Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: There were to be students but they might come in a little later.

Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of visitors from down south. On my left we have Cheryl and Alan Harkins, Rhonda and Jeff Arrow, Helen and Russell Strong and Lisa Victor.

Welcome to Parliament House. We hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: And there will be a test later for you.

MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR
Message No 24 – Assent to Bills passed in May

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message Number 24 from Her Honour the Administrator notifying assent to the bills passed at the May 2019 sittings. The message is dated 12 June 2019.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, in accordance with Standing Order 181 I report the following changes to the committee membership, that:

- Ms Sandra Nelson be discharged from Social Policy Scrutiny Committee and Mrs Kate Worden be appointed.
- Ms Sandra Nelson be discharged from the House Committee and Ms Ngaree Ah Kit be appointed.
- Ms Sandra Nelson be discharged from the Public Accounts Committee and Mr Lawrence Costa be appointed.
- The Hon Paul Kirby be discharged from the Standing Orders Committee and Mrs Kate Worden be appointed.

CONDOLENCE MOTION
Darwin Tragedy

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the major incident that occurred on 4 June 2019. We will be doing a condolence motion. I remind honourable members that on completion of debate, I will ask members to stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its deep and sorrow to the victims and families of the mass shooting that rocked Darwin on the evening of Tuesday, 4 June 2019.

On behalf of the people of the Northern Territory, we stand in solidarity with all those affected by this terrible tragedy and we condemn, in the strongest possible terms, all acts of violence and hatred.

British author, C S Lewis, reflecting on the death of his wife, said:

No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.

Many of us, just a few weeks ago, could relate to the words ‘grief’ and ‘fear’. That is what many Territorians felt when the news of the Darwin tragedy broke: grief, because we are a close bunch, a close knit community, and we all know each other or know of each other through a mate or two; and fear, because this kind of senseless random violence just does not happen here. It does not belong here and nor should it ever darken our door.
But we have faced fear and despair in the Territory before. Over the years we have survived wars, natural disasters and heartbreaking tragedies. We have lost everything and we have bounced back. We have rebuilt this city twice and we have rebuilt our lives. In short, we have endured and prospered. That is because in difficult times we instinctively come together, we grieve together, and we stay strong together.

We saw that in the days following the tragedy with an incredible community-wide outpouring of grief and tributes. I saw firsthand at the vigil held at the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church. It was packed to the rafters with more people congregated outside. Candles were lit to honour and remember Hassan Baydoun, Nigel Hellings, Michael Sisois and Robert Courtney. Pastor Lauren Merritt summed up the sense of solidarity best when she said:

_We have religious leaders, Red Cross representatives, Islamic community members and members of other faiths. We have friends, families, witnesses. We have the community of Darwin._

It was a highly emotional ceremony and a reminder, if we needed one, that in Darwin, in the Territory, we are, in many ways, inseparable.

The terror began at 5.39 pm on Tuesday, 4 June. The alleged offender drove to the Palms Motel in Darwin’s CBD and shot dead taxi driver, Hassan Baydoun, while he was taking a meal break. He also shot a 22-year-old woman who, thankfully, is on the road to recovery. At 5.50 pm the alleged offender then shot and took the life of 75-year-old Nigel Hellings in Gardens Hill Crescent. Nine minutes later, Michael Sisois was shot dead at the Buff Club in Stuart Park. The rampage ended minutes later in Jolly Street, Woolner, when Robert Courtney was fatally shot. In the space of half-an-hour or so, four innocent Territorians had lost their lives. To the families and friends of these four men, my heartfelt condolences.

Following an aborted attempt to enter the police station, the Peter McAulay Centre in Berrimah, the alleged offender rang Deputy Superintendent Lee Morgan who stayed on the phone with the offender while at the same time alerting his colleagues.

We will never know for sure if Lee’s presence of mind and calmness under pressure may well have saved other lives. It certainly gave police time to locate the alleged shooter.

At 6.44 pm, general duties and specialist police from the Tactical Response Group tasered the alleged offender and arrested him on the corner of McMinn and Daly Streets.

I thank everyone involved: NT Police; our interstate colleagues; our paramedics; all the witnesses who came forward to help; and everyone who sent information to assist the police investigation.

Operation Moor involved more than 100 officers, including forensic specialists from New South Wales and Intelligence officers from South Australia.

The thanks of our city go to the police and all of the staff at the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre led by Senior Sergeant Bruce Payne, who co-ordinated the front line response; Auxiliary Carita Aikas, who initially took the call from the alleged offender; Acting Superintendent Lee Morgan, who negotiated with the alleged offender until he was taken safely into police custody; Senior Constable Michael Kent, and Aboriginal Community Police Officer Jermaine Ostrofski, who stopped the alleged offender on the Daly Street bridge; and the Territory Response Group Officers, who worked to secure the situation and take the alleged offender into custody; all of the frontline staff at Darwin Command, from the initial response to collecting evidence and evidentiary scenes post-event; Deputy Commissioner Grant Nicholls; Superintendent Shaun Gill; and Commander Travis Wurst.

I also extend my thanks to the members of Crime Command; the Territory Intelligence and Forensic Science Services; the Police Commissioner, and his executive team who worked tirelessly throughout this event; and their communications team.

I thank the New South Wales and South Australian Police Forces for providing people to assist with specialist skills to aid the investigation. This demonstrates how closely our police officers around our nation work together.

The services of St John Ambulance paramedics and emergency call centre staff were also critical to the immediacy of our response.
The following people were first responders, and I extend my humble thanks to the incredible work each and every one does: CEO, Judith Barker; Director of Ambulance Services, Mathew Eastham; Emergency Communication Centre Manager, Craig Garraway; Clinical Services Manager, Sue Gellery.

The Emergency Call Centre staff—Lucy McLennan; David Scaife; Mary-Anne Browell; Bianca Stubbs; Shaye Quinlin; Ursula Godson; Shane Buteux; Kirstin Remfrey; Michael Hatfield; Sandy Scaife.

The Paramedics—Sahar Afiouny; Glen Imber; Nicole Johnston; Humberto Da Cruz; Breanna Thiele; Donna Winkworth; Elenka Obert; Tony Wood; Mathew Lugg; Amy Dudley; Chris Mullen; Ashley Gatehouse; Troy Jones; Theo Gialamas; Nathan Muller; Jeff Buteux; Justin Blomeley; Alice Crooman; Brad Brown; John Payne; Mick Harrison; Michael Mallias; Tammy Sheppard; Natalie Higgin; Marlo Urquhart; Sue-Ellen Skinner; Bridie Morley; Emma Johnson; Joanna Bigwood; Mick McKay; Kylie Gullefe; Mark Ferguson; and Amelia Walsh.

At the Royal Darwin Hospital—the emergency department; security; operating theatres; wards; and pathology were all involved in the immediate response to the tragedy.

I sincerely thank Dr Didier Palmer and the emergency department team; Surgeon Dr Jodie Williams and Operating Theatre team; Ms Jillian Farquhar, Clinical Nurse Manager—ward and team; Ms Lorna Mayer, Clinical Nurse Manager—ward and team.

You have to remember that they had the alleged offender and the victim at the hospital and had to look after both of them in separate wards. The hospital managed it incredibly professionally.

Theresa Brown and Security Team RDH; Pathology—Dr John Rutherford; Dr Marianne Tiemensma; Ian McDonald; Ms Jenny O’Shaughnessy; and the Human Resource Coordinators.

What is little known is that the switchboard at RDH was inundated with phone calls from around the country, from people uncertain and concerned about loved ones they were not able to contact. This went for an extended period of time. They were under significant pressure from people who really wanted to know whether or not their loved ones were involved in the incident.

I thank Ms Trish Bartlett and the switchboard team for their professionalism and support.

Territory Families Emergency Management Group organised a chaplain and Red Cross support for the Blue Taxi Company, which was particularly hard hit.

I thank our religious leaders for their community leadership and prayers for our victims. They were actively involved in providing help to many during the aftermath.

My sincere thanks to Hospitality NT, which provided support to hotels and clubs affected by the tragedy. I spoke to a number of the clubs and hotels involved. They all received significant support from Hospitality NT about the welfare of their staff.

I finally like to thank my own department, led by CEO Jodie Ryan, who supported and coordinated the recovery efforts.

DCM also promoted the services of the following organisations on SecureNT for people who felt they needed support in the aftermath of the tragedy: Lifeline; Beyond Blue; Samaritans; Suicide Call Back Service; Northern Territory Mental Health Hotline; Kids Helpline; and MensLine Australia.

It has been a truly collaborative effort. I know that we have left no stone unturned in our pursuit of justice and the safety of our community. I think you can see from there just a glimpse of how many people were involved on the night of the incident and the days afterwards to provide help, support and really look after our community. It was a monumental effort. I thank our first responders.

To our community, I could not be prouder of how we supported each other. The actions of one do not define us, but the actions of one can affect us all. We have lost four Territorians. We are grieving for ourselves, our town and for the families and friends of the victims. But we are also beginning the process of recovery.

Over the past few weeks I have talked with countless people about the events of 4 June. From phone calls with John Smellin at the Buff Club; Monica Tchia at Alatai Holiday Apartments; and Ashleigh Winn at the Frontier Hotel; to conversations with people at Darwin hospital; local church groups; and our Greek and
Islamic communities—obviously the Glenti happened very soon after the incident—through to meetings with St John Ambulance; Community Corrections; the Territory Response Group; and a significant number of staff at the hospital and the Peter McAulay Centre.

The overwhelming feeling I get from these people and organisations is one of determination and a need to move on, reclaim what is ours, and never to be defined by one random and senseless act of violence.

We move on. As we recover, we will never forget those who lost their lives and never stop supporting those in need of our love and attention. Because whatever we go through in the Territory, we go through together.

Mr Higgins (Opposition Leader): Thank you Madam Speaker and I thank the Chief Minister for bringing this motion this morning.

On 4 June this year we were all shocked to our core and horrified by what had unfolded on the streets of our beloved and peaceful Darwin. As word filtered out and media organisations started to file live reports online and through various mediums, the disbelief and dismay we all felt was palpable. To this day, it is still unbelievable that this has happened here.

In this House, we have paid tribute too many times to the victims of senseless acts of violence. To have this come to our doorstep is shocking and simply awful.

There are still so many questions why four men lost their lives and a woman was injured that night. I am sure, over the coming months, that there will be more questions and some answers and I acknowledge all the people the Chief Minister has reference in doing that job.

But no matter how much we find out, how much we learn, how much is revealed, we will never be able to erase this terrible event from Darwin’s history, and neither should we. For better or worse, it is now part of us all, it is how we deal with it and come through it, which should be the lasting legacy.

The four men who died that night were all ordinary blokes; Robert Courtney, Michael Sisois, Hassan Baydoun, and Nigel Hellings. Their lives were as varied as their ages: a security guard; a taxi driver; a retired sparky; a roofer; a Kiwi; two long-time Territorians; and an immigrant.

They were a part of our community. I am sure it has been said before, maybe you took a ride in Hassan’s taxi or had some renovation work done by Michael or Nigel or nodded to Robert as you entered the Casino. Their lives counted and were extinguished by a horrendous act of violence.

I did not know Hassan, Michael, Robert or Nigel, but the many tributes to these four Territorians were moving and heartfelt. Various described as ‘good blokes’, ‘caring’, ‘a great mentor’, ‘a keen fisherman’, ‘a loving uncle’, ‘valued’ and ‘a good friend’. These men touched the lives of many.

Territorians, indeed Australians, reached out to the families and friends of the victims, again showing our society as a whole can and will rally at times of devastation.

In the hours and days that followed, as before, our community came together in sympathy, united in grief for the victims and their families.

The Member for Spillett and I were honoured to attend the community service and vigil at the Uniting Church. Again, an example of Territorians banding together to offer comfort and sympathy, a moving service, I think, appreciated by all.

Our sympathy and thoughts are also with the young woman who sustained wounds to her legs. The horror visited upon her that Tuesday must have been terrifying. She may physically heal, but I cannot begin to imagine how this will affect her mental wellbeing. We wish that brave young woman a full recovery and a happy future.

Let us not forget the first responders, and those from police and other services, who have worked tirelessly ever since the first shots at around 5.45 pm. Their bravery should not be underestimated. We sincerely thank them for working quickly to move in on the shooter and secure the safety of our city. I am always grateful for the women and men who put their lives on the line to ensure our safety. They stand between us and chaos and they say, ‘Not today’. Again, I say thank you to them.
There were stories of bravery of witnesses and bystanders who helped others shelter during the confusion. To help your fellow man in times of intense adversity is a mark of courage.

I have deliberately chosen to not dwell today on the accused gunman. This is because we still do not know enough and there is a court process yet to go through. Do not get me wrong though, I totally condemn his actions. But today should be about the victims and their families, the brave responders, and the bystanders. This is our town and again we stand together, united against violence in our community.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I thank my parliamentary colleagues for their moving words. I too will add my voice to this condolence motion. The events of Tuesday 4 June are not the Darwin we all know and love. I pay my respects to the family and friends of the four victims of the shooting.

Hassan Baydoun, Michael Sioso, Robert Courtney and Nigel Hellings were killed in a mass shooting that happened on and around Darwin’s main arterial road. It is a road that many of us travel daily, cutting through the densely populated city fringes. Territorians who journeyed on that road that evening, or heard the sound of bullets echoing through their suburban streets, remain stunned by this brazen and horrific act of violence and shocked at how easily their lives could have been ended or forever changed.

Anyone whose child was late home from school or whose partner was late from work was hitting the phones, calling their loved ones to make sure they were safe. The reality for the Sioso family is that their much-loved Michael was not safe. Their calls went unanswered and their worst fears were realised. It was the same for Rob, Nigel and Hassan’s families. I pass on my deepest condolences to their families. I also pass on my deepest condolences to their friends and work colleagues, who I know have been greatly affected.

I have had the opportunity to speak with some of you to hear your heartbreak and grief. I want you to know that you matter not just to me, but to all of us here on both sides—and the Independents—of this parliamentary Chamber.

I extend my thanks for the brave efforts of our first responders who attended the incident as it unfolded that night. We have heard the details from the Chief Minister and comments from the Leader of the Opposition. I thank the dedicated police who responded to the threat and our amazing St John Ambulance paramedics who helped treat the wounded.

The Chief Minister and I visited the police to meet with staff involved; I know these events weigh heavily on their minds. The Chief Minister and I visited Casuarina Community Corrections staff and also the team at the Palmerston centre. From the administrative support staff through to management, their professionalism and dedication is evident.

Our probation and parole officers do a tough job in difficult circumstances every day. Their commitment and service is outstanding. I thank you for being on the front line when we need you.

A few days after the incident the Chief Minister and I visited the Royal Darwin Hospital to meet with some of the staff involved in preparing the hospital to respond and provide treatment to the wounded. The hospital’s response was professional. The quality of care delivered throughout the hospital included the treatment team in the emergency department providing urgent care and stabilising the patients; security officers who worked with our police to keep staff, patients and visitors safe; operating theatre support staff; ward staff for their care and coordination; pathology staff for their work in the investigation process; hospital switchboard operators, as the Chief Minister said, for dealing with the influx of distressed callers seeking to find out if their loved ones were involved in the incident; and to our hospital’s management for ensuring all aspects of a smooth emergency response.

The police worked with our hospital staff and their support was recognised as exceptional and extremely professional. I thank police on behalf of Health staff. I express my gratitude to all staff involved at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I formally acknowledge the high-quality service provided to Territorians all year round, especially at critical times such as this.

This week, the Chief Minister and I met with St John Ambulance staff to express our gratitude for their work, to hear their stories and to check how they were going after such a stressful event. The Chief Minister has named the paramedics; the commanders who led the response, and deployed the ambulance resources from the communications unit at the Joint Emergency Services Communications Centre; with the paramedics who were in the ambulances on the scene. It was a difficult process but their coordinated and professional response should be applauded.
During the event, police exercised caution to ensure the safety of all personnel and members of the public, including ambulance officers. We thank ambulance leaders and the paramedics for their ability to work under such challenges and to continue to deliver such an exceptional level of care.

We know there is a process of debriefing at a number of levels after such a critical incident within and between agencies. From the service level, the debriefing will lead to improved ways we respond to any future emergency situations. On a personal level, we encourage all staff involved to talk about their experiences and seek the support they need to deal with the stress of such a difficult situation. We have ensured that staff have had access to counselling services, and I am aware that members of the public have also sought support from the mental health services. We encourage them to keep doing so into the future.

Like everyone, we are awaiting the outcome of the police investigations and the Coronial inquest in the future. From these reports, we of course will work forward.

To the broader Territory community I pass on my respect and gratitude. From Central Australia to the Top End we are a close community. We have borne this together and we will continue to go through this together.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue and pass on my condolences.

**Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett):** Madam Speaker, I too add my condolences to those already very eloquently offered by the Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition and the Attorney-General this morning.

Although none of us would ever imagine being in this position, today presents an opportunity for us to come together as Territorians, Australians and human beings to denounce a horrible and senseless act of violence and mourn the victims and those who were injured or tragically lost their lives.

On the evening of 4 June 2019, Darwin unfortunately changed forever. The shock, fear and helplessness that Territorians experienced that night will not be forgotten. The pain and anguish of the families and loved ones of the victims is something they will always live with. The most we can do is heal together, care for each other and resolve never to allow such things to happen again. After all, this is what Territorians do best: come together and look after each other in times of tragedy in the tough times and in the face of adversity.

It is difficult to image something more contrary to the spirit of the Northern Territory than the events of 4 June. I was fortunate enough to attend the community vigil that took place at the Uniting Church with the Opposition Leader and many other members of government a few days after the tragedy. I was heartened to see the diversity of those in attendance. Everyone experienced the sense of community and togetherness that was exhibited. It was a very moving experience and an important part of coming together as Territorians.

As is often the case when things seem the darkest and the storm clouds have filled the sky, there is a silver lining. The selfless, perseverance and bravery of our police and emergency responders on that dreadful evening prevented a tragedy from becoming even worse. Within an hour of events beginning, the situation was under control, the alleged perpetrator was in custody, and the siege was over.

The heroic work of our police and emergency services staff saved lives that night—there is no doubt about that. We have the most amazing, dedicated first responders. Our ambulance workers and paramedics were working in a situation where there was an active shooter—an incredible threat—but their bravery shone through. We would not have had such a positive outcome if it was not for their actions.

Of course, there were many Territorians who also exhibited bravery that night and should not be overlooked. They were the people who raised the alarm—rang police and emergency services. They were the people who offered support to victims, provided authorities with information which was invaluable as part of the police work.

In Darwin and the Northern Territory, as the Chief Minister said, we are not strangers to tragedy, unfortunately. We have a history that has been developed with many heart-breaking events from war to cyclones and many other tragedies along the way. However, this is a very different kind of event that leaves us feeling vulnerable. If there is one thing we know from our shared history, it is that we are a resilient community and we always come back stronger than ever before.

Four Territorians were killed that night, and they each had their own special story and friends and family who love and miss them very much: Nigel Hellings, 75; Hassan Baydoun, 33; Michael Sisois, 57; and Robert Courtney, 52. A young woman was also badly injured.
None of the victims of this tragedy deserved their fate. They will be remembered not only by their family and friends, but by the broader Northern Territory community.

There is a desire for justice among the community. That is understandable and justice will be served. The legal processes are taking place and, god willing, we hope nothing like this ever happens again.

We are hurting as a community, but we should not let this tragedy alter our love of freedom, our optimism or the spirit that defines us as Territorians. We should continue to have immense pride in this place we call home. As long as we are healing and remembering together we will continue on and learn from these events.

I offer my sincere condolences to the friends, family and loved ones of the victims of this tragedy. I also reiterate my thanks to the many people who were involved in this event: police; paramedics; first responders; public servants; health professionals; churches; witnesses; and all the Territorians who put themselves in a position to protect other Territorians that night.

I thank the Chief Minister and the government for their actions following the events of 4 June and for bringing forward this motion this morning.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I wish to contribute to this condolence motion to mark the tragic event that occurred in Darwin on 4 June 2019. It was a night when, over the course of an hour, Darwin stopped. For an hour, the Darwin we know and love changed. Four dead; one injured; one in custody. Our city was rattled and hurt. This was not our Darwin.

We still have families in mourning and a community coming to terms with the tragic and senseless loss of life. There will be many others deeply affected by these events for a long time to come. My first advice on what had unfolded came through a phone call from the Police Commissioner. I remember that sinking feeling in my stomach; I could not believe something like this was happening in Darwin. My thoughts automatically turned to the victims and the safety of those on the front line.

Four lives were taken on 4 June: Hassan Baydoun; Robert Courtney; Michael Sisois; and Nigel Hellings. I extend my thoughts and sympathy to the victims and their families. Please know you have a community of support around you, and we mourn your loss.

The church service many attended at the Uniting Church, and the tributes paid at Eid by the Muslim community a few nights later demonstrated that the Darwin community stood united in support of the victims and those impacted by this terrible event.

I extend my thoughts to the bystanders and witnesses exposed to the events of that night, and I urge anyone who has been affected not to suffer in silence. You should seek assistance in the services of places like Lifeline, which are there to help.

While we are coming to terms with the events that night, one thing we can proudly take away from it is that we have an amazing police force and emergency services in the Northern Territory. On 4 June we saw the absolute professionalism, courage and compassion of our police. Our police are here to keep us safe and they do an amazing job. Their efforts that night are to be commended, particularly the speed at which they moved to protect us.

Operation Moor, the police tactical response to the events, involved more than 100 officers. I take a moment to acknowledge that huge effort.

In speaking with officers involved I heard some amazing stories of bravery, courage, dedication and commitment to the community. As Police minister, I am so proud of our police force.

I acknowledge everybody at the JESCC, the Joint Emergency Services Communication Centre, led by Senior Sergeant Bruce Payne. The feedback I received from officers who worked with Senior Sergeant Payne said he did an amazing job, and I was glad to personally thank him for that.

From auxiliary, Carita Aikas and all the call-takers, who were exposed to very distressing and confronting calls. They displayed resilience and professionalism in the way they handled a very difficult and unfolding situation. Police management have certainly acknowledged how calm and professional staff were, in the face of this experience.
To Acting Superintendent Lee Morgan for the skill and tact that he used on the night. Deputy Commissioner Grant Nicholls, Superintendent Shaun Gill and Commander Travis Wurst, who showed wonderful leadership and support to the first responders in managing this difficult situation.

I want to particularly thank and acknowledge two police officers on the scene for their incredible courage on the evening: Senior Constable Michael Kent and Aboriginal Community Police Officer, Jermaine Ostrofski, who played a critical role in the first response.

Senior Constable Kent showed his years of frontline experience, with ACPO Ostrofski working with him. All the police I have spoken to about the events of 4 June cannot speak highly enough of these two and the outstanding work they did. Thank you and well done.

I also want to thank the TRG officers who reacted with amazing speed to deal with the situation and worked with these two officers to secure the situation and take the alleged offender into custody.

Thanks also to all the frontline staff in Darwin Command for their initial response and throughout the incidents, for supporting the injured and securing the vital evidence.

I also extend my thanks to the members of the Crime Command, the Territory Intelligence and Forensic Science Services.

To the Police Commissioner and the executive team who worked tirelessly, to their media and communications team, Chantal Deutrom and Dean Elliott for working to get information to the community and the large workload that followed.

I would also like to thank the New South Wales and South Australian police forces for providing people to assist with specialist skills to aid the investigations. This just demonstrates how closely our police forces around our nation work together.

Let me tell you, we have some extremely brave and dedicated officers here in the Territory. Their professional and courage shone that night and the whole community thanks them for it.

I would also like to acknowledge the other first responders who assisted on the night, including the St John Ambulance officers and, of course, the medical teams that assisted at the hospital. It was a great team effort and the community thanks you.

Before I finish, I would like to include a few words for the Northern Territory Police Association President, Paul McCue. He said of the events:

> The recent shooting incident in Darwin demonstrated just how much we all appreciate the sacrifice they make each and every day. They go to work never knowing what call they are going to take, what job they are going to be asked to attend or how dangerous the situation will turn. The NTPAs thoughts are with those families and friends of the victims in this tragic event.

> We also think of the families of our police officers, who say goodbye each day as their loved ones go to work keeping us safe. The words 'courage, commitment, serve and protect' do not keep cheap, they come with risk. Thank you just doesn't seem enough for the courage and commitment shown that night to serve and protect our community.

I agree with those words.

**Mr Vowles (Johnston):** This is one of those strange situations where you stand up in traumatic times. Of course, we all have vast, long and lasting relationships in the Northern Territory. As a born and raised Territorian, like many people here have come here and made their lives, you get impacted by the victims and the alleged perpetrator and the families, you just get to know everyone.

When I first found out—it was pretty quickly as you imagine in Darwin and the Northern Territory being a small community, we all started getting texts and calls—my phone literally blew up in 10 minutes. I can tell everyone, I did not want to answer it, to look at it, to see what was on there. I knew when a small close-knit tight community we are, that we would know someone. Your first thought goes: ‘where are my family, where are my friends, where are my acquaintances, where are the people who I work with, where are they’.
I looked at my phone—I sat there with my wife—and went through my phone and there was some relief. I am almost saddened and embarrassed to say there was some relief, that it was none of my family or friends who were the victims.

Sadly, as a born and raised Territorian, I know the alleged perpetrator. I have had a 30-year relationship with the alleged perpetrator; I am good mates with his brother. His mother has had 40 years in the NT Public Service and has 30 years’ commitment to a Catholic parish in the Northern Territory. They are being fully supported by a family, a community, that has gathered around them.

Today is about acknowledging all of that in this House. Life in the Northern Territory changed for me and it changed for a lot of people here.

We heard from the Chief Minister and other speakers. We have gone through adversities like the bombing of Darwin—I was obviously was not here; Cyclone Tracy—I was here; the Katherine floods—I was here. This is really something different that has hit us and really impacted on us all.

We are all grieving, not only for the victims—I am grieving for the alleged perpetrator’s family who are great citizens of Darwin and the Territory. I am grieving for the Darwin I used to know. We always have a crack at our children about getting outside—like I used to do—ride a BMX, chuck wheelies, and fall off your bike and things like that. How that has changed.

This is something different because Darwin and Northern Territory—what has happened has changed all of us. I got on my phone and rang my children to ask, where they were, because they were not at home—two of them.

I rang all of my family to check in. Then I had an amazing situation I will never forget—I was literally ringing people for proof of life and some people I could not get a hold of. The way the Northern Territory is—and as everybody is this room would have had—the phone is going off about who the victims are, where it happened, and what is going on. I was telling people to relax and wait for the full story to take its course and let our amazing police force do their job.

I want to show my appreciation of the leadership of Reece Kershaw and the police. Everything they have done has been absolutely fantastic. It has calmed the Northern Territory and our community.

The Darwin I know is lost but we heal; we all heal. We will gather strength, we are resilient and one thing we know is that we will move on and get on with what we have to do, while respecting what has happened.

I acknowledge and my absolute sincere condolences from all my family to the victims and on the other side will support my friend and I will support his mother in any way I can to make sure that I am there for them, because that is what Territorians do.

Madam SPEAKER: Are there any other speakers?

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I rise to add my voice to the condolences that have gone before me. A number of the events that happened on that night occurred in my electorate, in particular the Buff Club, that unassuming old school institution of Darwin and Stuart Park, where I came within a whisker of actually being there having dinner that night made the decision in the carpark as I was leaving my electorate office to head home instead.

Like everybody else, the events of that evening had a very deep impact and I would like to add my condolences and acknowledge the pain and suffering, particularly of the victims’ family and friends.

I would also like to add my congratulations and thanks to all of the frontline service providers, the first responders and add my appreciation, in particular to the police who did, in my view, an excellent job on that evening. It must have been an incredibly difficult situation for them to get their heads around. It was not a simple matter of somebody with a gun wandering around shooting people. It was obviously, to some degree, a planned attack that moved from one area to another. It must have been very difficult for the police to get a grasp on exactly what was happening.

For the whole thing to be finished and have the perpetrator arrested within an hour speaks volumes for the ability of our police force and the people who work there. My congratulations go to Commissioner Reece Kershaw and his staff for the fantastic job they did on making Darwin and its people as safe as they possibly could in the circumstances.
Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I also extend my condolences and sympathies to the families who have lost loved ones and concur with all the comments that have been made. We send our best wishes to those who were injured and thank all those who assisted on that day when this terrible incident happened. Could we now stand for one minutes silence please?

Members stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

PAPERS TABLED


Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I table the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee report inquiry into the Water Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019 and associated minutes of proceedings.

The primary purpose of this bill is to modernise the act and to address technical irregularities and administrative inefficiencies. The committee received five submissions to its inquiry, four of which suggested amendments to the bill.

The issues raised in submissions relate to the notification of water extraction licence decisions, membership of the Driller’s Qualification Advisory Committee and renewal applications for water extraction licences. Following consideration of the issues raised and the evidence received, the committee has recommended the Assembly pass the bill, with the proposed amendments set out in Recommendations 2 to 4, which I will now briefly summarise.

Recommendation 2, section 71B(2) removes the mandatory requirements to circulate a notice of water extraction licence decision in the Territory—wide newspaper but retains the requirement that the notice be placed in a newspaper in the general locality to which the application relates. Several submitters expressed concern that the proposed amendment would reduce transparency and limit effective public participation in the decision-making process. The committee notes that these notices are currently posted on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources water licensing portal, but this is not required in legislation. In order to maintain transparency and to facilitate the public’s access to water extraction licensing decisions, the committee has recommended the proposed section 71B(2) be amended to require that a notice of intention to make a water extraction licence decision be published on an appropriate government website.

Recommendation 3 proposed section 71B(6) removes the mandatory requirement to give a copy of the notice of intention to make a water extraction licence decision to occupiers of land adjacent to the land from which the water will be taken or used and instead requires that reasonable efforts be made to notify such occupiers. There are significant barriers to identifying occupiers of adjacent land.

Additionally, the majority of water extraction licence applications are made in rural areas where there is no mail service. Under these circumstances the committee considers the requirement that reasonable efforts be made to notify occupiers provides a satisfactory test. However, the committee notes that the dissemination of notices to occupiers could be improved by requesting owners of adjacent land to inform relevant tenants of any notifications they receive regarding licence applications, and has made a recommendation to this effect.

The intent of proposed recommendation 4—the intent of proposed regulation 13, which sets out criteria for membership of the Drillers Qualifications Advisory Committee, does not clearly indicate whether the technical criteria specified in regulation 13(2) applies to the committee members specified in recommendation 13(3). The committee understands that the intent of regulation 13 is that no technical qualifications are required of committee members. It has recommended that regulation 13 be amended to ensure that the intent is clear.

On behalf of the committee I thank all of those who made submissions and for their input, which has been informative and helpful. I thank the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.


The bill is one element of a range of reforms being implemented under the Northern Territory integrity framework. It amends the Audit Act 1995, the Electoral Act 2004, the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017, and the Ombudsman Act 2009. The key focus of the bill is to introduce consistency and clarity in relation to the appointment of relevant statutory officers with regard to eligibility criteria, uniformity and process of appointment, conditions of office, and procedures for suspension and termination.

The committee received only one submission to its inquiry. It was provided by the Electoral Commissioner. Under the current act the Electoral Commissioner is appointed for a term of five years, but is eligible for reappointment with no limit placed on the number times that reappointment can occur. The bill amends the term of appointment to one five-year term with a renewal of one further five-year period if eligible.

The Electoral Commissioner highlighted the potential disruption that could arise if an election were to be held close to the expiration of an Electoral Commissioner’s term of appointment. Following consideration of the evidence received, the committee is satisfied that the mechanisms in place for managing this eventuality are adequate. No additional risk will be created by limiting the appointment to two five-year terms.

The committee welcomes the bill as an important step forward in advancing the aims of the Northern Territory integrity framework. It has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill with no amendments.

On behalf of the committee I thank the Electoral Commissioner for his submission and the Department of the Chief Minister for its advice. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee Report on the Care and Protection of Children Amendment Bill 2019

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I table the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee report Inquiry into the Care and Protection of Children Amendment Bill 2019 and the associated minutes of proceedings.

This bill is an integral part of the ongoing reform process initiated by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Détenion of Children in the Northern Territory. The bill gives effect to 12 of the royal commission’s recommendations and its primary aim is to achieve better outcomes for children by strengthening the legislation in a way that improves how the care and protection system responds to vulnerable children and families.

The bill has a strong focus on early intervention and prevention and updates the principles underlying the act, strengthens care planning, enhances legal processes and formalises the transition to independence. The amendments in the bill emphasise the importance of a child’s reconnection to family and culture, ensuring that communication with families and carers is appropriate and effective.

The committee received 10 submissions to its inquiry, all of which supported the bill in principle. However, a number of concerns were raised, particularly in relation to the application of and compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; discretionary powers provided to the CEO in relation to a young person’s transition to independence; the provision of protection order applications to carers as well as parents; and family group conferencing.

Following consideration of the issues raised and the evidence received, the committee has recommended that the Assembly passes the bill with the proposed amendments as set out in recommendations 2 to 4. I will now briefly summarise recommendations 2 and 4, which relate to key concerns raised.

Recommendation 2, proposed sections 8, 10, 12 and 70 strengthen or incorporate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit commented
that the bill did not include provisions to ensure compliance with this principle and recommended that when making applications to the court, Territory Families should be required to file a comprehensive report of efforts made towards such compliance.

As clarified by Territory Families, there are a number of policy, training and practice reforms being implemented to ensure compliance with this principle. In addition, the department noted that the court must not make an order unless it has been provided with a care plan and that proposed amendments to care plans, particularly in section 70 and proposed new section 72A, support compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Although the committee is satisfied with the department’s response, it notes that a number of these reforms have only been recently introduced or are not yet in effect. Consequently, it has recommended that a review of the effectiveness of these measures should be undertaken one year after the bill has come into effect.

Recommendation 4 relates to proposed sections 104A and 124. These amendments provide for the carer as well as the parent of a child to be given a copy of the application for a protection order, which proposed section 124 makes the provision of the application mandatory.

Both the Law Society and the NT Legal Aid Commission objected to the carer being provided with the application on the grounds that this would release highly confidential and sensitive information to persons who are not party to the proceedings, noting that the intent of these amendments is not to release sensitive information to carers but to ensure they are aware of the proceedings and able to contribute information about the child’s status and future needs.

The department indicated it would be supportive of a recommendation from the committee in this regard. The committee has recommended that the bill be amended to ensure that confidential and sensitive information such as that contained in an application for a protection order is not given to any inappropriate persons.

On behalf of the committee, I thank all those who made the submissions and appeared before the committee. I also thank Territory Families for their advice and finally I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan support in examination of the bill.

I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PETITION REPORTS TABLED

Social Policy Scrutiny Committee Report on Petition Number 34

Madam SPEAKER: I table a report from the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee regarding Petition No 34.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Motion agreed to; report adopted.

Social Policy Scrutiny Committee Report ON Petition Number 35

Madam SPEAKER: I table a report from the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee regarding Petition No 35.

Ms AH KIT: I move that the report be adopted.

Motion adopted.


Motion agreed to.

ELECTORAL LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 72)

I move that the bill be now read a first time.

Restoring trust and integrity to government was one of our key priorities when we formed government in 2016. As part of this commitment electoral reforms to improve the openness, accountability and transparency of electoral processes have been progressively implemented. The first phase of reforms finalised the electoral boundaries redistribution process in time for the redistribution process which commenced in February 2019. The next phase of reforms saw the introduction of a bill in November 2018 to return to a full preferential voting system and refining restrictions on canvassing at polling places, which was passed in the March 2019 sittings.

This third phase of electoral reforms introduces financial reforms to create more transparency around political donations and funds spent by candidates and parties to run election campaigns, as well as the remaining non-financial electoral reforms which are aimed at streamlining and contemporising the voting and electoral process.

In December 2016, the Hon John Mansfield AM QC was commissioned to undertake an Inquiry into Options for the Reform of Political Funding and Donations in the Northern Territory. The Inquiry Report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 14 August 2018 and recommended the implementation of a cap on election campaign expenditure, a cap on political donations, provision for the partial public funding of elections, strengthening reporting and disclosure requirements under the Electoral Act 2004 (the Act), and ensuring that associated entities and third parties comply with the act.

At that time, government accepted in-principle these five recommendations, subject to further assessment and consultation with stakeholders. A discussion paper was subsequently released to the public, with 15 responses received in relation to the paper’s key recommendations. The general sentiment of the responses was agreeable to the recommendations of the Inquiry.

Significant work has been undertaken to further assess the Inquiry’s recommendations for implementation in the Northern Territory. The amendment bill before you proposes a new scheme to regulate political donations and campaign expenditure across candidates, political parties, associated entities and third party campaigners. If approved, the new scheme is expected to be in place by the next Northern Territory general election, scheduled for 22 August 2020.

While the scheme does not contain all of the elements contemplated by the Inquiry, it remains true to the intent of the recommendations of achieving electoral fairness and transparency.

The bill includes an objects clause for Part 10 Donations and Expenditure, where the majority of the proposed reforms lie. The objects clause sets out the specific purpose and objects of the proposed scheme, which are to:

a) establish a transparent electoral expenditure and disclosure regime

b) increase the transparency of election campaigns

c) reduce undue influence in the electoral process

d) promote the accountability of, and compliance by, registered parties, elected members, candidates, associated entities, third party campaigners and donors.

The reforms introduce an indexed $40 000 cap on electoral expenditure for individual candidates, with a pooled cap for political parties. This means the maximum cap for political parties standing candidates in all 25 seats would be $1m. A cap on electoral expenditure works towards the objective of reducing reliance on private donations, levelling the playing field across all candidates and minimising excessive advertising.

The proposed amendments focus on increasing the transparency of political donations and expenditure, particularly in election years, to maximise the availability of up-to-date donation information that can be accessed by the public during the voting period.

Under the proposed scheme per vote public funding, which is a component of models implemented in other jurisdictions and was a recommendation from the inquiry, has been removed. This recommendation has not
been adopted to ensure public funding is not used to fund candidates or political parties to run their election campaigns. While Justice Mansfield recommended a partial public funding scheme for elections in the Territory, this government has made the decision not to implement this recommendation as a responsible approach in line with our broader fiscal repair strategy.

In line with this change there will be no cap on political donations, which was also a recommendation from the Mansfield inquiry report. This will allow unendorsed candidates and political parties to raise sufficient funds for election campaigns without public funding.

The absence of a political donations cap will be balanced by providing greater transparency of political donations and expenditure for voters. The additional political donations disclosures required under the bill, particularly in an election year, will be outlined further on.

Third party campaigners and associated entities—the proposed amendments extend the scheme to cover third party campaigners and associated entities. The bill imposes new requirements for disclosures by third party campaigners and associated entities, and caps electoral expenditure for associated entities.

The concept of a third party campaigner exists in the current act under section 192 as, ‘persons incurring political expenditure’. ‘Third party campaigners’ is more familiar terminology used and understood in other state and territory electoral legislation. To clarify and replace obligations on, ‘persons incurring political expenditure’, the amendment Bill inserts a new definition of third party campaigner:

... means a person who or entity that (other than a candidate, party or associated entity) has incurred or expects to incur more than $1000 of political expenditure in the capped electoral expenditure period ...

The current threshold of $1000 applying under the act for a person incurring political expenditure is thought to be a reasonable and appropriate threshold which the public would consider significant enough to potentially influence any one candidate. This amount should exclude minor expenditure by third parties on election campaigns, for example a neighbourhood letterbox drop on local issues, but would capture larger attempts by individuals or organisations campaigning for or against a particular candidate or party.

Third party campaigners are not direct electoral participants in the sense that candidates and political parties are, and donations and expenditure are accordingly treated slightly differently. The bill contains a targeted definition of expenditure by third party campaigners, which is specified as political expenditure, limiting expenditure required to be disclosed to that incurred in promoting or opposing a candidate or party. This clear and specific definition maintains the ability of a third party campaigner, for example a public interest or industry group, to lobby on general issues such as animal welfare that are subsequently picked up by candidates or parties as an election issue. Additionally a limited definition ensures that public debate on various political issues is not stifled, which is a right protected by the Constitution.

Similarly donations to third party campaigners are limited to donations specified by the donor as being for the purpose of political expenditure, or one that the third party campaigner would have reasonably thought would be intended to be used for political expenditure. Distinguishing the type of donations received by a third party campaigner avoids inadvertently capturing non-political donations, such as general donations to a not-for-profit organisation.

To enhance transparency over entities affiliated with candidates and parties, the amendment bill requires associated entities and third party campaigners to register with the Northern Territory Electoral Commission, NTEC. The NTEC must publish both registers on its website.

Third party campaigners will be required to register with the NTEC for each election that they campaign in, as they are not ongoing participants in the electoral system in the same way that candidates, parties and associated entities are. Third party campaigners must register prior to incurring more than $1000 in political expenditure.

An application for registration must be received no later than five days before election day. This is a matter of practicality, as any applications received after this date may not be processed in time to campaign for the election.

Cap on electoral expenditure—the proposed amendments introduce an indexed expenditure cap of $40 000 on electoral expenditure per individual candidate, with a maximum pooled cap of $1m for parties with 25 candidates. A cap on electoral expenditure is intended to reduce the ability of donors to influence
campaigning in the lead-up to elections by reducing reliance on private donations, which may later improperly influence decision-making in public office. A cap will also provide a limit to parties spending excessive amounts on campaigning due to greater access to donations.

The recommended level of the cap is consistent with the recommendations of the Mansfield inquiry, which was based on NTEC’s submission. The NTEC recommended a cap of $40 000 based on its knowledge of the Northern Territory’s current election environment and the model operating in the Australian Capital Territory, which they considered to be a suitable frame of reference given that it also has a 25 seat assembly.

Electoral expenditure was currently defined in section 199 of the act and changes to contemporise the definition of proposed. Travel and accommodation will remain outside the definition, it is therefore not included in the expenditure cap and will not constrain the travel of candidates contesting rural and remote electorates—which is a particularly important element given the Northern Territory’s geographical context.

The changes proposed to the definition will also capture expenditure incurred through online and social media advertising and distribution. These expenses were not previously captured as electoral expenditure, however are now considered a necessary inclusion with the growing use of online and social media advertising.

The proposed amendments allow the cap on electoral expenditure to be pooled by political parties for use across all their contested electorates. This is considered sensible as campaign expenditure of political parties is often spread across the Territory, for example through media advertising, and will result in a simpler reporting and disclosure system for parties. While there may be potential for pooling to benefit political parties over unendorsed candidates, as parties can shift expenditure towards particular electorates, this is mitigated by the overall party cap which limits the amount a party can spend.

In line with the inquiry recommendations, the expenditure cap period is proposed to commence 1 January of every election year to 30 days after election day, approximately a nine-month period. Only electoral expenditure incurred in this period will be included within the cap.

For an extraordinary general election or by-election, the capped period is shorter; from the date the writ is issued until 30 days after the election. This is because there is no set date for an extraordinary general election or a by-election.

Under amendments outlined in the bill, associated entities are not subject to a separate expenditure cap. Instead, associated entities must share the cap with their affiliated political party as they are, by definition, controlled by, or operating to, a significant extent to the benefit of a party. A shared expenditure cap provides the strongest option for regulating expenditure of associated entities and eliminates any advantage separate caps could provide for political parties with multiple associated entities.

On 29 January 2019, the High Court found the expenditure cap on third-party campaigners in New South Wales to be invalid, in the case of Unions NSW and Ors and the State of NSW. It is noted that the Mansfield inquiry report did not include findings to indicate that third-party campaigners are a feature, prominent or otherwise, of the Northern Territory electoral landscape.

The report also did not include recommendations in relation to third-party campaigners. In light of the High Court’s decision in January 2019 and given that third-party campaigners have not previously been a prominent feature of the Northern Territory electoral landscape, the amendments do not propose applying an expenditure cap to third-party campaigners at this time.

Although third-party campaigners will not be subject to an expenditure cap, they will be required to register with NTEC, with penalties for failing to do so, and disclose donations and expenditure under the proposed scheme from 2020.

The proposed amendments require parties and candidates to process all Territory political donations and Territory electoral expenditure through a dedicated campaign account. The purpose of a dedicated campaign account is to more easily determine when and how donations are received and expenditure is incurred. This is an element consistent across a number of jurisdictions with a donations and expenditure scheme, and provides a strong accountability and transparency mechanism.

A further significant change to the current legislation is the strengthened disclosure requirements that will apply from 2020. The proposed amendments provide for more timely and robust disclosure of donations and expenditure across all candidates, political parties, associated entities and third-party campaigners, with reporting obligations to apply from 1 January 2020 for the Northern Territory Election 2020.
The proposed amendments also align all reporting to financial years, requiring consistent annual reporting in non-election years and more frequent reporting of donations and expenditure in election years.

An expenditure return will be required from all participants—unendorsed candidates, parties, associated entities and third party campaigners—for the electoral expenditure period to confirm campaign spending in accordance with the expenditure cap and as an accountability measure for third party campaigners. Consistent with the pooled party cap, a party will provide a return for both the party and their endorsed candidates. The expenditure return is due within 30 days of the end of the capped expenditure period and must be published by NTEC on their website as soon as practicable.

The bill contains two regimes for donation reporting—routine or ongoing reporting obligations and increased reporting obligations leading up to an election.

In developing these two regimes, the current donation reporting requirements, including reporting thresholds, were reviewed. On the basis of this review, some amendments are outlined for donation disclosure reporting requirements.

The first of these changes is to increase the reporting threshold for donors to candidates from $200 over the four-year electoral cycle to $1500 per financial year. This means that disclosure thresholds for donor returns, whether the donation is to a candidate or party, will be aligned at $1500 per financial year. This will provide for more frequent reporting and increased public awareness of donations received outside of election years, while reducing the administrative burden on donors making small donations to candidates. This reform is also consistent with recommendations in the Territory 2016 election report.

In addition, the amendments replace the requirement for donors to disclose the details of individual gifts with the requirement for donors to disclose the total amount of gifts to each candidate and party if the threshold is reached. This will still provide information on donations made, but will reduce the administrative burden on donors. The legislation will introduce an additional obligation for parties to report gifts received during the financial year in their annual returns on the same terms as candidates. This obligation will provide further transparency of donations made to parties.

The amendments also clarify that in the case of donations to parties, amounts of less than the threshold of $1500 are to be considered when determining if the threshold is reached. That is, one or more gifts from one donor that are equal to or greater than the threshold must be reported. Other reporting thresholds remain unchanged.

The proposed amendments also provide for more frequent reporting and publishing of donations received by parties, candidates, associated entities and third-party campaigners in election years. The additional reports will allow members of the public to progressively view donations on the NTEC website, and have the most up-to-date information available during the voting period.

Under the proposed reporting arrangements, candidates, parties, associated entities and third party campaigners will be required to submit the following six reports:

- a six-month report covering the period from 1 July to 31 December in the year prior to the election
- two quarterly reports over the period 1 January to 30 June
- a report prior to the early voting period from 1 July to the day the writ is issued
- a report prior to election day from the day after the writ is issued to 17 days after that
- a post-election report from 18 days after the writ is issued to 30 days after election day.

Donation disclosure thresholds of $200 for candidates and $1500 for parties, associated entities and third-party campaigners are applied to the period 1 July in the year prior to the election to 30 days after the election. That is, once an individual donor gifts an amount equal to or greater than the threshold, prescribed details of the donor and the total of their donation must be disclosed. For donations under the threshold, the disclosure returns will only need to report the total amount of donations, from all donors, and the total number of donors.
In all reports, once the reporting threshold has been met, the amounts of donations received in that period must be reported, as well as the cumulative total received from that same donor from 1 July in the year prior to the election to the end of the reporting period. The sixth election year report will therefore show the total amount received from a donor from 1 July in the year prior to the election to 30 days after the election. If it is the first return, this period will start 31 days after the previous election rather than the previous 1 July.

Routine reporting will continue during election years, with the annual return and an additional return detailing gifts required every year.

The time frames to submit reports, as well as the time frame for NTEC to publish reports, are shortened to ensure that voters have access to the most up-to-date information possible.

These election year donation reporting obligations will apply to third-party campaigners once they have registered. These entities will also be required to include in their first election year report information on any donations they have received over the $1500 threshold since the previous election, whether it was a general election, extraordinary general election or by-election. This information is required because third-party campaigners will not have to provide annual returns as candidates, parties and associated entities will.

Outside of election years, the new scheme requires more routine donations and expenditure reporting to provide transparency across the whole election cycle. Parties and associated entities will continue to report donations annually, due 30 days after the financial year. Annual reports will now be due within 60 days from the end of the period—that is, the end of August—rather than 18 weeks or 112 days, to provide the public with access to annual reports in a more timely manner.

Candidates and donors to candidates will transition to financial year reporting from the current disclosure period of up to four years. Candidates will be required to disclose the total amount of donations and the total number of donors, including details of donations totalling more than $200 over the financial year, with the report due within 30 days—that is, the end of July.

The existing obligation on registered parties to advise donors that they must submit a return to NTEC has been extended to candidates, who will now also be required to advise donors of their responsibility to submit a return.

Donors to parties are already reporting donations over $1500 on a financial-year basis and the report due date will be reduced from 20 weeks to 60 days after the end of each financial year.

All reports will be published by NTEC on its website as soon as practicable.

Offences and penalties—the bill contains new offences and penalties to drive compliance with the new scheme. To provide a more accessible enforcement tool for NTEC, the amendments provide for an infringement notice scheme for offences relating to a failure to keep records, failure to provide returns on time and incomplete returns. This is an alternative to, rather than a replacement of, the existing criminal offences and will allow the Electoral Commission to issue infringement notices of $1550 for an individual and $7500 for a body corporate for late or inadequate returns.

NTEC will also be able to issue an infringement notice of half a penalty unit—equal to $77.50—where an associated entity or third party campaigner fails to update details on the register.

More serious offences such as those relating to false or misleading conduct are more appropriately enforced through the courts and will not be subject to an infringement notice scheme.

Proposed new offences for breaching the new obligations in the scheme have been developed to be broadly consistent with the existing penalties in the *Electoral Act 2004* and other jurisdictions. For a breach of the expenditure cap, a maximum penalty of 300 penalty units—equivalent to $46 500—or 18 months’ imprisonment, or both, will apply if the offender is an individual. A maximum penalty of 1500 penalty units—equivalent to $232 500—will apply if the offender is a body corporate.

The legislation provides for new offences for failing to register an associated entity or third party campaigner and failing to use the dedicated campaign account in accordance with the legislative requirements. All of these offences come with a maximum penalty of 200 penalty units—$31 000—or 18 months’ imprisonment if the offender is a natural person; and 1000 penalty units—$155 000—if the offender is a body corporate.
New South Wales and Victoria have developed criminal offences relating to schemes for circumventing electoral expenditure restrictions. In each case, the penalty for this offence is relatively high compared to other penalties within the same act. For the Territory’s purposes, a criminal offence for circumventing the expenditure cap that is broadly modelled on the New South Wales and Victoria examples, which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years’ imprisonment, is considered reasonable and appropriate. The penalty reflects the seriousness attached to this particular offence and would be consistent with precedent. It also sends a clear message about the importance of maintaining integrity in the electoral system of the Northern Territory, and aligns with the broader integrity and accountability agenda of this government.

The Mansfield inquiry report recommended that civil, rather than criminal penalties, be imposed for breach of electoral caps; however, given the Northern Territory does not have an existing regime or policy for civil penalties, offences under the new legislation will instead utilise the existing scheme for infringement notices and criminal penalties.

In line with the Mansfield inquiry report, the amendments include extending the time to commence prosecutions for alleged breaches of provisions in Part 9A, Registration of Associated Entities and Third Party Campaigners, and Part 10, Donations and Expenditure, under the Electoral Act 2004 from three to four years. All other prosecutions for any other alleged breaches of the Electoral Act 2004, must be commenced within 12 months after commission of the alleged offence, as currently set out in the act.

Review of the scheme after the 2020 Territory election: these amendments to our electoral system are significant and critical to ensure we keep our democratic system of government in check. However, the regulation of public donations is a dynamic and contemporary area, which most modern governments are reforming. On this basis, a review of the electoral expenditure and donation disclosure scheme will be undertaken after the 2020 Northern Territory general election, to be completed within 12 months of the election.

The increased reporting and disclosure obligations required under this legislation will provide a means to review the level of the expenditure caps; whether a cap on political expenditure by third party campaigners should be introduced and, if so, the value of the cap; and operation of the disclosure scheme.

The 2020 review will provide a Territory-specific and contemporary evidence base to affirm the reform measures.

Non-financial reforms: the remaining reforms are largely non-financial in nature and aim to streamline and contemporise voting and electoral processes. These reforms stem from recommendations from NTEC, including recommendations made in its 2016 Territory election report.

Election timetable: the first of these reforms is to extend the election timetable by four days. The election timetable is the calendar for when certain electoral activities must be undertaken, including when nominations close, mobile, postal and early voting can commence and the day the election is held.

The issue of the writ formally activates the election period and currently must be issued 20 days prior to the fourth Saturday of August. The Territory’s current election timetable is the shortest in Australia.

Extending the election timetable by four days will allow additional time for candidates, parties, associated entities and third party campaigners to submit pre-election donation returns, and increase the time period for nominations and mobile voting.

An extended election period will also resolve challenges that arise when issuing of the writ coincides with a public holiday. Under the current election timetable, for the 2020 election and some future elections, the day the writ is issued will fall on the Picnic Day public holiday. Extending to the previous Thursday, rather than Friday, will ensure that the day the writ is issued cannot fall on either Picnic Day or Darwin Show Day public holidays.

The legislation introduces a savings provision where a person who is not enrolled by the date of close of rolls is still able to cast a provisional vote during early voting or on election day. An unenrolled person will be able to cast a provisional vote, which can be admitted to the count once their eligibility to enrol is confirmed by the Australian Electoral Commission. These are ‘savings’ provisions which will not be promoted as a mainstream method of enrolling but will ‘save’ the votes of unenrolled people who turn up to vote, provided the person is eligible to be enrolled.
As the number of people casting early votes grows, it is appropriate that the voting and scrutiny of these votes is consistent with other votes cast on election day and through mobile voting. This will create a single regime for both casting and counting votes.

The removal of criteria for early voting and the 2016 introduction of an electronic copy of the roll, means there is no need for early votes to be treated differently. It should be noted, however, declaration voting, including absent voting, will still apply, as will provisional voting which is established through the amendments proposed in this bill.

The bill proposes amendments to make it easier for the NTEC to declare an election-day voting centre for multiple divisions. Currently, the NTEC must make separate declarations for each division. For example, if a voting centre is located close to the boundary of a division and the NTEC anticipates a large number of people casting votes for neighbouring divisions, it must declare the voting centre twice—once for each division. This allows voters from both divisions to cast votes at the voting centre without having to follow absent voting provisions.

The amendments simplify this process so that one declaration can be made per voting centre, declaring one or multiple divisions. Declaring a voting centre for multiple divisions will minimise cases of absent voting—people voting in a voting centre that is not declared for their division)—helping to streamline the casting and counting process.

The legislation provides for an increase in the nomination deposit amount to $500 and allows for the deposit to be paid electronically to provide administrative ease given the increasing prevalence of online banking. The NTEC recommended raising the nomination deposit to reflect inflation since the $200 amount was set in 1980. It should be noted that a nomination deposit is returned if the candidate is elected, obtains a number of first preference votes equal to or greater than 20% of first preference votes, or withdraws their nomination. For the 2016 election, approximately 62% of nomination deposits were refunded in the Northern Territory.

Under the proposed amendments, candidates will also be able to transfer funds directly from their bank account to a bank account prescribed by the NTEC. It is expected this will include a requirement for candidates to provide a receipt of the transaction, submitted with their completed nomination form.

In its 2016 Territory Election Report, the NTEC noted there was a significant increase in postal votes rejected at the 2016 election as they were unsigned by either the voter or the witness. The NTEC subsequently recommended that an unattested declaration be used which would not require a witnessed signature. The proposed amendments update the postal vote framework to remove the requirement for a witness. It is expected that removing the requirement for a witness will lead to less postal votes being rejected as a result of these avoidable mistakes.

Safeguards are included to ensure this change does not increase voter fraud as the NTEC is able to compare signatures between the postal vote and enrolment form. However, as an additional safeguard, the offence relating to forgery has been clarified to ensure that it captures forgery of any electoral papers, including postal votes.

The 2016 Territory Election Report identified that the value of broadcaster and publisher returns, which are currently required from companies such as Imparja Television, Southern Cross Stereo, TEABBA Media Services and News Corp has diminished over time. The value of these returns has diminished because auditors can now verify candidate and party electoral expenditure through a range of other sources. The report subsequently included a recommendation to remove the provisions requiring these returns, which was also supported in the Mansfield inquiry report. It should also be noted that the Northern Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction that requires returns of this nature. The value of these returns as a verification source is likely to be further diminished by broadening the definition of electoral expenditure to include online and social media expenses. The bill provides for the requirement for broadcaster and publisher returns to be removed.

The last of the non-financial reforms is to clarify campaign material requirements so as to improve public awareness of the authorising and funding source of campaign material. While the act already requires the authorising person’s name and address to be on campaign signage, there is no requirement to identify the political affiliation for that material. The proposed amendments require the funding source responsible for the campaign material, such as the political party or third-party campaigner, to be identified. In addition, all authorising text or logos must be in a sufficient size in the context of the campaign material.
Finally, terminology in the act has been updated to contemporise the legislation and ensure terminology was consistent with the amendments to the Electoral Act 2004 which were passed in March 2019.

It is proposed that all provisions in the bill will commence 1 January 2020. Existing obligations in the act relating to the disclosure of gifts under sections 191—candidates, 192—persons incurring political expenditure, and 193—donations to candidates, will end on 31 December 2019, with each return due to the NTEC within 60 days.

Transitional arrangements in the bill also set the applicable expenditure cap at $40 000 for 2020 to provide certainty on the level of the electoral expenditure cap, which is set at 40 000 monetary units.

The amendments outlined in the bill are part of this government’s broad-ranging electoral reforms to establish a more open and accountable electoral process. The amendments aim to increase the transparency of election campaigns and go a long way to increasing public support and confidence in our system of governance and democracy. They also contemporise the act in line with public transparency and integrity reforms in other jurisdictions and internationally, and ensures the Territory’s electoral system keeps pace with a modern democracy.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to commend this bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a first time.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be referred to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for report by September 2019.

APPROPRIATION (2019–2020) BILL
(Serial 88)

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to the resolution of the Assembly on 16 May 2019, following the tabling of the Estimates Committee report the Assembly will have before it the question that the expenditure proposed in the Appropriation (2019–2020) Bill 2019 stand as part of the bill, and the report of the Estimates Committee be noted.

The following time limits apply to the debate on the committee’s report: ministers, Leader of the Opposition and shadow ministers, 20 minutes; and any other member, 10 minutes. The maximum period for the consideration of the bill is five hours. If the debate is not concluded after five hours I will put the question without debate that the remainder of the bill stand as part of the bill.

I now call on the Chair of the Estimates Committee, the Member for Sanderson.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the report of the Estimates Committee and associated minutes of proceedings on its consideration of the estimates of proposed expenditure contained in the Schedule to the Appropriation Bill 2019–20, and the activities, performance, practices and financial management of the Power and Water Corporation, Jacana Energy and Territory Generation.

This is the Legislative Assembly’s 18th year of Estimates Committee hearings. The estimates process provides a valuable opportunity for members to ask ministers questions relating to agencies and programs being funded under the budget—60 hours of hearings over six days.

The hearings worked effectively and provided members an opportunity to ask questions about any area of government. I allowed a fair bit of latitude from members but ensured we stayed as close as we could to discussing budget-related matters. I thank every member for the way they conducted themselves over the hearings and for, most of the time, allowing each other to get their questions of interest in. Although, the Member for Nelson may not agree that he had quite enough time. We made every effort to give some balance and opportunity.

The committee’s report outlines the key lines of questioning that arose throughout the course of the hearings.

Madam Speaker, 137 questions were taken on notice during the hearings, but at the close of the hearings 13% of those had already been answered. Outstanding answers to questions on notice must be received by the Committee Secretariat by 11 July. Some ministers have those ready to go, but we did not get around to tabling them.
Answers will be uploaded to the committee’s website as they are received, and answers not received by the due date cannot be accepted and published by the committee, as has been the case in previous years. I thank Madam Speaker and all the ministers for attending and assisting the committee with their answers. I also thank the Chairs of the government-owned corporations and the many officials who spent much time preparing information for the hearings, including those agencies and public servants that did not get their allotted time.

I also thank the many Legislative Assembly staff members who supported the committee’s hearings in various ways. They were simply phenomenal. They sat with us through those 60 hours over six days.

I therefore commend the Estimates Committee report to the Assembly.

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I wish to record my appreciation for the work that has gone into preparation for the estimates process by all concerned in the 60 hours the government allocated.

The opposition came to this process to interrogate the budget and to better understand the investment and allocation of taxpayer funds and why monies have been allocated to certain programs and project but not others.

We came to understand and question the Gunner Labor government’s priorities. The Member for Spillett and I came to the hearings to understand what specific budget repair measures had been incorporated into the 2019–20 budget against the backdrop of the December 2018 interim report and the April 2019 final report for budget repair, authored by John Langoulant and his team.

We came to interrogate the investment in the creation of local jobs, delivery of a safer Territory and driving generational change, the three objectives as articulated by the Treasurer in her delivery of her third budget. Importantly we came to the estimates process to ask the many and varied questions posed by Territorians. We have been pleased to do so on their behalf.

In that regard, the opposition has been listening to Territorians unlike the government. The Gunner Labor government is out of touch with Territorians and out of control. To blithely say that all is well, that the economy is starting to turn around and that things are getting better is so blatantly ignorant. Territorians tell us that they are gravely concerned about the declining economy, the loss of jobs and the state of lawlessness that has spread across the Territory like wildfire.

There are concerns that the value of their properties continue to decline. They do not feel safe in their homes. Many are sleeping in their businesses at night to protect their premises. They are gravely concerned that young offenders roam the streets without any consequences or ramifications for their unlawful actions. Territorians continue to despair and, like the opposition, have no confidence that this government knows what to do to fix the economy and its budget or to satisfactorily turn around the crime crisis making Territorians feel unsafe.

The community wants and deserves actions. They have been waiting almost three years to see the Gunner Labor government do something other than make announcements, which constantly regurgitate talking points and spin—to actually govern positively on their behalf. They have been let down badly by this government, whose members seek to blame everyone but themselves for the perilous state of our economy, the wasteful spending, the backflips and the uncertainty that they have created in the business community.

We have the worst performing economy in the country. We continue to have the lowest level of business confidence in the nation. We have a crime crisis that would give any potential investor, or anyone wanting to move to the Territory, second thoughts. Territorians, like the opposition, were looking for some tangible measures in the budget to turn this around. Alas we did not see this at all.

The Treasurer still denies that there is a problem with the Territory economy and continues to blame everyone else for the Territory’s dire financial position. The Treasurer continues to mislead Territorians about the GST. In estimates she again stated that there had been a cut of $500m annually in GST revenue from the federal government.

The truth is that there has been a net reduction of $102.4m, a reduction of about $25m per year. This is not the $500m per year claimed by Labor. During estimates the Treasurer showed no contrition or shame for delivering the worst budget in the Territory’s history and continued to demonstrate that the Gunner Labor government had no intention of being open or transparent about the Territory’s finances.
It was a major concern that the Treasurer could not answer a number of questions put to her in relation to the increase in net debt of $2bn. The Treasurer has handed down three record $1bn plus deficits. This empirically and objectively makes her the worst Treasurer the Territory has ever had. She incorrectly blamed the new accounting standard for the Territory’s increase in net debt of $2bn and was unable to say where an additional $1.13bn in net debt came from. The accounting standard accounts for only $870m.

The Treasurer was dismissive of concerns raised on specific topics. She played the blame game again without once admitting any responsibility for the financial mess we are in. When asked to explain the government’s much touted Buy Local campaign, the Treasurer brushed the queries aside and segued into her usual haze of spin and blame.

The government goes on about the importance of buying locally, but the Treasurer’s own department used only two Territory-based businesses out of seven opportunities when it came to using consultants. This same trend of using interstate companies continued throughout the estimates process when other agencies expenditures were scrutinised.

When questioning the Speaker, and later the Infrastructure minister, it was confirmed that the government was yet to put forward a cost benefit analysis or operational plan for the underground car park. As you would appreciate I am sure, it is imperative that our Assembly committees are adequately resourced to support the great work of these committees. Currently the scrutiny committees are under-resourced which means that the sole secretaries of those scrutiny committees are over-worked and it does limit what can be realistically achieved by these committees.

I would like to see this problem resolved as, after all, it was the government’s proposal to introduce these scrutiny committees in the first place, yet there has been no plan as to how to adequately resource them. It is vital to our parliamentary and democratic process that these important committees are well-resourced.

The opposition asked a series of questions to a range of ministers on the government’s so-called voluntary pay freeze for executive contracts. We are not questioning the decision for budget repair per se, we just want to know if the government actually did its due diligence and worked out how to do this properly and they could not or would not give us detail.

Among the questions asked of the Minister for Public Employment: ‘who was consulted concerning the pay freeze before the policy was introduced—for instance unions, IR specialists or others with knowledge of employment contracts and conditions? What modelling, if any, has been done concerning the potential uptake of the voluntary pay freeze?’

The Chief Minister has said in the media that everyone will be taking the pay freeze full stop.

- what is your understanding of how that will be enforced?
- will retaliatory action be taken against those who do not agree to the pay freeze, for instance, will executives who do not agree to the freeze, be asked to resign or will they face non-renewal of their contracts in the future?

If a person is retaliated against for not accepting a pay freeze, that will be subject the Northern Territory government to potential legal or fair-work consequences.

- did OCPE seek any legal advice, either from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory or the Solicitor-General, regarding the possible legal ramifications or attempting to enforce a pay freeze on executive officers prior to the policy being announced?
- has any legal advice been sought, either from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory or the Solicitor-General, since the announcement of that policy?
- what happens if executive contracts staff do not agree to vary their contracts? Did that legal advice contain advice if people were not going to accept the contract? It seems to me that would be part of the advice you would seek.
- how do we vary the contract and what happens if people do not agree to that variation?

The minister’s answers lacked detailed and, in many instances, he failed to address the issues, saying it was all hypothetical. I have to ask, what is the government hiding? Will there be ramifications for those who refuse
to sign up to a freeze, what guarantees are there that the taxpayer will not have to pay out millions fighting legal challenges?

The Treasurer said, during estimates, we are the government and it will be implemented. The Chief Minister on Mix FM was asked if you thought people concerned by the pay freeze should ‘suck it up’, to which he coldly replied, ‘I think it is a very fair thing to do’.

This arrogant Gunner Labor government needs to respect Territorians and give them some real answers instead of hiding behind its litany of ‘spin’ and obfuscations.

Estimates 2019 has been eye opening, not only for what the government did now know, but more so what the government does not know. This government cannot answer simple, direct, straightforward questions, the type of question that any minister worth his salt should be able to answer on a day-to-day basis. For example, the Minister for Business, Trade and Innovation, the very minister responsible for small business in the Territory, the Chief Minister, does not know how many small businesses there are in the Territory.

How is small business ever going to grow and thrive, when the minister responsible has not bothered to take the time to find out how many small and medium businesses there are in the Territory. If you do not know what you have, how can you measure it?

The opposition know that small and medium businesses account for over 95% of all businesses in the Territory. They are the backbone of the territory economy and the engine room of economic growth. This measurement problem extends to the boundlessly bad, Boundless Possible marketing stunt. This is a campaign without KPIs, goals, targets, deadlines and accountability. In short, if one does not have performance metrics, how are Territorians to know if these campaign is working?

The opposition know it is not working against the sole stated objective to increase the population of the Territory. The population is falling. The estimates process revealed the government has not measured the Boundless Possible campaign beyond assessing spikes in website engagements following cinema and advertising along Australia’s east coast.

The Boundless Possible campaign is another example of the Chief Minister saying one thing and doing another. The campaign was devised by an interstate company and the work for the latest filming for the campaign again went to an interstate company. The campaign to date is about academic research and raising awareness, though it does not mean anything unless there is a conversation.

During estimates, it was revealed that this campaign and the population plan is being measured by, as I said, website spikes, ABS data, car registration data and job applications. The Chief Minister said he wants Territorians to tell the story about how the Territory is great, but all we hear is that we are the worst-performing economy in the nation, we are in the middle of a crime crisis and our credit rating has just been downgraded again.

Participation of voters in rural and remote areas was also a point of concern during the estimates process. It was great to hear voter numbers have gone up in urban areas, but we in the opposition are alarmed at the decline in the number of voters in rural and remote communities. The Territory is unique as it has lots of rural and remote communities with a high number of Indigenous Australians who should be involved in the democratic process.

We are concerned a number of these people are not enrolled in our rural and remote areas so we asked questions about education programs in place to the lead-up to the 2020 election, as well as whether the NT Electoral Commission staff had the resources to service rural and regional areas.

Estimates saw the first appearance of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption who said his office had received 280 referrals to date. Of the 280 referrals, 20% alleged corruption and the remainder are for misconduct and improper conduct. It will be instructive to see further progress on these matters. The opposition welcomes his advice that he will report to the parliament as soon as practical after 30 June 2019.

The Police minister faced questions from the opposition about police numbers and staffing, numbers to staff the Darwin police station and watch house, the Palmerston Police Station and watch house, Casuarina Police Station and the Nightcliff Police Station once it is built. All of these were unclear and need to be clarified into the future. How the government plans to fully staff these four police stations once construction is completed is something opposition is very concerned about. We hope it does not stretch the already limited police resources. For example, responses to questions suggested that Darwin Police Station and watch house may
be short staffed or deprioritised in favour of Palmerston, reducing efficiencies from reduced travel time for police.

On the staff numbers, we found at the 120 staff increase is based on 2011-12 figures, not from when they came into government. The government has been disingenuous about the police resourcing. It still believes its own rhetoric and have downplayed the crime crisis. The Territory’s Police minister also denied there would be cuts to frontline staff numbers, despite more than $20m in savings police have already made and the government’s own Root and Branch review suggesting there should be $1.4m to $4m in addition savings. Cuts to frontline staff numbers would seriously impact the safety of Territorians.

Property crime is at a five-year high and this out-of-control Gunner Labor government, through its own reckless and wasteful spending, is having to find saving measures elsewhere. Police, Fire and Emergency Services does an incredible job in our community. As I have said before, their jobs are demand driven. The Gunner Labor government needs to do everything it can to ensure they are properly staffed and have the necessary resources to do their jobs.

The Gunner Labor government’s failure to adequately answer basic questions about its considerations on budget repair shows it is either incompetent or untrustworthy or both. In estimates we learned also that the amendments of the Pastoral Land Legislation Amendment Bill that would provide for subleasing to be recorded on the title, and which was supposed to be in place in 2017 would finally be introduced in August this year. I look forward to that.

From Local Government, Housing and Community Development we had the admission from the agency that they finally fully expended the $6.9m stimulus program funded in April this year. This was despite promising the funding would be spent by July last year. Even when they do have expenditure of industry they do not even get it out the door.

We also learned from the Deputy CE of Primary Industry and Resources that the Labor government’s unnecessary, unwise and unscientific moratorium on onshore gas has had a significant impact on the investment attractiveness when it comes to policy perceptions.

This government’s incompetence was highlighted again when we got to the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics where we learn that the taxi tax has raised less than half, not just a shortfall, less than half of what it was expected to earn in revenue. This has resulted in a multi-million dollar black hole. This black hole needs to be plugged with borrowed money. Remember, Madam Speaker, we are spending $4m more than we raise every single day in the Territory.

It is a terrible decision like the taxi tax or the job and investment killing hybrid mining tax that have landed the Territory in this economic mire. In regard to the Arafura Games it is unbelievable that this government, specifically the minister for the Arafura Games still cannot give us an accurate total figure of the cost to government of the Arafura Games. How can the government possible conduct a proper cost benefit analysis if they cannot produce an accurate figure of the cost?

This goes to the heart of their accounting abilities and their economic credibility and financial literacy. If we cannot get the basics right then how can we trust you with the big projects and with growing the Territory economy.

We look forward to reading the event impact evaluation or whatever it has been called by this mob but we hold grave fears as to the accuracy and authenticity of the findings. According to the minister that report is due at the end of this month and be made publicly available.

Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture confirmed that airline seats are quarantined for use by the Northern Territory Government as part of their cooperative marketing arrangements and it is still unclear how many of these seats we use to fly athletes and business representatives to Darwin for the Arafura Games. Yet another cost that skews and obscures the true success or otherwise of the Arafura Games.

The NTT rugby league fraternity are very upset at the prospect of Richardson Park, the spiritual home of rugby league in the Territory and in many ways the sacred site for those (inaudible) being demolished. The Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics confirmed that these works will be going ahead but that the playing surface will be rehabilitated to a standard that would allow for use by rugby league clubs. It seems that its time as a revenue generating ground for clubs is over. The government has rejected the proposal from Nightcliff and Brothers rugby league football clubs and has indicated they are not confident of their ability to run a refurbished facility.
The national Indigenous art gallery is still not any closer to being built than it was when the government came to power in 2016. Apparently discussions with traditional owners is still ongoing but there is an in principle support from the council for the land swap arrangement. Sounds like a debacle.

The jury is still out on whether the Territory tax payer is getting value for money on Donghai Airlines. The government hid behind commercial-in-confidence when I queried the number of Chinese tourists coming to the Territory on Donghai.

Madam Speaker, I have closing remarks—if I could seek leave for an extension to finish these three and half pages?

Leave granted.

Mr HIGGINS: Madam Speaker, the Treasure in her budget speech said that the Territory Labor government has the plans and the vision to tackle both the economic and social challenges and deliver a bright future. Neither the Treasurer nor any other minister during the debate on the Appropriation Bill or during the estimate process provided any hope that this is indeed the case.

On receipt of Mr Langoulant’s report, Labor had promised to make tough decisions but they have not and the decision to sell or lease the Land Title’s Office blatantly goes against their election promise not to sell or lease any public assets.

Labor has not made any tough decisions and are passing the buck until after the next election. What is clear from these two weeks of estimates is that this Labor government got us in this economic and fiscal crisis but will not be able to get us out of this once in a life time catastrophe.

There was no acknowledgement of the scale of the problem or the effort required to write the ship. Time after time the Opposition asked simple and direct questions and got no answers. We asked if there was plan. We asked every minister, what is your plan? Minister after minister would not be able to outline their strategic vision or the specific steps required to get there.

It is clear that the economy under this government will continue to labour. This government has shown time and time again its trustworthiness. It is totally incapable of running an economy with its reckless, wasteful and self-promoting projects. We stand by our call to rein in spending, cut the waste, free up business, support a diversified economy and support and invest in sustainable infrastructure.

There is a better way. Territorians deserve better. The CLP opposition are ready to offer a clear and credible alternative to this hopeless and hapless government. We all deserve better than the Labor government, which has no plan, no idea of the basics and no hope for the future. The government needed to show in the 2019–20 budget that it could make the hard decisions to fix the economic and fiscal crisis. It has failed to do so. That is why the opposition does not support the budget and appropriation bill as presented and debated in this House.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I take the opportunity today to talk about the Estimates Committee. I appreciate and thank all the secretariat staff who were involved in pulling together its schedule and its organisation. It was a fantastic job, as is done every year for the Estimates Committee.

I give my thanks and gratitude for the enormous work done by the Northern Territory public servants in putting together a series of great responses to the many questions of the committee members. It is always great to see committed people there talking about the important work that is being done across the Northern Territory Public Service.

I thank the committee members, the Members for Nelson, Karama, Sanderson, Blain, Spillett, Araluen and Nhulunbuy, who all joined me on the estimates journey this year. There were a range of great questions asked by a number of people. I will take a few moments to talk about how important it is to be a participating member of the Estimates Committee and to be able to ask questions about the important work, projects and initiatives that are being rolled out by the government for the people of the Northern Territory.

I particular Minister Gerry McCarthy, the Member for Barkly, who was able to provide an in depth response to many questions on the commitment being made by the Northern Territory Government in remote housing. This is significant work that will change the lives of people in the bush. We heard about the commitment to and the continual roll out of the Room to Breathe program in remote housing. This is a great program. We
were able to hear directly from the minister, the Chief Executive and many department staff on how important that program is—the remote fencing and housing refurbishment programs.

One of my favourite things is to sit with the Estimates Committee and ask the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics, Eva Lawler, many questions about bush roads. Making sure that we have good roads is a passion of mine. It was fantastic to hear the minister talk in depth about the commitment the government is making on roads and the importance of providing secure bush roads to make sure people can get in and out of communities. This so our hard-working people in pastoral and mining sectors have good roads to travel on as well to get those product to market and keep the Northern Territory running strong;

Minister Manison also presented for a very long time. I think it was eight hours talking about the current economic the Territory is in and the commitment the government is taking towards the budget repair. It was great to sit there as a member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and hear firsthand the number of reform matters, programs and initiatives being implemented to repair the budget to ensure the Territory economy can continue to be that strong and vibrant economy it has been in the past.

It was great to have the Minister for Education and Aboriginal Affairs, Selena Uibo, talking about the importance of a quality education. The minister was able to talk about the remote schools and the significant investment we have seen there over the period of the last few years—and coming into this new budget just what that will mean for people in the bush. I am looking forward to seeing that continue to roll out.

The Chief Minister spoke at length as well about a range of measures being introduced to ensure that we continue to build a bigger, brighter and vibrant Northern Territory, which is important …

Mr Costa: Boundless.

Mr PAECH: It is boundless, Member for Arafura. The Territory is a boundless place of great opportunity and this budget, from the Estimates Committee’s position—and mine as a local member as just one member of the Estimates Committee—it is in good hands, I believe.

Minister Dale Wakefield, the Minister for Territory Families, spoke in-depth about some critical elements to overcoming a system that, for such a long period of time, denied our young people their access to basic services and the opportunities to change the path they are on and make life better for them and the Northern Territory. I thank minister Wakefield for attending yesterday to talk about the work that is being done, and continues to be done, in the space of Territory Families. She spoke about all the very attractive concessions the Northern Territory government has introduced to make life better for senior Territorians across the Northern Territory. Whether you live in a remote community or in the beautiful tropics of the Northern Territory’s Darwin suburbs, you are being looked after as a senior Territorian under this government.

Minister Paul Kirby, the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources also spoke at length about the important economies of the pastoral industry and the mining sector—again great performing economies in the Northern Territory right now. I know they are in good hands as we move forward on a range of reforms to make the environment safer and industry clearer on how we can work together to ensure that we can all move forward together in a positive manner.

The Minister for Tourism, Art and Culture, minister Lauren Moss, also spoke at length about the importance of a range of vital policies and initiatives in the tourism space to ensure that we can continue to keep the Northern Territory’s place known as a destination to draw the hundreds of thousands of tourists in every year to continue to see our beautiful landscapes and participate in the beautiful community events. Many great events in the Northern Territory are supported by the Northern Territory government, such as the Finke Desert Race and the endless carnivals and concerts.

It was also good to talk to minister Moss about important practices when it comes to Parks and Wildlife and how we work in times where our natural environment is changing due to climatic conditions. It is important to acknowledge the significant work being done by the Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission to ensure we do not see those hot fires, that we see in central Australia over the periods of the summer. It was great to have Minister Moss, and our Minister for the Environment, Minister Lawler, to talk about those initiatives and what measures are in the budget to make sure we can continue to look after that.

As a bush member, I constantly go on about the need to service regional, remote and rural parts of the Northern Territory. I can say that Budget 2019–2020 is a budget that delivers. It is a budget that delivers infrastructure in remote communities; delivering in remote school, clinics, roads and infrastructure through municipal and essential services, which are delivered by a local government.
Again, through delivering remote infrastructure to the roads and rural areas of Alice Springs, Budget 2019–20 is a budget for all Territorians and I am thankful for the opportunity to be on the Northern Territory Estimates Committee and I thank my committee members for working with me to ask the hard questions.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

QUESTION TIME

**Executive Contract Pay Freeze**

**Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER**

The Minister for Public Employment admitted during Estimates Committee hearings that the government has no power to unilaterally freeze the pay of individual executive contract officers nor does it have the power to compel ECOs to agree to amend their contracts to freeze their pay.

How can you possibly honour your commitment to freeze ECO pay? Will there be any repercussions for ECOs who do not agree to vary their contracts to accept a pay freeze? How do you expect the government to meet its saving targets related to wages quoted in the budget?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, it is critical that after we had that $500m in GST cut that we went through a process of budget repair. We want to create jobs in the Northern Territory, invest in kids and tackle crime. To do that we need a sustainable budget position.

This is why we went through a significant process that started with an interim fiscal report and then there was a final fiscal report, commonly known as the Langoulant report. We did the root and branch review of the Territory budget to make sure we were in a position to keep delivering on creating jobs, investing in our kids and tackling crime, while at the same time addressing that $500m in cuts from the GST and dealing with the fact that the CLP had no plan post-INPEX.

As part of that we accepted the recommendation to freeze politician's pay and that of executive contract officers. I wrote to the independent Remuneration Tribunal and recommended that our pay be frozen. The independent Remuneration Tribunal accepted that recommendation. As politicians we are doing our share of the heavy lifting. Territorians expect that politicians and senior executives do their share of the heavy lifting for budget repair.

We have big road ahead of us. We are all working together to make sure we have a strong budget position. You do not have a strong budget position just for the sake of it, you do it to create jobs, invest in our kids and tackle crime in the Northern Territory.

On executive contracts—we are yet to hear from the Leader of the Opposition whether he supports the idea of all of us doing our share of the heavy lifting. We are yet to hear from him on whether supports that position or not. We support it. We are talking about around 600 senior executives who do excellent work. We thank them for their work. We are asking them to do some of the heavy lifting with us. I am not asking of them anything I have not asked of myself.

We are talking about people who earn between $200 000–400 000 per year. They genuinely earn that money. The freeze will see us save $25m over three years. This a significant bit of savings work. We are yet to hear from the CLP whether they support this measure or not. From the Leader of the Opposition’s speech in reply, we know that the CLP members will cut deep and hard, but we are yet to know where they will cut. They will not talk to us about where they will cut and they will not be honest with Territorians.

Last time around we know that the cut deep in Education. We saw a significant loss of teachers and Power and Water prices go up by 30 per cent. We are not doing that. We are being upfront with Territorians about what our plans are and how we are implementing them to make sure we keep delivering jobs.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Chief Minister, your time has expired.
VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of students of Nungalinya College accompanied by their lecture Annette Anderson. Welcome to Parliament House.

I also extend a warm welcome to the previous Member for Nhulunbuy, Lynne Walker, who is also in the gallery on the left hand side. I understand that it might have been a birthday yesterday. Not that we are staying what the age was. I hope you had a lovely day.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr SIEVERS: Happy birthday Lynne!

Shiplift – Darwin

Mr SIEVERS to CHIEF MINISTER

Why is a shiplift so important for local job creation? What is the government doing to ensure that this important project is delivered?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we must create local jobs in the Northern Territory. We are investing in a shiplift in Darwin because it is good for the Territory. It will create new jobs in the Northern Territory. The Australian Government should invest in a shiplift in Darwin because it will be good for the nation. This is a nation-building project. This will grow and create jobs here in the north, the top of our country, that will help us service vessels from around our country but more importantly, it will be perfectly placed to service vessels from international waters to our north.

This is a nation-building project that will grow and create jobs in our country. It is not just good for the Territory, it is good for the country. We are doing it and the Australian Government should be side-by-side with us investing in this shiplift too.

The Leader of the Opposition and the CLP need to get on the phone to the Prime Minister and join us in saying that the Australian Government should invest in this shiplift too. I have made it clear to the Australian Government that we are investing and they should invest as well. What is missing from this is any advocacy, any desire to fight with the Australian Government for Territorians to get their fair share too.

Territorians deserve support from this Australian Government as well. We see them doing $6bn of congestion work in Melbourne and they cannot find $300m for a shiplift in Darwin. It is a tragedy. We deserve a government that will invest here in the Northern Territory. We need all of us in this Chamber, all 25 of us, saying in one voice to the Australian Government, ‘invest here too; create jobs here too.’

These are unprecedented times in the Northern Territory. We know that the CLP had no plan in place for that post-INPEX period. We know we had those $500m in GST cuts. We know that we need an Australian Government that will invest in the Northern Territory and growing jobs here. That is what we are doing.

So what will a shiplift deliver? We are putting $100m in to make sure that we can service those fishing vessels, pearling vessels, tourism vessels, oil and gas vessels, Defence vessels—there is a huge amount of work that can be done. The shiplift enables the marine industry to go in and around it to make sure that we are creating those jobs here; jobs that are year-round, not boom-bust with the season.

It will be a common-user facility and it will include wet berths to facilitate berthing and in-water maintenance works; a shiplift capable of lifting vessels out of the water for dry docking and maintenance works; a common-user handstand area available for ship repair and maintenance work; and importantly, the shiplift will have the capacity to lift vessels such as the new fleet of six offshore patrol vessels that will be home-based here in Darwin.
These are good jobs. These are jobs that will be around all year. These are jobs that will help make sure the Northern Territory in the future can grow out of the boom and bust that we see too often. These are good sustainable jobs. This shiplift will be significant for the Northern Territory and there will be one. The only question is whether the Australian Government is there with us too.

**Budget Repair**

Ms WORDEN to TREASURER

How will the government’s plan to fix the Territory budget protect and create jobs and are you aware of any other approaches to budget repair?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, we are taking action to repair the budget especially when you have a look at what we dealt with when we came to government. We already had an $876m deficit. We have seen the biggest changes in the history of the Northern Territory when it comes to the GST; $500m less each year and that was a devastating blow to the budget. We had the transition from the INPEX project; the biggest project in the history of the Northern Territory and we know that has had a big impact on the economy.

We have tackled this issue head-on. We have gone about putting in place the plan to repair the budget; $11bn of savings over the next 10 years. It is a really important plan. We have gone through government agencies with the root and branch review to find sensible savings where we can. Given the economic times we are currently in, it is really important that you make sure what you do is sensible, that you get the balance right and that you invest in the things that create jobs, grow the economy, facilitate more private investment, and diversify our economy. That is really important.

It is also really important that you live within your means but also provide the services that Territorians need each and every day. It is a fine balance. We have those plans in place but what we will not be doing, of course, is taking the CLP approach that we have seen in the past where we have seen huge cost-of-living burdens put on the shoulders of Territorians, such as 30% power increases. We will not be doing that. We are not going to take this slash-and-burn approach of the former CLP government. We see reports half-finished and never released to see the light of day.

We are making sure we are focused on the things that Territorians need. Providing their important services, creating more jobs and growing the economy. Making sure the Territory is a great place to live and to raise a family. That is what we are doing.

We are taking the right approach, investing in what matters to Territorians, what they need each and every day, and doing it in a way that means we are not taking the CLP approach—slash, burn, cut and put prices up through the root. We have seen it, they have form. That is what has happened in the past and that certainly is not the approach we are going to be taking.

**Arafura Games – Jetstar Asia**

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for the ARAFURA GAMES

The Department of Tourism and Culture revealed, through answers to questions that the opposition asked during estimates, that the government used Jetstar Asia seats available, by a cooperative marketing arrangement, to fly athletes over for the Arafura Games. The retail value of these flights was $75 000. Presumably this is a fraction of the amount the government pays to Jetstar for cooperative marketing.

When I asked you directly: ‘Did the Northern Territory government pay for any delegates to the games, whether they are sports people or otherwise, you said the government did not pay?’ I said, ‘So the government did not pay for airfares, accommodation, meals or ancillary costs for athletes or dignitaries to come to the games?’ and you said, ‘No’.

Minister, were you purposely trying to keep this information from Territorians?

**ANSWER:**

Madam, Speaker, not only will those opposite not get behind the success of the Arafura Games, they keep finding every excuse to be negative about. They are ‘negative Nancis’, day-in-day-out. The rest of the
community, the rest of the Territory, have moved on. The Arafura Games were a fantastic success and I look forward to presenting the cost-benefit analysis and final costings.

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: I pick up on the interjections, they do not even want to wait until the end of the financial year until it is all sorted, they just want to be negative.

We saw the games return …

Members interjecting.

Madam CHAIR: Order.

Ms FYLES: They just do not like to hear good news.

Madam CHAIR: Order, minister you have the call.

Ms FYLES: After an eight-year hiatus the games returned with over 1750 athletes from over 40 nations and it was a fantastic success. In terms of the question that the Member for Spillett asked, she clearly does not understand cooperative marketing. This came up, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture…

Members interjecting.

Madam CHAIR: Order.

Ms FYLES: The Member for Araluen does not how this works—she was the treasurer who claimed that, because she was from Alice Springs, she did not need to know how to add up, and they clearly do not know how sponsorship works.

No NTG taxpayer dollars were used on bringing athletes or officials to the games. There was marketing arrangements with Jetstar, which provided flight sectors and, as we have said many times previously, we also used some of the sponsorship money for other athletes and officials who were not on Jetstar sectors.

Those opposite do not even want to give the Games a chance but we were determined to make them a success and they were a success. We saw hotels full, restaurants and cafes busy and I am confident when the cost-benefit analysis figures come in they will show the success economically to the Territory.

We will build upon those Games for 2020–21, in November this year it is only 18 months until the next Games. What Territorians can be certain of is, if they get a CLP government, the games will be scrapped once and for all.

We know how important these Games are, not only to sporting competitions but to our local businesses. We hear from those opposite that we do not understand small business, rubbish. The Arafura Games support small businesses and they also build relationships and that is what we saw with the Business Engagement program.

In answering the question, the Member for Spillett does not know how these arrangements work and I would encourage her to get a briefing with myself or the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture and she might learn a thing or to.

Arafura Games – Cooperative Marketing Arrangements to Fund Athletes

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM, SPORT and CULTURE

Your department revealed through answers to questions that the opposition asked during the Estimates Committee hearings that the government used Jetstar Asia seats available to it via cooperative marketing arrangements to fly athletes over for the Arafura Games. The retail value of these seats are $70 000 minister.

Can you please confirm how many seats this $75 000 equates to and what does the government pay to Jetstar Asia in a cooperative marketing to secure those seats?

ANSWER
Madam Speaker, I will begin by saying I know exactly the answer that we provided you during estimates. It is really important to say that is it not fantastic that we have strong cooperative relationships with airlines that we can actually leverage those relationships to attack sponsorship for major events like the Arafura Games.

My understanding of this, and I am not the Minister for the Arafura Games but I do know how important that event is to the local economy. I know how important that event has been for local businesses and how important that event has been for local sport and it is fantastic because it was delivered through the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture that they had been able to leverage existing relationships to drive sponsorship in our major events.

There was not an exchange of taxpayers’ money here. This is about sponsorship. There are a whole range of sponsors for the Arafura Games and that is a really positive thing and speaks really positively to the work that has been done by the department, by the minister and by NT Major Events company because these events do not happen without attracting sponsorship, without getting the volunteers on board, without people who back those events.

Those Opposition do not back those major events. That is absolutely clear. Time after time we hear those opposite talk about how they do not back out major events. We do, and the airlines do and those other major sponsors do.

Remember those opposite that when you talk them down and you talk down the sponsors you are speaking to the personally. People who value the Arafura Games, who valued them previously before they were scrapped and who value them now because they are good for the Territory and they are good for local business.

The CLP scrapped the Arafura Games and they would do that again, and currently they are apparently happy to do and say whatever they want to try and scare others away from being involved in it—but people were really happy to be involved in it. It was a great team and a great army of volunteers and officials, including people who travelled here from afar to be part of it and had a great time and there was a great buzz around town. You felt it because you were there and I saw you there.

As per the answer in estimates, yes, there was an in-kind flight value and we provided that answer to you. We thanked Jetstar Asia for their support of the Arafura Games as we do all of the sponsors for the games. There were no taxpayers’ funds used and I really would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition should understand how sponsorships work given that you made really important decisions about some of these things in the past.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

Arafura Games – Cooperative Marketing Arrangements to Fund Athletes

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for TOURISM, SPORT and CULTURE

The Arafura Games had a gold sponsor. You would not disclose who that gold sponsor was. Can you tell me how much funding was used to fly athletes here and how much of the $50 000 from Landbridge was used to fly athletes here?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition asked a question in estimates that he was advised that I was not the relevant minister for it is the Minister for the Arafura Games.

Mr HIGGINS: I passed it across.

Ms MOSS: Yes and I will refer it to the relevant minister, the Minister for the Arafura Games.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, I do not know what it will take to get through to those opposite. The games were a success. Business want to get on board with the games. All they want to do is nit-pick and be grumpy and negative about it. But that is okay.
No tax payer funds were used to bring athletes to Darwin for the Arafura Games. As we have just heard from the minister for Sport, a sponsor, Jetstar, provided sector flights and we also used other sponsorship dollars for a small number of athletes who were outside the Jetstar Asia route.

We brought people to the Territory for the success of the games. Those opposite scrapped the games. They just want to be negative and grumpy about anything good.

**Palmerston Regional Hospital – Hydrotherapy Pool**

**Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for HEALTH**

Comprehensive rehabilitation is essential to get people back into work and lifestyle. How is the new hydrotherapy pool at the great Palmerston Regional Hospital and rehabilitation creating jobs and helping people get back to work?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, everybody who is positive will like this question in the House today, but we have a few grumpy people opposite.

The Palmerston Regional Hospital which I know the Member for Nelson likes to refer to as the Holtze hospital—we are happy to call it what you want because it is delivering services for Territorians.

Yesterday was very exciting. I had the pleasure of being alongside the hard-working Member for Brennan and the Member for Drysdale and the Disability Advocate, Robyn Burridge, someone who lives with a disability and is so passionate about this. We were also joined by Dr Gavin Chin, a rehabilitation specialist.

Not only did we deliver the Palmerston Regional Hospital, I need to remind those listening in and those opposite that when we came to government we had a hole in the ground dug, some concrete poured and then that was filled in. We were able to move beyond that, as a government, and get on and deliver a state-of-the-art hospital—the Territory’s first new hospital in over 40 years.

We also did the clinical planning to match that hospital. We did not just go and dig holes and hope the rest would fall into place. One of the things we identified very early on …

**Members** interjecting.

**Ms FYLES:** Now they pipe up, Madam Speaker! It is a shame they could not be so vocal when they were in government. They get very sensitive when we talk about that hole.

In planning for the delivery of services, the previous government had failed, but we realised that with rehabilitation services shifting from Royal Darwin Hospital—from being in part of that main tower to a ground floor environment with a specialist gymnasium—they would also need the hydrotherapy pool. Yesterday, Robyn Burridge was saying there has been evidence recently—and they are encouraging people who have suffered from a major injury or illness who are living with a disability to try to shift away from medication and get active. That is what this facility will do.

The $3.1m project, which was built by Scope Building NT, created about 20 jobs. The minister for Infrastructure and I had a chance to talk to Scope builders. They did a great job. It is a wonderful facility.

Rehabilitation patients will now be able to access hydrotherapy to assist with their pain relief, increase mobility in joints, provide vital exercise to paralysed muscles, reduce muscle spasms, increase and improve circulation. They are just a few of the things that access to this facility will help. It is just a few short steps away from where they live and will be accessible to both inpatients and outpatients. There is a lot of evidence about the weightless environment of a hydrotherapy pool in providing rehabilitation—and it is so important, particularly with our climate.

Madam Speaker, we are proud to have got on with the job and delivered the Palmerston Regional Hospital, and not only deliver the hospital but a rehabilitation pool, the first for the Department of Health in the Territory. This rehabilitation space is state-of-the-art and I congratulate everybody in the Departments of Health and Infrastructure and Scope Building NT on this project.
Aboriginal Births – Declining Numbers

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for HEALTH

In response to a question in estimates to the Minister for Education, I asked about declining Aboriginal enrolment numbers at schools. I received the following answer from the CE of Education:

We actually have a declining population in our early childhood so the number of babies being born in our remote settings has reduced as a result of deliberate interventions.

I find this alarming, as I know from my firsthand knowledge of Aboriginal people that they love children. Could you please explain what ‘deliberate intervention’ means? Is this a government and Health department sanctioned population control program in Aboriginal communities? If it is, does that not impinge on human rights of Aboriginal people and on their culture? Is this the next intervention?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I genuinely miss probably the second part of the member’s question. I ask him to ask me again, if that would be okay.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, ask it again.

Mr WOOD: Will I go through …

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, start again. Stop the clock.

Mr WOOD: In response to a question I asked of the Minister for Education in estimates about declining Aboriginal enrolment numbers in schools, I received the following answer from the CE of education:

We actually have a declining population in our early childhood so the number of babies being born in our remote settings has reduced as a result of deliberate interventions.

I find this alarming as I know from my firsthand knowledge of Aboriginal people that they love children. Could you please explain what a deliberate intervention means? Is this a government and health department sanctioned population control program in Aboriginal communities? If it is, does this not impinge on the human rights of Aboriginal people and on their culture? Is this the next intervention?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, that question that has been asked is a huge accusation against the Department of Education and the Department of Health. Our government and agencies do everything to support women and families from when they become pregnant. As a government, we have been focused more than any other government in the Northern Territory’s history about the first 1000 days and generational change.

Member for Nelson, you can interject all you want but that is a huge accusation and I stand by the Department of Health and the Department of Education and the work of agencies such as Territory Families. What we have done is put in place measures so we can see generational change in the Territory and support women.

We know the evidence is, if we support women when they are pregnant, we can lift the birth weight rates which has a huge impact. Then the first 1000 days, we know investment early on, in terms of every dollar spent, is significantly reduced if you spend it in the early years. We have come together as a government. We have the Minister for Children who ensures all government agencies are working towards the next generation in the Territory.

We support healthcare right across the Northern Territory with 80 remote clinics and six hospitals. We support everyone in having a healthy future so in terms of the question, I take huge offence at that accusation that he has built upon from that question.

We want to make sure that it does not matter where women are in the Territory, whether they are in Nightcliff or Ngukurr, or an urban or remote setting, they have access to healthcare. I find the premise of the question a huge accusation to our departments.
Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: Relevance. The question revolves around deliberate intervention and the minister has not told us what deliberate intervention means.

Ms FYLES: What we are doing is empowering women and Territorians with education, access to healthcare, supporting the next generation because we know the investment when women are pregnant and in the early years is vital. In the Territory, we know the strong correlation between child protection and the youth justice system and then our adult corrections system. We know that if we invest in the early years, it saves us both socially and economically significantly into a young person’s future.

It does not matter where Territorians live, either in an urban or a remote setting, they have the right to access healthcare and education and that is what we are achieving.

Budget 2019 – Remote Housing

Mr PAECH to MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Are you able to outline to the House what Budget 2019 does for remote Territorians in the space of remote housing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for his question and his passion for remote housing. It was great to be able to appear before an Estimates Committee over five hours and I thank once again, the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development for the incredible work that they prepared and the great delivery that they participated in. It was a real team effort.

Members in this House will know that we are at a two-year benchmark into a 10-year program to really address generational change. We know that improved housing underpins that change across health, education, social justice, facilitating better employment opportunities and the rest.

It has been really important to acknowledge that this is a policy that has social roots. It is a Labor policy and it is empowering remote and regional communities, not only in terms of the local decision-making but also the employment outcomes within this program. This is a program that is a long-term investment.

It is not just about the social outcomes of targeting overcrowding. We know that overcrowding is what we have to change. We have to reduce overcrowding in remote Indigenous housing. It is about the economy. I have been at an investment forum with main stream Territory industry and our Indigenous business enterprises from across the Northern Territory. Last night I took the Member for Port Darwin’s lead and attended the Chamber of Commerce’s sunset business function. I talked about a $2bn investment over 10 years and the supply chain logistics that involves for all Territorians.

That is about companies buying equipment and vehicles—those need to be serviced, companies that are travelling and tradies that are buying lunches at local stores. These is a supply chain logistics go to building supplies. The Territory is sitting up and taking notice. The Labor government is delivering.

We know what we are at risk of. The CLP have form, they cut this program. They put a nosedive into this program when they had carriage of the government between 2012 and 2016. We fear they will do it again. Anyone who represents a bush electorate should heed my words. We cannot afford the CLP to do this again. We have it back on track. We are performing above the expected targets and delivering generational change.

Do not trust the CLP. You cannot trust the CLP. It would be devastating for them to get carriage once again of remote Indigenous housing.

Territory Families

Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Can you please advise how you are working to strengthen territory families, including providing the following details: what progress has been made on family group conferencing? How many Aboriginal kinship carers have been added to the program since 1 January 2019? How many children in out of home care have been reunited with their families since 1 January 2019? How many non-Aboriginal carers are there currently?

ANSWER
That is a great estimates question. We answered some of those questions yesterday. I am more than happy to provide you with a full briefing on those issues because you care passionately about Aboriginal people and ensuring that Aboriginal children are in the care of Aboriginal carers.

One of the things we talked about at length was the Aboriginal kinship grant program we have put in place. This has allowed, for the first time, Aboriginal organisations to support Territory Families to identify Aboriginal carers. (inaudible) is one of those organisations in Central Australia. I know that it is an organisation you know well and support. I know the CEO well. They are doing an excellent job in supporting us in identifying Aboriginal carers in Central Australia. Tangentyere Council and Larrakia Nation are also involved.

This has led to a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal kinship carers. We have had a significant increase of about 20 per cent since 2015. We continue to do that. We acknowledge that there is much more to do. We have to work closely with communities to make sure we support young children to be in situations—it is what all of us would want for our children. If any of our children needed to go into care, we would want family to be the first consideration of the department—working to make sure there is family.

One of the things we have been doing is implementing a clinical framework, making sure we are working more effectively with families. These are not just nuclear families, but the broader family within the understanding of Aboriginal kinship systems. This is right from the first notification and intervention that Territory families is involved in.

The Signs of Safety clinical framework is applied in Western Australia and Queensland. In some parts of the north of Western Australia, there are now Aboriginal kids in Aboriginal kinship at rates of 70 per cent of kids. We know that program will deliver better outcomes. It delivers the ability to do family group conferencing and makes sure families are involved. I have been working closely with the Member for Nhulunbuy about how we can do that. We have asked his advice on how we can make sure that the legislation reflects Aboriginal systems and we will continue to do so.

I am happy to provide you with a detailed briefing, Member for Stuart, I know it is an area you are passionate about, we are too. We know kids do better when they are in Aboriginal kinship circumstances. We know if we support families earlier, this whole budget is about putting kids at the centre of government, we said we would when we can to government and we are delivering in this budget.

Onshore Gas Industry

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

Could you please provide an update on development of the onshore gas industry?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have a good story to tell. Our Territory Labor government is delivering, looking after and protecting our environment as well as creating local jobs in the onshore industry.

Our government is making sure that the onshore gas industry emerges and, as that does, our unique environment is protected and the jobs which go along with that—and the jobs across a number of other sectors that I and other ministers in the House represent.

We have supported the introduction of all of those 135 recommendations from the final report of the scientific inquiry, which is a vastly different approach to those from across the other side of the Chamber, who would not have had any safeguards in place for our water, environment and our communities.

As I have said in recent months, regulations on our end will not hold up the industry. We know that there are people and companies progressing through those regulations as we speak. As long as the companies do and they have met all the requirements at their end, they will continue to work their way through and in to the industry in the Northern Territory.

Twenty-nine of those 31 recommendations were required to allow drilling and fracturing to commence have now been completed and many of those are forming part of the finalised ‘code of practise’ which was finalised recently. In relation to the work this dry season, there have been a number of approvals that have come through from the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in relation to environment management.
plans, EMPs, and civil works for Santos and Origin have been approved. That work will be commencing in the coming days and weeks.

We could see hundreds of millions of dollars spent on civil works and exploration this year, which is going to create jobs in our regions and jobs for Territorians. We have had a number of meetings, through APEA conferences, with these large companies which are entering into these spaces in regional Northern Territory. We impressed on them that it is critical they are able to show to us that they are employing Northern Territory people throughout those civil works in the Northern Territory.

APIA themselves have now said that the NT has some of the most comprehensive and rigorous regulations in the world and our government stands by putting those regulations in place. Those big companies know they are out the other side of that period of waiting for the regulations to come in place. They may not necessarily enjoy that they have had to work their way through those regulations but they appreciate that they are in place. They appreciate our government for stepping through that in a systematic and scientific way and they are looking forward to getting back on the ground.

Property crime in Alice Springs

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

Property crime in Alice Springs is sustaining at a very high and alarming level. The latest police stats show a 105% increase in house break-ins, 26% increase in commercial break-ins and a 36% increase in motor vehicle theft. Yes, assaults have come down, but property crime has gone through the roof. We need to know from you, our leader, what are you going to do about property crime in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is important that everyone is safe and feels safe and that is as true in Alice Springs as it is in Yuendumu or Darwin. We know that in Alice Springs we have seen some good results on assault and DVs, as the Member for Araluen mentioned. We have seen some significant outcomes there from the work we are doing in and around alcohol principally, I think.

We have made a significant effort in Alice Springs around those additional police. We had a recruit squad there, with experienced police, to hit the ground running in both Alice Springs and the region around Alice.

We have also had the Police Alcohol Liquor Inspectors hit the ground in Alice Springs too, which has freed up police resources both in Alice Springs and the remote Northern Territory.

It is important that we put victims first and that everybody who does the wrong thing faces the consequences and is rehabilitated and does not offend again. You have to work your way through the whole process. We are focusing on youth crime and tackling alcohol crime in Alice Springs.

We will see seven new youth engagement night officers working with youth on the street regularly involved in crime and help them get on a better path. We are expanding the hours of the youth drop-in centres and the bus service to seven days a week, working with Gap Youth Community Centre and the Tangentyere Council’s Browns Street. We are expanding the hours of the Tangentyere Night Patrol to get young people off the streets, and we are working with an Aboriginal-led youth outreach service, which is very good.

There is a very handy little poster the Member for Araluen might have seen about the things we are doing to help tackle crime in Alice, which includes property crime, the Aboriginal-led youth outreach service, which I have just mentioned, more mobile CCTV cameras, the two new school engagement officers and the three school compliance officers working with young people. There is a significant amount of work going into Alice, recognising that we have to keep working at this.

You can never take it for granted. One crime is one crime too many. You can never say, ‘Yes, job done.’ When it comes to tackling crime, you have to go back every single day. The best thing you can do to tackle crime is hard work. You have to roll up the sleeves, get in and make sure everyone is talking to each other. That is what Strike Force Winx has been really good at. The Alice Springs Youth and Community Engagement team has been really good at focusing on that property time and early intervention.

We have the inter-agency case management that is happening as well. It is really important to help all of us work together about those 33 high-risk youth in Alice Springs. There is a significant amount of work happening in Alice to make sure we are tackling crime in Alice.
On top of that, we are investing in kids on Alice—full stop—not just those who are at risk. We know that the CLP cut youth funding when it was in government last. In Alice Springs, we are doing the opposite. As well as classic things, you have to keep investing. If you cut, it will have a massive ripple effect and will only lead to huge problems down the line and more expensive bills. You have to keep on top of it and keep doing the work.

I thank everybody who has been at this—the minister for Police, the Minister for Territory Families and others and all the people in Alice Springs doing really hard work to ensure we get on top of youth crime and alcohol-related crime.

Jobs for Territorians – Infrastructure Projects

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

How is this government supporting jobs for Territorians with infrastructure projects currently under way, as well as any new works?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Arafura. I am very much looking forward to getting out to the Tiwi Islands next week and having a good look at the infrastructure that is happening there with the roads, the port and all of the Tiwi enterprise work as well.

As you said, the government is backing Territory businesses and ensuring local jobs come first. In May, 79 construction contracts were awarded, valued at over $54m and 100% of these contracts went to local business. So, 100% of every job, every tender that went out, every one of those contracts that went out in May for 79 construction contracts were awarded to local businesses—a great news story.

Some of these contracts—they are all across the Territory—include the remote housing projects that the Member for Barkly is so thoroughly involved with, upgrades to the runway lights at Milingimbi, repairs at Gumatj school in East Arnhem Land, works on the Central Arnhem Road to Nhulunbuy, a new chiller at Yirrkala School, construction of the last 12 kilometres of the Litchfield Park road—I was out at Ostojic Group when that happened handing over and talking about that tender—the new shared path that the Member for Nelson is so excited about from Howard Springs to Coolalinga, improvements to Hodgson River Road in Katherine; upgrades to the Stuart Highway in Tennant Creek and construction of sections of the Larapinta Trail in Alice Springs. Construction work is all across the Territory with probably about 300 jobs just in the list of work happening in May.

There is still work out there for local businesses, with 21 tenders currently out to market valued at about $50m as well. In the last week members of this team have been involved in a heap of announcements. As I said, it has been lovely to see Austin Lane work. PTM Group—$824 000 for PTM to do some great work to cool the CBD area down. For Mandorah jetty, Cardno got the $1.1m design tender. I was talking to Jerry at Cardno design about that amazing work that will be happening.

I was with the Minister for Health at the hydrotherapy pool—$3.1m. Scope had completed that work. I know the Minister for Education has been rolling out the $300 000 for every school project. There were a whole heap of schools—Moulden Park in my electorate—but I think everybody’s electorate got some work and has some schools about to get that $300 000.

As a government, we are focussing on jobs and that is what it is all about with our infrastructure projects. Making sure that we are getting continuous jobs for Territorians and making sure that those jobs all go to local businesses.

Public Assets – Sale

Mr HIGGINS to CHIEF MINISTER

Chief Minister, will you tell Territorians of your secret deal to sell more Territory assets? The Opposition uncovered that your government paid a Western Australian company $139 185 for a report on alternative approaches to funding and financing infrastructure.
Where is this report? What does it say? Will it be made public and if not, why not? Why are you wasting taxpayer’s money on interstate firms to investigate toll roads and privatisation?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we know that last term the CLP sold off the bus services, TIO and they leased the port for 99 years. They did it all without telling Territorians anything before the election. You know what? They spent all the money and they left a deficit of $867m and no plan for post-INPEX. They did it all without talking to Territorians. They went to the election promising to cut the cost of living and then put up power and water by 30%.

We received a report from John Langoulant that recommended we look at asset sales. We said no, we are not going to do that. We will consider one thing around the Land Titles Office and we are looking at that now. We have not made a decision to sell it or not; we said we will look at it. We said no to everything else: up-front, on-the-record, honest with Territorians.

Was the CLP honest with Territorians? No. The CLP were not honest with Territorians. They went to the election knowing they were going to do one thing but not telling the truth: What did Territorians wake up to? They woke up to a bus service that got sold, a TIO that got sold and a port that got leased all without any honesty to Territorians. No honesty.

We commissioned a report. We got the report. We considered the recommendation. We said no to the asset sales apart from considering one thing: the Land Titles Office. We have not said yes or no: We have said we will do the due diligence and we will look at it. We have been up-front with Territorians.

You just cannot trust the CLP and we know from the Leader of the Opposition’s speech in reply that he said he will make payroll tax go away but he will not tell you how he will fill the $250m black hole. How deep will he cut? We already know that he said that every single public servant in the Northern Territory will have less leave—less holidays, they will lose the six weeks leave, he said that already on the record—but we do not know where else he will cut. We do not know how else he will cut. How deep and where?

Be honest with Territorians. You were not before the last election. You have a chance this election to be up-front with them. Tell them what you will sell. Tell them what you will cut. Tell them how many teachers they will lose. Do it before the election. Do not hide. Take your agenda to Territorians and see if they will reward you if you are honest with them.

We are being honest with them. We have been up-front about how we will repair the budget. The CLP cannot be trusted.

Domestic Violence Perpetrator Accommodation

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

According to a report from the ABC in May, the South Australian Government has said it will begin removing domestic violence perpetrators from their houses to allow their victims to remain in the family home, where safe, as part of a trial.

In the NT, we have premises access orders which restricts a perpetrator’s access to the victim’s house. What is different in South Australia is that the South Australian government is opening 40 new domestic violence crisis beds over the next 12 months, including a small number of beds for perpetrators to use while removed from their home. They will be placed in alternative accommodation with access to support services while domestic violence victims will be able to stay in their own homes if it is safe to do so.

Minister, has the government given this alternative accommodation model any consideration?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is great to talk about the significant investment that we have made in the domestic and family violence field and to deal with some of the major issues because it is a significant issue within our community.
We have much higher rates of domestic and family violence in the Territory than other parts of Australia and as a government we have been serious in investing by setting up a 10-year plan that gives us structured and evidenced-based response.

In terms of removing perpetrators from the house, that can be done at different times in different ways already in the Northern Territory. There has been a couple of programs that have been run in other jurisdictions. In Tasmania they did a similar program in the 2000s. It was not well taken up by perpetrators of violence—they provided accommodation.

There has also been some work done in Western Australia with a similar model and they are trialling something in South Australia.

We are looking at the results of those. So far they have not necessarily been as effective as what people would have liked. However, we very clearly say that women and children should be able to stay safely within their home.

We have been supporting women to do that with a range of programs through victims of crime. There can be some ways of securing households and there has been some significant investment in ensuring that our crisis accommodation also have outreach programs which are about supporting women to stay in the community safely.

In this budget we are very proud that there is further investment in the domestic and family violence sector including crisis accommodation, however—and this is another issue where we need to work together to ensure that the federal government also has a part in those programs.

Crisis accommodations are funded through the homelessness program and we more than match the funding from the federal government. We need to make sure that they continue to invest in this. In the next few weeks we will be opening the new crisis accommodation in Alice Springs which will be a very proud and emotion moment for me, and are increasing the ability for women to access those services.

However, we do agree that we need to look at a range of ways and by continuing to invest we will put $6m in to the budget. Our very first budget as a government we continued that investment with $20m over three years. In this budget we will continue to work with the sector about the best ways. We will monitor the results from other programs and we will continue to invest in perpetrator programs, such as the one in Alice Springs through Tangentyere Council—and Catholic Care run one in Darwin.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

Your own buy local advocate says, I am unable to conclude whether the buy local plan has had a positive effect. Your buy local plan is a plan to say bye to locals. This was demonstrated again this week with the Labor government’s Boundless Possible campaign boundlessly overlooked to hire a local film production company. This is just one example and we know with answers from written questions that nearly $2m went to interstate companies.

Why are Territory businesses boundly forgotten in your buy local plan?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we brought in stronger buy local rules in government. We changed the way we view a tender from value for money to value for the Territory and have seen a significant result since then of investments back in to Territory business.

The buy local advocate is there to make sure we get the best advice we can to keep strengthening the buy local policy. It is really important we do absolutely everything we can to give Territorians a crack at government work, particularly considering that CLP had no plan in place post INPEX.

We need to make sure we get as much money in through those Territory businesses as possible. Let us be really clear I have answered this question already on the record but the CLP were obviously not listening. We invited four local companies to tender for our Boundless Possible campaign work. Two local companies tendered and a local company one the work, so that was a tick for buying local.
The company that has concerns at the moment did not tender for that work. If you do not tender, you cannot win it. It is a shame because that company does amazing work. I would have loved to see them tender for that work. I reckon they would have done a great job of it. If you do not tender, you cannot win. A local company won that work.

Those local companies would be upset to hear the Deputy Leader of the Opposition say that they are not local. It is highly insulting and offensive to those local companies for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to say they are not local according to her. They are local companies and they are doing the work. I thank them for helping us on that campaign.

We will keep looking at what the Buy Local Advocate is doing. I meet with him regularly to see how we can keep strengthening the Buy Local rules. We are looking at different things in procurement. We have an excellent team. This has impacts across government. The procurement has impacts throughout every line agency of government on what we do and how we keep generating work back to Territory businesses.

It is critical that we do it right. There are fantastic Territory businesses. Some of them are doing it quite tough post-INPEX, which had a big impact on the Territory economy. There was a huge ripple effect post INPEX. It was one of the biggest projects in the world—over 10 per cent of our workforce at its peak. There was a lot of spending power through what INPEX did.

There was no plan from the CLP for those post-INPEX years. As part of our economic plan we have stimulus packages and a Buy Local program, which is going to make sure as much work is going to locals as possible while we work to diversify the economy, invest infrastructure across the Territory and grow the Territory population. We are doing a lot of work on all those things.

When it comes to diversifying the economy, we are saw the fantastic news this year from NASA. We will see rocket launches from Northeast Arnhem Land. The prawn farm is up and going. We have opened office space in Darwin. We have onshore oil and gas commencing. The first EMP is out the door. We are doing our bit to make sure the Territory economy sees the better days ahead. There are more good days ahead of us than bad.

**Turbocharging Tourism – Visitor Numbers**

**Ms NELSON to MINISTER for TOURISM, SPORT and CULTURE**

How is the Turbocharging Stimulus package impacting on visitor numbers?

**ANSWER**

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Katherine for her question—a fantastic region that always attracts amazing visitation because it is so beautiful. We are providing a critical post to the Territory economy through tourism, making sure that our Territory brand is well represented in the global market, one of the most competitive in the world. It goes to the heart of what the Chief Minister was talking about earlier on getting out of the boom/bust cycle.

The latest international visitor statistics that were released this week by Tourism Research Australia show good indications that the Turbocharging Tourism stimulus package is continuing to gain momentum and showing positive results. Some of the numbers for the year ending March 2019 include: all-purpose international visitor numbers are up by 4.2 per cent and international holiday visitors are up by 6.5 per cent. That equates to 297 000 visitors.

The average spend is up 18 per cent. That is $473m dollars of additional money into our economy. Japanese visitation is up 55 per cent. We saw some of the charters that have been in the Territory for the first time in a decade. Chinese visitation is up 48 per cent. The USA, which is our largest international market, was up 6.5 per cent, which was fantastic as we made some investment off the back of Tourism Australia Son of Crocodile Dundee campaign.

The figures have come from Tourism Research Australia's national visitor statistics, which also showed increases. There is also a lag in tourism statistics. It is important to make sure that we use the most up-to-date figures. The figures reflect the positive impact of our Turbocharging Tourism investment.

We have achieved the growth target that we set out to achieve, which was six per cent. This puts us on par with the growth rates of other jurisdiction. We are there, which is fantastic.
We have smashed all of our Turbocharging Tourism I goals. We are proud of the second package that will allow us to build on that moment, leading to more visitors. The Member for Port Darwin and I were down with the Darwin Festival crew at lunchtime. That is just one festival we are investing more in because we know how important our festival and events are to our visitor economy. They have a festival launch where they will put out their program and they too have been seeing really sharp increases in the number of people outside the Darwin region and the Northern Territory showing interest in coming to the Northern Territory, purchasing tickets and getting here on those plane which is fantastic.

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

Unanswered Written Question No 550

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 114(2). It states that a minister should respond to a written question within 30 days of receipt. If a minister does not answer the question within 30 days, the member who asked the question may, at the conclusion of Question Time, ask the Speaker to write to the minister to seek reasons for the delay.

Written question number 550, regarding the plan to fix antisocial behaviour initiative was sent to the Chief Minister on 21 March. That is now 90 days, which is 60 days overdue.

In accordance with Standing Order 114, I ask that you write to the Chief Minister seeking reasons for the delay.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, I will take that on notice, Opposition Leader.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Blain

Ms LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I seek leave of absence for the Member for Blain today. He is West Timor leading meetings to facilitate an agreement between a Territory high school and (inaudible) university and senior school.

Leave granted.

APPROPRIATION (2019–20) BILL 2019
(Serial 88)

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, firstly I would like to thank all the public servants, Hansard people, PAC colleagues and the Legislative Assembly staff for all the hard work they have put into these last two weeks of estimates.

The estimates are an important part of the parliamentary process and it is good to see it operate for the full 60 hours. It just goes to show that my picket line outside parliament a couple of years ago advocating for working longer hours worked, although I did play a part in the budget repair strategy by taking 3% off my questions to Territory Gen last night.

There were a lot of questions covered but some were not always answered. Unfortunately, we still have a system for researching Hansard that is not conducive to researching. One wonders what visitors to our webpage think when they get sent to Territory Stories.

We had lots of efficiency questions. Everyone got an efficiency question and some were more efficient at answering those questions than others. Then we had the wage freeze for CEOs which united debate on the legality of the government’s policy which was one of those questions asked but not answered and still not answered.

There were lots of treasury questions which I do not get excited about because there are too many terms that confuse. We just need to ask how much money do you owe and how are you going to repay it. I know that according to the NT Treasury Corporation, that assuming a 3.5% borrowing cost on $1.1bn would see us paying in the order of about $38.5m in interest per annum.
Then we had police and we had numbers: number of police, number of PALIs, numbers of break-ins, numbers of assaults, number of crashes, number of speeding tickets et cetera and lots more statistics with the bottom line that it costs about $450m to keep us safe.

The Electoral Commissioner dropped in to tell us there are about 30,000 people missing, well at least on the electoral roll, and he cannot find them and the Commonwealth is to blame. Then ICAC came in and we were all careful about what we said in case of misconduct. The Chief Minister dropped in the next day and he had the whole day to himself telling us about the good things the government is doing, although some of it did not seem possible, boundless or not, and he did not answer the question on the independent Remuneration Tribunal or the pay freeze for CEOs.

Then came the Attorney-General. Lots of questions but no answer on the wage freeze, lots of legal stuff and then corrections which led to more questions which were not answered around a prison manager’s job. Work camps, Parole Board, work parties and what happened to the garden out at Holtze but we do know there will be two rocking horses.

There was the Arafura Games for what cost? Health was a big one just like its budget but I will come back to that later. The Attorney-General departed followed then by the housing minister who was doing very well telling us about the local government and lots of houses and upgrades but he had little room to breathe when he put on his hat for public employment. The pay freeze came up again but no answer because you cannot answer hypotheticals.

This week we had the best, which was primary industry: diseases, plants, weeds, fish, mangoes, buffaloes, research stations, trees, cows, insects, anything worth talking about was in this section. Not forgetting gas and more gas, onshore, offshore, rocks, gold, sand and not forgetting water and dams. The minister answered all the questions but he was not asked about the freeze so he got off lightly.

Next, the new education minister and she was new at the job so answering questions was a bit harder but there were lots of staff on-hand. The question about why less Aboriginal children were involved in school than seven years ago led to this reply which came from the Chief Executive which was actually about having declining population in our early childhood so the numbers of babies being born in our remote settings has reduced as a result of deliberate interventions. What does that mean?

We had a federal intervention on Aboriginal communities and now another. Thirty-three per cent of Aboriginal children attending school for four days or more was another bombshell. Added to that is the Buslink Vivo on Howard Springs Road the proposed site for the Palmerston youth skills centre? No. That is not the site they are looking at now. Talk about on-again and off-again decision-making.

The minister for arts and culture, with sport added on—that is a nice portfolio. No (inaudible) questions but there were cuts to programs. The saddest one was the dropping of the land for wildlife program—very disappointing.

The never-ending Indigenous art gallery in Alice Springs came up, as did Chinese tourism; sport, including the new rugby league ground, films; parks, which are part of tourism and culture, by the way; ICT; and gamba grass. Everything, naturally, was ‘turbocharged’.

Minister Lawler finished off the day in fine style with an opening statement which covered everything, which was good. It allowed me comment on the question about efficiency dividends, cuts and freezes, but we still covered a lot: gamba; fires; water; bores; planning Weddell and, of course, the dreaded and in the wrong place Noonamah Ridge; geese; crocodiles; roads; and cycle paths.

I now have promised the minister a red rose, at her request, when the cycle path to Coolalinga is finished and officially opened. I am getting that bike ready!

I was very pleased by the minister’s view on development at Gunn Point—a genuine breath of fresh air.

Yesterday was the Minister for Territory Families, and it was a long day of serious stuff dealing with child protection and news that several sites for the new youth detention centre had been looked at and were soon to be released. We wait with trepidation.

There were discussions about bail, GPS bracelets, youth matters, Don Dale, family support, foster carers and kinship carers, and lots we did not get to, like men’s business.
After that, we met with the power, water and sewerage people, all very serious. Their answers covered everything a person should know about power, water and sewerage. We learned why our electricity tariffs are subsidised by government to the tune of $92m and, of course, solar power; and why Territory Generation has to compete with the renewables mob, and so does not sell as much electricity these days.

There was the new power station at Howard Springs—the most exciting news was the possibility of a renewable hydrogen and electricity facility at Yulara. It was great to see hydrogen getting a mention.

It was a good week and I learned lots of things, but one extremely sad outcome—I am talking in budget terms—was that the Minister for Health said in response to a question from the Member for Spillett that there were 744 abortions performed in the Territory in 2017–18, and from 1 July 2018 to 31 March 2019 there were 517 terminations performed. The minister said they estimated that will be around 690 this year.

Our rates of terminations are comparable to other jurisdictions. The Northern Territory rate is 13.1 per 100,000 people. The Western Australian rate is 15 and the South Australian rate is 13.8. That means more than 14,000 little Territorians did not see the sun shine or have a chance to reach their full potential as human beings like us. You would think those little human lives were just statistics and we were competing with other states. How sad.

The minister also said the government made a commitment on reviewing the act 12 to 24 months post-commencement and a working group had formed to do that. If that means allowing late-term abortions I would be horrified if this parliament even contemplated such a horrible and subhuman procedure.

I call on the Chief Minister and the Opposition Leader to say no to any suggestion that we go down that path and instead support life. Please make a stand. Adoption is the option. Counselling and support should be compulsory.

We can talk about the many interesting things during the budget—I enjoy budget estimates, strangely—but I would gladly forget all that if the one budget outcome of the Departments of Health and Territory Families was all those babies born. Would that not be wonderful—would that not really be boundless possible.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also want to speak about estimates and thank our wonderful Committees staff who worked tirelessly over the two-week period, the committee itself, the Chair and all the members, and the public servants—I am sure just about all of you, in some way, shape or form, had some involvement in the estimates process. Thank you.

It is a very much a worthwhile process, an important part of our parliamentary calendar and democracy and whilst a lot of preparation goes into it—perhaps there is not enough time to go into every area of every portfolio—that work is vital. It is much appreciated by the opposition.

We learnt lots of things during budget estimates, which is important—that is largely the point of it. But not as many things as we would have liked. Part of what made estimates interesting was the way in which each minister dealt with their budget savings measures and their budget efficiencies and how they were going to achieve that.

Largely, and I am speaking generically, ministers were not aware of how their department was going to achieve the flagged savings. Most departments from memory had between $1m and maybe around the $10m mark in efficiency dividends which they had to achieve as part of a plan for budget repair and I found it astonishing that not a lot of ministers knew how, or if, that was going to be achieved.

Unfortunately, instead of specific information, we were given broad generic terms about finding efficiencies, cutting costs and reducing waste. One would have thought, given the process we have been through—we had the initial, interim Langoulant report two weeks before Christmas last year, the much touted root and branch review happened in that process as well and the final Langoulant report—one would have thought that by June, a good six months later, ministers would have a very clear understanding about what savings they need to achieve and how they are going to do that.

No-one is saying ‘slash and burn’, we are asking for a roadmap on how the government is going to achieve the savings that it has identified. What came out in Attorney-General and Justice was that the measures in the root and branch review are not even necessarily going to be adopted. They are essentially ideas for the government to implement and find savings.
Which is interesting in and of itself, because my recollection and understanding of the root and branch review was that the Chief Minister had asked agencies to put that information up and so one would have thought if it had got them through the various budget processes and had made it into the root and branch review, it would be a document that would provide a roadmap forward.

I do not know why I am surprised and disappointed that there are not more concrete plans to achieve budget savings. I expected this government to be taking our fiscal crisis seriously, given the road they have been on over the past nearly seven months. It is disappointing that, whilst we have these efficiencies set aside, or this target, it is rather aspirational and largely—again I am speaking generically—there are not pathways to get there.

That was a highlight for me. Of course, we saw the usual business of: that is not my portfolio, speak to that minister, I cannot answer that, you should have asked that in a different output. I suppose we expect some of that in estimates, but on budget-related issues you would think there would be a clear pathway for each agency to identify those savings.

Particularly where agencies had increased budgets and significantly increased budgets over the amount of the efficiency. I do not understand how this government does its accounting or its books, I think no one really does that and that is why we are in so much financial trouble. It did not fill me with confidence and did not make a huge amount of sense.

We asked questions on a wide range of issues. When we spoke to all agencies, we also tried to get to the bottom of this voluntary pay freeze issue.

We saw a government in the heat of releasing the final Langoulant report and the Root and Branch review talking tough and big on how it will bring the budget back into a sustainable position, show restraint and remedy this fiscal crisis it has put us in. We heard about pollies’ pay cuts, public servants’ pay cuts and how things have transpired since that point.

We have seen some really disturbing and interesting behaviour from the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. They were, essentially, saying that even though it is voluntary for ECOs to enter into a contract variation to take a pay freeze going forward, they expect everyone will. If those ECOs do not, there will be conversations. The Chief Minister could not rule out loss of jobs. We saw this awful unbecoming behaviour of a Chief Minister play out. I was astonished at the way the government has dealt with this issue, essentially leaning on ECOs and saying, ‘You have to do this’.

When we asked the Attorney-General whether agencies had sought legal advice, she could not answer that. Then, as we asked each agency, none of them I asked had sought their own legal advice, they had relied on OCPE. Of course, we asked questions of OCPE and more information came to light that it is voluntary. But the behaviour of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister has been quite extraordinary over this period, I have to say.

Whilst we covered some significant issues in Health we ran out of time, but our questions will be put to Health in other ways. We look forward to going through that information. Of course, we had Education and there has been a lot said recently about how principals on executive contracts are also subject to the voluntary pay freeze. The minister could not rule out whether or not she considered principals to be frontline staff. I understand we had heard comments from the Chief Minister earlier in the day which can only be described as unsupportive.

We tried to seek more information about the changes to teachers’ housing subsidies and other areas of the Education portfolio. We have received a lot of feedback from concerned teachers about whether or not changes to that scheme would mean they could stay in Katherine. Our number one concern is for our students and to ensure that Katherine remains a place where teachers want to go and stay and provide that all-important ongoing education for our wonderful young people in Katherine.

We also, interestingly, learned through the Department of Education and the Minister for Education about the change in location of the Palmerston skill centre. The government—I think it might have been the Chief Minister—issued in a shiny media release late last year details about its Back on Track program. It listed a number of measure which it then spent, in answers to written questions, about $45 000 ...

Mr Deputy Speaker, may I seek an extension of time?

Motion agreed to.
Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Thank you. I do not remember what I was saying now. Oh, the skill centre, yes.

They spent about $45 000 advertising this program that actually has no meat on the bones whatsoever. I continue to be surprised by the level of incompetence. I do not know why, because I am yet to point to something the government announced that it actually came through with. But there is no question they dropped that release with no detail and now, here we are seven months down the track and the government is having to find a new location for that skill centre.

We also learnt, through speaking with the Minister for Territory Families that that centre is an Education centre. So, of course, Territory Families and other agencies may or may not have some involvement in it, but it really is a Department of Education facility rather than what it was described as being: a disengaged youth facility. This government is absolutely making it up as it goes along. One thing is for certain, we learned through Education that that would no longer be at the Buslink Vivo terminal at Howard Springs, which was what was announced late last year.

We do not understand why the government does not consult more meaningfully before it makes announcements. When we got to Territory Families, of course I asked about the new Don Dale. We know that in the coming weeks a new announcement will be made, but the minister could not confirm what consultation for that process would take place.

I asked specifically, ‘Are you going to repeat the disasters of the past with the Pinelands debacle? Are you going to out to Territorians before you announce the site and consult with them about what the issues or benefits may or may not be of that particular site?’ Again we got no commitment for that. The minister said that all will be revealed and other generic terms. We do not even know if the government is learning from its past mistakes.

What we do know is that we will wait for the announcement and be looking closely at the process. With the Pinelands site the government backflipped. I applaud them for that because it was the right decision. It made the wrong decision in the first place. It then dug its heels in and dragged out a lot of pain, stress and financial hardship on people for the following seven months.

It was the right decision to backflip, but it fobbed off its lack of consultation with, ‘We have pursued the proper consultation process through the planning commission and the DCA’. That was an absolute load of rubbish. Those statutory authorities have very specific jobs to do. It is the government’s job to consult the community on its policy and decision-making.

There were many things that came out of youth justice and the care and protection of children. Some of the numbers of assaults and other incidents—I cannot remember exactly, but I think there are level 1 to 4 incidents that can happen in our detention centres. Some high figures came out of that. These were alarming and we asked questions on how our youth justice officers, who are highly valued employees who do difficult jobs in difficult circumstances, are being supported.

Hopefully next year when we compare, we will see those numbers come down. I am sure the minister herself shares that aspiration. Everyone deserves to go to work and be safe.

We debated a lot about evidence and we talked about electronic monitoring, youth camps and a range of different diversion measures and whether or not they were work. We are waiting for a lot of information to come back on notice. We will have to sift through that information as it comes to light because the detail was limited.

There were many portfolios—every portfolio was covered. There were the government owned corporations, Power and Water, Jacana and Territory Generation, last night. This was a good opportunity to hear what is happening in those agencies. The impact of solar and renewable energy, pricing structures, and all of the types of issues that are important to Territorians were covered. We are waiting and looking forward for some answers to come back on notice.

In a nutshell, it was disappointing that there was not a greater focus on budget repair. If there was one theme that came out of estimates for me, it was that there is still an ad hoc approach ad and there is no clear visibility on how budget repair is going to be achieved. As a result, we are seeing desperate behaviour from the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister.
I leave my comments at that. I reiterate my greatest thanks to all of the people who made that process possible, including the ministers who fronted up and answered questions.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all those who were involved in this year’s budget estimates hearings. As a previous public servant I too had the pleasure in a sense to help prepare briefings from my departments, and it is really interesting to be on this side of the table Mr Deputy Speaker, as I am sure you will agree to see how the proceedings unfold through our eyes as the committee.

I understand that an enormous amount of work goes in to the preparation and whilst I feel very bad that we cannot scrutinise every single area or every single output I do want to say thank you again to all of those public servants who worked tirelessly to put together that really helpful information. There has been many conversations about all of the fantastic work that gets done and it is great reflection and a great opportunity for Northern Territory Public Servants to look back at everything that they have achieved and I hope they take the opportunity to give themselves a good pat on the back.

I echo the sentiments of all of the other committee members who spoke before me in saying thank you to committee staff as well as the Hansard office who do some incredibly late nights to make sure that they capture a really good record of how the proceedings went. To Annemarie and your team, thank you and really appreciate all of your hard work.

To my fellow committee members, especially to Chair, the Member for Sanderson, for doing such a wonderful job. It is always a bit of a tough ask with a limited amount of hours to keep people on track. Thank you to all of my fellow committee members, members of the Opposition and Independent members for your very insightful questions. I was very privileged to learn a lot this year. I have a new particular interest in bees, so thank you Member for Nhulunbuy for asking some of those really in-depth questions that I normally would not think of asking for myself.

Estimates is an important process to scrutinise government expenditure. It was great to have that interaction over the last two weeks to ensure that Territorians who are either listening at the other end or following every night on the news the updates of what came out of each day’s hearings.

As we have discussed, efficiency dividends was a hot topic. It was really to hear from a number of agencies about their plans going forward, especially yesterday from the government-owned corporations. The words attrition came up and that is something we all need to be mindful of is there will be natural attrition, people will be looking to move out of the workplace and it is about harvesting and keeping that corporate knowledge going forward within government.

As a previous public servant every single workplace I worked in would continually look at how we could be more efficient, how we could reduce wastage and basically make sure that we were keeping our finger on the pulse and making sure that what we were doing was relevant for Territorians. This was just another really good reminder to get agencies to look at what they can do better.

I will leave my comments there. Thank you again to everybody for all of their work this year for estimates and I am pleased to support the committee’s report to the House.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I want to place on the record my thanks to everybody involved in the scrutiny of the budget. It is really important that we go through the estimates process. An incredible amount of work happens right across the Northern Territory public sector of preparing briefs, gathering information, getting ministers briefed and from the staff of the Legislative Assembly who do a huge amount of work in going through this process.

I cannot stress enough how important estimates is. It is really important as a government that you are asked the hard questions that you do closely monitor the performance of expenditure but most importantly the outcomes—what are you actually achieving by the effort that is going in from the public sector and that is what estimates is all about. Having that opportunity to transparently go line item by line item about how are tax payers funds being used, what are they supporting with regards to public services and what value are they getting for that, what are we actually achieving.

A big thanks to those members of this Assembly who spent many long hours at the estimates tables too, this year. I know from previous experience of life in Opposition of just how long and draining those hours can be but how much preparation also goes in to the efforts of the questions that are asked. Thank you to everybody.
Budget 2019–20 was all about putting Territorians first. This is a budget that is all about investing in jobs, a safer community and in generational change. These are the things that are very important to Territorians that we hear loud and clear.

But this budget has come at a time when we have immense challenges, both fiscally and economically. We have suffered the $500m GST cuts. We have embarked on a program of budget repair due to those cuts. At the same time, we are also dealing with the biggest transition this economy has ever experienced as we moved from the INPEX construction to the operation phase.

I always say that when you look at the impact of this single project alone—the biggest project in the history of the Northern Territory by far. It is about a $37bn project. The next closes project to that in the history of the Northern Territory was a $3bn Alcan Refinery expansion, the G3 expansion, in East Arnhem Land. When you look at the size and compare those projects, it goes to show why it has been such a challenging transition.

That is why the budget has been framed the way it has. It is about ensuring that we invest in jobs, growing the economy, safer community and those services to drive generational change whilst ensuring we are repairing the budget and moving the economy forward.

There is a lot to be excited about, though, when you look at what is ahead of the Northern Territory. I believe we can achieve budget repair sooner and economic growth faster. That is because we have a huge amount of work happening across the Northern Territory when it comes to economic diversification and to securing more major project investment.

There is a lot of work that has been flowing through. Some of the projects we can see coming out of the ground now. There are big projects in the Defence space where we can see invest, for example, at the RAAF Base Tindal and the air combat capability development. We still see new land releases going through with developments such as Northcrest, out through the Palmerston area and Kilgariff in Alice Springs. The Darwin luxury hotel—look down there and you can see the ground moving and a lot of the work happening there where we will eventually have the construction of the $200m luxury hotel. The City Deal has been signed. The Kakadu deal has been signed. We have a Barkly regional plan, which will bring a huge amount of money and much-needed investment into Tennant Creek and the Barkly. We are investing in Katherine as an agribusiness and logistics hub to grow the full potential of agribusiness in that region. We are seeing onshore gas exploration really take off this Dry Season.

There are many projects we have not included in our budget estimates and forecasts going forward—things like the Darwin LNG backfill program. That will be a huge project in the Top End. We know Project Sea Dragon has opened an office in Darwin and they are coming closer to that final investment decision. That has not been factored into our forward estimates. We have some fantastic resources projects such as the Nolan’s rare earth mine, Mount Peak mine and refinery, the Verdant minerals, the Ammaroo phosphate project, the Chandler salt mine, the Jervois base metal project—just to name a few. There is the seniors’ accommodation in the rural area. The shiplift is something we are very deeply committed to. We will be lobbying the Morrison government very hard when it comes to that investment because that is an important element to economic diversification. As the Chief Minister said in Question Time today, nation building—an important project in that regard as well as enhancing our Defence capabilities in the Top End.

We are investing in local jobs through the budget with a $1.5bn infrastructure investment. We have Turbocharging 2, the tourism stimulus package which is about putting jobs across the Northern Territory and bringing investment from tourists from interstate and overseas to support other important sectors such as retail as well.

We have more going into training for the jobs of the future with our new skills training package. We have significant project champions coming online to bring in project investment sooner to complement the work happening with the establishment of the Office of Investment Attraction. We have the most generous home ownership concessions in the country to encourage people to make their life here in the Northern Territory.

We are putting Territorians first by investing in our seniors through concessions, investing in Back to School Vouchers, investing in the Sports Vouchers—things that support families across the Northern Territory each and every day.

We are investing in the important areas of community safety. One-hundred-and-twenty extra police and 75 Police Auxiliary Liquor Inspectors. We are having more police stations built across the Northern Territory with Palmerston being completed, Nightcliff about to get underway. We have investments to go into Maningrida, Ngukurr, Angurugu—important police stations.
We are investing in the Back on Track program for more options for tackling the issue of youth crime and making sure that if a youth does break the law and enter into crime, we have more consequences and importantly we can also put them on better pathways to rehabilitation to avoid becoming an adult criminal.

We are investing strongly in the areas of health, education and, of course, housing, one of the most critical areas in the Northern Territory. We continue to invest in roads, particularly out bush, because we know they are important for economic development and connectivity so people in the bush can get to where they need to go and be connected.

I have to stress that a lot of work has gone into the budget and the plan for budget repair. I thank the hard-working staff of Treasury, they have done an amazing job. It has been the busiest six months for that department and they have done an incredible job.

I would like to thank the many public servants who have worked hard in preparing Budget 2019 and the hard work they put into the estimates process. It is important that there is a robust process when it comes to scrutiny of the budget and making sure the hard questions are asked so that Territorians can see they are getting good value from their taxpayer dollars when it comes to the public services they receive.

Thank you to the Estimates Committee for their hard work in this report.

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

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Property Activation Bill)

Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, the opposition will be opposing this bill in the strongest possible terms.

We object to the approach and philosophy informing this bill, namely that commercial property owners should be punished for the prevailing poor economic conditions and will reject the idea that any government can tax its way into prosperity.

The opposition, unlike this out-of-touch government, listens to industry and Territorians. We have taken the time to listen and consult those affected by this bill. We know that the Property Council does not support the introduction of an activation levy for Darwin CBD or any other new taxes for property owners in general.

The Property Council believes ongoing commercial and retail defragmentation of both Darwin and Palmerston CBDs has created an environment of business investment uncertainty, which has contributed substantially to the current poor state of our CBDs.

The Property Council has, for a long time, advocated for the introduction of planning policies to address the defragmentation issue, such as a hierarchy of retail and commercial which would support a revitalisation of both Darwin and Palmerston CBDs.

With the current and substantial oversupply of both retail and commercial land and premises throughout the greater Darwin region, an activation levy will only further penalise Darwin CBD and will not address the real and underlying problems that has led to the number of vacant shopfronts.

The opposition oppose this bill, because it sends the wrong signal to the existing industry and potential future investors. Measures such as the derelict site and vacant property tax send the wrong signal to investors. The clear message is that the Territory is a high-taxing jurisdiction that is not open to new business.

What is needed now, more than ever, is exactly the opposite approach. We need to say to national and international investors that the Territory is open for business. We must say that we are nationally and...
internationally competitive. We must become the best jurisdiction in Australia to do business, which we will under a CLP government.

Invariably this new property tax is a massive stick and there is no carrot. Business could entertain some temporary pain if there was a clear economic plan for a gain, but the Labor government has no plan, no strategic direction and frankly no idea when it comes to understanding how small, medium and family businesses run. It should not really be a surprise that none of the members opposite understand small and family businesses, as none of them have ever worked or invested in them. This is the difference between the CLP and this lame Labor government. We have worked in, invested in and grown small and family businesses.

It is worth noting that this lazy Labor government has form when it comes to nasty and low-handed attacks on property. Remember that not long ago in 2017 when the Gunner Labor government tried to introduce a property tax. At that time the Treasurer said she wanted to, 'Start a conversation'. All Territorians know that this is a very unequal conversation and equally one sided.

The government, with all the power of the Territory, reaching into hardworking Territorians’ pockets again. Why? This desperate cash group in February 2017 was to fund a social program spending addiction that has not abated one jot. Excessive social program spending has not created one long term job and it will not generate true wealth or raise the living standards of Territorians.

Considering the economic and fiscal environment, in short we are in crisis. Let us be clear, there has never been a worse time in the history of the Territory to introduce a massive new property tax. Territorians are leaving, property prices are falling and crime is out of control. According to Labor the answer is to attack those that work, save and invest. The reason properties are half full is because the domestic economy is deep in recession and has been for long time.

Not to labour the point, but surely even Labor ministers would concede and acknowledge that if these commercial property owners could get tenants for their properties, they would. Why would they elect to leave their properties vacant? The CLP opposition and the community stopped the government’s plan to introduce a land tax in February 2017 and now we will stand up against this new property tax. Why? Because this punitive approach is simply wrong.

The government should be looking at working with property owners, not against them. The government should be looking to incentivise and encourage, not to punish. The government should be looking to build long-term confidence and certainty, not short-term panic and fear. Remember, we cannot escape the reality that residential property pricing is currently down by over 25 per cent from its peak.

Commercial property is far worse off. By some estimates the figures are now past 30 per cent in terms of a drop from the peak to the present day. Property taxes have been demonstrated to drive down property prices. The property sector has the largest economic footprint of any sector in the Northern Territory. The property sector directly contributed $4.6bn to gross Territory product in 2015–16, 20.7 per cent of the total contribution by all industries in the Northern Territory.

It is estimated to have contributed a further $4.5bn to Northern Territory GTP through flow-on demands for goods and services. The property sector also directly employed almost 34 300 full time equivalent employees in 2015–16, 26.8 per cent of the Northern Territory’s total. It has supported almost 24 400 FTE jobs through flow-on activity. Approximately 37.7% of wages and salaries paid to Northern Territory workers is generated by the property sector. The property sector’s economic contribution is generated through a relatively even split of residential and non-residential activity.

The property sector contributed approximately $376m in combined Northern Territory Government tax revenues and local government rates, fees and charges revenue in 2015. This equates to 38% of the total Northern Territory taxes and local government rates, fees and charges revenue in 2015–16.

The economic literature suggests the impact of recurrent property taxes, commercial or residential, is that they are generally capitalised into lower property prices. We reiterate concerns articulated by the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory during the revenue discussion paper debate that property value drops are likely given the effect observed in Melbourne and New Zealand.

Further falls in value are very concerning and the long-run effect could be catastrophic for a structurally fragile and project-driven economy like the Northern Territory. One of the likely serious outcomes of a massive new
property tax, is that it may become the trigger for a chain of negative flow-on effects that lead to negative compounding economic decisions. This could be very difficult and dangerous for the NT economy.

Under this scenario, an economic depression could eventuate and be deep and prolonged. The second major concern for the NT Opposition is the signal this massive new vacant property tax is sending to domestic and international investors. There is clearly an issue of political or sovereign risk. By this, one should read that the NT Government is introducing unnecessary uncertainty and hence, risk, into the investment environment.

Given the nature of investment capital being fluid and flowing to the place of least resistance, this unknown degree of risk via the massive new vacant property tax is negatively impacting private investment in the Northern Territory. If the government does proceed to implement this new vacant property tax on 1 July 2019, then there will be an investment that will go elsewhere.

Given the soft economic conditions prevailing in the Northern Territory, which is low consumer and business confidence and soft private and public investment, the government’s decision is foolhardy and reckless. It is worth considering how the imposition of this massive new vacant property tax will flow on through the economy at large.

It is the default setting that commercial leases in the Northern Territory have a flow-on clause meaning that any additional costs—read here: taxes—are directly passed from landlord to tenant. Following this through logically, the commercial tenant will then have two options: absorb the additional costs or pass it on to his or her current customers. Both options have a negative impact on the NT economy. Business conditions at the present time, June 2019, are soft; consumer confidence is low and easy growth through large population increases is gone. Business can simply not absorb additional costs.

With that said, the only option is to pass the added costs through to the consumer. Indeed, the timing of this massive new tax could not be worse as Darwin records its highest commercial vacancy rates in Australia at over 20%. A breakdown of office space grade showed C and B grade accommodation at 50% and 30% vacancies respectively.

One of the other considerations the Opposition would like to highlight is that the revenue raised from the introduction of this tax may be greater than the effort and expense expended in raising it thereof. The Treasurer said that she hopes that this massive new tax will not raise one red cent however why resort to administratively complex and expensive threats when there is a simpler, easier and more effective way?

This government and this Treasurer will not acknowledge that the new property tax is a very bad idea and there is a better way because this government does not listen to Territorians. It is also worth noting that this Property Activation Bill did not go through the regular scrutiny committee process and I am sure the Member for Nelson will have more to say about that.

This makes a mockery of the scrutiny committee process. Either all or none should go, not this current situation where the government picks and chooses. As the Member for Nelson said today on radio, it would have been constructive to hear from the people that this bill will affect, the commercial property owners in Darwin. Clearly the government only wants to listen to some people and not others. So much for being open, transparent and an evidence-based government.

In final analysis there has never been a jurisdiction that has taxed its way to prosperity. The better approach is always with the carrot. The suggestions that the government gives to avoid paying the levy are ridiculous and typical of people not living in the real world. As stated on the Darwin City Deal website, to avoid levies a property owner must by 1 October 2019 insert graphics, art displays or other visual installations or include rotating shop displays.

Nice paintings on empty shops will not create a single job. If anything it will cost jobs as fed up and struggling owners sell up and move on. The government should focus on its first priority, keeping people safe. It is time for the government to deal with a crime crisis, not the colour of shopfronts. It is time for this Labor government to get real and deal with the debt crisis and stop debating window decals and dancers.

The opposition will not be supporting the bill.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is dead right. I am extremely disappointed that a bill that affects people in the CBD could not have gone to the scrutiny committee. Time may have been an issue, but there was significant time to at least have one meeting of the
scrutiny committee because the people you would have been inviting would have mostly come from the Darwin area. I do not think that would have been too difficult.

The minister in her second reading said,

*We released an information paper in October last year and we have had ongoing meetings with stakeholders over the last 12 months.*

That might fine, but I have no idea what the results of those meetings where or who they were with. That is the information I would like to hear and should have been told before this legislation came before parliament.

I understand what the government is concerned about. I admit that where I bought my Ford some years ago does not exist anymore. It is a slab of concrete. Is this the way to achieve change in that? There have been old sites that have eventually changed without levy.

Where Haritos used to have his vegetable shop—I think it was on the corner of Daly and Cavenagh Streets. I know he had a market there because I used to sell mangos to him. That is now a block of flats. Where Savvas had his motor mechanics and sales place is still vacant. The place on the corner of McMinn and Daly Streets is still vacant.

One of the classics is just around the corner here. I am not sure if it is a heritage site, because it has a Sydney Williams hut on it. It is the corner of Bennet and Cavenagh Streets, although it has a large painting on the wall, which has cheered that corner block up.

I do not know what the discussions were, whether other options were put or whether all landowners were involved in these discussions. I do not know what they thought. I admit if it was my block of land, I would have some pride in doing even something minor to those blocks just to make them cheer up a bit.

Then you have the question, if I own a block of land, do I have the right to leave it vacant. I am paying rates on it. There are probably very high rates in the Darwin CBD for a block of land. The council picks up those rates. Another question is, is this an area that the council should be involved in and not the government. We are dealing with council-rated properties, not crown land. Although, one could ask if there is any crown land in the area marked out for the CBD that needs attention.

I am interested to see whether there is any planning mechanisms that could have been looked at. I do not know. I have only had a brief look at that option. It may or may not be possible but these are the things the scrutiny committee could have fleshed out, had a look at alternative ideas about how we could do this without putting on a levy at bad time. That is when the economy is not going so well.

The government will say, what we are trying to do is stimulate the economy. We are trying to make the CBD look better, and I understand that. It says here that the reason for doing what it is—is we want to activate our CBD to drive more foot traffic through our streets and in to our businesses.

My only understanding of that is that no matter what you do you are going to walk down Darwin streets and you are going to pass empty businesses regardless of whether they are vacant or not and you only have to go past the Darwin cinema and you only have to go past the Ducks guts—there are two large places one walks past and they have both closed down. They do not look real good. They are a building but they are not really a tourist attraction. We have singled out the people where the blocks of land that are basically vacant and nothing is happening to them.

I have been in touch with the Property Council because the Property Council is not the only one that is concerned about land and they obviously think this is a bad idea. I have tried to look at it also from my own point of view that this needed a bit more fleshing out. I understand the government had the meetings but the process in which I found out what is happening is the process of scrutiny committees.

This government promised scrutiny committees except on urgency and then it changed the rules. It must be at least six months ago the government asked for comments about changes to the sessional orders and one of those was—let us go back to what we had originally—because now you have three means of dealing with legislation One is on urgency, one is through scrutiny committees and one is back to the traditional method of at least 30 days, and you have gone back in this case to what I think is a very important piece of legislation because it has a monetary effect on the people that this legislation is aimed at.
You would have thought it was common sense for this piece of legislation to go to a scrutiny committee where people could tell other members of parliament—and scrutiny committee covers people not just from the Darwin area and that is probably a good thing so people are not necessarily biased in their views about this particular piece of legislation.

It could have gone to those people and it could have been fully discussed and debated. Hansard could have written it up, it could be on the website and you can see what people say. That does not appear to have occurred. For a government that talks about open and transparency and it originally said that we will set up committees to deal with exactly this sort of legislation makes me feel quite sad because it has not stuck to its promise. That is one of the reasons I supported the vote of no confidence. Not that I like to do that but I felt that government had let me down in what it had promised and here is another example of that.

The government could do better. I realise this legislation is a form of taxation. It has to go through Treasury as a levy and it has to go through at this time, but there really is no excuse for not putting it through a scrutiny committee. A scrutiny committee takes one day to deal with this piece of legislation.

I will not support the bill on the grounds that one—it has not been scrutinised properly, two—I have not been able to see what alternatives could have been applied to try to change the issue about vacant blocks in the CBD, which I do not deny is not an important issue because it certainly can spoil the look of the CBD. I must admit I would have rather Barneson Boulevard, for instance, stop at McMinn and we made McMinn a four lane avenue to be balanced against the Esplanade. That would have made it a big improvement in the way the CBD looked, but the government decided to run through one of our green spots in Darwin and take it up to the blank wall at Woolies. That matter is gone. That project is nearly finished.

We can have different opinions about the state of Darwin CBD. You can comment on the vacant blocks but you can also comment when you walk past some of the shops in the CBD that are vacant and derelict. I do not think they do any good for the look of Darwin as well.

If the government is deciding to put a levy on vacant blocks that are not occupied, I would be asking for the same reason you are talking about activating our CBD to drive more foot traffic through our streets and into our businesses. If you walk down some parts of Mitchell Street down the far end, that will not be achieved, not because of the vacant blocks, but because people have closed their businesses down.

The government could have done more work on this; the government is using that reason for coming through at this late stage to avoid having a scrutiny committee. This important bill needed more scrutiny and more alternatives could have been put forward to see if this could have been achieved without putting a financial impasse on people when we know the economy is struggling at the present time.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): I will not be supporting this bill tonight. I am stunned that we are here debating it this afternoon. At 9 am this morning I came into Parliament House and printed out the Notice Paper — the agenda for the business of the Assembly. It is not contained in the agenda that I printed out at 9 am, so at some point between 9 am and 10 am — or beyond — the government decided to slip this in to do a bit of a slime act and put this in at the last minute. It is caggy, lacking transparency, and desperate I would say. The government does not want to have an open and frank conversation about their Property Activation Bill 2019 because of obvious reasons which have been laid out clearly by the Opposition Leader and the Member for Nelson.

This is not a positive move for the Northern Territory. Do you have any comprehension of just how difficult it is for businesses in Darwin at the moment? Obviously not. This will place more pressure than you would not believe on the businesses within the CBD of Darwin.

I do not even know the details of this bill. I have not had time for a briefing, it is something that interests me. Does it just pertain to Darwin or is it Alice Springs too? We have not had an opportunity to scrutinise it through the scrutiny committee, we have not had an opportunity to even get our heads around it because this government has decided to just shove it in at the last minute today with no scrutiny or proper, adequate opportunity for the members of this House to have a close look at what is being proposed.

I am unimpressed and I imagine you put offside just about every business in Darwin through this low, pathetic act of this desperate government today in Parliament House. For almost three years, we have heard this constant drone and whinge coming from government about the appalling antics and behaviour of the former Country Liberal Party government. I think you are neck and neck, probably even in front in many ways.
This is a really good example of how you have lowered yourself. I did not think when we were watching the former CLP government imploding and doing all sorts of outrageous things between 2012 and 2016, that you mob would be just as bad in so many ways. You have really excelled yourselves in going to the bottom of the pond. This is not in the best interest of the economy of the Northern Territory. I know you desperate to try to get yourselves out of the poo you have put yourselves in. You have sent us broke in a record period of time. The writing was on the wall, in fact, in your first budget in May 2017. I can remember saying in this very Chamber how it was like watching a bunch of kids in a lolly shop. You were out grabbing everything you could and spending like there was no tomorrow—reckless, irresponsible spending.

All we have heard over the last six months since you have had this budget repair strategy in your vernacular is that it is everyone else’s problem and fault, except yourselves. No one is buying it. In fact, listening to the Treasurer is like listening to a broken, cracked record—saying the same thing over and over again, regurgitation those same lines over and over again. People have tuned out.

But I tell you, tomorrow morning when they wake up they will be tuning in to some pretty horrific, horrendous news that you will be putting even more pressure on business in the CBD of Darwin. It is really scraping the bottom of the barrel here today, folks! I do not know the precise details of what you are putting forward, but I know it will be an impost and will probably mean the difference between opening and closing the doors for a lot of those businesses in the CBD in the future …

Ms Manison: You have no idea what this is about. You have not read it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I can hear the Treasurer saying something in defence of her despicable act tonight. Maybe it is time to be quiet and listen to someone else who owns a business and has owned a business for many years—almost 23 years now. I own a business in Darwin and I can tell you just how tough it is.

I can see the Treasurer smiling and thinking it is hilarious, but I tell you people are suffering. Individuals, families and communities are suffering in part because of the absolute incompetence of this government. I do not think the Territory has ever seen a more incompetent government than the Gunner Labor government—this hopeless …

Ms Lawler: The first six months of yours!

Mrs LAMBLEY: Here we have—isn’t it great to hear the voice of the minister for Infrastructure and Planning, the honourable who abuses people in the lifts of Parliament House …

Mrs LAMBLEY: Here she is having a go at me again. Usually, I cannot hear myself think …

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause, Member for Araluen.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Mrs LAMBLEY: … because the member continues to yell abuse across at me.

Ms FYLES: Standing Order 31.

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause, Member for Araluen.

Mrs LAMBLEY: This is the woman …

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Araluen! Pause!

Mrs LAMBLEY: … who abused a woman in a lift in Parliament House. She thinks that her behaviour …

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, pause!

Mrs LAMBLEY: Oh, we do not like that.

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: We have a point of order. I asked you three times. Please take your seat!

Ms FYLES: Standing Order 31. I ask the member to withdraw her comments.
Mrs LAMBLEY: Here we go. Which particular comment would you like me to withdraw, Attorney-General? Which comment do you not like to hear tonight?

Ms FYLES: Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 31. The member has made quite a number of offensive comments about the minister for Infrastructure. I ask her to withdraw it.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Abuse someone in a lift in Parliament House?

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, you have been asked to withdraw your comments.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, I will not withdraw because she did abuse a staff member in the lift of Parliament House. It is on the public record …

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause and resume your seat while I …

Mrs LAMBLEY: … and she has apologised for it, so why should I retract it?

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause and resume your seat while I seek advice from the Clerk, thank you.

Mrs Lambley: Oh, this is like groundhog day; try to shut me down.

Mrs Worden: You cannot do it without being insulting. That is all you have to do. She is slinging insults. Your go to mode is sling insults.

Mrs Lambley: Oh dear, you just do not want to hear the truth, do you?

Mrs Worden: How rude.

Mrs Lambley: It is not rude.

Mrs Worden: You are very rude, Member for Araluen.

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you for pausing, members. Upon the advice, I will ask the Member for Araluen to withdraw her comments.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Which comment are you referring to, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker?

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The one that was raised by the Leader of Government Business in regard to disparaging remarks against the Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I really do not understand. You will have to be more specific. I was referring to a matter that is on the public record, has been debate publicly. I heard the member on radio say that she apologised for abusing someone …

Madam ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: And we are in the middle of a debate in regard to legislation. I will …

Mrs LAMBLEY: … in a lift in Parliament House. I genuinely do not understand what I am suppose to withdraw. Am I supposed to withdraw a fact that is on the public record?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, I understand you have been asked to withdraw some comments you made in regard to …

Mrs Lambley: That is correct.

Madam SPEAKER: Does the member in question find the comments offensive?

Ms LAWLER: Yes, Madam Speaker. I find it offensive in the context of what we are talking about in this debate.

Madam SPEAKER: If the member finds something offensive, I request that you withdraw the comments.
Mrs LAMBLEY: This is like Groundhog Day, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: It may well be for you. If the member finds it offensive the convention is you withdraw the comment.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What if I disagree and think they are not offensive?

Madam SPEAKER: Then you leave the Chamber. If you wish to move a motion of dissent against my ruling …

Mrs LAMBLEY: I withdraw.

The Member for Drysdale can yell and scream all she wants. I can remember the last sittings, when the Member for Drysdale was screaming abuse at me across the Chamber because she did not like what I had to say. In this case, I am talking about the impact her government is having on businesses in the CBD of Darwin. Her government will contribute to the further demise of the economy of the Northern Territory and contribute to the hardship faced by businesses within the CBD, and she does not want to hear it.

You will be hearing it tomorrow loud and clear from the Property Council. The Property Council has already gone to some effort to say it does not support the introduction of an activation levy for the Darwin CBD, or any other new taxes for property owners in general.

Who is the Property Council of the Northern Territory? It is the group that represents people like the owners of property within …

Ms Lawler: Have you ever met with them?

Mrs LAMBLEY: See? The Member for Drysdale can say what she likes when she feels like it, and say rather disparaging comments to me, and I am supposed to suck it up, am I — because I am not a part of this government? I have met with the Property Council. I have been a member of parliament far longer than you, so I have been around the traps a lot longer. I dare say I have been far more effective than you have in my time as a member of parliament. At least I do not abuse people in lifts!

Madam SPEAKER: Withdraw that.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I withdraw.

I am absolutely disgusted in this government slipping through this piece of legislation that should have been debated from start to finish in a very open and transparent way. You are letting yourselves down, disappointing yourselves, putting more and more pressure on the businesses of the Northern Territory than you ever realised. You are incompetent fools and you should be absolute disgusted in yourselves!

Territorians are turned off; they are not listening to a word you say. It goes from bad to worse. You should hang your heads in shame.

VISITORS
Northern Territory Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, please pause so I can welcome some people to the gallery. We have representatives from the Northern Territory Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association. Welcome to Parliament House. You must have a conference in town—no? You have just come for the entertainment. Lovely. I hope you enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms LAWLER (Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics): Madam Speaker, I also welcome the ICPA. I have met with them at various times and know the wonderful work they do, often under difficult circumstances to ensure their children get a great education in the Northern Territory.
I support the Property Activation Bill and thank the Treasurer and her team for bringing this legislation before us today.

Creating a vibrant city in Darwin has been a core focus of the Gunner government and this bill will complement our efforts, and the efforts of others who want the CBD to be a place that Territorians and visitors are attracted to—a place they can explore, shop, eat and be entertained.

Thinking back, I think we are the only Northern Territory Government that has put the CBD front and centre and has a clear plan to ensure we have the most outstanding, vibrant, attractive capital city in Darwin.

The passing of this bill will lead to the implementation of the Property Activation Levy, which some in the business community have expressed their concern about.

To be clear, the levy will only apply to lots of land within the Darwin CBD that are either vacant or non-residential buildings that have an unoccupied ground level, with the levy applied at a rate of 2% for vacant lots and 1% for lots with unoccupied buildings, based on their unimproved capital values.

As the Treasurer has said before, this government hopes not to collect a single cent from the levy. This is not a revenue raising exercise. I will say that again: our government hopes not to collect a single cent from the levy. It is not about raising revenue. It is about making sure that we have a CBD that is attractive for people in the greater Darwin area who want to then come into the CBD. It is about benefitting people.

This is about having a vibrant capital city that we can all be proud of, and everyone doing their bit to showcase the Darwin we know and love. We want more people visiting our CBD and by taking this measure, a significant number of owners who already have activated their properties will feel the benefits as well. Importantly, the levy will not apply to properties that are already activated.

Over the past 18 months we have seen properties around the city making improvements after many years of neglect. The recent painting of Palm Court and replanting along Bennett Street is an example that it does not take a lot to make a big difference. I travel in most days on that road, past Bennett Street, and it is just lovely to be able to look at the flowers along there and see that neat and presentable building.

Since coming to office, the Gunner government has worked tirelessly to improve the look and feel of Darwin. Our efforts have included developments and trials to cool the CBD, which is on average between two degrees and six degrees hotter than Darwin Airport.

We see large planter boxes, new street trees, heat-resistant road surfaces, awnings and the Cavenagh Street shade structure—the Member for Port Darwin announced the work that is going to be done in Austin Lane. Not only do they aim to cool the city down but they also serve the dual purpose of improving the aesthetics of our CBD to make it more appealing to people wanting to live, visit and work in our city centre.

I notice now as I go along Cavenagh Street that the vines are taking shape, with their beautiful flowers providing an added boost to the area. Beyond this, we are progressing a number of other projects to help complement our CBD cooling efforts.

That includes $1.37m for the second stage of upgrades to Cavenagh Street and $19.4m for the State Square underground car park. The car park plays an important role in the master planning currently underway for the Civic and State Square precinct. By removing bitumen and sending parked cars underground, we can plan for a revitalised precinct to create cool, green spaces for the whole community including families, friends and tourists to enjoy through activated spaces, events and public gatherings. At the other end of the extreme weather Darwin experiences, the carpark will serve as a very effective cyclone shelter.

This project forms part of the $200m Darwin City Deal, and in partnership with the Commonwealth, City of Darwin and Charles Darwin University, a ten-year plan is focussing on improving the lives of local Territorians through job creation, economic growth, infrastructure investment, a revitalised urban centre, and a more vibrant and liveable city.

Front and centre to this will be the establishment of a new education and civic precinct, including a new university campus in the city, attracting more international students to Darwin, boosting retail activity and bringing vibrancy to the CBD.
The Garramilla Boulevard is well progressed with the first section open, providing an inviting entry into the city. This will not only provide better connectivity for drivers; it is also a great place for locals who like to walk or ride their bikes, with hundreds of new trees and shrubs, providing a beautiful green space into the city.

My aim in working with infrastructure is to have it like Gardens Hill Road and for the old Territorians and people who travel along Gardens Hill Road where you travel and you see those raintrees that have joined up and you travel down that road. I know it is a beautiful road. You always feel that lovely green, cool feeling when you are under the arch of trees. We hope to see Garramilla Boulevard like that one day. It will take time for the trees in that area to grow but that is what we want to see.

Our government is putting effort and money into beautifying the CBD. It is something our government has focused on more than any other government, particularly the last government. I cannot think of one initiative in the CBD that was done to make it an attractive place for people to want to go into it.

There is also the stone wall work that is being done. If you travel along Garramilla you will see stonework being done where porcellanite is being used instead of the bare Besser blocks. Porcellanite has been chosen specifically because it is the rock that you see on the Fannie Bay and Larrakeyah cliffs. The word garramilla in Larrakia refers to that white stony rock. It is another lovely feature that is going in on Garramilla Boulevard. It makes that a beautiful and special entrance to Darwin, something that we can all enjoy and be proud of.

We are delivering other great projects that will improve the look and feel of the city. We recently announced that Myilly Point will see stonework done where porcellanite is being used instead of the bare Besser blocks. Porcellanite has been chosen specifically because it is the rock that you see on the Fannie Bay and Larrakeyah cliffs. The word garramilla in Larrakia refers to that white stony rock. It is another lovely feature that is going in on Garramilla Boulevard. It makes that a beautiful and special entrance to Darwin, something that we can all enjoy and be proud of.

We are undertaking a number of significant projects to complement the work we are delivering in the CBD, including $9.8m being invested in the George Brown Botanical Gardens multipurpose visitor centre. This is a beautiful addition to the botanical gardens. There is $17m for public infrastructure, including a 200 metre skywalk to connect the luxury hotel to the Darwin Waterfront. All of the work that is continuing so that Garramilla Boulevard is the entry point to the CBD. There is fantastic street art.

There are so many projects that we have focused on as a government to make the CBD a vibrant area. We need to make sure that business owners in the CBD are working with us to support the ideas that we have for the area, so we can bolster the public amenity for those that are using it with the potential to further increase visitor activity.

Looking ahead, the central Darwin area plan is on public display. This will play an important role in providing long-term guidance for how our city centre may be used and developed. While all the projects I have mentioned will go a long way to improving the city’s appearance, they are also creating hundreds of jobs for Territorians.

Contractors such as GT Builders, Troppo Architects, Tomazos and PTM have all been working in the CBD. It is about local jobs and people coming into our city centre. Our government’s vision is to fully realise the potential of places like Austin Lane. These are places that can be opened to become a destination, rather than a hidden back road through the city. A place for activities such as alfresco dining or special events.

I am under no illusion that we are experiencing difficult times. The property sector is no exception. We are not trying to create a burden for property owners, we are simply asking them to take some small steps which will go a long way to benefiting local businesses and the whole community. With Darwin being the national gateway to 400 million people living to our north, we have an important role, not just for the Territory, but for the whole of Australia in creating a positive first impression to our northern neighbours.
The job is not easy when we have vacant blocks and under-used property working against these efforts. As many people across business have recognised, the best way we can lift the fortunes of the Territory is by all of us working together. The Territory government is doing its bit but the time has now come for others to step up. As in most cases, I want to pass my thanks and appreciation to all of those who have already done that, who have stepped up and are helping out.

We have already seen the work of some property owners to lift the standard of their buildings and land and looking at the opportunities for them and others and I hope this will be the catalyst for more. These efforts do not have to be elaborate, they can include removing weeds, developing green spaces, pop-up playgrounds or getting rid of obsolete concrete slabs and exposed footings and putting in grassed areas. There is significant flexibility in what actions can be taken and this process will reward Darwin’s creative side, which we hold in abundance.

This levy is not designed to be punitive. With grace periods and resources in place to support property owners, I am confident our CBD will be an even better place in a short period of time. As the Chief Minister has stated, we must get more people living, working and raising their families in Darwin and the way we do this is to create more jobs and make the CBD a more attractive place.

The bill before us takes us one step closer to achieving this and I commend this bill to the Assembly.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I thank the members who have contributed to this debate of the Revenue Bill and the Property Activation Bill.

We have put these through together because they are technically revenue bills which need to be in place by 1 July as part of budget proceedings. I want to stress a few points in relation to the Property Activation Bill. This is one bill and one levy from which we do not want to raise a single cent. This is about making sure we add to the activation and revitalisation of our fabulous Darwin City Central Business District.

This is an innovative approach, it is going to complement a raft of work which we have done on our investments into the Darwin CBD, including: the Darwin City Deal, the work around Cavenagh Street, Austin Lane, the State Square redevelopment, the underground carpark, the work that is going to happen to add to the connectivity down to the Darwin Waterfront, the Laneway Series, markets, the fabulous public street art initiative. These are things where we have seen some serious investment into the Darwin CBD because, my gosh, it needed a bit of activation. It was starting to looking a bit tired. We are a modern dynamic city, you need to invest in these places. The idea around the property activation work came through when we put out the Revenue Discussion Paper some time ago.

Could I put on the record, after listening to the Leader of the Opposition’s contribution, there will be no land tax. I say it again and again and I am saying it on the record, as I did at the budget breakfast with the property council. No land tax. We listen to the property developers and the owners and we listened to what they need in the Northern Territory and that is one thing that we give our commitment, no land tax.

What we have done, since the Revenue Discussion Paper, is in Budget 2018, we did release that we would be looking at this activation work, because we saw it as an important thing to do to complement the work we are making as a government, the council and the federal government, into CBD activation and revitalisation. I keep pointing to the case of one of the properties that we have in our Darwin CBD that has literally been a hole in the ground for two decades. When you drive in to the Darwin CBC and come in through Daly Street, a major entry point in to the CBD—is that what you want to make as our opening statement in to our city?

We are not asking for anything onerous here. We are asking for owners to do their part by simply making sure that they keep those vacant lots neat and tidy and look at some very basic activation. If they want to go further and if they want to look at some really serious activation such as playgrounds, garden landscaping, opening up the space for people to enjoy—by all means. That is fantastic. To look at markets or having some temporary type of activities there then that is fantastic. It could be as simple as having some presentable fencing and we have seen some sites in the city where people have been moving towards some really attractive activation around how they present their lot.

With regards to the shop fronts, it could be as simple as window coverings, it could be temporary displays, it could be working with a community group to get them in. We have tried to make this system as easy as possible. This is about the activation, the outcome. This is not about wanting to collect a cent of revenue here, this is about the greater long-term benefit to the city and it is innovative.
I have had conversations with the Property Council over the years. I have to applaud the Property Council executive because they sit at the table with you and you can have the hard conversation and robust debate. That is something we have done over the years.

At the end of the day what we are applying here will activate and make sure we have a presentable, beautiful Darwin CBD. That is what it is about. What was also very clear—the Member for Araluen’s contribution is that she had not read it—is that she did not listen last time parliament sat when we were speaking about this. She certainly was not listening in the budget before that. But that is life.

It is really important to look at the work done in the revenue bill. What we have in the Revenue Legislation Bill, which is a very important part of the budget, is introducing the changes that we are making to home ownership when it comes to having some fantastic home ownership incentives in the Northern Territory.

Our home ownership scheme is the most generous in the country which is a great initiative and an incentive for people to move and to stay in the Territory and to build their future and to build their own personal wealth and investments.

Since 2016 this government has helped over 2071 Territorians purchase their first home. About 75% of these new home owners reported that without the first home owner discount assistance they would not have been able to purchase their first home.

To place on the record, since we made those changes we have seen 852 successful purchases of homes in Darwin, 514 in Palmerston and 468 in Alice Springs. You have to say that is a significant result when you look at the population at a per capita basis, 852 in Darwin. What a great outcome in Alice Springs—160 in the Darwin rural area, 68 in Katherine, 11 in Tennant Creek, one in the Tiwi’s and two in Nhulunbuy.

Since 1 September 2016 first home buyers could apply for assistance of about $28 000. In February 2019 we increased the first home buyers assistance to a total of $48 000 with an extra $20 000 to the build bonus. One hundred and fifty three Territory first home owner discount applications have been received and 87 build bonus applications with 63 approved and 24 pending—54 of these were in Palmerston, 24 in Darwin, eight in the Darwin rural area and one in Alice Springs.

With this bill our incentives become more encouraging for people to get in to home ownership with the first home owner building or buying a new type of home to live it they could receive up to about $50 000 in incentives. The first home owner buying an established home can receive up to about $28 601 when it comes to those concessions and incentives. Territorians buying a new home up to around $38 601. There are a lot of fantastic changes here through this revenue bill, which is all about ensuring that we have our home ownership systems in place.

It is also an important economic stimulus at the moment for our tradies, our local builders, our construction companies, for their suppliers and the people in that industry. Construction supports many jobs and many families in the Northern Territory.

We are also giving certainty to those with gaming machines in those hotels. We got feedback loud and clear from Hospitality NT that they needed certainty with regards to the collections from those machines. There is no doubt that, for them, they found that the changes had meant some changes in the valuations of their businesses. We listened and we took action. Their priority is investing in local jobs and their businesses so they can continue to grow. Hospitality is a very important part of the Northern Territory economy.

We listened to the feedback and again I thank Hospitality NT for their advocacy. They are another organisation that you can get around the table and have a really frank conversation with them no matter how difficult it is. They are always incredibly professional and very good people to work with.

I thank the very hardworking staff of Treasury who have done quite a lot of work through this over the last few years, whether it be through the revenue discussion paper and that journey, through to putting together an innovative piece of legislation targeted at activating the Darwin CBD to ensure it is a modern, dynamic city whilst recognising that there are some businesses out there doing it tough.

We do not want to put pressure on developers to put forward the wrong type of development. We want quality development particularly when you look at the size of the Darwin CBD. It is a peninsula. We want to make sure that we get quality, long-term developmental outcomes for the Northern Territory. If that lot is going to
sit there vacant, for decades in some cases, then you have a responsibility to make sure that it is presentable, an active part of our CBD and it fits in with our fabulous Darwin CBD.

Ms FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move that on the question of the second third reading, that these cognate bills be separated so that a vote can be taken on each bill separately.

Motion agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill be moved.

Motion agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the Property Activation Bill 2019 be approved.

The Assembly divided.

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Motion agreed to, bill read a second time.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Ms LAWLER: It is a pleasure to stand to do an adjournment on two amazing people in the electorate of Drysdale. I had two amazing people who both received Order of Australia medals in the Queen’s Birthday Honours. It probably is a record having two people in an electorate to get Order of Australia medals and our community is very proud of our two well-deserving Territorians that live in Palmerston and in the electorate of Drysdale,

In no alphabetic order, I will first talk about Anne Brown. Anne lives in Driver and is one of our very much-love seniors who works hard and advocates for seniors in Palmerston, and the rural area actually. She is one of those lovely people who works so hard for the community. Anne runs the croquet club in Palmerston and is also one of the key members on the Palmerston 50+ Club. She is on the Palmerston Rural Advisory Group and is always involved with the seniors’ fortnight, which is coming up very soon.

I congratulate Anne very much and say my heartfelt thanks for all you do as a much-loved member of our community. People like you volunteer your time and do so much for other people. You were shocked, I guess, to receive the award, but we are all very proud of you, Anne. As I said, thank you for all the work you do for our community.

Both of our Order of Australia Medal recipients had both been Citizens of the Year in the past in Palmerston—great credentials.
The second person is Anita Newman. Anita is a teacher at Palmerston College. Anita always works so hard with, often, the disengaged kids. She has such a lovely relationship. You see her with the students at Palmerston—they all just look up to her and respect her so much. She works at the Year 10 to 12 campus of Palmerston College.

One of the main, big work Anita volunteers to do is she works with the Air Force Cadets. She is the leader of the Air Force Cadets. You see her in her uniform looking fabulous. The way she has those older cadets all so proud, with great discipline is terrific. The cadets are always at the Palmerston Anzac Day ceremony. You see them marching. They are a fabulous group. Anita works tirelessly with them.

The Member for Brennan and I always go to the Palmerston College Anzac Day ceremony. It is truly a very professional ceremony. This year we had Tanya Plibersek there. I think the Chief Minister was there, as was the Member for Solomon. There was a big crowd there. Oh, and the Administration I think was even there this year—a really big crowd. Everybody knows it is the best ceremony in town out of all the schools, done very professionally. Anita organises the catafalque party as well. She does a fabulous job. She is a volunteer as well with the Northern Territory Emergency Services. I was thinking back to the Commonwealth Games. She was a baton carrier for the Commonwealth Games.

I am very proud of our two latest Order of Australia Medal recipients in the Drysdale electorate, Anita Newman and Anne Brown who are truly our local heroes. They are people who work tirelessly for our community and volunteer so much of their time and effort. Well done to Anita and Anne. I am very proud of you.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have talked in this Assembly a number of times about the treatment of whistleblowers in Australia. In fact, the first time I spoke about whistleblowers was on the second night of the first sittings for this Thirteenth Assembly, October 2016. In each sittings period since then I have at least spoken in adjournment once about this subject.

With the recent focus on the activities of the Federal Police enacting raids to uncover the sources of journalists who have published stories purportedly that endanger national security, it is a good time to revisit the consequences for journalists and their sources who publish stories that embarrass the government.

First, I will provide an update to the cases of Richard Boyle, who is the Adelaide public servant who disclosed the activities of the Adelaide Debt Recovery Unit for the Australian Taxation Office and the prosecution of Witness K and Bernard Collaery for a breach of the Intelligence Services Act 2001—purportedly.

I would not be surprised if people in this Chamber had not heard anything about Witness K and Bernard Collaery, as most of you may recall, where charged with communicating information about a secret spy operation in Timor Leste in 2004 which gave Australia information about negotiations for an oil treaty. Attorney-General Christian Porter applied to use secret documents to prosecute the pair in a 28 February 2019 hearing in Canberra.

This particular case has been alarming. The government is prosecuting without any public scrutiny and is using secret documents that the defence’s legal team cannot access. As New South Wales Labor MP Paul Lynch told the New South Wales parliament:

*These prosecutions are fundamentally misconceived and are wrong in principle. The prosecution wants as much of the case as possible heard in secret.*

If this is the case, then because of the lack of activity the media is playing along with the government’s wish for no public scrutiny. While the prosecution is being held in secret, media inaction and there being few politicians talking about the case—I think to date there are three of us talking about it. Independent member Andrew Wilkie in the federal parliament, New South Wales Labor MP Mr Paul Lynch, and myself. The government may get away with hiding this gross misuse of an Australian intelligence agency.

While Witness K and Bernard Collaery face a two-year maximum gaol term for providing information about the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, the Australian Taxation Office whistleblower Richard Boyle faces an astonishing maximum term of 161 years if found guilty. Richard Boyle, as some of you may recall as I have mentioned him previously. He is an Adelaide public servant who disclosed the activities of the Australian Taxation Office Adelaide debt recovery unit. He was remanded on bail to face court on 30 June—in ten days. Thankfully he intends to plead not guilty and he will see this case through.

The punishing impact of speaking out to expose the toxic culture and the abuse of power in the ATO has already been felt by Mr Boyle. He has lost his job, he has developed stress-related heart issues, he is
suffering from insomnia, had a nervous breakdown and he continues to struggle with depression. Yet, as he as stated, if people do not speak up about wrongdoing, how are we going to change things in this country?

If we remain silent in the face of wrongdoing, we allow the systemic flourishing of these practices. As in most of the western world post-9/11, secrecy laws aimed at protecting us from terrorism have dramatically expanded. In the aftermath of the 2002 Bali Bombing the Australian intelligence community, the wider community and the media were a catalyst for an expanded national security structure to counter terrorism, as it should to ensure the safety of all Australians.

The budget for the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation has risen by 250 per cent between 2005 and 2015. The other services within the intelligence community have had similar increases in budget and personnel. The problem is that these increases in expenditure and expansion of government agencies in response to the greater risk of terrorism also bring a real threat to civil liberties, as we have seen recently.

Both Liberal and Labor governments have put in place legislation that restricts freedom of speech and increases electronic surveillance. The other problem with all of this is that these laws become the new normal and are hard to reverse. The National Security Legislation Amendment (Espionage and Foreign Interference) Act 2018 expanded the meaning of national security, so much so that it includes political, military and economic relations with other countries. This is quite broad as it covers just about anything. It resulted in a broadening of what could considered a crime, for example if journalists reported on it and with greater penalties, as we have seen recently.

Over a raft of bills and amendments the government has managed to put in place for national security just about anything that can be classified as secret. In brief, the freedom of the press and protection of whistleblowers can be undermined. Section 70 of the Commonwealth Crimes Act makes it an offence punishable by up to two years in jail for a serving or a former public servant to reveal any information they know because of the role they filled.

The 2015 metadata law which compels telecommunications companies to keep all metadata for two years that can be accessed by a number of government departments without a warrant. There were some very weak whistleblower protection laws. There are incredibly huge loopholes that have been completely taken advantage of recently.

While it is easy for the Prime Minister and his ministers to say that no one is above the law—and they are right, no one is above the law—these are the politicians who have created the legal regime to repress government accountability and punish those who attempt to expose wrongdoing.

There is little doubt that this government is becoming more zealous in its readiness to prosecute those who expose government misconduct. Whistleblowers increasingly risk jail time even if they are revealing actual wrongdoing by government agencies, spying on an ally, abuse of refugees, improper conduct in a war zone as examples.

Annika Smethurst was subjected to hours of the AFP going through her home and her things—her cookbooks, bedroom, underwear drawer—all under the guise of national security. The timing of the raid was a bit strange. Surely, if national security was under a real threat, the AFP would not wait a year to raid her. It took a year for them to raid her and go through it all.

Literally, 24 hours later the ABC head office was raided, again under the guise of national security. The raid on the ABC headquarters in Sydney was one of the most extensive search warrants ever issued in Australia. The aim was to get any document related to the series of stories called the ‘Afghan files’; stories that were actually aired two years ago. Nine hours after they had started, the AFP collected 9214 documents.

David McBride was arrested last September under the Defence Act for releasing documents while he was a member of the Defence Force. His trial will be held in secret and anyone who reports on it outside the courtroom can be arrested. Mr McBride, speaking out before his trial while he still can, obviously without fear of further arrest, said that the government is using national security laws to classify those who speak out when they see government wrongdoing as spies and a threat to national security.

There is a place for keeping certain information secret, especially in relation to information that reveals the identity of operatives, endangers or protects lives, and that which would damage our relationship with intelligence sharing partners. Clearly there is a tension highlighted by the outcry over the recent raids and the treatment of whistleblowers which shows that we have the balance wrong.
George Williams, a constitutional lawyer and Dean of the law school at the University of New South Wales has said this:

*Australia is the only democracy in the world that does not protect free speech and freedom of the press through a charter or bill of rights.*

Australia is the only democracy without a national bill of rights. Because of this, there has been a gradual erosion of protection and rights of all Australians through counter-terrorism laws, data retention laws and incredibly weak whistleblower laws. How have we allowed this to happen in this country? It is time that we had a bill of rights, now more than ever.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the work and the people involved in the Marrakai Progress Association. As members would know, Marrakai is down towards Corroboree Billabong, down the Arnhem Highway. I hope that the tender for improvements to the Arnhem Highway, which I believe closed in May, gets let very soon and we can get that work underway as it has been promised in this year’s budget and last year’s budget. Hopefully the work will be done this year.

Marrakai people are great people. Some of them are farmers, some of them are just family people, some work within the local business community at the hotel, do river cruises and fishing cruises, and I had the good fortune to go to the AGM of the Marrakai Progress Association a couple of weeks ago and I wanted to put on the record the good work they are doing out there because people see it as a place you go fishing, or visit that beautiful rock carving by that Japanese artist, or go for a cruise on the billabong.

What the Marrakai Progress Association has done in the last couple of years apart from bringing the community together, is put on an enormous amount of functions and activities, not only for the young children but also for the adults and everyone there. They look after each other and care for each other, particularly in times of need, for example, when the flood plains flood and people are stuck they have done boat runs from the Marrakai side to the Humpty Doo side to do food drops, get medicines at pharmacies for people who need it.

What they have done in the last 12 months, they have had a school holiday program which involved fun-runs and activities for the children, Christmas light tour, Christmas party for the community, they have discos for the students every term, they do a function Welcome to the Wet! They have a bush banquet which is a progressive dinner which is hugely successful, there is corroboree billabong tours, general meetings, and they had an auction for Gavin Howie, the turf farmer who lost his legs in a tragic accident but is on the road to recovery. They raised an enormous amount of money to help towards that family. They have Superdraw weekly — in one year from their meat trays and raffles from their local corroboree pub, they raised $25,000 which goes towards their coffers which they use to put on all these functions.

They launched their website, they have Facebook, they promote their sponsors, they have sub-committees, they worked with me and the NT Government to get disused bus shelters to be relocated. It took a while, but I thank the past minister for infrastructure, Nicole Manison and current minister, Eva Lawler. The bus shelters have been relocated and they are putting particular locations, particularly in the wet season.

They put in for grants for community benefits and they have been successful. They have improved the volunteer fire shed, Bushfires Council. They are continually active, they do a community survey and they have their own newsletter, the Marrakai Mail. In the last couple of months the Baptist Bush Church in Humpty Doo do food drop parcels so people who need a bit of a leg-up—the Baptist Church has taken their food parcels to Marrakai like they do in Humpty Doo.

They work with the volunteer fire brigade as well. They do an enormous amount of work, they are very dedicated and want to make sure things work and everyone is involved the best they can, or want to. If you do not want to be involved then you do not have to, that is their choice. They are looking to continually progress different events, try and implement a five-year strategic plan for the community and area, and to have a vision for what is best for that community given what is involved — the people, small industries, tourism, fishing, hunting.

It was a big thanks to the outgoing committee who pulled a lot together over the last year. Thanks to John Showfield, Kelly Johnson, Katie Welchesky, Peter and Linda Shapid, Frank Corley. Big thanks from the members and the community for the work that you have done over the past year or longer. Sometimes it is financial contribution, sometimes it is just being there to help sell the tickets at the pub on a Friday night.
The new committee coming in — and I say congratulations to them and thank you for putting your name forward. It is interesting that I have been to lots of AGMs for lots of associations—sporting or recreational—and people struggle to get people to nominate, not like the Marrakai Progress Association. They had people all organised, ready to put their hand up to do their bit for the community.

Thank you to president, Ben Floyd, vice president, Kelly Johnson, secretary, Sonya Newman, treasurer Katie Welchesky, public officer, Kirsten Thompson, committee member, Frank Corley, and (inaudible) Robyn Hill. Thank you for putting your name up and continuing to care for your community and progress.

Marrakai is a good place. One thing I would like to put on record, is that the government needs to look at the Marrakai Track and the road to Point Stuart, they are both dirt roads, particularly the Marrakai Track, because sometimes that is the only track they can use to get out from corroboree and Marrakai when the flood plains from the Adelaide river get sealed.

That is something I will take up with government over the next little while. That is two key risks I can see, and we need to start to look to seal those roads to put in culvert crossovers and bridges. I am sure the Marrakai Progress Association is well-aware of that as well and will continue to lobby government as well. Congratulations to the Marrakai Progress Association. I look forward to working and visiting you out there in the very near future again.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank many people, particularly those in Territory Families, who responded with generosity and a strong sense of community to assist those Territorians affected in Tropical Cyclone Trevor.

Cyclone Trevor trigger the largest multiple-community evacuation undertaken in the history of the Northern Territory. More than 2250 people were evacuated by air/bus transport from the communities of Borroloola, Numbulwar, Ngukurr, Umbakumba, Angurugu, (inaudible), Robinson River and Police Lagoon, while a further 1100 people evacuated by road. Most of those went to Darwin, Katherine and Tennant Creek, with some people crossing into Queensland and others going to Nhulunbuy.

Not only was this the largest evacuation since Cyclone Tracy, but highly complex due to the geographic dispersal of our population and unfolding emergency situation that changed, and continued to change, over the course of the week before the cyclone crossed the Territory coast.

However, on Wednesday, 20 March, the decision had been made to start the process of evacuating affected communities. By the mid-evening, the Territory Families welfare group was planning to receive 2100 evacuees with three flights arriving overnight from Groote Eylandt and from 339 people spending the night on the Marrara indoor stadium, which was initially set up as a reception centre managed by Territory Families staff and Red Cross.

Concurrently, work had begun to open up the previously evacuation centre at the Foskey Pavilion, Darwin Showgrounds and related pavilions, which entailed the uplift of the containers with the supplies and bedding, as well as the installation of ablutions and showers to cater for the expected numbers of evacuees.

The response from local contractors was immediately and timely and we are most grateful for those who went beyond the call, working around the clock to get the centres ready.

On Thursday, the Katherine Showgrounds was also set up as an evacuation centre managed by Territory Families and Red Cross, following evacuations from communities of Ngukurr, Umbakumba and Numbulwar. Expecting an initial 300 people, some 921 people registered at the evacuation centre over the course of the emergency.

Others had self-evacuated to Tennant Creek as flooding threatened the communities of Corella Creek and surrounding outstations. Territory Families welfare group mustered staff from the local office in Alice Springs and had a full evacuation set up in Tennant Creek High School gymnasium within 12 hours.

The welfare group partners provided a wide range of services into the evacuation centres including counselling, interpreter services, financial services, food, clothing and other human services. The Territory welfare group partners include: Australian Red Cross, Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, Foodbank NT, ESA, NT Council of Churches, Department of Tourism and Culture, Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development, Department of the Attorney-General and Justice—in particular Correctional Services, and Department of Human Services from the federal government.
Other organisations included the Departments of Education and Local Government, Save the Children, Sommerville Community Services and CatholicCare provided hundreds of hours of support in the evacuation centres, organising a range of services from food and personal supplies, care and counselling services, to education programs and activities for the children.

There were also many businesses that supplied services such as catering and security. I have to say the Department of Defence had a huge role in the logistics and we thank them very much.

While there were at least 115 Territory Families employees managing the evacuation centres and repatriation of evacuees with partner Red Cross, there were volunteers from many government agencies and over 200 non-government employees and volunteers who also actively supported evacuees.

Behind the scenes was a 24-hour incident management team based at Darwin Plaza and Territory Families staff based in the Northern Territory Police-led emergency operations centres in Darwin and Alice Springs.

I take the time to mention a few people from my department who were key directors and leads in the Territory Families welfare group:

- at the Marrara Indoor Stadium, Judith Dowling and Lesley Merrett, with first time acting manager Brendan Boyce, who did an amazing job
- at Foskey’s Pavillion, Jane Burton, Kirsten Kelly and Jo Huyben were the leaders there
- at the Katherine Showgrounds, Meg Geritz, Bridgitte Atkinson and Victoria Dalgliesh showed really strong leadership under difficult circumstances, particularly when they got three times the number of people they were expecting
- Tennant Creek High School, Barb Kelly and Narene Coleman
- at Nhulunbuy, Erin Quinlan, Sasha Robinson and the Immediate Relieve Payment team who were mobilised and in communities ready to help people apply for grants and immediately activate debit cards on their return home.

Territory Families also stood up welfare group leaders with the high experienced professionals Karen Broadfoot and Gabby Brown, supported by Leanne Taylor, who provided 24-hour coordination of the effort.

Affectionately dubbed the mayor of Marrara, John Withers from the Department of Tourism, Sport and Culture, and the facility manager for sports infrastructure, opened the Marrara Indoor Stadium and cared for its temporary residents as if it were his own home. There were huge welcome signs out the front.

Evacuation centres were only one part of the Territory Families’ emergency response. The welfare group also provided $1.5m in recovery and hardship payments to evacuees. Teams were established and Territory Families staff travelled to communities to process applications on the spot and issue payment cards. This was the first time that a debit card system has been used. It was highly effective and worked efficiently.

The teams completed more than 1750 applications and 1615 cards for about 3350 people. Teams were flying into and between communities over two weeks, timing the payments to coincide with the return of families to community so that the first step to recovery could be to stock up on food and essentials.

The response from the Northern Territory community and businesses was, without a doubt, warmly welcoming to Territorians evacuated from remote communities and practically helpful, with the provision of offers of support and donation. These included everything from pizzas to personal items to sporting equipment. We had businesses like bowling clubs ringing up to offer free sessions. It was quite extraordinary and there was a lot coming through my own phone as well.

While I hope that we do not face similar category 5 tropical storms in the near future, the reality is that emergencies and natural disasters are increasingly more frequent and intense. We are more impacted by the interconnectedness between events, people and places globally. We are increasingly learning from the collective experience of emergency responders and volunteers.

An after action review Tropical Cyclone Trevor is being done for the Territory Families welfare group to ensure we continue to improve our responses. The scale and urgency of the emergency evacuation and repatriation event was unparalleled in the Northern Territory. The social impact should not be underestimated for the
3287 who were evacuated out of community in the face of an extremely dangerous weather event was minimised by the professional and caring humanitarian-led evacuation and repatriation response, in which Territory Families played an important role.

In closing I thank the people, businesses, local governments and the affected communities. It is an area that Territory Families is proud to lead through welfare coordination. We are improving when we do it. There has been a lot of work by a lot of people. Under the leadership of our CEO Ken Davies, I am proud to be the minister. We will continue to face these events.

For the 3350 people who evacuated—thank you for setting a new benchmark in community resilience.

**Ms AH Kit (Karama):** Madam Speaker, there are a few things that I wanted to mention in the House tonight. I will start with the terrible and senseless tragedy that occurred on 4 June. We had the lovely condolence motion in the House this morning. I echo the sentiments.

It was an unfathomable event that occurred here in Darwin. I was out to dinner for my birthday with my family at that time and it was just a huge stark contrast being able to enjoy myself with my family and watching the TV and the event unfold and knowing that other families would be going through something at the opposite end of the scale. I send my deepest condolences to the families and friends of those victims, to the witnesses on the night, the first responders and to all those who really came together as good Darwinites and Territorians do.

I give a huge shout-out to Hannah Spick from Good Dog Therapy. Hannah replied to my Facebook post expressing my sentiments about this senseless tragedy and straight away Hannah, with her beautiful nature, offered the help of her therapy dogs Roxy and Quinton to visit my schools knowing that there would be a lot of reverberating impact.

It was lovely to see people come together so I put the offer out to my schools and I am pleased to say that two of them took it up and there were glowing reviews. If you get a chance and you want to contact Hannah from Good Dog Therapy, I can highly recommend Roxy and Quinton. Quinton is still in training at the moment but if you see the size of this beautiful labrador you would not guess. They are so well trained and they bring so much joy to so many people. Thank you again Hannah and to Roxy and Quinton.

In regards to the RSPCA Million Paws Walk, it was another fantastic event held on Sunday 19 May in the water gardens. This year, I was fortunate to have a little helper. I took my nephew Robbie with me and once again, volunteered to pick up a dog from the RSPCA shelter in the hope of finding her a forever home.

My nephew and I visited the RSPCA, we met Lady, picked her up, took her to the event and as we sadly dropped her back to the shelter knowing that her day of fun was over, we were overjoyed to receive a text message advising that Lady had indeed found a family that were going to take her onboard. It is one of the many lovely stories that comes out of the RSPCA Million Paws Walk. More than $20,300 was raised to continue their important fight against animal cruelty.

To Shae, Taylor and all of your fantastic team and board, please keep up the important work. We really appreciate what you do and you make a huge impact and difference in our community.

I was able to join the Karama Library and the Knit & Natters group to host a Biggest Morning Tea on 3 June in the Karama Library. We had more than 70 people attend. The library was quite noisy for a place that is supposed to be nice and quiet. It was fantastic to see everybody get on board, come together, have a wonderful time and raise close to $1100 for the NT Cancer Council. To Stacey and her team in the library and to all the Knit & Natters and everyone who attended and to centre management for your lovely donation, thank you. I know that cancer is an issue close to many of our hearts and I am sure that our donation will go a fair way to bringing some improvement there.

I put on the record my congratulations and thanks to the Greek community and specifically the Greek Glenti organising committee for another wonderful Glenti. It is always a tough decision to figure out what you are going to do over a long weekend so if you are in Darwin and you missed out on the Glenti, I want to encourage you to get there next year.

I took the opportunity again to join the Greek ladies at the Greek Hall. Last year, I was learning how to roll the keftede so this year, I took the opportunity to learn how to make filla. It was fantastic and I really liked the opportunity and they tasted amazing. Thank you to Charlie and Katie Kathopolous and the rest of the Darwin
Olympic sporting club for letting me tag along and volunteer at your stall again. I hope you made a lot of money because we were very busy in the short amount of time I was there.

Celebrating any culture in the Territory is heart-warming and should be celebrated. As soon as I met the Darwin Olympic group, they have taken me into the fold and welcomed me with open arms. They do so much for our community. It is always a pleasure to keep supporting them.

On that note, Darwin Olympic is facing off against Uni Azzurri on Tuesday night at the Darwin Football Stadium. This will be the NT Final for the FFA Cup with the winner progressing to the round 32. I am sure the Member for Arnhem will have more details on this. As I understand, out of the winners between Azzurri and Olympic, the winner will progress to the next stage where they will get to compete against the top teams from other states as well as the 10 Hyundai A-league clubs joining the competition.

I do not want to jinx it, but good luck to Darwin Olympic. I look forward to cheering you on from the sidelines on Tuesday.

I want to mention two things that are coming up in the next couple of weeks. This is week nine, so there is only another week left of school. I know everyone is excited about school holidays, particularly students and teaching staff. I checked the other day and saw that the Office of Youth Affairs has uploaded the school holiday programs. If you are looking for something to do, there are so many free activities throughout the Territory. The Northern Territory Government’s Office of Youth Affairs funds a lot of those.

Visit www.youth.nt.gov.au and you will see everything you need to go forward. We also have a number of City of Darwin Library and City of Palmerston Library programs uploaded. We are fortunate in Karama to have a functioning library. If any kids in our local area are bored, chances are you will be in the area anyway, so come to the library. Stacey and her team are doing a wonderful job to organise fun events. I am looking forward to that.

We have NAIDOC Week celebrations in the next couple of weeks. NAIDOC is the one week a year where national celebrations occur, usually at the same time, to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and achievements. It is a celebration that needs to be had in partnership with the wider community. As a former NAIDOC Week Chairperson, there is no point our mob celebrating our things our own way behind closed doors. It is about reconciliation, education and spreading the love.

To all those frantically finding your last-minute resources, volunteers and money to organise your events, I wish you the best of luck. To all those who are gearing up for NAIDOC or have not thought about it, I encourage you to get out and about. Go to the events, join the marches and find out what the issues of the day are.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I echo the Member for Karama’s sentiments in wishing Darwin Olympic all the best for their game. I played for them one year, so I feel an allegiance to the them. My niece now plays for them at Malak grounds, so I am happy to support them and the next generation of Territory footballers.

I have a lot to say, as always. I have to smash it into one night. Normally I get six nights to talk about my electorate.

I start by wishing my father, Mick Uibo, a happy birthday today. He is not at his milestone decade yet, but he is only a couple of years off a big one. He is very supportive—a bit of a backbone for our family. He is always listening, watching and keeping updated as my unofficial media monitor. He lets me know things, even though I have people who help me do that as a job. He loves to do that as my dad. Thank you, dad, for your support, and happy birthday.

It was my partner Corey’s birthday last week, so happy birthday to him. I have missed his birthday for the last two years in a row because I sat on the Estimates Committee, and attending the Estimates Committee hearing this week meant I got five hours with Corey on his birthday. I cooked a really nice birthday dinner with about 10 different vegetables, which he hates, but he got all the meat and potato. Happy birthday to Corey. I thank him for all his support to me in my role.

I thank and appreciate each of my departments for their hard work and preparation leading up to the estimates hearing. I had my hearing on Monday, my first time as minister. I thank the Departments of Education, Trade, Business and Innovation, Workforce Training and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs for all the hard work. Our public servants do an amazing job, particularly around estimates, to have all that information at hand to allow
ministers and government to look at the great work they are doing, as well as the areas we are looking to improve across the Territory in having accountability.

I thank the Estimates Committee. I actually quite miss being on the committee. A lot of people do not like the Estimates Committee, but I enjoyed my time on the committee. I appreciate the amount of time taken and the hard work it is to be an Estimates Committee member. Thank you to the committee members and the Department of the Legislative Assembly for their hard work in the 60 hours and the lead-up to Estimates Committee hearings and the work that has been done since to have the committee members send their reports to the House today. Thank you to my ministerial office and my electorate office for their support during my time in estimates.

We have had 16 emerging leaders from across the Northern Territory in the First Circles Program and we had a presentation from the First Circles members to cabinet a couple of weeks ago; I acknowledge the hard work of the First Circles members and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs for their support for members to be able to present to my ministerial colleagues on the different projects and focus areas that each of our 16 First Circles members across the NT—eight from the Top End and eight from central—have been working on the past year. Well done to the First Circles members, and I encourage the new crop of applications for First Circles membership which is really a great program.

Last month we held, here in Darwin, the National Summit for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers. It is the first time that it has come to the Territory and it was a great testament to not only NT education, but our quality teachers and leaders here in the NT who support our students and communities. It was great to have a national forum and summit.

For me, one of the most exciting parts of this particular summit that was held here is that our participants who came from all areas of Australia, did not just stay in Darwin, they travelled and visited Katherine and school sites, went to Gunbalanya and Jabiru so it was great that we had highly accomplished lead teachers on a national level visiting our schools and seeing what education is like—our challenges and our successes in the NT. Well done on a great summit.

Towards my electorate now, I acknowledge Johnny Warrkatja who has been recognised as an award winning, he is an artist from the community of Gapuwiyak, also known as Lake Evella. He won the Kestin Indigenous Illustrator Award across Australia and I congratulate him.

The Little Birds Day, a book, was launched on 25 April this year. Johnny flew to Sydney to launch his illustrated book. It was well-received by teachers and children alike. Johnny is the first recipient of the Kestin Indigenous Illustrator Award, which came with a $10 000 award, a mentorship at Agabala Books and a deal to illustrate a picture book written by renowned author, Sally Morgan.

The story is just that— the day in a life of little bird, a book aimed at 3-year-olds and up. I seek leave to table some illustrations by Johnny.

Leave granted.

Ms UIBO: There are some beautiful illustrations and the book is now available for purchase. At the recent community cabinet held in Gapuwiyak from the 21–30 May, I had the pleasure of being able to host my ministerial colleagues and senior officials of various agencies in and around Gapuwiyak and the homelands. Johnny’s book is now available to buy at the Gapuwiyak Cultural and Arts Centre and a couple of ministers bought the book — I know Minister Lawler and Minister Moss purchased the book as well as myself. I have a copy in my electorate office so people can come into the office and see Johnny’s book and I congratulate him.

Community cabinet was fantastic, there was a brilliant vibe at the Gapuwiyak community. The chief minister was out umpiring a football game, under the brand new lights which was received under our remote ovals upgrades and infrastructure. It has really changed the way sport is accessed in Gapuwiyak community and the surrounding homelands. It was a fantastic way to finish off our couple of days in Gapuwiyak with that football match. It was a bit of excitement seeing the Chief Minister run around and help umpire the game. Well done to the Chief.

We also had the privilege to visit Baniyala homelands and sign the Gove Peninsula local decision-making statement of intent. That was very powerful, so it was a great couple of days in northeast Arnhem Land, particularly some of those areas in my electorate.
Queen’s Birthday weekend is always jam-packed across the Northern Territory. I had the privilege and the pleasure of being a local member for the Barunga Festival which is an amazing event. Over 4000 people each year visit and camp in the community.

It started on Friday, 7 June with the official opening of the Barunga oval lights—a $650 000 project by the Northern Territory Labor government in supporting the Roper Gulf Regional Council and project managing this project. The previous government committed to it but they put no money towards this project. I am very happy after three years of advocating. Thank you to my ministerial colleagues, in particular minister Moss and her office. I must say a big thanks to Stephen Nugent for his hard work with me always hassling over the Barunga oval lights.

Thank you, Stephen, for your advocacy in minister Moss’s office and making sure this project happen. I officially switched the lights on with Deputy Mayor Helen Lee, who is a Barunga community advocate and is very proud to hold that role. We switched on the lights together and they were bright and brilliant for the rest of the festival. That will be a game changer in sport and access in that part of the electorate.

Mudbilli band and Yiilla Band who played at Barunga Festival were top quality performances and artists from Numbulwar, Groote Eylandt and Ngukurr. I want to say a big shout out to Yiilla Band which has not performed for nearly 10 years. At Barunga Festival it was great to see their comeback. Grant Mudgubala, my cousin, who is the lead singer, is still as professional and talented as ever.

Yesterday, the Angurugu community hosted the local decision making implementation plan signing which is part of our government’s commitment to local decision making. Congratulations to the Anindilyakwa Land Council and the associated organisation on Groote and our government agencies in the next step in local decision making in the 10-year local decision making Anindilyakwa-led plan on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island in the Groote Eylandt Archipelago.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, I too take the opportunity in an adjournment to talk about the long weekend in Central Australia. If you love camping, motor sports and a good game of footie, you are in for a great weekend in Central Australia.

The Queen’s Birthday long weekend in Central Australia is, of course, home to the Finke Desert Race and the Aputula Sports Carnival—a great weekend all round where you can set yourself up along the track, watch some quality motor sports racing in the beautiful Central Australian landscape and watch some quality footie.

I place on record the outstanding work from a number of communities across the Northern Territory who make the long journey every year to come to the Aputula Sports Community Carnival. They are the mighty Mutitjulu Cats, the strong Aputula Crows, the Yuendumu Magpies, the Laramba Roos, Ltyentyere Apurte Eagles, Nyirripi Demons, Mimili Blues and Pukatja from the APY Lands and the Lajamanu Swans. The Lajamanu Swans were the successful champions of this year’s 2019 Aputula Sports Carnival. Congratulations on a fantastic effort.

While we are talking about that, we also acknowledge the great work with the women’s softball competitions—always out there playing a good game. It is more than just footie when we are talking about these carnivals. It is about sportsmanship, families making long journeys across Central Australia to come and see one another, to catch up on things and, of course, share in some fantastic games of football—footie where you are not running around on beautiful soft ovals, you are out on the hard beaten track playing quality games, soldiering on to represent your community. Tonight is an opportunity to say thank you to those remote communities for that work. The level of pride we see is great. Busloads of community members make that journey every year to support their communities.

It was outstanding that we had the community of Lajamanu make the trip to Finke—Aputula—one of the most remote communities close to the South Australian border. To the Lajamanu mob and the Laramba mob, thank you for making the trip as well as all the other teams. It was fantastic.

I also thank the MacDonnell Regional Council, the Aputula Aboriginal Corporation and store and CatholicCare in Finke—Aputula—for their ongoing support of these events to make sure that they are successful now and into the future. Myself and my team went down for the long weekend and in one day, we cooked a thousand sausages for everyone in the community. A great effort by all the family and supporters who came out and did that and I look forward to doing that again at further sports carnivals.

I also acknowledge two outstanding constituents of mine: Terrance Conway and Jason McMillan. Two young fellas from the great community of Santa Teresa who have been training fearlessly to participate in the Finke
Desert Race. I am so pleased to inform everybody in the House tonight that they did just that. They competed in the Tatts Finke Desert Race and they made it there and back which is an outstanding effort. It sends a message that young people in remote communities can achieve anything and everything.

I look forward to continuing to work with them and I acknowledge and thank the Lyentye Apurte—Santa Teresa—Catholic Mission who brought the motorbikes into the parish on Thursday night to bless the bikes and to bless our constituents and Jason and Terrance. It is fantastic to see that and I thank the Catholic Church for doing that. It was wonderful to see. I know that Jason and Terrance’s families were very happy to see their family make it down there and back.

I also acknowledge the hard work of the Finke committee. I take the opportunity to thank them: the President Antony Yoffa, Vice President Claire Ryan, Secretary Kelsey Branford—known to many in Central Australia as Kelsey Rodda—Damien Ryan, Glenn Auricht, Daniel Sawyer, Josh Clarke, Tammy Fitzgerald and Claire Lambley. They do a fantastic job at pulling off the Finke Desert Race every year and I offer my greatest thanks and appreciation to them for the fantastic work that they do but also stop for a moment and acknowledge the fantastic work that goes on behind the scenes from the enormous amount of volunteers who dedicate their time to make sure that the Finke Desert Race continues to be a premiere event in Central Australia.

I also thank the emergency services. Without them, we could not pull off such a fantastic event in Central Australia. Central Australia is home to a large population of people in the Territory who love their motorsports and I am one of those people which is why I have had a conversation in this Chamber many times with the Member for Stuart, Scott McConnell, and the Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, around the need to look at creating recreational reserves so that motorsports can continue to grow and thrive. I look forward to continuing to have those conversations because it is important.

The Finke Desert Race is also a fantastic economic driver for the community of Alice Springs. The population grows over the coming weeks of the Finke Desert Race. People are out prologuing along the track, training and working hard, doing the last minute fittings and fixtures to their bikes, buggies, ATVs and what have you. It really is great. It is also a great opportunity for families and friends to get together, go down the track, have a little camp, have the fire burning, sit and tell some stories, share a few drinks; whatever it is that you may do. There is nothing else like it. Laying in bed at night, looking out at that beautiful Central Australian night sky—the twinkling of the stars with the smell of the smoke from fires burning, gearing up to see some quality action the next day with some quality racing. I thank them.

I thank Tommy Dutton and the crew who are part of remote Central Australian football. They do a fantastic job pulling together remote football carnivals. It is not an easy task. There is a lot of coordination involved in making sure that those events are and continue to be successful. As the local member I am extremely proud of the communities and of the events that happen throughout the electorate of Namatjira and the wider Northern Territory over that long weekend.

That is a clear demonstration of how wonderful, diverse and unique the Northern Territory is.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I will speak tonight on a diverse range of issues, which will fit in with the diverse range of adjournments that we have already heard tonight. They probably sum up the Northern Territory pretty well.

The Dry Season is here, the clouds have cleared, the oceans are calm and clear, and the quilts and funny-smelling jackets have come out of peoples’ cupboards. There is no better time to be in Darwin. Each weekend throughout the Dry Season we have some amazing events in our beautiful city. There is a Darwin city events guide that people will be able to find online or in my electorate office. I will try to get some to other people’s electorate offices as well. It shows all the events from June to August. There is an amazing array of events.

One of the events that we have already had, and it has been happening in Darwin for a long time, was a couple of weeks ago. We had the Darwin Glenti. It is an absolute highlight of the social calendar for Greek people. It has been a mainstay. They have consistently put this carnival on since 1988. I would love to thank all the members of the committee and all the community volunteers that make it happen. There are far too many people to mention in the time that we have. They know who they are. They do an amazing job.

It is an event like no other. There are roughly 40 000 people who get to the Glenti across the weekend, not just from the Territory but from interstate and overseas. It is a really lovely event. They fill the hotel rooms along the esplanade so they do not have to go home at night because they pack up late and start early in
the morning. There are amazing displays of music, dance and the rich history of Darwin’s Greek culture, which we all know well if we have been there for a while.

Then there is the food. Sometimes it is hard to comprehend how much food is prepared by the volunteers for the Greek Glenti. I had much pleasure with the Members for Sanderson and Casuarina to show off our very poor skills at rolling dolmades. I love how patient the old nonnas are with us. They try to teach us each year how to do it well. It is a fantastic warm up and it is great fun to get to the Greek school and have a crack at rolling Dolmades. I think it is around a ton of dolmades that they get through on the weekend.

There was two and a half tons of octopus and half a ton of squid. Honey puffs—if anyone saw the picture Bec put up while we were there of Layla enjoying some honey puffs. That probably says it all. They are one of the most popular desserts and many of the most popular desserts and other meals were sold out late Saturday evening or early Sunday morning.

All of this means that the Darwin Glenti is one of the largest in Australian. It demonstrates how passionate everyone is about bringing the Greek community together here in the Top End. I congratulate them for all of their hard work. It was great fun to be involved in some small way—to get there on the day and help out behind the bar. A lot of people help out behind different stalls as well. It is a great community weekend.

On that same weekend we saw the 2019 Queen’s Birthday Honours List released. A couple of people have mentioned people from their electorates who have been honoured. I would like to do the same.

Perhaps because it was on the Glenti weekend, a special mention and congratulations goes to Ms Lillian Gomatis for her enormous contribution to the Greek community in Darwin. I recognise her decades of hard work. Lillian has a long history of giving back to our local community through her roles in a lot of different community organisations. I am extremely fortunate to work with Eleanor through her roles in the CBD, and Lewis, who work in my department. I would be lost without some of his expert advice at times.

I have a close affiliation with the family and know they are a much-loved part of the Northern Territory fabric. They are well-entrenched part of the Greek community in Darwin.

The organisations Lillian has been involved with include the Greek women’s philanthropic society. She was the first female President of the Greek Orthodox community in northern Australia and is the Chair of the Darwin Glenti. She has raised money for local charities, for the elderly community—important parts of our community to support people later in life who live with daily struggles.

During her time as President of the Greek Orthodox community, as was highlighted in the NT News on 10 June, she listed her main accomplishments as completing the third stage of the Greek Orthodox School, the renovations and upgrades of the Greek Orthodox Church, and her greatest legacy, the co-founding of the Greek Glenti in 1988. That is a remarkable array of things she has achieved in the Darwin community.

I acknowledge our fabulous Administrator, Vicky O’Halloran, who is a constituent of mine. Another constituent of mine is Doug Phillips. First of all, Vicky O’Halloran is well known through her work with Somerville Community Services and was CEO there from 1998 to 2017. Vicky led the organisation for nearly two decades in its pursuit of assisting those with disabilities who struggle with financial wellbeing, and all manner of community welfare.

I remember doorknocking Vicky and Craig’s place in the Cullen Bay area and how warm and welcoming they were—how fondly she speaks of her family. Coco is away studying and is soon to go overseas to study. Vicky’s love of my ability and Bek’s ability to bring Layla to different events, no matter how much Layla screams out during Vicky’s speeches. They are grounded and beautiful Territorians. I congratulate them on the recognition of all the years of their hard work.

Doug Phillips is also a constituents and has made amazing contribution to the Northern Territory. His work in the business community is second to none. Like many local business people, it is obvious he cares deeply about the long-term future of the Territory. He has called Darwin home for the last 44 years.

In acknowledging Doug’s contribution to the NT, the NT News put together an article that details his contribution. Currently Doug is the NT Procurement Review Board Chair and sits on the NT Development Consent Authority. He has previously served as a deputy Chair of the NT Employment and Training Authority, deputy Chair of the Automobile Association of the NT, board member of the Industry Capability Network of the NT, and a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.
I congratulate Doug, the Administrator and Lillian for all their recognitions. They are to be congratulated for the many decades of hard work and service to the Territory.

I will finish on a more sombre note and speak about the tragic events that unfolded on 4 June that ended in the death of four men and the injury of one female. Like anyone, we were completely shocked when we learnt of it unfolding. I was at an event with the Chief Minister at the time and we were alerted that there was a dangerous event happening and they wanted people to stay within the confines of the event until we knew that it was safe to go home. Everybody’s thoughts go to their family and their friends at a time like that to be sure that everybody is safe. We have had a number of speakers in here today that said, in a small town like this, you hope that everybody is safe.

In the days after the shooting, I visited the Buff Club, the Palms Hotel, and the taxi company. It became clear when we visited some of those places that people were really struggling and we have tried to put some services in place to make sure that those people get the professional assistance that they need.

I thank and pay my respects to all of the police and emergency services, the first responders, and also the people who deal with the affected people in the weeks and months post those really traumatic events. We hope that we are never put in that situation again. It has shown that if we are put in that situation again, we will respond professionally and admirably to it. I pay my respects to everyone who took part in that. Thank you.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.