

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the public gallery the wife of the Opposition Leader, Mrs Rhonda Higgins.

Mr Higgins: Hello, dear.

Mr Vowles: The real power behind the man.

Madam SPEAKER: Welcome to Parliament House.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS Ovarian Cancer

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, every day in Australia four women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer and three will die from this disease. Ovarian cancer has the lowest survival rate for any women's cancer—a fact that has not changed in more than 30 years.

This awareness campaign usually occurs in February but is now extended into the White Shirt Campaign through commercial outlets that occur from April to May 2019. The message of the campaign is Every woman, Everywhere – Free from Ovarian Cancer. Ribbons have been placed on your desks to highlight this campaign.

National Road Safety Week

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, from 6 to 12 May 2019 it is National Road Safety Week, and as part of this week ribbons have been placed on your desk to promote the Towards Zero campaign.

Road safety is everyone's responsibility. On average, 43 people are killed and about 500 seriously injured on Territory roads alone each year. Every serious road crash has ongoing and devastating effects for our families and communities.

Domestic and Family Violence Candlelight Vigil

Madam SPEAKER: I also acknowledge the domestic and family violence candlelight vigil that took place on 1 May 2019, which I understand was well attended. The candlelight vigil is held each year to remember those who have lost their lives as a result of domestic or family violence. Family and/or domestic violence results in the death of one woman a week by a current or previous partner.

In addition to support services, it is up to each member of the community to look out for someone else—recognise the signs, seek support and support someone. Information on the vigil has also been placed on your desks.

APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL (Serial 88)

Continued from 7 May 2019.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to the motion agreed by the Assembly yesterday, I now call the Opposition Leader to make his contribution to the Appropriation Bill debate. As is the normal practice each year, I have given permission to the media to record—they are over there.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, Territorians expect strong leadership, a government they can trust to deliver on its promises, a strong economy, speedier approval processes and action to get things done. Now, more than ever, the Northern Territory needs the steady hand of a competent government, one which is reliable, accountable and smart, and one which looks deeper than a tag line or a catchy phrase.

Budget 2019–20 needed to deliver a series of programs that are absolutely necessary—fiscal reforms, measures to reinflate the economy through incentives, certainty for private sector investment, relief for Territorians and new policy settings that address and prevent the great economic and fiscal crisis being repeated.

Budget 2019–20 is another failure of the Gunner Labor government. It does nothing to restore business confidence or encourage private sector investment and does not get one Territorian back to work or bring back those who have already left. It does not grow our population or give us necessary economic reforms.

Budget 2019–20 puts Labor and its expensive social reform first and Territorians last. It is another budget of broken and empty promises. It is little wonder Territorians do not trust this Gunner Labor government that says one thing and does another.

The most important bill to come before this House each year is the Appropriation Bill. It is usual for the Treasurer to set out a vision of where the Territory is headed and to instil confidence that the government is managing the economy, spending wisely and planning for the future.

Budget 2019–20 fails to do this as have the government's last two budgets. We listened with great concern in years past of the first two speeches by the Gunner Labor government's Treasurer and now the third. Three important vital budget speeches. None of which have set a vision or a plan for the economy and fiscal health of the Northern Territory. What we have heard consistently from this government is a litany of mistruths and blame attributed to either the federal government or the previous CLP government.

Treasurer, this does not wash, and I say today, that we, the CLP can and will deliver better economic and fiscal results than this government has done.

Let us look at Labor's record. Treasurer, you said Budget 2019–20 was developed with the following principles: creating and sustaining jobs for Territorians, implementing your election commitments and providing services to Territorians in a smart and efficient way by reducing the costs of government.

You failed miserably on all counts given that there are now 7882 fewer Territorians employed, businesses closing down week after week and jobs lost. The operational cost of government has increased by \$478.4m. There is also a litany of broken election commitments, which I will come back to later.

Your 2017 budget stated that savings measures would be \$74m for 2017–18, and \$828m over the forward estimates. As at 30 June 2018, it has cost Territorian tax payers an additional \$478.4m in operational expenditure and we have 903 additional public servants employed to the end of December 2018.

How can this incompetent government be trusted? They say one thing and do another. What a hash you have made of things, Treasurer. You have not delivered certainty or confidence in our economy as you promised in Budget 2017. Instead, we have seen the construction sector halved, residential property prices dropped more than 25%, no major projects or cranes on the horizon, lowest level of business confidence in the country as confirmed by CommSec and Census.

Northern Territory bankruptcies are up 67% in just the last year alone, and retail trade growth down since Labor came to government.

I now turn to Budget 2018–19 which had the tag line of: More Jobs, More People and a Brighter Future. Savings were estimated to be \$234m over the forward estimates with the spurious claim that this would bring the total savings to \$828m and the actual outcome, according to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, for 2017–18 was an increase in operational expenditure of \$450.66m from 2016–17 to 2017–18.

Revenue changes included the world's worst hybrid mining tax; a vacant land and derelict building tax; increase in motor vehicle licencing and registration and the repairs and maintenance program a historic stimulant for the construction sector, particularly tradies was reduced.

In our budget reply then, we cautioned the government about its troubling fiscal management. We warned the government its budget was reckless and foolhardy and it decided to respond by attacking and blaming the former CLP government. Labor then bragged that it was creating a brighter future for Territorians, yet just seven months later, just before Christmas, we were hit with their interim budget repair report. That report detailed and identified:

- that the current financial position is unsustainable
- that budget measures have been insufficient to stem expenditure growth

- a prediction of NT deficit debt of \$35.7bn in 2029–30 unless the Territory stemmed the current level and rate of expenditure
- a prediction of NT debt to revenue ratio of 320% by 2029–30, noting that the CLP got it down to 27%
- a prediction that interest on debt would be \$2bn by 2029–30
- interest forecast of 2021-22 of \$506m with a quadrupled increase to \$2bn per year—that is \$5.5m every day in interest.

The Gunner Labor government went to its happy place again, blaming the federal and the CLP governments.

It was also dishonest about the GST and was found to have been so by the Auditor-General, and to this day, has failed to acknowledge the economic and fiscal crisis that it has caused. The Treasurer has claim multiple different figures for the size of the reduction in GST payments from the Commonwealth Grants Commission. First, it was \$2bn, then it was \$3.4bn and again this year, the lame Labor mistruths continued. The Treasurer claimed that GST funds have decreased by \$75m.

The truth contained in the federal government's Budget Paper No 3 shows that GST increased by \$42.3m to reach \$2.78bn for the Territory. There has been a net reduction of \$102.4m, or about \$25m reduction per year, not \$500m per year claimed by Labor. The Coalition government provided a \$259.6m top-up payment in 2017-18 to help the Northern Territory government deliver essential services. The Coalition government will provide a further \$250.1m top-up payment in 2019-20 to help the Northern Territory government to again deliver essential services. Either the Treasurer does not know how to read the budget papers or is deliberately misleading Territorians.

Another fact is the deficit handed to Labor was \$78m, as reported in your Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement. The CLP also had a plan to bring the budget back into surplus, which can be seen in the forward estimates of Budget 2016-17.

Labor knew the construction phase of INPEX was winding down and our GST receipts would be down. Where was the Gunner Labor government's plan to deliver what it had failed to do—economic diversification and to tackle the downturn? Our plan included an open-for-business attitude, onshore gas development, diversification of the pastoral estate, enhancing the capability and capacity of NT business to supply to major projects and industry, minimising the regulatory and red tape burden, growing and supporting our tourism industry, expanding our trade with countries to our north, developing further links to tap into the growing international student market, major projects including Project Sea Dragon, the Western Hotel and a ship lift, and we supported and continue to see mining as a major driver of our economy.

We published a full policy and plan at the time of the 2016 election. The opposition has called on the Gunner Labor government time and again to show some physical discipline and do the following five things:

1. rein in spending
2. stop the waste
3. free up business
4. support a diversified economy
5. support sustainable infrastructure.

Industry, likewise, after initiating its own economic recovery summit, called on the government to do a range of things to get the economy moving, including the abolition of taxes, fast-tracking projects, getting moving on regulatory changes to provide certainty to industry and reining in government spending.

On 16 April the Chief Minister and Treasurer delivered the final report, A plan for budget repair. At that time, the Treasurer said it was:

... a plan to fix the budget, which will include tough decisions to ensure the government continues to invest in local jobs, generational change and tackling crime.

We say this: do not confuse tough decisions with terrible ones. Not only has the Gunner Labor government failed yet again to make the tough decisions required to rein in spending and stop the waste, it is passing the buck until after the 2020 election and beyond.

The government wants to be seen as doing something, but this plan is over a time frame that includes three Territory general elections. This is a government that said it would reduce public service numbers by 100 in Budget 2018, yet increased staffing by 233. In fact, this government has increased public service numbers by 903 since coming to government in 2016, noting this is only up to December 2018.

Operational expenditure has grown by almost \$500m since this government took office in 2016. We have called on the government not to punish Territorians for the incompetence and wasteful spending by lazily increasing taxes on Territorians' lifestyle.

The government's move to tax lifestyle, like personalised number plates, camping fees, additional museum fees and fees on fireworks, is lip service to serious decisions which need to be made. This is simply not good enough and Territorians deserve a lot better. They are not tough decision, just terrible ones.

Another out-of-touch decision the government is carrying out is the attack on teachers in Katherine. This government clearly lacks priority when working through its budget and puts wasteful advertisement spending above retaining teachers in the town. What is the cost to the community when these teachers leave town?

The Treasurer was in primary school in 1990–91. I trust she was a solid student then. But clearly she has not done any homework recently. She tells everyone the government's measures were the biggest changes since self-government. The fact is, the Commonwealth Labor government, which gave us the recession we have, cut 26% in funding to the NT in 1990–91. We know from last weekend's performance what Labor thinks of Paul Keating. He is their hero.

Those cuts led to a comprehensive estimates review committee process conducted by the CLP government, in which 1223 positions, or almost 10% of the public service, were abolished over a two-year period with all affected staff redeployed through a planned process. That was tough. This government's members would not know tough if they fell over it.

I do not see the Treasurer making tough decisions; she uses spin to mask the truth. The Perron government had a significant stimulus package, that being the House in which we meet today as well as the Supreme Court. The same government ensured business and industry had the confidence to invest in and commit to the Territory.

Fast-forward to today, and the Langoulant review says:

Government stimulus is not a suitable substitute for private investment, but Labor's latest moves will further stymie business and industry in the Northern Territory.

For example, we vehemently oppose hitting Territorians with an \$80m land tax as referenced in the Langoulant report. We question the value of selling off the Land Titles Office, a move which businesses believe will lead to increased fees for services necessary for development in the Northern Territory. However, we agree with Mr Langoulant when he says that the Territory budget cannot be repaired in isolation.

Government stimulus is not a sustainable substitute for private investment. The Territory urgently needs a concerted whole-of-Territory effort to attract private investment, and uncertainty is deterring private investment.

We welcome the commitment to benchmark against best practice. The effects of regulation. We have called for this for some time. We also welcome the recommendation to establish a parliamentary committee to scrutinise agencies actual financial performance against the original budget given the size of the task to reduce expenditure is a mammoth \$11.2bn dollars.

We believe this would be a positive step and one which is surely needed. The big idea in the Langoulant review is to hit hard pressed Territorians with \$100m in new taxes, and the insult to injury is the government will then go cap in hand to Canberra again to beg for a bail out.

Where is the leadership? Where are the promised tough decisions? It is not wonder Territorians do not have any confidence in this Labor government to turn our failed economy around. The response from business and industry to the government's so call budget repair has been underwhelming.

In the *NT News* on 17 April, NT Airport boss, Ian Kew said in relation to the idea to charge park entry and camping fees:

If the government wants to upset people this is the perfect way to do it.

The CLP Opposition agrees. This is a terrible idea and shows how out of touch this government has become. There has been no modelling on the short and long-term effects of this decision on the tourism sector and the broader economy.

The CEO of the Chamber of Commerce, Greg Bicknell says, in the same addition:

Look, a lot of this stuff is very long-term and will slip over to at least another two governments.

That is the problem. The Treasurer is kicking the hard decisions in to the long grass. The Property Council on April 10, said its members want a solution based approach. This Gunner Labor government could do well to read the Property Council's Five Point Plan for prosperity, jobs and strong communities.

The NT Cattleman's Association, President, Chris Nutt said on April 3, he and his members fear irrational government interventions and raised security of tenure and native title issues. This Labor government has obstructed diversification on the pastoral estates.

How can pastoralists trust Labor when they pull the pin on non-pastoral use subleases being recorded on the title at the very last minute? This dead of night backflip has left the pastoralist industry:

In a state of paralysis.

Warren Pearce, CEO of the Association of Mining and Exploration Companies, AMEC, called on the Treasurer to scrap the world's first, world's worst hybrid mining tax that is costing the Territory \$6bn of investment and 4000 jobs. AMEC is scathing of Budget 2019–20 with Mr Pearce saying, 'The Northern Territory budget has not met the expectations that the government has built with the Langoulant report. The government has pushed nearly \$0.5bn of hard decisions out in to the future. Achieving that will demand an unprecedented eight years for fiscal discipline and streamlining of costs. The Northern Territory has the most complex and expensive royalty regime in Australia. It means many small projects do not get the attention that they would in other jurisdictions.'

Dave Malone from the Master Builders Association, says, 'The headline economic growth figure is 6.3%. If that was the number that we are all going to experience then we would be congratulating the government on a fantastic effort around economic management. It is not, of course. It simply reflects an increase in export earnings from large projects, like INPEX, and very little of that flows through the Territory economy.'

The government's root-and-branch review is essentially its version of the estimates review process. But it falls short of making any effective change and is a shining example of where Labor has made some terrible decisions. It is making savings from decreasing the Business Growth Program, Business Innovation Support grants and cessation of the employer support incentives for apprentices. At the same time the government is keeping the job-killing hybrid mining tax.

The question has to be asked: does the government want business and industry to grow? How can it seriously say it supports jobs when it is implementing measures which threaten jobs?

I could spend the next hour pulling apart the review's outcomes from its lifestyle fees and charges to the crazy move of the Mitchell Street Mile to a biennial event.

The so-called root-and-branch review sets out to achieve approximately \$503m net savings over the forward estimates. Let me tell you what this means in practical terms and the reaction we have received from some grant recipients who face cuts of 1% to 3% of their funding.

Local government is exceedingly concerned about what these cuts mean for operational subsidies for remote and regional councils. These are the same councils it brags about, including in its so-called local decision-making.

Will they be able to operate with a 3% cut to the funding? An NGO that provides domestic violence services, has told us that having its funding cut by 1% to meet the efficiency dividend will impact on our operations and could mean reduced staff, office hours or reducing staffed office hours or cutting programs.

Another industry group said that it could see no evidence that a baseline analysis was adopted. And while it accepts that in austerity all revenue streams should come under scrutiny it is amazing that such a large share of the burden should be lumped on mostly NGOs and community groups. These cuts are clearly on Territorians who do not deserve to pay for your mistakes.

Coming back to Labor's broken promises—remember, it said in its first year in government that it would honour its commitments. How that tune has changed. Here are just a handful:

- bring the budget to a surplus position by 2019–20—we now see its latest promise is another 10 years down the track
- keep Territorians safe—we see a state of lawlessness across the Northern Territory
- grow the population—the population has declined by 0.18% over the past year, which is the biggest in 15 years
- create 14 000 new jobs each year, however almost 8000 less Territorians are employed
- build a new Don Dale—the ultimate back flip
- not to sell government assets—yet it will sell the Land Titles Office
- build a national Indigenous art gallery in Alice Springs—after almost three years and a spend of more than \$1m you do not even have an agreed site
- investigate financial models and products that can help people borrow money to build their own homes in homelands and outstations—not one private home has been built
- publish an annual list of interstate procurement to give support to your so called Buy Local scheme—it has not happened
- build a museum at Myilly Point—\$800 000 wasted and the project abandoned. Mind you, it was not a great idea in the first place.

Treasurer, you said that your government was restoring trust, addressing population loss and the classic:

The government will build a bridge to a better future.

And your government was:

... determined to demonstrate ongoing fiscal discipline to improve the budget bottom line.

Budget 2019 is the worst budget in the Territory's history. It has seen the government's net debt jump by the highest amount in the Territory's history. A \$2bn increase in net debt in just 12 months proves incompetence and cannot be dismissed by saying it is an accounting standard change. That is simply untrue.

At the end of this financial year the expected debt will be \$6.2bn. This leaves our net debt to revenue ratio at 93%. When we handed over the books the ratio was 27%. This is a key measure of the Territory's to service our debt.

I warned previously that we were on the road to insolvency. This is even worse than I feared. It will take a million dollars a day to pay the interest on the debt. Policy changes, or the government's social reform experiments, have worsened the Territory's fiscal position by almost \$600m over 12 months. Our Territory is a house built on shaky foundations. More than 70% of NT Government funding comes from the Commonwealth. In the rest of Australia more than 80% of jobs are in the private sector, in the NT it is not even 50%.

We have enough onshore gas to supply the entire energy needs of Australia for 500 years. We should be building high tech petrochemical or fertiliser manufacturing industries here. We should be incentivising

companies to use our extensive gas reserves for manufacturing purposes with inherent wealth and job creation.

The opposition believe that at this time of economic and fiscal crisis, with a government spending \$4m every day—more than it has, it should be a government's priority to make it easier, not harder, to invest in the Territory. The Territory is broke and we are living beyond our means.

Today I pledge to Territorians that a CLP government will end the waste, axe the lazy Labor taxes, and build the roads and other infrastructure of the 21st century. Under a CLP government there will be small government, and only programs that benefit Territorians will be funded. It is time to get things done in the Territory. As a community we must show the world that we want private sector investment.

The CLP is the only party with a plan and the track record to deliver a diversified economy. We will be build the foundational infrastructure for a globally significant and competitive onshore oil and gas industry. We will invest in transformational water infrastructure such as dams, off-stream storage, managed aquifer recharge programs and water networks.

Other than the underground car park, which has had no cost benefit analysis let alone an operational model, the opposition supports the completion of the State Square project. We will put making money before spending money at the heart of our government. We will focus on growing the Territory's revenue, not through increased taxes and destroying our lifestyle, but by growing out economy through private sector investment.

It is time for common sense and discipline to come back to government. We need to make more than we spend because, ultimately, we cannot provide what we cannot afford. Read my lips: there will be no cuts to frontline staff. We will reduce the price Territorians pay for government service and remove the silos that dominate government service delivery. We will reduce the waste and speed up government approval processes. We will reduce the debt burden and return the budget to surplus than a decade's time.

The CLP believe a small government is a good government because we trust Territorians to spend their money better than government can. We make this promise to all small and medium Territory businesses. We will review your payroll tax with a view to abolishing it once we see the true state of the Territory finances.

We will review all the alcohol reform measures imposed by the government to see what has been effective and what has not. We will scrap the floor price for alcohol and bin the useless MyFuel NT website waste. We will also scrap the hybrid mining and the vacant and derelict site property taxes. We will ensure there is strategic investment which creates sustainable employment in the private sector.

We will invest in a diversified portfolio of infrastructure-related projects, such as beef and mango roads that generate real wealth and unlock opportunity. Under a CLP government, with the budget in the black, we would back Police by reinstating work done for the police exam for sergeant, reinstate sworn officers in the intelligence unit and put youth justice back with Corrections. We will cut nine ministers to eight, assistant ministers and their travel and abolish Team NT. We will get the Territory off the road to ruin and back in the black.

These are just some of our ideas. We have more, but in the meantime if those members opposite want to snaffle any of our ideas, they are quite welcome to do so. After all, the sooner there is some real action to address budget repair the better.

This third Gunner Labor government Territory budget is another disappointment for those of us on this side of the House. The CLP can and will do better. We embrace hope and aspiration—a better life is something to aspire to and rise up to. Some political parties, especially those on the left, believe in a culture of dependency and victim—hood. They like it when people are down and dependent. They want the system to fail so that they can build influence and support.

Madam Speaker, the CLP government will never talk down to people. We will always try to offer people a way up and forward. We are the party of aspiration. The CLP can and will do better because that is what Territorians deserve.

Madam SPEAKER: We will pause while the cameras leave the Chamber.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, it is my honour to speak on the 2019–20 budget brought down by our Treasurer yesterday.

This morning on morning TV I think I heard the Prime Minister say something like, 'A government that cannot manage its finances should not be in government.' Of course, he was referring these comments to the leader of the Labor federal opposition, Mr Bill Shorten. These comments could very easily be spoken to this government and our Treasurer after what can only be described as a very ordinary budget that was brought down yesterday.

The third Gunner government finances and the Territory's finances could not look any bleaker. The tsunami of political rhetoric which we have been subjected to by the beleaguered Chief Minister and his empty Treasurer over the last couple of months has been insulting to the intelligence of all Territorians. We have had the budget repair report and now we have this very under-whelming budget brought down by the Treasurer yesterday.

There were constant referrals to the budget repair strategies of 'heavy lifting, the big decision, the tough decision, the difficult decisions', yet there is very little evidence of any difficult decisions whatsoever. In fact, I would go as far as to say that there is no heavy lifting and very few tough and difficult decisions that have been made within this budget. Where are these decisions? We have been given little detail of what the heavy lifting is that this government is doing, despite the fact that they continually refer to it.

The 2019-20 budget is an empty vessel, like the Treasurer and the Chief Minister. One thing that appalled me yesterday was that the Chief Minister did not attend the NT Chamber of Commerce briefing that the embattled Treasurer gave—the embattled Northern Territory Gunner government. Once again the Chief Minister is nowhere to be seen. His absence was definitely noted. When things get tough the minister is thrown under the bus and left to sink or swim. On this occasion we have definitely seen the Treasurer sink to a depth we did not think was possible.

A story of more incompetence and mismanagement—I have alerted the Chamber several times to my concern that this government is in breach of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act (2001)*. It should be of major concern to all Territorians that this budget is more evidence of that.

It was interesting to read the Final Report for Budget Repair. One point made by the report highlighted that the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act (2001)* requires the Northern Territory Government to develop a fiscal strategy based on sound fiscal management. The interpretation of what sound fiscal management is exactly is a matter for debate. But, from where I and Mr Langoulant sit, there is a dearth of sound fiscal management in how the Gunner government has managed the finances of the Northern Territory over the last three years.

One of the key recommendations of the Plan for Budget Repair—on page 7 of the executive summary—in fact fourth on the list is:

- *increasing financial accountability and transparency (goal 1)*
- *improving financial management policies and processes (goal 2)*

The Territory has never seen such incompetence when it comes to financial management. The fact that the Gunner government had to embarrass and subject itself to an external party, such as Mr Langoulant, coming and telling them how to do its job two and a half years into their term of government is deeply embarrassing.

I give the Treasurer her credit—she has managed herself personally in a way that is impressive, given that she has presided over three budgets that have demonstrated the failure of herself and the government to manage the affairs of the Northern Territory.

I remember the first budget delivered by the Treasurer in 2017. I said in parliament that it was like watching a bunch of kids in a lolly shop. This was just months after they were elected to government. I had a distinct feeling that we were watching a bunch of children—immature adults grabbing at money like children grab at lollies in a lolly shop. It was obscene, immature, irresponsible and ultimately bordering on criminal.

Going back to the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act (2001)*—it is a mechanism put in place years ago to make governments, like that we have here today, that are irresponsible and unable to prudently manage the taxpayers' money of the Northern Territory in a way that meets the community's expectations. The FITA is a piece of legislation that is supposed to capture these problems and create accountability. It has not been effective in this way.

I have referred this situation to the Auditor-General. I believe she is working on measuring and assessing whether or not the government is adhering to this important piece of legislation, which was designed to protect Territorians from irresponsible governments, like we see today.

In record time this hopeless government sent the Northern Territory from a position of relative financial stability to broke. Within months you could see this trajectory forming of this government's mismanagement of the Territory's finances, creating what we now have—a very grim situation. The figures speak for themselves. The analysis we have just heard from the Leader of the Opposition reflects just how grim this is—an increase of 903 additional public service positions since 2016 when this government came to power. That is staggering when you think that the population has basically frozen during that time. There were extra operational expenses amounting to almost \$0.5bn per year during that time.

When you match that with the comments in the budget repair report—the fact that they did some work with people in the community trying to get an impression of what was going on—the comments of the community about what has been happening in the Northern Territory since 2016 is quite concerning—the lack of business confidence, the fact that businesses are closing, bankruptcies are up by almost 70% in the Northern Territory. This bleak picture has emerged, not just because of the mismanagement of the Territory finances by this government, but also because of the economic downturn due to the completion of the construction phase of INPEX, which we all know.

There was an opportunity a few years ago to try to rein in expenditure and manage things much more responsibly than what we have seen over the last two-and-a-half years. What we have seen is reckless spending. There are lots of examples of that—the car park out the front here never ceases to amaze me. Every time I come to parliament, I cannot miss this hole in the ground. It think it is a \$30m car park that this government was quick to embark on. It was based on no business model whatsoever. There will be zero return on the investment of \$30m. Once the car park is finished, that is it. We have heard no business model mentioned in how they intend to generate some income from this investment. This is probably the prime example of what this government is on about—a \$30m investment into something that will have zero return for Territorians. This is how useless this government is. It cannot distinguish between a good investment that will bring a return to Territorians and a bad investment which will have a zero return, if not continue to cost Territorians forever more. The cost of maintaining and operating that car park will be a burden on the taxpayers forever unless they intend to charge. Of course, there is no mention of that. Labor governments do not like to charge for car parking—we know about that.

There are many examples of how this government has really failed the Northern Territory. It is all reflected in this 2019-20 budget. I was asked yesterday about the Infrastructure Development Fund and what I thought about the decision of this government to reallocate the \$200m sitting in that fund into general revenue to pay for its overspending. The Infrastructure Development Fund had enormous potential to grow the economy and businesses within the Northern Territory. It was never properly understood by this Treasurer. She was never committed to making it work or even understanding how it functioned or had the potential to be a positive part of the government.

We saw \$10m of taxpayers' money thrown at a water business that had no water extraction licence and was on the cusp of insolvency. Then became insolvent and went bankrupt and that \$10m has vanished. The government has no plan whatsoever to try to recoup that money or look into getting that money back for Territorians. All this waste and mismanagement is now a typical characteristic of this government, which is extremely concerning for all Territorians.

One of the recommendations from the Langoulant report was to use evidence-based decision-making to drive effectiveness and efficiency. I thought it was hilarious at the closing ceremony of the Arafura Games that we saw the Attorney-General, the Minister for the Arafura Games, make the off-the-cuff commitment that the Games would continue, despite there being no business plan.

We do not even know how much the Arafura Games cost. I suspect in the realm of \$10m—it started at \$4m and by six weeks ago it had clocked up to \$8m. I am guessing around \$10m was spent on the week of competition in Darwin. Yes, it has been an enormous success. If you spent \$10m on anything it would be an enormous success.

There has not been any business case and there are no figures on how much it cost or the business it generated to the community of Darwin and the Northern Territory, yet we have a classic example of the irresponsible way in which this government operates. You see the Attorney-General standing up in front of a group of excited, pleased, happy people who have engaged in the Arafura Games, making this announcement that the Games will continue.

That is what this government is all about—doing things that are popular and will endear them to their electorates, and not really thinking about the cost or the implications on the budget. Every dollar spent by any government needs to be thought-out, planned and responsibly spent. Ideally, every dollar you spend you should expect \$5 in return. It is about investing in a way which brings proper, sizeable return to the Northern Territory. We have not seen that from this government.

It is interesting to think back to 2012, when my colleague Terry Mills—who was Chief Minister at the time—and I were presented with a very bleak financial picture of the future of the Northern Territory. It was grim. We knew the GST would be reduced in the future. We knew our population projections were not particularly great. We knew Power and Water was draining money from the Northern Territory in an obscene and incomprehensible way. We knew there were major problems in the finances of the Northern Territory.

Terry Mills and I—with me being Treasurer and Deputy Chief Minister at the time, and Terry being Chief Minister—made some difficult decisions. We did some heavy lifting, and people did not like it. No one likes to hear things are being trimmed, cut back or reduced, or that things which are not successful or efficient will be cut in place of things that are designed to be more effective.

Those difficult decisions were made in the mini-budget of 2012. We were not thanked for that. No one said, 'Thank you very much for doing the heavy lifting and for making those difficult decisions'. In fact, we were thrown out on our ears, effectively.

I feel a great sense of being vindicated over the last six to 12 months, when I see how rottenly this Gunner Labor government has performed and managed the finances of the Northern Territory. We increased power and water prices, and it pained me as much as anyone else. It was one of the most difficult decisions I have made in my life—I have made a few since becoming a politician. It was an unpleasant and difficult decision, which, I might add, has never been reversed despite the fact the Gunner government likes to bring it up and throw it in our faces. They have never reversed it or reduces power and water prices.

I hear that they have been advised to reduce power and water prices into the future by the generation committee, or whoever it is that oversees the pricing of power and water these days. Those decisions are difficult to make—increasing the price of anything. In 2012 we made those decisions and were not rewarded for them. We were thrown out on our ears. Ironically, Terri and I are still here and those people who did throw us out on our ears are no longer in government.

When you want to reflect on prudent and responsible fiscal management, In that period in which we were given very strong and highly professional advice from a group of people that formed the Renewal Management Board, they advised us how to steer the ship, the Northern Territory finances, in a way that would bring us back to surplus, that would bring us back in to a very health financial position.

Those decisions that we made were not thanked by anyone. Had we remained in in our positions as Chief Minister, Treasurer and Deputy Chief Minister, the situation, the landscape of the Northern Territory would be much different.

It is this government that is under duress now. The pressure is on this government to make those difficult decisions that we made in 2012, and I do not think that they are at all capable of doing so. I do not see any evidence at all of this heavy lifting we are hearing about.

We have seen lots of backflips of this government and the Opposition Leader named a few, but I will spend the last few minutes talking about Central Australia and Alice Springs, and how this budget relates to the future of Central Australia.

One of the things that was promised by this government was a new Alice Springs youth detention centre. I heard Wendy Morton from NTCOSS this morning saying on *ABC Radio Alice Springs*, how the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre, the existing centre, is highly inappropriate. It is unfit for purpose. It is small, it is old and run down. I was there just a few weeks ago. It really is not suitable for the many kids that come in and out of there.

The Don Dale centre houses just as many people as the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre. The Don Dale centre, the complex there, the precinct, would be 50 times the size of the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre precinct. The facilities at Don Dale are vastly more impressive and better than in Alice Springs.

Yet, a decision has been made by this government to backflip. The Minister for Territory Families was on the radio last week telling us how she will not be building a new Alice Springs youth detention centre, she will basically be refurbishing the existing centre, which is disappointing for a whole range of reasons.

First, the experience of kids going in to youth detention centre in Alice Springs is not good and it seems like it will not improve much with just a refurbishment, costing—I think they have only allocated \$1m in the 2019–20 budget.

I had not been to the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre for years and it was fascinating going back a few weeks ago because nothing much has changed, after probably four years of having not been there. The separation of boys from girls—they just put a donga out the back for the girls. The minister called it a significant improvement. If that is what you call a significant improvement I certainly was unimpressed.

A \$35m investment in a town like Alice Springs at this point in history, to build new youth detention centre, is significant. This government should keep to their promise and honour their commitment to building a new youth detention centre in Alice Springs at around the price tag of \$35m, assuming that half of the \$70m they promised 18 months ago would be going to Darwin and the other half to Alice Springs.

This government should stump up. It was critical of the former CLP government for not providing new youth detention centres in the Northern Territory, yet here we are 18 months later—those in government have changed their minds. They do not want to provide it either. What are your principles and what do you really stand for?

There is no indication of what this government is really on about. It flip-flops and backflips. This is a classic example. I urge the Minister for Territory Families to build a new Alice Springs youth detention centre on the site of the Corrections precinct, though not necessarily exactly where the old one is. As it is a vast property, find a corner to put it in away from the adult prison and other facilities out there. We need it for the kids and for the economy, as \$35m that is not being spent in Alice Springs is highly significant.

There is also the fact that after almost three years, we are still having conversations about the national Indigenous art gallery. According to the Minister for Territory Families, in the same conversation she had on ABC Radio last week about the Alice Springs youth detention centre, she also spoke about the national Indigenous art gallery, which is not in her portfolio. We seemed to get her version of proceedings far more than anyone else's on everything Alice Springs as she seems to be the expert on the matter.

According to the Minister for Territory Families we are heading into more consultations and conversations about the national Indigenous art gallery. We have had conversations for three years about the site of the national Indigenous art gallery. Quite frankly the people of Alice Springs are over it. Why can you not make a decision?

I am not surprised that you cannot make a decision. This budget does not reflect many decisions at all. It reflects a government that is embattled and beleaguered, diminished to the point where it cannot make a decision about the site of the national Indigenous art gallery after three years. However, sooner or later a decision will have to be made.

You have put \$2m aside in the first quarter of the next financial year to have more conversations about where the site of the national Indigenous art gallery might be. Hopefully towards the end of the year we might see construction. I do not believe that we will. The price tag for construction seems to go down every day. We are down to \$47.5m after starting with \$50m. The Gunner government has not added a single extra cent to the national Indigenous art gallery since it has come to government.

I thought it was fascinating to listen to the Chief Minister telling us that it was his idea to build a national Indigenous art gallery. I put on the record that it was not the Chief Minister's and the Gunner government's decision. That was completely misleading. I remind Territorians that it was the CLP government that put \$70m in the budget for a national Indigenous art gallery and cultural centre in the May 2016 budget.

Three years ago the CLP put the idea and the funding on the table. This government has not added a single extra cent. All it has done has been to muck and muddle around and have conversations. It has not progressed at all.

If you talk about confidence in this government, this is a prime example as to why people do not have confidence in the Gunner government. Its ability to execute projects like this—to plan and construct a national Indigenous art gallery—is appalling. Your legacy will be your failure to execute the national Indigenous art

gallery from an Alice Springs perspective. People are over it. They are sick of the incompetence and mismanagement of this project, just as they are of the budget per se.

There are many positive things that we can look forward to in Central Australia despite the diabolical way the government has managed the Territory finances. I had a fascinating briefing with Treasury officials at the end of last year. Towards the end of the briefing on the state of the economy and finances in the Territory, I asked them what the lights on the horizon were and what are the things that will pull the Northern Territory out of the hole that it is in.

They gave me three projects that they think will see the Northern Territory out of this hole. The first was Project Sea Dragon. The second was Nolans Bore, Arafura Resources—which I visited a few weeks ago and had a fantastic day with the Member for Stuart and the guys from Arafura Resources—and the third one is the Ammaroo Phosphate Project, the biggest phosphate deposit in Australia. Yet these guys cannot even put things like that in the budget speech by the Treasurer.

These three things, Treasury said to me, will drag us out of the hole. Yet this government cannot even acknowledge Arafura Resources. The potential for that mine is untold, as well as for the Ammaroo phosphate mine. Two out of those three projects are based in Central Australia, so I am optimistic, despite the failure of the Gunner Labor government and the fact we have had this unbelievable incompetency—the national embarrassment of having a government take us to the brink of insolvency. It is unbelievable.

Despite all that, I am very optimistic about Central Australia. We have amazing mining projects about to come to fruition. There is a lot of excitement about the prospects that will bring the town. Despite the fact this government is so hopeless, Alice Springs continues to be a spectacular town full of amazing potential and amazing people who can shelve all this nonsense and not put any hopes or expectations on a government like this one. We continue to get on with the job. Businesses keep going despite the fact they cannot rely on a hopeless government like this in any way, shape or form.

My overall impression of the 2019 budget is feeling completely underwhelmed. You have taken us to the brink, to the cusp of insolvency. I cannot see anything improving at all. The optimism of the Treasurer—I would love to know what she bases that optimism on. All the CommSec forecasts suggest we are in for at least another two years of hardship and economic slump.

Treasurer, 10 points for optimism. One, if that, for your ability to manage the finances of the Territory.

As a member from Alice Springs, I am buoyed—I am positive about the future of Alice Springs, despite this nonsense we see day after day from the Gunner government. I feel for the Treasurer. She has obviously been thrown under the bus again by the Chief Minister. Territorians will overcome this. They have no confidence in this government and know that change will bring about good fortune for the Northern Territory.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I want to talk in general about the budget and to raise some local issues and comment on a number of things in the Education, children and families and agriculture portfolios.

I will read from the Langoulant report, from the section in Chapter 4 called 'Pathway to Surplus':

Key points

Implementing austerity measures such as significant reductions to the NT public service to achieve immediate budget repair will damage the Territory economy.

A medium-term approach to budget repair provides a balance between the Territory's fiscal targets and its broader economic objectives.

Returning the budget to balance sustainably requires the Territory government to operate within its existing budget over the forward estimates and limit expenditure growth in the medium term to no more than 3% per annum. This will reduce expenditure by around \$11.2bn in the period of 2028–29 compared to the business-as-usual scenario.

Achieving this outcome will require a combination of significant structural reform and improving budget management.

Demand increases for services such as health will need to be offset by increased productivity or efficiencies across government. Stimulus funding beyond that already approved will need to be offset by savings in other areas.

This report provides a package of 76 reforms to support the Territory government to achieve the necessary level of expenditure growth restraint by generating efficiencies through:

- *increasing financial accountability and transparency*
- *improving financial management policies and processes*
- *reforming the NT public service to deliver a sustainable workforce*
- *organising agencies and functions more efficiently and effectively*
- *using evidence-based decision making to drive effectiveness and efficiency ...*
- *digitally transforming the NT public service to drive innovation and reduce cost ...*
- *optimising revenue to support budget repair ...*

I would have thought I would have heard a budget that reflected Mr Langoulant's report, but I did not see that. In Budget Paper No 2 on the very first page of Chapter 1, it says:

- *net debt at the non financial public sector forecast to increase to \$6.2bn in 2019-20, rising to \$8bn in 2022-23*

There is a note that confuses people:

Excluding the impact of the new Australian accounting standard, the underlying net debt in the non financial public sector is forecast at \$5.3bn in 2019-20, a reduction of \$212m compared to the 2018-19 Budget. Similarly, the underlying net debt to revenue ratio is projected to be 80% in 2019-20, compared to 91% forecast in the 2018-19 Budget.

Whatever the Treasurer says, we have a large debt. I would have thought at the very first budget after this repair—the plan to fix the budget—I would have heard something in that speech that reflected that. I did not, I saw a normal budget. Yes, there were some issues about whether we got this much GST or did not get that much GST, et cetera. I would have thought that after all the effort that has been made to bring a person from Western Australia—obviously, a very experienced person—to bring out this repair to budget paper, that there would have been an emphasis on showing us a way forward in this budget. Unfortunately, there is an opportunity missed there to see if the government really supports these recommendations.

A recommendation that Mr Langoulant made was about getting rid of the efficiency dividend. The effect of keeping that efficiency dividend was made by one of the NGOs or small departments. He recommended that we should get rid of it. The government decided not to get rid of it. I am interested to know why it did not do that. Having been to the briefing by Mr Langoulant, I understood exactly why he thought they should get rid of it, and it made good sense.

One other comment that was in the minister's speech was that we are in times when we have a fiscal crisis. The minister said:

We will see nine schools benefit from undergrounding their power lines before we start the program into the suburbs.

A simple question—maybe for when the Treasurer is summing up. What is the point of putting underground power into a school if the power outside the school is above ground? I am interested to know the logic behind that. You have to get the school connected to a system of electricity. If the electricity is above ground outside the school and it all comes down, that was not much use. I am interested in what that will mean in cost and whether it will be effective.

On the local issues which relate to what I call rural issues, if you look at the budget there is not a lot for the rural area, Madam Speaker, because most of what I see there is revoted. We have been waiting a long time

for the Coolalinga road infrastructure mess to be sorted out. Yet, it has been on the budget for three years. There has been something for at least two years, anyway. We are waiting for something to happen. It would have been nice to hear that it has been decided and is on the way. All we know is it is in the budget, but if you take the case of the previous year, it was something that 'will' happen, but it was revoted.

There is the Pinelands Holtze Road upgrade we have been waiting for. There has been a lot of fuss about that. Of course, some of that was mixed up in the Pinelands debate. But if you take the Pinelands debate out of the way, there are some good things that have been planned with the changes to the road upgrade, especially a new connection on to Tiger Brennan Drive. Again, it is a revote, so it would be interesting to see where that is at the present time.

Then there is the famous Coolalinga bicycle path. In the 2016–17 committal target dates for major capital projects from the Department of Transport it says:

To construct a new bicycle path from Howard Springs to Coolalinga on the North Australian rail corridor—\$1.5m.

That did not happen. The minister sent me a little note that read:

The Howard Springs cycle is funded under continuation of the cycle path program to support active transport in the 2018–19 budget paper, with \$2.496m allocated for these works. The tender for these works closed on 24 September 2018, with the contract commencement expected in October 2018 and completion in March 2019.

It is now in the budget again at \$4.5m. I want to ask why it is \$4.5m ...

Ms Lawler: Asbestos.

Mr WOOD: Three quarters of the asbestos is gone as it was taken out in a previous year. I watched them remove it. The point is that it has gone from \$1.6m to \$4.5m ...

Ms Lawler: That is because there are little ridges now.

Mr WOOD: That is alright. I was going to comment that you should not over-engineer it. It is a cycle path, not a six-lane highway. I say that from experience. If anyone saw the cycle path built from Lambrick Avenue to the existing Howard Springs cycle path and the amount of money spent on that, you would have to say, 'That was an absolute overspend'. It was good to have it, but it was overdesigned.

There is money for another car park at Howard Springs nature reserve, which is a revote as well. There is not a lot there that is new in the rural area. What we have is good, but this year we would like to see it happen.

The Member for Stuart has spoken about education before, as have I. I am concerned that we are spending lots of money on education. Since the 2016–17 budget to now, the budget has gone up nearly \$90m. The total in 2016–17 was \$907m; now it is \$1.082bn. That is a lot of money, but are we achieving the results you would expect from increasing the amount of money going into education. I do not think so.

Two things worry me exceedingly. One is the attendance of children at Indigenous schools for more than four days. There is not much in the budget that talks about this. If we are to believe that over one third of the Territory's population is going to be part of a growing economy, and if that population has practically very little education that would enable them to be part of that economy, then we are failing.

It is not just the government's responsibility, as it is the responsibility of people and parents in communities as well. If I look at the papers for the numbers—I will give you 2016 figures. My wife went to Belyuen School, a government school, and St Francis Xavier School. In those days you learned and 100% of children went to school. My wife has a Grade 6 education. Unfortunately, I believe that she can probably read and write much better than some kids today.

We really need to do something. The figures for the 2016–17 budget are:

Primary, middle and senior students attending at least four days a week, Indigenous, 43%.

Previously it was down at 42% and was estimated to be 36%. Let us go a few years on to 2019–20. We have spent \$90m extra and we have been told there is record spending in education. The figures are:

Primary, middle and senior school students attending at least four days, Aboriginal, 43%.

There is absolutely no improvement. What is not shown in those figures—can we say if the same kids in 2016 were the same kids in 2019? Figures do not always explain things. It is a bit like when we had employment on remote housing and we said, ‘We have to employ many Aboriginal people’. I asked how many were employed for six months, and they could give a figure but not say if it was one person who worked or several at that time. Those figures need to be examined more quickly.

Then you look at other figures—again, going back to 2016–17. Reading for Indigenous students in Years 3, 5, 6 and 7—there was a slight improvement in Year 3 but for the others—55%—and 37% of kids in Year 9 have passed NAPLAN in that year. I do not want to get into that—NAPLAN is not perfect—but these give you an indication.

Take those same figures for 2019—Year 9 reading was 45%, Year 7 was 55% and Year 5 was 50%. Again, there has been a slight improvement in Year 3.

We can put these nice things in the budget about how we are spending, but if we are serious about outcomes—you will notice in the Department of Education’s budget papers in every budget, it talks about outcomes. It says:

Improved education outcomes for students, particularly Aboriginal students, in all key learning areas.

On that outcome, the government has failed. It needs to do something about it urgently because if we are saying the Territory will grow and we want Aboriginal people to be part of this economy they must have the education to enable them to do that, otherwise we will have more people in gaol and more kids running the streets. If we do not educate young people and we leave it in the too-hard basket it will come back to bite us in the future.

I do not want Aboriginal to be left out of the economy. I want to see them as part of the economy. I am not saying it is simple. There may be lots of reasons kids do not go to school. Maybe it is too easy. One person has said to me, ‘There are plenty of royalties out there; we have all we need so we go fishing.’ Another person told me they play guitar in the morning and then they nick off, because that is the bit they like. The bits about learning one plus one is two and whether the moon is part of the universe are not relevant.

We need Aboriginal people, especially in remote communities, to be part of our economy. I see nothing in this budget that gives me a feeling that we are changing things around.

I am not just picking on Aboriginal people; I am looking at the figures, and they are concerning. They have been concerning for many years. This is not something new. It has gone on with previous governments, but we have to sit down and ask how we will fix it. I do not see anything except people pouring money into the system and not getting anything out of it.

Something that concerned me with education recently—I will not tell you the school, but I was asked to be part of a little video the other day. The video is to try to show students at the school that their writing in NAPLAN is right down, from Year 7 to the top grades. Many students there cannot write. My question is to the department—you learn to write in primary school. If students in secondary school are not able to write a precis or a report, or only rely on a laptop or a tablet, where are we failing?

Do the educationalists have all the bright ideas, and have been challenged on what they have done? We spend a lot of money on people researching education and coming up with ideas. I talked to a teacher and he was telling me the kids cannot write properly. I said, ‘We are putting record amounts of money in education, are the outcomes coming from that? If not, we should be questioning the government as to why not.’

We need to ask hard questions. Are we teaching kids how to write, or is it a part of our education that we do not put enough emphasis on anymore? I always wonder whether we will have a science fiction movie one day about when all the batteries fail and you cannot use your laptop anymore—what will you do if you have to write something down and tell somebody something else? You would have to write a letter. Could you?

Regardless, you need to still have those skills today. You need to fill out a form. If you want to get your licence you need to fill out a form. You need to be able to do that clearly, not just write it like hieroglyphics. It needs to be done in a way that people can understand.

I raise those issues, not because I am saying we should not spend money on education. Of course we should. But if the outcomes that are written in this budget are not being achieved, then serious questions have to be asked about the quality of what is happening in the Northern Territory.

I will leave education and go to the minister responsible for youth justice. I congratulate the government on what the minister has said. She talked about research showing that young people diverted away from the youth justice system have a better chance of turning their lives around, compared to youth people who end up in detention. She said:

Our aim is to reduce the number of young people in detention by providing early intervention and support to young people and families and providing a range of programs that can provide an alternative to detention.

She went on to say:

This means we need the facilities to support the programs. As part of this budget, we are investing \$10.3m to provide infrastructure needed to support the Back on Track program, as well as a further \$3.55m for the Barkly youth work camp.

Well, as I said on the radio the other day when I heard the Chief Minister say, 'Oh, there are tenders going out for boot camps'—I do not like the words boot camp. To me, that has an American flavour to it. We need to have an Australian version of it. We did have a boot camp at Love Creek. I am not sure what has happened to that. What I find disappointing is that I have stood in this House and begged, you might say, the then minister not to close Wildman River Downs—and they did. That was a Labor government. And here we are now, we will put \$3.5m into developing the Barkly youth work camp.

I do not know what that will be. I spoke to the Member for Barkly just before we started today. I welcome it and encourage more of these to occur. In fact, I believe some of them should be mobile. I have seen many times where they take kids out to some of the national parks and work out there—mobile kitchen, toilets and showers. Take them out there. Go far enough away they cannot use a mobile phone, or no place to buy a new battery. But take them to a place like Mount Theo where it is far enough away for kids to get the fuzz out of their brains and start to think about why they exist on this planet and what they can do to improve their lives and help other people improve their lives.

I notice the minister said that there will be places considered for Nhulunbuy, Katherine and Alice Springs. I thought the Nhulunbuy one was in the budget, because it was mentioned here last year. I do not know what happened to that. That is excellent. We need more of them.

We need more of the work camps. We only have two work camps—the one at Tennant Creek and the one at Nhulunbuy. There needs to be more work camps for adults. The Member for Barkly will know, because I was involved when the Holtze prison was being built, that I never supported the idea of having a big prison that would take 1000 people. Now it is overcrowded. The whole idea was that it would never get to that because we would have work camps out bush where people would work closer to their community. That has not happened. Mataranka Station is a classic. It is sitting there. It is a great place for many Aboriginal people, not only to go and work there. It was a cattle station before. The university took it over and we had a rocky time with the cattle that died there. But it is still, I understand, leased from the government and is a great opportunity for the government to use that as a youth work facility as well.

In relation to Don Dale, I have said before I do not believe it should move. I believe the accommodation should be demolished. I do not think there should be a concern about whether it is near a residential area or not. You only have to look at the one in Adelaide. What you need there is a non-government organisation—and I am not saying Diagrama is the one. I do not agree that it should go back to corrections. I would rather we get people who have a track record look after youth than the politics of government. I listened to the gentleman from Diagrama, that came out here a few months back, and what he said about his record with looking after youth in Spain, France, and Germany and now in the United Kingdom.

Before the government moves any further forward with developing these facilities it needs to have a belief that we should use people like them and talk to them about the design and whether the existing site could be reused and re-established as a site.

The present one has its benefits. It is close to public transport—it is already there even though it is close to an industrial area. People are used to it. It is out of site. Just because there is \$70m allocated does not mean we spent that, especially in times of fiscal issues. We can do better than we are at the moment.

The other issue is about upgrading Alice Springs youth centre near the prison. When the Member for Araluen, the Member for Brennan and I visited Don Dale, the person in charge of Don Dale said that one of the problems with the Alice Springs facility is that it is too small. In fact, he quoted somebody who came up from Alice Springs to stay in the Don Dale centre who was a model prisoner, but when he was sent back to the Alice Springs facility he became a pest, and he said it was to do with the confinement of the facility; it was too small. Now, we are not going to change that at all, it is just going to be upgraded slightly.

The Minister for Renewables, Energy and Essential Services also spoke on something completely different. She said:

This government understands the importance of reliable, affordable power to underpin our economy and attract more residents. For this reason, this government subsidises the cost of providing electricity to Territorians by about \$1200 per family.

We are committed in keeping these prices rises to a level of CPI unlike what the CLP did. It raised power prices by 37%.

I remember having a very young baby, well I hope it was a young baby, and the shock of getting those bills.

I am not sure what that had to do with the shock of getting the bills.

My concern is that when the minister says:

The government owned corporations have forecast capital expenditure of \$289m which will stimulate the economy and create jobs. This is in addition to the \$80m being invested by the private sector in solar farms across the Territory, including the Manton Dam, Katherine and Batchelor solar farms.

There is more good news for Katherine including the 25 megawatt solar farm which commenced this week. This is predicted to create 100% jobs to the construction phase and this investment is happening because the private sector, including large international companies have confidence in this government and in our plans to achieve 50% renewables by 2030.

What is not coming out is, what is the actual cost? If we are subsidising this by \$1200 per family, the real cost of producing electricity is not being borne. It is being subsidised. What I do not understand is—if you are encouraging solar companies to invest in the Northern Territory, which sounds very nice, and if that investment means that Power and Water receive less money, which means they need a high subsidy—are we robbing Peter to Paul? Are we telling people the real cost of electricity in the Northern Territory?

Are we going feel good and say we will have 50% renewables by 2013 and is the subsidy to do that going to be \$2000 per family? It is no good glossing over the facts. It is nice to have renewables, but if it is costing us, let us know what the cost is.

If people are willing to have a reduction in other services because we will be subsidising Power and Water—do you realise in the budget that subsidy has gone up by \$20m since the last budget? We probably could have built the solar farm with that.

If we wanted solar, why did we not get Power and Water to build it or Territory Gen? Why did we not own it? You are introducing competition—we still need our base load power, we still have trouble selling gas—not enough thought went in to that.

The minister said:

As we move forwards to industrial solar options ...

I am not sure what that would be. I presume that would be solar-thermal.

... and also possibilities for hydrogen ...

I heard the word hydrogen, but it was only a short word—a little bit. The Member for Barkly would wonder why this is not given more publicity. Other states like South Australia, the ACT and other places are not spending money on a potential boost to our economy using renewables. Using methane, as something we

can produce, we can sell hydrogen and nitrogen to Japan, or to ourselves for fertiliser to go with the phosphate mine.

We have the potential to do this, yet do I see any excitement in the Northern Territory? I go to other places in Australia, such as Newcastle to look at the renewable research facilities in New South Wales. I hear about what is happening in South Australia. The ACT is getting hydrogen-run vehicles. I even heard that Bill Shorten said he was interested as he mentioned hydrogen when he was talking about his 50% electric car target—which is up in woop woop land.

The advantage of hydrogen is that you do not have to have a service station, which you would have to fill up with heaps of electrical work at a huge cost to service all those cars. With hydrogen you just need to connect at a normal service station—five minutes later you are off. You can have an electric car run on hydrogen through a fuel cell. It can already be done.

We have the potential to do this, and to run our trains, ships and cattle trucks. Places could do this themselves if they had the facilities. But what do we have here? Three words, 'possibilities for hydrogen'. We can do better than that.

Lastly, agriculture is always an area that misses out a fair bit when it comes to the budget. The minister talked about upgrading roads. There is always the need to upgrade roads. When you say that there will be \$15.9m spent on the Tablelands Highway—if you divide that by about one million you might get 19km of road. If you have been along the Tablelands Highway, you know that it is a lot longer than 19km.

It takes a long time to upgrade those roads. But I am not knocking it. It is good that the government has also put money in for mango roads in the Litchfield area. Both sides of the federal government have promised some money. One has promised money in a global sense, the other has said it will be for those roads. That is important when it comes to investing in horticulture and agriculture.

One thing that is missing in the discussion ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, I will be quick as the Member for Stuart wants to speak. An area that we have missed, as it has come out in the debate on low aquifers in the rural area, but when it comes to agriculture—I have been getting emails from people about not damming the Roper River. I do not know what the concept is.

If we want to develop horticulture and agriculture and not be limited by aquifers, as we are limited by aquifers—once the amount that has been taken out of there and the licences are at maximum—where do we get water from? We have to look ways including off-river dams, or small dams, that will not affect the flow of a major river. If we want to develop agriculture as a long-term part of our economy, then water is essential.

Whether we are growing to grow soya beans, cotton, or mung beans, or have irrigated pastures, we need to have water. Without water we cannot have sustainable agriculture. If you just rely on natural rainfall, it can be intermittent at times—it is heavy or light. You need irrigation to make sure there is certainty when you are growing a crop. That is an area I would have liked to hear more on. Minister Kirby mentioned it, but there needs to be more work.

There is a lot more I could say about the budget. I will say again that the repair to the budget document was released that Mr Langoulant wrote about the pathway to surplus. I am disappointed that that pathway to surplus was not reflected in this budget. There could have been a lot more effort made to show how they will go down the path to create a surplus—which was, by the way, promised in 2019-20 by the Treasurer, but now it is at least 10 years down the track. We need to see the government doing exactly what Mr Langoulant said.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to speak in response to the budget also. What the Northern Territory desperately needs at this time, more than ever, is some actual leadership. If we had had some strong leadership, we would have built a national Indigenous art and culture centre in Alice Springs by now. The reason why we have not built a national Indigenous art and culture centre in Alice Spring ...

A member: Because you undermine ...

Mr McCONNELL: You should take some time to listen. This is something I know quite a lot about and have been involved in for a long time. You can cackle and carry on and cost the future of Alice Springs by your inability to deliver this, but here are some home truths. Recently, the Leader of the Opposition, who I sincerely hope will be the Prime Minister in a couple of weeks' time, did a tour around Mona in Tasmania. When the Leader of the Opposition toured around Mona he made an offer of \$50m towards further development of Mona.

If there had been some leadership coming from this Labor government in the Northern Territory, we could have had a discussion about a piece of national cultural infrastructure in Alice Springs—a national Indigenous art and culture centre. We could have had some significant buy-in from the Commonwealth opposition or the government that is in power now. But because of the lack of leadership, the hubris and the willingness to divide and try to conquer people by causing arguments in a small-scale argument about Alice Springs, we have lost sight of the fact that this is a nationally-significant cultural centre. The ability to deliver this has been ruined by a lack of leadership from the Gunner Labor government and most particularly from Michael Gunner ...

Ms Wakefield: Shame on you, Scott McConnell. I know what you said privately!

Mr McCONNELL: It is disgraceful that Michael Gunner has not managed to attract interest in this project ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Stuart, please pause. Member for Stuart, please refer to members by their electorate names, not their names.

Mr McCONNELL: It is disgraceful that the Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, has not been able to attract a significant interest in this project.

I draw the attention of the House to a few projects that are of similar interest. Recently, there was the opening in northern France of the new Anzac national memorial at Villes-Bretonneux—is that the correct pronunciation?

Members interjecting.

Mr McCONNELL: If people want to learn something about what is going on outside of their little microcosm, let us have a little listen.

At Villes-Bretonneux, we recently opened the national Australian memorial to the Anzacs—the national Monash Anzac Centre in northern France. This project cost \$100m. That \$100m was Australian government money. The most significant Anzac centre in the world commemorating the Anzacs is in northern France. I believe in the heritage of Anzac and how important it is in the Australian makeup, but I also believe that Indigenous people—their contribution, their sufferings and the things that have happened to them in this country—need to be talked about as well. The way to do that is with a national Indigenous centre in Alice Springs. I passionately support that.

There is bipartisan support for that in this House. It is supported by the opposition and Independents. I do not know of anyone in this House who does not support a national Indigenous centre in Alice Springs. I know of people who do not support the small-minded politics of trying to divide and conquer people in Alice Springs—the people who are saying that we will now knock down a multimillion dollar set of council buildings to build new buildings on that site. Whose idea was that? What sort of lunatic thought that up? That is not a responsible thing you do when you have a government that is fiscally challenged. 'Let us knock down buildings that are worthy millions of dollars to rebuild some other buildings.' Do you people have rocks in your heads?

I know the Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, talks about moving big rocks, but is there really a need to rip buildings out of the ground to build new buildings? Why are we not looking for a new, more sustainable place to build a nationally significant centre in Alice Springs? That is what we need to do.

I draw attention to some similar projects. It is worth noting that the National Anzac Centre is in Albany, Western Australia. It is a very remote location. They have a good field of lights display there at the moment, which is well worth a look at. I have been to the National Anzac Centre in Albany. It overlooks King George

Sound, where all the ships gathered before they headed to Europe during the first Anzac campaign. It was built with \$10.6m from the Western Australian and federal governments. It has no ongoing funding. It is run by the City of Albany and has integrated into an existing heritage park that exists there. It is an amazing thing to look at as it is architecturally a significant building.

Imagine if we were seeing some leadership from this government on building this nationally significant piece of cultural infrastructure. In this election campaign we could have had the two possible federal governments trying to out-bid one another on how much money they offered to a national Indigenous centre in Alice Springs. That is where the debate should be. If there was some leadership and we brought people together instead of trying to divide them, we would be talking about actually delivering this nationally significant piece of infrastructure.

I have been engaged in this for a long time. Even when I was in the tent, so to speak, my opinions did not matter because those decisions had already been made by some sort of coterie of people outside of this place—a bunyip aristocracy, a group of people who are not elected but seem to make all the decisions. Look up bunyip aristocracy and you will see what I am talking about.

We are in a situation where elected people do not make decisions in this place. These decisions are made in some back-room wheeling and dealing. What is team Territory, for example? I thought it was the Labor government that was elected with 18 members. I thought team Territory would work on doing things like building the nationally significant Indigenous art and culture centre in Alice Springs, being accommodating of the divide in the Indigenous arts and cultural components—which is what the incoming government wanted for some reason—and to work collaboratively and cooperatively, to talk about ways this could be developed.

We have an example of a project here in Darwin, the Darwin Waterfront Precinct. It is a proprietary limited company which is still run by the government. It is a multifunctional development which has two major attractions, those being the wave pool—which we love talking about in the southern parts of the Territory—and the Convention Centre. That facility and the way it has been set up could easily be done in Central Australia. We could be talking about a multifunctional cultural heritage precinct that included the gallery and the national cultural centre, and being underpinned by commercial operations in a similar way to which the Darwin Waterfront Precinct works.

Another example is Federation Square in Melbourne. It was the biggest built item in the celebration of federation. It was built in 2001 for the centenary of federation. It cost about \$430m and was funded by the Victorian and Australian governments and the Melbourne City Council. It is a proprietary limited company and operates to this day. It is an important piece of cultural infrastructure in Australia. It is a pre-eminent piece of cultural infrastructure that we all know about as it is greatly celebrated. It is underpinned by commercial operations. It is owned by State Trustees Limited, which is owned by the Victorian Government, and it returned a net profit in financial 2016 of \$7.2m.

If we were actually talking about a piece of cultural infrastructure in Alice Springs that was underpinned with commercial best practice, that delivered the aspects that we needed to culturally, that had the involvement of Aboriginal people both Arrernte from Central Australia but Aboriginal people from across this great nation of ours, we could actually be delivering these sorts of things.

Instead, we have this small minded debate where people shout out across the Chamber having a go at people that actually support the idea of building this facility. Learn how to work together, learn how to be collaborative and cooperative, do not manipulate and try and have your own colleagues sacked from your own caucus because you do not like what they had to say.

I was elected to bring my voice to this place. For some reason my constituents do not matter because your small minded view, your divide and conquer is more important, and we are seeing that that does not deliver. We see that in these budget papers. We see that inability in you to even collaborate together to actually do the hard lifting.

There is hard lifting in these forward estimates beyond the next election. There is no hard lifting—you actually grew the expenditure in the financial year we will report on soon by about 10%. You now talk about a reduction of expenditure which you are probably not going to deliver, and no one in the commentariat thinks you are going to deliver it.

The reason you cannot deliver these things is because you will not work collaboratively and cooperatively. Your allies, who you seem to have some sort of debt to, seem to be more important. It seems to be more

important that we can give sinecures to previous Chief Ministers than actually give voice to people that were elected by the people of the Territory

It is not good enough. It is not going to deliver us a substantial change that we need in the Territory. I have been committing some time talking mainly about the lack of deliverability of a national significant piece of national infrastructure in the potential art and culture centre in Alice Springs.

I also need to talk about something else I am very passionate about. We have to recognise that a significant barrier to the growth of the economy of the Northern Territory is Indigenous economic participation. Indigenous land and Labor need to be involved in the economy in the Northern Territory. We need to grow the Indigenous business sector. We need to regrow the Indigenous people involved in the workforce because it is very important.

My understanding is that about 30% of the population of the Northern Territory is Indigenous and less than 4% of the workforce. We have this major issue where we have a high percentage of the population that are not actively involved in the workforce. It is very difficult to have quality of life outcomes without a decent income. It is very difficult to change your life on welfare. My heart goes out to people living on welfare, particularly people living on unemployment benefits because they have failed to go out for so long. They are dramatically low and it must be very difficult to even exist let alone have a quality of life living on welfare.

We talk about that quite regularly in the wider world and how important it is—every budget we are talking about jobs. Where are we doing the real hard yards that we need to in developing these jobs and the economic participation in the busy?

We have to diversify the economy in the Territory not just across whatever the next big fix is. The last big fix was INPEX, the next big fix will apparently be \$1.5bn from the federal government to have new fracking pipelines. That will grow our economy in some way.

We always need some big projects, but we need to diversify our economy and ensure our economy is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. We need to diversify existing activities. We need to increase pastoral production in the Northern Territory and diversify it. We need to get more Indigenous land involved in that pastoral economy—that is really important. We need to reduce the environmental impact of pastoral production by adaptation of new technologies. There are lots of new technologies around in the pastoral industry. We need to ensure that this government is doing a good job of this. We need to ensure we upgrade the beef road network so we are able to truck cattle out over a wider period of the year. That is a very important thing to do.

We need to work on increasing all these sorts of things.

Do you know what I see in this budget? I see subsidies for private home ownership in Darwin—across the Territory where you can own your own home. Most of my constituents are not able to own their own home. There is no opportunity for them to own their own home at all. It is public housing or no housing.

We need to diversify these things. We need to get those remote community economies into functioning economies where there are opportunities in those communities. Some work has been done on this—there is never nothing being done on these things. But we really need to talk about these things and be inclusive of the people in this place—not try to exclude people because they do not like what they say. We are elected to politics to have an opinion and bring our opinion forward and have this diversity of discussion. That is what we are elected to politics for. If you continue to want to narrow down your field by sacking people when it suits you, it will not help you. We will not deliver these changes.

I believe we are looking at our deficit getting to something like \$8.8bn. I do not think that is sustainable. When I asked a question of the Treasurer of how we will sustain that level of debt, I was told I am being ridiculous. My constituents do not think I am being ridiculous. They think I am asking a very legitimate question—whether the level of debt we now have is sustainable.

Where does that debt come from? It comes from our collective futures—the future of our children and our children's children. We are spending their money already. It is all good to blame the previous CLP government or the GST allocations or whatever. What will we do about it? I see in the budget papers, as I read them, that our own source revenue is going down, not up. What are we doing about those things? Will we have less revenue from payroll tax? That means we are likely to have fewer people employed in the private economy. We will have less revenue from stamp duty and that means we are likely to have the values of properties changing hands being less, or there being less properties changing hands, or both.

I have been told this great, good picture about how good things are, but when I look at the numbers, even with my Year 6 education, to me, they do not stack up. I think I am being sold the biggest pineapple.

Let us be serious about remembering what we are in the Territory. We are a place that is predominantly Indigenous. We are a place where we recognise Indigenous law, language and culture. We are proud of the fact that Indigenous people live on their country, practising their law, language and culture. We are very proud of the fact that we recognise Indigenous land rights. More than half of the Northern Territory is held under federal legislation in land trust for Aboriginal people. We have to embrace that point of difference and get on top of it.

Great work has been done by this government in the spend for Turbocharging Tourism—the name is a big lame but the expenditure is really good. What are the people coming to visit in the Northern Territory? They are not coming to see the newest hipster barrister at the local coffee shop in Darwin—although I do like a good barrister coffee whenever I get a chance. There are some good ones in Alice Springs too. They are not coming to see that, they are coming to see Indigenous people and the Indigenous environment. Nearly all national parks in the Northern Territory are Indigenous land. They are coming to see the Indigenous art, Indigenous performance art now and other things like movies and things that are made in the Northern Territory that are inspired, in most part, by the Indigeneity of this place. Let us celebrate the Indigeneity.

Instead, we are trying to sell the place with Boundless Possible in various shades of purple ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member, time has expired. Do you want to continue after, when it comes back for debate?

Mr McCONNELL: Yes, thank you.

The Assembly suspended.

VISITORS

NT Cattlemen's Association 2019 Futures Group

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of NT Cattlemen's Association 2019 Futures Group. Welcome to Parliament House. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

QUESTION TIME

Budget 2019–20 – Moody's Credit Warning

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

It seems that it is only Territorians and the opposition who do not trust your budget rhetoric. Today, Moody's issued a credit negative warning, citing your substantial fiscal deficit and a rise in debt burden to fund recurrent and capital expenditures. In fact, even Moody's doubts this Gunner Labor government's ability to reduce its spending at all, stating that the forecast 0.2% decreases in average expenditure will be difficult to achieve. You are sending the Territory broke. At this point you expect everyone to believe your empty rhetoric about heavy lifting and hard yards when you have done nothing at all to improve the fiscal nightmare that your government has caused.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. Unlike the CLP opposition and the Leader of the Opposition who today outlined his budget reply, we have outlined our plans on how we will repair the budget and put it on a sustainable footing to ensure that we can deliver the needs of Territorians for many years.

We have dealt with those brutal GST cuts, an economy in transition and have been very transparent about our plans. There have been some very difficult decisions we have had to make as part of that ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: What are they?

Ms MANISON: We have shown you what they are through the root and branch review and the fiscal repair strategy—by the way, a report about which the Leader of the Opposition had plenty to say. But he said on radio today he had not read it all—that is for sure!

Mr Higgins: I was not bothered reading what the economy was—I already know.

Ms MANISON: There you go. He has plenty to say and has not even read it.

We are doing the heavy lifting and repairing the budget. We are doing the hard work to put the budget on sustainable footing. We have a Leader of the Opposition today who has outlined a budget reply. What did we hear about their plans to repair the budget in that budget reply? Not much. We heard something about smaller government, which is a way of saying cuts. We would like to know what he would cut. We did not hear anything about the plans or fiscal repair. We were expecting a lot more today, but we got nothing, unlike what we have delivered.

We have been very upfront with Territorians. We have done a very extensive body of work when it comes to fiscal repair. On 16 April we released two bodies of work. They were not easy, let me tell you. The came with a lot of heavy lifting and will take considerable heavy lifting as we go forward. But we have made those hard decisions to ensure that we put the budget on sustainable footing.

Today, as I said, the Leader of the Opposition replied to the budget and had an opportunity to outline what he would do to repair the budget. We heard nothing. We know they have form. We have seen how the CLP goes about it. We have seen them sack teachers and jack up power prices.

What would they do? Would they take money out of remote housing, for example? Is that what they would do? They did not deliver their commitment to police last time. Madam Speaker, the question really is what would the CLP do.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, my question is to the current Chief Minister. Your policy changes ...

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, withdraw that.

Mr HIGGINS: I withdraw that, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: It has happened before, so we will not do it again.

Mr HIGGINS: My question is to the present Chief Minister—the Chief Minister present here.

Budget 2019–20 – Heavy Lifting and Hard Work

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Your policy changes alone have worsened the Territory's fiscal position by almost \$600m over the past 12 months. The economy is in shambles, crime is out of control and no amount of reality denial can possibly convince Territorians that the current Gunner Labor government will do anything to deliver the bright future we deserve. Considering your completely broken promises to balance the budget in your first term of government, add 14 000 jobs per year and this budget that does nothing to rein in spending or waste, how can Territorians trust you? Exactly what heavy lifting and hard work have you done?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have a plan to create jobs, invest in generational change and cut crime and to repair the budget so that we have the ability to deliver on all those plans. The Treasurer, yesterday, delivered a fair budget that puts Territorians first and outlined the bright future the Territory has and we have more good days ahead of us than bad.

Today we celebrated the opening of the Seafarms office in Darwin with 35 jobs based in Darwin. This is about Territorians living and raising their families here and about a world class trade opportunity. People may not be aware of the breadth of the Seafarms operation between Bynoe Harbour, Gunn Point and at Legune and at full scale it will be the equivalent of 1500 jobs and the worth of the live cattle trade.

The live cattle trade proves that the Territory can be a place for a world class export business, and Seafarms want to be a part of that. They want to have an operation in the Territory the equivalent of the class of the live cattle trade. Fantastic news!

As a government we partnered with them to deliver that. We made decisions as a Cabinet deliberately to invest in that to ensure that they had roads. Basic things that people down south take for granted is what you need to do here to develop the north. These are deliberate policy decisions that we have made to ensure major projects happen in the Territory and to ensure Seafarms happens.

I also led a trade mission to Japan and met with a major investor, Nissui, who has invested in to Seafarms and increased their investment in to Seafarms. These are the things a government has to do to ensure major projects happen in the Territory.

There are two things to work through as a major project—work through the government processes and get the finance. With Seafarms we have helped them on both fronts. We have worked through the government processes and made the pitch to the investor to get the investment happening to ensure this project happens.

This is an exciting project. This is one reason why I have confidence in the brighter future—one reason why the Treasurer could get up yesterday and talk about our brighter future, one reason we know there are more good days ahead of us than bad is because of major projects like Seafarm and the work we have done as a government this term to make that project a reality. Without the investments at Gunn Point and Keep River this project would not happen. Without the help of the processes and without the meeting with the investors to get the money this project would not happen.

This government is making sure that there are jobs and private sector investment in the Northern Territory—and we have that bright future ahead of us. We are doing what it takes to create jobs.

What we heard from the CLP today is they are not ready to govern. They have no plan B on cutting and they will not be honest to Territorians about where they will cut—that is not fair to Territorians. We have outlined our plans.

Port Keats Road

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Federal Labor's plan to deliver a fair go for the NT pledges \$20m to the Port Keats Road, but no date and no detail. NT Budget Paper No 3 only contains \$1.6m. In 2019–20 my letter of 5 April 2019 I asked for a breakdown of the \$60m committed by the federal coalition to the Wadeye Road. In your response you said the NT government will contribute \$15m. Yesterday you said:

You and I will be very old before we see the road to Wadeye bituminised. But if you vote Labor we might still see it.

Minister, is this more of your bully boy tactics in threatening the people of my electorate over the lack of support for Labor at the last Territory election.

Can you now give us an honest answer on what money is planned to be spent to provide access to the town with the largest number of Aboriginal Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, federal Labor is committed to bringing forward the roads infrastructure to a five year plan rather than the 10 year plan that we have seen from the federal government.

When I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's budget reply, he talked about roads and how they were going to put more money into them. He may not be aware that 80% of funding for roads in the Territory comes from the federal government—it is 80:20. If he is talking about bringing forward roads in the Territory, he needs to have some immediate conversations with his federal leader as 80% of funding needs to come from the federal Government.

If he thinks the Northern Territory Government is going to be able to fund roads 100%, he must be mistaken. He needs to get Sco Mo on the phone to pledge some money to get the roads in the Territory brought forward.

Otherwise it will not happen way out in the never never. Our government with federal Labor have committed to Territory roads.

The other thing that disappointed me was that I thought Scullion had the opportunity to leave Territory politics with a landmark ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, when referring to members of federal parliament could you please refer to them by their title, either Prime Minister or Senator.

Ms LAWLER: Madam Speaker, sorry. I thought once we had called an election he was not in that role.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, please withdraw that.

Ms LAWLER: I withdraw. I thought Senator Scullion had the opportunity to leave federal politics with the landmark building of the Tanamai highway. I look up at the gallery and I see cattle people and the trucking industry—and the Member for Stuart—who would have loved to see Tanamai Road fully bituminised. We are not going to see that ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. My question was about the Wadeye road and a bit of truth, not the Tanamai and twisted tracks.

Madam SPEAKER: The Minister has time to answer the question.

Ms LAWLER: Madam Speaker, what we ended up seeing federally was only \$160m. With the 80:20 rule going, the Tanamai will only get around \$200m, rather than the \$600m that I had hoped Senator Scullion was going to commit to.

As I said in my letter, Member for Daly, we are putting our 20% commitment in. Federally, they talked about ten years—the Wadeye road not done for 10 years. We will bring it forward five years if we get the funding from federal Labor. You need to vote Labor if you want to have those roads done in five years, not 10.

Education Department Employees – Katherine

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for EDUCATION

In the root-and-branch review one saving that was listed was a review of housing rental arrangements for Department of Education employees in Katherine. Last week department officials told teachers in Katherine that they would be losing their housing subsidies. You are taking your debt and putting responsibility for it squarely in the laps of Katherine teachers. You are forcing them to make the tough decision to leave Katherine.

What is the current turnover rate of teachers in Katherine? How many vacancies are there currently in Katherine schools? What is the average time it takes to recruit a teacher to Katherine and how long do they stay? What review of these factors and potential impact was undertaken before this decision was made?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know that the Member for Spillett is the shadow minister for Education. I am happy to receive a question from her. Our Territory Labor government will always invest in education. I thank the Member for Spillett for the opportunity to clarify some of the language and scaremongering that has happened regarding the subsidy.

No decision has been made. The Department of Education is undergoing a substantial review into an area which has not been cost benefitted in 30 years. There have been subsidies in the Katherine township for our hard-working, dedicated, committed, passionate teachers. For over 30 years this particular subsidy has not been indexed.

When we are looking at how the department spends its money, it is extremely important that we are looking at evidence. We have nearly 300 education staff in Katherine and only one third of those staff receive the particular subsidy. We are talking about 94 affected people. It is really important that through this review process that all of those affected 94 staff—and not all of them are teachers, there are admin staff receiving

the subsidy—that we get a clear view of who is receiving the subsidy, what is the amount of the subsidy being received, and how we can be more efficient in that area.

We have one and two teachers living in either two or three bedroom houses. There are houses where we could look at efficiency measures without looking at further increasing the subsidy. Over 300 education staff in Katherine are not affected. We are looking at clear messaging of the actual subsidy in Katherine which is over \$2m. That is largely left out of the conversation. We are not talking about the removal of a subsidy. We are talking about the efficiency of where the subsidy is being used.

There are costs that are being charged against this subsidy that are unrelated to the housing itself. We are looking at the solutions for the housing subsidy. It is really important that we support our teachers and education in the region unlike the CLP who ripped \$135m which affected over 500 education staff and teachers in the Northern Territory.

The CLP's way of dealing with education in the NT is shameful.

Arafura Games – Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for the ARAFURA GAMES

There were large screens, lights and plenty of noise at the opening and closing of the Arafura Games. They were great events.

Is it true that a so-called local company, which did not own its own equipment, won the contract to supply the audio, lighting and LED screen equipment by sub-contracting two South Australian companies which included South Australian crews to do the job?

Why was the sub-contract not checked to see if it fitted in with the buy local policy? Besides a request for a screen at Civic Park, which was cancelled, why were at least two local companies, who have the equipment, not asked to tender for the opening and closing ceremonies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson for his question. It was fantastic to see him at the opening celebration, getting out there and supporting our athletes. And the Leader of the Opposition just made a motion that I should acknowledge that he was at the opening celebration. Leader of the Opposition, of course I will acknowledge that you came along with your beautiful wife Rhonda to join us.

It certainly was an amazing evening and I congratulate Ben Graetz and the team, everyone involved in the opening and closing celebrations and right throughout the week of Arafura. It was abuzz. It was fantastic to see so many people from out of the Territory enjoying what started off as some dry season weather but we ended up with a bit of the wet season by the end of the week.

Over 1700 athletes from over 40 countries in 15 sports over 8 days. It was fantastic.

In terms of the specifics of your question, I do not have that detail before me but I am happy to look into that. You raised some very direct questions. I will try and seek some advice before the end of Question Time to get back to you. If I cannot do it in that timeframe, we have the buy local program in place, we have the advocate to make sure it flows right down, so that the example you gave can be avoided.

In terms of the local economy, people were abuzz. I was talking to someone yesterday who provides wholesale food and produce into restaurants, and they noticed the impact of the Arafura Games and that their restaurants and cafes were ordering more. That is what we want to see.

Not only is it an opportunity for us as a community to come together to celebrate to sport and embrace athletes from around the region but also for our local businesses who have been doing it tough. We saw hotels booked out. All three of the Hilton Group properties here in Darwin were booked out. We know that teams made bookings. One team alone was close to \$50 000.

Mrs Lambley: How much did it cost?

Ms FYLES: You always get the negative Nancy. She pipes up, 'how much did it cost?' We have said that, Member for Araluen, we will do the cost benefit analysis and we have acknowledged the amount that has

been provided to the Arafura Games to date. I can assure Territorians that we will not do what those opposite do. We are committed to the Games and have announced the date for 2021. We will not scrap it like the CLP did.

Mrs Lambley: Irresponsible spending.

Ms FYLES: She pipes up that it is irresponsible—what is so irresponsible about supporting a fantastic community event.

When you scrapped it, when you were the Treasurer, you tried to defend yourself that you were from Alice Springs and did not know things. You scrapped it without any cost-benefit analysis and the Chamber of Commerce said it was worth about \$10m to the local economy.

The Arafura Games was a fantastic event. I acknowledge everybody—there was a lot of hard work across the Top End.

Live Export Industry – Protection

Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

What are you doing to grow the live export industry? What are you doing to protect the live export industry from the politics of the vegans et cetera?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is timely to have the young cattlemen in here—I hope to see you upstairs later on.

It is an extremely important part of the Territory's fabric and the economy. They are, rightfully, extremely proud of the industry and look after systems and regulations to make sure animals are in the best and healthiest condition they can be.

We concentrate on making sure we do the best we can do. Any opportunity I have at agriculture ministers' meetings is to advocate on behalf of the Northern Territory and make sure any of the decision-makers who are not from here and have a part to play in the future understand how well regulated the industry is in the Northern Territory and how important it is to the Northern Territory. Those things are critical.

There are a host of jobs tied up in this industry in the NT, and there have been for a long time. There are many fantastic opportunities in this industry. Aboriginal Territorians benefit from the growth of buffalo exports. Some of the conversations we have had already about southeast Arnhem Land make sure we have the best opportunity to use the buffalo the best way we can for all Territorians.

The current live export cattle price is around \$2.90 a kilo. When we discuss things with the Cattlemen's Association they are proud that when cattle reach their destination from the Northern Territory they are actually heavier than when they leave. That is a great sign that they are being looked after and treated as humanely as possible.

The cattlemen can give you a number of amazing statistics, but that is one of the things they highlighted, that the cattle put on weight when they go overseas from here. The mortality rates are extremely low. We are proud of that industry. We will protect it as fiercely as we can and explain to people why it is such an important part of the Territory's fabric.

If there are any concerns from either changes among federal ministers or something else, rest assured we will advocate for this industry as fiercely as we can, because it is so important to the Territory. I look forward to meeting upstairs later on and explaining how important it is to us.

Live Export Industry – Banning

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

It was a Labor government that banned the live trade of cattle in 2011. This was in response to political pressure to largely satisfy the Greens and those far from the north. This decision not only damaged our relationship with Indonesia, but it severely damaged our local industry. Federal Labor has already committed

to banning the live trade of sheep. What can you say to the NT cattle industry that this will not, in time, apply to cattle when political pressure arises in the south again, as it invariably will?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the ban was a mistake. Chief Minister Paul Henderson and the Labor government fought hard against it. They stood side by side with the Cattlemen's Association, NT livestock exporters and others. As a government we will do the same if anyone comes for the live cattle trade. We believe that this is a world class export trade. We do it well in the Northern Territory.

We have a competitive advantage at the moment with the quality of the supply chain and the ability we have—talking about the journey of cattle. I have been overseas talking with people who want our cattle and like the beef and the quality of the beef that we provide.

We have a bright future in the Territory not just because of what people are already doing, but because the emerging leaders that we have in the cattle industry who are taking it forward are responsible and responsive. I have complete confidence in our cattle industry. They share that complete confidence in this government, which is standing with them to support Territory jobs and a world class industry.

I have personally benefitted. Our family was involved in the cattle trade. My great-grandad ran and owned Tennant Creek station for a long time—several thousand head. My grandad's first job as a 12-year-old was at Ammaroo as a fulltime stockman. He learned a lot about the importance of the cattle trade.

We know that it is important and we acknowledge the future of the Cattlemen's Association. We believe in this industry and actively promote it. The current and the former minister have both done that. You have to go overseas to keep advocating for trade and future markets to make sure there is a diversity in who takes the cattle. We also know that with the free trade agreement with Indonesia we have got an even better emerging opportunity for live cattle with our major trading partner.

It is the reason why our port is the busiest live export port in the southern hemisphere. The world class live cattle trade is proof of what we can do with other food products in the agribusiness sector. It has proved that you can export and feed our neighbours to the north in a world class way from the Territory.

The reason behind our Katherine agribusiness promise is to make it as easily as possible for the agribusiness sector to aggregate their food to get it in the mass that is necessary to get it to market cheaply. There are huge opportunities with east Indonesia, Timor Leste and further north.

Soy beans are also exciting among other food products. We have the capacity. It is live cattle that proves that this is possible—that we can, through the Territory, feed the people to the north. It makes sense that we do it from the Territory. Look at a map—we are the closest port to them. This is the future of Australia when it comes to export ...

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
Live Export Industry – Banning**

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

The point is the political pressure from the south that threatens all of this. Have you spoken to the federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten concerning this matter, with the decision of federal Labor to support the ban on the live trade of sheep?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I ask the Member for Blain to pay more attention to the news and current affairs. This has already been ruled out by federal Labor. I am happy to rule it out again know that they have already done that ...

Mr Mills: Have you spoken to him?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, did you have a point of order?

Mr MILLS: No, I wanted to know his answer to the question ...

Madam SPEAKER: Please cease interjecting.

Mr GUNNER: Madam Speaker, I took the opportunity to talk to more than just Bill Shorten. In the Northern Territory we have two fantastic members in Luke Gosling and Warren Snowdon in the lower house, and Malarndirri in the upper house, who also stand with the NT cattlemen.

It is not just about Bill, who obviously I have spoken with, and it is not just about other members of that federal chamber. It is knowing with confidence that you have in the Northern Territory three members of the Labor party who are representing us in Canberra and who also advocate strongly on behalf of cattlemen. I encourage everyone to make sure they get your support at the next federal election to make sure they keep fighting for the Territory in Canberra.

Remote Communities – Travel

Mr GUYULA to Minister for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

Travel in and out of remote communities is very costly for families and people who live remotely. Places that are serviced by one airline, like Nhulunbuy and Galiwinku, also struggle with last-minute cancellations and changes to flights which creates problems for people who end up missing connecting flights, medical appointments, working meetings and special events. What will you do to assist businesses and families who operate in and out of remote locations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for that question. It is one you have asked previously in the House. It probably would be useful for me to give you a clear briefing about it to be very clear.

We understand, all of us—particularly also our members who are from remote areas—the difficulties with their community members travelling in and out of remote communities. A federal government held a Senate inquiry into that. We have not seen the results of that Senate inquiry, but hopefully it will provide some direction about that. It is something Luke Gosling and Warren Snowdon are very much aware of because they hear those conversations from our members on this side who are also talking about people in their communities who find it very expensive.

As an aside, I know Territory Health is looking at their budget. The Member for Araluen queried some of the tough decisions that have been made. One of the things the Health Department has done is look at its travel. When you look at patient assisted travel from remotes, families are sometimes coming in multiple times in a number of weeks for medical appointments. Someone with a complex medical issue sometimes has to come in three or four different times. Some of those things can be improved by having greater coordination between specialists, outpatient clinics and things at the hospital.

There is no simple answer. The Northern Territory government does not subsidise remote travel in and out, but we obviously fund travel for people who are unwell. In working people are coming in for professional development, then their travel is paid for, but airfare travel in and out of remote communities is something that the federal government is investigating. There is not that financial assistance to do that.

Those operators are private companies. Whether it is MAF, Hardy or any of those like flight companies that come in and out, they are running a businesses and they need to ensure the costs of that travel covers the cost of operating.

Member for Nhulunbuy, there is no straightforward, easy answer to say that those prices can be lowered because it is private travel. Once that is under government, it is paid for. All I can say is I can provide you with further information through getting some government agency people to have some conversations. But there is no straightforward answer, sorry.

Budget 2019–20 – Alice Springs Hospital Parking

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

I notice in the 2019-29 Budget there appears to be no money specifically allocated to address the car parking crisis at the Alice Springs Hospital. Things are truly deteriorating at the Alice Springs Hospital. I had an elderly gentleman come to see me last week. He was visiting his sick wife in hospital and had to park a mile away. It is a crisis. You are all smiling amongst yourselves as I speak, but what are you doing to address this very important issue for the people of Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Member for Araluen. I appreciate it is something she is very passionate about. I also recognise it is something she has asked about before in this Chamber and had an answer before in quite extensive detail by the Minister for Health who takes this seriously and is doing the clinically planning at the hospital about future services ...

Mrs Lambley: What about the budget?

Mr GUNNER: Obviously, that includes car parking. It is a very considered plan from the Minister for Health that I know the Member for Araluen has been briefed on.

I only spoke in this House yesterday about the work we are doing to free up the nurses accommodation—private sector investment into Alice Springs—fantastic. How, as a government, can we get a win here that is also a win for the private sector that sees additional construction, people living in units frees up space. It is a win, win, win, win.

We are going through that process. We will see in this financial year those units being constructed. That frees up that space at the hospital. This is a good outcome for health, for nurses, the construction industry in Alice Springs and for jobs. You can see the domino effect of those wins that lead back to the hospital. The clinical planning has been led by the Minister for Health that the Member for Araluen has been repeatedly briefed on and that would include supporting the hospital through car parking, among other things.

There is a very clear and considered plan that we have outlined, both from the Minister for Health and myself yesterday. Follow the dominoes. I am very excited about that construction project in Alice Springs, about the leveraging of those 70 units into a partnership from the private sector...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. My question was about the car parking crisis at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, you have time to answer the question. Get to the point.

Mr GUNNER: I think outlining the plan to address the issue is highly relevant to the question. I think answering the question to relevant to the question. Constructing these units, getting a private sector project happening in Alice Springs, is a win for the construction win, sees a positive new development in Alice Springs, provides newer and better housing for the nurses. It frees up that space at the hospital for the clinical services planning that the Minister for Health has taken the Member for Araluen through that then allows for us to have that additional car park...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. I have never been talked through the clinical plan for the Alice Springs Hospital.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not a point of order. Chief Minister, you have the call.

Mr GUNNER: I can, to a degree, be responsible for the Minister for Health briefing the Member for Araluen. I cannot be responsible for the Member for Araluen listening to the Minister for Health. There has been constant and consistent briefing of the Member for Araluen by the Minister for Health about what is happening in Alice Springs. It is positive. We are doing it, we are addressing it.

We believe in and support Alice Springs as the capital of Central Australia, as a spot that services more than just people within Territory borders. The hospital is a big part of that and we are clearly investing in it and the people of Alice Springs. The Member for Araluen has been consistently briefed on what is happening there.

Building Certification

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Minister, I wrote to you in January 2019 regarding building certification and a need for an independent inspector. You responded by saying that you would discuss this issue at the Building Minister's Forum scheduled for 8 February 2019 which was to discuss an implementation plan for the building confidence report.

Will you please update the House on the outcomes of that 8 February meeting? Will you table the implementation plan? If not, why not? Likewise, will you table the building confidence report? If not, why not?

ANSWER

Thank you, Member for Daly. My answer will be very short. I am happy to table the report and the implementation plan.

For people who are not aware, after the Opal situation in Australia, there were concerns raised, particularly by the ministers from the larger states such as Victoria and New South Wales, about the building materials that had been used on some of our large multi-storey buildings. There were concerns about the quality of those builds.

The building ministers—and it was probably when the Member for Wanguri was the minister initially, there was work done then to have a look at those buildings across Australia. In the Northern Territory it was a minor issue. We do not have an extensive issue. I think Queensland has something like 400 buildings that are affected.

Out of that, there was a building confidence report that was written and it is probably on the website. I do not think it is anything to be hidden. It is there. From that report then is an implementation plan. From memory there are 24 recommendations. It is literally sitting on my desk so I am very happy to get you a copy. Mine is worn because I have read it many times. Obviously with this issue of transfer slabs just recently, it is one that I have gone back to and studied quite closely to make sure that some of the issues that have been faced by those nine buildings are addressed in that report.

There are 24 recommendations. The Northern Territory Government has a clear implementation plan for each of those recommendations and timeframes for them. It is definitely not something that we are trying to hide or steer you away from. Every single Territorian who buys a house or a unit, or a property, wants to make sure that there has been quality materials used in that building, that it has been carefully inspected at the right stages and that it is not going to be faulty, whether it is an electrician, a plasterer or whatever it is—when building or buying a house for most people it is their largest investment.

The building confidence report is all about giving confidence to Australians and that if they are buying a multi storey unit anywhere in Australia that they are going to have quality products in it, and that we are not going to see disasters—like Grenfell—in Australia or cracks in buildings like we have seen at Opal. I am very happy to give you a comprehensive briefing on the report and the implementation plan.

Budgets Cuts – Seniors, Pensioners and Carers

Mrs FINOCCHIARRO to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

This budget cuts \$9m directly from seniors, pensioners and carers due in part:

Lower than expected take up following the concession scheme reform.

After all the time and expense of the consultation, why is the scheme not being taken up? You promised it would be accessible, you promised seniors and pensioners would not lose a dime under the new scheme and a corner stone of the reform was to expand the reach of the concessions.

Why have you broken your promises, Minister? Why are you slugging pensioners, carers and seniors with this massive cut instead of trying reach more of them?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, thank you very much for a chance to talk about how much we value senior Territorians in this budget and how we have doubled the concessions going to senior Territorians. We have backed senior Territorians.

There was a significant amount of reform that we have had to deliver since we came to government because the chaos of the previous government meant that we inherited a data base that was not accurate. We have talked to senior Territorians, we have sent them letters and we have made sure that they have been properly signed up. This is about ensuring that we have effective systems that work and by doing that we have saved some money, because there was not as many seniors on the database that are actively using the scheme. It is as simple as that.

We have an accurate database which means that we can have an accurate prediction in our budget. We know what we are spending, where we are spending it and who we are spending it on. We have their addresses and their contact details and we are in regular contact with senior Territorians, and they know the scheme is working.

I met with the national seniors last week to talk about those issues. The issues they raised were cuts by your mates in Canberra. They cannot get services or financial advice from Centrelink anymore. They were the concerns that they were coming to me about.

They were coming in and saying we are happy with the scheme, we want more things on the scheme. One thing I am very proud of that we have done through the senior recognition scheme is to ensure that people can use the money flexibly. They can use it for travel or they can put it on their daily expenses, and they are things that are impacting on seniors. We understand.

Not only do we provide a \$1200 Power and Water support for every family in the Northern Territory, we also provide concessions for pensioners that impact on the bills but for your seniors. Anyone over 65 get \$500 a year that they can apply to their power bill. This is a good news story. Yet, over the other side they seem to twist it and not understand the budget papers.

We support senior Territorians. You cut them off when you were in government. You slashed the amount of senior Territorians who access any money at all. We doubled it and we made sure it was flexible and we back senior Territorians because we understand what they contribute to our community. They volunteer and they contribute to childcare and they make sure people stay in the Territory. We recognise their contribution to the Territory and we will continue to do so.

Humpty Doo Industrial Subdivision

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Some years ago the government released land near Spencely Road, Humpty Doo to a developer to build an industrial subdivision to reduce the pressure on rural lots being used for industrial development.

Could you say if any blocks have ever yet been release, and if not, could you say when this development will finally get off the ground?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are talking about the subdivision at Strangways Road, Lot 5546. In June 2014 Humpty Doo Industrial Park Pty Ltd accessed that crown land for use as an industrial estate. It is to contribute money to the headworks and to put money in for a new sewerage system.

It sought an extension of time. It also has had a further extension of time to October this year. What has happened is that initially, in 2014, it was thought that there would be substantial interest in having further industrial land in the Humpty Doo area. That has not eventuated. Without the new development, there are already lots in the Spencely area that are currently on the market trying to be sold.

The development agreement was amended in January 2016 and the company was given an extension to December 2017. It then requested a further extension, citing low market interest in that land. At this stage it has been extended to October this year.

Mr Wood: It is too expensive.

Ms LAWLER: Yes—we have had these conversations previously. I have some further information. The 20 stage one lots are currently being marketed by the developer for about \$700 000 for a 4150 square metre lot to \$1.79m for a 1.4 hectare lot. As the Member for Nelson said, in the current climate is probably for rural lots something that is not being looked at.

It has been extended. We would like to have land available in the Humpty Doo area for industrial development. But, it is moving quite slowly. The property council late last year did a review of industrial land across the greater Darwin area. Its projections were that there are substantial amounts of industrial land already available and that the demand is not there.

It will be at least October this year before we see any more movement on that one.

Police Resourcing – Alice Springs

Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

As minister you would be aware of significant incidents in Alice Springs, particularly in Bath Street between Coles and Woolworths, where the street has been closed down. This is not just due to the event yesterday, but there were a number of events leading up to that.

These significant events happening in Alice Springs are the result of a lack of policing resources in remote communities. Is the denial of adequate resources to remote police causing a safety issue in the town of Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are committed to making sure that people in the bush get the police resources that they need and deserve. When we came to government one of our key commitments was an extra 120 police. We know that we need to boost police resources across the Northern Territory. It was something that the former CLP government promised but failed to deliver.

As well as the 120 police, we also have put on 75 police auxiliary liquor inspectors, of which I know the Member for Stuart is not the biggest fan. We have just reached a contingent of about 60. There are another 15 to go. We have had great results when you look at alcohol-related assaults in Alice Springs. There has been a decline in alcohol-related presentations to the emergency department. We are getting result.

There is no doubt that we want to see more resources in the bush. We are making sure that we are looking within the police as to how we encourage more officers to put their hands up to become remote police officers. I want to see more people becoming police officers in the bush as opposed to filling in on a temporary basis. This is important as they can make longer term relationships with people in community. They have a bigger impact when they stronger relationships in community.

We have been working with police about how we can strengthen the incentives to get people out bush as well. We have been looking at how we can make greater waiting for promotions for people who have done time out bush. That is something we are running with me and will also help ensure we get the resources out bush and people committing to it.

We are also looking at ways in which we can get relief for those officers out bush. When I took over the portfolio of police, I went around and met many officers at remote stations. The feedback I got from many of those remote officers is that being a bush police officer is hard. They are constantly on call and it can wear them down because there is a lot of pressure on their shoulders every day and they are called out a lot. Sometimes, people get sick, somebody wants to have a holiday or somebody might need to do some professional training and development. We are boosting the pool of that remote policing resource deployment of people who can go in and do that relief operation work to ensure that we have our officers out bush with the support they need to better serve their community.

They are ways we are bossing police resources, Madam Speaker.

Budget 2019–20 – Heavy Lifting and Tough Decisions

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

Over the last couple of months, we have heard endless rhetoric about the heavy lifting, the tough decisions, the difficult decisions, yet most of us are still scratching our heads trying to work out exactly what you are talking about. What does that mean? Could you give an example of the heaviest lifting you have done through this budget repair? I have not finished my question yet, Chief Minister, and ...

Mr Gunner: I am happy to answer it, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, please pause. The member has time to ask her question. Keep going, member.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I would like an example of the heaviest lifting you have done in the budget repair process. I would also like to know some detail about how many executive public service positions have been cut or ready and maybe a few examples of exactly what those positions are.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, what is very clear is that the members opposite have not done the heavy lifting to pick up the Langouant review and read it. They have not done the heavy lifting to pick up the root and branch review and our responses and read it. They have not done the heavy lifting to turn a page and read everything we have outlined publicly, on the record, or everything we have done. It is all out there. It is all public. The CLP and the Independents cannot bring themselves to do the heavy lifting of reading anything and inform themselves of anything.

We have done extensive media conferences outlining everything we have done. The Treasurer has spoken in this place. We have publicly tabled everything, yet the members opposite cannot bring themselves to do the basic work of reading it. Territorians deserve a better class of opposition and Independents. They deserve someone prepared to do the work. You have to do the work!

We saw yesterday the Leader of the Opposition admit that he had not read the independent review into fiscal repair—had not read it or considered it. Then today, in the CLP Leader of the Opposition's budget reply, we heard an incoherent rambling contribution to the budget debate that they are not ready to govern and the only plan they have is a plan to cut. They will not be honest with Territorians about what they plan to cut and where ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance, Standing Order 110. I am not interested in this political game, I just want some real, tangible examples of heavy lifting.

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order.

Mr GUNNER: All Territorians want a CLP and Independents that are prepared to do some work, some reading, be briefed when they come into this House and know what they are talking about. This has all been publicly released in extensive detail. I am embarrassed for the Member for Araluen that she will come in here and confess that she has not done any work and has not read anything ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: My apologies, Chief Minister, you still have a minute. It had not gone around.

Mr GUNNER: The Member for Araluen has done no work and the CLP is not ready to govern ...

Madam SPEAKER: Okay. Chief Minister, please pause.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Relevance, Standing Order 110. I feel embarrassed for you. What is an example of your heavy lifting?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Apparently, you still have another minute.

Mrs Lambley: You cannot answer it!

Mr GUNNER: We have very clearly, in significant detail, outlined everything we have done and are doing. It is all public, all on the record, and it is clear the Member for Araluen is not prepared to do the work to properly represent the people who live in her electorate. It is a disgrace.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! He has no examples ...

Madam SPEAKER: Chief Minister, had you finished.

Mr GUNNER: Yes.

Budget Repair – Cost of Planning

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

How much is the Gunner Labor government spending in total in advertising its plan for budget repair? Why is the government advertising the fact it is merely doing its job of trying to fix a fiscal crisis of its own making?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I do not have that figure. I will endeavour to get it, but it would be fair to say that Territorians expect their government communicates with them in regard to the work they are doing. There is no doubt they want to ensure the Territory is on sustainable financial footing, and that the budget is being managed. We want to make sure they understand why there are significant reforms happening across the public sector and why there are changes happening which are being driven off that fiscal strategy report, the root-and-branch review that had several difficult decisions in it.

We are doing the heavy lifting. We are making hard decisions and being transparent with Territorians about those decisions. It has been a very big body of work. We have given people detail on that, unlike you—you stood up here today and gave a budget reply speech in which we did not hear what you would cut in order to balance or fix a budget, or how you would deal with the changes to GST in the Territory, which are here forever thanks to your colleagues in Canberra.

We did not hear any vision, plans or hard work today—we did not hear much at all from the Opposition Leader. We know the opposition has form in this regard. We have seen what they have done in government before. This includes things like scrapping the Arafura Games and power prices put up through the roof. We saw what happened in education and that they failed to deliver the extra police that were promised. We saw a raft of form when they were in government.

Opposition Leader, you are the alternative government, so we want to know how you would deal with the serious financial challenges we had because of the GST. Instead, today you had an opportunity to outline your vision and outline how you would deal with these serious challenges. Instead we got nothing.

We are getting closer to the August 2020 date, and there will be a point where you have to put a credible plan on the table. It will need to be costed, so I wish you luck. We have been clear about how we are going about this work.

Water Licence – Distribution

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

I recently asked if I could look at a copy of the Santos application for the grant of a licence to take all used groundwater, which I presume was their hydraulic fracturing program. In an email I received from the department, it said:

Please note that this copy has been made available by Santos for the purposes of digital distribution to the intended recipients only and for their exclusive use.

My name was superimposed across each page of the report.

Can you clarify if applications for water licences are available to the public, regardless of the purpose of the application, and if there are restrictions what are the reasons for those? Can you also say if I would have been breaking the law if I had distributed my copy of the Santos licence to anyone else?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker I will have to get clarification on that. I am unsure if that is the case. In the back of my mind I had a briefing on it and I understand you need to read the application while you are at Water Resources. I presume that is the case. It is about confidentiality and people accessing that or be able to have it emailed.

I will have to get clarification but my understanding is that you need to go in. An example from the Barkly is that a copy was emailed to ...

Mr Wood: They gave me a copy. It had my name on it. They wouldn't give it to anyone else.

Ms LAWLER: All right. Yes, you can get copies then. I am a minister with a good memory, but when it comes to some of the nitty gritty of operational things I leave it the CEs and people in the agencies to manage the issues. I can get you clarification on that.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I ask that further questions be placed on the Written Question Paper.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT **Speaking in First Language in Chamber**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to a resolution of the Assembly on 14 March 2019, the Member for Nhulunbuy has approached the Speaker for resources to permit him to speak in his first language in the Assembly.

In providing the resources, I have allocated the advisers' box on my left to the Aboriginal Interpreter Service staff on hand to facilitate the oral interpretation and translation into English.

While normally it would be highly disorderly for a stranger in an advisers' box to speak and be heard in the Assembly, the procedure endorsed by the Assembly on 14 March will, for these limited purposes, permit a stranger to assist a member with translation and/or interpretation if leave is granted.

For this to occur, the member must seek leave of the Assembly to do so. I call the Member for Nhulunbuy.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to speak in language and have my words interpreted as I make my contribution.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION **Community-led Schools**

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): [The member spoke in Djambarrpuyngu.]

The Interpreter: Madam Speaker, today I bring this motion to the Chamber because parents in the communities are being fined and that is a failure. These fines have the capacity to result in criminal history and possible imprisonment.

The issues of school attendance are complex. We want our children to attend school, but engagement is a problem for many reasons. Schools are foreign, they are not embedded in our culture. We are asking that Yolngu Aboriginal leaders are given authority. There must be more Aboriginal principles, more Aboriginal senior teachers, more Aboriginal linguists, more literacy production centre workers, and Aboriginal teachers in every classroom and regional offices.

To do this there must be appropriate training for Aboriginal teachers in education for two-way learning. We need to return a program that recognises qualifications for local teachers in local communities. We need to provide pathways that allow for success, and the current pathway does not allow for success.

Schools for Aboriginal children must embrace their identity, not undermine it. Our culture and language is strongly who we are. We are not Europeans. We live on our own country. I acknowledge the Indigenous Languages and Cultures program, but it is not a bilingual program. The ILC program is a section of time in the day or week where children learn their own language or culture. Bilingual education, or two ways, means that the language of instruction is in our language, especially for our young children.

Every lesson is taught in our language, and through our language we obtain the knowledge of maths, science, literacy and we learn English. School engagement is also problematic because where are the jobs for our children? We need to be able to develop business enterprise and provide training that reflects the wishes of the community.

There are also some cultural barriers. Elders have said we have to have mixed age classes with children from clan alliances in one class and spread classrooms out to different parts of the community to different camps where children feel safe. At Marpurru, teachers go with children to ceremonies. We make these cultural education spaces part of our classroom, but so far the government education system is failing Aboriginal communities.

Parents and families are not incompetent or stupid. We feel your disapproval. We can feel that you brand us stupid and lazy. This creates a space that we do not want to engage with.

Previously, I spoke about the UNICEF report titled *Fixing the Broken Promises of Education for All* showing the reasons for school non-attendance across the world. The report finds that one of the reasons many children do not attend school is because it is not in their language. The UN study understands that this is exactly why our children are struggling to attend. That parents are struggling to engage because you set us up to fail. This is your failure, not ours.

It is your failure because over the years there are people in the department who do not believe in teaching our children in their language. These people have systematically dismantled the system.

There was a time when there were bilingual units based in Darwin and Alice Springs with up to 12 staff who travelled to support the community. The professional support included designing a two-ways curriculum. There were linguists in every region and an ESL support team. The teachers in schools were supported to undertake two-ways education. There was also a strong remote area teacher education program for Aboriginal teachers.

It was the past Labor government who introduced the first four hours of English only policy. It is this Labor government that continues to under-resource two-ways education. It is very hard for any of the bilingual schools to really provide two-ways education anymore.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that it is our right, for our children, to access education in their own language. It is your ongoing failure to teach our kids in their first language. It is clear and evident in your failure to train our local teachers.

Minister, this is not our failure, but it will be yours if you do not make changes and instruct your department to engage communities, elders and leaders properly across all clans and camps including homelands, and hand over authority instead of fining our people for your failures. Work to create an equitable system where education is accessible to all.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, it is honour to speak in response to what has just been presented to our parliament. This is an historic moment and is the beginning of a change in the Northern Territory. It is not until we understand the voices of the others that we can respond adequately. My congratulations to the honourable member for his courage in persisting and finally coming to a position where this has been allowed in this parliament. This is, indeed, a great and significant day for the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr MILLS: Not all of us had the opportunity to hear and some of us find it difficult, if we have heard, to understand because we are so blinded in many respects by our own culture. We can only interpret through our own culture that which is from another culture. That is the first big step that we are called upon to make, particularly in the Northern Territory, which is a very unique place.

We are talking about the budget and the economy, but the economy has its operation within a society. For the true wealth of our community to be recognised and realised is when we begin to understand each other well and listen carefully. I am very pleased that I have had the opportunity to be here in 2019 to hear this speech.

I have heard, on many occasions, the voices of those who, when they feel that they will be heard, will speak. Bear in mind what I have just said, because many times the speaking might occur because they do not feel that they will be heard or understood. The most recent time that stays in my mind very clearly is when I was

with the Member for Nhulunbuy at Banyala and were talking about the future of the young people. We are often thinking about youth justice which is an issue we are endeavouring to make progress on. But we do not seem to have solutions. We just have a reconfirming and redesccribing of the problem. But when I was in Banyala, the community leader looked at me and said, 'We would like to be involved in this. We would like to be heard and make a contribution. Would it be possible that we could work together on this? After all, they are our children.'

I thought, 'For goodness sake.' That seems such a profound and powerful request, heartfelt. What sort of true government would not hear that if they want to actually make a difference and to change the paradigm, the way that we think and feel about such things? To truly govern and govern well with the voices of all of those that we are governing for.

When it comes to community education, I can draw on my own experience as a school principal. I was fortunate to come to the Northern Territory in 1989 to be principal of a school that was operating under a model they had developed in the Netherlands called Christian parent-controlled schools. The concept started by the Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper in Holland was to recognise that the first principle is that a child belongs to a family. It is the family that is responsible for that child's education, not the state. The state is to facilitate and support and help the parent discharge their primary responsibility.

That is such a simple but profound concept because we often get seduced into thinking that it is the government's responsibility to educate and we just present our children to the government, to the state, to be educated. At the end of the day it is the family's responsibility and once you recognise that, you then support that. How could you support it if you have not heard or empowered or encouraged the family in their primary responsibility and then found ways of adjusting and administering that support through a family. You cannot educate without the support of a family. Therefore that concept is very important.

As a school leader, constantly working to remind families that they are the one's responsible and we are here to assist you. Therefore we want to know how they feel about education. What is important to them? Of course, it is important that they are equipped for later life but where are they right now? The relationship within a family and the support that can flow from that is critical.

That is the first principle. The second principle in education is that you cannot teach someone something they do not know. You have to start from the known position to go to the unknown position. It is a simple matter. My wife is an early childhood teacher. She has taught so many kids to read. It is an honour to be with my wife when she speaks to these kids who now have children saying 'this is the lady that taught me to read.'

To give someone the ability to read, you have to take them from where they are to take them to the next spot. What do they know? In our culture, Western culture, they grow up with books and the familiar concepts and the written word so you go from English—basic, written, pictorial— to more abstract concepts.

If you are going in to teach someone from another language and fortunately I have had English as a second language training and cross-cultural training, you have to find the home concept, understand that and then have that understood in the mother tongue. Connect the written text to the concept that you know because you will need someone else in the classroom to assist you, someone from that culture, to help you interpret at that point so you can go from that which is known, introduce the concept of language in the western model, and go from that point.

To have English-only instruction is the worst place to start. Particularly for those early years because you are teaching concepts and reinforcing concepts that are basically misunderstood or not known. You have to go from the known to the unknown.

In my teachers training, we were given an experience like this and it would be great to have this experience for anybody. We were all trainee teachers. We sat in a large classroom and a man came in that we did not know. He turned out to be Hungarian. He began to speak to us quite strongly in Hungarian. He was clearly teaching us something in Hungarian, but we had no idea what he was saying. He was pointing to people and getting them to stand up and say what he had just said. We did not even know what he was trying to do.

We were all on the back foot and we were terrified because was an aggressive sort of chap. We went through a 40 minute lesson with no idea of what we were meant to do because we could not understand Hungarian. All of our instruction was in Hungarian. All the demands made to us were in a language that we could not understand.

At the end of it our pulse rate was up—we were anxious as we did not know whether we had succeed or failed. It was a bizarre experiment. At the end of it they said that is what it is like for some who is receiving instruction in a language they are not familiar with. You might be reasonably smart, but you cannot get a handle on what is going on. That is why the secondary part of this presentation is so vital.

I remember those early days, meeting people who were invested in two-way learning. They were enthusiastic and committed to the task. It is sad to see that fade out over time. We keep looking at the outcomes and are disappointed with them. So what do we do? We try harder with mechanisms that are clearly failing. This is an important speech.

For all those that are listening, I trust that not only have we listened, but we have heard and are beginning to understand that we have to apply a different mindset in order to make real progress.

Ms UIBO (Education): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this motion to the House. I acknowledge that it is a historic day for the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. Most appropriately it is during the International year of Indigenous Languages that for the first time in the NT we have had a member of the Northern Territory parliament speak in their mother tongue and own language, having it translated for their parliamentary colleagues.

I commend the Member for Nhulunbuy for his work and my Labor colleagues for supporting the changes through parliamentary process to the Standing Orders to allow this to occur. I acknowledge the translator from the Aboriginal Interpreter Services for their partnership and work. The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Community Development, who has carriage of the AIS, has already spoken to the interpreter. I thank you for your work.

I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for presenting in his language, which is an area I know he is extremely passionate about, especially with regarding to language and education.

I move a small amendment to the motion. I move the following amendment: to amend the first paragraph of the motion by removing the words 'discontinue its policy' and replacing them with 'consider alternatives to'. It is proposed that the first paragraph will now read:

That this Assembly urge government to consider alternatives to using truancy officers to find parents in communities where children have not attended school.

No amendment is proposed for the second paragraph. I table that amendment.

Only the Northern Territory Labor government can be trusted to invest in education. We know it is the key to generational change and to creating a brighter future for all Territorians. We have comprehensively reinvested in education, restoring the savage cuts that the CLP made to our schools, teachers, families and *djamarrkuli*—our children.

Student attendance at school is influenced by a multitude of factors outside of the school fence. We are addressing these through our 10-year early childhood development strategy and other wraparound services for our students in the NT. We are focused on working with communities to hand back decision-making so they have the power to make the generational changes that will see student attendance and education outcomes improve.

We know that student engagement improves attendance. That takes investment in schools so that schools are places that families and children feel welcome at and want to attend.

The CLP ripped \$135m out of the Education budget in its term of government four years ago. This is the equivalent of 500 teachers and support staff being sacked throughout the system. We are only just now, two-and-a-half years into government, returning to the level of investment we had in education in the NT before the CLP took government.

We have provided more funding directly to NT schools. This includes an additional \$20m per year, since 2017, for the provision of more teachers and classroom resources. I heard the Member for Nhulunbuy speak about the resources that were lost, particularly in language support teams across the NT.

We are resourcing schools to meet the needs of their students, through a fair, predictable and transparent school resourcing model, based on the recommendations of an independent review.

We know the needs of students in the bush are generally more complex as there are multiple factors impacting on student learning.

Our school funding model consists of the base student rate and weightings for year level, socioeconomic status, Aboriginal status, Aboriginal concentration, remoteness, students with English as a second language and students with additional needs in recognition of needs of students.

Our needs-based model provides more funding per student to students in the bush because they have greater need and face great disadvantage.

For example, 60% of additional \$20m we put into school budgets in 2017 went to remote and very remote schools, around 40% of students are located in the bush schools, but their needs are greater and service delivery costs more. In 2019, the average per student funding rate for urban schools is \$10 500 and for remote it is \$14 160. A school like Parap Primary is funded at a per student rate of about \$8400 whereas Angurugu School's rate is \$16 250.

At Mulga Bore it is similar with rate of \$15 860, Maningrida is \$15 170, Tennant Creek High, with very complex student needs in the middle and senior years, is \$15 280, whereas Darwin High School is \$10 980.

Lajamanu is \$15 000 and Papanya is \$14 690.

This is what needs based funding looks like—this shows clearly that we are investing more in education in the bush, because the need is greater.

We are also investing in learning environments, with Building Better Schools funding providing every school with \$300 000 toward infrastructure upgrades which the school determines, including all remote and very remote schools.

Some examples of completed projects include:

- Maningrida—upgrade to preschool ablution and VET learning area
- Ramingining—acoustic improvements to classrooms, which is great when we hear about hearing health and the impacts on learning
- Nganambala School, or Emu Point—basketball half-court and shade and play area for recreation and health
- Haasts Bluff—upgrade to the main classroom block
- Laramba—upgrade to the canteen
- Jilkminggan, off the Roper Highway, refurbished its resource rooms and added new playground for their upper primary area.

These are all needs that have been identified and committed by the school to how they use their Building Better Schools funding.

We have committed \$5m for refurbishments and upgrades to homeland schools. Last year, \$1m of upgrades were delivered for the Yirrkala Homeland School and works continue in Budget 2018–19 with the works for Donydji, Ramingirr, Mungkarta, Apungalindum, Amengernterneh, Irrultja and Awawerr—Soapy Bore.

I am quite good with the Top End language but I struggle quite a bit with the Centralian language and I apologise to my Centralian colleagues.

Our Labor government is increasing our funding to schools but funding alone will not simply change the outcomes of the disadvantage that is faced by our students across the NT. We need quality teachers, we need exceptional leaders and we need schools with strong relationships and strong communities backing them—and we need our kids to go to school every day regardless of where they live.

Student attendance and outcomes at school are influenced by the multitude of factors outside of the school fence, and we are addressing those through the early childhood development strategy over a 10 year period.

We speak a lot in this House about our Families as First Teachers program, which is now 39 in the Northern Territory—34 remote sites and five urban sites. By 2020 the Territory Labor government will have another 14 FaFT sites across the Northern Territory and we have announced the next seven expanded and new sites for this year and another seven by December 2020.

At the end of 2018 there were more than 2300 children participating in the FaFT programs across the NT—and that is a fantastic figure.

As part of Starting Early for A Better Future our 10-year Early Childhood Development Plan, we have committed to expand the FaFT program through the establishment of 14 additional FaFT—Stay, Play and Learn sites.

Under this strategy we are providing \$750 000 in the 2018–19 budget and a further \$1.5m annually for this next budget to build on our existing investment in FaFT. The funding will be used to deliver our seven FaFT sites and new Stay, Play, Learn sites across our expanding FaFT programs sites. We will end up with 53 sites across the NT by 2020.

Recently, I caught up with the FaFT teachers and Families liaison officers when they were in Darwin for some of their regional forums. Over half of our FaFT employees from our communities are local Aboriginal staff and that is a fantastic suite for this program but of course, recognising that families are indeed the first teachers for our young ones.

Investing in Families as First Teachers is because we believe that this approach is the way to commit to our program's success but our community and school and family success.

The final report of the Abecedarian Approach Australia (3a) Linkage Project led by the University of Melbourne in partnership with the Department of Education is expected to be released this year in June. The research project followed a cohort of 151 children aged between six months and four and a half years old and their families in Maningrida and Galiwinku to identify the contributions of different levels of (3a) interventions to children's language and cognitive outcomes prior to them attending school.

We are serious about achieving generational change for children and families around the Territory. We are focused on working with communities to hand back decision making so they have the power to make generational changes that will see will improve student, and family and children outcomes, with the attendance and educational improvement we need to see real change across the NT..

Right now we have teams of engagement and compliance officers working across the Territory directly with students and families to foster relationships, encourage regular attendance at school and assist in removing any barriers that are experienced to making attendance improvements by coordinating access to support services. The NT Education Department employs a range of strategies to improve student attendance as a means of ensuring that every child in the NT has the opportunity to engage, grow and achieve in their schooling, no matter where they live.

Schools analyse the school-specific attendance data and identify various factors that impacted on enrolment and attendance in various school sites. The predominant factors affecting attendance are things like family mobility, funerals, community unrest and illness.

There are 23 engagement officers located across the Territory working to engage families, and there are 10 compliance officers who are authorised officers under the *Education Act* to compel enrolment or attendance at school through the issuing of directions and notices. The department also supports the delivery of engagement programs for boys in 14 schools and girls in 13 schools in the NT through our various targeted Aboriginal secondary programs. These programs work with priority groups at risk of disengagement to improve student engagement and outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Schools have local initiatives to address non-attendance and encourage and reward regular attendance in school. The department collaborates with key stakeholders, including the Commonwealth government, to ensure a targeted and coordinated use of resources is approached. We want the bigger picture to be positive outcomes for our students.

On 30 June 2018, all department senior attendance and truancy officer, SATO, roles ceased to exist. These roles were replaced with engagement officers and compliance officers. There are 23 located across the Territory who work on referrals from schools or work directly with students and families to foster relationships and encourage their regular attendance.

In Term 1 2019, engagement officers will work with schools, families and students in approximately 30 remote and 15 urban Northern Territory government schools. We know that student attendance at school is influenced by a multitude of factors outside the school gate. We, indeed, take this into account. We need to ensure that families are supported to overcome any barriers to attendance. If children do not have food, we know it is harder to learn and we want schools to be working with communities to provide breakfast and lunch clubs where it is needed.

If children have behavioural challenges, we want to give their teachers and leaders skills to support the need they have in the classroom. If families do not have access to transport, we want to ensure we work with communities to overcome this challenge and see how we can help get students to school. If children do not feel safe at home, we want to create safer communities in the bigger picture.

I applaud my colleague, the Minister for Territory Families, for her work in Galiwinku on the Women's Safe Place in the electorate you represent, Member for Nhulunbuy. These initiatives of great safe spaces in communities are community-driven initiatives that we support, as a Labor government.

We are building better health clinics around the NT. Member for Nhulunbuy, in your electorate, this government opened a new health clinic in Galiwinku.

Where there are barriers to school attendance, we want to overcome them so that every child can attend school every day to reach their full potential. We know there are certain events that happen that are outside of the family's control and fines are—believe me—the very last resort that anyone wants to look at. We want to support families to get children to school before any of the punitive measures are even looked at.

We do not want to penalise families and children's involvement in the important cultural event which is learning in a traditional sense and cultural sense and it is learning in a community sense. Where children are out of school because of funerals or other significant events in a community our schools and our staff on the ground are working with the local communities every day to make sure that students are engaged and their attendance is accounted for.

Where families are travelling between communities at various times of the year we need to ensure that there is ease of access to the local school that that student is moving to. At the same time, there is a consequence of parents if students have continued absences from schools without reasonable excuse or support from their community.

Ten compliance officers operate in the Territory and are authorised officers under the *Education Act* to compel enrolment or attendance at school through the issuing of directions and notices.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 43. May I request extension of time for the Minister for Education?

Motion agreed to.

Ms UIBO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that this is a very important motion and topic to speak on.

Such notices are not the first choice. Notices are only issued and pursued when repeated attempts to engage with the parents and family care givers of a child to ensure their child is regularly engaged with schooling if those measures have failed. This is the absolute last resort and something that nobody wants to pursue.

From Term 1 this year, Compliance Officers will engage with schools with the highest numbers of students who have not attended school in the last 20 school days. Compliance officers will work with 34 schools throughout the Territory—urban and remote.

In addition, Compliance officers will conduct regular patrols of major shopping centres in urban and regional locations during school hours. Compliance officers will also be present following major events to ensure students promptly return to school.

One of the key joint initiatives with the Commonwealth government for improving engagement is the Remote School Attendance Strategy, RSAS. The Department of Education is currently working to finalise and implement a new RSAS agreement.

The department also supports the delivery of engagement of our programs targeted for our middle and senior students for girls and boys programs. This includes Clontarf Academy for boys and the STARS Academy and Role Models and Leaders Girls Academy for our young women.

Community Led Schools and LEaD committees represent the education component of our commitment to local decision making in schools. And it goes to the heart of the Member for Nhulunbuy's motion, in schools and communities making the best decision for their young people.

This was a key commitment when we came to government in 2016 and we are working to achieve it. Already we are seeing results.

We are working with seven schools this year who want to be in a position to become Community Lead Schools. We are working with another 40 communities across the Northern Territory to build capacity and engagement and governance to support them in their goals to become community lead schools.

Mr Costa: Delivering for the bush.

Ms UIBO: Delivering for the bush. Thank you, Member for Arafura. I know you are very passionate as well in your electorate.

Community Led Schools is an election promise being implemented in conjunction with establishment of Local Engagement and Decision-making, LEaD, committees in remote schools across in the NT.

Local decision-making and Community-led schools engages with the broad spectrum of school councils, school boards and local advisory groups in communities that represent the interests of communities and families.

We are working collaboratively with our schools, families, community and industry partners and local businesses and organisations to reach agreement on education delivery in each individual remote community.

Where communities want to grow and develop to leadership and become a Community Led School we have engaged NT COGSO to strengthen governance arrangements and include the delivery of capacity building for community members to actively participate in decision-making.

This year the department will work with the seven schools I mentioned, including Gunbalanya, Yirrkala and Yirrkala Homelands, Lajamanu, Willowra, Nyirrpi and Yuendumu. These schools have identified a desire and capability to become community-led schools. I think this is fantastic. I have the fortune and privilege to visit the majority of those schools.

There are other schools that I have not visited yet, but I look forward to talking with them about their community-led schools initiatives. The department will additionally work with 40 other schools to engage in LEaD committees and pursue what is best for their communities, schools and the education that is delivered in those communities.

School councils and boards are incorporated bodies. Under Part 6 of the *Education Act 2015*, school councils and boards have a range of functions and powers that have not been fully utilised by some schools, particularly some of our more remote schools. We are looking to improve and strengthen that.

We are working to improve student outcomes across the Territory. We want to work with families to make sure children are going to school every day. Where there are barriers to attendance, we will support families to overcome them where possible. We want to work with schools to grow strong local decision-making bodies, so that their parents and caregivers, who are local community members, are directly making the decisions that will most impact their children.

The Member for Nhulunbuy mentioned some points that I will address in speaking to the motion. I quote from your speech that, 'Schools are foreign'. In terms of the placement of school in the western system, I understand that that could be strong viewpoint. In terms of schools as a place of learning, I disagree. I believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are from the oldest living and continuous culture in the world. Learning is something that is part of our culture. It is something that we need to further support.

I understand the Member for Nhulunbuy's passion. We talk about walking strongly in both ways. We need to make sure we support our communities to do that with children, when we talk about our more remote Aboriginal schools and communities.

The Member for Nhulunbuy mentioned enterprise and secondary pathways. I think this is a key part of where we are starting to get great outcomes with secondary provisions cross the NT. The training and opportunities that we can get in some of our remote and small communities—it is essential that we build partnerships with trainers, providers, businesses and corporations to provide opportunities for employment outside of school for students in those areas. It is a key cornerstone of community-led schools to look at what partnerships we can support, from the perspectives of the department and the local community.

I was concerned about the part of the Member for Nhulunbuy's speech where he talked about Aboriginal people being branded as being stupid and lazy. I refute that. The majority of teachers in our remote communities would not have that perspective. They are there for the right reasons—to support the learning of not only our students, but also of our Aboriginal teachers and assistant teachers. This is so they take on leadership roles if they do not already.

I have met many strong local Aboriginal teachers in our Territory schools who are definitely—I would be worried if anybody in this day and age, in 2019, has taken that derogatory idea of Aboriginal people. Member for Nhulunbuy, you have my support in making sure that we stamp out any of those terrible derogatory terms about Aboriginal people. I am happy to work with you if there are areas of concern if you think that theme is being carried on into our schools.

The Member for Nhulunbuy talked about failures. These failures need to be addressed over time. The NT Labor government has started the journey to addressing this with our local decision-making policy. This is not only with Education, but across all sections of government—Health, Housing, Infrastructure, Police, law and justice, and Education. These are key areas where local decision-making will make an impact for our communities and the longer generational change that we know is much needed in the Territory.

Member for Nhulunbuy, you also spoke about the success of the history of the Remote Area Teaching Education program or RATE as most of us know it. I have met with you on this particular issue and I acknowledge your passion in this area and talking about the ways we can improve the pathways for local Aboriginal teachers but also the opportunities for our assistant teachers who are currently working in schools—many of them have been in those positions for many years—and being able to help provide strong, supportive pathways for them to move into further qualification if they choose.

It is something I have been talking about with many people across the NT. What is the current equivalent of that program now? I acknowledge there is a big body of work that we need to improve on and it is something that I am taking on in my journey and role as the Minister for Education.

Member for Nhulunbuy, the local engagement and decision making team is dedicated to working with all schools across the NT and I am very happy to offer a briefing on any of the matters that you have raised today. It is *yindi djama*—big work—but our *djamakuli*—our kids—are worth it.

Thank you Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this motion to the House and I commend you for being able to present your motion in your language of Yolngu Matha.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is my great privilege to support the Member for Nhulunbuy with his general business motion. Looking at how we can encourage this government to look at the policy of using truancy officers to find parents in communities where children have not attended schools and to urge the government to implement its policy of community-led schools and work with community members to identify what barriers exist for children in attending school and implement changes identified by communities to remove barriers to education for all children.

This is a really important issue and like the speakers before me, I would like to start by acknowledging the Member for Nhulunbuy for his incredible contribution to this parliament over the last two-and-a-half years. What we have seen today with the Member for Nhulunbuy, Yingiya Mark Guyula, speaking in his home tongue, his own language, in the Northern Territory parliament is historic.

He has made this change. I heard the Minister for Education acknowledging her team for this change in the parliament but I see it very differently. I see it as something that the Member for Nhulunbuy has achieved in a very short time in this parliament. He has managed to convince us all that this is an important issue; that

he be allowed to speak in his language in the Northern Territory parliament. I give him full credit and nobody else for making this happen.

Hopefully in the future we will see many more Aboriginal people—and of course we hear interjections from the government who cannot stand to let anyone be recognised fully for what they have done in this place. I still hear the Minister for Education objecting but in all reality, I was a part of the Standing Orders Committee and I know how hard the Member for Nhulunbuy fought for this right to speak in his own language.

Despite what the government members might say, that is in fact what happened. Congratulations to him. Congratulations to the people that he represents that have been right behind him in this monumental and historic change to the way we do things in this parliament.

This debate this evening that the Member for Nhulunbuy has introduced to parliament is about his language, or Aboriginal languages, it is about culture, respect and self-determination. It is ultimately about how we educate children in the Northern Territory who do not speak English as a first language that come from different Aboriginal groups around the Northern Territory.

I have learned a lot from listening to the Member for Nhulunbuy over the last two-and-a-half years. I have learned a lot about these types of issues, the unique needs and interests of Aboriginal people. He is a true leader in this respect. He is breaking ground in teaching the likes of me, and hopefully other members of this parliament, different ways of thinking about how we provide services to Aboriginal people.

This is a typical example of the types of issues the Member for Nhulunbuy has brought to the table. A philosophical discussion about how we can do things differently and better cater to the needs of Aboriginal children who speak English as another language—the fact he has had the courage to raise the fact that parents of kids in his community feel belittled and judged by the way education is provided in the Northern Territory, and how the truancy officers execute their duties. That is an important insight for someone like me, a white, middle-aged woman from Alice Springs with a European background, to hear those things.

It takes courage for members to come to this parliament and share that information directly from their communities. When I was Minister for Education for a short period in 2012–13 and again at some point after that—I had two short stints that were unmemorable for anyone observing politics at that time. My contribution to education was not memorable because I was doing the job for such a short period of time.

Our approach to bilingual education and two-way learning was to allow communities to decide what they want and how they want to do it. We did not see ourselves as being the experts. Education is full of experts in education and on this issue, but we did not think we knew better than the local people about how to educate children who speak English as a second language and come from a culture outside of mainstream Northern Territory. We led with that as a principle.

It concerns me that in 2012–13—six or seven years ago, but it seems to be still a major problem. What has changed? The same can be said about a lot of issues in the Northern Territory. What improves and changes over time? Some things do, but some things like this, which are almost put in the too-hard basket time and time again, for some strange, inexplicable reasons, are not addressed in the way they should be.

I was a bit disappointed, listening to the opportunity given to the Minister for Education, given that 90% of her speech was crafted and prepared from level five staffers and people from the bureaucracy. She read that out without even listening first and responding to what the Member for Nhulunbuy said—the heartfelt and deep contribution he made to this debate.

Reading off your policies, how much you have been spending and this, that and the other is very impressive for you and your people, but in regard to a philosophical education on how we can do things differently it was not particularly useful.

We need to listen to people like the Member for Nhulunbuy, and the government needs to be brave and listen to him about how it can change things. I am not hearing any commitment from government about how it might embrace some of the ideas and experiences of this leader of a distinguished Aboriginal community in the Northern Territory.

Excluding the wisdom and ideas of people within this Chamber, and in this case the Member for Nhulunbuy, is a sign of real arrogance. It is not really helpful to anyone.

I support the Member for Nhulunbuy. His contribution to this debate on how we can do things differently for Aboriginal children who speak English as a second language in the Northern Territory is critical. It is a real opportunity to think about changing policies—not be arrogant and sticking to what you are doing because you think you know best, but opening your mind and thinking laterally about some of the things that have discussed tonight by the Member for Nhulunbuy and trying to incorporate them moving forward. That is what we are here for. We are not here to beat our own drum for 35 minutes and then tack on to the end of the speech something that the member—in this case, the Member for Nhulunbuy—has raised in his motion. It should be the other way round. We should be embracing ideas and debating and discussing how we can improve the lives of all Territorians.

I am not hearing that from the Minister for Education. She is obviously still fairly new at the job, still getting her head around exactly how to function as a minister. You do not need to put on your arrogant hat ...

Ms Uibo: How is it arrogant, Member for Araluen? We are talking about local decisions and empowering our communities? Do you not listen to anybody when they talk?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs LAMBLEY: ... and storm forward with rigid ideas and policies based on a written speech when you have a perfect opportunity here to embrace and welcome and listen to what the member has suggested ...

Ms Uibo: The last 10 minutes of my speech was talking about issues that have been raised by the Member for Nhulunbuy—very important ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am hearing the minister rattle on over there. She had her chance and she did not want to speak off the cuff ...

Ms Uibo: I know. I did and you did not want to listen to any of it, so shame on you for not even ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: ... and now she does. She wants to have an argument because she wasted her opportunity. She squandered her opportunity to thoughtfully, genuinely contribute to this debate ...

Ms Uibo: Did you listen to it, Member for Araluen?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I feel very sorry for her because she is an Aboriginal woman who comes from an education background. She could have really made a more meaningful contribution than she did ...

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 20—no, 31: offensive. I do not see how pointing out my race or my history or background has anything to do with my capability in my job. I ask the Member for Araluen to withdraw. I am very offended.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am not withdrawing because I did not say anything offensive at all. It was my opinion. I listened to her quietly and respectfully ...

Ms UIBO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Mrs Lambley: I am not withdrawing.

Ms UIBO: I find it very offensive that the Member for Araluen thinks that my cultural background or heritage has anything to do with the capability and capacity of how I can fulfil my ministerial role. You are feeling very 'sorry' for me as an Aboriginal woman. Shame on you!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs Lambley: You had your opportunity, minister, and you squandered it.

Ms Uibo: You do not even listen when someone speaks.

Mrs Lambley: I listened to you. You have been rattling on.

Ms Uibo: Maybe you could comment on what I said.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Thank you for your patience, honourable members. Standing Orders 31 to 33 look into this conduct. Member for Araluen, the Member Arnhem has indicated that she finds that language offensive. Therefore, I ask that you withdraw the comment. If you are not willing to do so, then I will make a determination.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, could I have some detail on what exactly it was that I said? From my recollection of what I said is that I said, 'I feel that she squandered an opportunity to present her perspective as an Aboriginal woman with an education background in this speech'. I did not offend her. I felt I gave an opinion that she has ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please cease your interjections until this is resolved. I will finish with the Member for Araluen, then I will ask the Member for Arnhem. Member for Araluen, do you have any further remarks?

Mrs LAMBLEY: I do not believe I have said anything offensive. My comments were not racist, sexist or offensive in any way or fashion. If the Minister for Education has a problem with the content of my speech, then she needs to be very specific about what she means. I feel offended that she has had her opportunity to give her speech and now she is interrupting mine to grandstand an allegation of offensive language.

Minister for Education, can you be more specific, or are you trying to disrupt my speech?

Ms UIBO: Mr Deputy Speaker, this has nothing to do with the Member for Araluen's speech. I believe that every member of this parliament has the right to speak what they think is important in this House, particularly to the people that they are elected to represent.

What I found offensive by the Member for Araluen was the reference to my race and my gender in saying that she feels sorry for me as an Aboriginal woman with an education, speaking about the issues that I have spoken about in my capacity as Minister for Education. I have no reason whatsoever in the critique that the Member for Araluen gave of my job to see it in any way, shape or form appropriate for her to point out my race and gender and link that to my capacity to be capable in my job.

Mrs Lambley: Minister, I think that you have read far too much into it ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I did not ask anyone to speak. Honourable Members, in the rulings and precedents of the 12th Assembly, during a debate of a censure motion on 15 October 2013, the Speaker ruled pursuant to Standing Order 62 that

... consistent references to race and nationality were offensive and that the words be withdrawn.

That was Speaker Purick in October 2013.

Member for Araluen, under that determination I ask if you could withdraw your comment.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I referred to myself earlier in my speech as a middle-aged woman from a European background in response to comments made by the Member for Nhulunbuy about the fact that he is not European or a migrant.

If you are going to ask me to withdraw a comment based on the—I am not withdrawing anything. I have not said anything offensive. I think the Minister for Education is taking this rather too personally. It is about a debate on community-led schools and that is all that it is. I was intending to critique what she said.

I said that I feel sorry for her that she did not make the most of an opportunity to engage in a meaningful debate about the topic at hand. I am not withdrawing. I think you are being a bit precious, minister.

Ms UIBO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not have any problem with feedback and critique regarding my role and the motion that has been brought forward. I do not see how it is appropriate to point out to the house the gender and the race of a particular member of parliament, linking that to the way that they do their job.

I ask that you rule fairly and equitably so that you set a good precedent in parliament, particularly for the Northern Territory and the electorates that we represent.

Mrs LAMBLEY: So we cannot mention anyone's race in parliament anymore? \

Ms Uibo: It is not up to you to decide who offends who. You do not get a chance to decide that ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, if I have to dissent you, I will have to remove you.

Honourable members, under Standing Order 33:

When the Speaker's attention is drawn to specific words the Speaker will determine whether or not the words are offensive or disorderly.

Member for Araluen, I go back to the comments I read out earlier. You have referred to yourself as a middle-aged woman. You did not direct that comment at someone in the Chamber. The Member for Arnhem has taken offence to language she believes was disorderly. I ask that you withdraw that comment. If not, you will need to move a motion of dissent.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Can I have clarification, Mr Deputy Speaker? Are you asking me to withdraw 'Aboriginal woman' from my speech? Is that correct?

Ms UIBO: Mr Deputy Speaker, I know the Member for Araluen does not listen to anyone else in the House, let along herself.

The words used were that you feel sorry for me as an Aboriginal woman with an education, and what I said in this House.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I think you need to read the *Hansard*. This is getting a bit out of control.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31; the member feels that the words are offensive.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We are already past that.

Ms AH KIT: I would like to note my objection, if that is okay. I find it offensive, as an Aboriginal woman in this Chamber, Member for Araluen.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, please resume your seats. I know we are all getting a bit heated right now. I am trying to work through this issues.

Member for Arnhem, you have placed that on the record. Member for Araluen, you are suggesting to go back to the *Hansard* to get the accurate recording. Is that correct?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Yes. And I think there is a context to this that needs to be taken into account. I am not a racist. I am not having a go at you for any reason apart from what you did with the opportunity that was squandered in parliament. If you want to interpret it as some sort of racist slur then I am feeling a bit offended, too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, I cannot get a *Hansard* rush that quickly. In this instance I will provide two options: you may withdraw the comment and check the *Hansard* upon its distribution to honourable members tonight; or, if you do not wish to do that, you are provided the opportunity, under Standing Order 48, to dissent from a ruling. That process is set out in the standing orders.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just for clarification, you are asking me to withdraw?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: For the sake of continuing the work of this Chamber, I withdraw. But I question what this whole performance was about. Can I continue my speech?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, you may.

Mrs LAMBLEY: The contribution from the Member for Nhulunbuy tonight was profound. It has obviously stirred a lot of emotions in people. This is about language, culture, race, respect, determination, Aboriginal

having a say in how their children are educated. It is about good policy, and ministers standing up for all Territorians and being very clear about how they are engaging with communities on education policy. It is not about getting precious and defensive about how people critique your speeches in this Chamber. It is about getting on with business. It is about Aboriginal people living in the bush, speaking English as a second language feeling that they're being belittled and judged, that they are missing out and that they are not learning. Those are the problems I want to talk about in this Chamber, not some precious minister worrying about some interpretation of what I say. I have never said anything racist in this Chamber. I have never directed...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, no. No more interjections. You will all have an opportunity to provide your comments to the debate. This is a place of respect. Member for Araluen, continue your remarks.

Mrs LAMBLEY: It is my speech and I will say what I want within the standing orders of this parliament. You had an opportunity to speak and like I said, you squandered that opportunity and now you have tried to derail my speech. My speech is about the topic. My speech is about backing the Member for Nhulunbuy and supporting his move to try and improve the plight of Aboriginal kids living in communities that are having difficulty getting educated.

The Minister for Education is still screaming at me as she leaves. I withdraw. I withdraw.

Let us get focussed here, people. This is not about you and your precious egos. This is about real problems for real people in the Northern Territory. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing this forward. Who would have known we would end up in this place tonight talking about the precious ego of the Minister for Education?

I have withdrawn those statements and I stand here tonight as a proud colleague of the Member for Nhulunbuy hoping that his expectations, his wishes, are listened to by the government. That things can change to improve the plight of the people that he represents. He is a leader of his community and he is trying hard to effect change and I support him 100%.

Mr HIGGINS (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will give a small contribution to this debate that we are having at the moment. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for bringing the motion in the way that he did. I think he will be proud of that in years to come and so will his community.

The CLP has always supported a community development model in our Indigenous community across the Northern Territory. The parliamentary wing of the CLP continues to support that. An example of how that has been supported in the past is how the CLP introduced a community-led type model in health clinics across the Northern Territory in the introduction of Aboriginal health workers. That has proved very successful.

I know this government here at the moment has plans of actually handing more of that control over to local communities. I hope they adopt a similar model to that successful model that was introduced by the CLP many years ago.

The thing that needs to be an outcome from this, and I think it is the intention of the Member for Nhulunbuy, is that these community-led schools need to ensure that the outcomes that they achieve are going to be better than what they have now and that those outcomes make people in remote communities have an education that is equal to, if not better than, anyone else around Australia.

That is something that is treasured under our constitution that says everyone is entitled to an equal access to an education. That education is then something that will ultimately lead to a job. They are some of the prerequisites to having this sort of model introduced.

In regard to the model itself, we have heard some commitments from the Labor Party in regard to what model they would have. We would need to see what that suggested final model from government is before we would support it. We would consult the Member for Nhulunbuy as well as our own constituents on how that model might work.

The thing that people need to bear in mind, and I do not know all of the detail on what happened in Wadeye in regard to education, but I can give a brief snapshot. The people of Nhulunbuy, in the last 10 years, I think it was, took the Education Department to court over its failure to deliver an education to some of the people

of Wadeye. That ended up in a multimillion dollar settlement. It was funded by the Catholic Church. It involved bringing in CDU to train some people in some of the trades that were being used around the community so that those people who had failed to be given an education were then given the opportunity to get a job.

It is education that really leads to a job. The important thing with this is that, as far as I know, it is the only time a community has ever taken anyone to court in regard to their failure to deliver an education. It is an important issue and I hope that the Member for Nhulunbuy is aware of it. If he is not, it is worthwhile him having a look at that as well.

The other thing I will say is that when we talk about language, I have spoken in this House before about people who have English as a second language and some of the complications that causes. The speech I gave was in regard to agriculture and the use of backpackers and the difficulty you would have in running a property if you were a Vietnamese person and English was your second language, and you employed a person on your property who was, say, German, who also had English as a second language. It complicates it even more. But when people in the Territory think about teaching kids in these communities in their own language, they need to bear in mind how hard it is on some of these properties.

I am relating it to that because there are consequences that have come out of that. We have had incorrect chemical usage because of translation problems. We have adapted some of our chemicals that now have Vietnamese on the labels. The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries produce brochures in different languages.

What the Member for Nhulunbuy is asking for is not something that is any different to what we do for people who have come to our country. He is asking for it for people who are from this country. It is on that basis that we would support the Member for Nhulunbuy's motion. I presume that government will support it as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wait with baited breath to see when the government will come out with its final plan of what it committed to do prior to the last election.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, first I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for giving his speech in his language. I must admit it is not the first time a language has been spoken here. The Member for—I am trying to think what the electorate was at the time. Alison Anderson gave a speech in her language some time ago, so people have spoken in their language. She then translated it into English.

I do not care how that process works, I just believe that a person should be able to speak their first language in this parliament, as long as it like when I was in Nunavut and I could hear it in English as well. They had three languages at Iqaluit, which is where the parliament is. They had French, English and Inuktitut, which is the Inuit language. They had street signs in three languages which made it a bit hard to sometimes fit it all in on the one stop sign. But I was able to listen to the language.

It is important that we reflect the diversity of people who live in the Northern Territory, especially in parliament, by having the ability for that language to be spoken. That does not necessarily mean that I agree with everything the Member for Nhulunbuy said. He knows that sometimes I disagree. I think it is good that any member of this parliament has the ability—even if we had an Irish person who wanted to give us a little Gaelic. After all, in Ireland—it is one language of course, and the Territory has many languages—there has been an uplifting or revitalising of the use of the Gaelic language. It is the indigenous language of Ireland and was suppressed in the 19th century by the English. Towns were given English names and people were not allowed to speak their native language. I hope we do not get to that stage here.

It is great that we do speak a language. There are many languages in the Northern Territory, some are vibrant and unfortunately some of those languages, because there are few speakers, are dying and will die. There is no doubt about that, because they are a small language.

My wife, being a Wadjigan woman, speaks a fairly unknown language called Batjimal. There are very few people who now speak that language, and even she does not speak it fluently. She was taught it by her father but moved to Belyuen when she was young and obviously when she went to the school there she spoke English.

Even so, she has worked on a book that has been published, where plants, animals, insects and fish all have Batjimal, English and their biological or botanical names. Glen Whiteman put a number of those books together. He has done a whole series of them, including one for the Tiwis, for Ngan'gikurrunggurr out on the other side of the Daly River, the Jawoyn and the Wagaman people. My wife, along with a number of older

women from the Wadjigan group, worked with Glen putting on those books. Unfortunately nearly everybody who put that together has since died.

One good thing is the language is there. There is also a dictionary in Batjimal and, hopefully this is part of my wife's therapy, she is teaching that language to the great-grandchildren of other parts of the family. Trying to get them to understand the pronunciations and meaning of those words.

It is important we preserve language as best we can. I know the ABC reads the news in a number of languages including Yolngu and Kriol. I always have an argument with linguists about Kriol and Pidgin and whether, as my wife used to say, it's only bad English. I will not get into that.

The Member for Barkly might remember when Parliament sat in Alice Springs and the Minister for Education struggled with Central Australian words. I have had many an argument that if we are translating a spoken language, and all Aboriginal languages are spoken languages, at least the written translation should be in phonetics.

Anyone who can tell me how to spell Ampilatwatja is a genius. People who come to Central Australia would have no idea how to speak the names of those communities. I think it is a mistake. People have argued that you have to learn that language. I argue that it is not their language, it is an imported language linguists use to write about Central Australians.

I have books by Ted Egan, who was a native affairs patrol officer. He wrote Arrernte as A-double-R-U-N-T-A, I think. There could be a D or Arrenda. Now you look at it and think: is that the same word? Try the shopping centre in Alice Springs.

Sometimes we need to encourage people to be able to learn other languages but in some cases such as Central Australia it is a bit of a mixed bag. When you go down to Pitjantjatjara country, it is written in phonetics. You come back up this way and it is written in another language. I have said at those debates, if we are going to do that we should have the phonetic language side by side so people can pronounce it.

The Member for Nhulunbuy made some good points. A lot of this debate has been had over many years. I was at Bathurst Island for a long time. There was a lot of debate—I will be honest with you, Member for Nhulunbuy, I did not always agree with bilingualism. I worked with a tractor. The tractor had a manual. There was no way that the manual was going to be translated into Tiwi. It was a technical book dealing with a tractor.

I know that there is a word for tractor in Tiwi. One place you will not find Kriol, pidgin or broken English is Tiwi. They never went down that path. At Daly River you would be talking about (inaudible) and all that sort of stuff. That is the way they were. The Tiwi Islands never did that as they preserved their language well. I am told there is a more modern version than the older version. Sometimes the older people get a bit cranky about that as there might be some shortcuts in their language.

I always felt that there is an opportunity for adult people in the community to be trained as adult educators, so that they take the responsibility, not the government. The traditional owners or the people who have a knowledge of the language take responsibility for teaching their language. It does not have to be qualified teachers. My wife is not a qualified teacher, but she knows the language as best she can.

Some of that responsibility should go back to the traditional owners. If they want their language preserved, they have to make that effort. Whether it means night or Saturday morning classes—they could get paid for it. I am not saying they should not be paid for it, as they would be adult educators. You cannot always go with the government.

The Member for Nhulunbuy is getting at that to some extent when he mentions community schools. The people who want their language preserved need to take some responsibility. I am a great supporter of language being preserved. My difference is how it is done, not that it should not be done. This debate has been around a long time.

The Member for Nhulunbuy mentioned Aboriginal teachers. Again, that is a debate that has been around for a long time. The Batchelor Institute has a teaching qualification for primary school teachers. My niece became a teacher through the Batchelor Institute. You then have the argument that if you wanted quality, was the teaching certificate that you got from the Batchelor Institute the same as if you went to Charles Darwin University.

Were you having two levels of teachers, one at one grade and one from Batchelor Institute that you could only use on Aboriginal communities? Do Aboriginal people want that or do they want a teacher that is the equal to anyone else in the Northern Territory? There was a debate over that. I remember having it in parliament. We have a means of naturally qualifying people to teach in schools. Batchelor Institute still has those qualifications available for anyone who might wish to take them on.

My question is that you end up having two levels of teaching. It is a good point, because you raised the question of appropriate training. Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr was an Aboriginal teacher many years ago. The principal back in Sister Ann's day—she made a concerted effort to make sure the next principal was a Tiwi woman. There have been things happening over a long period of time. I think that is good.

You have to make sure that if you do that, you make sure those people have the qualifications to do it. Do not do something that looks good for the sake of looking good. You need to do it because they are the right person, the right person and are qualified and capable to do the job. You have to make sure you do not put people up on a pedestal just so you can say, 'Look at them. Look at me.' It has to be done for the right reasons.

I raised this issue in my speech on the budget today, but it is one of attendance at schools. I do not quite agree with the Member for Nhulunbuy that kids do not school because parents think they do not like English. I go back to my time when I went first to Daly River. The bell would ring and a 100% of people would go to school. When my wife went to school 100% of kids went to school and the kids did not learn language there, they learnt all English but they still went to school.

I think there has been a drift away, not just in Aboriginal communities, but in non-Aboriginal communities about people not turning up for school. If you look at the attendance figures of some of my local schools, even though they are much higher than many of the Indigenous schools, they are not up to the standard I would expect. I would expect nearly 100% of kids to be going to school in the Northern Territory.

There are parents who will not send their kids to school, or if they do they do not care. Talking to some of the principals they say we have written and told people you must send your child to school unless you have a proper excuse. No reply. The school itself loses financially—I think Member for Nhulunbuy you have mentioned this before—but if a school as some of these schools have—I have schools on this list of attendance for 2018, I think there is one school out in Central Australia that has 37.5%. Out of 147 kids, only about one third of those kids goes to school. That affects the amount of money the school can get.

I have a list here, I did not count them all, but certainly I do not believe that you can just say that these kids do not turn up to school because only English is taught there. I will not name the schools but I went to a school in the Top End when I was on the Council of Territory Cooperation and we went out to look at houses.

This particular place has a bus that goes around and picks up kids and I was talking to the driver and the driver said 'you know what happens when we go round to those houses there? Some of the kids start throwing stones at the bus.' The reason is because those mums do not want those kids to go to school because they want them to look after the babies while they go off and pay cards.

I do not think the question about attendance at schools is a simple one or one that you can just say this is the reason. Communities vary right across the Northern Territory. What I could say—and again, you raised this issue Member for Nhulunbuy—there is no feeling that I need to have an education because there are no jobs.

I understand that fully but Aboriginal people, like a lot of people in this world, will not be able to get enough work in a community unless the government keeps putting money into that community and you have jobs that are funded purely by government. You might only need two welders in a community so if a kid goes in and learns to be a welder, how can he use those skills anywhere else. He may have to move, like many people have to, to get a job.

It is not necessarily the case that because someone cannot get a job in the community therefore we should say why bother with education. If we are to have doctors and teachers and we are to spread the word about Northern Territory Indigenous people, like a lot of people in this world, have to move. Why do we have so many Filipinos in the Northern Territory today? Why do we have Vietnamese? Why do we have Greeks?

I know, the Member for Nhulunbuy you will say they have come to our country, but what I am saying is within our country there are jobs and people move around this country to find work because there is not sufficient work in their own community. A lot of little country towns there would be very little work. You go into the

Mallee areas of Victoria, go through some of those communities there, there is not a lot of work in those communities anymore because they have less farms, people travel to the local supermarket much easier than they do to the local store. People have had to go out from their communities and get jobs elsewhere.

I do not want people to feel that there is no reason to have an education. I can understand why people might say that but I think we need to look at the broader issues about education and how Aboriginal people can take their legitimate right in our community in any part of Australia, just like our footballers do. We do not say oh well I can play football out of Port Keats or Bathurst Island and that is the only place I will play it. If that were the case, we would not have all those champions down in Victoria and New South Wales and Western Australia.

Aboriginal people who are playing football elsewhere have moved to use their skills in another way. That is exactly why you need an education, so you have the skills if there are no jobs in your community, or it is a small community which will not have those jobs, and you have the ability to find work elsewhere.

It is not easy. I remember that many years ago Tiwi Islanders were sent to Queensland to get an apprenticeship. Boy, did they get homesick! I understand that. Even I got homesick—I was 19 when I moved to Daly River. I loved it in the end; I thought it was great. I was only a young bloke with an education in horticultural science. I took that education to Daly River to help grow vegetables. It can apply not only to Aboriginal but to others.

How you get young people engaged in schools has always been an issue. You want to make school interesting, but you also want to tell people that if you want to learn you need discipline. I will use my wife as an example. She was the Aboriginal liaison teacher at Sacred Heart Primary School in Palmerston. She used to say to me, 'I wish I could have given some of those kids a little clip over the ear'. She spent all of the day saying, 'Be quiet, sit down, do this and do that'.

It might all be very well to have people turning up at school, but if they are not learning it is a waste of time. We need leaders in communities, not only in non-Indigenous places, to say to kids, 'When you go to school you have to be quiet and have respect for the teacher'—Indigenous teacher or not. If you want to advance your education you need good quality time at school.

When I showed those figures before of the number of children, Indigenous especially, who are only turning up for school for four days and are missing a day—it is at 45%, which is not good. I do not want to see more Aboriginal kids in gaol. One way to make sure they do not end up there is to make sure they get an education that can get them a job and some goals in life.

Member for Nhulunbuy, I thank you for what you have brought forward today. It is worthy of debate. I do not agree on everything and might have a different stand, but that is what this parliament is about.

It is great to hear someone speaking in their language. If there are others here who feel the same, and in new parliaments when I am not here, I think it should be encouraged as long as people can hear a translation.

Thank you for bringing this motion forward.

Mr McConnell (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is with great honour that I speak in response to the Member for Nhulunbuy's motion.

Several speakers before me have said that what we need in this place is leaders. To get children to school we need leaders. We have had a demonstration of leadership from the Member for Nhulunbuy. He has run for other elections, but he ran as an Independent in a remote seat where his family and clan members were, but also members of other clans, and he had to win the support of his community. He did that.

He had the honour of being elected to this place. He has been given the honour today of being able to speak in his first language here. I acknowledge the work done by everyone who has made that happen. I particularly acknowledge the work of the interpreter service. Thank you all very much. I acknowledge the investment of this government into the interpreter service.

I return my attention to leadership. I reach out, again, to the Member for Nhulunbuy. He has demonstrated true leadership today. We have had some high emotions and debate on things that have not brought any glory on this place at all. This man has brought honour and credibility to this place at all times. I am honoured to share this parliament with that man.

I went on a big trip a few months ago with the member and a friend of his, Jacko, along with my friend Lance McDonald. We travelled all around places in the electorate of Stuart, the electorate I have the pleasure of representing. We went through a lot of different country. We went through Anmatjere country, Pintubi country, Luritja country and Warlpiri. It was really interesting to watch this man from saltwater country talk connections to those people from the desert country and the integration in between.

Lance, a good friend of mine who was travelling with us, can speak Yolngu Matha, so that was very helpful. We had an amazing experience.

I have travelled with some other members of this place. I have travelled with the Member for Arnhem many times and the Deputy Speaker, the Member for Namatjira, on many occasions as well. But this was a special trip. We discussed a lot of things. One of the things we talked about was leadership. What students, parents and everyone is looking for in leadership is people who have a similar experience. That is why people like the Member for Nhulunbuy and the Education Minister, whose electorate I have forgotten right now ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Arnhem.

Mr McCONNELL: The Member for Arnhem ...

Mr Mills: Arafura.

Mr McCONNELL: Now I am confused. I am getting as bad as the Speaker now. Excuse me.

People are looking for a reason for that education. One of the reasons for that education is we have to invest in this idea of hope and a future, and bringing a future to people. One of the good ways to do that is to teach in the school in first language. That is very important. Sometimes I might flippantly answer the question, 'I do not care what language is being spoken in schools so long as people are at school.' We cannot teach people if they do not go to school. We need to make students go to school, so we need to make the school as attractive as possible.

There are many people in this place who are a lot more scholarly than me who would know the evidence base there is here. The Education Minister would be well aware of the evidence base. We know quite often it is easier to learn English if you have learnt in your first language first. We know we need that common language of commerce in Australia of English and we have to commit to that common language. But we need to recognise much more—particularly in an Indigenous Aboriginal context—that we have to pay far more attention to first languages. That is because they are an important tool to make school attractive. We have to work on those things.

I do not think these punitive actions the Member for Nhulunbuy has told us about, with people being fined for truancy and that sort of thing—I do not understand what that is trying to achieve. We have to bring back that sense of hope, which is brought back by much more embracing people learning in their first languages.

We have to also better understand in this place that we should be much more connected to this all the time. This first language is not just an issue for people in remote areas who know that language from that place. Here are some things that I have often thought about.

Why do we not have an incentive for people serving in the Northern Territory Police Force? If you are a police officer and can get to competency Level I—these competencies are around now through the Interpreter Service—in an important language in the Northern Territory like Yolngu Matha, Warlpiri or Pitjantjatjara, why not have a salary incentive for those people? If you are a police officer and have the ability to take some time learning a local language, that would be a good benefit. If you see police officers—and there are a couple of non-Indigenous police officers who have learnt language and numerous Indigenous police officers who hold their own language—and watch those guys de-escalate—I am using an American term there. If you watch those men or women de-escalate a situation using those language skills, it is extraordinary.

It is so much easier. You can see someone who cannot speak that first language—it is *rama rama*, really mad, everybody is going everywhere. If somebody comes in who can speak the language: bang! It deescalates so quickly.

We should incentivise these Indigenous languages and be more inclusive with things like that. The same thing in the teaching environment. One of the significant problems with teachers in the Northern Territory is that a lot of people come here and teach for a short time. Imagine if we rewarded those people who are willing to invest in learning the local language with a salary incentive.

If a teacher learns a basic level of Warlpiri and is going to get a significant salary benefit for holding that language, it might be something that attracts them to stay in the Northern Territory. We should be thinking about that and being more inclusive for the Indigenous languages. We should be thinking of how we can incentivise Indigenous languages and work more in Indigenous languages.

Back to the schooling. We have a serious problem with school attendance in a lot of remote communities. I see that in my electorate. How do we incentivise getting people to attend school more? We have to be more inclusive and understand things better than we do now. This is why I do not like some of these actions we take that are overly punitive and rail against racial profiling at the front of bottle shops in regional towns. I will never think that is a good idea. That is a perfect example of what should not be doing.

We should be working with Indigenous people and giving them the tools and opportunity to participate in the economy, have a job, own their home and have a decent road into their community so they can own a decent car. We should not be penalising them by giving them a fine because their children do not attend school or by racial profiling them at the front of a bottle shop. We should not be doing those sorts of things. We need to be more inclusive. That is why I was elected.

I am a white person and non-Indigenous person but I grew up with Aboriginal people and respect them and their life experiences. Since I have been elected I have experienced ordinary treatment as well. I have always been an opinionated person and a direct speaker and that is what I was preselected by the Labor Party to do and elected to do. One of my constituents put it better than me. When I arrived here I was treated like I did not belong here.

I have been treated like I do not belong here and I am a white fella. I have been treated like I do not belong here because I think like people in the Aboriginal world. That is my life experience and brought up with. I understand why we are having these issues—school attendance and getting people involved. We are not being inclusive of First Nations people here in the way that we need to. I am not saying that we are not making attempts or trying to have a go at any particular individual or government. I am trying to say that we need to do better.

At the moment the Indigenous population of the Northern Territory is around one third. That is normally accepted as it is between 29% and 33%. Four percent of the workforce is Indigenous. That is a chasm of a lack of opportunity. Anyone that has tried to live on a welfare income—particularly in a remote community where the prices in the shop can be three times what they are in Darwin or Alice Springs. Imagine trying to live and accommodate all of your issues in life. You might want to increase your income by going and playing cards. That might be the only way you get enough money to live.

We have to work out a way to get a more participatory economy on Indigenous held land that involves Indigenous labour. We need more Indigenous people involved in the economy. My background is in the pastoral industry. When I was a kid working—like a volunteer as I was a proper young kid—I hang around in the stock camps in the 70s, which were run entirely by Indigenous people. Now I go to those same cattle stations and the stock camps are run by 457 Visa holders and backpackers. It is stepping backwards. What can we do to work on those things going forward?

If we do not work out a much more inclusive and participatory economy for Indigenous land and labour, you are going to need a lot of Don Dales and gaols. The amount of times we hear that we have so many more police than any other jurisdiction, but we need more. We have so many more resources in health but they are still stretched to the limit. We have so many more resources in Territory Families than other jurisdictions yet they are still stretched to the limit.

These things are stretched to the limit because we are not offering people the opportunity in the beginning. We are trying to treat all those things that are symptoms. They are symptoms of our failure to deliver to that sort of common wealth we need. People should be able to have a participatory economy in the community they choose to live in. They should not have to move long distances.

I take the commentary of previous speakers that people need to be willing to move from time to time. I know people from the Pitjantjara lands who used to work in Wadeye in the 60s. That is a long way from their country. People are willing to move around. I know a lot of people in Tiwi from Central Australia, through the mission links. I know people are willing to move around.

We have to focus on this much more. I am trying to be collaborative and cooperative and saying we need to do these things better, because we must deliver to these Indigenous people the opportunity to feel positive about their future.

They do not have the mobility of non-Indigenous people. At the moment, people are apparently leaving Darwin in fairly large numbers because they have the mobility to move back to where they come from. Most of the Aboriginal people I know do not have the opportunity to do that.

We need to do better. It is hard not to have a go at the current process, but that is not what this is about. These are issues we fundamentally need to work on in the Northern Territory to make our economy more sustainable. It is not about the cost of living in Darwin. I feel for you guys in Darwin that do not have it as good as you used to, but it is not about you. It is about the whole of the Northern Territory.

The people in Kintore who do not have air-conditioning in their public housing properties, and no other choice but public housing. It is about them. The people on Tiwi who are suffering through incredible incidences of suicide and suicide ideation. It is about them. It is not about you in Darwin.

Please, this place might be in Darwin but it is not just about Darwin. It is not just about Palmerston. It is not just about special police responses and a new police station in Palmerston because there is a lot of anti-social behaviour there.

I know why there is anti-social behaviour in Palmerston, because we as a government, collectively, are not delivering the services we need to in the remote communities. There is a direct cause and affect link here.

Identify and please think about this. It is important. The things the Member for Nhulunbuy told us here today are all very much at the foundation of this. We need to recognise and be much more inclusive about these things. Separatist policies of racially profiling people at the front of bottle shops, of treating people separately and with lower and different expectations is not acceptable anymore. It is 2019. We need to deliver those quality services, to have affordable homes and options of home ownership and have understanding.

I came to this place to try to help all of us get that understanding. The reason I come out a little bit rough sometimes is because it is so difficult to get through to people who are so comfortable worrying about whether they are going to get an incentive to buy whitegoods because they just bought their own home.

You cannot buy your own home in Yuendumu or Lajamanu. You certainly cannot get an incentive for whitegoods because you bought your own home.

We need to get over ourselves here. The reason why we get—I think it is set in legislation—the \$4.66 return on GST, the horizontal fiscal equalisation, is because of the disadvantage in places like Kintore and Wadeye. Not because it is hard life to live in a suburb in Darwin. My constituents and I respect Darwin as our capital city, but we have to have equity, especially if you affirm yourselves as coming from the progressive side of politics.

We have to think about these things. We are measured by what sort of environment people are living in remote communities. We have to do much better. We have to listen to the esteemed gentleman that we have in our company now in the Member for Nhulunbuy. We have to listen to his experience. He might not be associated with one of the big political parties, but he was duly elected to this place and he should be listened to.

I do not want to look like I am trying to play up to anyone here, but he is the person that should be the most esteemed person in this place because of what he went through to get elected and for what he has to do. He has been listening to me speaking English for all this time—that must be hard in itself. I am sure others are suffering through it as well.

We need to recognise that this place is an inherently Indigenous place. The reason I was elected was to try to bring that perspective and to get people to understand. We have a lot of people who have worked—we have Aboriginal people in the parliament of course. We have non-Aboriginal people who have worked for long periods of time with Indigenous people as school teachers or in other professions.

What I am trying to do is to add value to that, so that we can understand that we need to do these things better for remote communities and our constituents in the Territory. We are going to be measured on how well Aboriginal people are doing in the future.

Are Aboriginal people able to live on their land and practice their lore, language and culture? Are we going to recognise those things? Are we going to be able to celebrate in 10 years' time the work we have done in this parliament in increasing school attendance and local workforce utilisation?

Let us understand that it is sometimes a stressful place in here. We sometimes say things that on reflection we probably would have said differently. But it is not about us. We were not elected to be about us. We were elected to be representatives for our constituents.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak to the amended motion on community-led schools. I thank the Member for Nhulunbuy for introducing this important motion. I thank the member for delivering the motion in his mother tongue. I thank the interpreter for doing a wonderful job.

There is no question that the Member for Nhulunbuy is passionate about education and would like to see his constituents supported to have school-aged children attend school so that they can learn, grow and contribute to their communities.

The Minister for Education spoke of the many initiatives our government is implementing and supporting to have a lasting impact on Territory children and their families. From our investment in education to repair the damage that the previous CLP government did through the cutting of 500 teaching and school support positions to ensure that our schools have adequate levels of teaching and support staff to cater to their students.

It is also great to see that schools have flexibility to use their global school budget in a manner that they see fit. For example, last year Manunda Terrace Primary School principal, Lisa Hirschausen, advised me that funding for the Save the Children wellbeing officers, who supported her school, would end at the end of last year. Lisa was able to use her global school budget to employ Carly as the school's very own wellbeing officer, stealing her from Save the Children.

This was a fantastic move by the principal, as Carly is doing a wonderful job, continuing to support students. A few months ago she took the coordination role in organising the school's Harmony Day event to celebrate the many wonderful countries in Manunda Terrace Primary School and our wider community in general.

As we heard from the Minister for Education, our government continues to expand the fantastic Families as First Teachers program. There are 39 FaFT sites operating throughout the Territory with 34 sites located in remote communities and five sites operating in urban centres.

This important program helps families to teach their young children from a young age to provide a better start to life with the program offering reading and learning games for them to use with their child, books and games to use at home, support to help families keep their children healthy, and also support to prepare a child for school.

Earlier this year I had a family member tell me that that she had a wonderful experience with a FaFT centre and that she would recommend it to others. This story is not isolated as many community members and children have benefited from this amazing program.

I acknowledge and thank all of the FaFT employees for the important work they undertake to help shape the lives of the young people who attend their centres. I also thank the Minister for Education and her hard working department for all of their efforts in expanding the number of FaFT centres from 39 to 53 by the end of 2020.

Our government is committed to working with remote Aboriginal communities through a local decision-making lens. Local decision-making allows for the delivery of government services to be transferred to Aboriginal people and organisations if that is what the community desires.

It should be noted that local decision-making will happen at a pace that suits the community and that government will support communities to ensure they are adequately prepared to take over and deliver the government services they choose to take responsibility for and control.

Gunbalanya Community School provides a great example of local decision-making initiative. This independent public school operates on a community-led approach through the leadership of its two principals. One is Indigenous and the other is non-Indigenous. The framework for operation was created through community consultation and government has supported the school's establishment and its governing structure.

Since the Gunbalanya Community School Board was established a few years ago, members have continued to enhance their governance and leadership capabilities through its business plan. The business plan also focuses on five key areas, which are:

1. parents are engaged in their children's education
2. the school provides increased opportunities for school leavers, and support for students in transition to further education, jobs and training
3. strengthen two-way teaching and learning across all year levels
4. the Gunbalanya IPS Board governs the school with a focus on strategic improvement, and
5. the school environment meets the needs of students and staff.

By focusing on these five key areas the school places itself in the best position to maximise the educational experience for all students.

I will take the opportunity at this point to add some information to the Member for Blain's comments in regards to the Banyala Homeland in the Member for Nhulunbuy's electorate. The Banyala Homeland Local Decision-Making agreement will be signed at the end of this month.

After months of hard work the Local Decision Making agreement is finally going to get signed and it will contain the community's aspirations to deliver its own services. Well done to all those involved. I am sure the Local Decision Making agreement will bring much benefit to the Banyala Homeland community members.

School attendance is absolutely vital as children who attend school regularly—and we have heard it many times in this Chamber—are more engaged and able to learn more than their counterparts. The Minister for Education spoke in detail about the attendance strategy that our government is implementing to improve school attendance and I want to take the opportunity to touch on a few of these

The previously known truancy officers have been replaced with 23 engagement officers and 10 compliance officers. The engagement officers work with students and their families to encourage regular school attendance by helping to remove any barriers that may prevent this.

At the moment there are 30 remote and 15 urban government schools who have been allocated engagement officers and I look forward to finding out how this initiative is benefiting schools in my electorate.

Unfortunately there are circumstances where engagement has not been successful in that children do not begin attending school regularly. This is where compliance officers can be called in for assistance, as they are authorised under the *Education Act* to compel school enrolment and attendance through the issuing of directions and notices. As previously stated by the Minister for Education, it is a last resort.

The final point I speak to on the amended motion is the recently launched Framework for Inclusion 2019–2029, which will provide additional supports for schools to help them support each Territory child to reach their full potential at school.

A true team effort is required to support a child. This inclusion framework will be supported through an investment of \$40m over four years in early intervention, flexible schooling and in supporting students with additional needs. I look forward to the implementation being designed by the Department of Education in partnership with principals and other key education stakeholders, as I believe it will provide important additional supports to many Territory students.

Every child deserves the opportunity to access a high quality education so that they can learn, grow and develop important life skills, and in turn have many more opportunities open for them where they can look after their family and contribute to their community.

I acknowledge my colleague, the Minister for Education, the Northern Territory Department of Education and all Territory school staff and education stakeholders for all of their efforts to make this happen. Unlike the two-time unmemorable previous CLP Minister for Education, both of my government's previous and current Ministers for Education have done and continue to do an amazing job. They have done so much good work to benefit many of our Territory educational institutions and I take my hat off to them.

I commend the amended motion.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

MOTION Agribusiness

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this Assembly recognises that the agribusiness sector is a critical part of the Northern Territory economy; notes, with concern, a number of future policy decisions will have a detrimental impact on this sector; and calls on the government to complete a strategic plan in consultation with the sector.

The modern Territory was built on the back of the agribusiness sector—on the buckets of sweat of the stockmen, drovers and growers. The modern Territory was dreamed into existence by people with a big vision. The CLP opposition knows that money does not grow on trees, but wealth does. Labor is suspicious, sceptical and ignorant of wealth creation. Their policies are hurting the agribusiness sector here in the Territory. Today the agribusiness sector is a more than \$1bn industry, yet where is the strategic plan for live cattle or cattle production? Where is the 20-year plan for agribusiness?

The CLP built the live cattle trade. This is the reason we were happy to stand shoulder-to-shoulder when the NT Live Export Association to protest the imposition of independent observers on all live export ships. We wrote many times, held face-to-face meetings and fought it through the media. We fought behind closed doors and in the public spotlight because it was the right thing to do.

The CLP will always do what is right for the Territory. That is why when we learned of the scandal engulfing Animals Australia, we wrote immediately to ask that the federal coalition government investigate allegations that not-for-profit groups and other individuals receiving or benefiting from taxpayer resources. Are they manufacturing footage of animal cruelty to discredit and destroy the live animal export trade? Allegations that activists are willing to pay for individuals to abuse animals to serve their own purposes have been circulating in the industry for many years.

As an opposition, we know the federal coalition has firmly committed to developing the north. Live animal export is a critical cornerstone to that plan. The uncertainty arising from the allegations against Animals Australia is having a negative impact across the industry. Territorians doing the right thing in the industry should be given a platform to have their say and for further complaints and allegations to be investigated. We believe a Senate inquiry is required to fully address the allegations and uncertainty in the industry.

Additionally, the federal Department of Agriculture's investigation should reflect on the devastation the 2011 cessation of the live trade wrought on families across the north by the former Labor government.

Furthermore, the opposition moved this motion tonight to recognise the importance of a \$1bn-plus sector of our economy that has been, sadly, ignored by this Labor government, and that is agribusiness. Thousands of Territorians rise every morning to work in commercial farming, fishing, forestry and horticulture. It is time these people are recognised, that their story is heard and that the government finally backs the consistent, continuous sector of the economy.

The agribusiness sector does so much with so little. In regard to its size and direct government support, agribusiness in the Territory gets massive, outsized results and punches well above its weight. There is so much potential, and I will discuss some of the areas the opposition wants the government to get behind.

There has been great news at a federal level. The federal Coalition is doing the heavy lifting by getting free-trade agreements in place with our biggest trading partners, for example China, Korea, Japan and, most importantly, Indonesia.

The Indonesia-Australia free-trade agreement, the FTA, builds on the Indonesia-Australia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement signed in Jakarta on Monday 4 March 2019. It is a great opportunity for cattle producers and exporters, good news for all exporters, especially growers, because 99% of exports to Indonesia will have tax-free entry or preferential treatment. Live male cattle—the 5% tariff will be removed. The tariff for frozen beef will be halved from 5% to 2.5%. Citrus—oranges and lemons—will be duty free. All reductions will be in place by 2020.

I am also very excited about the potential for cotton in the Territory. I do not mean Labor's approach to dealing with youth crime and the youth detention crisis.

The bumper harvest we have seen in the Kimberley and across the Ord this year demonstrates that the Territory could and should get in on these rich pickings. It is exciting that private investors, not government—private money is pouring into new cotton technologies and ventures across northern Australia. Why should it not? We are seeing record yields of unprecedented global demand for this organic, high-quality, natural product. The Western Australian and federal governments are making it easy for private investors to invest.

This demand for ethically sourced super fibre is projected to grow year on year, and exponentially at that, as a huge potential for the Territory. However, government must be saying the right things and reassuring private investors that it will not change the rules of the game regarding water and land tenure mid-game if private investors are to be reassured.

Sovereign risk is real and it has killed jobs and investment in the Territory in the past, especially in the last two-and-a-half years under the Labor government. The CLP government knew it was our job to set the conditions, create the environment where small business could grow, and where investors could comfortably take a risk.

We believed then, as we do now, that one of the most important roles of government is to set out the big vision, namely where the Territory is heading and what the plan is to diversify the economy. The CLP opposition has always said that if a government does not have a big vision, it has a big problem.

What we hear from industry on a regular basis, particularly from the peak bodies for growers, like NT Farmers, is that water is the main game. Having certainty with policy and clarity in allocation decisions is everything. When I talked to NT Farmers President, Simon Smith, he said water underpins every conversation about the future of farming in the Territory. Access to water for irrigation is the game-changer, from freeing up used water in existing farming regions to prudent allocations in emerging areas and legislation for on-farm storage.

These are the issues in the industry that people with their own money at stake are concerned. The opposition are also concerned about these water issues.

The Labor government is yet to act with the speed or resolve that industry and opposition expect when dealing with water policy. There is far too much uncertainty, too much proposed change and too little by the way of urgent communication or engagement.

I would like to raise a positive investment undertaken by the previous CLP government. It was unprecedented funding for soil and water research at Wadeye. Both sides of this Chamber are committed to Indigenous economy empowerment and development. What is too often overlooked is that our Indigenous areas and towns have some of the best water and soils in the Territory.

This was the case at Wadeye and the locals have known this intuitively for years. With the soil and water analysis conducted by the department of land resource management as it was then, we have the proof. The corroboration that industry and investors would require if they were to get involved with projects in that area. That is what we want to happen. Private money should pour into these areas and it is incumbent on government to sell this important and valuable research to industry and private investors in the Southeast Asian region.

It is one thing for government to compile reports and have them collect dust. What we should be doing is committing to commercialising and actioning this data. It is not good enough to leave great reports in desk drawers. The opposition wants the government to set about a commercialisation of this potential. Government data needs to be sold to industry nationally and investors overseas. The Territory has never had an aggressive commercialisation mindset or strategy. We need a big vision.

From my time as a mango farmer in the Daly there are some things I would like to touch on. As Territorians we need to grow up and have a maturity about how we deal with land tenure. Nearly half the land mass of the Territory is Aboriginal controlled land. We need to view this with a practical, constructive and positive lens. Many people will not invest on Aboriginal land for a stack of reasons. This is short sighted as some of the best, fertile and arable land is Aboriginal land. The message needs to be that it is possible to get section 19 leases and that it is not all that difficult.

I had a section 19 lease when we were at the mango farm at Daly River. It is possible, straightforward and government should assist in every way possible to get more activity, investment and opportunity happening on these lands.

The pastoral industry is a billion dollar sector and a significant component of gross state product. Subleasing and sub-par consultation with land councils lead to the reforms being scrapped at the eleventh hour. This Labor government is sceptical of the live trade and shut down the trade overnight. Their supporters—the left, the Greens and the activists collectively—want to end the live trade again. Federal Labor have committed to ending this multimillion dollar industry yet what the Territory Labor minister had to say about his federal Labor colleague comments was nothing.

There is also the issue of independent observers. Darwin is Australia's largest livestock exporting port loading about 500 000 head per annum to Indonesia, Vietnam and other short haul destinations. The north Australian cattle industry cannot survive without the live trade. Processing facilities have not survived for the last 40 years due to globally uncompetitive cost structures imposed on Australia's meat processing sector.

The animal welfare performance of the northern short haul trade is second to none. The trade, its suppliers, exporters, shippers and in-market feeders should never be tarnished by events not occurring within the northern short haul trade. The hard yards have been mostly done and out comes the clearly present and comparable to Australia's own domestic performance.

The Northern Territory LEA yard at Berrimah has just had \$5m spent on upgrades. These funds were provided by the Northern Territory Government. This has now provided the world's best housing for cattle just three kilometres from the Port of Darwin.

There is further work to be completed in order to become the best operating facility supporting the new sheds. Three to five million dollars is needed. The Northern Territory Government should be, as the previous CLP did, back our wealth creators in the live export industry by investing in upgrade works at the Berrimah facility.

The CLP opposition calls on the minister to make this commitment, and if he can, make it today. What should be abundantly clear to all Territorians is that the CLP will stand with our live exporters. We believe in the live trade. Labor is sceptical and uneasy with the live trade and would close it down again, as federal Labor did in 2011, if it had half a chance. The live trade is a great drought mitigation tool. It is the only market which will take 220 kilo northern drought-stricken cattle rather than let them die. If other producers cannot take them, nobody else than the live export can.

The impacts of trade closures on Indigenous communities would be disastrous. Indigenous stockmen are employed on many cattle stations, including stations of their own. The buffalo trade is mostly from Indigenous lands.

There are important considerations to take into account when the Assembly asks why we should care about the live cattle trade, or about independent observers. All members in this place should care a lot. The measures the federal government is trying to impose on us will kill jobs and investment and will put Territorians out of work.

It goes without saying that the agribusiness sector is so diverse in the Territory it would be remiss of me not to touch on the other significant components, namely our growers and producers, vegetable and fruits as well as forestry. There are also the nurseries and exotic plant specialists who send the gems of the Territory all over the world.

It is exciting to see that the north has so much potential. The CLP and Coalition government have always believed in the potential of the north, and still do. This report was done by more than 100 scientists and took over two-and-a-half years of careful consideration. It is not in any way a half-baked or political plan.

Developing the north should become a bipartisan issue going forward. We should commit to developing our nation. The CLP believes that if a government does not have a big vision, it has a big problem. The CLP, at its core, is about nation-building projects. We are supported in this by a federal Coalition government that has a White Paper on developing the north, 2015. The funding infrastructure in place through the Regional Growth Fund, the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund and the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility.

No other government in the past has put as much money on the table for the north. We now have the roadmap, the plan and the money. What we need now is the political will and the leadership from the Territory

Labor government. It is time for the Labor government to start showing some urgency on delivering for Territorians.

The federal Coalition government has already put \$2.6bn on the table to identify and build water infrastructure to boost economic growth and employment opportunities through initiatives such as the \$580m National Water Infrastructure Development Fund. Earlier this year we saw the exciting potential of the Northern Australia Water Resource Assessment project conducted by the CSIRO. The report highlights detailed research undertaken by the CSIRO to assess proposed water catchments at Adelaide River.

The government needs to get out of the way regarding the red tape, but step in when it comes to essential infrastructure like telecommunications.

Ask yourself when the last time was that you heard the Chief Minister give a major speech about the importance of agribusiness to the Territory. When has the Chief Minister spoken about the potential of this sector? There is so much low-hanging fruit when it comes to creating more jobs and securing tens of millions of dollars of new investment.

This Labor government is clearly more interested in pursuing social policy than it is in running a clear and coherent economic policy. This is a shame, a disgrace and an absolute waste.

Agribusiness is our biggest export opportunity and has been so for over 50 years. Let us let business get on with business. Agribusiness is a great opportunity. It is time that this Labor government understands this opportunity and gets behind the sector.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I know I am using my phone. The Member for Barkly will be pleased.

I will read something the Leader of the Opposition just mentioned. That is, the CSIRO report about developing northern Australia. Part of it says,

Understanding the opportunities in the north. Northern Australia makes a substantial contribution to the Australian economy, particularly through agriculture, mining and tourism. Agriculture in northern Australia is already a significant global player. Its 12 million cattle make northern Australia the world's fifth-largest beef exporter. Its more than 3000 sugar farms make it the world's fifth-largest sugar exporter, and combined income from these two businesses alone exceeds \$3bn each year.

These are opportunities to unlock significant new investment in the north. This will require confidence about the scale of opportunities and understanding of the risks involved, which we have the experience and capability to deliver.

Our research has identified intensification of agricultural production as providing some of the best opportunities for further development, largely through identifying new opportunities for irrigation.

They also mention water. Of course, without water we will not develop our north. It says,

Water is integral to the success of the development of the north. We have recently completed the first and only account of water availability-this is CSIRO-for northern Australia, and found that every year, out of the 2m gigalitres of water arriving in northern Australia, around 15 000 gigalitres, enough to irrigate almost 1.5m hectares, could be made available for irrigation.

Our detailed catchment assessments can accurately identify how much water can be sustainably used on an ongoing basis for irrigation and other uses.

The report they bought out, as mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition, is about the catchments. The catchments in the Northern Territory they assessed are the Finnis, Adelaide, Mary and Wildman catchments in the Northern Territory, a combined area of 30 000 square kilometres, with the river flowing through extensive coastal and marine floodplains. The Finnis, Adelaide, Mary and Wildman rivers, they found, with a combination of major dams, farm scale off stream storage and groundwater, could support expansion of agriculture.

They also prepared reports in Queensland and the Fitzroy River in Western Australia.

There is no doubt we will never reach our full potential with agriculture until we have guaranteed water supplies. We can take water from aquifers. If we work on 80% for the environment and other uses, and 20% for the agriculture industry and town water supplies, once that 20% has been totally used up, we have no more water. Unless we trade water between farms or become more efficient in its usage.

We have to find other ways of developing the north without relying on aquifers. That is where the big picture discussion needs to be had. Obviously this will cost a lot of money. Development of the north will need people with financial backing, because some of these ideas like Seafarms out at Legune Station, require huge amounts of money to get them off the ground.

That is not to say small development is not important. There is still room for family farms and small developments, but if you are looking at the cost of irrigating crops, if you use pivot irrigation and have to build dams and pipe the water from the dams to the farms, there is fairly big investment required.

It would be good to hear from the government what they think about the development of the north from an agricultural perspective and the future of our water supplies. Where are we going to get the water? Power and Water have brought out a document more related to town water supplies, and they even go so far as desalination as an option, because the area around Darwin is geographically limited as to where you can catch and hold water. There are not too many places you can put in a site that will catch a sufficient amount of water to supply a city.

There are people looking at ways to develop water supply but not necessarily from an agricultural perspective. I am interested in what the minister has to say when it comes to that. This has been highlighted in the discussion in my area especially where the Member for Goyder's area is where the aquifers are low. The Berry Springs aquifer is especially low, probably the lowest that I have ever known.

The other aquifers are not necessarily as low as has been recorded before but they are still quite low and unless people use their water wisely then the rural area and the growers may have some difficulty with their cropping later on in the year. Hopefully people get together and work as a community and realise that we need to work together to benefit all.

That highlights the fact that we have a limited amount of water in our aquifers and once you have reached that limit, you have reached the limit on how far you can expand agriculture and horticulture in the north.

I went to—and the minister knows—the field days in Katherine and Douglas Daly recently. It was a very interesting field day. One thing I feel right at home with is going back and seeing what people are growing, keeping in touch with what is happening.

There were discussions over the growing of cotton and cotton has been one of those issues that sometimes cause controversy but I tell people—and I think the minister was there when the representative of the cotton industry in Queensland said basically you get a water licence and what you use that water licence for is your business.

I am not always a great fan of sandalwood because I have a little sign on my desk that says you cannot eat sandalwood sandwiches but the point is if you give someone a licence, they can grow the crop that suits them and they will only grow a crop that is commercial. When people are worried about cotton using too much water, you can only use up the water that the person has a licence for. You cannot use any more. That is it.

The other thing is it will not happen if it is not commercial. There is a lot of work to happen before cotton becomes a major crop back in the north. It probably has a better chance in the Ord simply because there is a lot more water. We do not have a cotton gin. Until you have a cotton gin, the cost of moving cotton interstate is quite enormous.

There are other options that I have heard. One is that you could try upland cotton, just growing it on rainfall. If you are at the field day, you would see the difference between cotton that was irrigated and cotton that was not irrigated. There is quite a substantial difference but you have to admit the rainfall in the Katherine region is 55% of what it normally should be. Naturally that had an effect on the crop.

Cotton also has more work to do from the timing of when you plant the crop to when you harvest the crop. I was told recently, you could actually sell un-gin cotton if you can call it that, straight to Vietnam. You just pick the bulbs as they are and do not put them through a gin and you send them to places like Vietnam. They are not as compact as you see the big bales.

I do not know much about that option but it was told to me by someone who knows the industry who said it was possibly an option. You maybe do not get as much money but then you do not have the cost of a cotton gin. If we are looking at developing the north from a cotton perspective, we probably need some government funding to help because that would be a big cost.

There were plenty of other things at the field day. Some of these things have been around for quite a while. There has always been a market in the Northern Territory for people to grow seed for down south. Some of the things that are being grown in the Katherine research station was Panic, Digitaria, Splenda Setaria, Rhodes grass, Jarra finger grass and Mulato which is a new species that I might talk about at another time.

One of the interest legume crops is pigeon pea. If anyone knows about cotton—you cannot grow GM cotton without having a trap crop. If you want to a field you would see pigeon pea being grown there. That is a method of making sure the heliothis or the caterpillar does not build up resistant as there is another crop that it can use to breed, eat and do all that it needs to do on. If you allowed them to eat on GM cotton they could build up a resistant.

That is a clever and smart thing about GM. This is why we lead the world in the way we use GM cotton. Some other countries are not as strict as we are in this country. You cannot just walk in and buy GM cotton. If you do have it, you are inspected to see if you are doing the right thing.

Mung beans, burgundy beans—mung beans were being grown at Douglas Daly Research Station. Mung beans have been around for a long time, along with soya beans. It is interesting that places like Douglas Daly were developed by trying to bring growers up from the south. If you have been to Douglas Daly you would have seen the more or less abandoned town of Fleming, which was to be the centrepiece of Douglas Daly.

There are some silos there that are slowly rusting away. There might be one person and a workshop there. There is a community hall and a bit of a playground. It has a history, but the reason it did not grow was because the great idea of people that you could come north and grow a crop did not always work out as the rainfall is not consistent. This is why irrigation is so important.

If you are to grow a crop, you need consistency. You might be able to grow in the Wet Season, but if you have a dry patch between January and March, you need to be able to put the irrigation on. If you cannot do that your crop will wither or you will get a low yield. Water is important if we are to have consistent cropping.

In some cases, because we are so far from markets, farmers need two crops a year, which they can do in the Territory. They could have one earlier crop and one later crop, as long as there is the irrigation. There are things there that are important.

Hay is still important. When I was listening to the discussion about hay—with the drought on people were probably sending any old hay down as long as it gave roughage to the cattle. Down south there are hay quality people. People who want hay want top quality hay. There was a lot of discussion about the quality of our hay here. In some cases people are not overly concerned about this, as it is used for some of the local cattle going out on the live export trade.

It was interesting to see that hay is not just hay for a lot of people. It is the right mix of grasses and maybe legumes. People want to know how much protein is in that hay. That was also being discussed at the field day.

Maize has been around for a long time. It is funny that it is a crop that has not taken off that well. One of the big problems with maize can be heliothis, the caterpillar. It is a good crop for forage. We also have sorghum for forage. Seed sorghum is grown in Katherine, a lot of which was affected by the poor rainfall. That is not to say it cannot grow.

Sorghum certainly has a history. If anyone knows the history of Tipperary—the reason they cleared so much of Tipperary, which was an eye-opener for me when I first turned up at Daly River, was because they tried to grow sorghum and it grew very well, until they put it on the wharf and it went mouldy because it rained and it was not protected. They lost all their sorghum because one little thing went wrong. We do have a history of big projects.

I will not go through all the crops, but there were a couple of other crops there. The debate about diversification is a good debate. I have forgotten the gentleman's name—he was the manager of Tipperary

and was on the Country Hour yesterday. I am sure the interview they did with him was at Douglas Daly. He is looking at diversification.

My concern, if we are talking about agribusiness, is the future of the live export trade. This is not because of the vegans or the politicians, but because it is always going to be a trade with risks for other countries—there already are. The market may start to change away from wet meat to frozen or boxed meat. It is always going to be a risk looking into the future. One way for pastoralists is to diversify.

I do not know where the legislation about diversification has gone. It came to parliament and then that section of the legislation did not come back. I am interested to know where we are from a legislative point of view regarding pastoralists being able to diversify on their property. Under existing legislation, they do have some rights to diversify. Tipperary is growing lemons; they have mangoes and cotton. Hopefully, if I get the word, I will hop down to Tipperary to see them harvest their cotton trial.

Mr McCarthy: What about opium?

Mr WOOD: They did have some, Member for Barkly. You have to shh. You know that was a secret. We do not know where that was, but it had a big fence around it. We think it was on Tipperary, but that was a trial. Information from that trial still might be worth looking at later on.

Again, diversification is important because agriculture is an up-and-down business. Anyone will tell you that. Look how difficult it is to be in the citrus business lately. If your only industry was citrus, lately you would have had problems trying to get your fruit out to other markets. It is the same with bananas and banana freckle. You could not move product out of the Northern Territory. Hopefully that diversification is the way to go. If you are growing lemons, mangoes or hay you need water. That is the big issue. I lived on the Daly, and in fact pumped water out of it—not a big lot.

Mr Kirby: It is your fault.

Mr WOOD: It is my fault, yes. We had close to two hectares of garden—bananas, paw paws. We grew lettuces and cabbages. Believe it or not, they grow quite well in the Dry Season. I nearly had a job with, I think, Ron Hersey who was the lettuce grower in Katherine many years ago. He produced beautiful lettuces. You would be amazed at what you can grow in the Territory. He has gotten older and gone out of business. I think Katherine has bigger potential for horticulture in the north because the climate is much better. Again, you need the water. You need to irrigate crops in the Dry Season when it is not raining because watermelons, capsicums and all those crops taste a lot better.

Later I think I have a session about biosecurity and some of the issues that affect agribusiness. Pests and diseases can limit where we go with agribusiness in the north.

What is the role of government? The role of government is to look at the bigger issues, not so much the commercial issues, you might say. If people have water, they will decide what crop to grow simply because they know they can make money out of it. The big step for the government—and it requires more than just the Northern Territory Government. We have had schemes like the Ord River scheme; way back we had the Snowy Mountains Scheme. We have had plenty of schemes, but in the end the Northern Territory has not really been a part of them.

I am not a great fan of—there used to be, and still are, people with a triangle on the back of their car that says ‘Don’t dam the Daly.’ Not only do I think that—I do not want to see the Daly dammed, but it is a stupid idea because they wanted to dam it at Mount Nancar, which would flood so many kilometres of countryside. It would be a silly idea. Whether you can put small dams at the top of the tributary areas, which do not affect the main areas and can be brought together through pipes—whether you could have off-river dams, as the one for Marrakai has been put forward. It has issues. I understand there was mining in that area many years ago so there is some concern over contamination of the water. It would have to be treated.

We can stand here for the next 10 years and say the same thing, but if we are fair dinkum about developing the north, somewhere along the line governments have to put what is called the headworks for a subdivision. They have to put those big-cost items in place. They have done so everywhere else. You only have to look to Queensland to see the dams that were built. If we are to develop the north, water is the key.

I sometimes feel we do not give enough emphasis to agriculture because agriculture and horticulture can employ a lot of people on a relatively small parcel of land. You can grow a lot of watermelons, capsicums or tomatoes on a fairly small parcel of land. It does not have to all be broad acre. It can employ a lot of people.

The other side of agribusiness is one you might bring up in your response to the motion, minister. It is the business of pickers. Where do we get the labour?

I feel sad that in some communities in the Northern Territory we have 14% to 20% unemployment but we cannot get those people to be part of, at least for part of the year, picking mangoes or watermelons.

I was talking to Mr McCormack at Lambells Lagoon last year, when they had some tours for people down south, about our horticultural industry in the north. He said that the trouble with getting good people who can drive a tractor and are reliable to work on his watermelon farm is difficult at times. It makes it hard for people to run a business.

The business of an agriculture visa—I do not know where that is going but there has been a lot of discussion about it. I have been to meetings in Coolalinga with the NT Farmers Association about bringing people from the Pacific Islands and Timor-Leste—all great ideas, but it goes around in circles a bit. We want people to work on our farms.

Then there is the new issue—I do not understand this too much. The government has said that if you work a number of hours you get paid overtime. You are a union man, minister—I am not against overtime, by the way. My understanding is they were working casual rates. I thought casual rates made up for some of that loss of overtime.

Some mango growers have moved from picking during the day when it is stinking hot to picking at night. They get flood lights and have had pickers working through the orchard at night, which is cooler for them and better for the fruit, because it is not hot, but they have to pay double time because they are working at night.

I sometimes think we need pay scales that can be flexible according to the situation. If you make the cost of that too high, the grower will give up or the cost of mangoes will go up and there will not be as many sales. It is an area between fairness—I am not doubting it at all. If the backpackers are happy to sleep during the day and work at night when it is cooler and they are not sweaty, you would encourage that. It is better working conditions. If it is double the pay it might be difficult for those people.

That is all part of agribusiness; it is not just about growing a crop, but you have to get it out. If you cannot get the workers to get the crop out, especially when you are a long way from the main population, we have to encourage people to come here. How we do that needs more discussion.

Many of the vegetable associations have been screaming out for agriculture visas. I do not know where that is going at the moment. Maybe the minister can give us an update on that.

I am happy for this to come before us today. I say many times that primary industry is the poor cousin when it comes to discussing issues in this House, especially within the budget. There are lots of other departments with lots more money than the Department of Primary Industry and Resources.

We must make sure we keep up with our research. We must not start thinking about cutting costs on research because if we are to advance in a world that is competitive, we have to stay competitive. One way to do that is to keep doing research and development on crops—varieties of crops that are already around that we have been using to improve them, but also new options. Look at the Ord River, where they have chia. That was a new idea, and someone was able to develop that as a proper business.

I thank the Opposition Leader for bringing this important motion to parliament.

I see ministers respond to a question, but really they give a policy statement in that answer. It is a Dorothy Dixier, but we have in our standing orders ministerial reports. I think we have only used them once. Years ago we would have a ministerial report that went for five minutes, the opposition could respond for three and as the Independent I could respond for two. But sometimes, if there are things happening, instead of it coming up as a Dorothy Dixier—say a new market is opening up and the minister has been overseas. He has just come back from some country and there is a new market for Northern Territory crops. The minister could get up and give us—I know you can talk longer than that in the new style of reports. We could say that it is a great idea or that we are not sure about it. We do not use the reports enough to inform members of parliament and the public about things that are happening right now.

When it comes to agriculture—things like where we are with citrus canker. You might be able to give us an update. Where are we with the cucumber mosaic virus? Do we have an outbreak of a new weed? Those are

the things that would be useful to give this House reports on. They are in the standing orders but we do not use them enough.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for bring this forward.

Mr KIRBY (Primary Industry and Resources): I take pleasure in speaking about this motion before the House. It gives me the opportunity to clear up queries and concerns from the other side. It might be easiest to work backwards.

The labour issue is a hot issue. There would be nothing more heartbreaking for a farm whose crops are like their children than to see them not be able to get them off in the time of the year that is required. It is something that I have raised at the agriculture ministers meeting and are represented on a working group around labour issues. After 18 May that will be something on our list to follow up with our federal counterparts which ever party gets in at the time. It is an important issue and something that we have to step our way through.

Some of our labour market is determined by rules and regulations. I am aware of what they are for very good reasons. If we are in a situation where people are happy and comfortable to work then we need to put the rules and regulations in place for everybody's best interest.

As far as addressing some of the concerns that the Leader of the Opposition brought up, I am happy to talk about access to water being our main game. I cannot tell you the amount of discussions that we have had in caucus, cabinet, on farms and with our respective people and industries that we represent. To be lectured by the Leader of the Opposition around access to water is hard to stomach.

After their reckless behaviour with over allocations to friends who stood to gain from them. The leader spoke about bipartisan and I would encourage him to be bipartisan around a host of different measures. Water is one thing that is too important to play politics with or to gift to your friends as it has happened in the past. I will not dwell too much on that, we have a host of good things we can speak about in this industry. There is a lot of great work being done.

Independent observers was another thing brought up and heavily discussed at our agricultural ministers meeting. Some of the concerns the Member for Nelson raised—if you look at our commitments through the budget around the Berrimah farm being upgraded and resourced correctly to make sure we are in the best position to keep on top of those threats to the Northern Territory. We have to have clean produce here. Our ability to get that out of the Territory to down south or near neighbours to the north. There is nothing more critical than making sure we have the best and cleanest produce we can in order to export it down south or to our near neighbours to the north.

We have worked closely with the buffalo industry and farmers on strategic plans. We have a good long term vision and close eye on how their long term plans are formulated and enacted. We take a slightly different approach; we do not dictate to industry how we think they should best do business. We support them to make sure their long term plans can be enacted.

I draw your attention to a press release by Chris Bowen explaining that live exports are safe. The Chief Minister explained this in the House today, and I took the opportunity to reiterate it with the young cattleman's association people upstairs.

Despite what the acting Prime Minister said recently at the Cattleman's AGM here, there is no justification for those remarks. The Labor Party, if they are in after May 18, will support the live export business. We know how important it is to the Northern Territory.

This motion gives us the opportunity to speak about the agribusiness industry in the Northern Territory. As the Member for Nelson said, we recently had the opportunity to go to the field days at Katherine and Douglas Daly. It is a great opportunity to hear from industry's mouth how things are tracking on the land. Discussions on cotton and some of the things the member mentioned were productive. We will continue those discussions with industry.

I commend Alister Trier and his team in the department and all the hard work they do. There is no way I am going to be able to get through all the hard and dedicated work they do and all the portions of industry we look to support, in the time I have.

We will seek to amend this motion and ensure it reads:

That this Assembly recognises that the agribusiness sector is a critical part of the Northern Territory economy. It notes that changes in domestic and international market conditions, environmental factors, logistics, infrastructure and government decision making, all impact on the success of the agribusiness sector. Government will continue its work in the agribusiness sector in developing and implementing cooperative plans to build agribusiness in the Northern Territory.

Agribusiness is a business of agricultural production, largely built around the production of the most important commodities for food. That is why it is extremely important to all of us. Budget 2019-20 notes that in 2017-18, the industry share of the Territory's gross state product was 2.9%, ahead of the 10-year average of 2.3%.

One of the examples of the activities the NT Farmer's Association noted, was that around \$25m of farming produce is transported interstate each year. More than half the Australian produce of mangoes comes from the Territory; around four million trays of mangoes per annum. We learned around half of that comes from the Katherine region, which they are rightly very proud of.

It is an industry that is always looking for an opportunity and for innovation. That was a big part of what we discussed at the field days we were at. The ABS statistics have determined that there are around 1700 jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishing in the Northern Territory alone. This is why it is important to us as an employer and as the economic driver of activity through the regions and remote areas.

There is a massive population to the north of us and any ability that we have to gain access, or further our access, into those markets is critical for us to do.

We have mentioned the drought at different times. It was something that the young cattlemen spoke of after this afternoon's question time, when I met briefly with them. There are tens of thousands of head of cattle being moved around the Northern Territory at the moment because of the conditions that we are feeling. This is something we need to be aware of.

I pay my respects to the good pastoralists and the people on the land, who recognised some time ago that they would have to start separating their heads of cattle out of the Territory. This was because they knew there would be some tough times ahead. Alice Springs pasture growth is well below average, with the majority of the district experiencing extremely low growth—around 10%, which is the lowest on record—from what we are told.

It is a timely reminder of the vulnerabilities of the agribusiness sector. We talk about the boom and bust economy in the Northern Territory and the risks that go with it. If we had the opportunity, we would all take some of the risk out of farming. Unfortunately, no matter what we try to do it is evidently always going to be reliant on conditions, particularly the rain.

The citrus canker is at the front of our minds at the moment. That is a good reminder of why biosecurity threats around the nation need to be taken seriously. We are proud that we have continued to invest in the Berrimah Farm, so those offices and laboratories are staffed to the best of their abilities and so they are upgraded and maintained with the best quality equipment. This is so we keep all of our produce safe.

Our livestock producers can be exposed to changes in trade policy as well. These heavily impact on their capacity to supply international markets. We are pleased that in 2018 the live export of cattle from the Northern Territory was valued at \$520m, which is up 33% from 2017. We have already supplied around a third of the live exports to Indonesia. Opportunities are expected to increase as a consequence of the new free trade agreements signed in March this year.

More generally, NT pastoralists generate more than 85% of the NT's primary production value. The cattle-related industries contribute around \$1bn annually to the Territory economy. On average around 6000 cattle are turned off NT pastures annually.

The Chief Minister and I both spoke on the importance of the live export trade. I reiterate everyone's statements that we understand that it is a major player in the Northern Territory's economy and employment future. We will do all that we can to advocate and represent the industry as best as we possibly can to ensure that it has a long and sustainable future in the Northern Territory.

We also had the opportunity to speak about some animal welfare issues with the young cattlemen's upstairs earlier this afternoon. It is something that we work closely with as a department. Sometimes when we are in conditions like this our behaviour does have to be a little reactive if we hear about animals that have got

themselves into trouble because of the conditions but it is something that we are as proactive about as we can be.

We must thank the industry—the cattlemen’s especially are always on the front foot, always letting us know when they know that there are going to be a large head of stock that need to be moved or coming into some dangerous situations because of lack of access to water or because of heat. We look forward to supporting all of the hard work that is done in those areas in the years to come.

Whilst the Territory can become a very interesting and a very complex place to do business into the future, our economic outlook expects to see the value of horticulture, aquaculture and buffalo exports in particular expand into the short and mid-term.

There is also much to say about our aquaculture for example, the success of the Humpty Doo barra farm including their successful application for a \$28m Northern Australian Infrastructure Fund, the NAIF loan, to match their own funds to expand their facilities, introduce solar power generation, improve aquaculture practices and increase production.

It is extremely exciting any time I get to speak with the family that runs the business out there. They are extremely proud of what they have been able to do and rightly so. They do ship a lot of barramundi out of the Northern Territory and they represent us in the best way possible.

The Chief Minister spoke today about Project Sea Dragon and how important that is to the Northern Territory. It was wonderful to be able to get down there at lunchtime and watch the Chief Minister assist in officially opening their office in Darwin. It will have a major footprint across the Northern Territory. It will also have an office open here in Darwin which was what today’s opening was about.

That will start with around 10 people in the office there and at different times through their operation they will have up to 30 people operating just in this Darwin office. It is an exciting time in their future. They have walked a long path to get where they are but they know they are very close to starting up different portions of their project and we welcome very much being able to work closely with them into the future.

There are a few other areas that I would like to touch on. Luke Bowen from the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation recently made a keynote presentation to the National Farmers’ Federation. In his message was a comment about our place in the world is not guaranteed, we will have to earn it and invest in it.

Even though we have just been through a tough budget process, I can honestly say that all of the industries and sectors that are represented under my portfolio were supported as heavily as they could be. We look forward to those areas expanding into the future.

As an example, the NT Farmers’ Association have done some great work, funded and supported by government as we have mentioned, to map out their plan for growing and developing their industry and making sure they have long-term strategic plans going forward. The plant industry strategic development plan’s goal is that the NT plant industry grow at double the rate of agribusiness nationally to reach \$600m by 2028. We will be enthusiastic supporters of all of that work.

There is a large volume and range of work and we enjoy the opportunity to recognise as much of that as we possibly can. Our economic development framework built on advice from the industry and community alike—as I mentioned we recognise that industry are in the best position to tell us, explain to us and work with us about how industry needs to progress into the future.

Mr McCARTHY: 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.

Mr KIRBY: I want to make sure I was clear enough when I formally moved the amendment, to remove all words after ‘this Assembly’ and replace them with ‘recognises that the agribusiness sector is a critical part of the Northern Territory economy; notes that change in domestic and international market conditions, environmental factors, logistics, infrastructure and government decision-making all impact on the success of the agribusiness sector; and government will continue its work with the agribusiness sector in developing and implementing cooperative plans to build agribusiness in the Northern Territory’.

We have been through our concerns about water in depth. We understand what the Member for Nelson was talking about in regard to the aquifers he mentioned. We can guarantee that a large body of work is being done by the minister for the Environment. I commend her for the work she is doing. I can guarantee it is not just these sectors. I proudly advocate as fearlessly as I can for our agriculture, but the department and the minister are making sure we have sustainable access to water over a long period of time.

At times like now, when we have some of the driest conditions we have seen in the Territory, especially in my 20 years here—I have not seen a Wet Season like it. I commend the minister for her work and look forward to working with her to make sure all allocations are made with everybody's interests at heart.

The work we have done to continue through the budget to make sure everything is invested in as heavily as it can be will be exciting going forward. There are a few individuals in the department who I have mentioned—I will not mention all the others.

I look forward to others joining the debate. People take these sectors seriously. Everyone knows local farmers and their families. We know what they bring to the Northern Territory. We know how heavily they need to be supported. I can guarantee they are supported by me, as the minister, and by the other ministers and government.

I commend this amended motion to the House.

Mr McCARTHY (Local Government, Housing and Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the minister and the amended motion. I thank the Opposition Leader for bringing forward the opportunity to talk about an exceptional industry in the Northern Territory—agribusiness—and its potential.

I note that the Opposition Leader has significantly changed the words of this motion since I first saw it on the Notice Paper a few months ago. It would be remiss of me to mention it may have something to do with the current federal election. While the Opposition Leader is a very sensitive member of this parliament and regularly comments on the government politicising issues in this House—he is very sensitive about any criticism of the former infamous CLP government from 2012 to 2016—it seems he has brought this back in a changed format to politicise an issue around live cattle exports. I could not help but think there may be a hidden agenda here tonight. It has been good to hear the minister outline what the government is doing. It has been great to hear the Member for Nelson and that historical commentary regarding agriculture and pastoral sector as well.

It will be interesting if we look at a political aspect of what is an incredible debate in Australia at the moment, which relates to this upcoming federal election. We had a full deck of Northern Territory Cattleman's Association young leaders in the gallery today. I could not help but think that it would be wonderful to do a quick survey of their commentary regarding climate change, particularly in relation to the sustainability of their sector. A lot of those young people would have been born into that industry and be planning their careers there. By the look of that healthy young crew of Territorians, they have already embarked on a career in the sector. It would be great to create that debate today about climate change and hear what these young Australians have to say.

Since the Leader of the Opposition has chosen this political approach to changing the nature of this motion and evaluating the opportunity for cheap shots against the Australian Labor Party, let me just give a little historical context. I will start by saying that in 1891 we had the famous Australian shearers' strike. This was the earliest and most important recognised industrial dispute. It was a watershed in the development of organised representation of labour in Australia, and of course the formation of the Australian Labor Party. It took place in Barcaldine in Queensland, and is of course one of those great tourist attractions today. Barcaldine is a beautiful little town and a tree of knowledge.

Maybe the Leader of the Opposition wants to reflect on a bit of history because that movement was where the Australian Labor Party really put a stake in the Earth and walked shoulder-to-shoulder with the pastoral and agricultural sectors ever since. It has been the watershed moment that this industry has been able to come together and thrive. If we want to take a more contemporary occasion in terms of the Australian Labor Party and this sector—I believe the Leader of the Opposition was significantly trying to discredit the Australian Labor Party in this debate and to bring his agenda of this revised format—we should look to the Wave Hill walk-off in 1966. We saw around 200 people—stockmen; station workers, mostly women and volunteers at that time; families and children—put their stake in the Earth and said enough is enough. They walked off Wave Hill Station. That was another watershed moment. It was in solidarity. Aboriginal people then stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the pastoral sector. The rest is history, and a fabulous one.

I will draw a parallel to something that is very important that the Michael Gunner Labor government has embarked upon, treaty. We have heard some interesting debate earlier this evening on Indigenous issues around this great nation. I enjoy listening to the Member for Stuart and his continual debate on land and labour principles. Being a member of this Labor government, I see that treaty will now start to address that important truth-telling and critical healing process to take us to the next stage where we will be able to significantly change the debate on land and labour principles, being inclusive of First Nations people and the economic development relating to traditional lands and communities.

That is a little link to history I make in this debate. Let me get far more contemporary in my opportunity to talk about agribusiness, the pastoral sector and the Labor government's commitment. I have been in the Barkly now for 40 years and have spent a long time in the pastoral sector. Not as a pastoral sector employee, but as a school teacher.

It has been a great learning curve and I have great relationships and represent an electorate that covers the largest area of any electorate in the Northern Territory, and the best cattle stations in the world. I am honoured to represent those constituents.

I draw the Leader of the Opposition's attention to some of the aspects of this industry that Labor governments in the past, and this particular Labor government, support. I will start with beef roads. Leader of the Opposition, draw your attention back to Budget Paper No 4. You will see some very significant strategic investments from our Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics into beef roads.

Some of those are critical beef roads in the Barkly; the Tablelands Highway and the Barkly Stock Route. We have the Sandover, Plenty and Tanami Highways. These are critical for the mining, resources, pastoral and agricultural sectors.

You have a government that is appropriating important investment into supply chain logistics supporting the cattle industry and, Leader of the Opposition I will bang it out hard, the live export industry. You do not build beef roads in the Barkly unless you are clearly focused on the live export industry.

Having said that, I will draw the attention of the House to the other opportunities that have grown over the last 20 years in the Barkly, and that is the pastoral sector using the highly productive lands of the Northern Territory to grow cattle and then move them interstate and finish them in their supply chains through their associated properties in Queensland and New South Wales.

This is what we call stores cattle and is another example of the great economy in the Northern Territory. Central Australia participate in this activity alongside their significant live export initiatives.

Alongside beef roads and roads infrastructure is the work by previous Labor governments and this Labor government in the heavy vehicle transport industry, and particularly our triple road trains that move cattle. The modern drovers of today. I acknowledge our Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, who has a great connection with that industry and works tirelessly to support it not only in regulation and legislation, but also infrastructure to make sure that industry has the best opportunity to move cattle to the ports, through the stores and supply chains, and develop this industry in the Northern Territory.

I will quickly draw your attention to the Darwin port. Under the previous Labor government, Darwin port was significantly growing the live cattle trade, but along came the CLP between 2012 and 2016 and they sold the port. That debate continues. They did not sell the port, they leased it for 99 years. It is history, and I am pleased to say the port is still very much a focus in supply chain logistics getting cattle to those overseas markets.

I remember being a member of a Labor government that invested in Darwin port to make sure the live cattle export trade was supported. We acknowledge the planning done under the previous administration in the Northern Territory, but I am pleased to say I was able to sit on government benches and watch critical infrastructure going into improving and upgrading the live export yards, particularly at Berrimah, an important link with the live cattle movement into South East Asian countries.

This is important work and needs to be clearly identified and I acknowledge primary industry and resources staff. If anybody has seen the stock inspectors of the Northern Territory, they are an incredible labour force. This minister has the privilege of working with. They move around the Territory in some of the remotest parts of the country regulating and managing important biosecurity aspects of developing and managing this industry as well as the export or interstate movement of cattle.

These people are great Territorians and critical in this economic development story. The minister is regularly advocating for important resources to make sure this department progresses and is front and centre in this development.

In terms of agriculture I was lucky to attend to food futures forums that were conducted in Darwin. I related those learnings to some of the projects that are going on in the Barkly. I started to embrace the concept of niche agriculture. There was a lot of debate around broad acre agriculture in northern Australia trying to deliver for the food bowl of Asia. It was not long before Territorians grabbed that narrative, started to refine it and talk about niche, high end, and high value products of the Territory.

They immediately saw the constraints around land, water and labour. It is a clever—as Territorians are—adaptation to start to look at these niche markets. I congratulate the Chief Minister on his leadership around Project Sea Dragon. That is no small project, it is a mega project in terms of aquaculture and the biggest that the Territory has ever seen. It is another example of a high end product that will have a high value and will employ a lot of Territorians. There are estimates of up to 1500 jobs across four different sites in the Top End when this project is in full swing.

The other example I would like to give is in the Barkly. It is the Ali Curung water melon farm. This niche agriculture is capitalising on two crops a year and a winter market that pays premium prices for the product. It is a superb product of seedless watermelon with clever transport logistics around back loading heavy vehicles that are coming back out of the Northern Territory with capacity to take on fruit to distribute to south eastern Australia. It is a very clever operation by a dedicated family and is a great example of how this niche market can be sustainable environmentally and in terms of building our economy.

Not far away is Neutral Junction Station's hay production. They have just about doubled their capacity since first exploring this. As the Member for Nelson was talking about it is very high protein product. There are local stories around that will quieten down a Barkly weaner minister. That is good stuff if it can quieten down a Barkly weaner. The commentary that I was interested in was that I made a stereotype and said it must be heading interstate. The commentary that came back was that it cannot even get out of the Barkly because it is so popular.

The customer base in the Barkly was starting to soak up the initial production and this project now has the opportunity to expand significantly with a sustainable water application process that has been carefully managed by our minister for natural resources. There is a lot of work being done to the Western Devonport aquifer and how those critical water resources will be managed and sustainable allocated to sustain an industry in the future.

As the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources said, it was alarming to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about water management. I agree with him in the first case that this is a critical natural resource but apparently he has a bad memory or wants to put it into his past. The CLP government between 2012 and 2016 had very poor form in terms of the management of Territory water resources. It was done under the guise of cutting red tape and green tape. I reckon the Chamber has the best air conditioner in town, but I saw CLP ministers sweating regularly in this place because there was an active and well-researched opposition that called it out.

This was the natural resource that everyone in this debate is critical to developing and sustaining agribusiness, the pastoral sector and horticultural opportunities into the future. We all agree—now we have a government that is scientifically managing this critical resource once again. Territorians have great faith and assurance that this will be done properly. It will be based on science and done sustainably.

To add another important layer to that, the strategic Indigenous reserving was reintroduced. It gives first nations people the opportunity to develop projects themselves or to be in the market place to trade a resource. This is a postmodern opportunity for traditional owners. They can play in this market space and develop their own projects or choose an environmental outcome for this critical resource in the Northern Territory.

There are good things coming on this front. The Territory economy is very much underpinned by this sector. There are great opportunities. I enjoy hearing the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources talk about the buffalo industry. I remember the previous CLP administration talk about developments in that industry, which I acknowledged and commended, as you give credit where credit is due.

This government has picked up on that and is continuing to develop those opportunities. This is an opportunity for a lucrative product in South East Asia. It is based around Aboriginal traditional country and

labour, with integration into the bigger economic picture of the Northern Territory. Well done Minister. I enjoy every report that you give on the pastoral, agricultural and horticultural sectors.

Like the Member for Nelson said, it would be good to hear some brief reports on the development of new opportunities, one of them being live buffalo export into South East Asia.

This has given me a good opportunity to participate in this debate, acknowledging those great constituents who are pioneers in the—pioneering pastoral families that my family hold dear. We have great relationships with them and have learnt a great amount from them and had great times together over the years.

I commend the minister and support the amended motion.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, we are all fighting to speak on topic that is very important to the Northern Territory. I thank everyone who has contributed to the debate tonight.

Agribusiness provides an exciting opportunity for the Territory to grow into the future. We have a strong agribusiness sector that is quite diverse. It is something for us to be proud of. It is an area that will expand and show how critical the Northern Territory is into the future, not just to the Territory and the rest of the nation, but also in providing food to other parts of the world—including to our near neighbours.

It is a good time to debate this motion, as there were two fantastic announcements from the federal Coalition team—from Minister McCormack and Minister Canavan. One of those announcements was on mango roads. This is something that the Litchfield council and the industry stakeholders have put a lot of effort into. I remember speaking to the Mayor about their plan for mango roads many months ago. I am pleased to see that it is transpiring and coming to fruition.

That is part of understanding how important developing the north is and expanding our opportunities in the Territory. The federal government has come on board with \$20m to improve 15 kilometres of mango roads.

That is an exciting announcement from today. When we talk about mango roads and beef roads, and other types of roads that unlock economic potential—they increase efficiencies, enhance the nature of the product and open up opportunities for additional people wanting to move to various types of farming.

By upgrading these freight roads as part of the roads of strategic importance, we will ensure that Territory growers are able to not only access those domestic markets in a better way, but also our export markets, growing those industries into the future. It sounds so simple to build a road, but the difference it can make on your product is enormous. If you take mangoes, using the mango road example, the difference between having your truck bash along a stretch of unsealed road compared to a smooth bitumen road and getting access to market more quickly means your product is fresher and in better condition. Therefore, it will be more sought after.

I was pleased to hear that announcement today, and I know the Member for Daly—whose electorate will be affected by that announcement—is grateful for it.

Equally, Minister Canavan has been back in the Top End. He is a huge supporter of the Territory and developing the north. He made an announcement today for \$2m for a scoping study for Adelaide River irrigation and industrial water supply.

That has the potential to be an enormous game-changer in the Territory. I had a briefing on it recently, thanks to the minister facilitating that with Power and Water. We talked about that project in the Adelaide River region. It will be very interesting to see what this scoping study produces. It will look at the technical work and the design work, and will even go as far as supply chain details and providing a business case for that project.

Territorians are starting to talk in everyday chat about water infrastructure and how important it is for the future of not just security of water supply, for drinking water and bare essentials, but for unlocking our economic potential.

I think it was last year or the year before that the federal government commissioned the enormous CSIRO report into water infrastructure. It showed some enormous opportunity for unlocking some catchments around Darwin, Mitchell and the Fitzroy. This is just another exciting step in that pathway. As an opposition we are committed to looking at that as a serious economic driver for the Territory.

The Adelaide River off-stream water supply project has the opportunity to create 1400 jobs in farming alone. It is not something we cannot approach in a vigorous sense. We have to go after these opportunities with our eyes and ears open, and we are ensuring that we secure that value well into the future. They are the jobs of the future and we want the next generation of Territorians and generations thereafter to have these opportunities for employment, growth and development.

The beauty of agribusiness is that the breadth and diversity in jobs and opportunities it provides is huge. Perhaps more so than any other industry sector. There is all the technical and research work around it, as the Member for Nelson said in his contribution. There are the physical labour components, the construction components, the processing, distribution, export and domestic transfer. There are a lot of ways people can participate in the agribusiness economy.

The Territory is in very difficult times and all of this talk is phrased around it being budget week. We have had the Gunner Labor government deliver its third—and worst of all three, which really is a race to the bottom—budget here for Territorians. It does not provide the optimism or the vision or any type of roadmap into the future.

There has been a lot of talk from the government, particularly from the Treasurer—she is doing her best to instil a level of confidence and optimism in the community in a circumstance that really is dire and Territorians are hurting as a result of this government's reckless financial mismanagement. Unfortunately yesterday we did not hear anything that really inspires new confidence or creates any new opportunities in the Territory.

CBD vacancy rates are very high, one in four properties in the CBD are vacant. Investment in dwellings has declined for the last four quarters. We know there are many jobs that are tied up in residential property and that has become extremely fragile. Our construction sector has halved and we really are looking to that agribusiness sector at the moment for that encouragement and the light at the end of, what has been for hardworking Territorians and Territory businesses, a very long and dark tunnel.

It has been really encouraging to see that growers are having some record years despite significant challenges. There have been the examples of biosecurity threats recently with citrus canker, the mosaic on the watermelon, and banana freckle. These are huge issues that Territory businesses have to overcome and we have to deal with them in the most efficient and sensitive way possible. We must be protecting our industry but also warding off those biosecurity threats and ensuring sustainable industry into the future.

Debate adjourned.

APPROPRIATION (2019–2020) BILL (Serial 88)

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and again commend the Treasurer and her team—and it is great to see baby Chloe in here, Treasurer—who have been working day and night to bring in a tough but fair 2019 budget for all Territorians.

I am also very pleased to hear that the new figures show our economy is now heading up. The future is bright and the plans our Gunner Labor government have put in place and stuck to, are now showing good outcomes through our economic and social reforms.

The Treasurer and her team have delivered a budget to bring the Territory back into line with what the Territory can produce off its own back since the ending of INPEX and the disgraceful cuts by the Liberal government to the Territory's GST.

The Gunner Labor Government have worked very hard to keep our economy going by putting Territorians and their families first, through the various targeted stimulus packages, creating jobs, safer communities and our continuous commitment to generational change.

Those opposite who sit in this chamber should be ashamed of themselves, as not once over the past two-and-a-half years have I seen them call out to any of the constantly-changing Liberal Prime Ministers of this country to call for our fair share of the GST or even any money for the NT.

Now it is election time, and guess what? We are seeing hollow promises by the Prime Minister, his Liberal colleagues and CLP friends in this Chamber. They made those hollow promises in their last election

campaign, including building the north and Closing the Gap. Then they called a royal commission and then walked away from it.

The federal Liberal government has been in for three years. Where is the money, Prime Minister? Where is the money into your programs and royal commission? We see nothing, and I ask why. Why are we still waiting, when you have had three years to do something for Territorians? All we have is a big zero—zero dollar from the federal Liberal government over the past three years.

Let us hope that we have a change to a Labor government come this next election, as we know a Labor federal government will invest heavily in the Territory. Quite frankly, Territorians have had a gutful of the current local and federal Liberal government's shameful broken promises and poor track record of delivering nothing for the NT. They produce nothing for the NT, in fact they ride off the back of a Labor INPEX deal or sell the country off to make money. We all know about the Darwin Port and our TIO. All I can say is that they make hollow promises. As Derryn Hinch would say: shame, shame, shame.

Let us get this straight. We all know that INPEX was a Territory Labor initiative. It was one that former hard-working Labor Chief Ministers Paul Henderson and Clare Martin secured for the Territory and its families. INPEX was the biggest fiscal injection to the Territory of \$37bn, secured by a Labor government and the biggest deal that the Territory has ever had or seen and one that my Labor colleagues and I are very proud of.

The Labor government has vision for the NT. A Labor government secured the INPEX deal. It is a credit to the Former Chief Ministers Paul Henderson and Clare Martin. We sincerely thank them.

Over the past two years the Gunner Labor government has also been working hard to secure long-term fiscal income projects for the NT and planting many seeds, which our Treasurer has stated are sprouting green shoots. These shoots will grow our NT into a strong and stable economy for all Territorians and their families' futures again, just like the Labor INPEX deal.

The Gunner Labor government has many new and diverse projects that will provide jobs and income for the Territory. As we have heard in this Chamber, those major projects are well on their way including the mining developments and a boom about to happen again. We have so many mines that are now becoming operational due to two years of hard work by the Gunner Labor government with traditional owners and developers across Australia and the world and these mines include:

- lithium—some say it is the world's new gold. It is a very valuable resource
- phosphate—a fertilizer that is a huge commodity across Australia and the world
- rare earth and metal mines. These are rare metals that are used to make super strong magnets and various specialist tools
- gold mines—we have some of the highest gold purity in the NT.

There are then the gas and salt mines, and many more.

Plus, the Gunner Labor government are working with many of these mines to develop and create our own Territory processing plants. This means more jobs for locals and more investments that will be returning to the Territory. We have the ship lift and if federal Labor win the next election, they will inject another \$300m. This is a fantastic commitment from them for all Territorians.

What about the space base, the most exciting project ever to hit the NT? Imagine the NT having its own rocket launching pad—an adventurers dream come true where you can go into the next world. Then we have the Sea Dragon project, a prawn hatchery and prawn farms across the Top End. Some have reported this will be big, or even bigger than our great cattle industry, which is a well re-known and solid industry of the NT

I must also speak about our government's renewable energy. We are one of the country's leaders in renewable energy as Labor governments have a strong commitment to renewables with a target of 50% by 2030. The Territory is rich in sunlight and many other renewable resources. That is why we are investing in solar projects across the NT and more, which will create more jobs and deliver a cheaper and cleaner source of electricity in the future.

Labor governments believe in climate change. Liberal governments do not seem to care. We only have one world and unless our space base rocket launcher finds a new world soon then we best take care of the world we live and raise our families in. I am so pleased our Gunner government and the federal Labor government see it this way.

Mr Vowles: Hear, hear!

Mr SIEVERS: Is that correct, Member for Johnston? Thank you.

The Treasurer and her team have worked very hard to bring this budget in and to deliver a fair budget that still supports all Territorians and their families. Our Treasurer's budget invests in Territorians, their families and our local businesses. This budget is well thought-out and provides balance and stability to the road ahead for the NT. This Labor government will always put Territorians first, so our families have jobs now and in the future, have quality education, and good health that is supported by Medicare, which will also include cancer treatment if a federal Labor government wins the next election. How good is that?

On an Australian federal election stage the lines are clearly drawn between those that have—the banks, the top end of town—and those who have not—the middle class hard-working families where in many cases both parents work all day just to make ends meet.

Budget 2019 continues to deliver for all Territorians and I am particularly pleased to see it also delivers for the families in Palmerston and includes the following.

Palmerston city Projects—\$3.25m for Palmerston pool. We have heard the opposition talk about the Palmerston pool. They did not support it. We are investing in children and families, and swimming lessons. Why would you not support that? It is beyond me.

That money also includes smart energy efficient LED lighting to make our streets safer in Palmerston. We want that. The federal Labor government invests \$5m into the pool. We are also investing, as is the Palmerston City Council.

This government has a proven record of working with all levels of government.

Then we have Palmerston police station—\$30m. I go past it every day and it is coming along well. It has a community hall, as we include the community in many of our projects.

There is the Palmerston fire station—\$25m. We are working with NTPEFS. It is another great initiative. We are listening to the people of Palmerston and what they, their families and our services need.

There is \$100m for the public housing stimulus package, creating more local jobs for local people. I cannot commend the minister enough for that.

Back on Track programs—\$9.5m over two years. This includes bush camps, where people can get out of town and learn new skills out bush such as fixing fences, cook, clean and so forth. I am so proud this government diversifies the options available to our youths. Some of us are good at school and some of us struggle. Some of us need other options. This includes training and support services, day patrols, youth drop-in centre and targeted case management services. I thank the Minister for Territory Families very much. She has put her heart and soul into Palmerston.

Antisocial behaviour programs—\$14.1m over two years. This is about better pathways to return to country, expanding first response patrols and providing short-term accommodation.

Zuccoli public school stage one and stage two. That is another Labor government initiative. This public school was needed many years ago under the CLP, but nothing provided when local public schools were overflowing in Palmerston. Rosebery and Bakewell schools were overflowing for many years.

We heard the minister for Infrastructure say the other day that this school was not even on the books for the CLP. It was not in the forecast planning. It was nowhere to be seen. This Labor government is so dedicated to families that it is delivering that school, stages one and two. It is a \$42.6m project. That is massive for Palmerston. I thank the Minister for Education for investing in Palmerston as well.

AFL—\$1.7m—and NRL—\$1m. They are games coming to town, bringing top-level sports to the Territory. We cannot wait for the Eels versus Canberra Raiders game in July this year. While we on rugby, what about

Warren Park! That is another great initiative. My nephews and nieces who play NTNRL for Nightcliff, Brothers, Sharks and many other clubs want this facility. They want the politics to stand aside on this subject. They have been waiting far too long for a home ground and this Labor government is delivering it for the families.

It is about getting a place they call home again and a place they can showcase their talents. To showcase our Territory kids talents on a great ground. Some of my nephews and nieces are very talented at this sport and many other sports in the Territory

We have recreational fishing from our \$50m package with \$2m into artificial reefs and fish aggregation devices. It is not only increasing fishing opportunities but providing habitats for fish to breed and grow in. There is \$650 000 in recreational fishing surveys to continue good research into our local fish stocks and species.

We have \$400 000 into fishing grants. There are wonderful opportunities for fishos and fishing clubs to engage in. I attended the buddy boats day which I did an adjournment last night on. It was a fabulous day. This allows our fishing clubs to gain grants to help families and kids with disabilities learn to fish, have fun fishing and enjoy it with the family. The smiles on the faces of those children—I cannot express how grateful they are. This money goes towards them.

We caught over 10 fish on my boat—some great sized snapper and cod—and they were so happy. Well done to the Palmerston Game Fishing Club and to all the sponsors and supporters.

We have \$300 000 into boosting our fishing stocks. A few weeks ago I was with Member for Port Darwin, Member for Drysdale and the Palmerston Mayor. We put over 1500 barra into the lakes in Durack and Sanctuary Lakes. The kids and families are having a ball. They can pull barra out of their own backyard. Our government is committed to recreational services and sports for our children and families.

The Labor federal government have committed dollars and improvements to the Palmerston boat ramp should they win the next election. That is a great initiative which will provide a kiosk, more facilities and a boat wash. The only boat wash I know of in the Territory at the moment is in Nhulunbuy and it is a great boat wash. How good would it be to have one in Darwin or Palmerston? The fishos out there would be rapt.

We also have Turbocharging Tourism two. Turbocharging Tourism one was a huge success and Turbocharging Tourism two builds on this and continues the momentum to attract more people to live, work, visit and stay in the Territory. It supports our local businesses like the Arafura games. All I am hearing on the streets is how good they were. Families are so happy about it.

The Gunner Labor government brought back the Arafura Games. It was a wonderful event and one that this Gunner Labor government worked hard to bring back. The NT prospered in so many ways through the games both economically and socially. Well done to all involved.

We have so many events coming to Darwin. I thank the minister for all her hard work and for her team for bringing so many events and people to Darwin. Bassinthe grass is coming up. It is a big hit with locals and people flying in to see some of the top acts including Amy Shark and Allday. They are past my days in the mosh pit but I remember going to see some great performers in my younger years like AC/DC, Cold Chisel, and Goanna—if you remember Goanna—and Midnight Oil. Yes, I know Buzz from Midnight Oil. Giddy, Buzz.

We are investing in seniors. The NT concession scheme and the NT Seniors Recognition scheme, \$31.64m into looking after and respecting our hard working seniors. They are the backbone of the NT and I am pleased we are looking after them.

We are delivering home owner incentives, the best in the country if not the world. The opportunity in the NT to buy and own your own home has never been better than under a Gunner Labor government.

We are delivering back to school vouchers, \$7.1m to support our local families and children returning to school with books and items they need. I know Bakewell and Rosebery schools are pleased about these \$150 vouchers per student. It all helps our families and our children.

The sports vouchers, \$5.4m, another great story supporting children to engage in some physical, art or recreational activities, which is great for their mind, body and soul. These two \$200 vouchers are available every year for every child. It is fantastic. We are the government for Territory families and children.

Then we have childcare subsidies, \$6m for NT families for long day care and childcare services. And what about the electricity subsidies of \$2.5m for Territorians to keep the costs of their power down? We all know what the CLP would have done about that. They would have slugged Territorians another 30% for power, but our Gunner Labor government is saving families around \$1200 per year on power bills.

Our commitment to underground power services for Territorians, after this project was cut by the CLP. Then we had cyclone Marcus which caused so much damage to our external power. The Gunner Labor government is investing in underground power, and this initiative is very welcome. It shows this government listens to Territorians.

Then we have the \$11.8m investment into motorsports, which includes infrastructure at Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex. We have some great V8 car drivers from the Territory. Bryce Ford is going really well. We have the V8s coming up. What a spectacular event that is.

The list goes on. I could stand here all night and talk about the investments in the Territory, but we must never forget it does cost to run things. We have not forgotten about those things. Budget 2019 includes the delivery and running costs of the Palmerston Regional Hospital. That was built and delivered by the Gunner Labor government. It includes a hydrotherapy pool. How good is that?

Then we have the Northern Territory cancer services at the Royal Darwin Hospital, including the PET scanner and cyclotron at the radio pharmacy facility. Expanding chemotherapy services, what a great initiative. The Gunner government has invested in and delivered this when all others failed in the CLP. That is their track record in the CLP. They promise and they fail. They do not deliver.

This government is delivering, and we have heard the federal Labor government will also cover cancer patients through Medicare, if elected. We are here for the people of the Territory. Cancer does affect everyone and we must provide the best services we can for our families and all Territorians.

Then there are the investments in rebuilding our roads across the Territory, which we have heard about today. Supporting local businesses and communities to get their product or family safely to and from their destination.

I am very pleased we delivered Gunn Point Road which I use a lot and I know the Member for Nelson has advocated for its sealing for many years. I know the Member for Nelson will be very happy about that, in fact he might be doing handstands right now listening to that. Going on from there, especially as Budget 2019 and the Labor Gunner government will also commit \$4.3m for the cycle path at Howard Springs and Coolalinga, which I know is another issue the Member for Nelson and yourself, Madam Speaker, have advocated for over a very long time. Congratulations.

Madam SPEAKER: What about a swimming pool?

Mr SIEVERS: The federal Labor government has promised that if it wins the election you will get your swimming pool. How good is that?

Then we have the \$14.1m for round three of Building Better Schools, which is \$300 000 for every school in the NT. This is a great initiative and one that my local Bakewell and Rosebery schools have engaged in. Again, if the Labor federal government win the next election, they too are putting more dollars into our local schools in the Territory. This includes a further \$580 000 for Bakewell School, \$470 000 for Rosebery School and \$1.34m for Palmerston College.

This Labor government are delivering and we will work with any government willing to invest and support Territorians. However it is a shame the Liberal government during the past three years have not engaged and worked with us for the better of all Territorians. As we have experienced, the CLP their motto is just cut, cut and cut. They provide hollow promises and then as we have seen in the past do the contrary to their election promises to Territorians, including the increases to power and water, selling the TIO and port and the cuts to many frontline services in police, youth, health and our education system.

It is clear from the Treasurer's report and Budget 2019 that the Territory is on the way up again under a Labor Gunner government. We had a plan, we stuck to the plan through tough times and now we are seeing the positive outcomes from being strong and standing by and up for Territorians no matter how many naysayers there were in this Chamber. It is easy to criticise and do nothing. It is far harder to stand up for Territorians when they need stability and they need to know the government of the day will be there with them through thick and thin times.

This Labor government has never lost faith in Territorians. We have been there from the start and it has not been easy, however our members' drive, determination and focus to make the Territory a better place for our children has never wavered. I can tell you by looking around this Chamber...

Mr McCARTHY: Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move that an extension of time be granted to the member.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SIEVERS: I can tell you by looking around this Chamber and in the eyes of all my Labor colleagues I can guarantee none of my Labor colleagues will ever let Territorians down. They will always stick up for our Territory families.

We will hear the CLP saying what we should do but they do not have a plan and they never did. We have seen the CLP ride off Labor's INPEX wave and then sell off our farm when the tough times were on the horizon. Shame, shame, shame.

We all know when we sign up to buy a house we own it. We then have capital and a commodity that will grow in time and be worth more in the future. We know that we must spend on upkeep on the way to ensure our investment is secure and that it grows.

We all know what the CLP would have done in this situation, as we have already seen their model. It is to sell the house. The problem with selling the house is that you are left with nothing to work with or work on. There is nothing for our families to call their own, for others to invest in, to grow capital or to leverage others wanting to invest in the Territory.

You are left with nothing under a CLP model. Further, the CLP model was to, 'Let us cut critical frontline services, in Education, youth programs, hospitals and Police'. Let us not forget that the CLP slugged our seniors hard with car parking and bus fares. The CLP cancelled the Arafura Games—shame. It sold our TIO and gave a 99-year lease on our port.

The CLP hit Territorians hard in the back pocket with enormous fees and increases to every Territory family with the unforgettable increase in power costs, which were up by 30%, and water was up by 40% ...

Mr McCarthy: Sewerage by 25%.

Mr SIEVERS: Thank you Member for Barkly—sewerage by 25%.

The budget is critical to getting the Territory back on track through bringing people back to the NT, creating jobs, investing in infrastructure, and putting Territorian families first. This Gunner Labor government believes in its people and its families. We will invest in them for now and into the future.

I thank the Treasurer and her hard-working team for delivering a responsible budget in some tough economic times. A new Budget 2019 that will see stable investment and growth in the Territory. It is a budget that will attract people from different states and countries, appeal to investors and—most importantly—that will benefit all Territorians and their families.

I commend the Treasurer and the support the budget.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, as a government we acknowledge that we have handed down a tough budget and have made decisions that will prove challenging for some. We have seen GST revenue decrease year on year for the fourth time in NT Government history.

This morning I listened to the CLP Opposition Leader's speech. I heard him say that the Treasurer was misleading Territorians regarding the federal government's GST cuts. The GST cuts are unfair. They are huge. They have had significant negative impacts across all agencies. The cuts are unfair because the federal government bases their distribution on a per capita basis as opposed to a needs-based equation. That is not say that our challenges we face the Northern Territory can be compared to those faced in New South Wales.

Funding on a per capita basis rather than on a needs basis only exacerbates the reduction in the GST relativity. In the context of what we are dealing with in the Northern Territory, we have delivered a tight, responsible budget to gear the Territory up for growth and to continue to respond to the needs of Territorians.

Our focus in Budget 2019–20 is to continue to provide quality health and education, to invest in law, order and policing, and to not only increase our housing stock across our communities in the most need, but to also invest greatly in the repair and maintenance of existing housing stock.

We are focused on ensuring that Territory businesses can gear up for growth in the exciting economic opportunities ahead. We have handed down a budget in what is undeniably a tough fiscal environment. Members would be aware we are suffering the effects of reduced GST contribution, despite what the Opposition Leader says, and significant funding cuts by the Commonwealth Government. As such, my government has made a very real, very deliberate decision to go into deficit to keep Territorians in jobs.

And more importantly, we are ensuring that essential services continue to support the everyday needs of Territorians.

I listen with bewilderment to Leader of the Opposition describing the Territory. I understand the politics of it all, the theatrics—which I find abhorrent—but I have to ask, what are your solutions? What are you offering as an alternative? Austerity measures? Reducing government? More cuts? All that we have heard are complaints, opinions, commentary. This morning there was an opportunity for them to present some solutions and they did not.

The Opposition Leader said today that the CLP will bring smaller government. What do we know that as code for? 'We will cut public service jobs.' He talked about reducing red tape and speeding up approvals processes. It would behove to remind people that it is that very attitude and process that saw some people being given an unjustifiably large water allocation. It is that attitude that has led to water being over-allocated in Katherine. It is that attitude and approach that Katherine residents are fearful of—cutting corners to expedite approvals.

I am sick and tired of hearing complaints and whinging. I understand the concept of opposition. The opposition is the largest non-government party or Coalition of parties in the Legislative Assembly. The opposition's main role is to question the government of the day and hold it accountable. But it is also the role of opposition to offer a credible alternative to the current government, and this opposition fails to do that. What we get from the opposition is what it has become known for—the Chicken Little, sky-is-falling, negative nelly chatter. It is constant—also what the Member for Araluen is known for.

We have rolled out several stimulus packages to generate jobs, but apparently that is not good enough. Apparently the Leader of Opposition would prefer that we spend no money at all. And, of course, if we were to spend no money at all, what would we hear from the Opposition Leader and Independents like the Members for Araluen and Blain, who are more fiscally prudent, according to their speeches. We would hear cries of, 'The government needs to spend money'. That we are not doing enough.

Let me just remind everyone in this Chamber, it took the CLP four years to destroy the economy, to destroy the trust of Territorians and to bring so much shame and embarrassment to the role of Members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Yet here they are, along with a couple of their ex-party colleagues, incredulous of the work we have done in the last three years.

The damage done by the previous government is extensive. It has to be acknowledged. The CLP government gave us all the perfect example of what we do not want as a government: dodgy water deals and selling public assets without precedence.

They behaved as if they were running a 'buy one get one free' warehouse sale instead of running a government.

I very rarely ever give time in my speeches to talk about the previous CLP government in such a negative tone, but the Leader of Opposition's comments today had to be responded to.

I take this opportunity to support the measures being taken by this government to address the Territory's financial situation.

Thanks to the root-and-branch review we have a comprehensive overview of the areas of government where spending can be reined in, where we can make smarter decisions to ensure our economy remains stable,

and the Territory remains a great place to live and work. The Treasurer has highlighted that we have some great projects lined up for the Territory. The resources, agribusiness and tourism sectors are being supported.

We have projects that cover the Alice Springs CBD, despite what the Member for Araluen claims. We have continued focus and support for the development of the inland port for Katherine, and the minerals processing plant in Tennant Creek, to name a few.

Recently, Minister for Education travelled to Nepal to engage overseas tertiary students. Thanks to her efforts, we will see the population of Darwin increase by up to 20,000 with international students over the coming years. This increase in population of students will have positive flow-on effects for the real estate market and for hospitality businesses in Darwin.

We've had to make some difficult decisions with regard to the Root and Branch Review, not least of which is the teachers' housing subsidies in Katherine. I hope that the Member for Araluen and the Opposition Leader are listening to what I am about to say. Teacher housing subsidies were introduced 30 years ago. This has continued without any comprehensive review for 30 years. There are inequalities and inefficiencies in regards to this subsidy. There are 300 education staff in Katherine. Of the 300, 94 receive housing subsidy. Not all of the 94 receiving housing subsidy are teachers.

Teacher housing subsidies in Katherine cost the NT government \$500 000 annually, which of course has a flow on benefit to the real estate industry in Katherine. When the Department of Defence decided to establish Tindal Airforce Base in Katherine in the late 80s the NT Government at the time, the Katherine Town Council, seized the opportunity and developed the suburb that is now Katherine East.

Katherine East is home to more than half of Katherine's population and is out of the flood zone. Katherine East has, in recent years, expanded significantly which of course is due to the visionary forward planning by previous Labor governments who released land to allow for development for the first time in 30. It has created almost 1000 new house and land blocks in Katherine East.

Of course, it came with benefits to the economy. The rapid expansion of Katherine East with new housing has also had a significant impact on the real estate market of Katherine. This expansion has contributed to a decrease in values of properties in Katherine North and Katherine South and an increase in properties available on the rental market.

I digress. I will go back to the teachers' housing subsidies. The last 10 days have been interesting. The CLP Senate candidate Sam McMahon wants to know what I'm doing about Katherine teacher housing subsidies, and has apparently been asking on social media. Other CLP supporters have insisted that I 'come out swinging' on this issue.

I have the best interests of the average Katherine person at heart. Katherine residents' wellbeing, the stability and safety of the town—everything about Katherine has been first and foremost, my number one priority. Many times, it has been above everything else. Since being elected, my focus, energy and time has been on making Katherine an affordable place to live and work.

I support the teachers of Katherine working with their union, the Australian Education Union NT branch in coming up with viable options that not only make Katherine attractive for teachers to come and stay, but affordable for the average renter—for the person who fits tyres at Beaufort, for the person who works at Shell service station, for the disability support worker at Somerville. Where we have front line jobs, the government already has a scheme called the National Affordable Rental Scheme, where front line workers can access rental properties at 20–30% less than the market. This scheme is available for teachers and nurses and other key areas. This initiative already exists.

Schools in regional and remote areas face great challenges, made even more difficult by the discriminatory, punitive Commonwealth funding model that the Liberals subscribe to. It uses measures such as attendance rates and test scores to determine how much funding is provided. While some people believe that these measures are fair and reasonable way to measure the success of a school in urban areas, it fails to take into consideration external contributors such as remoteness, difficulty in getting to school because of road closures due to weather—which we experience annually in the NTT—and health issues. There are cultural contributors as well.

In regard to the teacher housing subsidy, I will be working with my colleagues in caucus and working closely with the union and with my colleague the Minister for Education to put forward options relating to teacher

recruitment and retention for Katherine. Teachers are the backbone of the education system. You can have a class without a classroom. You cannot have a lesson without a teacher.

Changes in the way the Department of Education support teachers in regional, rural and remote areas will obviously impact us in Katherine but if these changes mean that our schools are better resourced, our teachers are better supported, then I stand beside the Minister for Education and agree with her wholeheartedly when she says that if it comes between choosing ad hoc entitlements or investing directly in schools, the choice is obvious. We will choose the schools and students every time.

I am confident that the Department of Education will continue to recruit and retain qualified, experienced teachers to regional areas, specifically to Katherine, because not only is the Territory a great place to live and learn, it is a great place for career development.

It is important to remind everyone that the federal Liberal government cut \$500m per year from the Northern Territory budget. It is the federal Liberal government that is forcing our hand in finding savings when there really is not much room for savings.

Overall expenditure on public education will grow by 2.3%. Meanwhile, expenditure on private education will grow by 3.4%. Core resourcing costs for public schools are budgeted to grow by just 1.7%, meanwhile, projected inflation growth is 1.6%, meaning there is no real growth in core expenditure from the federal Liberal government. Once cost growth for education is factored in, it could possibly mean a cut in real terms. There it is again: a cut.

Due to the NT Government's budget repair strategy, the NT Department of Education has announced \$5.7m in savings. This includes \$500 000 earmarked for cuts to Katherine teacher housing subsidies. There is a process involved in all of this. As I mentioned earlier in my speech, this is a subsidy that has been in place for 30 years without any real comprehensive review. That review is ongoing, it has commenced.

The Minister for Education has said many times that this was not going to be an immediate decision. No decision had been made and this was not going to be implemented immediately. The department was going to undertake a review, including consultation with the stakeholders. That has commenced. No decision has been made at this stage.

Again, I go back to funding Commonwealth Government. It has been dramatically reduced in a number of areas related to education.

Commonwealth direct funding of public schools, as I mentioned before, is only going to grow by 1.7%. In the grand scheme of things surely people can understand the significant impact that has on the schools in the Northern Territory.

This is another one I need to remind people of. NT Remote Aboriginal Investment, the NTRAI, cut in half with a massive 48.7% reduction from \$56m to \$28.7m. All of this affects the Northern Territory and no matter what the Leader of the Opposition says or what the Member for Araluen shrieks across the Chamber, we have to take note of these things. We need to remember where this has stemmed from.

The CLP candidate for Solomon, Kathy Ganley, Kathy Ganley has been saying on the radio—and I have heard her say this many times spruiking something like—I cannot remember the words exactly—a Gunner government wants to tax everything'. This kind of fear mongering before a federal election is misleading, cheap political point scoring and boring.

I am sure Ms Ganley recalls from her time as deputy coroner that people are dying in the Northern Territory through violence, alcohol abuse, recklessness and helplessness. When the candidates come out with these lines they are creating a greater divide between the wealthy and the rest of the population. This not a way to address these issues.

The Gunner government and federal Labor under the leadership of our next Prime Minister Bill Shorten, supported by committed and dedicated Territorians like the Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon; the Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling; and the Senator for the Northern Territory, Malarndirri McCarthy; are looking at making Australia a fair place for everyone.

It is ridiculous that big businesses get tax break after tax break while we do not have a universal standard for child and maternal health services in this country. It is ridiculous that the postcode you are born into has an

impact on the likelihood of you finishing school. It is ridiculous that funding decisions are made per capita without looking into the external factors.

The NT Government is in debt. It is undeniable. This is the result of a combination of debt that was inherited by the CLP government and significant cuts to the Northern Territory by the federal liberal government. This debt is not a result of mismanagement and we cannot go into austerity measures. We need to continue to provide services that everyday Territorians rely on.

In recent surveys conducted about the issues most concerning to Australians the number one issue was consistently reported as environmental issues and climate change. Climate change is something that the CLP and federal liberal government continue to stick their heads in the sand about. We need industry but not at the cost of our future. We need to have a price on carbon, an electric car industry and to make sure that the temperatures in our oceans do not continue to rise at alarming rates. We need to make sure we are not making ways for big businesses to sell off our precious resources to overseas entities AKA Clive Palmer. This, leaving us broke, resource less and living in a hot land.

We should not be told a story of fear, taxes and uncontrollable debt. We should be told a story of how a caring government is taking the necessary steps so that Australia and the Territory continue to be a great place to live. So that everyone has access to high quality health care and education. We should be told about the programs that our government is investing in like supporting parents to be parents. We should be told about the programs that support our most vulnerable.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43, I move an extension of time for myself.

Motion granted.

Ms NELSON: We should be told that there are services available to address domestic violence, homelessness, education for our children, and university and training options for our young people.

Taxes are meant to provide things for the whole community and are meant to be used for the greater good. Not for the top end of town and for keeping big businesses happy.

I read the Katherine Times opinion piece published online on 21 March 2019. The headline was 'Sandra Nelson must consider what is best for Katherine'. This came directly after I had made the announcement that I would not be recontesting the seat for the elections in 2020. It was calling for me to consider pulling the pin on my political career to avoid what the editor implied would be the community represented by a lame duck until the 2020 election. I was not surprised by the editor's opinion. It has been pretty consistent over the last two years.

If I were to announce today that our government is investing \$1bn in Katherine township, following the local paper's editor penchant for negative spin on anything related to me, the headline would probably read, 'Local member only secures \$1bn for Katherine'.

I am proud to be the first Labor representative of Katherine.

I am also proud to be part of a government that has delivered substantially for Katherine, including significant investments in Nitmiluk National Park that will have flow-on effects to business operators in our town; the main street upgrade; the roll-out of the Families as First Teachers program; and the recently announced family and child centre program. We are delivering on millions of dollars' worth of infrastructure investments including a new fire station which will be officially opened this month.

We have made substantial investments to our police and delivered youth outreach and engagement officers, Public Housing Safety Officers, a new flexible learning centre, school holiday programs and so much more.

While there are some very loud conservative voters in Katherine and a loud minority of detractors, there are also some people who see the divide in Katherine as an 'us against them' situation. That is not what Labor is about, and it is not what I am about. I see the divide, I feel the divide, and I will continue to work towards breaking down that divide.

How fortunate am I to be in a party that has committed to doing the same thing!

I was alarmed to hear the Opposition Leader talk about shutting down or reducing social programs. Under Territory Labor, we have succeeded in changing the future of Katherine, a future that is far brighter in part

because of programs such as FaFT, the new family and child centre programs, Blue Eagle Muay Thai after-hours activities, Deadly Cutz youth mentoring and training, and Katherine Flexible Education Centre. programs that invest in our children and young adults.

I rarely respond to opinion pieces and negative comments, not because I do not have a comeback; it is because I am busy doing what needs to be done for Katherine. As tempting as it has been at times to respond, a far more productive use of my time, energy and focus has been on delivering record investment for Katherine. The residents will benefit from for years to come.

Investments include:

- \$10m for Nitmiluk National Park projects
- \$8m for new fire station, increased by \$3m, which will be officially opened in the next few weeks
- \$4.5m for refurbishment and improvements to the sports precinct
- \$2m for new works at Katherine Showgrounds
- \$5m for CBD revitalisation
- \$450 000 annually for three years for youth school holiday activities and events
- \$300 000 for each school in Katherine
- \$30m committed to establishment of Katherine logistics hub—the inland port
- \$500 000 for the Doorways Hub to address homelessness
- opening of a youth hub by Territory Families and permanent placement of six youth outreach workers—the first of its kind in Katherine
- \$1.1m opening of education re-engagement centre—another first of its kind in Katherine
- Public Housing Safety Officers for Katherine
- \$3m for repairs and maintenance for public housing in Katherine east and Katherine south
- \$2m to seal Beasley Road
- \$15 000 for improvements at Katherine Motocross track
- \$18,000 for Blue Eagle muay thai after hours youth activities
- \$2m for Mimi Arts infrastructure—the Department Tourism, Sport and Culture has been working with the management and Board of Mimi Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Centre in Katherine to scope potential upgrades to the centre in line with the arts trail election commitment.

The upgrades focus on improving the visitor experience and general amenity of the building. It is so important. Mimi represents a very different product in Katherine, as it provides opportunities for visitors to interact with artists while the artists are working.

Over the past six months, GHD Advisory Consultants have been developing a business case to assess the business model and potential impact of infrastructure upgrades. That work is now complete and will shortly be shared with Mimi Arts to make decisions on the next steps. I am looking forward to this infrastructure project. It is something Mimi Arts has worked hard for and I am passionate about.

There has been \$800 000 for the Katherine hot springs, \$250 000 towards establishing Katherine Community Hall.

And if this was the only thing I was able to deliver for Katherine during my term of government, I would walk away feeling very proud. We committed \$150 000 towards establishing headspace and using that as leverage

to lobby for more money. And it has happened. It is being delivered: headspace is in Katherine. It is being managed and operated by Anglicare and they are currently recruiting.

I cannot begin to tell you how proud I am of that one investment; headspace. All of this has happened because of continued strong electoral representation by me as the Member for Katherine, and because of a Territory Labor government.

In challenging economic times, our government has focused on the important everyday business of education, healthcare, community safety and infrastructure. This budget is about continued investment in the services that are most critical to the future prosperity of the Territory, and certainly for the people of Katherine.

I commend the Treasurer for all her hard work, and her ministerial staff, and I also commend the Treasury. Thank you.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to contribute to the parliamentary debate on the Appropriation Bill 2019 and congratulate Treasurer Manison on her third Northern Territory budget.

The Territory has been for many years, the land of opportunity. Budget 2019–20 builds on that opportunity. It is a budget where people get a fair go, the Territory gets a fair go and fighting chance to succeed.

Territorians work hard to meet their responsibilities and commitments. The Territory's future is bright. A place that can flourish, where everyday people can become tomorrow's small business owners or entrepreneurs. Budget 2019–20 begins the pathway to ensuring those very successes can be achieved for everyday Territorians.

Through solid investments in tourism, remote housing and roads infrastructure spending, we can provide the builders of the Territory the opportunity to continue to pave the way to build our Territory's quality construction projects.

Those of us here this evening cannot solve all our Territory's problems. Our economic recovery cannot be solved solely by the Northern Territory Government, but in partnership with our great Territory businesses and workers, we can make our jurisdiction a place of envy. An economic powerhouse, though we must work together.

We must look at every option. We must not be scared to look across our shores at the exciting and emerging projects happening in the renewable space, the horticultural and agricultural industries, and whether they are viable options for us in the Northern Territory.

Together we can make a difference for the best of the Territory. There are steps we can and will take right now to improve people's lives and the economic position of our great Territory. Some members over the last few days have been cynical with the debate, and tonight I accept that this Chamber itself represents a variety of views from a variety of constituencies from all over the Northern Territory.

They represent places that have either seen major growth in jobs over the past few years or in cases similar to mine, have seen very little investment over the years of the previous government in my constituency of Namatjira.

I am confident that through the suite of measures this government is looking to introduce through Budget 2019–20, we can begin to see quality and equal investments across the Northern Territory.

Our jobs packages and investments are in our people. They are a step in the right direction. There should be nothing controversial about this. It encapsulates everything that the Territory is and deserves. Everything in these measures has been supported and will be welcomed by Territorians, including by my parliamentary Labor colleagues who sit here tonight.

Our objectives in Budget 2019–20 are clear: to put more people back in quality jobs and more money back in the pockets of hard-working Territorians. These measures come to the aid of our economy to help it through these difficult and challenging times.

The Treasurer has indicated that throughout Budget 2019–20, investments will create more jobs for construction workers, teachers, communities in regional and remote areas, and for those Territorians who have been in long-term unemployment. It will provide a kick start—or as we say in the bush, a jumpstart—to our economy, which had stalled under the previous government's lack of planning for our future.

I understand that for some people this is a hard concept to grasp. But we must look to the future. Looking at future investment opportunities for our Territory, which is a small jurisdiction with a limited capacity to raise its own revenue due to population constraints, is hard. I do not deny that for a second. We must be innovative and develop—to be excited with our appetite to be bold and progressive, daring to create new and emerging industries where suitable.

We need to continue to develop programs and policies that give our companies confidence that they will be investing in the right government. We need to make sure that when they are hiring people that their products are good for the Territory.

I come from a family of bloody hard workers. I know firsthand that small businesses are often where most jobs are created. Through small businesses taking these risks—the plunge, stepping out—looking into tendering projects or applying for tendering projects for large contracts, or everyday Territorians taking the leap forward of going out on their own. These are hard decisions. But, under a Territory Labor government we will do everything we can to support the growth of new Territory business, to support Territorians to reach their full potential.

Having just spoken about that, it would be remiss of me to not mention the strong support from places like the NT Chamber of Commerce, the strong leadership from the Department of Business, and of course the Ministers for Business, Trade and Innovation. They are constantly looking at projects and the emerging industries and markets that we can bring to the Northern Territory. Strong support and leadership gets results. It develops a strong and vibrant Territory. This is what we have with the Territory Labor government.

I am sure that everyone here knows that we need to invest in our remote communities and regional towns. I am a bushy and I love the bush and the beauty of our remote communities. I can think of no better place to be. When I am out bush, I am the happiest I can be. I have said in the Chamber a number of times, and I will continue to say it, that I believe the future of the Northern Territory often sits in the bush—in our communities, regional towns and through our hard-working first nations brothers and sisters, native title holders and traditional owners; our hard-working, passionate pastoralists; and many of our comrades and workers in the resource sector.

Budget 2019–20 is a positive budget for people in the remote parts of the Northern Territory. It delivers investment in remote roads, like those such as the Docker River and Plenty highways. In Budget 2019–20 there is a significant investment to making sure we continue to provide bitumen sealing of those roads to help our remote brothers and sisters.

It also includes roads like the Maryvale Road, which is a road I have long advocated for on behalf of my constituents. There is an investment in it of \$19.4m under a Territory Labor government. This investment of \$19.4m will deliver a 20-kilometre dual lane sealed section of the road. That is a significant investment for remote Territorians and communities of Titjikala and Finke and for the tourism businesses at the Ooraminna homestead. This government understands the challenges and regional and remote people's needs.

It is safe to say that remote roads and every bush member in the Chamber have a relationship like no other. We depend on each other, yet our relationship is somewhat corrugated. We travel these bush roads every week and understand how important they are to remote people they provide the only corridor for many community members to get to larger towns to visit families and friends, attend medical appointments, and buy fresh produce. These roads are also crucial to ensure that livestock, horticulture and agriculture products can get to markets. I am very proud of the outstanding work we have seen in our federal counterparts, Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon; Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling; and Malarndirri McCarthy, the Northern Territory Senator in their commitment to these roads. Territory Labor understands those challenges. I am excited about their recent announcements in Central Australia.

The Santa Teresa Road is one that I spend a large amount of time advocating for on behalf of my constituents to the ministers, both federally and to my colleague Minister Lawler, the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. We have seen a commitment of \$35m for that road. It is another outstanding commitment. There is \$9m allocated to the Papunya Road. There is \$3m for the Arreyonga–Hermannsburg Access Upgrade. There is \$2m allocated for the Kintore–Haasts Bluff access, and \$9m for Alparra and Ampilatwatja. These are federal commitments but the benefit they bring to remote Territorians is invaluable. You cannot measure just how significant that investment is for remote communities, pastoralists and tourism.

Over the last six years of cuts and chaos from the Abbott-Turbull-Morrison government, the Territory's infrastructure needs were ignored. Building a world-class Territory is what I want to see us achieve and that

can only be done by investing in the bush, like continuing to invest in remote housing through a range of measures, which not only deliver positive and life changing results for our remote brothers and sisters in communities but also for our civil and construction industries.

I was also very pleased to recently welcome the federal Labor team's announcement regarding remote housing. Again, Labor understands the work that needs to be undertaken in remote communities. In particular I am pleased to hear that the commitment regarding the remote housing deal includes outstations. Often outstations are forgotten. This is a significant investment and I am very proud and happy to hear that under this government, outstations are not forgotten. The Territory always does better under Labor.

The Budget 2019–20 builds on the successes of our record investment in remote housing, we will continue to see new homes built under this government, additional living spaces created on existing homes and much-needed refurbishments across our communities.

Budget 2019–20's ambition is to create jobs, develop future industries and ensure our every Territorian has the chance to gain the right skills for a transforming, modern economy which will put us in good stead for the future. Budget 2019–20 encapsulates the need to develop those skills.

This budget will deliver record investments across our schools. Places like Amooinguna, Harts Range and Mutitjulu will see significant upgrades to the local schools. By these measures we will look at helping and building small businesses to continue to succeed, employ more people and take on new projects through start-ups, government incentives and through our commitment to growing, diversifying and developing our economy.

It continues our record infrastructure spend. I am overcome with positivity to see money allocated in the budget to undertake and support the delivery of industrial land in Alice Springs. This will inform current and future industrial land development needs, headworks, planning and subdivision works to support local businesses in Alice Springs that need access to industrial land.

Time after time I have stood in this chamber and spoken about the good people of Alice Springs and their needs when it comes to commercial land release. We will not be like the previous administrations and ignore that concern. We are putting our money where our mouth is and investing in the future. We are investing in industrial land release and providing confidence to the good folks—the rural residents of Alice Springs—that the industrialisation in the rural area is something of the past.

Budget 2019-20 is clear, concise and representative of the needs of Territorians. We have heard loud and clear that Territorians want to own their own piece of the Northern Territory. We have developed generous first home owner packages that will continue to develop affordable housing and residential land in Alice Springs as a priority. Land such as the Kilgariff Estate in Alice Springs. It is a wonderful, growing and vibrant estate where we encourage anyone to come out and invest. Our generous first home owner packages have been a success.

We have had many new families decide to call Kilgariff Estate home, building and designing their own home. The level of pride and excitement they have when they are able and afforded that opportunity to do it—that is what a Territory Labor government does. We invest in our people and give them the opportunities to succeed.

As members of this Chamber are aware the winding back of large scale projects like INPEX is edging ever closer, marking the end of decades of a golden time in the resources sector. It is important to acknowledge the range of projects on the horizon.

I thank the members for Johnson and Port Darwin for the work they have done in continuing to look at further projects like the Amaroo phosphate mines. It has been spoken about in this Chamber today—the Territory Labor government is working on a range of projects just like that. The Mount Peake Mine and the list goes on. Seven major projects in the resources sector are in Central Australia. We are a power house.

In order to grow our population and become a jurisdiction that is not fully reliant on federal government funding we need diversification. We need to transition to a high tech, renewable, friendly and modern economy that is equipped for the future.

Budget 2019-20 delivers in the renewable space with a commitment of \$1.5m invested into the Centre for Excellence in Renewable Energy. Round two of the rooftop solar project in schools and our continued work

in heat mitigation strategies for the CBD of Alice Springs. We have continued to significantly invest in the renewable space.

We have committed \$5m over three years for the Rooftop Solar Schools program, \$8.3m over two years for Territory Generation five megawatt battery storage in Alice Springs, \$5m into establishing the (inaudible) Centre at the Desert Knowledge Precinct, \$45m has been allocated and we are working to deliver for the 25 megawatt Katherine solar facilities and \$40m for the two 10 kilowatt solar plants to be built at Manton Dam and Bachelor.

This is a government which delivers in the renewable space. We have seen significant investment there already. There is significant work that will continue to be done as we work towards achieving the Territory Labor government's commitment to renewables.

Investing in the bush is crucial to the future of the Northern Territory and I am glad to see funds being made available for increased local decision making agreements to be exercised. I believe that if we want to see our children stronger, communities healthier, houses maintained and happy communities free from negativity and violence then we must ensure that rather than people from Canberra and or Darwin making decisions about locals business, local people and aspirations then we need to ensure that individual communities and organisations are involved in their own decisions, so they are empowered, so they are invested and so then they will participate.

Under this government we will continue to work closely the relevant stakeholders to deliver in the area of kinship care. Another great commitment of a Territory Labor government.

The bottom line is that the Territory will always get a fairer and better deal under Labor governments. We understand, we value and we appreciate each and every Territorian.

As the member for Namatjira and a proud Labor member, I will always stand up and advocate that Territorians get the best deal possible. We have heard from those opposite in the Chamber tonight and yesterday, scare tactics around the Territory budget. This Territory budget is putting the Territory back on track to deliver positive outcomes for people in the Northern Territory.

This budget provides a clear direction. It outlines the work we know we need to do. It is a fair and equitable budget. I know those opposite might spruik the Higgins hot sale and talk about what they will sell and what they think we should sell, but under a Territory Labor government, we understand how important things are to Territorians.

Unlike the others, I am never going to have a job in real estate. I think the Member for Daly could be a good real estate agent. Previously when he was a minister, he did a very good job at selling off public assets. If it does not work out well for him in 2020, there is always a job for him at one of the real estate agents. I digress.

Budget 2019–20 is a good budget for Territorians and the good people of Namatjira. There are significant road investments, significant investments into remote housing, significant investments into making sure that remote clinics operate and are in great condition, that schools are looked after. It is a budget that is fair and equitable for all.

I commend the 2019 Appropriation Bill to the House.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to place on the record my sincere happiness and support about recently attending an event in Alice Springs. It gives me great pleasure to be in a position tonight to rise and express to this Chamber and all honourable members how happy I was recently to attend and officially open the inaugural Purple House conference.

As always the morning started off with a wonderful welcome to country by Aunty Geraldine Stuart acknowledging the strong Arrernte people as the traditional owners of the land on which the conference had gathered and to pay our respects to the elders past, present and future.

The Share a Tale conference was the Purple Houses first conference a special conversation about remote dialysis, community-led healthcare and keeping culture strong.

The program was fantastic, and I am sure everyone who attended inspired by the presenters sharing their expertise on renal disease from their personal or professional experiences.

I am told by attendees that so many insights were shared as the voices of people receiving dialysis spoke about the many successes and challenges, as well as the challenges that many people still face.

It was also great to have many organisations who deliver this life saving treatment on country also provide valuable insight.

I know how important this subject is in the Northern Territory, with over 700 people currently requiring renal replacement therapy to sustain life. It is estimated that by 2023 more than 1000 Territorians will require renal replacement therapy.

On 20 October 2017 the Minister for Health, Natasha Fyles, launched the Northern Territory Renal Services Strategy 2017–2022 to set the future direction for our renal services. A key priority of the strategy is a focus on care closer to home, which is consistent with a focus on remote communities.

The Northern Territory Government is pleased to acknowledge its 15-year relationship with Purple House. Over this time, Purple House has pioneered the delivery of nurse-assisted dialysis to some of our most remote Territorians, ensuring they remain connected with their families, culture and country.

The Northern Territory Government will continue to support this partnership while welcoming the innovative approaches to providing care that may be offered under the new Medicare Benefit Schedule item, funding haemodialysis in very remote communities.

In support of that partnership, I was pleased to announce at the conference that after some lobbying and advocating on behalf of many people, the Northern Territory Government was able to donate the Central Australian Health Service renal truck to the Purple House. This extra truck will support the ongoing work of Purple House, reaching out to Territorians, giving them the opportunity to safely return home to country for special occasions.

It is important to put support and thanks out to Sarah Brown and the team at Purple House, who did a phenomenal job organising that conference. They do a great job continuing to deliver that care. I often pop in to catch up with my constituents, and it is always delightful and refreshing to see how happy they are there.

Renal dialysis can be confronting, scary and daunting for those who have never experienced it before. The level of care they get from Purple House, whether that is in Alice Springs or in one of the remote clinics, they are always delivering quality care and seem to be surrounded by wonderful, happy people.

As part of the conference, the opening night, many interstate visitors were able to sit down at Purple House and share in some delicious kangaroo tail, which was cooked by Purple House, showing just how connected it is.

I place on the record my support, and that of everyone in this Legislative Assembly, to the continuation of the great work the Northern Territory Government provides to Purple House. Purple House makes a beautiful range of products as a fundraising business. The Member for Nightcliff has some in her draw. It is a great social enterprise to help fund the Purple House to continue to deliver that quality care.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I rise to put on record my offence and complete disgust regarding the comments made by the Member for Araluen today during the first general business motion.

The Member for Araluen made comments about me, and I quote from the draft *Hansard*:

I feel very sorry for her because she is an Aboriginal woman who comes from an education background. She could have really made a more meaningful contribution than she did ...

I dispute the comments made by the Member for Araluen, who for some reason thinks it is appropriate to comment on my race and gender regarding my representation in parliament. To add insult to the offence she caused me, after I pointed out under Standing Order 31: offensive words, the Member for Araluen refused several times to withdraw the comments she had made. Instead of acknowledging the offence she had caused me, she moved on with her speech and said:

I did not offend her.

I ask how the Member for Araluen thinks she can decide what offends me and what does not. This is a prime example of the discourse that has historically and presently experienced by Aboriginal people across the country. A person from the dominant mainstream culture can decide what is felt or experienced by a person of a minority group.

The Member for Araluen then tried to down play the offence she caused me by calling me, 'Precious'. This is a typical tactic by someone who does not want to acknowledge that their comments have been hurtful, instead shifting the blame to the complainant. It is then their problem. It is as if I am too sensitive or emotional to hear criticism.

Even when I stood to address the Deputy Speaker, I reiterated that we all have a right to speak about the important issues which we have been elected to represent. Critiquing what I said, or my role as Minister, is not the issue. What I found offensive was the need for the Member for Araluen to say that she felt very sorry for me as:

An Aboriginal woman who has come from an education background ...

I want to point out that flippant comments about a person's race, gender, age, sexuality or ethnicity are not simply small components of what makes a person's identity for the person who is being described. They are parts of our identity and make us who we are. Often these elements are not things we can change about ourselves.

I do not see how the Member for Araluen sees it as appropriate to explicitly point out my race and gender and link them to how my contributions to my House are either acceptable or not acceptable in her eyes. She also said:

I am not having a go at you for any reason apart from what you did with the opportunity that was squandered in parliament.

I pose this question to the Member for Araluen: why would being an Aboriginal woman who comes from an education background warrant her to feel very sorry for me? Why would it be something that would need to be pointed out specifically? Why would it have anything to do with one's ability to make a contribution to debate in this House.

Tonight I offer two points of reflection. First, today was a historic day for the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. A member of our parliament, and the Territory, delivered their motion in their traditional Aboriginal language with the use of an interpreter.

Secondly, what was meant to be a positive debate sadly digressed into an example of political hijacking. What really needs to change in the NT is the acknowledgement that there is no place in our modern, multicultural community for simplistically referring to a person based on their race or gender.

In 2017 former First Lady of the USA, Michelle Obama, said:

The shards that cut the deepest are the ones that were intended to cut. Knowing that, after eight years of working really hard for this country, there are still people who won't see me for what I am because of my skin colour.

It is 2019. I have been a member of parliament in the NT for nearly three years. As a proud Territorian I will remain optimistic that each person in the Territory is not judged in their role based on their gender or race and that we do not connect someone's capability or capacity to do a job based simply on assumptions connected to their identity. I pledge that I will remain optimistic that this is not the world we live in, however today I have come to terms with the sad reality that we still have a long way to go.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, I thank and acknowledge the Member for Arnhem for sharing those wise words with us all this evening and reminding us that we need to be wary of the words we share, both inside and outside this parliament.

On a lighter note, I will update the house on the recent activities and achievements of my amazing Karama electorate. I will start with Malak Primary School. Malak recently received word that in semester two they are going to receive a 0.6 FTE Families as First Teacher position that will be placed in the school to work with

vulnerable children. I am excited about this. I think FaFT is an amazing program, as do all my colleagues, and I know it is going to bring so much added value to Malak Primary School.

The school also recently celebrated National Harmony Day. It is a very multicultural school, and Principal Lorraine Evans does an amazing job to promote inclusion of everybody. Well done to the entire school.

I was able to take my staff along to be part of the special assembly. It was fantastic because in the middle of the assembly, the students from every class had created what they called a harmony city out of recycled material. It was fantastic to see all these buildings that were created from empty milk cartons, orange juice bottles, you name it, they had it in there. It was an amazing way of encouraging the artistic flair of those students but also using recycled material, which was great.

I provided the school with a donation that went towards the morning tea, so it was lovely to see the grade 6 student leaders overseeing the dissemination of the fruit to the younger kids. It is really quite sweet and you could see the admiration and respect of the younger students to the older ones. Well done to all of those student leaders.

The school also recently hosted students who were evacuated from Milyakburra and Robinson River because of cyclone Trevor. Lorraine and her team organised an area of the school, I believe in the staff quarters, where a pop up school was initiated. Lorraine and her staff were able to work with the staff from the classrooms as well.

It was great to see that the lessons would finish at the same time so all the kids could play together at recess and lunch. That was a great way of making sure the visiting students felt warm and welcome, because the school was definitely excited to have them there.

And finally on Malak Primary School, I once again acknowledge the wonderful work of Principal Lorraine Evans, who was awarded a national 2019 Commonwealth Bank teaching award. With over 3000 applicants from around the nation, Lorraine was a successful recipient.

I also acknowledge the fantastic Assistant Principal Mina McCarthy, who was shortlisted into the top 50. That is a fantastic achievement. I understand that Lorraine joins Ms Leah Crockford and Mr John Cleary who were also selected from the Northern Territory. Well done to them.

As part of the award they were given a fellowship which includes a study tour of Singapore, a \$30 000 school improvement grant, as well as a \$10 000 professional development grant, and I understand Lorraine wants to continue to learn more about the Reggio Emilia method. Good luck to Lorraine. Thank you for all you do, and it is absolutely clear why you were the Northern Territory's Principal of the Year for 2018.

O'Loughlin Catholic College recently commemorated Anzac Day at the school and were supported by the 8th/12th Regiment from Robertson Barracks. That was a fantastic event for the school. I drive past almost every day and see that their new sports precinct is well underway. I think the dry season has played a good role in that.

Our Building Better Schools funding of \$300 000 per school has been instrumental in making that happen. The cover is up, I believe the foundations are laid and there is going to be a great basketball court that should be finished shortly. I look forward to visiting Rhett Bowden, the Principal, and touring the school and taking in that wonderful asset once it is completed.

I understand O'Loughlin Catholic College students and staff participated in and supported the Arafura Games last week, so I am sure fun was had by all.

Finally, Year 7 camps took place last week at Adventure Bound. I had to see Mathilda, a staff member of O'Loughlin, to ask what that was. It has been many years since I was at school. Apparently it is at Base Camp Wallaroo. The students had a fantastic time outdoors and learned some new skills while creating some wonderful memories. School camps are an important part of the educational journey. Well done to O'Loughlin for organising that for those students.

Malak Marketplace—I know Hansard have been waiting for me to brag about it! I am back again, just like the marketplace. The first session was held on Saturday. It was fantastic to have Chief Minister Michael Gunner with me. We did a walk around with Lina Paselli-Kruse, the general manager and co-founder, and talked to the local stallholders. We were given some dried dragon fruit to try, and spoke with the local artists. There

was one lady, whose name I forget, who makes artwork out of recycled material. She is very creative. It was a great opportunity for locals to get in early and get some Mother's Day presents.

The marketplace operates every Saturday in the Malak car park behind the shops between 4 pm and 9 pm. It is an organic farmers' market. It is plastic-free and we encourage people to bring their own eating and drinking utensils. Come on down; it is a beautiful atmosphere. There is live music and there was entertainment by the Burning Circus last weekend. There was yoga inside the Chambers Crescent Theatre. There is something for everyone. If you have not been yet, please come on down.

I recently joined the Multicultural Council Northern Territory for its monthly 'happy families' community dinner. The dinner is hosted every month in partnership with CatholicCare NT. This month we were treated to a delicious Mexican dinner. There are a lot of events on so there was not the usual turnout, but it is a wonderful monthly event where newly settled people to Darwin are encourage to come along. You can meet with one another and ask for assistance, and find out about local services. It is a wonderful initiative. I thank Karen and her team for running it.

I enjoyed spending time recently with the Karama Indonesian Uniting Church. On Good Friday I joined them for their Stations of the Cross event. My mum would love me to be more devout Roman Catholic, so I was trying to do my part as a good daughter. It was good to spend time with Ferdie Mauboy and Puck Weaver, and seeing how the Indonesian Uniting Church does the Stations of the Cross. I was not able to see out the entire event, but I joined them a couple of days later to farewell Reverend Reva Natigor, who has returned to Indonesia. I wished him the best of luck. He has been amazing for the church and for our community.

On another note, their op shop is open every second Saturday, and they are still seeking volunteers.

I thank C3 Church in Malak for holding their big egg hunt at Leanyer Recreation Park on Saturday 20 April. I was able to join my federal colleague, Luke Gosling. There were hundreds upon hundreds of excited kids and their families looking on. This is completely run by C3 Church. Pastors Lars and Megan Halvorsen do an amazing job in bringing a lot of joy to our community. I cannot thank them enough. They run it so well. It is so popular. People from the northern suburbs and my electorate do not always have the opportunity to get to the Waterfront to partake, so it is good to have events in our own back yard.

I congratulate young Mason Seden of Karama. Mason won my Easter egg competition. He was successful in guessing how many were in the jar. Mason enjoyed the jar of Easter eggs and a basket of goodies. I am sure his mum, Yvette, who I went to school with, was thinking I provided a bit much sugar, but I thought, 'It is Easter, and all these kids deserve to smile'.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate the organisers of the Partijima Festival which was a truly extraordinary experience for Alice Springs. Each year the festival seems to get better and better and in ways you could not possibly imagine.

The light show was extraordinary this year, both in the Todd Mall and at the Desert Park site. The design was extraordinary and I take this opportunity to commend the curator Rhoda Roberts and the lighting designer Richard Neville. The light show out onto the ranges was absolutely stunning. It is hard to describe and the reality is that none of the photos that you see of the festival, as stunning as they are, truly capture the experience of Partijima. It is one of those experiences you have to go and see.

This year, even more people went and saw it. There was a 25% increase in the number of people coming through the gates which is an extraordinary outcome particularly when we had moved the festival from October to April. There was quite a short window in between. That was quite extraordinary to see that growth. It was worth it. The feedback I have had from tourism operators in Alice Springs is that the numbers were up early. The tourism season started earlier than what they normally expect and it meant that they had some further bookings than they would expect in that earlier part of the season.

I acknowledge the organiser's expansion of the cultural program alongside the art show and that has been important. I know lots of locals who went to some of those workshops and events and said they got so much out of it. It was an opportunity for Alice Springs to participate in Aboriginal culture in such a wide range of areas. Many of the painting workshops were booked out. Maruku Arts, in particular, had a very popular couple of sessions.

There were local performers like Warren H Williams who is a brilliant singer. There was also some programs such as Thomas Major went down and talked about the Uluru Statement as well as the more diverse drag

queen bingo. It was very diverse, a little bit of something for everyone. If you cannot find something to do at Parrtjima, you are not trying.

There was a lot of great performances and a lot of great people. Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the local reference group. This is a group of very senior Arrernte people who give the cultural leadership to this program. It works so well not only because of the curator but also genuine engagement and leadership, strong cultural leadership, of local Arrernte people. I acknowledge everyone on that reference group and make sure that people are aware of how much work they put in and what they bring.

That art festival is so successful because it is based in real culture, real experience and the country of that culture. I thank them for sharing that with us, giving us the privilege of sharing that so generously with us. This year's theme of Indigenous language which fitted in with the UN year of Indigenous languages showed the importance of language and culture on country.

I acknowledge also the Nepalese New Year which I attended several weekends ago. The Nepalese community is a strong one in Alice Springs. This year is the year 2076 according to the Nepalese calendar. It was a great event and I acknowledge the committee who organise that festival. It sold out. Next year they are going to have to go to a bigger venue because they could only sell 150 tickets and there was strong demand.

That is a huge outcome for a town the size of Alice Springs. Well done and I look forward to again supporting that celebration of culture and dance next year.

I went to the Sikh new year as well, which was an amazing event. It was one of the first Sikh events held outside where they worship. It was held in one of the large halls. 240 people attended that event it was extraordinary. We have a very strong and committed Sikh community in Alice Springs. The quality of the dancing and performances was extraordinary. Some of the singing was touching. We have a very strong and proud Sikh community, and it turns out very talented as well. I look forward to future Sikh celebrations.

The fact that they are now holding such large events shows that many people are very proud to live in Alice Springs and want to celebrate Sikh culture. We are very fortunate to have such strong communities in Alice Springs. I feel very proud when I attend these events of how diverse and surprising that is, because when people think of Alice Springs I do not think many people think of a strong Sikh or Nepalese community.

We have had a wonderful time of the last month celebrating diverse culture and language in Alice Springs. It is one of the reasons I am very proud to represent Alice Springs and grateful that I live in such a wonderful town.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Madam Speaker, on 30 April I had great pleasure in being one of the keynote speakers at the National Housing and Homelessness Forum held for the first time ever in Darwin. Sadly, just outside the doors of Parliament House, the Northern Territory boasts some of the worst housing and homelessness statistics in the country.

In my own electorate of Katherine, the homeless population is twice the Northern Territory average and 31 times the national average rate. One in four Aboriginal people is sleeping rough, and thousands of Aboriginal people are in heavily overcrowded homes. We know the statistics all too well and the impact that a lack of access to housing has on people of all ages, backgrounds and situations. When we add babies and children into that mix we are setting them up for poor health, education, compromised safety and limited life expectancy.

We just have to do better. Public housing, or the lack of it, is a major concern for us in the Northern Territory. Our waitlists are long; our turnover of properties is limited and the maintenance of tired and old properties is in growing demand. In Darwin for example, the wait for a one-bedroom home is six to eight years, with two- and three-bedroom homes both at four to six years. In regional towns across the Territory like Katherine, there is nothing available in any size for at least four years.

In urban areas across the Northern Territory there are more than 4200 active applications for public housing, with more than 1200 of those considered to be priority applicants. In Katherine there are 427 active applications. In 2018, just 47 applicants were able to access public housing dwellings in that 12-month period, which is about 11%. While some folks might say that 11% is better than nothing, the reality is that it is simply not meeting the demand.

Of course, if there was a magic wand to wave, we would not need a waitlist and housing stock would be in perfect condition and ready for whoever needed it straightaway, but that is not the reality we are faced with. We are working within finite budgets to build new housing stock and maintain existing stock that is in some cases well beyond its usable life.

While there is a lot to do in this space, my government has made some inroads. We have invested in critical repairs and maintenance that have been left for far too long. We have provided safety upgrades to homes and complexes and we are building more homes suitable for older people. We have even made the outside of some of the large public housing complexes more beautiful. An example of this is the beautiful murals on some of the public housing complexes in Darwin and at the Bernard Street complex in Katherine, which I have spoken of before.

That particular project in Katherine had two purposes, as was the same in Darwin. One was to stimulate the economy and two was to foster a sense of pride and make those buildings a highlight in the community and not an eyesore. This might seem like it is missing the key issue, which is providing more housing stock, but giving people pride in where they live is not a minor thing. Given the ever-increasing demands on our budget and the cost of land and construction we have to make do with what we have for as long as possible.

One of the areas where the Territory struggles is in transitional housing and supported accommodation. We do not have anywhere near enough to serve all of the people who would benefit from such an option. For some of these people if they do have housing allocated to them, without support they are at risk of losing tenancy and severely disadvantaging themselves when they next try to get a home. For those without a housing allocation, they are couch surfing, staying in hostels and going from crisis service to crisis service. They are going into already overcrowded homes with family, sleeping in cars or in the long grass.

There is currently a great project underway called the Northern Territory Housing Accommodation Support Initiative. It is a partnership between health, housing, mental health and Anglicare. This program provides support to people with mental illness currently living in public housing. People are supported to live independently and not left to fend for themselves with no support. It is a fantastic program and I am looking forward to seeing how this model goes over its four years.

Remote housing is an issue that can be easy for some of us to say that there is no solution, throw up our hands and walk away. There are thousands of Territorians relying on us to get it right so that their families and communities can thrive and prosper. There is a shortage of housing in remote communities and not one person in this world would disagree with that fact. This is a legacy of years of poor decision making, lack of real consultation and an out of sight, out of mind approach to remote housing.

I acknowledge the hard work, commitment and passion that the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Community Development, Gerry McCarthy, has put into finding workable solutions to improve and increase housing for our remote communities. He is delivering on the commitment that we made when we went into the election.

I will touch on two success stories from my own home of Katherine. It is not 427 new houses but they are two programs that are helping people facing homelessness in the Katherine region. They have been very well supported by the minister for housing, Gerry McCarthy, and his department.

The Katherine Doorways Hub operated by the Salvation Army is an initiative that was borne from compassion, passion and commitment and driven by one of our very own community champions in Katherine, Mr Harley Dannatt who was at the forum with me.

The Doorways Hub is a drop-in centre designed to support people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. It is a pilot program that was funded under the Homelessness Innovation Fund. It has been hugely successful. The centre provides hot food, showers and toilets, the use of washing machines and dryers, and connects people with a case manager and necessary services: health, social, legal, employment and financial.

It is also somewhere for people to see a friendly face and feel welcome and respected regardless of their gender, race, age or socio-economic status. In the first six months of operation there were almost 8000 visits to the hub. Six months, 8000 visits to the hub. In a perfect world, such a place would not need to exist but my gosh, I am so grateful that it does exist and that it exists in Katherine to provide comfort, support and the essentials of living for those people experiencing homelessness.

It is a long road ahead but we are making progress. We are making progress because of ministers like the minister for housing and community development, Gerry McCarthy; because of people like Harley Dannant; because of organisations like the Salvation Army and because of programs like the Doorways Hub.

With every new house, supported accommodation, extended remote house and successful private tenancy, we are one family closer to bridging the gap and giving everyone a safe and happy home. I put on record my appreciation to the minister for housing and community development, Gerry McCarthy. I also put on record my thanks and appreciation to the federal Member for Lingiari and the federal Labor party for their \$1bn pledge to build on remote housing in the Northern Territory.

They have made a commitment to go dollar-for-dollar with the Northern Territory Government in remote housing. It is the guarantee of housing certainty for the bush for the next decade to meet current and unmet needs. It is in partnership with the Northern Territory Government and means new housing, employment, training and opportunities for businesses across the Territory. It is going to be a significant stimulus to the Northern Territory economy.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

DRAFT