar us all with the same brush.

Apparently, we have to be charged a premium for alcohol because we cannot control ourselves. It is extremely insulting. This is not socially progressive; it is social regressive. We are talking about trying to increase the population of the Northern Territory, yet today, of all days—the day after this wonderful initiative to boost the population of the Northern Territory is presented to the world—we introduce what could only be seen as a completely socially backward policy. This is a government policy that will impinge upon the rights of all of us, make us pay more and effectively give more money to the alcohol outlets of the Northern Territory.

This is a signal that Territorians cannot control their alcohol consumption, that the Banned Drinker Register is a flop and has not worked—it is not enough—and that we need to be charged a premium to limit our consumption of alcohol.

I do not subscribe to this at all, and I do not think many Territorians will. I find it very difficult to stomach the fact the Northern Territory opposition has taken a bipartisan approach to this. When I was part of the CLP government this was one of our cornerstone policies; we did not support an alcohol floor price. We had the support of the community on that. That is one of the reasons the CLP tipped out Labor in 2012. But that is all history. Apparently, the CLP is all on board and supports an alcohol floor price.

This strategy fails to target anyone. It is a broad-brush approach and I do not think it will be effective at all. From 1 October this year there will be no cheap grog available for purchase. That can only affect people on low incomes, which I am led to believe this government supports.
Alcoholics will pay whatever it costs to get grog. We know that. There are remote members of parliament in this room as we speak who know alcoholics in their communities use grog runners to access alcohol. They know these alcoholics will pay whatever it takes. They will pay $100 for a carton of beer, $200 for a bottle of whiskey or rum—whatever it is. Alcoholics will pay whatever it costs.

Why has this government not realised that grog running is prolific throughout the Northern Territory? It is prolific throughout Alice Springs and Central Australia, where I live. These is no doubt that when people are refused alcohol at any bottle shop in Alice Springs and beyond, they have easy access to grog runners and will pay whatever it costs, which is inevitably a huge amount of money—a huge mark-up—on the original price. That is a fact.

People facilitate this. People take others to bottle shops to buy alcohol. They do not have any success and then they go straight off to the grog runners. Why do you think for a moment that increasing the price of a bottle of red or white wine to $9 or $10 will make any difference at all to grog running and people's ability to access alcohol?

Inevitably, the impact will be on children. One of the biggest problems in Central Australia, and possibly throughout the Northern Territory, is food scarcity. The Minister for Health, who has carriage of this bill, should know all about this. People throughout the Northern Territory, and indeed Central Australia, are hungry. Children are hungry. People are not accessing enough food. One reason for that is people spending all their money on alcohol and gambling.

Today this government is introducing a further impost on the cost of alcohol, thinking that for some reason alcoholics will stop drinking alcohol because the cost of the product is increasing. That just does not stack up. It just means more children and families are going without food. What consideration has this government given to the fact that scarcity of food is a problem?

I am looking at all the remote members in this Chamber; you know that a lot of your constituents are hungry. Did you have a conversation with the minister responsible for this policy and tell them about the hungry people in your electorates? These are the people going without proper and adequate food, the children who are not being fed or clothed properly and are not being adequately provided for. Did you talk to the minister about the impact this will have on the families of alcoholics in your electorates? It does not seem to have happened and I cannot understand why. This is a bad policy. It will only lead to further poverty and disadvantage.

To top it off, prior to the 2016 election, the Chief Minister and the Member for Braitling told us they would not be introducing an alcohol floor price. It was definitely not on the agenda and they supported a volumetric tax on alcohol. There was no way in the world they would introduce an alcohol floor price. They did not tell the truth.

The Chief Minister, to this day, stands in the Chamber and talks about the virtues of how honest and wonderful he is and how he operates from a position of integrity. It all fell apart when he introduced this alcohol floor price, because he did not tell the truth to the voters in Central Australia and Alice Springs, who had been debating this issue for many years. He told them a mistruth.

For that, this government should hang its head in shame. The people of Alice Springs will remember this. They will be reminded at the next election that this government cannot be trusted when it comes to alcohol policy. Apart from a handful of people, no one supports this. An alcohol floor price is an impost on the cost of living for Territorians. There is no other way to couch it. It will have no impact on alcohol consumption.

My concern is how you will measure the effectiveness of an alcohol floor price. That will be almost impossible—conveniently so, perhaps. Minister, I would like you to answer this question in your summation today: how exactly will you measure the effectiveness of an alcohol floor price when you have all these other strategies at play?

You have the Banned Drinker Register, police outside bottle shops in places like Alice Springs, and alcohol strategies that have been in place for decades. How can you single out the effectiveness of this strategy? I do not think you can, but I would like to be proven wrong. How can you attribute any success to this strategy when you have such a broad range of strategies at play, a ‘suite’ as you call them, minister? I want to know exactly how you will do that.

This came about through the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review in 2017. One concern I have is that I do not believe this report has been critically reviewed by anyone. It seems like everyone has chosen the
expedient political position, has got on board and decided it was all wonderful. Reading the section on an alcohol floor price, I do not think the rationale used to support it is particularly strong.

It talks a lot about the floor price introduced into Alice Springs in 2006. I remember it well. I was an alderman on the Alice Springs Town Council. We were all very much engaged in the introduction of very strict alcohol policies in Alice Springs. We have effectively led the way in Alice Springs. Other communities have also done their share of heavy lifting too, such as Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Katherine.

Much of the thinking and strategizing on alcohol policy has centred, for many years, in Alice Springs. I remember the introduction of what was effectively a floor price in Alice Springs some time ago. At the same time, restrictions on the opening hours of takeaway outlets were introduced. Separating the effectiveness of that floor price from the other strategies at play is very difficult. I do not think it was ever done.

The Riley review indicates there was a reduction in alcohol consumption, which is true; it was quite dramatic. But there were all these things happening, too. You could not really attribute the success of the strategies at play just to the introduction of a floor price. One of the most successful strategies of all was the restriction of the sale of fortified wines until after 6 pm, which is still in play now. That ended the epidemic of pancreatitis we saw in Alice Springs for many years. Alcoholics could not obtain port or whatever their choice of fortified wine was until after 6 pm, so they moved on to other products. They did not move off the fortified wines because there were cheaper products; they just could not get those products when they wanted them. After that we saw a wave of spirits and other sorts of alcohol purchased.

Alcohol consumption is still a huge problem in Alice Springs. This floor price will not make too much of a difference to the price. The average cheap bottle of red wine and white wine will increase by between 40c and $1.50. The increase in price is relatively small but the fact we have had a floor price in practice in Alice Springs for many years—and still have an unacceptable rate of alcohol consumption and alcohol-related crime in Alice Springs—indicates that an alcohol floor price makes little to no difference.

People will pay whatever it costs to access alcohol. We know that and Alice Springs people know that. When people talk to me about alcohol policy I tell them that the people of Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy are the experts on this, not the people in Darwin. You have not lived and breathed these strategies, imposts or means of trying to curb the blight of alcohol in our society. We have lived and breathed them.

For someone like me, who has been an elected member of Alice Springs for around 12 years, it has been a part of my life as it has been a part of the lives of many people in Alice Springs who have taken a very active interest in this space.

We butt heads occasionally with the People’s Alcohol Action Coalition but we agree on some things. We do not agree on an alcohol floor price. They have blurred the evidence, saying it has been a sensational hit. It has been a part of a range of suites that has made a difference over the years, but the best thing we have ever seen in Alice Springs in regard to reducing alcohol consumption and alcohol-related crime has been police outside bottle shops.

What did we see two years ago? The Gunner government came in and took them away.

**Ms Fyles:** Rubbish!

**Mrs LAMBLEY:** No, it is not rubbish, minister. You know full well that you took the pressure off and the police disappeared. All of a sudden we have a 30% increase in alcohol-related assaults in Alice Springs, and the Chief Minister is saying, ‘Oh, I don’t know why that has happened’. I can tell you why that has happened, as can anyone in Alice Springs. It is because you did not maintain police outside bottle shops. You failed to see that it remains the most effective strategy we have seen in Alice Springs for decades.

Finally, the Gunner government saw sense. The Police minister shot the ball across to the Deputy Chief Minister, took the easy way out and gave the portfolio to someone else when things got really hot. She has finally seen, as has the government, that you must keep the police outside bottle shops. It is a necessity in places like Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs.

Taking them away was a disaster, as we have seen in Alice Springs over the last two years. We have seen an increase in alcohol-related presentations at the emergency department of the Alice Springs Hospital and alcohol-related crime across the board.
Yes, it fluctuates; it goes up and down a bit, but we have not seen alcohol-related problems in the town as bad as we have over the last two years, for many years. I put that down to the poor approach by the Gunner government of not listening to local people. You must listen to local people. We are the experts, not you, not other people from somewhere else. We know what works best.

The Member for Barkly, who always listens so intently to everyone’s speeches when he is in the Chamber, knows what is best for his community. I hope he has told the Chief Minister and the minister responsible for alcohol policy what works best in his community, because the only way we will get through this is with local advice, expertise and reflecting on what has worked and what has not. What has not worked is an alcohol floor price. It really has not made an ounce of difference. When the police were introduced outside of bottle shops by the former Labor government, the Henderson government in 2012, that is when we saw a real change.

There were incremental changes before then. Opening takeaway liquor outlets at 2 pm was the greatest impost on local people of all time. Can you imagine—think about it, all you people who live in Darwin. All of a sudden you cannot buy alcohol until 2 pm. Imagine not being able to buy a bottle of wine on your way to a barbecue at a friend’s place for lunch. It was a big change and people hated it. People still hate it.

One of the groups that has been affected the most by the 2 pm opening hours of takeaway liquor outlets in Alice Springs are the tourists. They come unaware. They think they can check out of their hotel or caravan park at 9 am and drive to Coles to pick up a carton of beer. I am sorry, but you cannot do that. We have adjusted; it is a part of our life in Alice Springs.

If you really were serious about curbing alcohol in Darwin, maybe you should think about that. Maybe it is time you really were serious about making changes. An alcohol floor price will not make any difference. If you are serious, you have to introduce things that are completely unpalatable. I can guarantee that is one of them. That is an example that sticks in my mind.

The lead-up to Christmas, when everyone is thinking about making rich puddings and trifles—waiting until 6 pm to buy your sherry for the trifle. Every couple of years I run out of my sherry and I think, ‘Oh my goodness’. I never go to a bottle shop at night in Alice Springs. It really is a pain in the neck, but you adjust. If you think it is working and if you can see a difference, you adjust and get over it.

Putting money into the pockets of takeaway liquor outlets and other suppliers of alcohol to implement your alcohol floor price does not sit well with me. Lining their pockets for the sake of an untested strategy—a strategy that you have had to draw evidence from the far ends of the earth. Scotland has just introduced a floor price on alcohol. They have no evidence to suggest it is effective. There is somewhere in Canada that was cited in the evidence. Then you come back to Alice Springs, where I question if the floor price introduced in 2006 was ever effective on its own.

The evidence behind your suppositions of introducing a floor price are flimsy at best. I think you will find over time that it will not deter consumption of alcohol in the Northern Territory. It will mean that poor people will become poorer, hungry kids will become hungrier, and kids that are inadequately clothed and cared for will be more inadequately clothed and cared for. It will be an impost on the people who need an impost like this the least.

Alcoholism is an addiction that will not be controlled by an extra couple of dollars placed on the price of red and white wine. It will not make an ounce of difference. I really do not see any justification for this. I think it is shallow and totally socially regressive.

I would like to see exactly what your plan is to measure this strategy, minister. How can you separate what is working and not working? I would like to hear that today. This is the place we need to tease out some of the issues. When the minister gets to consideration in detail stage she gets short and does not like to answer too many questions. On this occasion, given that you are introducing what is effectively the beginning of the official nanny state of the Northern Territory, it is time you gave us more detail.

How will you measure this strategy? How can you separate what is working and what is not? How can you separate the effectiveness of the Banned Drinker Register, police outside bottle shops and an alcohol floor price from the other strategies in place throughout the Northern Territory—and there was a range introduced by previous governments. How can you pick each one out and measure its effectiveness? I am very curious to hear your response, minister.
My position is that I do not support an alcohol floor price. I do not support the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill 2018 at all. This is a backward step for the Northern Territory. This is not about being progressive in any way. It is about putting an impost on the people who need it the least. It is about being unfair and lining the pockets of alcohol suppliers in the Northern Territory. It will all go to dust very quickly because there is no evidence to support any of this. You have just taken something that is politically sexy at the time. There is really no basis for it.

I look forward to hearing a response to my questions, minister, and to debating this further.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, to the Member for Araluen’s credit, she has been completely consistent with her position, which is that we should sell as much cheap grog as possible to as many people as possible in the Northern Territory. Going into her first election to this Territory parliament her platform was that people should get drunk and fall down before sundown. She criticised the Police Commissioner for issuing a 48-hour ban on a takeaway licence in Alice Springs that was proven to do the wrong thing. It was selling alcohol when it should not have, under responsible service of alcohol.

The Member for Araluen has been completely consistent when it comes to selling as much cheap grog as possible to people in the Territory. We disagree with that. We disagree with the approach of the former CLP government and the former CLP Treasurer, the Member for Araluen. That is not the way we should behave in this Territory. That is failing our responsibility as a government and as parliamentarians to do the right thing by the people of the Northern Territory.

We want Territorians to be safe. Alcohol plays too large a part in Territorians not being safe, and we will do something about it. We will have the biggest, most comprehensive suite of measures on alcohol the Territory has ever seen, from the BDR to floor price, to the 48-hour bans, to police alcohol liquor inspectors, to risk-based licensing and a lot more. We take alcohol-related crime and the abuse of alcohol seriously, and we believe that all Territorians should be as safe as possible.

For far too long, the horrifying impacts of problem drinking and alcohol have hurt the Territory. For far too long, and by too many governments, it has been virtually ignored, which has hurt local families and businesses. We know the trouble it visibly causes on our streets with antisocial behaviour, crime and tragically, not so visibly, through the domestic abuse that happens in far too many homes. All are totally unacceptable in our community.

Alcohol is a common factor in too many bad things that happen in the NT. It is there in too much antisocial behaviour and too many crimes, too many injuries and deaths and too many abused families and ruined lives. That is why we are doing everything we can, as a government, to tackle alcohol-fuelled crime and violence.

This is not about being a wowser. Having a social and responsible drink with family and friends is a relaxing and fun part of our fantastic Territory lifestyle. But alcohol abuse by too many people simply has to stop. As Chief Minister, I cannot be half-hearted in tackling the issue of problem drinking. I want to be able to look every Territorian in the eye and say we had a real crack at fixing this problem.

Our Attorney-General and Health minister, the minister in charge of making sure we get this right, is doing an amazing job. I thank Natasha for her work.

I am passionate about the many measures we are taking to tackle the abuse of alcohol. That includes a floor price on alcohol. People should not be able to buy a bottle of wine for less than the price of a bottle of water. That is a very basic position. We should all, in this Chamber, be able to get around that. It is a shame that some cannot. It is simply wrong by any measure and it causes a lot of problems.

While not everyone abuses cheap wine, sadly too many do. Too many people buy too much cheap wine for the purpose of feeding their addiction and getting totally and utterly paralytic. A bottle of wine should not be cheaper than a bottle of water, and a floor price will address this. It will help tackle problem drinking, but it is not done in isolation. It is one of the barriers we can put up to limit the access that problem drinkers have to alcohol and reduce the abuse of it.

Importantly, another of the barriers we had to put up is the return of the Banned Drinker Register after the chaotic former CLP government scrapped it. We are now seeing numbers build up to a level where it will have a real impact. Imagine how successful the BDR would have been if it had been left in place and worked to this point in time. It is another way we are limiting the supply of alcohol to those who abuse it.
Limiting access to alcohol is crucial if you want to make real change. That is how we will protect the community, and it is what we are doing. We are totally determined to deliver of our legislative reforms that support a healthy, safe and responsible community. This includes wide-sweeping reforms to prevent and reduce harms associated with alcohol misuse.

As we have previously announced, we support 186 recommendations of the Riley review—the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review—and have given in-principle support for another 33. We rejected just one recommendation regarding banning all Sunday takeaway sales, as restrictions are already in place. This represents, by far, the biggest effort by a government in Territory history to tackle alcohol abuse and the violence and crime it fuels. No government has done more; no government will do more.

In October the minimum unit price legislation will take effect in the Northern Territory. It is not a silver bullet solution but is another tool to limit access and tackle alcohol abuse. What the floor price means is that licensed venues will sell all alcohol products at a minimum of $1.30 per standard drink. That means there will be no more $2 or $5 bottles of wine, and I make no apology for that. It is a good thing for the community.

I can promise Territorians this is not about making money; it is about stopping the harm of alcohol abuse, pure and simple. The minimum unit price is not a tax and the NT Government does not profit from the floor price policy. It is an initiative that will standardise alcohol prices to reflect the alcohol content in beverages. Retailers will use the money from the minimum unit price to meet system upgrades needed to implement the reform. That is a good outcome.

It is important to remember that this is not being done on a whim. We have a very clear plan, which was sadly lacking under the CLP government. Unlike the chaos and dysfunction we saw during four years of the CLP, we have a plan to tackle alcohol-fuelled crime and violence. The floor price legislation was a recommendation of the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review, and it is a key part of that plan. The review actually recommended a minimum floor price of $1.50 per standard drink; however, we are proposing $1.30.

We think $1.30 strikes the right balance. It will help protect the community without seeing the price of reasonably-priced alcohol increase. It targets cut-price, cheap and nasty products that cause so much harm. The floor price is one of several measures under the Northern Territory Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan and aims to improve community safety by reducing access to and consumption of alcohol for problem drinkers. It will apply to the sale and supply of all alcohol in the NT, including those operating takeaway and on-premises sales. The purchase of alcohol online will be subject to the minimum floor price where the destination of the product is in the Territory.

Since licensed venues will sell all alcohol products at a minimum of $1.30 per standard drink, it means that an average bottle of wine over 7.7 standard drinks, with 13% alcohol, will sell for a $10 minimum instead of $5 or less.

The minimum unit price will affect the cheapest alcohol beverages with the highest alcohol content. It targets products that are under-priced and with very high alcohol content, such as cheap cask and bottled wine and fortified wines. Beer, ciders and spirits will either see no change in price or the change will be very low.

Importantly, this will seriously impact on problem drinkers and their demand of under-priced alcohol without affecting moderate drinkers, and the research backs this up. Research provided to the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review shows that, one, the heaviest consumers of alcohol—individuals at risk of harm—disproportionately depend on the cheapest alcohol; and two, at-risk and dependent drinkers are more price sensitive than moderate drinkers.

Based on the evidence, we believe that the introduction of the minimum unit price will be effective in reducing the harms of excessive drinking. We know that alcohol abuse and the associated impacts extend well beyond the individual to family, friends and the wider Territory community.

While this legislation aims to address the immediate impact of alcohol abuse on Territorians. It also aims to address wider issues, including the huge financial impact on the health and police services.

The negative impacts of alcohol abuse cost the Territory hundreds of millions of dollars every year. Previous modelling had the costs at well over $600m annually and in current-day terms that figure would now be much higher. Whichever way you look at it we cannot afford to close our eyes to alcohol abuse, socially or financially. We will deliver on our plan. We need to do this for Territorians because that is what they want and deserve.
I commend this bill and the work of the minister to the House.

Mr Mills (Blain): Madam Speaker, I wish to explain why I will not be supporting this measure. I acknowledge that the intent of this is to stop the abuse of alcohol. At the very best, our Labor colleagues are well intentioned, but it cannot logically stack up. It does not work.

That is because you are ignoring the actual problem. You are categorising and defining the problem in certain terms. We have just heard the soaring rhetoric of the Chief Minister. We all agree with the grand statements of how bad alcohol is, but need to get down to the real issue: alcoholism. It is those who are addicted to alcohol. If members of this Chamber and the government were serious about striking a blow for kids and families, they would be very honest about the effect of alcoholism—the addiction to alcohol.

When I see the quantity of alcohol consumed in the Northern Territory I am astonished. I have seen it demonstrated a number of times. I find it scarcely believable that that amount of alcohol is consumed in the Northern Territory. In my peer group we do not drink anywhere near that amount of alcohol, but there is a section of our community drinking enormous amounts of alcohol, prodigious amounts, scarcely believable. Those of us who are mindful of our health might go to excess in certain areas of our diet from time to time, but there are members of our community walking amongst us, in the park across the road from Parliament House, under the water tower in Palmerston, and in remote communities who are drinking enormous amounts.

The floor price will not strike a blow to help them. If it logically follows that increasing the basic price of alcohol will make a difference, you are deliberately turning your eyes away from the power of an addiction. I have taken time since returning to this parliament to spend time with those who are addicted and live in plain view among us. I have friendships and conversations with them. They welcome those conversations and tell me the plain truth.

I will speak of the men; many of them are noble men who are leaders and have famous names. They are men who are revered in their communities but are alcoholics. ‘What effect will the Banned Drinker Register have on you?’ ‘We will sort it out; we will find a way of getting it.’ ‘What effect will a slight increase in the price of alcohol have upon you?’ You are talking to someone addicted to alcohol. It will make no difference. They will collect an extra couple of dollars. You know how it works. They work on many fronts; they pool all their resources and calculate where the best value for the dollar is. They have been doing it for years. They will work it out.

Raising the basic price of bottles of wine—they will just move it up to the next notch and collect another $2. They will find it.

You would almost be deluded into thinking the Chief Minister’s statement, which is a rhetoric device—to say that we must make alcohol more expensive than a bottle of water. You would foolishly assume that if you increase the base price of alcohol, people will say, ‘Oh no, I think I’ll buy a bottle of water because it is cheaper than wine now’. That is nonsense. It is quite a deceptive argument.

It is the same, logically, as saying we are very concerned about methamphetamines in our community. If you had a close look, if your eyes were wide open and had a look at what is happening in our community with methamphetamines, and if you were truly concerned how it is tearing families apart, then you would increase the price of it so people would not buy it anymore. That is dumb. They are addicted. It is dumb.

I find it disturbing that the Chief Minister would start his defence of his position, which is an extremely blunt instrument that will not deal with the problem, rather than dealing with the Member for Araluen’s comments. He attacks her personally and then trots out a whole range of very broad statements that will not pass the acid test of proper scrutiny. He will dismiss, with some cliche, that the previous government with all its dysfunction is somehow responsible for the problem, but now comes the glorious and enlightened Labor government which is nothing like the past.

Many people are forming judgements of this Labor government that it is not doing anything much at all. Nor is it being held to account, nor is it displaying any courage to deal with the real issues. It is defining issues largely as political issues and trying to find the maximum amount of room to navigate as though it is under some political threat. Well, it is. The chickens will come home to roost. All respect to the Member for Nelson, I do not mean to offend you.

The expectation that this measure will make a big difference will be tested in a couple of years. Will it make a big difference? Yesterday the Member for Spillett and I—and I am sure others called in—met the seniors
at the Seniors Forum in Palmerston. Sometimes we overlook how a tight budget works for a householder or a pensioner. They are the ones who will feel this. They have already expressed their concerns. They do not want to be given the impression that they are alcoholics. They just manage their money well enough to have some enjoyment. They are the ones who will be affected by this more than the characters I saw in Bennett Park, who I will probably catch up with during the week. They will not really be troubled by this.

Let us be honest. How many of you have dealt with people who are alcoholics in your neighbourhood or family networks? I am sure everybody has. I remember growing up there was a fellow working for us. Alcohol was not really available easily on the farm, but we found the methylated spirits and the boot polish missing. Then the vanilla essence was missing. It was not an issue of price. There was hardly any supply, but he was addicted to alcohol. That plays out in a hundred tragic lives in our own immediate networks.

We have been given an impression that this will make a big difference. It would make a big difference if we started talking about the real issue. The Attorney-General likes to characterise the approach of the last government. As you would appreciate, I cannot give full account for the way that played out. We thought the Banned Drinker Register was an imprecise and blunt instrument used to create a general effect that we are doing something, but we are ignoring the actual problem and not honouring the core principle that is dear to me and many in our community who work hard: personal responsibility is important. Dealing with behaviour that is a problem to self and to families needs to be responded to.

The issue of personal responsibility comes down to those who should be encouraged to take personal responsibility. However, if they are unable to, lifting the price slightly will not change the fundamental problem. They have a deeper problem that a slight increase in price will not address. That is why we concluded that, rather than a Banned Drinker Register, which is a broad-brush approach that lacks real courage and definition and creates a sense that somehow society is at fault and alcohol is the problem—when it is actually individual choices that are the problem—we deal with the people concerned. We recognise that if someone comes into protective custody three times and alcohol is the driver of this, there would need to be the delivery of treatment—mandatory alcohol treatment.

That was not punitive. There were already punitive measures. They would go to gaol because of their behaviour. Rather than go to gaol we would deliver help at that point of need. That would be expensive and there would be push-back. But if it is society truly cares, they will take that step. You do it in your own family if someone gets to the point where you want to deliver care. Because of the addiction they do not particularly want it, but because you love and care you intervene. That is what that was about.

We have this massive government majority at liberty to trot out all sorts of nonsense about criminalising alcohol abuse. Absolutely not—it was about delivery of care at the point of need. They would be going to gaol most likely anyway. But rather than send them to gaol, why not deliver treatment? That was the point of it.

Now it comes to this. Once again, you are creating the same impression that somehow society generally is at fault. It is this wretched thing called alcohol which, in some cases—shock, horror!—is cheaper than water. If we lift the price of it up then people will somehow change their behaviour. No, you still have the same problem. Those who are addicted will not start drinking water because of this. They will just collect an extra $2. Where is the help for them? Where is the response to the problem that is in plain view for everyone in our community who has two eyes that work? Where is the help there?

I have asked the Attorney-General—I have lost track of it—at least five times to explain to me her approach to those requiring rehabilitation. Where is the prodigious effort to deliver rehabilitation to those who have a real problem? I asked five times and all I got was gobbledygook. We have a government that is more interested in broad-brush approaches, extremely blunt instruments, soaring rhetoric and motherhood statements that create some kind of smokescreen and an impression that something is happening—with an eye on the next election—then they will sail on and sort it out afterwards.

There are a lot of people out there having difficulties. They are trusting the government in some regard and enduring this, but they will see that this will make very little difference; mark my words. I am not alone. Former minister Chris Burns never agreed with me. I found he would always take the political position and was good at arguing. He ran some pretty good arguments regarding the floor price—as a researcher with Menzies and as a former Labor government minister—arguing quite compellingly that it will not work. It is well-intentioned, but it will not work for exactly the same reasons I have just described.

He said in his article in the *NT News*:
Its essential aim is to lift the price of cheap alcohol so that people buy less cheap alcohol.

That is the premise. Chris Burns also said:

While this is admirable it is a fairly blunt instrument to try to achieve goals that will not work.

He says that he has done a lot of work in this space in the current government and he is warning the government not to go down this path.

The majority of people impacted by this are people who do not deserve to be. These are the ordinary people who do not abuse alcohol.

Once again we have a government that would like to inconvenience everybody to create the impression they are dealing with what everybody knows is the problem. But they are not dealing with the problem. They are just creating a sense that something is happening.

There was a federal Labor government report, as Chris Burns reported, by the National Preventive Health Agency which looked at minimum floor pricing for alcohol. It was rejected. The report found that it was very difficult for a minimum floor pricing policy to result in any benefit to the community. What is the benefit? How will it deal with the problem?

It goes on to say:

In the Territory there will be an increase in the price of alcohol and the people who will be affected most will be ordinary consumers.

I do not have the date for the article but I am sure you know of the article.

If you are really dealing with alcohol, then comes the issue of policing. I am certain the enormous volumes of alcohol being consumed in the Northern Territory are largely being consumed out of sight and, in many respects, in an unregulated environment.

The Member for Araluen raised a very good point which was not addressed or responded to by the Chief Minister, whose response was disappointing. This is a serious debate which we have had here many times. The issue of trafficking alcohol, or grog running, is very real. If we are serious about dealing with grog running and the flow of alcohol—the floor price does not touch this at all. Where is the effort to deal with that problem? At the same time police resources seem to be reduced in the bush. I think you are storing up a greater problem for yourselves.

I hoped, with the majority you have here and your apparent concern for social matters, that you would have greater honesty and precision in putting measures in place that will deliver some help where it is needed. I enjoy talking to the men in Palmerston. I have made a point of that. Every time we talk about alcohol here I will talk about them because they are fellow Territorians, fellow constituents. How do they relate to this?

I ask them because they have given me a fairly clear indication to date. They have a problem with alcohol. This will not make any difference to them, and that is the concern. We are talking about tourism. Our concern is what is happening in public spaces.

For those reasons and others, which I could elaborate on at another stage, I will not be supporting this measure.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this bill, unlike the Member for Blain, the former leader of the CLP; and the Member for Araluen, the former deputy leader of the CLP.

I find it very disappointing because we are trying to tackle grog and the harm it causes across the Northern Territory from a range of angles, because there is not one single solution to dealing with alcohol. We all know that and the experts know that, so the best thing we can do as a parliament is tackle it from every possible angle. That is the mammoth effort it will take if we are serious about tackling the issues of alcohol-related harm in our community. It has been a very thorough process to go through the research, work and recommendations of the Riley review. It looked at evidence-based approaches of what works when it comes to tackling alcohol-related harm.
I welcome the Leader of the Opposition supporting these changes and the bill today. This is bold. This is brave. To tackle the harm created in our community—caused by alcohol—will take a brave, bold and evidence-based approach. That is exactly what this suite of reforms is about, and it is why we have this legislation before the parliament today, which is one part of that.

We saw the form of the Members for Blain and Araluen when they were the leaders of the Northern Territory under the former CLP government, when they ran the show. They scrapped the BDR with nothing to put in its place, and we saw the chaos that caused when we had 2500 problem drinkers all of a sudden getting easily available access to grog across the Northern Territory. They went down the path of alcohol mandatory treatment and it did not get the results we wanted to see.

If someone is to be successful in alcohol rehabilitation, they have to be willing to be part of that process and want to make that change in themselves. That is a very important part of it. That is why we have made sure we are taking an evidence-based approach to the changes we are implementing through the Riley review. This is big. It is bold. These are hard reforms. Nobody in this parliament can say they are not touched, affected or do not see the impacts of alcohol in their communities each day.

No one here gets away with not seeing that. It does not matter if you have a remote seat, an urban seat, rich constituents or constituents who do not make much money. We all see the misery and harm alcohol creates.

We are tackling this from a range of angles. We have the Riley review and the reforms we are putting through, and this is an important part of that. This is one piece of that reform package. I take my hat off to the Attorney-General, the Minister for Health, because she is leading the charge on these reforms. This parliament is genuinely, constructively working together to see the improvements we desperately want to see.

If all goes well, as a parliament we will make a big impact because we are working together—at least, most of us are—on these changes and reforms, because we all want to see change for the better of the Northern Territory. Our constituents need to see it as well.

It is a huge amount of work to do. It is not easy, but we are doing the heavy lifting. Today, with these changes, we are working through these important reforms, which will be progressed today. The sad reality of what we see each day in the Northern Territory—the impacts of alcohol in our community—is that it affects the economy and our health systems, and police resources are stretched. The number one thing police have been telling me—the new Police minister—which frustrates and angers them, and that they hate seeing on the job and dealing with, is the harm caused by alcohol. Sixty per cent of their work is generated by alcohol in the community. That is an unacceptable number.

Alcohol has a terrible impact on antisocial behaviour and violence. It leads to chronic health problems. People who get caught in the spiral of addiction will often end up in situations where they are incarcerated. We see what happens in family units when they break down because of alcohol abuse. The people who tend to suffer the most in those situations, unfortunately, are children, which is unacceptable.

One thing that has been difficult to get solid data on because it is a difficult problem to diagnose is FASD. Talk to many members of this parliament who have communities where we see alcohol-related harm—I have heard many stories of the children they believe are affected by FASD who they have seen on the front line. They have seen pregnant women drinking at harmful levels, which can lead to FASD. We know that children with FASD will have lifelong effects through to their adult life.

Situations of neglect impact on the stability of a home, whether people go to work or send their children to school every day. If they do not send their children to school every day it has huge impacts on their education and the flow-on effects of what happens into their adult lives.

In the Territory we have some of the highest alcohol consumption rates in the world. It is not acceptable. That is why we are taking action.

Alcohol accounts for a much larger share of deaths in the Territory than any other Australian jurisdiction. We see the harms it causes each and every day. That is why we gave in-principle support to the implementation of the 186 recommendations of the Riley report.

It is hard work. But there is an extensive research base and the evidence is very clear. The lower the price of alcohol, the higher the level of consumption and harm. Alcohol pricing reform is one of the most practical ways to reduce problem drinking. A minimum price is a targeted intervention that research shows will reduce consumption amongst some of our most vulnerable, heavy and binge drinkers, pre-loaders and young
people. We need to use every lever at our disposal to change problem drinking behaviours and the harm it causes.

Heavy drinkers and young people are particularly sensitive to the issue of price, with the heaviest drinkers more likely to seek out cheaper drinks than moderate drinkers. Put another way, minimum pricing will have an impact on those at most risk of harming themselves and others. We are not alone in facing this challenge; Canada, the United Kingdom and eastern European countries, including Russia and the Ukraine, have established minimum pricing.

Multiple studies over a number of years in Canada and the UK have shown that minimum pricing has led to significant reduction of alcohol consumption with consequent drops in alcohol-related violence, traffic offences and hospital admissions as well as reductions in long-term chronic disease.

The link between alcohol pricing and consumption is very clear. Ideally, we would have liked to see a national approach through an Australian taxation system such as a volumetric tax on alcohol that references the alcohol content of the product. A breadth of overseas research indicates that alcohol taxation is an effective financial mechanism in reducing consumption and related harm.

We lobbied the federal government for that, but the reality is that the federal government is not going down that line. In absence of that avenue we are tackling the issue for Territorians and the Territory.

We are leading this is in the Territory. This is a big move in Australia and other jurisdictions will follow it very closely because this is about tackling alcohol abuse from all angles. Floor pricing is in no way a silver bullet solution to this problem. We know that is unrealistic. It is one part of many different ways of approaching this massive problem.

For business, the implementation of minimum pricing is part of the continuing suite of reforms we are implementing. Many at the point of sale to reduce the supply of alcohol to problem drinkers. This bill sets out the minimum price at no less than $1.30 per standard drink. A minimum price applies to retail sales, not wholesale purchases by licensees. The difference will end up going to the retailer.

Consumers who believe that there are inappropriate price hikes as a result of the introduction of minimum pricing will be able to use existing complaint mechanisms, such as Consumer Affairs. The number of products in the low price range that will be affected is not huge.

This measure is squarely aimed at the cheapest products, because cheap availability of these products contributes to alcohol-related harm. Alcohol-related products that are already at minimum prices or above will not be impacted.

Let us be very straight here. This is about targeting the cheap problem grog that wreaks havoc in our communities. In the community I represent, in the northern suburbs of Darwin, it is two-litre white wine casks that create havoc and antisocial behaviour. Often when you see two-litre white wine casks strewn along the ground, with a lot of other rubbish as well, you know there has been trouble. You know that people have loaded up. Often you will see groups with empty soft drink bottles sharing that cask around. It does not lead to anything good. People have been sitting down, drinking excessive amounts of cheap white wine. That does not lead to anything good. It leads to a lot of trouble, violence, people getting themselves into vulnerable situations, and antisocial behaviour in our community.

This is about targeting the nastiest cheap grog out there in our community. It is about making it harder for problem drinkers to get their hands on excessive amounts of alcohol. It is about reducing the amount of alcohol that they can consume. If they consume less there is a better chance that there will be less harm as a result of drinking sessions. There will be less harm to the broader community and to the people themselves. That is what it is all about.

I appreciate that some Territorians will feel frustrated by these changes because they are not problem drinkers and like to enjoy some of the cheaper products on the market. We have thought about that price point and made sure we set it at a level that we think can make a difference by targeting the products of choice for problem drinkers, but leaving the majority of products untouched in their price point. The Riley review maintained a balance between pricing to reduce harm and the impact on responsible consumers.

The bill also prescribes the regular review of the minimum price as recommended by the Riley review. We want our alcohol reform measures to be fair to business and consumers, but we do not step away from the magnitude of the issue of alcohol-related harm in our community.
We recognise that implementing minimum pricing will create some further administration for licensees that will be required to put processes and systems in place and will be required to supply the data that enables the evaluation of the impact of minimum pricing. We will be evaluating the impact of minimum pricing as we are evaluating all the measures we are putting in place to tackle the issue of alcohol in our community, to make sure that what we are implementing is what will work best for the Northern Territory.

There is no doubt that we will have many other Australian jurisdictions and other countries watching, because these reforms are significant and we are tackling the issues from all angles. A very important part of that is ensuring that we get the data, do the research and learn what is getting results, making sure we continue to monitor it and make changes if they are needed. Ultimately it is about ensuring that what we have in place are the most effective measures to tackling alcohol-related harm.

We have been consulting with Hospitality NT—formerly known as the AHA—and businesses across the Territory, and I acknowledge that these conservations have been constructive. We have hard-working licensees and business operators working to do the right thing. It is important to recognise the hard work of our dedicated police force. As I said earlier, alcohol contributes to 60% of their workload and they have been clear with me about the frustration it causes. Our police have to go in and clean up the mess and destruction that alcohol causes. They have to deal with the families who also suffer from that misery. They have to go into domestic violence situations, deal with road fatalities, apprehend people who are not behaving appropriately, and put up with really drunk people. They have to do this far too often and it frustrates them because they know these problems would be avoidable if people did not drink to these outrageous levels.

We are making sure we give police more resources to do the job. We have an extra 120 police coming on board, of which most have been recruited. It is about making sure they have the right resources to do their job. That is why we have a record budget to support them in doing their very important job.

There is more that we are doing. Last night we saw the graduation of the first 18 police auxiliary liquor inspectors in Alice Springs, who will be starting work this week. We have worked to progress the establishment of a dedicated alcohol squad that is focused on alcohol-related harm and crime to stop people who try to take advantage of vulnerable people through secondary supply of alcohol across the Northern Territory. We will have 75 police auxiliary liquor inspectors coming on board in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine. We will have 12 officers dedicated to tackling alcohol as part of this team, and three prosecutors.

It is important to make sure we have our eye on people. If there are individuals, businesses and licensees not doing the right thing, we have the dedicated resources to prosecute those people and make sure there are consequences for their actions, because the actions of those people have devastating impacts and flow-on effects throughout our community.

We also have less pressure on frontline police resources because having these new police auxiliary liquor inspectors will free up some of the valuable highly-trained sworn police officers so we can get them out across the Northern Territory to target the hot spots. We will see more random checks when it comes to secondary supply in our remote locations. We are targeting grog runners who are doing the wrong thing. It is important to have additional resources to serve our community and make it safer. That will be a very good part of this.

Last night we had the graduation of the first 18 police auxiliary liquor inspectors in Alice Springs. They will be undergoing transition and training arrangements over the next month as they take to their very important jobs.

Another resource we committed to this team was an extra 10 mobile CCTV camera vans to target hot spots and areas where we need to tackle alcohol supply and keep an eye on things. It is incredible technology. They are being very well utilised by police and are a good tool to make sure people know that we are keeping an eye on them. They will be held to account if they are captured doing the wrong thing on CCTV.

There are some very important elements of support going into police as well because we want to see that those who run grog and go out with the intention of supplying alcohol to problem drinkers—alcoholics, the people we are trying to give less access to alcohol—are caught and face the consequences for their actions. It is unacceptable and creates far too much misery for everyone. That is why we have given police extra resources.

This bill substantially increases the penalties for secondary supply, with the maximum penalty for selling liquor without a licence increasing to three years’ imprisonment or a fine of up to $46 200. We will not tolerate grog running, and there will be very serious consequences.
We have also made sure there are more powers for the Police Commissioner to tackle establishments if they are doing the wrong thing. I applaud the police for the work they have done through Operation Haven, up and down the track. They started in Alice Springs, made their way up the Stuart Highway to Darwin and stopped at all the places in between. They have been watching takeaway outlets, entering licensed premises and watching the behaviour of people in those places.

Has there been responsible service of alcohol on-premises to drinkers? Unfortunately, they have found some instances where there was not a responsible level of service of alcohol, and highly intoxicated people were being served alcohol. Those businesses and licensees have been spoken to, and under the new powers we have given the Police Commissioner, we have seen the closure of two establishments and warnings given to others. That is unacceptable. When people are drinking in your premises you have a responsibility to make sure that if they are intoxicated you do not continue to serve them.

It is about making sure people see that they have a responsibility once people leave the premises. That is something we were keen to give police power over. They have been utilising that power through their conduct and operations, by the assessments they have made and the evidence they have gathered on the conduct of some of these places.

They have gone about shutting access to takeaway outlets to sell alcohol. They have seen that some of these businesses have been selling to people and not following the BDR correctly. That is unacceptable. They have been targeting those businesses. There have been warnings issued and a closure. Police will continue this work.

This bill today is one piece of many actions we are taking to tackle alcohol-related harm in the community. There is a raft of other measures we need to implement, but responsible service of alcohol through takeaway outlets and on-premises is an important part of this. That is why we are making sure we hold more people to account and that there is greater communication between police, licensing and these places.

There have been many conversations between police and Hospitality NT, the AHA, and they are doing some incredibly constructive work. They are working together to ensure people within the alcohol industry fully understand their obligations and know there are no excuses. If they do not meet the standards, there are more powers to deal with them. I have been advised by police that the conversations have been constructive and they will continue to work together because they all want to see an improvement. I applaud and welcome that work.

This bill is a very important part of our alcohol reform measures as part of the Riley review. It will take time to see results, but none of us want to sit down any longer and think that in our time in parliament we did not do our best to tackle the causes of alcohol-related harm. It is deeply important to the members of this government. There are members of this parliament who share these views and that is why we are trying to work together on these very important issues.

There is no single answer. That is why we are tackling it from different approaches. We understand that minimum pricing in this bill might test some people. Some people might be left feeling a bit disappointed about it, but we are targeting the products that we believe cause the greatest amount of harm in the community and create problems for everyone when people get access and drink to excess.

We are taking an evidence-based approach to the Riley review. We are making sure we put a lot of resourcing into this, because we want to get this right. If we are to reduce the harm created by alcohol in the community, the flow-on effects across the Northern Territory include children having a better start to life and getting through their schooling, going on to have a productive adult life.

It goes to tackling the issues of chronic health and being able to stop people from developing chronic health problems because they are not drinking so much. That will have a huge impact in the Northern Territory. It will have a huge impact on crime and antisocial behaviour if we are to tackle the issues of problem drinking.

What this parliament is doing is bold; it is brave. We are doing this from an evidence-based approach because it is what members of the community have said they want to see. They are sick of seeing the harm that alcohol creates across the Northern Territory. That is why we are doing everything we can to tackle alcohol-related harm and the crime and misery that follows on from that.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is good to hear debate in parliament and the different views put forward. My submission to this debate will be partly technical and partly from my personal knowledge of some of the issues that have been raised.
The amendments brought to my attention yesterday are proof that this bill should have gone to a scrutiny committee. Even though this bill was introduced on 9 May this year, it appears the government could not be bothered sending this to a scrutiny committee. It said the issue was already covered by Justice Riley in his report.

Whilst Justice Riley covered this issue extensively in his report, he did not write the legislation. It is important to note the role of the scrutiny committee is to scrutinise legislation before going to parliament. Justice Riley wrote a report; the government wrote the legislation.

This is a very important bill, one that Justice Riley said should be a priority for government. That is even more reason this should have gone to a scrutiny committee. There were 15 weeks between the bill’s introduction and today. Even though you promised all bills would go to a scrutiny committee, you conveniently went back on your promise, changed the standing orders and hid behind the Riley report. There was plenty of time for the legislation to be checked out. You promised and, on the important bills, you failed to deliver.

We now debate it on the floor of the House with amendments that may have been noticed earlier than yesterday if the bill had gone through the scrutiny committee. I note there are 14 pages of amendments to the original bill that are part of the bill we are looking at today, plus the amendments we were already given. Those should have been thoroughly looked at by a scrutiny committee. So much for bringing parliament to the people and restoring trust—or could I say that was rust?

What is in this bill? The independent scrutiny committee has done its best to find out. This bill amends the Liquor Act to introduce a key recommendation of the Riley review, as mentioned before: the introduction of a floor price for the sale of alcohol. A floor price, or minimum unit price, is a minimum price per standard drink at which alcohol can be sold. The Northern Territory will become the first Australian jurisdiction to legislate a floor price.

Other countries that have a floor price include Scotland, where minimum unit pricing was implemented on 1 May 2018; and Wales on 21 June this year. I am picking up a note from the minister for Police—they have not had enough time to find out whether it has had an effect, because they have only been going one or two months. It was also implemented in Canada, where it is known as a social reference price.

Floor pricing targets heavy drinkers, binge drinkers and pre-loaders—those who drink a quantity of alcohol before going out—and affects the price of cask wine and cheap bottled wine rather than beers and spirits. Profits from having a floor price go the retailer. Floor pricing is not a tax collected by government.

One of my concerns is whether retailers supported this because they might get extra profits. I suppose the issue is whether a lowering of sales because of the increase in price would offset the extra revenue that a retailer might get from these changes.

The Member for Blain mentioned the issue of moderate-income earners who like a drink. Justice Riley made a comment on that. He said:

> It is probable that moderate drinkers among low income families will be affected by a floor price because cheap alcohol is likely to represent a larger proportion of the alcohol they consume. They may be expected to be more responsive to price changes and the consumption of alcohol within the group may be expected to fall if a floor price is introduced. This factor is to be weighed against the significant benefits that will accrue to those people and to the community as a whole.

It is an issue that will especially concern pensioners with the price of wine increasing. The bill simplifies the process for interstate retailers to obtain a Northern Territory retail licence and increases penalties for unauthorised selling of liquor. The bill provides inspectors and police with additional powers to address compliance with the floor price, particularly in relation to online sales. Liquor regulations will be amended to a specified data, which must be submitted by licensees to monitor the floor prices.

I quote from the objectives of the act. Object (1)(a) says:

> The primary object of this Act is to regulate the sale, provision, promotion and consumption of liquor:

> (a) so as to minimise the harm associated with the consumption of liquor …
... to protect and enhance community amenity, social harmony and wellbeing through the responsible sale, provision, promotion and consumption of liquor ...

That objective has been around a long time and the government is at least working within the objectives of the act. Whether it will do that is part of the debate we are having today.

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VISITORS
St Paul’s Catholic Primary School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 students from St Paul’s Catholic Primary School, accompanied by their teachers, Rochelle Long and Catherine Conradi. Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

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Mr WOOD: My grandson is an ex-student of St Paul’s.

Ms Fyles: A great electorate.

Madam SPEAKER: A great electorate and a great school.

Mr WOOD: Looking at the clauses, there have been changes to the definitions. There is a fair number of changes that will be added to the definitions, including ‘interstate retailer’, ‘interstate retailer licence’, ‘liquor product’, ‘liquor sale’, ‘liquor sale offer’, ‘minimum sale price’, ‘product label’, ‘sale price’, ‘standard drink’ and ‘wholesale sale’.

Interestingly there is a definition of ‘sell’ with the explanations from the department this morning. The definition of ‘sell’ has been slightly amended to cover where alcohol is given as a prize or something like that. There has been a slight change to that section of the definitions.

Additional powers have been given to liquor inspectors so they can attempt to purchase and actively purchase alcohol contrary to the floor price or, where the vendor does not have a licence, have powers to obtain evidence at any stage of the sale. The inspector does not need to identify as an inspector doing this.

It is interesting to note that in the explanatory statement it says:

When using this power, the inspector need not identify themselves as an inspector, however the inspector must not do anything to encourage the sale. For example, it would be permissible for an inspector to fill an online shopping cart with products below the floor price, fill out postage details to an address in the Territory, and to pay for the products. However, if the inspector was told by the website that the sale could not take place at the quoted price because the liquor was for delivery to the Territory, it would not be permissible to contact the company to complain about this and to demand delivery.

This raises the issue of entrapment, the legal definition of entrapment being the act of a law enforcement agent inducing a person to commit an offence which the person would not have or was unlikely to have otherwise committed. We have to be careful when people are carrying out this section of the act that they do not fall in to that section of entrapment.

Clause 7, licences amended—this clarifies that interstate retailers are not regarded as holding takeaway licences to which the moratorium on issuing new licences applies.

Clause 8 in the explanatory statement says:

To ensure that local businesses that are required to comply with the floor price cannot be undercut by interstate retailers, it is necessary to ensure that all liquor sold or sold into the Territory must be sold subject to the floor price rules. This requires bringing interstate retailers who sell into the Territory under the legislative scheme.
I will raise another interesting issue. I have raised it before, but it would be nice to hear the government’s response. I am interested to know if the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition Act 1992 could be used to challenge this bill the same way the beverage industry did when they stopped the NT’s container deposit legislation. Mutual recognition is designed to overcome unnecessary obstacles to trading goods. In relation to goods, it overcomes differences in standards and other sale-related regulatory requirements. Is the proposed bill able to be challenged under the Mutual Recognition Act?

In clause 8 we are dealing with the requirements for an interim equivalent licence for interstate retailers. Also, in regard to section 30C, it says:

_The new section 30C clarifies that such interstate retailers do not have to comply with the banned drinkers register requirements unless this is explicitly made a condition of their licence._

It is interesting to read the explanatory notes. I understand some people are already doing that voluntarily. If they are doing it voluntarily I would have thought maybe you should work on that and make sure it is a requirement. I am not sure how it works in practice, but it is interesting that if we can have floor price rules which are applied to an interstate retailer, why are we not doing the same for the BDR?

Section 32 talks about making adherence to the floor price provisions a condition of all liquor licences in the NT.

A licensee must not contravene licence conditions—this applies the offence of breaching licence conditions to interstate retailers, extraterritorial application, and selling or delivery of liquor to a person or location in the NT.

Should there be a definition of ‘extraterritorial’? Minister, maybe this applies more to section 116, but I will ask now, what happens to someone who imports alcohol from overseas? Are people able to do that? Obviously overseas people will not be able to be brought into this legislation. It may be the case that people come from a country where they enjoy a particular brand of wine or otherwise and wish to import it into Australia.

Section 115 talks about addressing the offence of selling alcohol without a licence. The penalties are increased, and I support that. The clause has added the word ‘reckless’. One of the potential consequences in the rise in the price of legal alcohol is that some persons may turn to purchasing illegal alcohol and some may try to profit illegally by becoming distributors. The new penalties intend to deter this behaviour.

The issue of secondary supply from people going across the border will continue to be an issue. Even though the government has put more people into this area, there will be people finding the back roads and still making the effort to supply alcohol at a lower price—it will not be cheaper—but to profit from restrictions on alcohol or the price of alcohol.

This bill addresses the offence of purchasing liquor from an unlicensed retailer. Can you please explain the following from the explanatory statement:

_Police will need to take care to identify whether they are exercising their police powers or licensing inspector powers in order to ensure evidence is admissible in criminal proceedings._

Part IXA talks about a fairly substantial part of the bill and specifies the meaning of the following:

- a standard drink
- sale price
- the formula provided for calculating the number of standard drinks
- the reference to the product label to determine the number of standard drinks
- how the floor price operates in different situations—for example, mixed sales of liquor and non-liquor products promotions
- how the floor price minimum sale price is calculated.
It creates offences for selling alcohol below the floor price, empowers the Liquor Commission in relation to sale price manipulation and imposing conditions on licences, and introduces requirements on licensees for maintaining data and selling liquor below a minimum sale price.

There are a lot of clauses trying to cover all possible ways that alcohol can be sold or promoted. It will be interesting to see if there are any loopholes because there will be some people trying to find a loophole in the legislation. It will be interesting to see how this legislation will work in practice.

Will these changes work? The NT Government said on its website that research provided for the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review shows that the heaviest consumers of alcohol and individuals at risk of harm disproportionately depend on the cheapest alcohol. Young drinkers were identified as being particularly sensitive to the price of alcohol. The research also shows they are at risk and dependent drinkers are more price sensitive than moderate drinkers. The evidence strongly suggests that the introduction of the minimum unit price will be effective in reducing the harms of excessive drinking through the closer targeting of access and cost of products.

Alcohol abuse and the associated impacts extend beyond the individual to family, friends and the wider Northern Territory community.

The Riley review mentions some research about the effectiveness of floor pricing and reducing alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory. From the evidence presented to the Riley review, a single study carried out in Central Australia is cited in at least four submissions in different ways. This may give the incorrect impression that a number of different studies came to the same conclusion. The study was done by Symons, M; Gray, D; Chikritzhs, T; Skov, S; Saggars, S; Boffa, J; and Low, J (2012), who did a longitudinal study of the influences on alcohol consumption and related harm in Central Australia with a particular emphasis on the role of price. That was done through the National Drug Research Institute of Curtin University.

They used the average wholesale price per litre of pure alcohol as a proxy measure for retail price. The study found that in Central Australia, as price increased consumption decreased; however, this was in the context of the Alice Springs Liquor Supply Plan. The study period also induced alcohol restriction measures put in place as part of the NT National Emergency Response.

Justice Riley mentions the liquor supply plan in his report. He said that an example of the effectiveness of price measures in the Northern Territory occurred with the introduction of the Alice Springs Liquor Supply Plan in 2006. The sale of wine and fortified wine in large containers ceased under the plan increasing the average price of a standard drink from 80c to $1.10.

A study by the National Drug Research Institute found that this led to a significant decrease in alcohol consumption in Central Australia. There was a consequent reduction in alcohol-related harm as measured by hospital admissions and emergency department presentations, particularly for results, as well as a reduction in alcohol-related antisocial behaviour. There was no overall reduction in the alcohol-related crime rate of 12%. It was claimed that the plan halted an alarming increase in the rate of assaults suffered by Aboriginal women.

The plan was a voluntary arrangement. Unfortunately not all licensees participated. AMSANT, the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory; APONT, the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory; Congress; and People’s Alcohol Action Coalition all mentioned the LSP in their reports. A bit of a concern was that they tried to say a minimum floor price was basically the same as removing cheap wine and cask wine from shelves. I do not know if you can really say that. Congress tried to say there was no evidence that price controls were ineffective, but they did not have any evidence to prove that. One has to be careful trying to use the liquor supply plan as an argument that we need a floor price. That is not to say it did not have some good results.

There were other studies done in Canada, and in some ways that is hitting closer to our experience because British Columbia has a large number of Inuit people. They looked at minimum alcohol prices in British Columbia, which had been adjusted intermittently over 20 years. Their study estimated impacts of these adjustments on alcohol consumption. They looked at data on alcohol prices and sales of different beverages provided by the British Columbia Liquor Distribution Branch for 1989–2010 and data on household income was sourced from Statistics Canada. Longitudinal estimates suggest that a 10% increase in the minimum price of an alcoholic beverage reduced its consumption relative to other beverages by 16.1%. Time series estimates that a 10% increase in minimum price reduces consumption of spirits and liqueurs by 6.8%, wine by 8.9%, alcoholic sodas and ciders by 13.9%, beer by 1.5%, and all alcoholic drinks by 3.4%.
They simply concluded that increases in minimum prices of alcoholic beverages can substantially reduce alcohol consumption.

Scotland, after some court challenges, introduced a minimum price per unit of alcohol, called the MUP. It was only introduced in May so it is too early to see what effects it has. Plans to introduce a minimum unit price for alcohol were approved by members of the National Assembly for Wales on 21 June this year.

It is interesting to note that:

*England has not yet proposed the introduction of a MUP, although the government said in November 2017 that it would keep this 'under review' depending on the impact of the Scottish policy.*

I took the following from a Wales government-focused website. There are a couple of comments:

*Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething … said the Bill will target and reduce the amount of alcohol drunk by 'hazardous and harmful drinkers' in light of the 'difficult reading' statistics of alcohol-related illness and death often is. He did, however, accept that it was an 'experimental' law and that’s why it includes a sunset clause which could see the law repealed in 2024 if the (as it’ll be known then) Welsh Parliament agrees to do so.*

The ‘as it will be known then’ is because they might have their own name for the parliament by then:

*The actual minimum unit price will be set by regulations and a consultation will start on that ‘as soon as possible’.*

*Shadow Health Secretary, Angela Burns AM …*

A conservative:

*… wasn’t exactly glowing in her assessment of the law. She believes it’s incomplete as it leaves a lot of key obligations off the face of the Bill and it will disproportionately affect moderate drinkers on low incomes. Angela also didn’t feel the potential for unlicensed alcohol sales or the switch to harder drugs amongst vulnerable groups had been properly explored.*

I note that because that is something the Member for Blain raised:

*The only reason the Conservatives decided to vote in favour is because of the sunset clause.*

Perhaps the sunset clause should have been added to our bill, or at least at the end of the three-year study that involved Menzies School of Health Research. As part of the Northern Territory Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan 2018–19, Menzies will be working with the government to assess the processes, impacts and outcomes of alcohol harm minimisation strategies planned for the implementation across the NT.

This work is likely to produce solid evidence, lacking until now, of any effect the introduction of a floor price of alcohol, but it will be difficult to separate it from other parts of the alcohol harm minimisation plan. Justice Riley recommended:

- the establishment of a dedicated locally based research body, tasked with undertaking research specific to alcohol and other drug patterns of use, addiction and harms in the Northern Territory, to ensure our policies, programs and legislation are based on the best available contemporary evidence

- improved data collection, linkages and sharing across government agencies and non-government organisations

- extending funding timelines for new programs and initiatives to ensure there is adequate time to assess their impact on reducing alcohol related harm; and allowing for rigorous, independent evaluations of all programs.

Peter d’Abbs, who has been around a long time in the Menzies School of Health Research, said in his submission to the Northern Territory Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review:
This objective should be linked to a return to the evidence-based, inclusive and inter-sectoral policy-making processes that characterised the Living With Alcohol Program years. Alcohol policy in the NT is too important and complex an issue to be addressed in any other way.

In keeping with the need for evidence-based policy-making, an independent alcohol and other drug research unit, funded in part by the NT Government, should also be established, with a charter of conducting independent, high quality evaluations of interventions and policies, and of initiating research into the causes, patterns and consequences of alcohol and other drug misuse in the NT.

My concerns will be with what Justice Riley mentioned since the report. It was argued by Alcohol Beverages Australia that demand for alcohol by heavy drinkers is not responsive to price with the implication that drinkers would spend more on alcohol and less on necessities such as food if the price increased. I hope this is not the case, but people get around the BDR, as mentioned by other speakers, so will they find ways to get around an increase in price? If we are dealing with alcoholics, I am fairly sure they will do their best.

I will quote from an article in written evidence from the Sheffield Alcohol Research Group to a Health and Home Affairs committee session on minimum unit pricing in the UK. The question was put:

*Will those dependent on alcohol inevitably adopt problematic strategies in response to the minimum unit pricing?*

The response was:

*This is not our understanding of either the evidence or practitioners’ experiences. Research with those dependent on alcohol and our discussions with treatment service providers in Scotland suggest that there are a range of potentially beneficial or more problematic strategies that dependent drinkers adopt when alcohol becomes unaffordable. Potentially beneficial strategies include reducing alcohol consumption, waiting for money to become available or seeking treatment for their alcohol problems. More problematic strategies include not buying essentials, using illicit drugs and drinking non-beverage alcohol.*

*Those dependent on alcohol are a diverse population with complex needs. They are unlikely to adopt a single common response to MUP and stakeholders in the policy debate should avoid generalisations. If MUP is implemented, service providers will require resources to manage a range of responses from their clients and our evaluation work in Scotland will provide evidence to inform that support and the protection of vulnerable individuals.*

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

**LIQUOR AMENDMENT (MINIMUM PRICING) BILL**
(Serial 55)

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, before lunch I was talking about various studies that have been done in relation to the changes government is putting forward to liquor pricing.

I quote former minister, Chris Burns. He wrote a paper on why he did not support this new bill. He said:

*However, I do agree with John Boffa and Trevor Riley that some wine products are extremely cheap and readily lend themselves to those who abuse alcohol—especially 2L casks with over 20 standard drinks retailing at $10 or less.*

*Rather than apply the blunt instrument of a $1.50 Minimum Price, I suggest using the BDR to restrict sales to one 2L wine cask per person a day—as happens in Alice Springs.*

I wonder if the government gave that any consideration, which might have been—if it was workable—a lot simpler than what we are putting forward today.
One of the problems I have is that most of the research I have looked at is based on desktop studies or has been done overseas. Can we apply these results to the NT? How will this bill fix alcohol issues in the NT when we know people find ways to get alcohol when they are desperate by stealing, using other products, asking for money or anything else?

Who is this bill aimed at? Is it the drinker who drinks above the safe guidelines for alcohol or is it the alcoholic? I have my doubts about the second group when it comes to the effectiveness of this bill. If the government argues that it will make a difference, and to prove whether this is the case or not, and to see whether the changes bring real change to individuals, the review by Menzies must target people over the next three years to see if there has been real change. Not broad, statistical change but change to people’s lives.

Naturally, lowering the floor price on its own will not change everything. As Justice Riley said:

*The initiative …*

Lowering the floor price:

... *should not proceed alone but as part of a suite of measures designed to reduce alcohol harms.*

Besides the BDR, what will the other parts of the suite of measures be? He said it should not proceed alone, so will you wait until the suite of measures is ready? What are the suite of measures? That is not clear.

The government should have kept the alcohol mandatory treatment facility as part of its suite of measures, even if it needed some changes. I know that was a recommendation of the inquiry into that facility. Then I would have more hope something might happen for these people. They need the most help. But the government, with its tunnel vision, only sees criminalisation when it looks at mandatory alcohol rehabilitation. Obviously, it does not have the same attitude to people who have to be held in the Cowdy Ward.

All my life I have seen the problems of excessive use of alcohol for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people. Although some may say we are becoming a nanny state, alcohol costs our country and the Territory an enormous amount in violence, including domestic violence, divorce, sickness, loss of production, car accidents, unwanted pregnancy, FASD children, liver disease and heart failure, pressure on our hospitals and other health facilities, and pressure on our rehabilitation facilities.

The nanny state has to pay for all this, so there are times when we need to be what some people might refer to as a nanny state. I have seen the effects of alcohol—as I tell others—through the death of over half the 30 Aboriginal boys I once looked after at Daly River. They all died, either directly or indirectly from alcohol, and most died under the age of 21.

I could argue that having police outside bottle shops, asking, ‘Where will you consume the alcohol?’ is a nanny state thing. The Member for Araluen supports the POSIs.

Finally, alcohol consumption is not an Aboriginal issue. Just look at this chart—which I have here and am happy to table, Madam Speaker—to see how we fare. We are miles above the rest of Australia when it comes to estimated alcohol consumption in standard drinks per day. Alcohol problems for many non-Aboriginals is a hidden problem and sometimes only highlighted through DUI, crash or domestic violence statistics. We see Aboriginal people in the street, so that affects our view.

One thing that bothers me is that I see little effort by government to promote abstinence from alcohol—it is not cool. Just see how the government promotes alcohol at all its functions. Whilst I will not be opposing this bill, because there is evidence that there will be some change to alcohol consumption, the independent scrutiny committee would give it full support if the following recommendations were in place:

- that the bill be introduced not alone, but with a suite of measures as recommended by Justice Riley. The committee was thinking along the lines of mandatory alcohol rehabilitation centres, healing centres, more support for outstations, closing takeaways on Sundays—which you have refused to do—and even having non-alcoholic events at Parliament House
- that the government explains how this bill would change the lives of chronic alcoholics
- that there should be a sunset clause so that—as in Wales—the bill can be reviewed, and with sound data, a decision can be made about whether it should continue or not.
Mr McCARTHY (Housing and Community Development): Madam Speaker, I support the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill 2018.

Many Territorians drink responsibly, but we all know the difficulties the Territory has with problem drinkers. The cost of alcohol-related harm to the Northern Territory is in the hundreds of millions of dollars each year. We have the highest proportion of alcohol-related harm and deaths in Australia. For non-Aboriginal Territorians, we double the national rate. For Aboriginal Territorians, it is nine to 10 times higher. The size of this problem cannot be overstated.

Statistics have shown that more than half of all assaults and nearly two-thirds of domestic and family violence incidents were related to the misuse of alcohol. Northern Territory Police respond to more than 20,000 domestic and family violence incidents every year. The cost of alcohol-related harms to the Territory is totally unacceptable, both socially and economically.

This bill establishes a minimum price for a standard drink in the Northern Territory, responding to a key recommendation in the Riley review. This government is taking an evidence-based approach to tackling alcohol-related harm because we know this is the biggest social challenge in the Territory, and it must be approached in a methodical and holistic way.

Turning to debate in this House regarding some of the previous speakers—I note from the outset that the Leader of the Opposition has committed the CLP to supporting this bill, and that should be commended. However, once again, his advisory staff have twisted and turned Territory history in an attempt to somehow provide the CLP with some credibility in this House in this debate. Well, Leader of the Opposition, just leave it as you supporting this bill, because when you start making statements and accusations that the BDR increased the number of assaults, it shows that you have not learned any lessons from the past.

There are many members in this House—and more importantly, members of the Northern Territory community—who remember the year 2012, when the CLP scrapped the BDR overnight, with nothing in its place and no policy position. That was purely cheap politics. It led to two years of social turmoil and some of the highest rates of assaults recorded in the Northern Territory’s history. That is an example of a really bad decision. Territorians would expect that the CLP have learned lessons in those four chaotic years, commencing with that ridiculous political decision.

I take the Leader of the Opposition back to the debate because the CLP tends to cherry-pick out of policy. Its platform through the years that Labor was in government, 2008 to 2012, was about trying to isolate the BDR and talk about it, essentially ignoring the Enough is Enough policy and the suite of evidence-based initiatives the Labor government had put in place.

The CLP was able to twist and turn the argument, as was the Leader of the Opposition with his notes from his advisory staff today, in this House. To twist the debate and marginalise an initiative—when we know the Riley review and Labor’s alcohol policy is an incredibly complex and large suite of initiatives to address one of the most challenging problems in our community.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that and he should admit that. He chose a line in debate that—he said that Labor’s policy challenges the people who do the right thing and that we should be focused on those who do the wrong thing. He is dead right, and that policy is out there. It is rolling out.

I put a big shout-out to Northern Territory Police, who now have four major operations and arrests for secondary supply of illegal alcohol, which would have landed in Tennant Creek or beyond in remote communities in the past four months. This is a great result, a direct result of good community police intelligence gathering. It is a great result for police on the frontier, patrolling across regional and remote areas. It is a great result for the community that has not been impacted by this hoard of illegal alcohol coming across the border from Queensland and flooding into Tennant Creek and the remote communities.

There have been three successful on-road operations across the Barkly Highway as well as a recent example involving a commercial bus. A passenger getting off a bus was picked up in Tennant Creek with a significant amount of illegal alcohol.

Well done to the Tennant Creek police as well as the Northern Territory Police for all the important intelligence gathering that is going on as we speak. That translates into positive patrols and operations.
We heard our minister for Police talk about Operation Haven, which has been extended across the Northern Territory—tangible elements of community policing with its tentacles across all our regional, remote and urban areas.

This directly relates to policy—the acknowledgement and recognition that Labor’s real focus on addressing alcohol-related harm and misuse is a suite of initiatives. It is a complex mix of evidence-based policy direction that translates into community initiatives.

I will comment on some of the important elements of a big policy with real action, that is, the 75 community police auxiliaries who are now in training; the 12 dedicated police to address secondary supply across the Northern Territory; and most importantly, at the top of that food chain, three police prosecutors to make sure the hard work of police on the frontier will be followed through in the courts. These important messages will be sent very clearly to those who want to profit from the misery of vulnerable Territorians.

I add to that equation the new Public Housing Safety Officer teams being created in Katherine and Tennant Creek. This is another Labor government initiative. This is not about punishing responsible drinkers as the Leader of the Opposition says; this is about all Territorians being part of a solution. That is the mantra that I have used in the past and continue to use because we know the scourge of this issue across the Northern Territory. It impacts on us all. It impacts on the urban, regional and remote areas.

These initiatives translate into the smaller regional areas like Tennant Creek as being very positive and proactive frontline initiatives from an evidence-based policy led by a brave and committed government. When we break down that policy initiative and look at it in a micro sense in Tennant Creek, we will see 11 community police auxiliaries totally focused on alcohol, with a mobile capacity across a town where we know each other. We are a good mob; we get on well with each other and we know where the hot spots are.

These officers will get to understand us and the rhythms of our community, and they will almost be able to complete their work street by street, door to door. That will come as a great benefit to the team of Public Housing Safety Officers who will be dealing directly and building relationships with our public housing tenants. That will also be on the front line of good intelligence gathering—working with the police officers to make our community a safer place. These are real initiatives on the ground.

This is another example of an evidence-based alcohol policy that supports the Banned Drinker Register. That must never be alienated and marginalised by the conservative element in this House, which wants to exploit this argument again for its own benefit. In that election period it was completely exploited and promoted to an urban populace. It was this mantra of punishing responsible drinkers. It was used politically with no evidence.

The CLP scrapped the entire policy without anything in its place and we went through two of the most dangerous and complex years, when assaults rose and there was complete chaos in relation to alcohol-related harm and misuse.

Then we saw a scramble to do something, as the Member for Blain talked about in this House—the alcohol mandatory treatment program. Do not get me started on that. In Tennant Creek we saw nearly $4m appropriated. They storm-trooped in and took our sobering-up shelter, a successful initiative to protect vulnerable Territorians who had alcohol problems. They spent an enormous amount on security and then, within 18 months, they walked away. They appropriated over $4m of Territory taxpayers’ money and it lasted 18 months as an experiment, and they walked away. I think they registered five people who actually started in that program.

It has to be evidence based and supported and it needs a courageous government. There are all those elements coming through. It is important to note that this bill is one of a number of initiatives as part of a large, complex, evidence-based policy suite.

My mantra is about all Territorians being part of the solution. It goes to our senior Territorians, our public housing tenants, our regional and remote Territorians. Let us adopt that mantra under a courageous government that is making a difference, is prepared to stand up and do the hard work and has an evidence-based approach. We are all part of the solution. If you look at the statistics, when you see the current alcohol harm and misuse across the Northern Territory—it can cost over $600m a year. That is Territory taxpayer money, Territory funds, going to address the issues of alcohol-related harm and misuse that could be repurposed and reappropriated into positive community outcomes for all Territorians. It makes sense. As we say, it is not just the sensible thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. It has real economic arguments as well.
I enjoy working with my ministerial colleagues. The Minister for Primary Industry and Resources is driving a pastoral sector development that contributes over $600m into the pastoral estate and gross state product for our pastoral industry. That is an industry going forward, one I have spent 40 years in. It is one of the backbones of the Northern Territory economy. Generating an income of that magnitude without addressing alcohol harm and misuse—we are seeing over $600m appropriated to fix broken Territorians and repair our communities.

It has to change, and it will change. I am proud to say—and this is a story I will continue to tell—that I am part of a government that has said this has to change. We are not prepared to compromise. We will use an evidence-based approach and deliver for all Territorians. All Territorians are part of this solution.

The legislation we are debating today is but one of a suite of initiatives relating to Justice Riley’s review. It is good to see that the Opposition Leader supports the passage of this bill. When we talk about the enormity of this evidence-based policy, we are talking about 186 recommendations that have been adopted by government and 33 under consideration. It is an evidence-based approach to alcohol harm and misuse. It is about normalising alcohol use in the Northern Territory.

I take offence at members opposite who want to use this nanny state comparison. It is cheap politics. In the community I represent, it declares you as an elected community leader with no idea, because that is cheap politics. This evidence-based approach is targeted at normalising alcohol use in the Northern Territory. It is about people being able to use alcohol responsibly and appropriately. Unfortunately, there is still an element of the community that does not know how to do that.

The Member for Blain picked up on an important point when he talked about addiction. That is correct; there is real addiction when we talk about alcohol or any other drugs, but this policy will make sure we normalise the use of alcohol across the Northern Territory. We make the Northern Territory a safer place, a place that will fulfil the opportunities for every Territorian.

I pick up on the Member for Araluen’s comments. She localised it to regions, including Alice Springs, her home town. I accept that. We have a lot of experience in the regions and have learned a lot of lessons. We have a lot to add to this debate; however, it is important to reflect on some of the undesired outcomes of CLP policy.

When they scrapped the Enough is Enough alcohol policy, including the BDR; when we started to experience the worst level of assaults on record; when we saw that the community was at increased risk of complete dysfunction in regard to alcohol harm and misuse; that is when the CLP government of the day started scrambling for solutions. One of those solutions was the application of police on bottle shops. The unfortunate part of that chaotic nature, which was characteristic of that government over four years—without an evidence base, planning or thought—was that it was not resourced policy. There was no consideration of how to sustain our Northern Territory Police officers on bottle shops. I witnessed this firsthand in Tennant Creek. Things started to fragment very quickly.

One of the other side effects of that policy was a push of the problem drinkers across the southern regions of the Northern Territory into Darwin and Palmerston. Member for Araluen, you are not correct when you say that residents of Darwin and Palmerston did not experience any harm, hurt or real effect due to previous government alcohol policies. They certainly did between the years 2013 and 2016. I was a local member in the Barkly and was very concerned because some of the major crimes that were reported in the Palmerston and greater Darwin region had Tennant Creek names attached. That was very alarming. It signalled a trend that I took a closer look at. We knew the problem drinkers from Central Australian regions were either crossing the border into Queensland where there were no restrictions, or they were moving into the greater Darwin area, including Palmerston, where there were no restrictions on alcohol outlets, including corner stores.

That was something real. I am on the record debating that with the previous CLP government and Chief Minister directly, warning and pleading for some action. That was completely dismissed and ignored. It was a real example of a government with no evidence base and no real resource allocation to its policy, that was so divided and focused on its internal conflicts and self-interest that these elements of community development completely escaped it.

Labor has come back to what works based on evidence-based policy. I will localise that again, because I will go back to the Member for Blain’s contribution to debate, to talk about what will make a difference. Let us talk about what is happening in Tennant Creek, where we have some targeted investments addressing community safety, economic development and local jobs. It is a good combination of policy initiatives. Most importantly, it is focused on alcohol harm minimisation.
When we talk about policy being supported by good local decision-making, it is great to see that the $5m purpose-built BRADAAG centre—our Barkly region alcohol and other drug rehabilitation centre—will now be grown out of a purpose-built infrastructure. The model has been successful over many years. Tennant Creek has been at the forefront of trying to address alcohol harm and misuse. But a $5m investment from this government provides critical infrastructure that will be informed by the sector and based on good local decision-making with the BRADAAG board and its stakeholders. It will then be a facility that can drive another level in the reduction of harm minimisation through good rehabilitation. That is the rehabilitation of a family model. It is really exciting. It is something BRADAAG has been able to explore in a limited capacity over the past few years because of infrastructure constraints.

Now, with a purpose-built facility, we have the opportunity to provide that frontline service for the rehabilitation programs and the education and therapeutic programs, to a transitional accommodation pathway that will incorporate families by taking the family together and working with them for a real rehabilitation outcome.

I look forward to being able to visit BRADAAG on this new site, in new infrastructure, and see children progressing to school, and spouses going to work and engaged in good rehabilitation programs on a pathway of reintegration into the community with a full understanding of alcohol harm and misuse, addiction and addictive behaviours. Most importantly, with a focus on a family unit—not just one element of a family being dealt with, but a family unit working through challenges together.

That investment from a Labor government has a very good outcome in public housing. This new purpose-built infrastructure will release 19 public housing dwellings back into supporting families in Tennant Creek, reducing the waiting list and establishing families into safe and secure environments within the township of Tennant Creek, supported by good community police auxiliaries, Public Housing Safety Officers and the Northern Territory Police Force, which will finally be released into its core business of good community policing initiatives.

We are already seeing the four major outcomes in the apprehension and processing of people who have been illegally carting alcohol—secondary supply. We have already seen four major outcomes in the Tennant Creek area: three on the highways and one person alighting a bus in the town.

This is evidence-based policy. This what our police have been asking for. This government’s investment is providing all the components that are coming together. This is just a micro example. This is a focus on a town of 3500 people. However, be aware that on any one day the population of Tennant Creek can swell by 500 to 1000 people, because it represents a service-delivery footprint the size of Victoria. This evidence-based policy will have an impact on the immediate town and a significant impact on the larger population in regard to the regional footprint.

That is good, smart policy. I am very proud to be part of a government that will be delivering it.

Associated with the front line of a government that has said, ‘We will deal with this’—a brave government that stood up and has worked hard for the resources and appropriation to back evidence-based policy. We have our core business of investment in the child and a focus on real generational change. They are the two investments I am really looking forward to seeing. One is growing out of the ground as we speak, which is Tennant Creek’s early childhood integrated development centre. It is wonderful. Minister, you would be so proud of the children in the school on one side and in the childcare centre on the other side looking through the construction fences and talking about what is happening with this new project. William is one of them. He talks about trucks because he sees them there.

Our ministers have set this up. Our government has resourced this, and now we have a cohort of children who will essentially be the first intake to this facility, and they are watching it being built. They are talking about it. They are seeing their families working on it. This is all very real and can be very powerful in this micro example.

Associated with that, the first of the Northern Territory Labor government’s family centres will be delivered in Tennant Creek. This is an allied health approach to connecting vulnerable families and those seeking good education and awareness of health services for their children in the same town. This is the generational change policy running parallel with the frontline policy directly addressing alcohol harm and misuse. It makes sense. It is good economics and it is generational change for the Northern Territory.

I am proud to say it is not only happening in Tennant Creek. Territorians are all part of this solution because we are all working together. You can cherry-pick any bit of controversy you like to flare up the electorate or inject into a small focus group to get yourself a one liner or an audio grab, but essentially this government
will not be swayed. We are marching forward with this policy because we know that evidence-based policy is good policy. This has been needed in the Northern Territory for decades.

It is good to listen to debate in the House, to challenge and add contributions to debate, and I look forward to other speakers continuing in debate. This bill means that alcohol will not be available for purchase for less than $1.30 per standard drink and will not affect most products.

To me, this means that the constituents I am privileged to represent really need to consider that alcohol is a scourge of the Northern Territory and we are all part of the solution. The cheapest alcohol products are clearly aimed at the most vulnerable in our community and the floor price aims to set a limit for this.

Mr SIEVERS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move that the Member for Barkly be granted an extension of time, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCARTHY: I thank the Member for Brennan, who has a lot of experience in this area. I acknowledge the Labor Caucus and the diversity, the depth of life experience—as I like to call it—from our younger members to our oldest member. It is good to be able to have that Territory diversity in a Caucus room. It translates to a good debate and to the best policies possible.

Drinking alcohol is a responsible social activity for many Territorians; however, the level of harmful drinking in the Territory is clear. The floor price in this bill is intended to reduce the amount of alcohol purchased by the most vulnerable people in the Territory, and it is not the only part of this government’s plan to address alcohol-related harm.

The community should not have to put up with alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour. The cost of alcohol-related harm to the Territory is totally unacceptable, socially and economically. Enough is enough and this government is taking action.

When I take this on the road, as I did between 2008 and 2012—raising the education and awareness level of the Enough is Enough policy that has clearly influenced further policy development in this area—I use a moderate approach. I do not deny anybody a drink in the Northern Territory. We have great occasions to celebrate, but I ask that as responsible drinkers we moderate our behaviour. It is not about swill drinking or smashing a 30 pack; it is about enjoying alcohol socially and within a community lifestyle and a Territory culture.

There is already a move afoot. In the Barkly I am seeing some pretty tough characters who I have known for a long time shift in their drinking habit to a mid-strength beer, for instance. They have made the decision themselves. The most important part of any change in behaviour is when you come to terms with it and make the decision yourself.

They influence others around them in their peer groups. The shift across to mid-strength beer is a good shift. The floor price has an evidence base which shows that people will shift from cheap, high-alcohol volume products to a product that provides a more sociable and moderate outcome.

Territorians need to be aware that we are all in this together. It does not have to be an abstinence approach or, as some members are saying in debate, a punitive approach. It is about shifting our culture and behaviour to make sure everyone is a winner.

I go back to the Member for Araluen’s comments. It is about kids and their families—moderating our behaviour so there is an equal share in the outcomes, whether that means food in the fridge at home, something for the spouse, home improvements or travelling to a show, rodeo or community event.

The message we are clearly sending in this debate is that this is one suite, but it is not to be underestimated. This is policy that means business. This is a very proactive and challenging policy. History will tell, as some of the speakers have said in this House. I feel very confident, after over 10 years in public life, that we are back on track and have a very clear plan. I believe Territorians will back us. I believe we will gain the groundswell I saw from 2008 to 2012.

I remember the workshops I conducted; one of the most memorable was on the veranda of the Barrow Creek Hotel. People were fully engaged and listening. I will never forget that afternoon. The old ladies, whom we know as the wise heads in our families and communities, were translating my workshop information on photo
ID and what it represented. It represented a right to trade in our community. They very quickly translated that information into, ‘I will protect this right because it is my right’.

They are a generation—particularly the older generation—of Territorians I have had the privilege to work with, who can talk about fighting for rights, such as land rights, and the development of the communities. From a camp where I started a school at Epenarra to a community of 200 people, with sophisticated infrastructure such as clinics, schools, employment and local government—they fought for that. They translated that as their right to purchase alcohol, as it is everybody’s right in the Northern Territory.

But it also comes with a significant responsibility. It was good to know that this message was starting to translate through the community. In radical politics—the rug was pulled from under that in 2012. But now this legislature is getting back on track. This legislation is part of a suite of initiatives that are passaging through. This will translate to real measures to address alcohol harm and misuse in our community. We should all be very proud to be part of it.

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I support the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill. As speakers have said, we have a comprehensive suite of measures to address alcohol in the Northern Territory. It is the most comprehensive and very courageous suite of measures. It is not something any of us are backing away from.

I have said before that my heritage is Italian. When we talk about Italian heritage, we talk about people being able to drink alcohol socially and being responsible with alcohol. It is what we want for Territorians. It is about the harm-minimisation approach that the Member for Barkly spoke about.

We know that most people in our community drink alcohol responsibly, but there are far too many for whom alcohol is a problem. That results in harm to them and others in their family. It is something I hear about as I move around my electorate of Drysdale and around the Territory. Territorians are concerned about the effect of alcohol, particularly the effect it is having on children.

Every Friday night in the Dry Season the Member for Brennan and I attend the Palmerston markets. We have a friend, an old football player from Central Australia, who often lives with his family on Davoren Circuit in Moulden. Over the three years the Member for Brennan and I have been attending the Palmerston markets we have seen his health deteriorate and his alcohol consumption increase. He has become a bit of a pest in our community. He is one of those people who hits you up for some money. The Member for Brennan and I often give him money to buy some food, but sometimes I think it is spent on alcohol instead. It is at the stage where he has become a nuisance to his family and disrupts them. He has ended up sleeping rough. He has a bag, which he has most of his possessions in.

The Member for Brennan and I have talked about how we, as leaders in our community, can support and address some of the things he is experiencing. It is about his family. We are sad to see this deterioration, because he was someone with a social profile and a charismatic personality that we still see. We all get a bit of a laugh out of his conversations.

Over three years you see their health and the way they look after themselves deteriorate. It is not something we want to see. That is why we are putting measures in place such as the BDR and these measures today.

This government, and all of us here, want our communities and homes to be safe from the devastating effects of alcohol. The issue of alcohol is one of the biggest social challenges facing the Northern Territory. It drives up violence, particularly domestic and family violence, which is often hidden from the rest of the community and places a significant burden on government resources, such as police and health services.

As the Attorney-General mentioned, the total cost of alcohol-related harm has been estimated at $943 per Australian adult, and a staggering $4197 in the Territory. That is more than four times greater than the national average.

You can talk about savings measures and stimulus packages for businesses, but there is a saving measure right there. When you look at the rest of Australia, at $943 per adult, and the Northern Territory at $4197 per adult—whatever we can do to minimise the harm from alcohol is a great step in the right direction to make things better in the Northern Territory. Money can be spent on more worthwhile and useful purposes than alcohol-related harm.
In addition, 3.9% of deaths nation-wide are caused by alcohol, but in the Northern Territory that figure is 12%. These figures are too high. Too many Territorians are being lost to alcohol, and for too many Territorians their health and safety is being effected by alcohol.

As the new Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, at one of the first media events I attended I was asked about the number of pedestrian deaths this year. They are higher than usual. I have had a good look at the reports and information on those deaths, and nearly all of them involved concerns about alcohol. If someone is sleeping on a road, under a truck parked on a roadside stop or crossing a road while inebriated, that will be the impact. For the people involved in accidents, the repercussions go on and on.

They are terrible figures—12% of deaths in the Territory are related to alcohol. That is far too many. Action has to be taken. This government is taking action. We promised Territorians that we would take an evidence-based approach to tackling alcohol-related harm. I am proud to be part of this Territory Labor government, which has a comprehensive plan for addressing harm caused by alcohol. The plan is based on what evidence says makes a difference.

Unlike the CLP government, which included members sitting across from me, who took away services and programs aimed at curbing the effects of alcohol, this government has listened to what works and is taking action. We have already started to implement a number of alcohol reforms based on recommendations in the Riley report, such as reintroducing the Banned Drinker Register and passing legislation to address point of sale intervention. We have re-established an independent Liquor Commission and provided the Police Commissioner with similar powers to the Director-General of Licensing. This has empowered the commissioner to temporarily suspend a liquor licence for up to 48 hours if the commissioner considers it appropriate.

The commissioner also has the power to temporarily suspend a licence if a licensee, employee or agent of a licensee is being investigated for an offence against the Liquor Act and an investigating police officer reasonably believes that the offending is likely to continue. This enables a quick response to protect the safety of the community. We have already seen this action being taken and making a difference.

The passing of this amendment bill to introduce a minimum floor price on alcohol will be the next step to make our communities and homes safer. This is a key recommendation of the Riley review. A floor price established under this amendment bill will provide a minimum price per standard drink at which alcohol can be sold in the Northern Territory. No longer will it be acceptable in the Territory for alcohol products to cost less than a bottle of water. The changes in this bill will not see the cost of all alcohol products increasing. It is about targeting products that have a high alcohol content, are extremely low-cost and which target some of our most vulnerable Territorians, like the man I spoke about who we see at the Palmerston markets.

For example, we have heard that some bottles of wine can retail for as little as four or five dollars. This makes drinking alcohol so cheap and easy that it creates an environment that supports and encourages drinking to harmful levels. This kind of environment has a particular impact on young people who are forming their drinking habits.

Contrary to what some others may think, introducing a floor price can work. I will give another story. My son recently has moved to Norway on an exchange for university. Norway has put a high floor price on alcohol. Just as an example, a six-pack of Heineken beers costs $43 compared to about $20 in Australia. He was on FaceTime, telling me they had just had O Week. O Week at universities is often a time where there is some heavy drinking, and drinking games are played. He said that it was costing about $17 for a schooner of beer. Nobody was drunk at the university campus in Trondheim at O Week. They were all being very circumspect and careful about their drinking. If you are a university student you cannot afford that.

That is what influences those behaviours—when you have a floor price it makes it expensive, so you look at other activities. He has been able to relate how fit, healthy and focused they are on physical activities. They are planning hikes and sporting activities. As a nation, the Norwegians are remarkable. That is what we need to do in Australia. We have a reputation as big beer drinkers—big alcohol drinkers—and this is something we can do to change that reputation, to have a future generation of young people who understand the concerns regarding alcohol and who drink in moderation so we do not see alcohol-related harms to that generation.

I am not saying that we need extreme prices, but it shows that a floor price can make a difference in the consumption of alcohol. It can create a different culture of how alcohol is viewed and used. It can create an environment for more responsible drinking habits, and that is what we are trying to do.
This government is bringing in alcohol reforms based on the evidence of what will work. This government is making responsible decisions about minimising the harm caused by alcohol. I was quite astounded to hear the Member for Araluen say that increasing the price of alcohol will not have an impact. The measures we are talking about will reduce the consumption of alcohol and make a difference.

However, this is just one of a suite of reforms to address the impacts of alcohol. For instance, this month my colleague, the Minister for Territory Families, and I announced a new rehabilitation precinct in Darwin that will incorporate the new Darwin youth justice centre as well as an alcohol rehabilitation centre. The rehabilitation precinct will allow future opportunities for service providers, training providers and businesses to collaborate and potentially co-locate. This is about planning for the future needs of vulnerable Territorians.

We are also supporting families and educating children. We are investing an additional $35.6m to support actions that will drive generational change through our 10-year early childhood development plan, Starting Early for a Better Future. As part of this plan, government will establish 11 new child and family centres and expand the services in the existing six centres.

We will also continue to expand the Families as First Teachers program from 38 to 52 sites across the Territory. That is about working with families, making sure they have the skills to raise children to understand the dangers of alcohol during pregnancy, and supporting families across the Territory.

This government does not make decisions in isolation but thinks about how its strategies and actions will work together to make the Territory a better place to live, work, grow and thrive in.

These legislative amendments are about keeping our community safe and reducing the harm alcohol is causing in our community. Drinking alcohol is a person’s right, but they have to do it responsibly. It can be an enjoyable social activity for many Territorians who safely and sensibly drink alcohol in moderation. In setting the floor price, the government is creating a balance between a price that will reduce harmful consumption of liquor and one that will have minimal impact on moderate consumers—Territorians who do the right thing and drink responsibly. These changes will help promote the responsible consumption of alcohol.

This government is taking a long-term approach to break the cycle; ensure there is ongoing sustained change in behaviour through intervention, support and education; reduce alcohol-related harm; and make our community safer. The Territory is plagued by harmful levels of drinking beyond any other state or territory. That is a fact. The volume of alcohol that is consumed, on average, per person in the Territory is among the highest in the world. This has huge repercussions in our community.

We cannot continue to talk about these issues. We, as a government, are doing something. We need to continue to make tough, courageous decisions. This government has listened to people and will work hard to address the complex issues related to alcohol abuse and misuse. This government knows the value of ensuring services are available to allow people to take control of their lives and end the cycle of drug and alcohol abuse, and the lasting impact this has on the individual, their family and the wider community.

We are supporting children, families and communities to give Territory children the best possible start in life and to break the cycle. We are delivering a range of evidence-based, long-, medium- and short-term strategies to reduce the prevalence of alcohol abuse. That is why I support this bill.

I thank the Attorney-General for bringing this liquor amendment bill to the House.

Mr VOWLES (Primary Industry and Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity to speak in support of the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill 2018. Our government is delivering on the recommendations of the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review, known as the Riley review. The legislation enacts the key policy recommendations from the Riley review. This legislation will establish the floor price for alcohol in the Northern Territory, which is a minimum price for a standard drink.

Members of this Assembly often speak about the harm that alcohol abuse is causing across the Territory. We all have our individual stories. Dealing with alcohol abuse is one of the highest priorities, not for government but for the Territory. We have heard from my colleague, the Attorney-General, numerous times—the truly horrific data on the cost of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. I will read out some of the statistics. I say off the bat, it is a bloody disgrace. Please listen and take these figures in.

The total social cost of alcohol-related harm has been estimated to be $943 per Australian adult. In the Northern Territory the equivalent burden was estimated to be $4197 per adult.
Over 50% of all assaults are alcohol related. Up to 65% of domestic and family violence incidents are alcohol related. This means there are nearly 12,000 alcohol-related domestic violence incidents per year.

We have the highest number of alcohol-related deaths and injuries in the nation. The volume of alcohol consumed on average per person in the Northern Territory is among the highest in the world, with one liquor licence for every 353 adult Territorians. It is a disgrace.

For too long, our community has suffered due to necessary action not being taken to stop alcohol-fuelled violence and harm. It is something that all members have witnessed in their electorates, as have our families, our loved ones—children, partners, cousins, aunties and uncles.

This is my sixth year in parliament and I have spoken too many times in this Chamber about how alcohol affects our communities, in particular the people of Johnston, whom I am fortunate to represent. Millner, Moil, Jingili, parts of Alawa—not a week goes by that I do not get a complaint through my electorate office, or directly to me, when people come to us with an incident where they have seen or experienced something. It seriously has to stop. We have to stop talking about it in the Chamber. We have to get to work and do something. That is what we are trying to do.

One of the things that struck me when we looked at the Riley review was the profound and cascading negative effect of alcohol abuse on so many people. To quote Justice Riley:

*It is well recognised that the impact of alcohol misuse is not just upon the individual, it extends to their family, friends and acquaintances and to the whole of the community in which that person resides.*

So many of the entrenched problems of our community—kids going into care or detention, or ending up as adults in gaol—can be traced back to alcohol abuse by the person or their parents. I have also learned from my mum, an Aboriginal health practitioner for many years, about the profound damage of alcohol abuse. Alcohol abuse can and has created a cycle of violence and despair in the lives of too many members of my family and my extended family and friends.

It has to end. We have to change behaviours, expectations and the story. The path to a safer community is a long one. It is a tough journey, but it is one this government has shown it is prepared to embark on.

This is the first government in the Territory’s history to step up and make the hard decisions to fight the plague of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. It is important that when we talk about this floor price legislation, we talk about it from that perspective. We have repeatedly seen that no federal government will implement a volumetric tax on alcohol. The federal government knows, as do we and the health experts, that the alcohol tax system is a problem with higher alcohol content—not necessarily leading to products with higher prices.

Faced with this problem being ignored, we have taken action. We are throwing everything at the alcohol abuse problem. The Territory can no longer afford wine being cheaper than bottled water. We have already brought back the Banned Drinker Register, which, as of June 2018, has nearly 3500 individuals on it with active bans. We have put a moratorium on all new takeaway liquor licences. We have put in place an independent Liquor Commission and backed it by creating a strong public and community interest test in the Liquor Act.

We are implementing 186 recommendations in full and 33 recommendations in principle from the Riley review. Importantly, we now have a floor price being implemented through this legislation that we are debating today. It is a brave government. We need to make sure we are governing and developing policies for Territorians.

Territorians want and deserve safer communities. They expect their government to listen to them and produce evidence-based policy. This legislation delivers for all Territorians. The important thing about this floor price is that it will not put up the price of all alcohol. That is simply not how it works. What it will do is put up the price of certain higher alcohol content products that are the risky ones causing problems in our streets and communities.

The main thing affected will be cheap wine, such as cask wine, or bottles that sell for under $10. The floor price will not affect everyday people who like to have a beer or two. The floor price is not a tax. Rather, the floor price will affect problem drinkers or at-risk people. It aims to reduce the amount of grog they consume by sending a price signal.
It is true that the Northern Territory will be the first jurisdiction in Australia to implement a floor price. We should be proud of that. That does not call into question the evidence behind this policy. It shows there has been a lack of political will from governments to take the necessary strong actions. On that point, it is worth quoting from the Riley review, which assessed the research and evidence and found that:

*Research reveals that the heaviest consumers of alcohol, and those most at risk of harm, disproportionately rely upon the cheapest alcohol ... any increase in price will reduce consumption and consequently alcohol-related harm. Further, research reveals that young people are particularly sensitive to the price of alcohol and it may be expected that with a price increase dangerous consumption will be reduced for those people. Interestingly, other research has indicated that harmful drinkers are more price sensitive than moderate drinkers.*

As a father of three boys, two of them teenagers, I am fully aware of what the price of alcohol means to how much they consume at some stage. It is important that we understand, respect and acknowledge that.

The Riley review shows that there is significant evidence that a minimum price on alcohol will reduce alcohol consumption and the burden of diseases and injury in the wider community.

The Riley review found that a floor price will reduce consumption for hazardous and harmful drinkers, as these are the drinkers who favour the cheapest alcohol. Importantly, a policy mechanism we have seen in other places will be a first for Australia. It is seen in a number of Canadian provinces, for example, which other members have mentioned. In Scotland a floor price was implemented only this year.

One thing I specifically recommend in this legislation, which distinguishes it from those earlier examples, is that clear and detailed attention has been paid to ensuring the floor price will not be undermined by alcohol that comes into the Territory from interstate. In particular, with the advent of internet sales and an increasing number of consumers purchasing online, the application of the floor price to those sales is a real strength of this regulation.

This legislation does a good job in creating a level playing field for local and interstate retailers. It applies equally to Territory retailers and interstate retailers who are selling alcohol in the Northern Territory. All retailers will have to conform to the floor price regime. If they do not, there is an option for significant penalties. Selling or offering to sell liquor below the floor price, including through discounting or artificial pricing arrangements, will be a criminal offence with the same penalty as the offence of a general breach of a liquor licence. It is also an option for their regulator to impose stricter licensing conditions to prevent any retailer from trying to undermine the floor price through strategies like bundling products together to artificially reduce the cost of alcohol.

To assist in achieving this goal the legislation mandates new requirements of licensees to keep data in order to evaluate the impact of the floor price on industry, consumers and alcohol-related harm.

Importantly, this legislation will also crack down on grog runners and sly groggers, people who not only undermine alcohol policies but are directly responsible for causing immense damage to our community. The penalty for secondary supply is being tripled. The maximum penalty is almost a $50 000 fine or up to three years in gaol. This change shows loud and clear that this government is tough on secondary supply.

There are no excuses. If you are a grog runner or a sly grogger, we are giving police the power to go after you and stop you from the harm you are causing in our communities. We have too much alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour in all communities across the Northern Territory.

As a government we are delivering evidence-based policy to drive intergenerational change in the Territory’s relationship with alcohol. Today’s legislation is just another important milestone on the path of progress. We have implemented important measures since the beginning of our government, and we will continue to deliver real change for Territorians to ensure our communities are safer.

I commend the Attorney-General for implementing this important legislation. We hope, and we know, we will see changed lives from this policy. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

*Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families):* Madam Speaker, I support the amendments to the liquor legislation to introduce a minimum price on alcohol. Every Territorian has the right to live in a safe community and to work, play and conduct business without fear of violence or antisocial behaviour that arises from the irresponsible consumption of alcohol.
I have lived in the Territory for 15 years. This debate has been extensive within our community, particularly in Alice Springs. It is about how we manage the impacts of alcohol-related harm within our community. I am proud to be part of a government that is moving past debate and towards meaningful evidence-based action today.

This debate is about stopping the talk about problems, stopping the finger-pointing, and getting on and making systemic changes that will have an impact on the safety and wellbeing of our whole community.

The cost of alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory is far too high. Whilst these figures have been talked about a lot today, I still cannot get past the fact when we put all of the costs together—police work, health, corrections, child protection—we have an estimated cost of $4197 per person, compared to $943 nationally. That is an outrageous figure. That is why this bill is so important; it is about making sure we have a sustainable Territory moving forward.

We have all spent a lot of time talking about these issues, and today’s action, making that meaningful change, will have huge impacts on the future of the Territory.

I commend the Attorney-General for her approach on this very difficult issue. Too many governments have been too afraid to take action. The Attorney-General has shown incredible leadership in this area, making sure we take a comprehensive and tough approach to tackling alcohol-related harm. We are not being simplistic and sloganistic about it, but taking a comprehensive approach with a range of measures, not just one thing.

We have seen evidence today that it is very easy to criticise and throw negativity across the Chamber. We are taking action that will have impacts on not just one thing but many things.

In Alice Springs there has been a long conversation regarding alcohol-related harm and battling the impacts of alcohol abuse on a very small town over a very long time. In Central Australia we have some of the highest alcohol consumption levels in the country. The recent crime stats show that 65% of assaults in Alice Springs are alcohol related, and that is higher than the average in the rest of the NT, which, as a whole, is 56%. It continues a long-term trend where the percentage of alcohol-related assaults in Alice Springs is much higher than the Territory as a whole.

The impacts of alcohol on Alice Springs have been profound over a long period of time. As a government we are determined to turn this around. Reducing alcohol-related harm is a complex problem with no silver bullets and no single answer. That is why this government is developing a full suite of actions to address alcohol-related harm. However, we need to be clear that increasing the price is recognised internationally as being one of the 10 most effective measures for reducing alcohol-related harm and is a key recommendation of the Riley review.

I noted with interest the comments by the Member for Drysdale about her son’s experience in Norway. If we can influence teenagers’ drinking patterns—as also mentioned by the Member for Johnston regarding his teenage sons—and not get them into a habit of heavy drinking as adults, we can have a significant impact on their health outcomes later on, and in other areas such as domestic and family violence, sexual violence and a range of other related harms. The impacts on our community will be significantly reduced.

The conversation about alcohol has been alive in the Northern Territory for a very long time. In the past we have been trailblazers in regard to alcohol reform policy. Under the highly successful Living With Alcohol Program, from 1991 to 2000, the Territory government of the day introduced a tax increase of 5c on a standard drink containing more than 3% alcohol. From 1995 an additional levy was placed on wine casks. Funding raised was invested back into harm minimisation programs, which is sensible. We want to make sure any money raised is invested where possible, but these levies had the effect of increasing the price of all alcohol other than light beer, further increasing the cost of cask wine relative to all other alcoholic drinks.

This resulted in a significant decrease in alcohol consumption of 18% over the nine years of the program, and a switch of purchase patterns for light beer from 1% to 30% of the market share. It also resulted in a 30% reduction in alcohol-related fatal accidents and a 31% reduction in alcohol-related deaths. That is from a very good piece of research done by Curtin University in 1999. We can say very clearly that the evidence base on the impact of costing has been driven from the Territory’s experience in that period, when we saw dramatic reductions in alcohol-related harm by a pricing measure.

It is not as if we have not done this before. This is about the Territory reclaiming its status as an innovative jurisdiction that is dealing with its problems head on in a way that works.
Unfortunately, that levy was suspended due to a High Court decision declaring it unconstitutional on the basis that only the Commonwealth Government can set a tax on alcohol. This is yet another example that the answer to the problems in the Territory will not be found in a court down south, being argued by fancy down-south lawyers. Let us face it, we have had a bit of that lately. We tend to experience that a bit in my portfolio. The answers to the Territory’s problems have to come from the Territory community and the lived experience within the Territory.

From that research we have a very clear example of where a price mechanism was put in place. It had an impact and when it was taken away, in the 12 months following the lifting of the levy, consumption increased again. That is why this legislation is so important. It is moving from debate to action.

Today the Territory will again be a leader, being the first jurisdiction in Australia to introduce a floor price on alcohol. This is a very important day because we are taking responsibility for and looking clearly at our problems and coming up with a solution. Australia is also one of the few countries in the world that has introduced a floor price. The others are Canada, Scotland and, to a limited degree, Eastern European countries. In Canada, floor pricing was introduced in the 1990s with research showing significant reductions in pure alcohol consumption. A 10% increase in price in one province resulted in an 8.4% reduction in consumption and, two years later, a 9% reduction in chronic alcohol-attributed admissions to hospital, and a staggering 31.7% in wholly alcohol-attributed deaths.

That is extraordinary, but it also reflects the figure in the Northern Territory, which was a 31% reduction in alcohol-related deaths in the 1990s. We know this has an impact. The research is clear. Evidence from around the world shows that this will have an impact. I am very proud to be a part of a government that is evidence based in making decisions on what works in the Territory, but also making sure we have the safety and wellbeing of Territorians squarely in the middle of that decision-making.

As someone from Alice Springs, I acknowledge the work of the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and the People’s Alcohol Action Coalition, which have lobbied extensively on this issue and have been leaders in making sure the evidence base is clearly communicated to the community and the government about the impacts of alcohol in our community.

We have health experts drive this conversation, as well as people involved in the youth justice and criminal areas who, on a day-to-day basis, are seeing the impacts of alcohol misuse, abuse and dependency. Professionals see the impact of this to such an extent that they are driven to speak out the way the People’s Alcohol Action Coalition has over many years. It has been lobbying for over 15 years on these issues and has been consistent in its approach. I hope its members are reflecting on the impact their work has had on the Northern Territory, because they have been relentless in their advocacy and are focused on the outcome. I hope they are able to see that this government has listened to them and is acting on their advice. I do not think we would have the political will to do what we are doing without the continued advocacy from the community on the impacts of alcohol on us all.

I congratulate them. We can make the big changes. When you are on the front line of advocacy it can feel like no one is listening. When you come up, again and again, against governments that have not been willing to make the evidence-based changes—I hope they are feeling a sense of achievement today, with a government that has listened and is acting.

PAAC established a trial of a voluntary floor price amongst a group of supermarkets in Alice Springs. That was quite a step forward. Businesses acknowledge the role they play with regard to this issue and they are willing to support collective action. Accord in Alice Springs has been a very powerful thing in acknowledging businesses in a small community. They realise the impact their product has on our community. That took a great deal of leadership. The Chamber of Commerce was involved, as were a range of others. I acknowledge them.

The Riley report acknowledged the contribution these groups have made in providing evidence and a potential model for minimum pricing in the NT.

Minimum pricing works by placing a minimum price per standard drink. In some places, bottles of cheap wine can be bought at a lower price than a bottle of water, which is outrageous. It must be stopped. We cannot have a situation where alcohol is that cheap.

Despite the recommendations from many reviews and lobbying from states and territories, the Australian Government has not moved to a volumetric tax. The current system taxes wine on the basis of value and
actively contributes to creating alcohol-related harms through providing a cost incentive for a number of wine producers to create cleanskins, or high-volume, low-value cask wine.

In Central Australia there are very low-cost products. We see the bottles of those products in the community. Some of the behaviour of companies seems predatory. The evidence shows that these products are of high risk for people who are alcohol dependent. It is also an access point for young people to purchase these points.

The Member for Johnston’s point is well made. Young people often do not have access to large amounts of money. The cheaper the product, the more they can buy. That is also true for people who are alcohol dependent, so this really does impact them.

In recent years, some outlets in Alice Springs as well as Tennant Creek have been selling low-cost cleanskins in plastic bottles for only $4 or $5 for a 750 millilitre bottle. The impacts on our community of Alice Springs have been significant. In the past you would know if there was a particularly cheap product available in one of the outlets because we would see a rise in admissions to the women’s shelter, the hospital and in police work. You could track that very clearly.

The new minimum floor price of $1.30 per standard drink would see 750 millilitre bottles of wine selling for no less than $10 or $12. This would mean a much reduced buying power for the same level of alcohol consumption. Unlike some other alcohol measures, floor pricing only impacts on those who purchase low-cost, high-volume alcohol. That is an important point. This mechanism is not about impacting someone who is drinking responsibly or the person who buys a good bottle of wine on a Friday night to go with dinner.

This is about changing the behaviour of people whose alcohol consumption is risky, harmful and has impacts on the community. It will also impact the heaviest consumers of alcohol. They disproportionately rely on the cheapest alcohol products. Young people also tend to buy low-cost alcohol products, leading to high-risk and violent behaviour. Minimum pricing will not impact on the majority of responsible drinkers as it only targets low-cost alcohol products.

Evidence from supply measures introduced under previous Labor governments show that banning or reducing access to low-cost, high-volume products, such as cask wine or flagons of fortified wine, significantly reduces alcohol-related harm. From 2006 to 2008 the NT Labor government introduced the supply plans in every regional centre outside Darwin. Central to all of these was limiting access to problem products, such as cask wine and fortified wine. This resulted in significant reductions in pure alcohol consumption levels in the first few years after their introduction. For example, in 2006, there was a reduction of 19% in pure alcohol consumption in Alice Springs. In Nhulunbuy, in 2008, there was a reduction of 22% in pure alcohol consumption, and in Katherine, a reduction of 12%.

It also resulted in reductions in other alcohol-related harms such as large reductions in antisocial behaviour, the number of aggravated assaults and presentations to hospitals for alcohol-related conditions. I was working in the emergency department in Alice Springs at that time, and the almost instant reduction in the amount of presentations was stunning to those of us on the floor. I was looking at the alcohol presentations around that time. It had a significant impact on people’s lives and their health. In particular, fortified wine had a significant impact on some of the presentations of people within the emergency department.

Some of the doctors I worked in the emergency department with are still working there. Where we put in long-term, systemic measures to address alcohol consumption and availability, we will have an impact on the frontline staff in our emergency departments, police and ancillary services. But, most importantly, we will have an impact on the lives of people who are alcohol dependent, making sure they have the best possible health outcomes.

I will also talk about the enforcement and its impact on retailers. While the implementation of a new floor price system will incur some costs for retail in introducing administrative systems that can collect data and calculate price, these will be compensated by increasing income on sales through minimum pricing.

This new system will also enable data on drinking patterns to be collected to inform future alcohol management approaches and the effectiveness of existing alcohol measures. It will be a very important step forward. This single measure will not make all the changes we need to make within our community. We need to make sure we are gathering the data so our next steps can be informed by as much evidence as possible. That is a very smart way of dealing with the issues and measuring the success of what we are doing. We need to plan for any further changes we may need to make in the future in regard to policy levers, and to make sure we are getting the best possible health and community safety outcomes for Territorians.
All retailers will need to abide by minimum pricing, including takeaway and on-premises, as well as online and interstate alcohol suppliers. That is a very important point because it is ensuring that there are no loopholes by which people can get around the system. There is a common conversation in Alice Springs about the amount of alcohol that goes through the post office from down south orders. This will impact them as well, so we are ensuring that there is no loophole people can get around. Substantial penalties will be introduced for those trading without a Northern Territory licence and not abiding by the new pricing system.

We are serious about reducing alcohol-related harm. Since coming to government we have introduced an improved Banned Drinker Register, a moratorium on takeaway liquor licences in the Northern Territory, an independent Liquor Commission, a community impact statement for all new licence applications and clear licensing decisions. This will ensure the community has a voice in decisions about alcohol supply and liquor licences, and that issues of community harm are taken into account.

That is very important reform. This is about making sure there is acknowledgement that things are different in Alice Springs than they are in Palmerston or Darwin. They are very different in Nhulunbuy. We know the Territory is a big and diverse place and communities have different issues in slightly different ways. Whilst alcohol is an issue for the whole of the Territory and we need to have broad Territory-wide policies, we also need to make sure individual communities have a say, because communities know where that harm is happening.

If a new takeaway licence is granted to that store, they know what the roll-on impacts for that licence will be. It may not be obvious to someone in Darwin making the decision. The people of Alice Springs will immediately say, ‘If you do that, this will be the direct impact’. That is why we have that process where there is not just one person making that decision; there is a commission that has multiple members with a wide range of experiences and who are from across the Territory. They bring a breadth of experience to that role. We also have the ability for the community to raise their concerns to the commission and have them considered as part of that decision-making process. This is about ensuring the whole community has a say on these issues that significantly impact us.

We also have an invigorated POSI scheme, which is very important in Alice Springs. Through legislating POSIs for the first time and putting 75 new auxiliary police positions in place—thus getting police back on the beat to do frontline police work. I am very proud to be part of a government that rolled out the first 18 POSIs in Alice Springs. As a government, we acknowledge that Alice Springs has some specific concerns. We have made sure that, for the first time ever, new police in Alice Springs are training in Alice Springs. I am very proud to be part of a government which had the first 30 police trained specifically for Alice Springs conditions.

We also have the first squad of police auxiliaries commencing active duty in Alice Springs today, and that is very important.

Mr SIEVERS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move an extension of time for the member to complete her remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Ms WAKEFIELD: This is a really important step forward. One of the issues was that we had a very badly planned policy under the previous government, as we did under so many other circumstances. It set up a program and did not fund or plan for it. It did not work with police about the best use of their resources.

That has had significant flow-on impacts. This government has come up with a workable solution that is properly budgeted. We have increased the police budget to manage this increased service delivery. This is an important part of our commitment to deliver the 120 officers the CLP failed to deliver, but also ensuring the auxiliaries do the work that supports the police to do their highly specialist frontline work.

I find it quite surprising that for the first time in the NT we have a specialist alcohol police squad. Considering the harm that alcohol does, it is a great initiative. The Police Commissioner is a great supporter of being very clear that as a drug, alcohol has significant impacts on us as a community.

This is made up of 12 police to investigate and prevent secondary supply, as well as three prosecutors to focus on licensing breach prosecution. That is a really important addition—prosecutors making sure that police are not only gathering the evidence, but that it is followed through. Having prosecutors means the grog runners, the people who are acting unethically and breaching their licensing conditions, are put on notice. Not only will we investigate but we will prosecute these breaches.
We have three prosecutors coming on board, and we need to make sure that having an alcohol licence is a significant responsibility. When people are not living up to their responsibilities, there are consequences for that behaviour. That is what we are doing by having the specialist squad.

We also need the provision of increased powers to the Police Commissioner to suspend a liquor licence for up to 48 hours where liquor outlets continually flout the law and where there are threats to public safety. We know that powers have been put into effect in Alice Springs. That was a decision the Police Commissioner took very seriously, and he took the right action at the right time. Where there is irresponsible action, the impacts and the flow-through to the community is significant.

There are areas in Alice Springs linked to alcohol supply where women are unsafe, there is an increase in crime and police are managing the hot spots, and there is direct link between the hot spots and the supply of alcohol. We need to be using the evidence base. We know where they are in Alice Springs and we need to be acting. We saw those powers used to good effect and the Chief Minister was clear in saying that everybody needs to be put on notice. We are serious about acting, not just talking or pointing fingers. We are resourcing our police force and courts to act when they need to.

There have also been increased penalties and measures to tackle secondary supply, including 10 CCTV cameras outside bottle shops and other hot spots to catch people involved in secondary supply. This government is serious about reducing alcohol-related harms.

As Minister for Territory Families, the impacts of alcohol misuse, abuse and dependence impact on every part of my portfolio. Alcohol places children at risk. It is a key risk factor for children to enter the child protection system and for young people to end up in the justice system, homeless or in a cycle of crime, often leading into a lifelong cycle of alcohol abuse. The intergenerational impacts of alcohol misuse in our community cannot be underestimated.

Alcohol contributes to the level of serious bodily harm and the number of deaths of victims of domestic and family violence. There is strong evidence and data showing that harm is significantly increased when the offender or the offender and victim are intoxicated. There is evidence from around the world. Aggravated assaults are less likely to happen when alcohol measures are in place, such as minimum pricing, which limit access to high-volume alcohol products. There is a direct link and we need to continue to act on that.

The data from the Northern Territory, from our towns and communities, tells a horrendous story. The cost of alcohol-related harm is far too high and this is why we need to take strong action to reduce alcohol-related harms and make the amendments to introduce floor pricing. Those of us who have worked on the front line, such as the emergency department, like me—I cannot begin to tell you the impact of the harms related to alcohol that frontline workers see on a daily basis. I hope those frontline workers also see that it is about supporting them in their work.

The impact of alcohol is significant and we need to do better. I am very proud to be part of a government that is acting, not just talking, and doing a range of things to ensure we have the best possible Northern Territory to live in.

This is one of our big challenges. We are clearly looking it in the face. We are taking strong action. This is part of our package of work to make sure the Northern Territory has not only a strong and bright future, which we know it has, but that our kids see a place for themselves, that there is a future for them beyond a cycle of drinking and dysfunction, and that we have a strong and healthy community that is able to get the best out of the wonderful place we live in.

When we talk about investing in and selling the positive messages of the Northern Territory and the positive story that we all know—we are doing that. We are taking action on the issues we are facing. I am proud to be part of a government which is doing that.

Ms UIBO (Education): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill. The bill is a further demonstration of the Gunner Labor government’s genuine commitment to reduce alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory.

It is another strong sign of our intention to act, even when it may prove to be a difficult or unpopular decision. There are no magic fixes in the policy area surrounding alcohol. We need a suite of measures to help curb problem drinking and substantially lessen antisocial behaviour across the Territory. Importantly, this legislation establishes a floor price, which sets a minimum price per standard drink at which alcohol can be sold in the Northern Territory.
The establishment of a floor price is a major recommendation of the government-commissioned Riley review, the broadest review of alcohol policy in the Territory’s history. I thank former Chief Justice Trevor Riley, who chaired the panel; and the members, Professor Richard Matthews, Mr Denys Stedman, and Ms Trish Angus, for their efforts in creating this comprehensive policy review.

Territorians were well-informed during the lead-up to the last election that the Gunner Labor government would use evidence-based approaches to tackle alcohol-related harm in the Territory. Managing excessive and poorly-controlled alcohol consumption is one of the major social challenges facing the Territory. Our government came to Territorians with a clear plan to responsibly address the issue. We commissioned the Riley review, and a significant number of public discussions and meetings were held across the Territory, which reviewed more than 138 submissions.

Following this extensive information and evidence-gathering and analysis, the Riley review was handed to the government in October 2017. Our government offered in-principle support to implement all but one of the report’s 220 recommendations. We did not support the total ban of takeaway alcohol on a Sunday. Government decided that the current provisions in place around that policy position were adequate.

In our detailed response to the Riley review, we decided to re-establish an independent Liquor Commission, which is chaired by Mr Richard Coates. We agreed to a community impact test for significant liquor licensing decisions; extended and expanded a moratorium on all new takeaway liquor licences; established a unit within the Department of the Chief Minister, the Alcohol Review Implementation Team; and established an industry reference group.

Earlier today, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the fact that all Territorians are affected in some way, shape or form by alcohol-related harm or violence. A floor price seeks to fix a market and regulatory failure.

As the minister said in her second reading speech:

… the essential purpose of creating a floor price is to correct market and regulatory failure. Alcohol is taxed and therefore priced in an environment where higher alcohol content does not necessarily lead to products with higher prices. The solution to that issue would be for the federal government to implement a volumetric tax on alcohol. Only the federal government has the power to implement such a tax because of the constitutional restrictions concerning excise.

A volumetric tax is something we have lobbied for … we are faced with the reality that no federal government will put a volumetric tax in place. That has left our government with the hard decision—the only responsible action is to introduce a floor price for the Territory.

One of the problems is that it is relatively cheap to produce wine with a high alcohol content. Mass-produced, cheap wine is sold at a relatively low price compared to other types of alcohol. You only have to look around at the areas where problem drinkers congregate, and see the mass-produced, plastic wine bottles, to know there is a problem.

Drinking alcohol is an enjoyable social activity for many Territorians and visitors to the Territory who safely and sensibly drink alcohol in moderation. I acknowledge that many retailers provide safe drinking environments and show levels of social responsibility that go beyond the point of sale. At the same time, the Territory faces high levels of harmful drinking well beyond any other state or Territory.

It is already known that the volume of alcohol consumed on average, per person in the Territory is among the highest in the world. That is alarming considering the Territory population is a mere 250 000 people. It is shocking to know the Territory has such high levels of alcohol consumption per capita compared to the rest of the globe.

Heavy drinking increases the burden on families and our communities, who are left to deal with the dysfunction and health issues that so commonly follow. The Member for Braitling spoke about some of the shocking firsthand experiences she had in the emergency department. Many Territorians deal with these issues, day-in and day-out, as part of their everyday workload.

We all have stories from our electorates about the harm alcohol causes. It also makes it more difficult for communities and families to be fully functional and to keep young people out of the justice system. I acknowledge the Attorney-General’s office for providing the following figures.
About 3.9% of deaths nation-wide are caused by alcohol, but in the Northern Territory that figure rises to 12%. Territorians lose years of their life due to alcohol, and are significantly more likely to spend the time they have living with a disability due to alcohol. These figures, based on rigorous studies, include harm from alcohol-related injuries and disease.

There are big consequences for the Territory. This creates a higher level of burden on our health resources. It drives up violence, particularly domestic and family violence. A large proportion of police time and resources are spent trying to keep the community safe from the havoc wreaked by harmful levels of alcohol consumption in our communities.

Where the total cost of alcohol-related harm has been estimated at approximately $943 per Australian adult, the equivalent in the Territory is estimated to be $4197. That is a cost to the taxpayer. It is unacceptable that it is $943 per Australian adult interstate, yet in the Territory, it cost taxpayers $4197. These are terribly concerning numbers. When we are confronted by numbers like this, we know we have to act. That is exactly what the Labor government is doing.

This bill will require retailers who sell alcohol in the Territory, or for delivery to the Territory, to ensure liquor products are sold for no less than $1.30 per standard drink. A standard drink is a technical term that is defined by the bill. It is consistent with the Australian food and beverage industry standards. It means:

… the volume of a liquor product that contains 10 g of ethyl alcohol when measured at 20°C.

The change in pricing will not affect most products. However, it will impact on products aimed at those who cause harm. It means that alcohol products that are currently $1.30 or more per unit will not be impacted. Most liquor products will not be affected by these new rules because they are already priced above the minimum floor price.

The advice the Attorney-General received is that this will affect approximately 25 products in the Darwin area and 28 products in the Alice Springs region. These products are aimed at our most vulnerable community members who face real difficulties. Only the cheapest alcohol products will be affected, which is primarily the cheapest wine and fortified wine.

I am advised that a standard bottle of at least 13% alcohol white wine will be about $9 a bottle and red wine will be a little above $10 a bottle. A product that is above that—a $12 bottle of wine—will not be impacted.

I will refer directly the minister's second reading speech. I will quote her in some detail regarding the new Part 9A:

In keeping with the Riley review's recommendations, the bill requires that the floor price be reviewed every three years and provides the floor price be indexed as prescribed by regulation. The bill inserts a new Part 9A into the Liquor Act. This Part sets out the technical rules used to calculate the floor price.

The key points to note about these rules are:

- complying with the floor price is to be an automatic condition of all licences to sell liquor in the Northern Territory
- liquor products may not be offered or sold for a price that is below the floor price, which is $1.30 per standard drink
- liquor retailers and regulators will be able to rely on standard labelling on alcoholic beverages—which is on all liquor products—to determine the number of standard drinks in the product
- it is not permitted to sell liquor products for less than the floor price by means of giving discounts or refunds
- selling or offering liquor below the floor price will be a criminal offence with the same penalty as the offence of a general breach of liquor licence
- the floor price applies to sales from licensees to consumers, known as retail sales, but not to purchases where the licensees obtain liquor from wholesalers
• the floor price will not apply to liquor that is purchased duty free

• liquor may be sold as part of a single transaction where liquor and non-liquor products are bundled together; however, it is expected that licensees will still price liquor sold with non-liquor products above the floor price

• licensees who attempt to use bundling to undermine the objectives of the floor price may find themselves subject to stricter licensing conditions to prevent this behaviour

• local and interstate businesses that sell retail liquor in to the Territory will be required to comply with the floor price

• interstate retailers that wish to sell liquor in to the Territory will be required to have a Territory licence

• there will be new requirements on licensees to keep data to evaluate the impact of floor price on industry, consumers and alcohol-related harm.

The government recognises that implementing the floor price and collecting data will be an increased administrative burden on licensees, who will also require upgraded systems and processes to comply. The minister and her agency have been working hard, consulting with the industry and the many hard-working Territorians who do the right thing.

While the introduction of the floor price is focused on getting people to purchase less alcohol and lower-alcohol products, the increased price per product will mean retailers, in some instances, will earn slightly more from particular products.

The data we collect will be used to provide a clearer picture of the impact of alcohol harm reduction policies and help identify the drivers that increase and decrease alcohol consumption in the Territory. This is vital information that will help the Territory improve alcohol policy into the future.

The Riley review recommended that the Northern Territory engages in a comprehensive research and data collection program that collects and evaluates the impact of interventions and policies. The data collection regulations that will be developed under this bill will provide critical datasets for these evaluations.

To ensure the floor price is enforced, regulators will be given evidence-gathering powers. This information will be used by police as part of investigations, for example to seek appropriate search warrants. The penalties and powers make it clear that all retailers must obtain a licence and sell in accordance with the floor price if they intend to sell alcohol in the Territory.

I echo comments made by some of my parliamentary colleagues in congratulating the first graduated police auxiliary liquor inspectors yesterday. The work they will be embarking on is critical. It will support the Gunner Labor government’s commitments to make sure we have safe communities and that alcohol does not consume our communities and have a negative impact on them.

It is fantastic that we have such a diverse range of people who have gone through this training and graduated to become police auxiliary liquor inspectors, provide an important service and be recognised in the community. This will alleviate the pressure on police in bottle shops and allow them to attend to the duties they have been trained for. It will support the ongoing work of implementing the recommendations of the Riley review.

It is fantastic that men and women have put up their hands for this very important role. I am looking forward to seeing some of the auxiliary police in my home town of Katherine. I am sure the Member for Katherine is also looking forward to this.

I am interested to see how other communities respond to the roll-out of these personnel. Having more police auxiliary liquor inspectors will be positive for the Territory, particularly in our regional centres. They are part of our communities. They live in and represent the communities they will be working in. They would not be doing that type of job if they did not care about the communities. I have so much respect for them and am looking forward to seeing more of those positions rolled out across the Territory as they graduate.

The bill provides for interstate-based suppliers that have obtained a licence through the regulator in their own state to obtain a newer licence for the purposes of selling alcohol in the Territory in a relatively simple process with minimal red tape. The licensee needs to provide a copy of their interstate licence to the Liquor
Commission. They are then deemed to have an interim Territory licence in the same terms as their interstate licence, but with an additional requirement to comply with the floor price conditions.

Sly grog is a problem in the Territory. Sly grog runners seek to exploit some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Territorians in our communities. Selling alcohol illegally causes extensive damage and harm in our communities. We have to do all we can to stop it. I have experienced and seen the dramatic impact and harsh reality of what happens when sly grog runners are in our communities, particularly when I lived in a dry community for four years. I saw the effects from sly grog being run into the community. The ridiculous amount of money people were paying the sly grog runners to bring grog into the community was alarming.

I am very proud our government is tackling this bit by bit. It is a long process. We will not be changing things overnight, but it is a step in the right direction. Territorians want to live in safe, happy and productive communities. We can all agree there is far too much alcohol-fuelled violence in the Territory. Part of our solution is contained in this bill. As I just mentioned, no single measure can solve the Territory’s alcohol problems overnight, but together we must use every measure that we possibly can to prevent what is unacceptable in the community.

I want to spend a few moments talking about alcohol management plans in remote communities, particularly some community-based solutions people have discussed in the Arnhem electorate. That includes the idea of capitalising on social clubs, having high standards if there is alcohol being served in communities and keeping community members and family members off the roads if they have consumed alcohol above the legal limit.

Small and large communities in the electorate are quite baffled at some of the reasons community-driven solutions are not being looked at. Unfortunately, it is related to the hold that the Commonwealth Government has on some of our Aboriginal communities. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you are very aware, with your electorate of Namatjira facing similar issues in regard to the restrictions and the reinforcement of the Commonwealth Government to take control of what has happened in the Northern Territory, particularly in Aboriginal communities.

Barunga community, as an example, has been vocal about options for safe drinking areas in their community. Just up the road, in Wugularr, the social club is run by community members and there are very strict rules and guidelines for people consuming alcohol in the community. It has been pushed and driven by community members in order to make it successful. What we need is local decision-making in our communities, whether they are urban, regional or remote.

There will be communities where the idea of having any alcohol will be a big no-no, and that is absolutely fine. One thing I have learned in my role as Member for Arnhem is to open up my mind and listen to conversations between people in the electorate and across different parts of the Territory, comparing what goes on in other communities and listening to people who are looking at locally-based solutions. There are some communities across the Territory with social clubs; there are a lot of them in Darwin. It is a place where workers who have clocked off can enjoy a drink socially, safely and sensibly. Often a good meal can be served and there might be a live band. There could be pool tables for entertainment, or a kids’ playground attached.

I opened my eyes to moving away from the historical sense that Aboriginal communities must be dry. If it is being driven by the local community it is worthwhile listening to. It cannot be successful without the support and initiation of a local community. Several places in my electorate are looking at this type of solution for their community. The majority of it is based on the fact family members, to be able to enjoy a drink, need to drive 45 minutes to Katherine or three hours to Mataranka—if you are at Ngukurr or Roper—to go to the closest pub or alcohol outlet.

Then there is the safety factor of returning to the community via roads if there is no sober Bob. That has changed the conversation in the electorate. People are looking at how we can keep our community and family members safe. If they enjoy a drink, how can we ensure it is sensible, regulated and not abused? That is one step that I will support my communities in where I can. It is tied up in the restrictions of the federal government. I believe the federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs has the ability and the power to make these adjustments and be flexible with the community guidelines. However, I understand he is not open to that at all. That is a real shame when we look at community-based solutions for the problems people live with day-in and day-out.

We have a federal minister who is a Northern Territory Senator. He refuses to be open to discussing some of these ideas with community members. That is a real shame.
In some of my research I looked at the United Nations. What has been done on an international level regarding consumption of alcohol and the processes—I found an article from 2011.

The harmful consumption of alcohol kills an estimated 2.5 million people across the world every year …

This is from the UN World Health Organization. They calculate that as nearly 4% of the world’s population.

An article from 2017 from www.iogt.org stated:

Alcohol kills 3.3 million people worldwide every year, representing 5.9% of all deaths.

In the seven years, that is a jump of over 1.7 million people …

Mr SIEVERS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time be granted to the member.

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: It is astounding that over seven years there has been an increase of over a million people who are dying from alcohol-related harm across the world. My mind is blown by that, considering it is more than the Territory’s population alone and is around 12% of the Australian population. They are very scary figures.

The IOGT website also looks at what the United Nations are doing in relation to alcohol harm minimisation across the globe. One of the points made in the article is that alcohol is a hindrance to achieving 13 of 17 sustainable development goals. The focus of the article is that alcohol leads to poverty.

In the Territory our most vulnerable and disadvantaged Territorians are often part of the high number of people in our community who are affected by alcohol-related harm or violence, and that is concerning. The steps we are taking as a government to try to reduce the harms on our Territory population are extremely important in making sure we have safe and happy communities.

The United Nations World Health Organization mentions that harmful alcohol use is increasing and affecting the younger generations and drinkers in developing countries. It was interesting to hear the two stories from my colleagues, the Members for Johnston and Drysdale, about the impact on the generation of my parents—who are both non-drinkers—and the next generation, such as my sister and me. We have grown up in a culture where drinking is acceptable and is something done in your youth, sometimes in excess. We have this open, binge-drinking culture that is accepted.

During my worldly travels in other western English speaking countries like the US, the western part of Canada and the UK, I have noticed that the binge drinking culture in Australia is quite similar. In the western European countries which are non-English speaking, the culture of drinking is still there but is a very different take on it. It is about having a meal with the family and drinking over a long period of time rather than drinking a lot over a short period of time.

I have made personal observations over the years on what is acceptable culturally in regard to alcohol consumption and what the impact is of alcohol consumption in that culture, society or community. Is it a positive, safe one where people look after each other and there is minimal harm, or is there harm in excess? That is the big question we need to ask ourselves. When we are looking at alcohol consumption, is it harmful or is it social and responsible?

The last quote I wanted to mention is from the UN website. It is about countries that endeavour to reduce the impact of alcohol-related harm and some of the measures they talk about, which will resonate with our government members:

The measures include taxation on alcohol to reduce harmful drinking, decreasing availability by reducing outlets licensed to sell alcohol, raising age limits for those buying and using alcohol, and enforcing effective measures to prevent driving under the influence of alcohol.

Unfortunately, it seems there are issues across the world in other countries as well as other parts of Australia, particularly here in the Territory. That is why this Labor government is taking steps and measures to try to alleviate, prevent and intervene in the impact that causes harm in communities in the Territory.
I acknowledge the opposition members for their bipartisan support of many measures we have discussed throughout this bill. It is so important that we work together in this Chamber to tackle the unacceptably high level of alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory.

The Attorney-General has further amendments for consideration in detail, which have been circulated to members of the Chamber. I look forward to working through and supporting these amendments with my parliamentary colleagues when we go through that process.

It is very important that we have the ongoing steps and measures from the Riley review, and the recommendations we are implementing, to ensure we have safe communities, safe individuals and support for those with alcohol addiction. There are measures for that, and we have a huge body of work across the various agencies. We are breaking down the silos in government to have cross-agency conversations for the benefit of the general population. We are doing this because we want Territorians to be safe and have their community’s best interests at heart, knowing there are many different ways to tackle alcohol-related harm and violence. This is just one measure.

I thank and commend the Attorney-General, her staff and the department for the large body of work. I also thank the other agencies’ staff for ensuring our shared visions for the government to support Territorians and reduce the impact on Territorians to alcohol-related harm.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will reiterate a few words, particularly from the Member for Arnhem. It is really good to see the two CLP members on board with this one. It is a surprise and a change. Given the national view on volumetric taxes, which I will talk about a little later, it is good that the Liberals bring themselves to the table and realise what is best for the Northern Territory.

This is a place where we all sit quietly. I often sit quietly, listening to everybody while they have their say. It is important to hear the diversity of opinions. That is why there are 25 of us. The diversity of views and experience is what makes us such a good team. The opportunity we have for difference of opinion is to talk about things here.

One comment earlier today really riled me. I am normally calm in here, but this really got my goat. I do not think it can be left unanswered today. I am really disappointed to see a particular member of this parliament putting their own interests ahead of their constituents, because none of us is here for that. It is an unusual situation for me to be in, to raise something I found disappointing. I cannot muster one ounce of sympathy for the Member for Araluen, who complained earlier today that she might not be able to buy her sherry for her trifle. It was a simple throwaway comment, but self-indulgent rubbish. I am an accomplished baker …

Ms Uibo: Award-winning!

Mrs WORDEN: Award-winning.

Honestly, contributing to a serious debate on alcohol and complaining that she does not have sherry for her trifle—and that at 9 pm she might need to rush out and the bottle shop might be closed. It is incredible. She clearly wants access to alcohol at any time she might wish and forgets about her constituents in Alice Springs. I am so glad she has her eye set on the big picture.

We are here for the big picture, not to think about our own self-interest—a bit of baking on a Sunday night or preparing for Christmas. For goodness sake, be organised. Get your ingredients early. Have a rustle through the cupboard and find something you can easily substitute for your sherry that is so important for your trifle.

She also stated the fact we are becoming a nanny state. This just proves how delusional the Member for Araluen is. She does not support our approaches or therefore, by default, the massive work from former Chief Justice Riley, but she continues to call for police on bottle shops. That is a nanny state. She is a hypocrite. It is appalling that someone is more worried about sherry for their trifle and police in front of bottle shops, people who have been trained to do a highly sophisticated job for community safety in the Northern Territory—she wants them stuck outside bottle shops so she can get sherry for her trifle at Christmas. That cannot be left unanswered.

Back to the notes I prepared earlier, I reiterate that it is great to see members of the CLP on board. I do not think anybody, other than the Member for Araluen, can criticise us for not moving forward on the
recommendations of the Riley review and getting things done. It was a great review. I heard the Member for Arafura talking about it. It was some really good work.

I picked up earlier that the Member for Nelson is disappointed it did not go to a scrutiny committee. I wholeheartedly agree with the Attorney-General. This is an evidence-based approach by experts—done over a long period of time—who talked directly with Territorians. We have had that conversation. People want us to take that step forward, keep moving and keep the momentum going. That is exactly what we are doing.

It was only in May this year that we talked about the point of sale interventions, and here we are again with another important piece of what I have regularly called the jigsaw puzzle. It is intended to change the face of alcohol and alcohol-related harm across the Northern Territory.

It is worth repeating, as other members have said before, that we are well aware of the harm alcohol is causing to many Territorians, not just vulnerable people but particularly the vulnerable. Our policies and approaches on this issue are consultative, clear and consistent.

Listening to the debate today made me think back to my experience with alcohol. I am on the record as no longer drinking since being elected to this role, but it does not mean I have not had my time. I was president of a men’s football club for four years, and on the board of Waratahs and around Buffalos in Nightcliff. I have seen the impact alcohol can have, even in the context of elite sportspeople who put their bodies on the line.

The Member for Port Darwin will agree with me. You can see the ravages of alcohol. I often run into people who have a lot of history with alcohol. The ravages, fights and damage at all those football clubs—the cost to clubs to repair their own facilities. I remember being at the Waratahs' brand-new facilities. Within a week there was significant damage to the toilets. That is not done by sober people.

I was associated with a club's celebrations of a grand final win where a cricket oval was burned. It took me weeks, if not months, as president to make good with the Northern Territory cricket people. Disgraceful behaviour through drunks in clubs—it brings out the stupid in people, I am not isolating people here; it also brings out the stupid in me. I think I am funny when I have been drinking. People tell me I am not.

It lowers people’s inhibitions. People do silly things that can even cost them their lives. Time and again we see families destroyed by a death. At the old Waratah Oval one of our island brothers put his hand through a window and cut an artery. He is so lucky to still be with us today. Lucky one of his fellow footballers had paramedic training and saved his life. It was frightening.

I have had to step over people every time the game was finished. Those people have had their lives damaged. They will never be the same; you can see it. I saw that gentleman recently and thought about how he is a walking miracle to be here.

Our social responsibility towards alcohol goes way beyond the sale of alcohol. We usually talk about social responsibility in here, but today’s legislation broaches the aspect of the sale. It addresses our concern that cheap and mass-produced alcohol products with high alcohol content are too often the drink of choice for Territorians suffering from alcohol addiction.

There is a wide range of media commentary on the introduction of minimum floor pricing, with the Territory being the first jurisdiction in Australia to have it put in place should this legislation be successful today. Someone had to do it, and this Gunner government is capable of doing it.

A lack of national volumetric tax to stop cheap retailing of high alcohol content drinks has left a vacuum. It can only be described as a gaping vacuum. When the state of play indicates this vacuum is continuing to cause terrible individual, family and community harm, alternatives such as this must be brought forward and implemented. Justice Riley and the people he worked with told us that through consultation with Territorians.

Should the federal government, whichever ilk, have the inclination towards a national volumetric tax then monies collected could be redistributed—much as the Living With Alcohol Program. It could be redistributed to state and territory governments for alcohol and drug program support and shelters for victims of domestic violence.

We can only hope this may happen in the future. My research has told me the federal government first considered a nation-wide floor price as early as 2011, and again in December 2017 following three years of consultation. It even released its own draft strategy aimed at reducing Australia’s alcohol consumption that included minimum floor pricing.
Sadly, as I said earlier, there has been no federal movement on this issue. The fact the Territory has the highest per capita alcohol consumption rate in Australia tells us we have to lead the way and find our own solutions, because our problems are not the same as the rest of Australia. They are unique to the Northern Territory; we know what they are. Riley told us and we are doing something about it.

Forty-four per cent of Territorians notably drink at risky levels at least once a month. Take non-drinkers out of the equation and statistics just get scarier. Territorians are dying on our roads; alcohol is destroying lives. We see young people experimenting around us constantly. We see their activities on Facebook.

There is any opportunity to celebrate with alcohol. We see the amount of police and ambulance resources that go into mopping up alcohol-related harm at race day. We see people drinking at wakes when young people have suicided due to poor mental health. We see these activities over and over. Front and centre is alcohol. ‘Let us celebrate the loss of life with alcohol.’ ‘Let us celebrate the birth of a child,’ and out comes the alcohol.

I have been working for the last couple of years with one of my local ladies. I have been advocating strongly—the Member for Braitling has a smile on her face because we have had some meaningful discussions about how this can work. It is an ongoing conversation I cannot let go, about how DV statistics can be featured just like road statistics. When another woman or child dies due to domestic and family violence, it should be on our media releases. We should be putting that out to be run in the media.

We can talk all we like about young people dying on our roads. Yes, it is important, but it is really important that the domestic violence figures—how many women in this country are killed due to domestic violence—are front and centre, and we should be reminding people so they are prepared to make a change.

The risks being taken by individuals result in accidents, domestic violence, children at risk of harm and loss of work productivity. How many of us have worked with people who consistently do not rock up on a Monday because they have had a big weekend? In some cases they ring in and make some excuse, but you know damn well they have been out drinking.

Our attitudes need to change. The list of increased health presentations, the damage, and the cost and resources goes on. Many of our local retailers have become too reliant on alcohol as an income. Attitudes need to change across the spectrum, from individual to families, groups and communities, not to mention the negative impact on our streets with tourism and commercial investment. We have to act. We have a mandate to act.

When I was on the City of Darwin council we were not responsible for alcohol sales. You could say that councils do not have any direct control over alcohol. The problem with Darwin Council is that alcohol-related activity is out of control in council spaces. There was an expectation that council would do something. We held a number of community meetings. We brought people together; we brought boffins up from interstate to tell us about their experiences with the lockout laws in Newcastle.

We got together and decided that with the lack of leadership under the former government regarding alcohol, the council had to step up and fill the void. We had some very exciting activities and worked productively with a number of government agencies, and we made some decisions. For a while it had a small impact, but unless you had everyone on board—the Northern Territory Government at the time was not on board—you could not make an indent.

During my time with the council we decided to champion those types of things because we had to; the harm was there. It is not a new problem as the Liberal members and some of the Independents would like us to think. This has been going on for a very long time.

I am pleased to see the recent police activities in shutting down some of our venues due to improper practice. I reiterate the Chief Minister’s and many of our other members’ comments about that because enforcement is equally as important as all the other measures we put in. I look forward to a review of that when we review the Liquor Act, because that is where the powers we have given to the police are working, and we need to find the best way to do that.

Reforms like this only work if you take the community with you. The Riley review provides evidence and strong recommendations, and the community is with us on this journey. They realise it is time for change in our attitudes and habits when it comes to alcohol. They also realise we have the political will to do it, probably for the first time in a long time for many of them.
I hear everyday Territorians talking about this issue. There is a growing community willingness and drive—even from people who are rusted-on drinkers—to make a change, stand with us and try new ideas and strategies. We may stumble along the way, but if we do not try we will not see a change. We are trying new ideas, strategies and policy alternatives, and the community rhetoric is growing. We talk about it regularly in the electorate office with people who pop in.

We are talking about it with the Salvation Army, which is doing amazing work right in the heart of Anula with some of our most vulnerable people. We should all have a walk in their shoes—the harm they see, the people they are picking up and the women and children they are helping. I have recently spoken to them about opportunities to help with short-term shelter for women and children who are fleeing domestic violence caused predominantly by alcohol abuse. They see people losing their homes. The Salvation Army is an extraordinary group of people in Anula.

We are trying to change the conversation and we are changing the tone. The cost of alcohol is exasperating and nobody could measure it to our community. It weighs on every Labor government member’s shoulders; all our discussions prove that. We inherited this landscape, but we are not prepared to walk about, put our blinkers on and keep walking past and stepping over people.

A minimum floor price of $1.30 will stop retailers selling cheap products to problem drinkers. I understand that some drinks are as low as 40c per standard drink. That is not helping us address the issues of alcohol addiction. Whilst the Banned Drinker Register is having the desired effect on alcohol availability, it needs minimum pricing to support it and create a robust system of restriction.

In Anula we had a pocket of problem people spilling into the park, but that is gone. The Banned Drinker Register, education for the local store owners, some pressure from other local store owners who wanted to see the troubles ended—I am pleased to say that since the Banned Drinker Register has been in place we have not seen any problems in that Anula park or around the shops.

I understand there is already a wealth of evidence that floor pricing can be an effective strategy to reduce alcohol-related harm. Areas of Canada have reduced alcohol-related hospital admissions and consumption through the introduction of a floor price. Areas of Europe are looking very closely at the benefits and we will likely see them move to introduce their own.

While minimum pricing disproportionately affects lower-income groups, we also know this group is, sadly, the most likely to have issues with alcohol consumption. It may prove to be a more effective and tailored policy than the Banned Drinker Register, which is more broadly targeted. Only time will tell.

The Territory has significant prior experience with adjustments to alcohol pricing, as the Member for Braitling mentioned before, with the former Living With Alcohol Program, which imposed a levy on drinks of over 3% alcohol content. That in turn was used to fund a range of preventative programs. Despite the controversy over its ultimate closure, evidence tells us this pricing intervention had a significant effect while in place. We need to repeat this intervention and continue to implement programs as we are doing today. They need to encourage people affected by alcohol to seek support and make a change in their lives and the lives of their families and the broader community.

Alcohol has never been more available and it is a key marketing strategy for most retailers. The sheer quantity of liquor licences in the Northern Territory makes this approach a real, clear recipe for disaster. I am told that young Territorians may be affected by this legislation. I offer no apology.

When I was younger and short of a dollar—as most of us have been; I do not think anybody here was born with a silver spoon and did not go through times when they were studying or working part-time and raising a family. My friends and I would invest in a cheap bottle, or two or three, of alcohol before setting out for an evening and then guzzle water all night. Most of us have done that. I ask people, where is the harm if you can only afford two bottles instead of three? I do not accept that it is a good enough reason to ignore the more pressing issues and take action to achieve outcomes within a bigger picture, one that the Member for Araluen simply does not get.

I pick up on the Member for Arnhem’s words about her family’s drinking culture. My family is European and I remember my parents offering me a very small glass of wine with a meal on a Sunday when I was as young as eight, when the family all sat down together. I remember my father—he is on his way to Brisbane today, so he will not hear me—heading off on boozy long lunches. When he came to Australia it was a whole new thing. He was used to trading in Europe, where alcohol was treated with some respect. It was treated as part
of culture and, generally, as part of a meal. Sometimes it was to celebrate great times in life, but certainly not to excess.

I was brought up with very little alcohol around me. My father might have been off drinking; those are stories for later. It formed my view of alcohol and it did not stop me from drinking as a teenager and sneaking it on the bus for the Year 12 camp and those sorts of things, nothing out of the ordinary. Most people would have stories of their own journey with alcohol. I certainly learned lessons about respect for alcohol; it is a whole different world to what we see now. It is really important that we keep contrasts about alcohol in our minds.

Early interventions such as this will likely have a longer-term positive impact, just as it did for me, on the drinking habits of young people. If they can see their government working positively for change, they will embrace change. The younger generation will grow up with nothing but a new setting. Will that not be an exciting time, when young people do not know or see what we face now? I can only see today as a positive. We are putting people and businesses on notice; we are resourcing this. As the Member for Braitling said, we are acting.

I am looking forward to seeing what the evidence tells us when this approach is evaluated. It is important. I am also looking forward to seeing the Territory’s Liquor Act overhauled, and reforming the way Territorians view alcohol and behave when it is too big a factor in their lives.

We are not targeting people or businesses who do the right thing. We are asking people to do something. We are not asking for something that is not in the community interest. People who do the wrong thing will be caught, and there will be consequences.

It is incumbent on each one of us to get behind these changes, not just for us but for our kids and their kids. It is important.

I support this next part of the jigsaw puzzle. I commend the Liquor Amendment (Minimum Pricing) Bill to the Assembly.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, in my last speech regarding alcohol I spoke of the harm it causes. It affects the economy, the health and wellbeing of families and children, and the harmonious functioning of our communities. I hear about it every day in my electorate from local residents; first responders, like police and paramedics; and people who want to see children and families prosper, like teachers and child protection workers.

Yet here we are, talking about alcohol and introducing another piece of legislation, as the Member for Sanderson pointed out. I am sick of talking about it. I have said before, inside and outside this Chamber, it is likely there are a number of people in the NT who are relieved I am not the minister responsible for anything related to alcohol. If I were, I would be banning alcohol until all the problems caused by, or exacerbated by, alcohol are sorted. When I say sorted, I am not only referring to the alcoholics but the retailers who seem to have difficulty accepting their responsibility with this issue.

We could make real inroads into reducing the trauma for families and communities across the Northern Territory. At times it feels like we are spinning our wheels in the mud. We do not have to look hard to see what the police think about alcohol.

Last week the Police Commissioner used his new powers under the Liquor Act to suspend trading at an outlet in Alice Springs and one in Tennant Creek for 48 hours for the purpose of improving community safety. In my electorate—the NT News reported this—there was a warning notice issued to one outlet.

What does it say when just two months after getting those powers, the commissioner has already used them twice, with potentially more to come? What does it say when the Director-General of Licensing sees fit to restrict takeaway sales for months at a time? It says what we all know. Alcohol is a major problem, and fiddling around the edges will never be successful.

Why are we not getting the message? I heard the Member for Araluen this morning, in the midst of her usual negative-nelly tirade, talking about the 2 pm opening hours and how inconvenient that is for some people. Let me tell you, there have been many times over many years when I would have been thankful that the bottle shop was not open, because that would have possibly meant a few hours of reprieve and relief from verbal and physical abuse related to alcohol—my husband at the time being an alcoholic.
I have often spoken of my childhood, the civil war in Timor and the impact on me, my family and friends. I have overcome much adversity and many challenges. I certainly have not lived a privileged life as per the descriptive of the word ‘privileged’, yet I do consider myself privileged and very fortunate when compared to so many others in my community.

I have lived with a man who was addicted to alcohol. He was abusive when he was drunk. I supported him as he worked through the many emotional and traumatic issues that tormented him, so much so that the only relief for him was to get drunk. While he was receiving support and counselling, so was I. But, here is the thing; he is now able to moderate his consumption of alcohol. He knows what his triggers are. He is doing fine. Whereas I, on the other hand, do not drink. I am not comfortable around drunk people and have developed many strategies and coping skills.

For example, I count the number of drinks people have when I am at an event. For me, two drinks is a safe number. In my mind, a third drink is the ‘gone to the bad side’ drink.

These are my own personal examples of the negative impacts alcohol has on some people in our communities.

Earlier today the Member for Blain referred to Dr Chris Burns and his statement in regard to alcohol. I have read Dr Burns’ statement, delivered in this Chamber on 28 October 2010. I quote from the statement:

“I fundamentally disagree with the position of the opposition which is to criminalise drunkenness. That is, essentially, what the opposition wants to do and that is a fundamental difference I have with the opposition. I agree with John Boffa and others; we need to understand the health and medical implications of this and not criminalise it.

Yes we need to be tough, and the government’s proposal to declare people habitual drunks is tough. It is tough to direct them into compulsory treatment, say they are on the banned drinker register and we will not allow them drink. There may be some in Australia who say that is paternalistic; I believe it is the right step for this government to take because it is such a large problem and has accelerated since the intervention. It is a counterproductive effect of the intervention.

Eight years later, here we are debating the same issues and discussing the same approaches.

On 29 June 2005, the newly elected Member for Arnhem, Malarndirri McCarthy, delivered her maiden speech in this House. She spoke of access to alcohol in communities in her electorate. She spoke of a new system, the permit system, that members of her communities agreed was the way to go to ensure responsible drinking.

I pick up on the Minister for Education’s comments—the current Member for Arnhem. She referenced some of the communities that are now dry communities, not by choice but by enforcement, a result of the 2007 intervention. Those communities have sought to have restrictions lifted, but as the Minister for Education stated, the applications are sitting on Senator Scullion’s desk.

When we talk about empowerment, self-determination and community local decision-making, it is difficult to talk about those things and not be cynical about it, because we have communities that are trying to get themselves back up and make decisions for themselves but are being impeded by things like dry community restrictions and applications sitting on a senator’s desk who has not shown any interest in empowering communities.

I support the Director-General of Licensing and the Police Commissioner exercising the powers they have now. I reference the minister’s second reading speech, her mention of the Riley review and government’s acceptance of all but one of its recommendations, that is, a total ban on the sale of takeaway alcohol on Sundays.

Surely we could have one day a week where takeaway alcohol is not for sale. The Director-General of Licensing seems to think it is a good idea in the case of Tennant Creek, as was seen recently, so why is it not a good idea for the rest of the population? People are smart enough to buy their supplies before stores close for Christmas or Good Friday, except the Member for Araluen, who is not able to plan ahead. If it is for the good of the community, should we not consider that?

I frequently wonder about the hypocrisy and double standards of our approaches to alcohol. Who exactly are these approaches aimed at? Why is it okay for a family to take a bottle of wine to the Nightcliff foreshore, but
it is not okay for another person to drink wine in the same park? Why are the people drinking on the streets of Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine or Tennant Creek treated any differently to those who stumble into the gutter outside a nightclub at 4 am and get into a fist fight? Why are the remote and regional towns any different from the northern suburbs? There is no difference other than us turning a blind eye to some of those scenarios because it is uncomfortable for us to really see what is going on. Let us be honest; the mighty dollar speaks much louder.

I am not a conspiracy theorist. I am far from it, but there seems to be one approach for the general population and a very different approach to our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Alcohol affects the whole community, even behind closed doors in nice houses, at good jobs, in private hospitals and fancy rehabilitation centres that cost a ridiculous amount of money. We should be wary of making alcohol policy based on race or a perceived issue with a particular race. This does no favours to anyone.

I have mentioned many times that I am a civil libertarian and, as such, legislating personal behaviours is something that does not sit well with me. This is exactly what we are doing with alcohol reforms; we are legislating personal behaviours. I delivered an adjournment on 15 March in which I talked about the need for people to take responsibility for themselves and their families. We have to support people to do that. I believe they understand their responsibilities, but we have to show support for people who are unable to control their addictive behaviours.

Personal responsibility is where the focus should lay, but even the most strident of civil libertarians know that when an issue affects our entire community as often and strongly as alcohol does, we need to do something to address it. Part of the problem, besides way too much supply, is the pricing of alcohol. The way it is taxed does not reflect the volume of pure alcohol within a product. In practical terms, this means a bottle of wine with a much higher pure alcohol content does not necessarily cost more than a mixed drink with a lower alcohol content.

In my research on the cost of this kind of product I went to a website of a well-known, nation-wide liquor retailer and the cheapest bottle of wine was a $4 chardonnay, and that was not on sale. That is the usual price with a 12% alcohol content and 7.7 standard drinks per bottle. Each standard drink costs just 52c. For a standard mixed drink—in this case, bourbon and coke—a can was also $4 but had a 5% alcohol content and 1.5 standard drinks per can. That is $2.60 per standard drink. For a double bourbon and coke in a can you pay $5.30 for a 6.9% alcohol content at a cost of $2.69 per standard drink. To drink the same amount of alcohol as that $4 bottle of wine in cans of bourbon and coke—5 and a bit cans—would cost $13. That is a price difference of $9.

The discrepancy here is greater than I had imagined. It is not surprising that bottles of wine are so popular with problem drinkers and young people for whom price is a significant influencing factor, as has been mentioned in the Chamber today. Nobody buying a $4 bottle of wine is sipping it while enjoying a plate of cheese and crackers. That wine is cheap rocket fuel.

The easiest way to address this would be through a volumetric tax, which I am wholly supportive of. However, in the absence of support from the Commonwealth Government, we have had to make other arrangements. We can and should keep working on them. Where the Commonwealth Government has failed to provide leadership in this area, the Northern Territory Government has stepped up and proposed this minimum floor price.

I am supportive of a minimum floor price for alcohol. It is disgraceful and dangerous that you can buy wine cheaper than water or a can of soft drink. That is the fact. It is the truth in a lot of communities in the Northern Territory.

As the minister mentioned, a minimum floor price on wine and fortified wine will make white wine about $9.20 and red wine about $10 a bottle. Products more expensive than that will not be impacted. In my opinion, every product needs to be impacted. The technical rules governing this minimum floor price has some important elements that I believe will ensure its effectiveness.

Much like the Member for Sanderson today, I was getting really annoyed listening to some of the Independent members speaking about how inconvenient this will all be, how much of a negative impact this will have on their communities. Really? Domestic and family violence caused by alcohol is not a negative impact? Something we should be thinking about? They are more concerned about the fact they cannot buy wine or a carton of beer at 10 am.
Liquor products cannot be discounted or refunded to reduce the price of the product below the floor price. This is incredibly important. With dozens of specials available at every bottle shop, not being able to get around the floor price by purchasing extra is critical.

Interstate retailers will now be required to have a Territory liquor licence and must abide by the floor price. I feel like screaming out 'Amen' and 'Hallelujah'. This will hopefully prevent people getting around the minimum floor price by using prepaid hampers, wine clubs and other sales methods based interstate.

While there are some loopholes in this legislation regarding bundling of products, I am pleased to see additional powers for the Liquor Commission to deal with underhanded activity by any outlet found to be exploiting this. I am sure everyone is sick of hearing me go on and on about alcohol, but I will continue to do so until we see healthier and safer communities with real futures and less alcohol.

We have a responsibility to get this right so we are not still talking about it in 10 years’ time. This will not solve the problem entirely because, as the opposition rightly pointed out and as we have pointed out ourselves, there is always the potential for secondary supply. We have addressed that through legislation. There are penalties for secondary supply.

Like the Member for Sanderson, I have no sympathy whatsoever for people caught selling alcohol on the black market. I have no sympathy for business owners who are knowingly complicit in selling alcohol to people they know will be selling it on the black market.

It does not take much of an operation to see the sober ones go into licensed premises and start supplying to those outside. It is all about cutting down the pool of people who can drink and are abusing the system.

I agree to a certain extent. I have a lot of sympathy for the majority of people in the Northern Territory who are responsible drinkers and, yes, this will impact everybody. The issues related to alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory affect every member of the Territory, every community, every electorate. For that reason, I am really supportive of these measures. As I said earlier, there are some people in the NT who would be very happy I am not the minister responsible for this, because I would be a lot harsher.

This is not a silver bullet. It is not the magic solution to fixing the social issues related to alcohol abuse, but it is a step in the right direction. Our extensive reforms represent a responsible partnership between those in the hospitality sector and the public, to reduce harm from alcohol while still maintaining viable businesses. It represents the very fine balance of supporting those who need it and the majority who are responsible consumers of alcohol.

I sincerely hope we will not only talk about this. I am sick and tired of talking about alcohol; we just need to do it. We need to pass it, get it sorted and support those in our communities who need it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly. I am pleased to hear the opposition also commends and supports the bill. As I have stated before, I am sick of talking about it. As far as I am concerned, it does not go far enough. I am disappointed that we did not accept all of the Riley recommendations.

Debate adjourned.

CONSIDERATION OF COMMITTEE AND AUDITOR-GENERAL’S REPORTS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into Taxi Licensing and Subleasing Report—consideration deferred.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory Report to the Legislative Assembly, November 2017—consideration deferred.

Auditor-General for the Northern Territory Report to the Legislative Assembly, March 2018—consideration deferred.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I acknowledge the life of a very important woman from the Pitjantjatjara lands, Mrs Ward, who we call a true force of nature.
Last Thursday saw a milestone in Central Australian and Northern Territory cultural life with the launch of
*Ninu Grandmothers’ Law*, the autobiography of Nura Nungalka Ward, at the NPY Women’s Council, in the
yard of its headquarters at Wilkinson Street in Alice Springs. I was very sad not to be at this event because
Mrs Ward was a truly extraordinary person.

She straddled the biggest challenges of her social and cultural environment, some of the biggest challenges
we can possibly imagine, and took it all in her stride. She was an amazing woman of great resilience.
Throughout her life she lavished care and attention on an army of children, always encouraging and watching
out for them.

Starting out as a station worker with her husband, assisting him with fencing, pastoral leases and keeping
the cultural traditions of her grandmothers, she was a woman of indomitable energy and spirit. She taught
the young girls how to hunt and gather food, and all the while sang songs of their country and taught its laws
and painted symbols and danced its stories. She was tireless in teaching Inma, the dances of the desert, and
delighted in doing so.

Mrs Ward was small in stature, and a strong and dynamic woman. She was also very thoughtful and an
extraordinary original thinker. She was meticulous about the detail in the stories she told, the explanations
for the healing powers of plants and her teaching of Inma.

Inma, dancing while singing, was the way to teach young people about *tjukurpa*, the important things in life,
namely their law and history, ancestors, environment and how it all came to be.

In her later role as a health worker with children and a community health activist in the Pitjantjatjara
communities, she contributed enormously to the establishment of the Nganampa Health Service, the
Pitjantjatjara Council, the NPY Women’s Council, the UPK health promotion method and the Mai Wiru healthy
foods movement.

She was passionate about meeting the needs of young girls and women and the challenges they faced in
the new age of settlers, colonisers, cattlemen, miners and missionaries. But above all, she was a problem
solver. She had a good-humoured bossiness that was all her own, and enjoyed teaching others in a firm
manner. Her laughter was legendary.

I had the great pleasure of working alongside Mrs Ward when I worked at the NPY Women’s Council. I was
one of the many non-Indigenous workers who benefited from her generosity of spirit and knowledge. One
thing I learned from her was the need for an enormous belly laugh.

One of my strongest memories of Mrs Ward was when I was working in the hospital and she was there. She
physically tried to steal my dress off my body because she liked it and thought it was completely acceptable
for me to go nickity around the hospital. The belly laughs were so loud in that conversation, the security guard
came in to check on us because there was so much noise coming from that room.

That was the sort of experience I had with Mrs Ward. She had a great sense of humour. Nothing could stop
her when she was determined on a course of action that she knew to be right. She was unstoppable, a force
of nature.

She passed away last year after a long battle with illness. She was greatly loved by many people and is
sorely missed. These things were clearly demonstrated at the launch of the book, which I hear was
extraordinary. That is shown through the relationships with her collaborators over many years.

In the telling of her story she was greatly assisted by the dedicated work of skilled linguists—not interpreters—
Linda Rive, Julia Burke and Suzanne Bryce, who over the last 14 years have been working with her to
document her stories and bring her book project to fruition.

I acknowledge the importance of Mrs Ward’s work. She was a leader. Her book is an extraordinary document
about the impact of colonisation on the Pitjantjatjara lands, the resilience of the Pitjantjatjara people, the
strength of the movement in the Pitjantjatjara lands around organisations like NPY Women’s Council, which
continue to grow and provide services in a culturally appropriate way to invest in culture and stories, and
making sure culture stays strong.

It is women like Mrs Ward who led the way in these conversations. I feel fortunate to have had some time
with her. I congratulate everyone on the publication of her book. It is a tribute to an extraordinary woman.
Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak about some amazing people who reside in or have strong connections with the Nightcliff electorate. Without trying to categorise, most of them are seniors. We have lots of seniors in Nightcliff and I look forward to hosting my Seniors Month event. It is a lunch in a week or so.

I acknowledge Irene Milios and her family. They have hosted 22 Biggest Morning Teas, raising funds for the Cancer Council. They pull that together on behalf of the Greek community. It started underneath their home and is now held at the Greek Orthodox School in Rapid Creek. The event has consistently been one of the top events for the Territory and, in fact, Australia. I acknowledge their dedication to raising funds and awareness for cancer sufferers and their loved ones. It is a huge event in our community; lots of people go to it.

I acknowledge Roy Stokes, who is a remarkable Territorian. He received the Ambassador of Peace Medal at the Battle of Kapyong service at the Darwin cenotaph earlier this year. The medal was in recognition of his service and a show of gratitude from the Korean people following the Korean War, where more than 17 000 Australian servicemen and women served.

I acknowledge Judy Boland, who is a secondary school teacher. Her dedication to her students and profession resulted in her being made a Member of the Order of Australia at the 2015 Queen’s Birthday awards. Her impact is very impressive across the Territory not only with her students, parents and colleagues, but also the work she does with the Historical Society.

I am also pleased to be the patron of the Evergreen Seniors Club NT, which was formerly the Nightcliff Evergreens. That is a club for anyone aged over 55 who would like to join. They meet on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. They have events in-house as well as excursions. The club has more than 100 members, and almost 20 members have joined recently. The club is run by a very dedicated volunteer committee, and I pay acknowledgement to its members for their hard work. I encourage members in the House to share the Evergreens Seniors Club’s information.

I am patron of the Nightcliff Bowls Club. It was fabulous to do presentations recently for their men’s bowls championships—not always seniors, but a majority are.

I am also patron of the Nightcliff Orchid Society, another community group. For people who have time to attend to their garden—not like me. My garden is not of any standing to go in any shows. The spring show is the Orchid Society’s main event. I always look forward to sponsoring awards for that. I note that other members in the House do that as well.

I acknowledge in the gallery this evening Ms Liz Walker. I had the pleasure of attending Liz’s farewell morning tea from Nightcliff Primary School on Friday. Liz has been teaching in the Territory for 41 years, I am led to believe. What an amazing career and impact on our young people. We talk in here about generational change, but Ms Walker has positively impacted on the lives of many students, particularly those at Nightcliff Primary School.

A few members of this parliament are ex-teachers. Teachers have such a unique and privileged position in helping to educate young minds in our community. It can be exhausting, but it is very rewarding. Forty years shows such commitment to the students and young people of the Territory. Liz’s work helping those who speak English as a second or additional language—she helped students understand and connect with an education system that would be inaccessible without specialist support.

Liz gave me a bit of a rundown of her history in the Territory. I will share that with the House and acknowledge her efforts.

She has worked at three schools: Bamyili, near Barunga; the Kriol bilingual program at Barunga; and the Ludmilla Indigenous multi-age class. She did a Graduate Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language. At Nightcliff she taught at the ESL unit, working with children who were participating in school but for whom English was a second language—migrants, refugees and Indigenous students. She has always been passionate about this field of education and loved learning more about the cultures. Her years with refugee families were the most challenging but the most rewarding. She was always learning as well as teaching the students. Every cultural group she has worked with over the years has taught her so much.

She has done all the usual teacher things. I first came across Liz at cross country when I was teaching at St Mary’s. Cross country is still going there and it is fabulous. Hundreds of kids every Thursday run two
kilometres. I think most of them do it for the ice cup and the fun at the end of the event, catching up with different kids from schools around the northern suburbs.

She got children involved in sports and activities, promoting participation rather than winning.

In typical Territory fashion, Liz came here just for a year and now is not leaving the Territory. She plans on staying, which is fantastic.

I will share some words that she sent to me. ‘I am really pleased I chose the path to the NT back in 1974. I chose the Commonwealth teaching scholarships over the equivalent Victorian one. It was less money while training but worth it.’

That was back in the days when the Whitlam government opened up further education to all. She goes on to say, ‘It doesn’t seem that long ago I was a young teacher from western Victoria who landed in the Territory, and the time has slipped by.’

I acknowledge all our teachers—in October we have World Teachers’ Day—and the hard work they do every day to educate and guide the next generation of young Territorians. I acknowledge Liz and her hard work and dedication. From the early days when I was teaching and participating in cross country, to my involvement over the last six years with Nightcliff Primary School, Liz was always a friendly face when I was at the school, making sure the children participated in activities and assemblies.

Liz, on behalf of the community, I thank you for all you have done for Territory families and wish you very well in retirement. I know you are keen on popping in to parliament. You are welcome to view Question Time or parliament at any time. We sincerely thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to share a few words this evening about your career in the Territory.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, I echo the comments from the Member for Nightcliff and acknowledge the wonderful work and amazing history that Liz Walker shares in education and places that are special to me, like Barunga. I acknowledge that work, and the work in other parts of the Territory she has worked in.

The previous Minister for Education, Minister Lawler, acknowledged the over 40 years of service she has provided the Northern Territory.

Liz, thank you very much for dedicating your time and your life to education. I am really excited that you are still part of our community in the NT. You are most definitely welcome to return to parliament at any time.

Congratulations on the many years of service and thank you so much for your work in Education.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak about the very disturbing of case of Witness K and his lawyer Mr Bernard Collaery, and the very dangerous precedent set by the federal government should it continue to pursue prosecution of these two Australians.

For members who are not aware of this story, Witness K is an Australian spy turned whistleblower for Timor-Leste against Australia. The issue was the bugging of Cabinet rooms in Dili by the Australian Secret Intelligence Service during gas and oil treaty negotiations over the Greater Sunrise fields in 2004.

Years later when Witness K learnt of the particularly unpalatable appointment of a former federal minister, Alexander Downer, to the board of a company heavily invested in the outcome of the treaty, he complained about the use of the agency to undertake such actions to the statutory authority—the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security. He was given permission to speak to his lawyer about the issue.

Witness K’s lawyer was Mr Collaery, a barrister and former ACT Attorney-General, who was also a legal advisor to Timor.

In 2012, when the corporate espionage operation came to public attention, Mr Collaery represented Timor in an action against Australia at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, disputing the original treaty. Witness K, due to give evidence in 2013, had his home raided by ASIO and his passport seized. To this day, Witness K’s passport has still not been returned to him.

The federal government has authorised electronic monitoring of Mr Collaery’s office and legal chambers and Witness K’s home as well as physical monitoring, raids and legal threats.
Witness K and Mr Collaery have now both been charged with conspiracy to breach section 39 of the Intelligence Services Act 2001. This section covers the communication of information obtained during employment and directly refers to information shared with ABC journalists and a producer.

Mr Collaery has noted:

*Today is an attack on our absent constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression, it’s an attack on the legal profession, it’s a personal attack on a patriot Australian who can’t speak here today, Witness K. It’s an attack on myself for acting as a lawyer within my professional rules and it’s a sad moment in the history of a country I love and I have served.*

Independent MP, Andrew Wilkie, used parliamentary privilege on 2 July in an adjournment speech to bring attention to this grievous action. I thank him for doing so, as do members of the Timorese community. Without him taking this stand it is likely we would never have known this was going on.

I seek leave to table a copy of Mr Wilkie’s speech.

Leave granted.

Ms NELSON: Australia has a long history in the resources of Timor, spurred on by powerful corporate and personal greed. It is all too convenient that the Foreign Affairs minister at the time of the bugging, Alexander Downer, ended up as a lobbyist for the very company that benefited from this disgraceful act. That former Foreign Affairs minister was not the only one. To this day, politicians and department secretaries have found themselves in well-paying jobs at that company and the peak lobby group for the industry.

Australia’s interest in Timor’s resources is not new. In May this year, declassified documents showed Australia’s interest in the oil and gas of Timor as far back as the 1970s. Those very same documents reveal Australia’s complicity in the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, influenced almost entirely by the potential access to oil and gas.

I have spoken many times inside and outside this Chamber about the effect of the Indonesian occupation on East Timor; it was bloody and violent. There were an estimated 200,000 deaths as a result of violence and famine. It saw sexual slavery, continued violence against women, the forced removal of children and so many other horrors that Timorese people remember to this day, me included. We Timorese people are a resilient bunch and, despite the population being decimated in those 25 years, there have been many good things that have come from our fight, including our independence.

With the Timor government in a more powerful bargaining position this time around, a new treaty over oil and gas fields was made earlier this year. Timor dropped its action against Australia and negotiated a deal so they will see up to 80% of the $56bn oil and gas field profits. This is a life-changing deal for Timor which would not have been possible without the actions of Witness K and Bernard Collaery. Good on both of them for speaking out against espionage in order to rip off one of the most impoverished countries in the world. Shame on the Commonwealth Government for doing that.

These two people doing the right thing has led to terrible personal and professional consequences for them. On 30 July in the Guardian, my uncle, Jose Ramos-Horta, was quoted as saying:

*They acted on the basis of their conscience, that what Australia was doing was wrong, so much so the Australian government retreated and backtracked on the maritime boundary saga and it led to this historic agreement, for which I personally—more than once—strongly and sincerely commended both sides.*

I seek leave to table a copy of this article as a reference for Hansard.

Leave granted.

Ms NELSON: By approving this prosecution, Attorney-General Christian Porter—I assume he is still the Attorney-General, as I do not know what happened after the spill this morning—has set a very dangerous precedent, one that affects whistleblowers in every sector of the community. Without whistleblowers being protected, horrific acts of crime, violence and governmental corruption that have come to light over many decades can and will go unrestricted.
Even with the new ICAC in place in the Northern Territory, it still takes the courage of people who know something to say something. When we punish them for speaking out, we are effectively telling other people to turn a blind eye to things that are wrong. Bad things happen when good people do nothing. Witness K and Bernard Collaery did not put Australia in harm’s way; they are not a threat to national security, they merely spoke up about something that was wrong. They spoke up about a government that was taking advantage of the Timorese people for corporate gain.

I urge the Attorney-General, Christian Porter, to reflect on the message that he and his government are sending to the broader community by pursuing the prosecution of Bernard Collaery and Witness K. I strongly, emphatically urge Attorney-General Christian Porter to reconsider the prosecution and continued persecution of these two Australians who have shown the courage and bravery to speak out against this horrible act of treason.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to complete the adjournment I commenced last week about NAIDOC Week in the Darwin region. I will reread the paragraph I did not get to complete.

On Thursday 12 July, I held my second NAIDOC Week Story Time session, singing the same songs and reading the same books I did in the previous session. What really struck a chord with me was that at the end of the story time session, we always finish with a song and dance. It was great to see a young girl of around 11 years of age and her father come back into library to join in the singing and dancing to *Rock-a-bye Your Bear* by the Wiggles. Thank you to the Wiggles and to Karama Library for helping to bring our community together.

Friday of NAIDOC Week is always a highlight as we start the morning with a free barbecue breakfast in the CBD, followed by a march to Raintree Park where guest speakers deliver short speeches on the national NAIDOC theme. This year’s theme was Because of her, we can! This year’s breakfast, march and speeches were fantastic, and I commend Larrakia Nation and Nicole Brown for all their efforts.

I was honoured to represent the Chief Minister and deliver a speech in Raintree Park. I want to share a few excerpts with the House:

> I’m also proud to serve in the Northern Territory parliament. We lead Australia for the number of Aboriginal women to be elected to parliament and to become ministers, and my colleague, Selena Uibo, recently added to that number through her appointment as Minister for Education and Workforce Training.

> We’ve already seen First Circles graduates represent their community on a national platform, including Galiwinku’s Bettina Danganbarr recognised as the 2018 Local Hero of the NT Australian of the Year awards.

> I stand before you as a proud graduate of the Lookrukin Indigenous Women’s Leadership Program run by the Northern Territory Government, which allowed participants to undertake a Diploma of Frontline Management and also the Department of Health’s Stepping Up Program that helped to increase employees knowledge of government and expose them to work experiences that enabled them to diversify their skillset.

> I am grateful for both of these opportunities, as they have contributed to help me achieve what I have to date.

> Before I go, I encourage you all to take the time to reflect on the amazing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have helped to influence and shape your lives and if you have the chance to acknowledge them, please do.

On Saturday 14 July I attended the local NAIDOC Ball and Awards Evening with my colleague Ken Vowles, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, which was emceed by the Member for Sanderson’s daughter, Sarrita King. Well done Sarrita.

I send my congratulations to the following people, who the committee chose as the award winners for this year:

- Apprentice: Tyrone De Santis
- Scholar: Karita McCarthy and Gabrielle Hill
Congratulations to all winners and to those who were nominated.

To say that I was actively engaged in my local NAIDOC Week celebrations is an understatement, and I loved every minute of it. This year saw a comprehensive and innovative suite of events delivered to those living in the Darwin region, with much credit going to the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation for their continued extensive involvement in NAIDOC Week.

This year, Larrakia Nation were responsible for 17 events in the Darwin region, from the flag raising ceremony which was followed by the family fun day in Coconut Grove to the art and crafts event at Bunnings Darwin, professional make-up sessions with the amazing beautician Kani at Beauty of Tatum, and the NAIDOC concert that was held at SKYCITY Darwin.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Top End NAIDOC Committee for delivering four events this year, including the ball and the awards evening. 

As a previous Chairperson of the local NAIDOC Committee and with more than 10 years of supporting NAIDOC Week and its associated events, I know firsthand how challenging it can be to coordinate and deliver NAIDOC Week events, especially when you are a volunteer but still have a paid job to carry out as well.

I also understand how rewarding it is when you see people, especially young Aboriginal children, enjoying an event that you poured your heart and soul into. There is truly no better feeling than that joy and gratefulness being displayed.

The second part of my adjournment speech is on O’Loughlin Catholic College, which is located in the Karama electorate.

O’Loughlin Catholic College recently welcomed two new teachers. Larnae Gurusamy is taking over as the Cooking and Hospitality teacher, and Luke Beatty is the new Physical Ed/Health teacher and the homeroom teacher of 7.3. Both teachers came highly recommended and have been warmly welcomed by the school. I wish both teachers the very best in their new roles.

O’Loughlin Catholic College recently brought the Disney musical *Mulan Jr* to life through the efforts of students and staff. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the production, but I have been told by the school that the production was a huge success with much praise being heaped on all those involved. All three 6 pm sessions were fully booked and the matinee session held at 2 pm on Saturday was almost fully booked as well.

I congratulate Joanne Green for her role in organising and directing the musical, all students and staff who were involved in the production, and all those who attended this wonderful performance. It was a very engaging 75 minutes where the cast and backstage crew truly shone with talent.

Each year O’Loughlin Catholic College offers Year 11 students the opportunity to participate in the Odyssey trip, where they are able to experience life away from home whilst learning about and visiting some of Australia’s most iconic places. This year a large group of 51 students and five teacher supervisors participated in the trip. It included visits to Sydney, Canberra, Perisher and Melbourne. The program for the Odyssey trip was created to offer students an educational experience that supported their learnings inside
the classroom and provide them with new experiences. I understand students were able to provide input to
the itinerary, so well done to them.

A few of the highlights of this year’s trip included:

- the Sydney Harbour Bridge climb
- a guided tour of the Sydney Opera House
- a visit to Madame Tussauds
- an opportunity to explore Questacon, where students were amazed by science
- a tour of the Australian Institute of Sport and the opportunity to try out some of the sports
- a visit to Perisher to enjoy some time in the snow
- a visit to Parliament House Canberra for a tour and to watch proceedings of parliament.

They were fortunate—I believe that is the right word—to watch the parliamentary proceedings when the
Member for Solomon delivered his speech on the significance of Territory Day, and his rendition of Meatloaf’s
Two Out of Three Ain’t Bad. Lucky them.

I am sure all students enjoyed their Odyssey trip and I am sure they are grateful for the many experiences
they were able to take part in.

I would like to congratulate Year 10 student Rosemary Wheeler on successfully completing her silver award
under the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. In order to achieve her silver award, Rosemary referred to her
involvement in basketball, completing her first aid certificate, helping out at Red Cross and completing her
journey to Lake Argyle. I understand that Rosemary will now look to complete her gold award over the next
18 months and I wish her the very best on this next endeavour.

On Friday 29 June, the 12.1 Pastoral Care class attended the Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in
Youth, or PARTY, program at Royal Darwin Hospital. This interactive program was designed to help educate
young people on the dangers of risk-taking behaviour and I am told that the students took the information on
board and promised to make informed choices going forward.

Finally, on the athletics carnival, I send a big shout-out to the age champions:

- 12 years female was Brydie Williams on 36 points
- 12 years male was Albert Thomas on 24 points
- 13 years female was Tia Langridge on 38 points
- 13 years male was a split: Oliver Bernardino and Kai Hale on 34 points
- 14 years female was Eleanor MacLauchlan on 29 points
- 14 years male was Nathaniel Flint on 32 points
- 15 years female was Schian Rothlisberger on 38 points
- 15 years male was Hayden Scrimgeour on 29 points
- 16 years female was Stephanie Rayner on 52 points
- 16 years male was Alex Leslie on 34 points
- 17 years female was Kayla Ruzsicska on 41 points
- 17 years male was Nicholas Glinatsis on 28 points
- 18 years and Open female went to Elizabeth Paice with 52 points, which is a massive total.
- 18 years and Open male went to Luke McDonald on 30 points.

This year the House Champion was Collins with a total of 1430 points, followed by Mackillop with 1094, Hunter with 1057 and Gsell with 867 points.

Congratulations to all those in the Collins House for an impressive win this year.

Finally, the school also awarded prizes for best dressed and best house costume. This year the best dressed student was awarded to Keeley Atkins, and the best dressed teacher went to Debbie Walter. Congratulations to you both, and well done O'Loughlin Catholic College.

Mr Kirby (Port Darwin): Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to provide a travel report for a trip I was fortunate enough to take part in a few weeks ago.

First, I would like to pick up on some of the lovely words the Member for Karama said about the O'Loughlin Catholic College. My older children were lucky enough to go there and they very much enjoyed it, particularly the Odyssey trips. I think Jake and his partner, Bree, may have first gotten together on an Odyssey trip some years ago and they are still together to this day. They are very successful trips.

I recently had the wonderful opportunity to attend a World Cities Summit in Singapore. It was a very busy few days but it provided insights into smart cities technologies, disruptive innovations and adapting to digital economies. There was a strong focus on how cities and governments around the world are changing their approach to engaging and how to achieve better outcomes throughout the community.

There were significant discussions over the few days about collaborations and innovative ways of looking at procurement through public and private partnerships. It was fascinating to find out how other cities are trying new and different ways to finance, procure and implement some of their solutions. It was amazing.

There must have been close to a thousand people at the opening of this conference. It was in a massive building that had a number of levels. There was a world water conference and a green conference all going on at the same time. There were quite a few thousand people all in the same building. It made for an interesting time. There were a number of Australians over there, not just from the Territory.

Good governance in the age of destruction is an increasingly challenging concept that different cities are dealing with. It was interesting to hear debate about the ways cities around the world were adapting quickly to quickly changing technologies and circumstances.

The calibre of the speakers and participants at the summit was extremely high, with ministers and local government leaders from all around the world. CEOs of global companies such as Hewlett-Packard, Mastercard, Uber, McKinsey and World Bank spoke with us, some of them in large forums. There were also unique circumstances where there were rooms not much bigger than the Chamber we are in now, where we engaged some of these global leaders in personable discussions and you felt like you were close to and able to speak directly with these people.

All three levels of government from Australia were represented, demonstrating the strong importance we place on our partnerships in the region. A strong focus for us was looking to the north at the Asian countries on how they do business, and how they will do business into the future. It is essential for the Territory, given our role as Australia’s northern capital. It was pleasing to join with the City of Darwin, which had a small delegation there including the Lord Mayor. We made sure we had a very good presence there.

There were a lot of discussions focused on the need to work closely with the community to understand its needs and make sure problems were properly identified and understood. Technology is seen as a way of delivering solutions rather than just being installed to keep up with the Joneses. There were lots of discussions about data and how that can be used to improve people’s lives.

One thing that was really clear from the conversations the people in different areas of the city were having was the enormous amount of civic pride everybody has in places they live, work and play. In a place like Singapore, it strikes you from the moment you get off the plane—how lovely the airport is, how hard they have worked with greenery inside and how friendly all the staff are, including taxi drivers. They make sure your experience in their city is the best possible so you will recommend it to your friends and as many go there as possible.
That is something we will pick up on as a government. We will work closely with council to make sure everyone’s experience when they come to Darwin is as pleasurable as it can be.

The greenery of the gardens in and around the buildings is how a business highlights its precinct. I took a great deal of interest in the public art, the different methods and modes of lighting and cultural experiences. It was a real pleasure to come back and in the weeks afterward to announce the next regime of our street art festival in Darwin. There will be some magnificent additions to the Darwin streetscape over the next few months. I very much look forward to updating the House about that over the coming weeks and months.

Government works closely with business and the community so that solutions are developed and funded collaboratively. We saw some interesting models about how places and spaces are being managed and activated. We, along with the City of Darwin people, were keen to pick up on how we can use that knowledge for the revitalisation of the Darwin CBD.

The summit was a chance to build on what we already know about Singapore’s solutions for greening and cooling the city. Interestingly, we conducted the heat surveys here a number of years ago, but Singapore has not done anything to that level of detail. It has since, and now it has the funding to very quickly start moving on the findings from that heat survey. We often say that as a small jurisdiction we have the opportunity to lead the pack. Those heat surveys through the CBD are an example of that. It is a feather in our cap that a city like Singapore is following our lead on that. We will soon be trailing in its dust, no doubt.

There are huge lessons for us to learn from the approach Singapore has taken, what is under way following the trials we have undertaken, and how we make connections to continue with world-leading experts like the people in Singapore. We have the opportunity to be at the front of some of this work and stay invested in this region. We should not underestimate the potential of this for our future.

To put it into context, in one of the interviews I did, people wondered if it was just a junket—going overseas as a backbencher. The flight is between four and four-and-a-half hours. It was not different to go to Singapore than to visit another city within Australia, but the opportunity to learn there was so much different, broader and better for a conference like this.

I look forward to further conversations with government through our City Deal partnerships and doing as much as we can to work together on the revitalisation of the CBD. Attending summits like this not only allows the Northern Territory Government and the City of Darwin to be putting Darwin centre stage, but it gives us a great opportunity to learn global lessons. We need to make sure we are part of these conversations so we can get the best outcomes for Darwin residents, businesses and tourists to attract more people here.

I was extremely proud to represent the Northern Territory, our government and the Chief Minister at this important summit. I look forward to continuing to develop those important relationships at every opportunity.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I thank and congratulate the very hard-working community of the Filipino Australian Association of the Northern Territory for its wonderful 120th Philippines Independence Day celebrations, which were held at the Filipino community centre on 23 June.

I was delighted to attend that evening with the minister for multicultural affairs, Dale Wakefield; the assistant minister for multicultural affairs and Member for Sanderson, Kate Worden; and the Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling. I congratulate the President of the Filipino Australian Association of the Northern Territory, Mr Raul Daet, who did a wonderful job. He is also one of the hard-working employees of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. He is doing a lot of fine work helping us get some amazing roads built in the Northern Territory.

I also thank his Vice President, Tony Viegas, who also spoke on the evening, for making an amazing contribution to the Filipino and Darwin communities. It is always great to see Mr John Rivas and his lovely wife, Edna. Mr Rivas is our Philippine Honorary Consul General in Darwin. He works very hard serving the community. It was great to see him at this event.

I want to thank all the wonderful volunteers who gave their time to put on some magnificent performances. I go to some multicultural events throughout the year. They are a wonderful opportunity for a member because you are exposed to brilliant entertainment and beautiful cultural experiences. When it comes to the amazing entertainment, the Filipino community is pretty hard to beat.

First, the beautiful choir sang the national anthem. It was amazing.
We saw a wonderful solo vocalist performance by Kassandra Kirby. This young lady had the most stunning voice. I hope she sticks to singing; she did a delightful job.

Apparently there is not enough talent with President Raul Deat—we got to see a piano rendition by Jermaine Amber Daet. Oh my goodness! What a talented lady she is. It was incredible to listen to the music she performed in her piano renditions. They are a family of high achievers to say the least, not only academically, with the hard work they put into the community, but also musically. It was a splendid performance.

We saw further musical performances with Shane Santos on flute and Jeremiah Co on the violin. We then saw a lovely dance rendition by Jinky Stacey, Juvy Eakins and Jean Blockey. We also saw a fold dance that followed, with Chyrra, Chinette, Zoe and Natalia Grant.

One of the most delightful performances of the evening was the Palmerston Dance Group. It was not what I was expecting when I saw it on the programme—a modern dance. The ladies were wonderful. They were all dressed up and performed not a Filipino style of dance, but a very modern hip-hop style of dance. It was full of joy and delight. It was so lovely to see the ladies having a good time dancing with their friends and families on the stage. The joy in their faces made everyone else feel very joyous.

The evening concluded with a lovely adjournment by Maddy Tagnipis and Chris Pownall.

The Filipino community has a very long and proud history in the Northern Territory, especially in Darwin. The Filipino families make up such an important part of our community and our workforce. They are strong contributors across the Northern Territory. I congratulate them on their 120th Independence Day celebrations to mark that important event on the Filipino calendar.

We look forward to seeing everyone at Barrio Fiesta later this month.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.