

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Fannie Bay**

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

Motion agreed to.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Is the Member for Casuarina back from leave? Has she returned to her ministerial responsibilities?

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, the member is still on ministerial leave, but she has been present during parliamentary sittings.

**VISITORS
Bees Creek School**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 6 students from Bees Creek—an exceptionally good school and exceptionally bright students—accompanied by Ms Rebecca Gardiner, Alison Holmes, Rachel Webster and Kirby Chin. Please extend a warm welcome to Bees Creek.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: I understand there is a Maya Silcock. Put your hand up. Hello, Maya! Maya is helping me landscape my garden. Get 'em young, I say, get 'em young.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Yes, treat 'em mean, keep 'em keen.

PAPER TABLED

Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report on Licensing (Director-General) Repeal Bill (Serial 115)

Ms AH KIT (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislation Scrutiny Committee report Inquiry into the Licensing Repeal Bill 2019 and associated minutes of proceedings.

MOTION

Note Paper - Scrutiny Committee Report on Licensing (Director-General) Repeal Bill (Serial 115)

Ms AH KIT (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, In accordance with Recommendation 2.2.6 of the Riley review, the position of Director of Liquor Licensing was created through the *Liquor Act 2019*. Consequent to the implementation of this recommendation, the bill repeals the *Licensing (Director-General) Act 2014* and amends references to the Director-General as a relevant office holder for the exercise of powers and functions under the *Associations Act 2003*, the *Cooperatives (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2015*, the *Gaming Control Act 1993*, the *Gaming Machine Act 1995*, the *Carbon Management Act 1998*, the *Private Security Act 1995*, the *Racing and Betting Act 1983*, the *Tobacco Control Act 2002* and the *Totalisator Licensing and Regulation Act 2000* and associated subordinate legislation.

Where required, a new statutory office holder relevant to the respective legislation is established and references to the Director-General are replaced with references to the new statutory office holder.

The committee called for submissions on 29 November 2019 to be received by 29 January 2020. As no submissions were received and the committee has no matters to bring to the attention of the Assembly, the committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice for briefing the committee on this bill. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan support of the legislative review process.

Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 112)**

Continued from 16 October 2019.

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

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment Bill 2019.

This legislation went through the legislative committee process and a report was tabled to government with recommendations. We understand the government is not accepting all the recommendations? I apologise, it is difficult to speak to the debate, the Member for Nelson has also raised this issue.

Ms Fyles: I spoke to the Opposition Whip, there is one amendment.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: The opposition supports the committee's recommendations and thinks the government should be accepting them all. This is a government-led committee, one which seeks submissions from everyday Territorians, stakeholders and interest groups; everyone has an opportunity to contribute. There is then a public hearing process and public briefings.

It is all part of the government Opening Parliament to the People reform which we have talked about a number of times in this Chamber. It is a difficult process—the Member for Nelson will probably mention this—to come into the Chamber and debate the legislation when we do not know what the government is doing; whether they are going to accept the recommendations—which we put a lot of time, energy and care into—of the scrutiny committee of the parliament. A lot of work is done, not just by the members of the committee, but also the Chair, the Member for Karama, and the staff who provide such excellent and diligent support.

As an opposition, we align our views with the committee and we believe the government should not be moving forward with this 'pet's clause', section 65. We support the committee's recommendation that the amendment not be approved because the evidence clearly shows that there are already existing channels and avenues for tenants and landlords to resolve these issues at current times. It did not become clear, through the scrutiny process, as to where this proposed clause came from, why the government was doing it, who it served to protect and how it would advance the interest of Territorians.

We received 10 submissions and the committee concluded—I am reading from the Member for Karama's preface:

The committee is of the view that these amendments pose an unreasonable burden on the landlord and will only benefit a small proportion of tenants in private rental housing

Currently, under existing law and frameworks, tenants and landlords are able to negotiate when it comes to whether they would have a pet in a premise. We have heard from REINT and others questioning what broader impact this may have on the housing market, the availability of rentals and investment attractiveness as a jurisdiction. It essentially gives the right of the tenant to have a pet in a premises and the landlord has to go to NTCAT and dispute the allowance of that pet pursuant to a limited criteria. This costs time, energy and in our view it infringes upon a landlord's property rights to determine whether they would like to have a pet in their investment property.

The Labor government are anti-business, anti-jobs and they could not get our economy going if someone handed them a life raft on a separate platter. But this type of policy continues to show their lack of understanding of landlords. These are not the big evil rich businesses that Labor like to talk about, these are everyday Territorians who have worked hard. They may have an investment home or unit, they have poured their money in it, it may be their superannuation or retirement plan. They are everyday Territorians who will be impacted, potentially negatively, by this legislation with little or no justification as to why it is required in the first place.

I cannot understand why the government is going to push ahead with this clause. Perhaps the Attorney-General can shed some light on this.

My understanding is if a home's renters and tenants can reach their own agreements—there is no apparent evidence that there was an issue with premises governed by body corporate. It is the body corporate which makes rules around that. There are already adequate provisions in place to deal with this.

I quote from paragraph 3, point 26:

The Committee considers that while keeping a pet does not automatically mean that damage will be caused to a property ...

That is a fair point to make. People love their pets. There are good, responsible pet owners. This is not an automatic thing that says 'your pet is unclean'. I continue:

... it has the effect of increasing the potential for damage or uses, such as flea and tick infestation, damage to irrigation systems, flyscreens, carpets, floors and furnishings. Pets, particularly dogs, may also cause a nuisance to neighbours"

The report goes on.

We are concerned around what this means for NTCAT. They are going to see an increase in landlords and tenants presenting to NTCAT to deal with these pet disputes. If there is a landlord who feels that they should not have a pet in their premises, they will have to go to the expense and go through the stress, the time, energy and effort required to prosecute that case at NTCAT, and they may ultimately fail. This is a huge infringement upon a landlord's property rights. There seems to be no reason why this has come about.

The tenants in Territory Housing are allowed to have pets. The Member for Nelson has more information and so I stand to be corrected on this. As the committee stated, it is a very small proportion of tenants in private rental housing who this legislation may benefit. However, it could be to a large detriment in terms of property rights, and the impact on the NTCAT and on people's decision-making around whether or not this is a jurisdiction they want to invest in. If they can go to a different jurisdiction and not have to worry about these types of government interventions, then they may well do this. We hear time and again that capital flows to the path of least resistance.

If there is one thing that this Labor government is good at—and there are not many things that they do well—they put road blocks in the way of private investment. That is the last thing we need in the Territory right now. We are already the worst performing economy in the country. Business confidence is at all-time record lows and yet we have a government in its last year to pass laws that make a difference, that get our economy growing again, and we are...

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. Could the Leader of the Opposition talk about the bill, not her hate for animals?

Madam SPEAKER: Not a point of order.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Speaker, I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw that pathetic comment. That really highlights the calibre of the debate coming from the Labor government.

Ms Fyles: Madam Speaker, she has just spent 10 minutes ranting about her dislike for animals. It is pointing out the facts.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I ask her to withdraw that again, Madam Speaker. That is unbelievable.

Ms Fyles: I did not think that would upset her so much, but I withdraw.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I clearly hit a nerve in that the debate has now descended into lies. We have children in the gallery and you are standing here in a debate that impacts people's lives. It is a debate that you, Attorney-General, brought to this Chamber. It is a decision that your government had made against the recommendations of its own government-led Legislative Scrutiny Committee. It is just incredible.

This is the calibre of the debate. This is the calibre of the Labor government Territorians are suffering under. No wonder our economy is in such bad shape. No wonder crime is out of control. It is because we have people like you, Attorney-General, running this place. I certainly hope that Territorians send you a message in a couple of weeks' time.

Mr McCARTHY (Local Government, Housing and Community Development) Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for the opportunity to talk on this important legislation being delivered by a Labor government. While the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 is important in regulating private residential tenancies, it also plays an important role alongside the Housing Act for public housing tenancies.

This government is absolutely focussed on delivering better housing for all Territorians and to name a few, delivering more jobs and better housing in remote communities; local jobs in local communities; jobs for urban businesses through our stimulus programs; a more balanced approach to rent calculations; and a stronger focus on the rights of neighbours.

I am pleased to talk about the changes that assists tenants and the department to operate more efficiently as the Territory's biggest landlord.

It is interesting to participate in debate in this House and have Territory students listening because the Leader of the Opposition has just spoken about a very important piece of legislation that is passing through this legislature, without one mention of public housing and I suppose this reflects a position from the CLP. It does not want to talk about public housing. It does not want to talk about their previous administration with the carriage of public housing in the Northern Territory which reflected cuts, cuts and more cuts.

There was a four-year period in the Northern Territory between 2012 and 2016 where urban public housing in the Northern Territory was absolutely neglected. There was a period of disgrace in terms of the delivery for remote Indigenous Territorians ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: relevance.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Barkly, keep going.

Mr McCARTHY: The period between and 2012 and 2016 in terms of non-delivery for remote Indigenous Territorians has a highlight where in two years of a CLP administration delivered one remote Territory house and had significant funds from the Commonwealth in the bank.

That is a question that will remain right through 2020 and be asked at the next Territory election. Why would a government with money in the bank—significant money, no contribution from the Territory but significant Commonwealth dollars in the bank—not improve Indigenous housing.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 35: off-topic.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, it is a piece of legislation being debated which covers all housing in the Territory. There is lots of latitude given here and I think the minister is okay.

Mr McCARTHY: It is very clear that this act does embrace improvements in terms of public housing and the Leader of the Opposition purposely avoided any debate around that because there is a history of neglect in terms of public housing by the CLP.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 31: off-topic.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! What does she find offensive?

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader it is not a point of order. You have had your time in your debate, there will be others to debate and then as I understand it there is some committee detail but minister if you could just talk about the legislation and get to the point and we will not have all these objections.

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 20: interruption. The Leader of the Opposition keeps interrupting the debate. This is a broad-ranging debate around the *Residential Tenancies Act* ...

Madam SPEAKER: That is what I said. There is a reasonable amount of latitude given in all these debates.

Mr McCARTHY: Let us put this into context around the amendments to the legislation around improving housing across the Northern Territory. As the biggest social landlord in the Northern Territory and as the minister responsible for the Department of Local Government Housing and Community Development that houses 27% of the Territorians population we have a fair position in the debate. This position was available

to the Leader of the Opposition and the CLP. They chose not to go there and in 2012 and 2016 chose not to be there and were vacant in this space.

Let us contextualise a bit more for the Leader of the Opposition who is finding it very difficult to accept a previous administration's failings and how this legislation under a Labor government is improving housing across the Northern Territory.

Let us give credit where credit is due. In public housing, the previous administration introduced a three-strikes policy to address tenant behaviour; however, they never did any work on the implementation or making the changes relevant to the act. They simply lived on a rhetoric. I was in this House when that rhetoric was regularly trotted out.

In reality all the CLP ever did was make cuts in public housing which, in an economic debate that the Leader of the Opposition used in her contribution and saw local businesses losing work, public houses sitting idle and empty. The CLP stopped the remote housing program and starved Territory businesses of hundreds of millions of dollars.

I will pick up on a point the Leader of the Opposition made in this debate that is very important, in terms of learning lessons from the past. What past? The CLP past. What sort of past was it? It was chaos. Let us zone in on something extremely important, which is stimulating the Territory economy. If you had significant Commonwealth funds in the bank and did not deliver remote houses, not only did you disadvantage remote Territorians across improvements in health, education, social justice and employment, you denied Territory businesses millions of dollars in economic stimulus.

That is the fact of the matter; it is the lesson that should be learned. That lesson was picked up by a Labor opposition, which has implemented policy, in government, to address that failing. We now see a record investment in remote Indigenous public housing from a Labor government. We are seeing record investments in urban public housing stimulus. We are seeing the stimulus of the Northern Territory economy at a critical time when we need it the most and we are delivering important social outcomes with Labor social policy.

This legislation makes changes to allow for the option of helping tenants transfer when they have difficulties with neighbours and visitors. This is an important part of the legislation and was completely ignored by the CLP, which does not want to talk about housing.

Recently we announced changes to public housing with our ineligible policy, changes to underutilised policy, rent adjustment and debt policy. However, in some cases, these policies were being hampered by the current *Residential Tenancy Act*. I thank the department, the Attorney-General and my government colleagues for making this an important part of a government's agenda in improving the lives of all Territorians, not just the 'chosen ones'.

This new legislation will help provide support for the changes to the residential act. Under Part 15, Division 3, section 144 'relocating tenants in public housing' gives the CEO of Housing authorisation to transfer tenants. That is an important part of the act. But the important part is how you apply the legislation. This is the essence of good legislation that we as legislators have carriage of.

Under Part 15, Division 3, section 114, when we are talking about transferring tenants, the new elements to assist us—and when I say 'assist us', I am talking about the CEO of Housing—are:

... the premises have more bedrooms than needed or the other accommodation has a suitable number of bedrooms;

Or:

the premises do not need the social, physical, psychological or medical needs of the tenant or occupier and the other accommodation would be better suited to those needs

Or:

the premises or neighbours pose a risk to the health or safety of the tenant or occupier and the other accommodation would be safer ...

They are pragmatic changes to this legislation to support the biggest landlord in the Northern Territory, the social landlord: the Northern Territory Government, through the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community development.

Part 2 will allow the CEO of Housing to terminate a tenancy agreement if an offer to relocate the tenant or occupier of the premises to other accommodation because the tenant or occupier engaged in the following conduct:

- (a) *any unacceptable conduct as specified in section 100(1)(a), (b) or (c)*
- (b) *any antisocial behaviour specified in section 28A of the Housing Act 1982.*

It is a pity the Opposition Leader did not want to debate these elements of the act, because this is about protecting tenants. Equally as important, this is about protecting neighbours and neighbourhoods. This is a government that puts its words into actions. This government works hard on legislation in this House. This government deserves credit where credit is due.

Under section 145, provision is made to ensure the tenant is not being disadvantaged by ensuring the CEO of Housing does not terminate a tenancy agreement unless the CEO of Housing has given the tenant or occupier of the premises a notice of intention to terminate, with the additional information specified in subsection (2); and the CEO of Housing has undertaken to enter into a new tenancy agreement with the tenant or occupier of the premises in accordance with subsection (3) for the other accommodation.

This section is also secured for the tenant with a requirement that the notice of intention to terminate must also include the following information—as stated in the bill:

- (a) *the reasons for the tenant's relocation;*
 - (b) *the process for termination under this Division;*
 - (c) *the undertaking of the CEO (Housing) to enter into a new tenancy agreement with the tenant or occupier of the premises and the terms of the new tenancy agreement;*
 - (d) *a clear explanation that the CEO (Housing) will pay for the reasonable moving costs;*
 - (e) *a clear explanation of the right of the tenant or occupier of the premises to remain in possession of the premises under section 146;*
 - (f) *the expected date when the tenant or occupier of the premises can move into the other accommodation;*
 - (g) *a clear explanation of the right to make submissions under section 147;*
 - (h) *a clear explanation of the effect of section 148 regarding the security deposit.*
- (3) *The CEO (Housing) must give the tenant or occupier of the premises a written undertaking to enter into a new tenancy agreement that explains the terms of the new tenancy agreement.*
 - (4) *The CEO (Housing) must pay the reasonable expenses of the tenant or occupier of the premises to move to the other accommodation.*

As you can see, these are very important elements of this change. They are important elements of a government that is making this work for the community.

I give credit where it is due. The previous administration, the CLP, provided a three-strike policy but did nothing further about making the legislation meaningful or apply to our complex community and our challenges in public housing.

This is now a balanced debate which was being denied to Territorians by an Opposition Leader who wants to ignore the important lessons from the past.

This new legislation provides security for the tenant in all transfers, as well as allowing the CEO of Housing to support the work of department staff who must deal with issues in public housing on a daily basis. Division

2, section 138—Termination for renovation, replacement or demolition—will give the CEO of Housing the option to terminate a tenancy agreement if they require vacant possession of the premises for the purpose of renovation, replacement or demolition of the premises. This section will allow for works to be carried out in the dwelling to provide a safer home or to increase the lifespan of the dwelling.

Under this new legislation, streamlining the process required to carry out the work and rehouse the tenant is the priority. There are countless examples across the Northern Territory—a \$5m urban housing stimulus program, a \$69m urban housing stimulus program, and the current \$100m urban housing stimulus program. It is not only supporting public housing tenants, it is about stimulating the economy with good social policy, increasing the life of assets in our system by 20 and 30 years, improving the outcomes for people living in public housing and good social policy that relates to good economic stimulus in a time when we need it greatly.

This is a government that has runs on the board and that saw the opportunity to improve legislation. We have the trust of the community because we have shown we mean business. It is not about all talk, which was the CLP rhetoric, it is about showing the community this is how we do business with this legislation and these changes to make it better, more streamlined and effective.

It is common sense and I am honoured, as the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Community Development, being able to participate in debate with legislation passaging through this place that will improve the lives of Territorians, support Territory businesses and deliver improvements in public housing.

With these changes to the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, we are better able to support our tenants by offering more security, while at the same time ensuring that the CEO Housing and staff and the wishes of neighbours are being supported.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support the changes to the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. That is why the staff in the office that I represent, and the department, have put so much time and energy into supporting our Attorney-General with these important changes to make this better for all Territorians.

While I am on my feet, I put in a plug about our Public Housing Safety Officers. These are frontline ...

Ms Wakefield: Hard-working.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Member for Brainting. These are frontline, hard-working Territorians in very challenging jobs.

A Labor initiative was to expand this initiative across the Northern Territory. I am very pleased we saw that expansion into Katherine and Tennant Creek under this Labor government. I am not frightened to challenge the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Spillett. I am not worried about any of your issues about being offended.

This is a real debate and these are real challenges. A three-strike policy in public housing was a policy, but there was no back-up or support structures. Public Housing Safety Officers do an incredible job. I was very ...

Ms Fyles: A Labor initiative.

Mr McCARTHY: Absolutely. I was very honoured to go out on patrol with them on Friday night, meet our Public Housing Safety Officers in the field, go on patrol, walk and drive with them, listen to the communication, but most of all, to witness the superb relationships they have with public housing tenants. That was something to be commended.

This is not easy and members of this House know how difficult public housing management, tenancy and property management can be. Every member in this House has the opportunity to participate in the improvement. It is my colleagues in the government that provide the best challenges and interface for policy growth and development, the best input to me, as the minister, and who are working on this almost on a weekly basis. I acknowledge other members in this House for their contribution as well, because if we work together on this we will see improvements. This is an area of the Territory that has great challenges. We house over 27% of the Territory's population in public housing.

These Public Housing Safety Officers were exception on Friday night in the application of good policy, but also in their personal relationships with the tenants and their understanding of the greater Darwin area—the

geography, the topography, the social demographics, the problem tenants who are dealing with significant challenges in their lives, the issues of mental health and poverty and of complexes and the more dense public housing that is a historical legacy of the Northern Territory.

I have mentioned my learnings and I thank the officers who provided those learnings in the field, on the ground with our public housing tenants and infrastructure. It is challenging work and these teams do an exceptional job. I was pleased to patrol with the teams in the greater Darwin region. I would equally accept the opportunities to travel and learn from the teams in Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

I stand in this House, proud to be part of this Labor government and the Residential Tenancies Act Amendment Bill 2019. I thank everyone for their participation in this debate and look forward to further learnings on how we can deliver better for all Territorians.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, firstly, I have a complaint. We only found out late yesterday afternoon that we would be dealing with this act today. My file is substantial because of the number of submissions. Why can we not have more time to advise us what will be coming up ahead of sittings. These are important pieces of legislation and, whilst this side of parliament has not got the numbers, I believe all members should contribute to legislation which is important to Territorians and affects them personally, whether they live in public housing or private rentals.

I think the government does not care about the responsibilities of members of parliament, who are not in government but who do receive advice—I have notes from the research officers and I appreciate their work. It would beholden on government to be organised before sittings and indicate when a piece of legislation will be put forward.

I am interested in the processes we have. This bill has gone before a scrutiny committee and they have advised the government. I would be interested in the Chair's comments. There has been no dissenting report and yet it is noted, recommendation 2 'the bill be amended', recommendation 3 'the bill be amended', recommendation 5 'the bill be amended' and recommendation 6 'the bill be amended'. No amendments came into being.

I understand the government has the right not to accept the scrutiny committee's report but one thing it should explain is why it has not accepted those recommendations. Otherwise it leaves the Chair of the committee high and dry. She has put forward a report, backed by members of this parliament with the majority coming from the government, to say this is what we think should happen.

We are left with no response but instead we have an amendment, which landed on our desk today, regarding a tenant's right not to impede entry. The process is interesting, I think it needs refining.

An overview of the bill:

- it creates a general rebuttal presumption in favour of tenants keeping pets
- prevents a property condition report being entirely imaged-based
- provides an offence if unreturned bond money is not deposited in the tenancy trust account on behalf of the tenant, within the legislative timeframe
- clarifies that a landlord may use reasonable means to enter a property under the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal order, but must provide compensation for any damage caused after entry and ensure that the premises are reasonably secure after gaining entry

I imagine that is what this new amendment that has landed on our desks this morning is about—clause 7:

... replaces references to notice of termination throughout the act with reference to notice of intent to terminate to avoid confusion, facilitates the temporary relocation of public tenants and the uptake of new tenancy agreements to enable rollout of the government's public housing replacement and refurbishment programs.

When you look through the bill, you will note that, general speaking, it has a section on pets, then it looks at the tribunal in relation to having pets and termination, but it also deals with public housing in regard to—as the minister said this morning—renovation, replacement and demolition of public housing, relocating tenants in public housing and the processes that enable the government to do that. I do not have a problem with that.

Government, obviously, has to replace public housing from time to time. We know that has occurred in Darwin and, over many years, in Alice Springs and other places. It is good that the process for doing that is fair and reasonable, especially for tenants. I suppose the question is, what was wrong with the previous legislation? Was it causing a problem? Usually, that is the reason we get changes to legislation—there were some issues.

In regard to the issue that has been raised today by the Leader of the Opposition and by a number of people, which relates to a recommendation by the scrutiny committee to scrap sections 65A and 65B, the government has decided to keep those in. It says under new section 65A:

- (1) *It is a term of a tenancy agreement that a tenant may only keep a pet on the premises in accordance with this section.*

A note to the section states:

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) provides for rights in relation to assistance animals.

Tenants must first give the landlord a written notice describing the proposed pets. The landlord can object within 14 days after receiving the notice, giving the tenant written notice of the objection, including the reason, making an application to NTCAT under section 65B. A tenant must not keep a pet on the premises before the expiry of the 14-day period unless NTCAT orders that the landlord's objection is unreasonable and that the tenant may keep the pet on the premises. If the landlord does not apply to the NTCAT under section 65B in the 14-day period, the tenant can keep the pet at the premises.

The tenant's right to keep a pet under this section is subject to any prohibition on animals or birds applicable to the premises under Part V, Division 6 of the *Unit Titles Act 1975* and Part 3.5, Division 2 of the *Unit Titles Scheme Act 2009*.

In new section 65B a landlord who objects to a tenant keeping a pet on the premises must apply to NTCAT for an order that their objection is reasonable and that the tenant must not keep the pet on the premises. NTCAT must consider the reasonableness of the tenant keeping the pet, having regard to the type of pet, the character and nature of the premises, the character and nature of the appliance, fixtures and fittings, whether keeping the pet on the premises is permitted, restricted or prohibited under any other law or by-law, any prescribed matters, any other matter the tribunal considers relevant. NTCAT can then make orders that the landlord's objection is reasonable and that the tenant must not keep the pet on the premises, or that the landlord's objection is not reasonable and the tenant may keep the pet on the premises with or without conditions.

I say at the outset that I love pets. I note someone said something about pets. The funny thing is I have two camp dogs from Kununurra that drive me nuts. I also have unwanted pets—possums. I do not know whether we can make a law that says possums have to be outlawed because they live in my roof, my garage ...

Madam SPEAKER: Steal your chook food.

Mr WOOD: No, I do not have any chook food anymore, but they drop things all over the place—Madam Speaker might use a word for that that I would not have in parliament. They are nice and cuddly looking but do not put your finger in their mouth. They are, to some extent, household pets because they know where to live in my place.

There is no doubt that we all love pets. The issue before us is whether it is the existing legislation, which I understand—not dismissing, of course, the fact that I mentioned the *Unit Titles Act* where you can have people say there will be no pets in these units. That is a shared agreement between tenants, but in the case of someone renting a house, my understanding is that keeping a pet was an agreement between you and the landlord.

Under scrutiny committee's section 3.25, which I think is important in this debate, it says:

The Committee queries the necessity for these amendments as the evidence received suggests that the proportion of rental properties they are likely to make available to tenants who wish to keep pets will be quite small. The DLGHCD advised the Committee that almost 50 per cent of rental properties in the NT comprise public housing.

Public housing is covered. I presume—and the minister might correct me—that if you go into a public house you still need to have tenancy agreement. I would imagine the tenancy agreement would allow you to have

a pet under certain conditions. I am concerned that one of the conditions is that you cannot keep chickens. I think there should be an amendment to this bill to allow that, it is very disappointing.

You cannot keep other animals, like horses, camels, pigs, wild pigs, cattle, buffalo, crocodile, sheep, goats, deer, llamas, alpacas and honey bees. I presume you can keep things like fish, little birds in cages, dogs and cats. But you obviously have to sign a tenancy agreement for you to be allowed to do that.

I am not sure whether the department can say no or yes. If that is the case, it is no different than what private landlords are asking for. I am looking at how this works in reality and the rights people have in public housing compared to private housing.

I continue the quote:

The DLGHCD advised the Committee that almost 50 per cent of rental properties in the NT comprise public housing in which pets are already allowed except where prohibited by Council bylaws

In the notes on the department's website, it talks about a tenancy agreement, it says that if you do not take action, your tenancy agreement may be terminated. This is in regard to complaints about pets, so obviously that is in a tenancy agreement. It also includes council bylaws, which I thought applied to private residents as well.

The Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory commented that 65% to 75% of rental stock in the Northern Territory is unit stock, with the majority of those unlikely to be affected by these amendments due to the prohibition under the *Unit Titles Act 1975* and the Unit Titles Scheme 2009 proposed section 65A(8). Consequently it is likely the impact of these amendments on renters would be quite small.

The scrutiny committee said—it understands that people would like to keep pets—is that it thinks the effect of the changes would be quite small. The committee is saying that 65A is not needed, but we are going ahead with them. I am a bit confused as to whether there has been a real problem or a perceived problem.

I know that animals cause issues in houses. They can be smells, defecation, fleas and noise et cetera. There is a comment there that in places like Western Australia they have a bond if you want to keep an animal on your premises. That is kept there to recover damages.

I know what those damages are like because I now have Crimsafe on some of my flywire doors because dogs can find their way through a flywire door. I imagine in a public house where flywire doors are used, pets could cause damage to flywire doors and someone has to pay for that damage.

I am not sure what the government wants to do is the right way to go. The committee has said remove those sections. I believe they had said that because they believe that the effect of those amendments is quite small, in other words they are not needed. I suppose what they are trying to do is also take into the account the rights of the landlord. Finding the balance between allowing someone to have a pet—I know older people like to have a pussy cat or a small dog or a little birdie they can talk to, and they are important—but you have to remember that if there was an issue you could take it up with the Discrimination Commission because as it said, where it is an assistance animal you do have some rights.

Would it be the case that if you needed that animal because you needed a companion, an assisted animal, you would be covered by that piece of legislation and therefore you are referring to an even smaller group of people who might want to keep a dog on a rented property just for the sake of having a dog?

I think the balance that the Scrutiny Committee put forward is based on the fact that public housing does allow pets but you still, from my understanding, require a tenancy agreement and although you are allowed to have a pet there are some restrictions fitted in, I presume, into your tenancy agreement.

What we read from the Scrutiny Committee report is this would only affect a small number of people because a lot of people are covered by the Unit Title legislation. Therefore are we using a sledgehammer to crack a peanut? Is this legislation something that is really needed?

We do have a Scrutiny Committee. I read their reports, I read Hansard. I know there will be a bias by the Real Estate Institute towards landlords, they represent those people, and there will be people on the other side who represent tenants and that is the balance you have to find here.

So we have a Scrutiny Committee who sat down and listened to all those submissions from all those people and they have come back and said, we think section ...

VISITORS
Sanderson Middle School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Year Nine students from Sanderson Middle School accompanied by their teacher, Mr Bill Rolf.

Welcome Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr WOOD: It is clear that the Scrutiny Committee, which we know the government has the majority numbers on it—after reading and listening to all the submissions from NAAJA and a whole group of people that put in their perspective on this issue, and obviously it is an important issue—has simply said the committee recommended the bill be amended to remove proposed section 65A and 65B.

I believe in Scrutiny Committee. That does not mean I always agree with them. Here we have an important issue looking to have balance between the rights of landlords versus the rights of people to keep a pet.

There are other rights involved through the Commonwealth Anti-Discrimination legislation in regard assisted animals. A person could say they needed a pet because it was an assisted pet, then they would have a good case. This seems to be over-bureaucratic to some extent. It puts the onus on the landlord to go to NTCAT etc,

The balance should be where the tenant and the landlord can come to an agreement. If there is an issue then go find another landlord. It is as simple as that because, at the moment, renters have the way at the moment with cheap rent. If you are not happy with that then look for another landlord. If I weigh up what I have read and what the scrutiny committee has stated, I believe they have found the right balance and that their recommendation two should be supported.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Territory Families): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Residential Tenancies Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. I am confident there will be many families in the Northern Territory will be delighted about the protections that this bill passed.

We all know that having a home is one of the fundamentals of our society. Having a stable and secure home is one of the foundations that we require to have a stable and secure family. As a government, we have faced up to the challenges—I thank the Member for Barkly for his contribution as Minister for Housing—because we have led the way in making sure that as many Territorians as possible have a stable home.

The reality is that more than 50% of Territorians rent, and many of them will rent for life. There has been much commentary about the changing nature of home ownership, not only in the Northern Territory, but across Australia. People under 30 are finding it much harder to get into the housing market across Australia. When people move to the Territory, they are looking to rent initially in that period, and we want to make sure that we have a contemporary residential tenancy act that responds to the needs of Territorians and people who are renting within the Territory.

We also acknowledge that property owners require confidence that their properties will be cared for. That is not what this bill is about. Rental returns in the Territory are exceptionally good but a good rental income does not make up for expensive damage, high maintenance costs, or unhappy neighbours.

However, tenants want to be able to live in a rented home with the same rights they would have in their own home: the rights of quiet enjoyment, be able to entertain guests and, in some cases, have domestic pets. This last point is addressed in the bill. I note the opposition from the other side and I understand there are different views, but the reality is that Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. We love our pets, in particular, our dogs and cats. Just because you cannot afford to buy your own home, does not mean that you should miss out on the pleasures of pet ownership. That is important.

I confess to a conflict of interest here. I have a dog that is much-loved and lives inside our home. He is very much an important part of my son's life. Therefore, if something changed within my family's home and we had to rent, that decision would be heart-wrenching, to make a decision about whether we can keep the dog or

not. As someone who has rented in the past and had a dog, it is very stressful when you know you will have trouble finding a rental accommodation, and perhaps accepting poorer quality housing because you want to keep your dog with you. These are significant issues that are facing families who are renting, in particular, children who part of a family who is renting and need to have these protections in place.

There are many landlords that allow pets. When I have had agreements with landlords around keeping a pet, it has been about doing extra maintenance, doing the floors with a steam cleaner twice a year rather than once, just the practical things that can be negotiated. However, there needs to be a point of negotiation. That is what this bill provides. It provides the tenants with the right to start a negotiation with the landlord.

Where I have had a landlord who has allowed me to have my dog, I have been a good tenant because I know how precious that is. This makes tenants more likely to not hide the dog every time there is an inspection; they are more likely to be honest about what is going on. This is about providing renters with the opportunity to have honest conversations, which will lead to better relationships between tenants and landlords. When they become fractious, they can become challenging. This is about providing everyone with the tools to have a realistic conversation.

These provisions therefore provide a fair balance between both parties. Under this legislation landlords will provide an opportunity to reasonable object to a tenant keeping a pet. To do this the landlords must advise the tenant and seek an order from the NTCAT that the objection is reasonable. Having regard to the matters such as the type of pet and the nature of the premises.

According to the RSPCA, Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. About 62% of Australian households own a pet. This is not a fringe issue, which is why I am surprised that the CLP and ex-CLP members are opposing this legislation. It shows that they are out of touch with what is happening in the Territory—50% of Territorians rent, and 62% of Australians have a pet.

It is important that we provide the right balance, but also speak up for the large proportion of Territorians who love their animals.

In my previous work at the Alice Springs Women's Shelter, a significant body of research shows that women do not leave dangerous relationships if they cannot find accommodation or a solution for their pet. We had agreements with some of the local kennels because if women did not want to leave their pet in that circumstance because they were worried about the pet's safety, that was a barrier for them.

It is important that we provide support and more ability for people to leave difficult circumstances but not give up their pet to do so.

I want to talk about the positive influence of pets. We should not underestimate that. It has health benefits. People with pets have much better health outcomes. They have a positive influence in regard to mental health as well. Let us not see this as an anti-economy or anti-community move. This is about supporting people to have pets, which has benefits and helps people to live successfully in the community.

It is also important to note that there is a huge economy with the business of dogs and cats. There are members in my office who are very attached to their animals. They are making sure they contribute to the community with a range of benefits by having those animals.

This is about having contemporary legislation. Western Australia, Victoria and the ACT have made changes in this regard. It is important to acknowledge that the home ownership market is changing; more people are renting. Therefore we need to make sure we do not put up barriers for renters.

We have made sure there is a balance—there is not a blanket-lifting of all restrictions, particularly regarding body corporate in unit complexes. This does not override those, so people can still make those decisions in townhouses et cetera. It is also important to note that that is just one aspect of this bill. It is an important aspect, so I am surprised that the CLP is opposing it.

There are many people in our community who have pets—you only need to go doorknocking to see that. I have a lot of conversations when I am out on the doors, making sure people enjoy their pet ownership.

This bill will be welcome by landlords seeking clarity on how they can legally enter a premises if restrictions are in place by the tenant. This bill amends the act to detail when the NTCAT can order entry into premises and includes and authorises the use of reasonable means to gain entry while expressly and rightly not including any physical confrontation with the tenant.

Clearing up the term 'reasonable means' will be useful to landlords and, by default, those acting on their behalf. This is a grey area, and I commend the Attorney-General for the work she has done to clarify that. Unfortunately, there are circumstances where there is a need to enter a premises and that needs to be clear.

I support the reforms on handling of bonds. On the conclusion of tenancies, it is incumbent upon the landlord to either return the bond to the tenant or to make a claim against it. At times, it may not be possible for the landlord to return the bond and this gives a clear pathway for the landlord to put the bond money in the tenancy trust account.

I thank the Attorney-General for her work on this bill. It is a difficult area and there is more to be done. We have listened to the concerns of groups and I thank the Attorney-General for taking those concerns seriously and setting up a reference group to look at the next steps in the residential tenancy group. We know there is more to do but this is an important step.

I do not want to underestimate the importance of pets and making sure we have pet ownership dealt with and have those protections in place. When things go wrong with residential tenancy it can be difficult and I thank the Member for Barkly for his support of the public housing safety officers. In Alice Springs they are an important service.

I thank the Attorney-General. This amendment bill brings certainty and rights to an important area on pet ownership. It makes our legislation contemporary and reflects the needs of Territorians. Fifty per cent of Territorians rent—many will for life—and many own pets. Just because you are renting does not mean you should be excluded from the benefits of pet ownership. I am proud to be a part of a government that supports this.

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, this bill is a significant piece of legislation and it was disappointing to see that the opposition has not prepared or briefed itself on this bill.

The *Residential Tenancies Act* has been in place for more than 18 years and no longer adequately reflects the shift in residential trends, including Territorians renting for longer periods of time. This bill is the first tranche of reforms that we hope to bring before the parliament to improve the tenancy law for both landlords and tenants.

The purpose of the bill is to make a number of amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* and the Residential Tenancy Regulation 2000. The amendments are predominantly to address issues identified with the administration and operation of the act and regulations.

It is the start of a commitment to modernise the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* to ensure that it continues to offer a balanced framework that meets both our landlords and tenants' needs in the Territory. I will take the time to address a number of operational issues.

The *Residential Tenancies Act* is a complex piece of legislation which needs proper consideration. We are working with key stakeholders and hopefully we will establish a working group which will continue to work through these issues. The issues are often difficult because we have different representatives; the landlords and the tenants. By working together, we will have a strong piece of legislation and this is the first step which will reflect the Northern Territory community needs.

I thank the members who spoke on the bill this morning. A discussion paper was released last year in which numerous stakeholders provided feedback. The stakeholders included government departments, the general public and peak stakeholder groups. Over 20 submissions were received and these are currently being reviewed. I thank the stakeholders who took the time to provide a submission and who will continue to work with government on this reform agenda.

The key features of this bill: realigning the name of notices that may be given under the act to correspond with the actual nature of those notices. The bill replaces references to 'notice of termination' through the *Residential Tenancies Act 1999* with 'notice of intention to terminate'.

During the review of the act, it became evident that if the name of a notice does not accurately reflect the nature of that notice there is confusion. This is both from tenants and landlords about the purpose and effect of the notice. This amendment intends to make it clear and improve the understanding of tenants and landlords. The notice does not automatically terminate the tenancy agreement. The amendment makes it clear to improve this. The name of the notice is that, after a notice is issued there are additional steps that

must be taken under the act for tenancy to be determined and that issuing a notice is only the first step in that process.

The notice provides the notice of intention to terminate. The act provides that a tenancy agreement will only be terminated where the parties agree, or NTCAT so orders.

The bill will also change the name of notice that is given to remedy a breach of the tenancy agreement. Commonly referred to as a breach notice, the current name of the notice, under Part 11, Division 3A is notice of intention to terminate. However, that notice requires the person to remedy a breach within a certain time frame. If the breach is not rectified, the person issuing the notice has to consider the options under the act, which range from giving the other person more time to remedy the breach, through to considering the start of the termination process.

The new name of the notice therefore reflects the purpose and intent of the notice. These amendments will provide clarity about what the notice is for.

The bill strengthens the value of the condition reports, which are intended to be used as evidence of the condition of a premises at a particular point in time—the time the tenancy is entered. Currently the act provides that a condition report may consist entirely of images. This bill removes the option to make a property condition report that is only based on images. Practical problems have been identified with condition reports being made entirely by images, the problems ranging from a lack of a quality image through to a lack of context behind which the images is recording. That makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the reports to be useful when comparing the condition at the start of a tenancy and the end of a tenancy.

On their own, images lack context without an accompanying written explanation about where and what the image is evidence of. This does not mean that images cannot be used. The ability to make a report partly based on images will remain where the report is also partly in writing.

A key feature of the bill is establishing a general rebuttal of presumption in favour of tenants keeping pets. We heard about that this morning; I will come back to that in a moment. I will also talk through the recommendations made by the scrutiny committee.

The bill clarifies that an order made by NTCAT under section 77 for a landlord to gain entry onto a premises may also include conditions for the means that a landlord may use in order to gain that entry. This is an important point, as many who rent would agree to.

Section 77 enables a landlord to obtain an order from NTCAT to gain entry. This bill amends the section to enable NTCAT to specify how the entry may occur. The amendment makes it clear that 'reasonable means' only applies to removing barriers placed by the tenant to prevent entry. It expressly does not include permitting physical confrontation with the tenant. The obligations to ensure the premises are secure after gaining entry will still remain.

The bill makes it an offence for a landlord to fail to comply with the requirement to place a tenant's unclaimed bond money into the tenancy trust account and further enabling enforcement of the offence through the Commission of Tenancies issuing an infringement notice.

When a tenancy has ended, the landlord must return the bond to the tenant or make claim against it. Ordinarily the bond should be returned to the tenant unless a claim is made under the act. However, there may be times when the landlord cannot return the bond to the tenant, for example, if the tenant has vacated the premises and is unable to be located. In that situation, section 116(1) of the act requires the landlord to place the unclaimed bond money in the tenancy trust account.

The Commissioner of Tenancies noted that it does not always occur within the time frame set out in the act and has to sometimes prompt landlords to do this. With this amendment, the commissioner can issue an infringement notice for the offence, which is a penalty of four penalty units, or \$628.

We can already see there are significant elements to this bill that have been washed over by those opposite. Perhaps if they reached out for a briefing, they may have a better understanding of how important this bill would be for Territorians, considering that around 50 per cent of Territorians rent their home.

The Rental Bond Board is an issue that has been raised through the discussion paper by a number of stakeholders. We are considering that and exploring potential further reform in that area.

The bill contains amendments which are relevant to the Department of Housing. I note the minister responsible spoke, but was continually interrupted by those opposite. Perhaps if they had listened to the member, they would see that the elements of this bill facilitate:

- the roll-out of the government's public housing replacement and refurbishment program by providing a process for temporary relocation for CEO housing tenants and entering of new tenancy agreements
- streamlined management of public housing by providing a process for transfer of public housing tenants to alternative new premises and alternative tenancy agreements where operationally required.

The Northern Territory Government has commenced a program to improve the lives of Territorians who rely on public housing, particularly those in remote areas who experience critical levels of overcrowding. The Northern Territory Government's housing portfolio contains over 11 000 dwellings. Six thousand of those are in the urban and regional locations, and nearly 5000 are in remote areas; some are in town camps or community living areas. Of the total, nearly 11 000 are social housing dwellings and nearly 400 are affordable rental dwellings.

We have made a significant commitment of \$100m to upgrade urban and regional public housing through the stimulus fund. There has also been the investment package of \$1.1bn over 10 years committed to remote public housing under Our Community. Our Future. Our Homes. The federal government has agreed to provide match-funding through the National Partnership for Remote Housing program. These programs being led by the Minister for Housing will roll out refurbishments to public housing premises to ensure that they are fit-for-purpose. Where a house is identified as being beyond economic repair, it will be replaced with a new house.

Delivery of investment programs on this scale requires considerable coordination of various participants, including tenants and building contractors, in a setting that is affected by distance and weather events. Therefore, it is a significant program to roll out and an important program. I commend the work of the Minister for Housing, and the department of Housing staff who are focused on this delivery.

While the roll-out programs can be built around location and seasons, the act does not provide mechanisms that facilitate the refurbishment and replacement program. These amendments allow relocation which will enable this program to work effectively.

The second amendment relevant to the department of Housing enables tenants to be moved to alternative premises. There are occasions when there is greater flexibility needed by the CEO of the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development to terminate tenancies. The act prescribes rules which, in a public housing setting, are rigid and practically difficult to adhere to.

The act does not contemplate the public housing setting where the landlord/tenant relationship is one that is long-term, needs-based and may vary from time to time. For example—as a local member of parliament, I am familiar with this and I imagine other members are too, particularly in urban and remote areas—a tenant may have occupied a three or four bedroom house over a number of years to accommodate their family. Over time, children sadly grow up and leave home

Mr Wood: It is sad, they grow up.

Ms FYLES: The Member for Nelson is not sure if it is sad. As someone with a 10-year-old, I feel it is sad.

Mr Wood: One of mine came back after 19 years.

Ms FYLES: One of yours came back. Maybe mine will not leave. We will not start that debate; we have had enough debate across the Chamber this morning.

Children grow up and leave public housing which changes the tenant's public housing needs. Therefore, for the CEO Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development to allocate housing on a needs basis, the CEO needs to terminate that tenancy agreement, although they do not wish to terminate the ongoing landlord/tenant relationship. The termination can appear to be a harsh course of action for a vulnerable tenant who may not understand the process.

Under the CLP, we saw a harsh approach to public housing; they increased the rents significantly rather than have a practical way to step through it. I had people who had been in those homes for 30 years; it was their

home and so it was very difficult for them. That termination can be appear to be harsh for a vulnerable tenant and they might not understand the process.

Therefore, the CEO of Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development has offered the tenant an alternative place to live. These amendments seek to provide that a guarantee to public housing tenants that they will be provided with an alternative house and incorporate that guarantee into the overall relocation process. This is very practical.

The scrutiny committee looked at this bill and made a number of proposals, including:

- amendments to clarify that the amendments to section 77 only relate to an order made by NTCAT under section 77 and not under any other circumstance - Recommendation 3 from scrutiny committee .
- an extension to the notice period in proposed sections 146(b) and (c), 147(1) in clause 20, from 7 days to 14 days - Recommendations 5 and 6 from scrutiny committee. This is to afford tenants more time to move premises under section 146, or to make a submission to the CEO Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development under section 147.

The intent is to provide flexibility in situations where transitional accommodation is not available on the date the tenant agreed with the CEO to vacate their premises to enable the renovation, replacement or demolition of the premises.

We did not have a request for a briefing from the opposition, but I reached out to their Whip this morning at about 9 o'clock to indicate we would be accepting all but the one recommendation about pets from the scrutiny committee—to respond to the Leader of the Opposition, which was all she spoke about and was quite harsh that they felt that they were not informed.

Regarding pets, which is what we have spent time debating today, the government considered the committee's recommendation to remove clause 6, which inserts new sections 65A and 65B, providing a presumption to keep pets. It has been determined that new sections are necessary and workable and should be maintained, despite the committee's recommendation.

This is no way to reflect upon the committee. We acknowledge the scrutiny committees do a large volume of work, and away from this Chamber scrutinise these bills.

Where a landlord has reasonable ground to refuse, an application may be made to NTCAT which considers the objection, and if reasonable. It is important to note we are not the only jurisdiction to make amendments in favour of keeping pets, and more and more jurisdictions are considering similar provisions.

I know you, Mr Deputy Speaker, would be supportive, as a pet owner of Topsy and Henry. Many of us in this Chamber have pets and they are a large part of our lives ...

Mr Wood: The Speaker is independent. He cannot give you an opinion on that.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FYLES: The Member for Nelson is interjecting about his pets. We heard from the Member for Braintree about the importance that animals can have in people's overall social and emotional wellbeing. Pets are important. As a government, we believe that, with 50% of Territorians who rent their homes, they should have the opportunity to have a pet.

It is reasonable. I have a pig that lives in my electorate, where I go doorknocking in Rapid Creek. I have sent the pictures of the pig to the Deputy Chief Minister. She ...

Mr Wood: So, it has a pig, has it, like you are supposed to have in the *Livestock Act*?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Ms FYLES: I am sure that this pig is well-kept under all legislation. The good people of Rapid Creek are straight onto any unusual animals. There is a reasonable aspect to this. We are talking about cats, dogs and you spoke about budgies that old people talk to, Member for Nelson. I promise that you can come into the parliament and talk to us so you do not have to talk to the budgies when you retire.

In all seriousness, this is an important issue. We know the benefit of caring for pets. Some would argue that a pet is far more responsible than a toddler. The Member for Goyder would have something to say about that. She is always claiming that the animals are easier to look after than children.

I did not realise that the Leader of the Opposition hated pets and animals so much until her rant of a response speech.

I have received, as has every member of this Legislative Assembly, a letter from the RSPCA. It provided in detail its thoughts. I will read an extract:

The Northern Territory is an animal-loving jurisdiction with the highest animal ownership levels in Australia of 82%, compared to an average of 62%.

Submissions from nine diverse organisations to the committee provided clear support for these inclusions—and I will come back to that point. We consider this is clearly reflective of the wider community's view given the positive feedback we received on the proposals when first announced by the government.

They went on to say:

It was unfortunate that there was a single submission to not support pets and that was what was focused on. They believe the conclusion was based on limited evidence.

They did an online Facebook poll. The opposition loves to talk about Facebook. They come in here, as soon as something is on Facebook, and quote it. I will throw that right back to them. The RSPCA Darwin conducted a Facebook poll. We will give this Facebook poll merit. It was supported ...

Mr Wood interjecting.

Ms FYLES: I pick up on the laughter. Well, if it is good for the other side, it is good for us, Member for Nelson.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, please pause. Honourable members, remember you are not on a lunch date, you are in parliament. Please refer to each other through the Chair and do not interject.

Ms FYLES: This is important and serious ...

Mr Wood interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson! I will remove you. Do not interject.

Mr WOOD: I was asking for clarification.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Then you can call a point of order.

Mr WOOD: Could I ask for a clarification of interjection. Is laughter an interjection?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will rule laughter as not an interjection.

Mr WOOD: Then I did not interject, thank Mr Deputy Speaker.

Ms FYLES: The RSPCA—very familiar with animals, that is their main duty, and well respected by the community—did a poll that said 'should the law be changed to stop landlords unreasonably refusing to rent properties to Territorians who have pets'. They had over 1200 responses and over 80% of people said the law should be changed to support pets. They hoped that amendments 65A and 65B will be retained. I think that is really important. They had correspondence in quite detail around the importance of pets and what this legislation sets out to achieve. It provides for those Territorians who rent a property to have the same rights as Territorians who own their home and that there is a presumption that they can reasonably keep a pet. We have heard if the body corporate has a no-pets policy that would overrule.

It is important we understand the context of the Northern Territory housing environment and this is about being reasonable in terms of what pets can be kept and the benefits. We are not the only jurisdiction to make amendments in favour of keeping pets and more jurisdictions are considering similar provisions. There is no evidence to suggest there was a decrease in rental properties in Victoria or the ACT when they introduced similar reforms and there is no evidence to suggest that would occur here.

The act currently makes no provisions for pets and there are many benefits in enabling tenants to make a home with a pet. The amendments provide a mechanism for tenants to keep a pet and for a landlord to reasonably oppose the keeping of a pet. The act already provides that tenants must not damage the property and provides landlords with a means to obtain financial compensation if damage occurs. Any damage that might be caused by a pet can be considered by NTCAT, to decide whether the pet has caused an issue during the tenancy and whether the tenancy has to take additional steps to compensate for it.

We have consulted NTCAT during the drafting of these amendments and it has been determined that these amendments will not adversely impact their workload. Perhaps a question would have been fantastic if the Leader of the Opposition had bothered to get a briefing from the Department of Attorney-General and Justice on the bill.

We are seeing an increase in the period of time that people use rental properties and the number of people who reside in rental properties without ever becoming homeowners. That is an important point. Traditionally people would rent a property for a few years when they moved out of home and then they would go on to buy a unit and then a house. We have seen a significant shift. I have friends who for a long time have rented their home and in fact will most likely will always rent. They have raised their children there, keeping their pet. They have not been bad tenants. In fact they have maintained those properties.

Some would argue that a person who is caring for a pet, who walks their pet, engages with their pet, is likely to maintain a property to a higher standard than someone who simply crashes there so to speak. It has been disappointing to see those opposite come in here and pick one aspect of what is a number of changes to the Residential Tenancies Act and to pick on that without any evidence or with any facts.

I point to the RSPCA, the information provided in this bill and from NTCAT and also the well-known fact that pets are known to have health and general wellbeing effects on individuals, families and children. The benefits of pets should not be denied simply because a property is rented but those opposite want to do that.

The amendments maintain a balance between a landlord's right to safeguard their investment and the tenant's right to enjoy the premises and make it their home.

The government also notes the committee's recommendations 4, 7 and 8 which relate for further consultation and consideration of the issue of notice periods; whether it will be appropriate to remove this requirement in section 25(3) that the tenant should be present when the landlord completes the ingoing inspection of the premises and the next tranche of reforms giving further consideration to the inclusion of amendments to address the impacts of domestic violence on tenants, something that the Member for Braintree spoke about.

I sincerely thank the committee for its work on this bill. I acknowledge that it is hard work and is not always easy. It is not a tick-and-flick; they call for submissions and seek information. In bringing this bill to the House, we have done a discussion paper and we note the submissions were received. We look forward to further work on it.

Once the bill has passed, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice will re-engage with stakeholders, including in relation to the identified areas by the committee to develop further tranches of legislative reform.

This bill is an important step forward in the government's commitment to reforming the *Residential Tenancies Act*, and this is just the start. It is difficult work. We have very different interest parties represented in this work. By working together we can see change that will allow landlords to have their investment properties maintained, but also to allow people who want to rent a property to have access to the protections they should be afforded.

Having a house and a home is important. You cannot engage in education or employment if you do not have a roof over your head.

I thank the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice staff who have led the development of this bill. Some of them are in the Chamber today and some are listening in. I also thank the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development for its contribution. There were some tricky issues in this, but I met with them and we worked through them. The Office of Parliamentary Counsel also deserves thanks for its work on the bill.

I commend the bill to the Assembly, and I thank everyone for their contributions.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 6, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 7:

Ms FYLES: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move amendment 1 that clause 7 be amended by omitting all the wording in clause 7 as it is drafted in the bill, and replace clause 7 with new provisions that repeal current section 77 in its entirety and insert a new section 77 and 77A.

The Legislation Scrutiny Committee's recommendation 3 recommended that the bill be amended to clarify the proposed section 77(4) to (6) only to relate to orders by the NTCAT under current section 77(1).

While it is noted that the current wording of proposed subsections (4) to (6) to section 77 do not pose legal uncertainty, they are based on the drafting style preferences of the Office of Parliamentary Counsel. The committee's recommended amendment is intended to enhance clarity and does not change the intent of the provision.

With this in mind, we have taken the opportunity to completely redraft those provisions to further enhance the clarity of the intention to amendments in section 77. Proposed new section 77 now sets out up front the general requirement that a tenant not unreasonably impede a landlord when attempting to gain lawful entry to premises. Proposed new section 77A sets out what may then follow should a tenant unreasonably impede a landlord's lawful entry.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 19, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 20:

Ms FYLES: I move amendment 2 to clause 20 to omit the words 'if there is no agreement' in (proposed section 141(b)). The words have been identified as an error in drafting which may cause confusion of the operation of the amendments. The operation of the proposed section 139(e) requires the CEO housing and the tenants to have agreed to a date for vacant possession of the premises before the tenancy can be terminated and therefore when the tenant must give up possession of the premises under proposed section 141.

As currently drafted, proposed section 141 provides two alternate times for giving up a vacant possession as being the latter of (a) the date agreed under section 139.1(e) or (b) there is no agreement and the date the transitional accommodation becomes available. The CEO in housing and the tenant must agree to vacate the possession date under section 139.1(e). Vacant possession may only occur on the date agreed between the CEO housing and the tenant and therefore section 141(b) has no operational effect.

The amendment will make the policy intent of the proposed section 141 clear. It provides some flexibility where the transitional accommodation is not available on the date agreed between the CEO housing and the tenant, where the tenant would give up vacant possession either on the agreed date or at a later date.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms FYLES: I move amendment 3 to clause 20 to replace the 7-day time period with a 14-day time period in proposed sections 146(b) and (c) and 174.1

The Legislation Scrutiny Committee's recommendations 5 and 6 proposed sections 146(b) and (c) and 174.1 be amended to increase the 7-day timeframe to 14-days to afford tenants more time to move premises under section 146 or make a submission to the CEO Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development under section 147.

While the proposed relocation of a tenant under division 3 would only be done following extensive consultation with the tenant, government agrees that the proposed extension of time will benefit tenants and therefore adopts the committee's recommendations.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 20, as amended, agreed to.

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

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MINISTERIAL POLICY STATEMENT Protecting Our Environment

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, today I deliver a ministerial statement on my portfolio of the Environment and Natural Resources. I do this to update and advise the Chamber on the delivery of the promises we made to Territorians, the promises that we as a government have and will continue to deliver.

I know from talking to people in my electorate that these are all key issues they will be considering at the next Territory election.

I am a born and bred Territorian, a mother and a grandmother, and I am extremely proud to stand here today to celebrate the achievements this Labor government has made to protect our incredibly diverse, rich and beautiful natural environment.

VISITORS Sanderson Middle School

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 9 students from Sanderson Middle School, accompanied by their teacher, Mr Bill Rolfe. On behalf of all honourable members, we extend a welcome to Parliament House. We are currently delivering a ministerial statement on the environment. Please enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms LAWLER: Welcome to Bill Rolfe and all the Sanderson kids up there.

There is no denying, our natural environment is a key part of what makes living in the Northern Territory so very special. The Territory's unique natural environment holds a special place in the hearts of Territorians. No matter where you live and where you have travelled, there are so many special places.

We have watched in awe as the sun has set over one of our national parks or many beaches. We felt the sand under our feet along our stunning coastlines. We witnessed the richness of the red sand across our deserts and been surprised by the diversity of native wildlife, flora and fauna.

This is why Territorians are passionate about protecting our environment so that future generations can experience the beauty and wonder that has been enjoyed for thousands of years. It is an environment that has not only brought us joy but provides crucial support to our economy, for example, through our tourism sector, bringing visitors from across Australia and the world to see our iconic natural wonders and beautiful landscapes.

Our natural resources help nourish us and are in demand for sectors such as agriculture, mining and other resource-reliant industries. For sustainability across all Territory sectors we need to balance the ongoing protection of the environment, with the need to maximise the benefits we derive from it to provide jobs for Territorians and grow the economy.

To do this, we need relevant and modern laws in place to ensure that our environment, and our lifestyle that depends on it, is protected for future generations. I am very proud of all of the achievements this government have made to do this.

Our Labor team went to the last election with a clear vision for the future, and we have been delivering on that vision. The Territory Labor government understands that a strong economy relies on a healthy environment. We are securing our natural assets because that creates more local jobs. This is why we are developing a climate change strategy, creating jobs through our 50% renewables target, strengthening environmental protection laws and developing an offsets policy.

Sadly, the CLP failed to protect our environment and precious water resources. It was careless with the management of the Territory's water resources, of which the effect continues to be felt today, and neglected to put protections in place before approving onshore gas exploration in the dying days of its government.

Last Sunday at the Rapid Creek markets, the Leader of the Opposition, stood by her CLP candidate for Johnston, Josh Thomas, while he declared that the most significant factor impacting our environment is a trivial matter that the people of Johnston do not care about. Mr Thomas demonstrated that he has zero understanding of the impact that climate change has on our environment with a totally uneducated view of climate change. On Sunday he stated:

Climate change will always change, the weather will always change.

This is a dangerous position to be in, and it is a sad reminder of what the previous CLP government did. It scrapped the Territory's climate change policy, did not listen to the science, disregarded our environment and gave away our water, all of those putting jobs at risk.

By ignoring and denying that climate change exists, the CLP put jobs, our environment and the prosperity of the Territory in jeopardy.

I want to share some information from the United Nations on climate change to educate the CLP and remind them that climate change is real, and it is having an impact on our environment, our jobs and our lifestyle:

Climate change is the defining issue of our time and we are at a defining moment. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale. Without drastic action today, adapting to these impacts in the future will be more difficult and costly.

Responding to climate change helps us protect the things we value the most and the things we cannot put a price on, like our incredible environment, and will create economic opportunities for Territorians and Territory businesses through the emerging industries and local jobs.

By stark contrast, I want to assure Territorians that the Territory Labor government has been prioritising local jobs, protecting our environment and putting children at the heart of our decisions, working towards a brighter future for all Territorians, and we have been addressing climate change.

Since coming to government, Labor has prioritised creating jobs and protecting the environment by making significant reforms to ensure the best protections are in place and ensured we have a plan for our future. We have replaced outdated legislation and practice, ensuring we are strengthening governance and accountability for environmental decisions, supporting local jobs and providing greater certainty for the community and business.

I will start by addressing the significant steps this Labor government has taken with regard to water resource management. The Territory's water is a precious resource that we all share, and as our population and new businesses and industries grow, so too does the demand on this finite resource.

From our larger population centres to our most remote communities, we need to responsibly manage and allocate our water resources to ensure the ongoing health of our rivers and waterways, while providing households, businesses and industries with the water they need to live and to prosper.

Management of our water resources is crucial to protect the environment and to support important cultural values, and to provide certainty to industry that rely on that water. Water is of enormous public benefit and its management requires transparency, accountability and a shared obligation for its effective use. This is exactly what we have done.

We have undergone a process of reinstating water advisory committees to ensure that community values about water allocation and management are considered, and that community members and stakeholders are part of the water allocation plan development processes in their area.

Water allocation planning is an integral part of establishing the estimated sustainable yield in a plan area, in determining and communicating the underpinning science on different water resources, and informing water allocation decisions by the Controller of Water Resources under the *Water Act 1992*. This work is of course lead by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

However, the role of the committee in advising on matters such as the values for each resource, important environmental and cultural assets that require protection, and through setting a range of localised rules on matters such as trade, is equally important. It ensures that local stakeholders are able to participate and contribute to the planning process in their region.

Each committee has its own challenges and no doubt, its own views on how to tackle those challenges, but to date I have been provided robust advice from the committees, advice on effective, fair and informed water allocation plans and policies for their regions.

Over the past year this government has declared three new plans, namely the revised Western Davenport Water Allocation Plan in Central Australia; the Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer Water Allocation Plan 2019–2024 and the Ooloo Water Allocation Plan 2019–2029 in the Top End. A fourth plan in Central Australia, the Ti Tree Water Allocation Plan 2020–2030, will soon be declared. These plans are providing greater guidance on sustainable water allocations in these regions.

A return to the consultative approach to water planning was part of our sustainable water use election platform and with the finalisation of four plans over this time, evidence of its success.

I take this opportunity to thank the committee members and chairpersons, past and present, for their invaluable contributions to the development of these plans.

This government has also reinstated Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves, which were shamefully scrapped under the previous government. This will ensure water resources within a Water Allocation Plan are set aside for future economic development by local Aboriginal communities.

The Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserve Policy Framework, established by our Labor government in October 2017, provides Aboriginal landowners with increased opportunity to access water resources for their economic development.

This ensures that water is reserved in the consumptive pool for future Aboriginal economic development and enterprise, and addresses concerns that Aboriginal Territorians are missing out on future beneficial, economic outcomes on their land because they are currently not ready to develop that land.

It also provides a positive incentive for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups to work together, and with other prospective partners; through opportunities for Aboriginal employment, water trading, land development projects on their land and shared equity arrangements in development projects.

In October 2019, amendments to the *Water Act 1992* were passed to reflect the Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves Policy Framework. Regulations to support these amendments are progressing and will be finalised in the near future to allow the amendments to come into effect.

Each of the finalised plans establishes Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves, either formally or notionally, providing Aboriginal people with the opportunity to undertake water based economic developments in these areas, either on their own or in partnership with others.

The Northern Territory Government's Water Licensing Portal is also a product of our commitment to transparency and accountability. We introduced a new, centralised, user-friendly public water portal that makes it easier for the community to access documentation relating to water licence decisions and to participate in the decision-making process. This was to remediate the lack of transparency by the previous CLP government about water licence decisions. We also recognise that water is a public and shared resource and that government must be accountability for its management and allocation.

In June 2017, the Water Licensing Portal was launched, giving Territorians unprecedented access to water licence and water allocation information, greatly improving transparency.

The portal includes:

- information on licensing and water allocation principles
- links to water allocation plans
- water advisory committee information
- maps of licences in relation to water controlled districts and allocation plan boundaries
- individual licence details, including factors considered in granting a licence
- spatial and dashboard analytical representation of information
- links to scientific reports and publications.

We also took to the election a commitment to provide transparent, accountable government, and we are seeing that through. It is an important commitment because the previous CLP government eroded the community's trust by sidestepping fair process in several significant areas. Water licencing was one of those areas. That is why we completed the Independent Review of Water Extraction Licences granted during the four years of the former CLP government.

In this time, the CLP allocated large water extraction licences without appropriate administrative processes and checks and balances in place. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has completed over 95% of recommendations arising from the Independent Review of Water Extraction Licences, with the remaining recommendation relating to an assessment of the Mereenie Aquifer system close to completion.

In keeping with the focus on transparency, updates on progress against the recommendations is publicly available on the government's website. This is one way we are restoring trust and public confidence in the water allocation process.

Work is also under way on a range of other reforms to ensure the Territory's water policies are fair, effective and transparent. This includes changes to legislation in December 2018 that now sees mining and petroleum operations subject to the *Water Act 1992*. This means that, like other large water users, they will be required to apply for a water licence.

We recognised the important role the mining and petroleum sectors play in the economic development of the Territory, and the importance of strong public confidence in these industries. Ensuring that these industries are subject to the same regulatory scheme as all other industries helps provide this confidence.

The removal of the previous exemption requires all mining and petroleum activities to be subject to the arrangements and processes in place for water extraction licences as well as bore construction permits, and permits for alteration to a waterway.

These changes support the recommendations of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing. They will ensure we can better track and monitor water use across the Territory, will help inform future planning, and will ensure the ongoing security of our water supplies.

The amendments also establish new compliance options expected in a contemporary legislative framework, updating offences in light with the Criminal Code 1983 and revising penalties that align with industry best practice and other jurisdictions.

Options such as infringement *notices and make-good* provisions now *incorporated* in the Act, establish a scheme for regulatory enforcement outside the court system. The amendments provide *appropriate* deterrence against offences against the *Water Act 1992* and improves the *efficiency, effectiveness and fairness* of regulatory actions that can be taken under the Act.

Other amendments to the *Water Act 1992* and regulations which commenced last year help facilitate trading of licensed entitlements, improve administrative efficiency and reduce red tape; providing benefits

to the broader community though improved management of water resources, through more timely decision making and reduced costs for applicants.

There is still a lot to be done in the water reform arena, and this work will be guided by the feedback we received through the Northern Territory Water Regulatory Reform Directions Paper that was open for public consultation early last year.

To date, policies on prioritisation of allocations, trade and underutilisation of entitlement policies have been finalised and are now in effect.

Grant funding. This government recognises and supports the important role community groups play in protecting the Territory's environment and holding government to account. This is why on forming government we reinstated funding support for key environmental organisations so they are able to hold us to account as we implement our reforms. This is crucial funding that was taken away when the CLP came to government in 2012.

We value the role these groups play in giving voice to community aspirations for better environmental protection and sustainable development. The Territory Labor government allocated \$630 000 in operational funding to environment groups in 2019–20. This funding assists organisations to engage with the government in the development of environmental policy, promote environmental awareness in the community and improve the management of waste in remote and regional Australia. The Arid Lands Environment Centre, Environment Centre Northern Territory, the Environmental Defenders Office NT, Australian Marine Conservation Society, Keep Australia Beautiful Council NT and the Local Government Association of the NT have all benefited from this funding.

This government has provided a further \$300 000 in environment grants to encourage the community to improve waste management in the Northern Territory.

Twelve grants were awarded to organisations across the Northern Territory through a competitive grants program in 2019–20. Projects funded include a large scale composting trial in Alice Springs, a waste awareness *campaign* in the Big Rivers area, a portable bailer to increase the efficiency of the drumMUSTER, infrastructure to help schools divert waste from going to landfill and equipment to help staff at a new Container Deposit Scheme collection depot in Wadeye.

This government recognises the important role that Aboriginal ranger groups undertake in protecting the environment and we have supported these ranger groups through the Aboriginal Ranger Grants Program providing \$4.1m over two years for one-off capital grants of up to \$100 000 to help ranger groups to purchase essential items like vehicles, boats and radios and communications equipment. This funding helped 46 ranger groups purchase capital items over the last two years.

We also committed \$2m annually for a Conservation and Land Management Fund to support land management on Aboriginal land and sea country.

Under the multi-year funding, the Northern Territory Government has allocated \$5.8m of its \$8m commitment under the Land Management and Conservation Fund supporting 30 ranger groups across the Northern Territory. Applications for the remaining funding commitment will be called for at the end of this month.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

QUESTION TIME

Youth Violence – Consequences

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Last week in Palmerston, a 14-year-old girl was bashed by a group of at least eight other youths. She did not know them, she was simply walking from Target to the bus stop. The entire incident was captured on CCTV.

This was a violent, unprovoked and very serious attack. At least one of the youths was known to police and allegedly had charges against her for previous offences. Unsurprisingly, the young victim does not want to

go to court and relive the incident if her attackers will not face consequences. How do you suggest the father of this girl tells his daughter that she, as a victim, has no recourse under the current system? When will you and your government admit that you have failed Territorians with your victim-blaming offender-focused policies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, first I want to acknowledge the distress for this family and young girl in that circumstance. Any form of violence and any type of this bullying behaviour is completely and utterly unacceptable and taken very seriously by police. I know it is something they take very seriously and work very hard on. We also know that the impacts of that type of crime on a victim of crime are significant. As someone who has worked with a significant number of victims of violence, I know this can have impacts.

There has been some discussion. I have discussed with the members of Palmerston some of these issues in the shopping centre. We have been talking to police about these concerns. We will continue to work very hard to reduce the amount of violence within our community and send a very clear message that this is unacceptable.

I am more than happy to follow up the details of this specific case. I have had a quick briefing on it previously. I want to be clear that the justice system is there to support victims of crime. Police are very skilled at supporting victims of crime through what can be a very difficult process. I am sure they will be more than happy to sit down with this young person and talk them through that process. We brought legislation before the House that was about supporting victims through this very difficult circumstance that you have raised.

We know that vulnerable witnesses, particularly young women going through that process, need to be supported through the court process. We have worked and will continue to work on that. It is completely and utterly unacceptable. We need to put those things through the process. I am happy to get a briefing and get back to you on the specific circumstances of that incident. But it is completely unacceptable and we are in total agreement on that.

Renewable Energy – Environment Protection

Mr SIEVERS to TREASURER on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER

Can you outline the Territory Labor government's record of investing in renewable energy and protecting our environment? Are there any risks to this approach?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Brennan is someone who passionately believes in the importance of protecting the environment. He loves going fishing and into our parks and enjoying the wonderful, spectacular environment we have.

This is why we are a government that is committed to protecting the environment. Since we came to government we have taken big steps to do just that. We have delivered a new *Environmental Protection Act* to safeguard the environment for future generations. We have improved the Water Act. We will never be able to forget all the things that happened under the previous CLP government when it came to water. We have accepted 135 recommendations from the scientific inquiry into onshore gas. That is making sure we have world-class regulations to safeguard the environment.

Of course, we have set a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030. We have already seen in this term of government great improvements in the uptake of renewable energy, something we are very proud of because more renewable energy means more jobs for Territorians and investment in the Territory. It also means that we are seriously tackling climate change—a very important point.

This Territory Labor government believes in climate change. We have a Minister for Climate Change with a climate change policy that was something the former CLP government scrapped. It is pretty questionable what the CLP's position on climate change is after we heard the CLP candidate for the seat of Johnston on the weekend when he was asked about climate change ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order! Leader of the Opposition!

Ms MANISON: I quote:

Climate change will always change. The weather will always change. We had an ice age 15 000 years ago.

That is the Country Liberal Party view on climate change. From what we can hear they think there is nothing out of the normal and nothing to see here—a real concern.

We want to know what the risks are, going forward in the Northern Territory, if you had a CLP government at the helm. What would they do with climate change and renewables. We have heard their policies, one would be to scrap the renewable energy target. We know they walked away last time on climate change. They had no form when it came to protecting the environment last time they were in government and we know they are climate change deniers.

Territory Net Debt – Daily Interest

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

Is it true that Territorians are paying over \$800 000 per day in interest because of your debt?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Territory books are there for all to see—in the budget, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and the Mid-Year Report.

We are a government that has had to deal with the biggest challenges with GST since any Territory government. It has been huge, the devastating cuts to the GST and it is now becoming a national issue, as the national economic conditions contract and the pressure that is being put on the national economy, particular with the bushfires and the coronavirus. This will flow through and have more of an impact on the Territory budget when the GST takes across the nation. When they go down, it hurts the Territory's share of the GST.

That is why we have done everything we can to invest and support local jobs and local businesses and to make sure we grow the economy. Ideally, we do not want to be reliant on GST funding, we want to have a diversified economy where we have Territorians who have more own-source revenue being generated from within the Northern Territory.

The way to do that is to make sure we continue to support diversifying the economy, to bring new industry in and also to support the traditional economic sectors. It is making sure we invest in jobs, jobs, jobs and do not take the CLP way of cuts, cuts, cuts. We know all about that and selling public assets, which is not the approach we take.

We have made sure that we stimulate the different sectors of the economy where it is needed, making sure we have the right projects in place. We have ensured we are taking quick and decisive action to support local jobs and businesses through our strengthened Buy Local procurement reforms, supporting local businesses and jobs.

We are diversifying the economy. Look at the work on onshore gas ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; with 50 seconds to go do Territorians pay \$800 000 a day interest?

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order, the minister has time to answer the question.

Ms MANISON: If you look at the books, the budget papers, the Mid-Year Report, the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, the information is there.

This is a government which is looking to grow the economy and create new jobs. A government that is about jobs, jobs, jobs not cuts, cuts, cuts. We know that is the form of the CLP, the leader of Territory Alliance, the Member for Blain, and the independent member for Araluen, when they worked together in this parliament. That is how they have gone about business.

We are committed to growing the Territory economy; more jobs and investing in Territorians, not taking a cutting agenda like the CLP.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
Territory Net Debt – Daily Interest

Mr HIGGINS to TREASURER

If we refer to the books, Page 32 of the Midyear Report 19–20 says ‘we have interest expenses for 294m so that divided by 365 days a year’, Treasurer, will you now acknowledge we’re paying \$805 475.45 a day in interest because of your irresponsible debt?

ANSWER

I will make no apologies for standing up for the Territory by making the hard decisions and doing the heavy lifting which the former CLP government and the current Member for Blaine or the former Member for Araluen, former Treasurer, did not make. We have seen the biggest GST cuts in the history of the Northern Territory and made to do the hard work to repair the budget and create new jobs at a tough time because we are investing in jobs, jobs, jobs.

We are not taking a cut cut cut agenda which we know is forte of those opposite. We have seen it before, the broken promises of 2012, what they do and how manage government. When we have gone to Canada to have that fight with the Commonwealth we have not seen the CLP standing there with us, doing what Territorians need. We are a government getting on with the hard work investing in jobs and a better future ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Health Services

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER for HEALTH

Minister, what is NT Health doing to develop sustainable practise whilst continuing to deliver quality health services to Territorians?

ANSWER

I thank the Member for the question. We cannot deny that increasing numbers of natural disasters, rising temperatures and sea levels and dryer rainfall patterns ...

Mrs Lambley: Oh, things are tough, aren't they?

Ms FYLES: All have the potential to impact our health. I pick up already from the interjections from the Member for Araluen: perhaps she should listen to this response, I believe when she was in government in 2014 they scrapped the NEG Manager position in the Department of Health because they don't like or believe in climate change over there. I'll remind the house what the CLP Candidate for Johnston said on the weekend: 'Climate Change always change, the weather will always change' ...

Mrs Finocchiaro: Because jobs are number one. People care about their jobs.

Ms FYLES: The Leader of the Opposition doesn't like to hear this but boy she looked astounded. Anyway, I will just remind her ...

Madam SPEAKER: Pause. Just keep your volume down, please, honourable members. Minister, you have the call.

Ms FYLES: I am reminding her because from the look on her face she was mortified. The CLP Candidate said 'Climate change will always change. The weather will always change. We had an ice age 15 000 years ago.' The impact of climate change ...

Mr Higgins: At least he's honest.

Ms FYLES: We have an interjection, 'at least he's honest', because that's what that mob over there really believe about climate change, but most of us in the chamber believe and are planning for it. Addressing

climate change and its impacts is a priority for this government given its potential to significantly affect the delivery of health services in the Territory. The changes to the natural environment could have a significant adverse effect on communities. We are getting on with the job of having good policy ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Minister please pause. What is your point of order?

Mr HIGGINS: 110 Relevance. This question was about health, not climate change.

Madam SPEAKER: There is quite a bit of latitude. Minister, you have the call.

Ms FYLES: At NT Health we are working to reduce the impact of global warming on our health service delivery with strong health leadership to educate and develop policy to promote delivery of healthcare without environmental harm. We already retrofitted existing buildings with efficient lighting and air-conditioning chillers and new buildings such as Lorraine Brennan and the Palmerston Regional Hospital have an efficient design.

The Top End Health Service has also drafted a sustainable healthcare strategy for all of its facilities that looks at a number of aspects including staged initiatives and business objectives for the next three years, focussing on reducing general and clinical waste, improving our energy efficiency and reduction of water consumption and changes to organisational behaviour. They do not want to hear it over there, but this is something our doctors, nurses and clinicians on the front line care about.

I challenge you to get out there and meet with them so that you can understand the impact it will have on our environment and the delivery of health services. People who work outside in the construction industry— The Northern Territory will be facing more days of extreme weather and this will have an impact on the ability of those to work outside, but also the abilities of illnesses, kidney stones et cetera. We are working with our clinicians. We are listening to them. We respect that climate change is real. We are not denialists.

Alcohol Floor Price

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

You have been very quick to point out the benefits of your floor price. But reports we are receiving from retailers suggest that Territorians are drinking more since your government passed the floor price legislation almost a year-and-a-half ago.

Evidence suggests that drinkers are simply switching from lower alcohol content products like cask wine to higher content drinks such as spirits. You said the floor price would decrease alcohol consumption. It seems your floor price is not working.

Will you now release the wholesale liquor sales for the last year so that Territorians can judge for themselves the impact of your floor price?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, seeing as the Leader of the Opposition was so reluctant to ask me the question, perhaps I can throw it back at her. What is she going to do with the Riley review recommendations? What are you going to do with the floor price? What are you going to do with the Banned Drinker Register?

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: Something she refused to answer on radio last week. Now she is interjecting.

Mrs Finocchiaro: What is your floor price doing? Answer the question. When I am on that side you can ask me the question but you are the minister.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Opposition Leader, you have asked a question, allow the minister the courtesy of replying.

Ms FYLES: Those were the questions I put to her and she refused to answer them on radio last week. We know what the CLP did last time. They scrapped measures without any measures in our community. We saw

alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour, and our emergency departments overflowing with grog-related harm.

As a government, we have been committed to an evidence-based policy. I challenge you Leader of the Opposition ...

Members Interjecting.

I would like the Leader of the Opposition to listen to this. I challenge you to have an evidence-based approach and policy. Will you scrap the floor price?

Mrs Finocchiaro: I challenge you to answer a question in Question Time. You have two minutes left. Answer my question.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, that is a warning.

Ms FYLES: They do not like to hear it. We have created a safer community by introducing a range of measures that were done in an independent Riley review that saw business, justice, health professionals ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: Relevance. I asked very clearly if she would release the wholesale liquor sales figures.

Ms FYLES: I am very clearly explaining what we have done. An evidence-based approach that you will simply scrap given the chance.

The floor price was introduced on 1 October. It targets crime and antisocial behaviour by reducing the amount of alcohol consumed by problem drinkers. The vast majority of products remain unaffected. The floor price has seen massive reductions across the Northern Territory. Alcohol-related assaults are close to their lowest levels in a decade. In the 12 months ending November 2019 there was a 20% drop in alcohol-related offences.

She has switched off now. She does not want to listen to the good news. She will stand there and throw it across the Chamber but not when we talk about the real impact of these evidence-based policies backed by health professionals. The challenge is there for the Opposition Leader. She can have the approach that we saw with the former Opposition Leader who would look at the evidence and listen to those experts.

Palmerston—she might care about this, it is in her own backyard—15% fewer alcohol-related assaults in the last year. Alice Springs 30% fewer alcohol-related assaults in the last year.

The challenge is there for those opposite. Will they have an evidence-based approach or will they simply scrap these measures and we will see the rivers of the grog flowing in the Northern Territory. We are committed to following this work through. We are researching and looking at it and we will continue an evidence-based approach to alcohol policy in the Northern Territory.

The latest progress report shows 168 of the 219 accepted recommendations have been completed. The only threat to them is a CLP government.

Renewable Energy – Jobs

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for RENEWABLES, ENERGY and ESSENTIAL SERVICES

How is the government's plan for more renewables helping to create local jobs right now and securing our economic future?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I know the Member for Karama feels very passionately about protecting our environment. We understand—and those on the other side of the Chamber clearly do not—that when you protect the environment you also support a stronger economy and more jobs. It can no longer be seen as a trade-off between the two. In fact, reducing carbon and increasing renewables ...

Mr McConnell: How many jobs are in renewable energy?

Ms WAKEFIELD: ... is going to provide the Territory with unprecedented economic opportunity. We accept the science of climate change. We are very clear about that. I am surprised to hear the Member for Stuart heckling me because I thought he also believed in the science of climate change. He stands up and talks about it often ...

Mr McConnell: How many jobs are there in renewable energy? You do not know, do not know.

Ms WAKEFIELD: ... and we know that the jobs are attached. That is not what the CLP believe. The candidate for the CLP in Johnson experienced his own climate change after that press conference because the look on the Leader of the Opposition's face showed a very chilly, ice age coming on. That was the only ice age that the candidate for Johnson was ever going to experience. They have had so many positions on this. Three press conferences to clear this up, whether or not they believe. We believe. In fact, we are investing in your electorates in this very issue. .

The Member for Daly shocked me last year when he got up and said that investment in renewables was not real investment knowing the outcomes that are happening in his electorate. In Daly River, we have been achieving up to 70% of power generated by renewables in that part.

Mr McConnell: Wasn't that a CLP project?

Ms WAKEFIELD: That is an amazing project. A solar/diesel hybrid solution that is saving diesel. The expertise within Power and Water to do that.

Mr McConnell: Wasn't that a CLP project? I think it was. Didn't the CLP borrow the money for that project?

Ms WAKEFIELD: I do not understand why you do not want further investment in your electorate that is driving jobs and outcomes ...

Mr Wood: Did your government bring that into being?

Mr McConnell: No, no, the previous government. Do you remember that? I went and got that. A six billion dollar ...

Ms WAKEFIELD: ... and has the ability to grow because businesses need power to grow. We need that to be renewable power for that growth.

Mr Wood: Is that a Labor program?

Ms WAKEFIELD: This week, the Minister for Education out at schools talking about our Rooftop Solar for Schools initiative. This is an important initiative ...

Mr Wood: I thought it was before you came in.

Mrs Finocchiaro: How many schools have you done? How many schools have you done?

Ms WAKEFIELD: ... Not only is it putting money back into schools, it is also saving the environment as well as learning opportunities. This is because those kids know ...

Mr Wood: Did you study chronology?

Ms WAKEFIELD: ... that jobs of the future are about a green economy.

Mr Wood: The science of time?

Ms WAKEFIELD: By putting the solar on the roofs, providing those educational opportunities, and saving money on schools' bills that can go back into education—which you mob cut, dreadfully, when you were in government ...

Members interjecting.

Ms WAKEFIELD: ... we know we are getting better outcomes for Territorians by believing in renewables.

Planning Scheme Amendment – Sex Services Businesses

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Minister, in November, your government passed laws allowing sex services businesses to operate in the Territory without limiting where they may operate. You also proposed an amendment to the Planning Scheme which would allow those sex services businesses to operate in the suburbs. Territorians do not want sex services businesses next to their homes, schools, child care centres, churches or other community centres. What is the status of the planning commission process following the public hearing on 3 February, and when will Territorians know whether the house or unit next door will be used as a sex service business?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, so it is 'No sex, we are CLP' obviously. Probably a good slogan to have.

First of all, there has always been the ability to have solo sex workers in the Northern Territory. That has been the case since 1992. Let us be clear, single sex workers have been able to work out of home since 1992.

Member for Daly, I am the decision-maker around these changes to the Territory Planning Scheme. The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice has written to me regarding that.

The second thing to be clear about is, in the legislation that we have talked about previously in this House, we said that if you are near a school, a childcare centre, a place of religious worship, that you cannot have two sex workers working in a place that is right next door to a school.

Mr Wood: ... by

Mrs Finocchiaro: ... and across the road.

Ms LAWLER: We are not turning a blind eye. There will be regulations in place. We received public feedback on 13 December. If you want to have more than two workers, we have said that that is something that can take place in light industrial areas in the Northern Territory. We are very aware of concerns that have been raised by a range of people, particularly COTA, who have been in contact with you just like they have been in contact with us.

It is legislation that—as a government, we think the right thing to do is deregulate the sex industry in the Northern Territory. If you are a single worker, you are permitted to work ...

Mr HIGGINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110; my question was not about the sex legislation itself. It was about the Planning Commission, which had its hearing on 3 February, so when will we hear a decision made by the minister following that hearing.

Ms LAWLER: I was getting to that. As soon as I hear that the paperwork has come through I will make sure you are all advised of that.

That is being worked through at the moment, but we are very much aware of people's concerns—it is a small group of people who have concerns. We need to remind people that solo sex workers have been allowed to operate next door to them since 1992. They cannot if you live next door to a school or childcare centre—I do not think people need to be too concerned about this. We will work carefully around the *Planning Act*. We have been very sensible with these measures—13 February was not that long ago, so we will provide the information at the right time.

Climate Change – Policy

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for CLIMATE CHANGE

Madam Speaker, it certainly feels like climate change is real in here, as it is getting pretty hot.

Can the minister please update the parliament on the Labor government's promise to deliver a comprehensive climate change policy for the Northern Territory? How will this response support local Territory job creation and protect our environment for future generations?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, our great Territory lifestyle truly is unbeatable, from our fishing to our world-renowned national parks. Territorians know that there is no better place to live.

However, the Territory is experiencing the consequences of a changing climate, with a number of temperature records broken during 2019 across the NT. In Alice Springs, Christmas Day 2019 was the hottest day on record. I have had a few Christmases in Alice Springs, so I cannot imagine it being hotter than some of those.

Territorians support action on climate change. Climate change threatens everything that makes the Territory lifestyle great. That is why the Territory Labor government developed the draft climate change response to address climate risk and create new economic, social and environmental opportunities.

The Opposition Leader stood next to the CLP candidate for Johnston and did not intervene or jump in when she had the opportunity to say, 'No, this is not CLP policy'. She allowed the CLP candidate for Johnston to be a climate change denier. She stood quietly—although judging by the look on her face said, 'Ooh, I haven't had the chance to brief him on climate change'. She had the opportunity to say something about climate change and chose not to.

The draft climate change response identifies three goals that need to be achieved to reduce, mitigate and adapt to the risks and impacts associated with climate change. They are growing the renewable energy industry, reducing emissions across the Territory's economy and adapting the impact of climate change.

Territorians want more renewables and want our environment protected for future generations. We are creating jobs and cost-savings for Territorians and Territory businesses through our target of 50% renewable energy by 2030, and a long-term aspirational target of net zero emissions by 2050.

Investing in renewables and taking climate-smart action means more jobs as well as more permanent jobs for Territorians. Sun Cable building a \$20bn, 10 gigawatt solar and storage farm in the Barkly could generate 1000 jobs, and 300 onsite. There is \$14.3m of funding offered to Territorians and Territory businesses to undertake energy efficiency work and solar energy installation.

We are working hard to make sure we have jobs in the renewable industry. It is in stark contrast to Terry Mills when he was in the CLP and the shameful work he did to scrap the NT's climate change strategy and set things back four years.

They do support renewables, have an appalling record when it comes to protecting the environment and have totally ignored the science.

Climate Change – Heat-related Deaths

Mr McCONNELL to MINISTER FOR HEALTH

Climate change is affecting the Territory now. It is not something about the future, it is affecting the Territory now. Has your department been keeping statistics on heat-related deaths in the Northern Territory? If not, why not? Can you advise how many people have died from heat-related stress in the Northern Territory, up to and including 2019? How many of those people have lived in Territory Housing properties, particularly remote Territory Housing properties, and why do remote Territory Housing properties not need air conditioning? Do you treat people in the bush differently?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for a very important question. A question that we are acknowledging on this side of the House, we are not denying the evidence of scientists. Scientists who want governments around Australia to get on with believing the scientific evidence, not ignoring it or denying it like those opposite.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Stuart, it has been about 18 seconds, give the minister the time to answer the question. She has got plenty of ...

Mr McConnell: She will not be answering the ...

Madam SPEAKER: Do not backchat me. Minister you have the call.

Ms FYLES: Just a moment ago I took the opportunity to share with the House some of the work that we are doing in the Department of Health and the Top End and Central Australian Health Services. We have a sustainable health care strategy.

We acknowledge the impact of climate change—of a hotter, dryer climate—that it will have on Territorians and absolutely it will have an impact on the delivery of health care. That is what we are focused on. I am listening to clinicians around what they are already seeing anecdotally coming through their emergency departments. When people are out working in a hotter environment they are dehydrated and they might have a higher likelihood of kidney stones. They are seeing that in a healthier, younger population.

This is just some of the evidence that has been presented to me but those opposite they just start laughing. If they will not listen to me and they want to laugh at me, I encourage them to get along and listen to some of the medical professionals that have taken their time to update me around the changes that they are seeing.

We are looking at strategies around what we can do to have a more sustainable healthcare system and I outlined that previously. We are also allowing clinicians to have the opportunity to provide input into our strategies through the Medical Advisory Committee or the MAC as it is more commonly referred to in the health world. This is a committee of clinical leaders, drivers of clinical care and medical education. As a group they have been discussing the impacts of climate change on health service delivery, planning for future service delivery and improving health impact on our environment.

The Member for Stuart just asked a question and I believe that I am responding to that. He wanted some very detailed statistics which I would be happy to go back and ask if those statistics are available in that format. We keep different information around different diseases, illnesses and also tragically deaths. He was quite specific. I will see if any of the data that is collected encompasses that, for example, I know we have the child deaths review process where we look at children and what are some of the factors in them tragically passing away at such a young age.

In addition to the strategy that we are working on, both the Top End Health Service and the Central Australian Health Service have committed to joining the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Network. We are committed.

This is not just about a by-election. This about acknowledging scientists and driving change within our system ...

Madam SPEAKER: Time has expired.

Aboriginal Ranger Grant Program

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES

Close to 50% of the land area and approximately 85% of the coastline of the Northern Territory is Aboriginal owned and managed land. Can you provide an update on how the Aboriginal Ranger Grant program is creating jobs, delivering economic opportunities and providing a crucial frontline in conservation and natural resource management of some of the Territory's most remote communities?

ANSWER

The Territory government have been delivering on our promise to protect the environment, create jobs and deliver for Territorians in the bush. The Territory Labor government promised to increase funding and support jobs on country, to deliver economic opportunities in some of the Territory's most remote communities. Aboriginal people have long held cultural and traditional responsibilities to protect.

Aboriginal people have long held cultural and traditional responsibilities to protect and manage their land and sea country. We are supporting Aboriginal ranger groups to do this crucial work with \$4.1m over two years for one-off capital grants of up to \$100 000 to help them purchase essential items like vehicles, boats, radios and communication equipment. Over the last two years this funding helped 46 ranger groups across the Territory.

There is \$5.8m to support 30 ranger groups across the Northern Territory for conservation and land management activities to reduce the threat of weeds, feral animals and fire. Applications for further funding

will be called for at the end of this month. This funding helped fund Aboriginal ranger programs from across the Territory.

Some examples are:

- \$81 000 for Central Land Council to develop a healthy country plan for ranger groups in Central Australia
- \$45 000 for the Alyawarr Aboriginal Land Trust firebreak project—when I was in Central Australia I heard all about that one, it is an amazing break being put through Alyawarr country
- \$15 000 for tracker training for Aboriginal rangers in Central Australia
- the Arafura Swamp Rangers Aboriginal Corporation for feral animal and weed management in the Arafura swamp—we were at Gapuwiyak last year and heard about that project
- \$40 000 for the Dhimurru Indigenous Protected Area Marine Debris Management projects—I have a post on my Facebook looking at the amazing work they are doing
- \$131 000 for the Bulgur rangers to enhance training to align more strategically with Aboriginal ranger career outcomes
- \$37 000 for Larrakia rangers to monitor and manage traditional intertidal seafood—I was at Frances Bay looking at the boat that was made locally.

I recently received a letter of thanks from the Northern Land Council commending this program, saying that it had been outstandingly positive. I thank all our Aboriginal rangers for the work they do.

This government recognises the importance of working together to protect the environment. As we have said before, this is in stark contrast to the CLP, which has no plans for jobs on country and does not understand that good environmental policy is smart economic policy.

Power and Water Corporation – Gas Contract

Mr MILLS to TREASURER

This question relates to your capacity as the shareholding minister for Power and Water Corporation. The Attorney-General identifies a \$95.3m deficit in the last financial year and refers to onerous contract liabilities in the latest report. This is a reference to the Blacktip take-or-pay contract with ENI. There is strong demand for gas on the east coast and that market can be accessed through the pipeline, but to send our gas along that pipeline and receive a good return for the Territory, requires an infrastructure investment to compress the gas. Without that investment the gas cannot be sent east and much-needed revenue will be lost.

Are you aware of this problem and do you support the investment to allow this gas contract to return a benefit to the Territory rather than increase debt and deficit?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Blain is correct in that there is a long-outstanding gas contract with onerous obligations on Power and Water's books and it has been for a long time. We support the development of the gas industry making sure we have the right environmental protections in place, which is why we went through the Pepper inquiry. Part of that is ensuring that we have the best use of the resource as it is developed.

A pipeline going to Queensland has been developed. I have met with Jemena and I am sure many members have had presentations from them about where they see potential into the future and if they see further work offshore or onshore that stacks up to deliver further infrastructure to go to the east coast.

Power and Water has a dedicated team that looks at gas and the delivery of gas. They look for buyers for the gas to ensure it is getting the best value for the Territory. They are constantly looking at ways to negotiate and deal with that, because the gas contract is very sensitive. A lot of work happens there.

As shareholding minister, I want to see the best value for the Territory with gas. I want to make sure we see it used to ensure it has the minimal financial impact on the Territory's books and that the maximum benefit comes through to the Territory.

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance, Standing Order 110. The nub of the question was the need to have the gas compressed so it can travel east. It is an investment of about \$1m, which is \$10m less than the cost of the grandstand.

Ms MANISON: Madam Speaker, regarding the Member for Blain's question, I have not been briefed, Member for Blain, I cannot answer you an question in Question Time.

Power and Water regularly advised me that they are seeking the best value for that gas. Power and Water works on that. My expectation, as shareholding minister, is that they deal with that gas as efficiently as possible, we minimise the impact it has on the books, but where opportunity presents itself, further develop and create more jobs in the Northern Territory. Ways in which we can deliver more affordable energy and assist other great projects in the Northern Territory to get off the ground will always be the first priority. That is important. They have the gas here, so they have to maximise the benefit through to local industry and local jobs.

There is no doubt it the gas business is complex. It has been quite a burdensome contract for a long time, but we are looking to make the best use of the gas.

Regarding your questions about the compression, I will seek more information.

Rooftop Solar for Schools

Mrs WORDEN to MINISTER for EDUCATION

On this side of the House, we believe that the future of the Territory is bright. Last week, I note you were at my great electorate of Sanderson, talking with Anula school about the solar panels they will get on their school to reduce consumption and cost of running their school. Can you please outline how our government is investing in cleaner, greener schools for our children and young people across the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, yes, I agree it is a very bright future in the Northern Territory, particularly when we are looking at greener infrastructure for schools. I was very proud, as you mentioned, Member for Sanderson, to be in Anula school last week. Getting rooftop solar for Anula school as part of their bigger, sustainable curriculum they are doing is a project you have been a big supporter of. Congratulations to the Anula school and the Member for Sanderson for that support.

We believe that the future is bright. As many people have heard in this Chamber, our investment in education is about quality education and sustainable and green infrastructure to support that. Our \$5m investment is in three rounds for rooftop solar for 25 schools across the Northern Territory—in our urban, regional and remote locations. It is also looking at the savings measures that will be enjoyed by schools. Some of our schools, it is estimated, will save up to 40% on their energy consumption through the rooftop solar project, which means that more money will be resourced for other programs for our students in their learning journey, which is fantastic for our Territory schools. We would love to see more of it.

We believe in climate change. We have spoken about it quite a bit today, particularly this afternoon. We are not climate deniers, unlike the CLP. We heard the comments on the weekend which a lot of Territorians are very disappointed about.

Regarding the future of the Territory, a lot of our Territory kids are already talking about climate change and are already active and advocating against it. I am part of a Territory Labor government which is very proud to support actions and activities that will reduce energy. We have a Minister for Climate Change and a minister for renewable energy. We take climate change extremely seriously and we know our Territory schools and students do. Our educators are looking at the ways we can have sustainable measures, not only in our schools now but also for the jobs of the future and are teaching our Territory students about the sustainable practices.

We have heard the minister for Renewables talk extensively about the great solar projects across the Territory. That can start in our schools, looking at the local opportunities for students to go into workforce training and have jobs here in a huge industry which not only provides income across the Territory but the opportunity for our young people to stay and contribute to the bright future.

We are proud to be investing in sustainable infrastructure in our schools.

Finniss River Bridge – Construction Delayed

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

I have been told that the bridge across the Finniss River has been delayed. Could you give reasons why the construction has been delayed on the Litchfield loop road and who designed the bridge? Was it designed in Australia?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Litchfield Park road has been a long time coming to get it completely sealed. I will look forward to its' completion.

Ostojic Group have the contract and I had a briefing a few weeks ago. They ran into some geotechnical problems— they hit rock and it has required extra drilling. The contract was awarded approximately \$26.3m and there was approximately \$35m set aside. Even though extra costs will be involved, it will come under budget. NT Aurecon designed the bridge.

The Member for Daly would understand they have been difficult negotiations. If my information is not accurate, I will source further up-to-date information. I understand the Ostojic Group has been working hard and they believe they will finish in December 2020. If you have further information, Member for Nelson, I am happy to get a briefing from the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Members in this House, traditional owners, pastoralists and the tourism industry will be happy when that road is sealed completely.

Fracking – Environment Protection

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

This government is diligently implementing the 135 recommendations from the final report of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing of Onshore Unconventional Reservoirs in the Northern Territory. What does this mean for the protection of our environment and do you know of any other approaches?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Katherine for the question, we know she is passionate about looking after the environment.

We have been on record in this Chamber explaining how we are working our way through the 135 recommendations. We know the people across the other side of the Chamber would have done things differently, had they been given the opportunity. That would have been disastrous for the Northern Territory.

We are proud of our record, we are a government which does what we say. We said we would have the Pepper report. We are enacting all recommendations from the moratorium and we are proud of the way we are stepping through them.

We are making sure that the Territory's onshore petroleum industry and, as it emerges, our other industries and unique natural environment is protected. Local jobs come first.

We have worked our way through 31 of the pre-exploration recommendations from the 2019 inquiry. We will work diligently and tidy up regulations and further recommendations at the next sittings.

We already have Santos and Origin working in the Beetaloo Basin and employing locals down there. We had a very productive with Imperial Energy who are interested in the Northern Territory as well. They will be on-the-ground sooner rather than later in the Northern Territory so we have junior investors as well. They know they have to very diligently step their way through all of the regulations to make sure that as they come to do business in the Northern Territory that we have set the standards at world's best practice. That has taken some time to step through and we make no apologies for that. This industry will be around for decades to come and it is extremely important that all of those matters are taken into account.

Conversely, as we have had the Leader of the Opposition scream out across the Chamber at different times, they would not have taken that approach. There would be no reserves and there would be none of the protections for Aboriginal lands or parks and all of the risks that were highlighted in the report through the 135 recommendations. They would not have been taken seriously. It is taken seriously by our government.

We commit to doing what we said we would do which is diligently care for our environment through these regulations.

Nhulunbuy – Cost of Living

Mr GUYULA to TREASURER on behalf of CHIEF MINISTER

The town of Nhulunbuy has some of the highest rents and the highest council rates in the Northern Territory making it one of the most expensive places to live in the Northern Territory. Combined with ongoing power outages which cause disruptions community-wide, how is your government helping this remote community to deal with these challenges?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is a government that believes in the future of Nhulunbuy and the East Arnhem region. It is a wonderful place socially, economically and culturally. It is rich, diverse and an important part of the Northern Territory. That is why we have continued investing in this region so it will grow and flourish well into the future.

There is no doubt that with the curtailment of operations it went through a really challenging period. We saw the population contract and a loss of jobs. A lot of work has been done to make sure that more projects have been developed for east Arnhem Land. Work has been done on the feasibility of some exciting projects particularly in the port and the harbour to diversify through tourism and fishing in particular. That would be great. It is a service hub for the surrounding communities out there so ensuring we have the right service profile and footprint out there is an important part of the future.

We are deeply committed to the region. We saw huge changes in the last term. At one point, we had the Member for Blain as the Chief Minister, I remember you had gone to Paris to talk about getting gas to Nhulunbuy. Then we saw the former Member for Braitling go into the seat as Chief Minister and it was on one Darwin Show Day that we saw that gas deal thrown out the window and announcements made about the mine.

That was devastating for the town. There has been a huge amount of work that has gone on to rebuild the future there. This is a government that is deeply committed to the future of Nhulunbuy and looking at the curtailment, rehabilitation and related works out there. We put \$1.5m into infrastructure investments in the port precinct over there. We have also engaged in a local decision-making partnership there to make sure that traditional owners are at the forefront of looking at the service delivery models for the future.

We believe in Nhulunbuy and the East Arnhem region and we will be continuing to invest to make sure they have a bright future.

Renewable Energy – Targets

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for RENEWABLES, ENERGY and ESSENTIAL SERVICES

We have done some great work already in progressing our commitment to 50% renewables by 2030 and zero emissions by 2050. Can you please explain how the government's plan for more renewables impacts on two important pillars of economic growth and the environment?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Member for Katherine is a strong advocate for the environment and for the economy. Katherine is thriving at the moment, and there has been great investment there in regard to renewable energy.

As a government, we understand the opportunities with solar energy. That includes opportunities for our economic security and future prosperity—the ability to grow the Northern Territory. We came to government with a plan for 50% renewables by 2030 and we are making progress toward that. Beyond that there is a

larger opportunity for us to reset our economy by decarbonising in a bright future where renewable energy is powering a range of industries within the Northern Territory.

We are in a perfect position to reap the benefits of this revolution within our economy worldwide. We have the ability to be part of the global transition to a low-carbon future. We are perfectly placed geographically with our size and the sun resource we have, but also the know-how of Territorians on how to deliver this type of technology.

We have talked a lot about Sun Cable because it is an extremely exciting opportunity, but ultimately it is a lighthouse project. It sends a signal to other companies that the Territory is an amazing place to do business if you want to set up a solar energy business. There are amazing opportunities with our sun, our space, our know-how and our infrastructure, such as the railway and gas pipeline. Not only is that about solar, but leading into a hydrogen future. We will have more to say about that in coming months.

This is a difficult time in the global economy. Transitioning to a low-carbon economy is difficult. What you need for that to happen is calm, evidence led, policy-based government, not the rabble we heard from the other side—when we had minister after minister and could not do any planning.

You cannot take these opportunities if you do not believe in climate change. All we have heard from the other side of the Chamber is denial. They also talk about random things like nuclear energy. We have this amazing opportunity. Businesses are investing now in an amazing solar future. From across the Chamber all we hear is negativity, denial that climate change is even happening and a plan for nuclear energy.

That is not the future of the Northern Territory. Only Labor can deliver a future that is about renewable power.

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

MINISTERIAL POLICY STATEMENT Protecting Our Environment

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, these grants have produced some excellent results in creating jobs on country and with the indulgence of the House; I would like to outline a couple for you.

Under the capital grants program the Larrakia Rangers received \$100,000 for the purchase of a new boat that has enabled them to expand fee-for-service contracts for Larrakia Nation to deliver the Darwin Harbour dolphin surveys.

Another wonderful outcome of the ranger grant program relates to the Wardaman Rangers who receive around \$220 000 over two years under the land management grants to fund improved conservation and cultural maintenance on the Wardaman Indigenous Protected Area, including effective management of weeds, fire, biodiversity and feral animals. At the six-month review, seven Wardaman Rangers had obtained casual work delivering the project.

These projects and others are showcased on some beautifully shot videos available through the department's Facebook site.

Last year we also amended the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2019* to strengthen the role of Aboriginal rangers as conservation officers in the Northern Territory by providing greater powers for the protection and management of traditional lands, providing for better environmental and cultural management of country by the 1000 Aboriginal rangers across the Territory.

This act delivers a key component of this government's Protecting Country, Creating Jobs policy not only giving Aboriginal rangers the recognition they deserve but also to enable enforcement powers that increase the ability of groups to effectively manage their land to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis and enhancing economic development and jobs for Aboriginal people on their own country.

The Territory's coast and seas are unique with the coastline extending 10 950 kilometres including 887 islands and coastal waters covering more than 72 000 square kilometres. The Northern Territory's coastal and marine environments provide economic benefits of \$2bn per year and support 6500 jobs.

The Territory Labor government understands a strong economy relies on a healthy environment. This is why we are developing a climate change plan. It is why we are creating jobs through our 50% renewable target. It is why we are strengthening environmental protections laws and why we are developing an offsets policy.

The protection of our coastal and marine environment is also an important commitment of this Labor government. The Territory coastline plays a key role in the economic and recreational life of the Territory and is home to important ecosystems and abundant sea life. The need to protect and maintain our marine environment remains as important as ever, in fact it has been even more important especially in the face of measureable climate change impacts on the world's ocean.

At the same time we need to balance coastline protection and conservation with ongoing support for recreational and cultural use of our coast by the community managing growing demand for our natural resources and fostering sustainable industry for the benefit of our economy. We are doing this through the development of our coastal and marine management strategy which will ensure the health and viability of our coastline. The strategy was developed in consultation with the community for a long-term benefit of the environment and the economy with a focus on boosting recreational fishing opportunities, preventing pollution, fostering sustainable industries and supporting the Territory's unique outdoor lifestyle.

Limmen Bight Marine Park is home to abundant marine and birdlife providing critical feeding grounds and nurseries for dugongs, coastal dolphins, sea turtles and other marine species as well as supporting a rich cultural heritage.

In 2012 the Henderson Labor government declared Limmen Bight a national park. Unfortunately, like many other stories on the environment the CLP neglected to put in place any plan on how this important park would be managed. Our Territory Labor government has continued the work of the Henderson government and released its draft management plan for the environmentally and culturally significant Limmen Bight Marine Park. The plan proposes ways to protect the areas environment and cultural values while supporting sustainable traditional use, economic development, recreational fishing, commercial fishing and boosting an emerging nature tourism industry.

The plan was developed in close collaboration with Limmen National Park traditional owners, Aboriginal organisations, industry, conservation groups and the federal government. It recommends a framework for the ongoing management of Limmen Bight Marine Park and proposes best-practice monitoring and evaluation. The plan ensures ongoing employment opportunities for local traditional owners through cooperative management of the marine park and provides for sustainable tourism opportunities. I am now very pleased to say that the plan has been finalised and will come into operation at the end of March 2020.

Like the broader Territory coastline, the Darwin Harbour also plays an important role in the economic development of the Territory. However, sustainable development of a working harbour needs to be balanced with a range of cultural, recreational and environment values. In recognition of this and as promised when we came to government, the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee was re-established in June 2017 with Professor Karen Gibb of Charles Darwin University as its chair.

The committee is tasked to provide:

- advice to me as the minister on the management of aquatic environments of Darwin Harbour and its catchments
- advice on an integrated research and monitoring plan to inform sustainable management and protect the aquatic environment and critical habitats at risk from climate change
- advice on, and facilitate the development of, an annual reporting framework for Darwin Harbour's aquatic environment
- a forum to share information and provide opportunities for cooperation and collaboration with key stakeholders and the community.

The draft Darwin Harbour Strategy 2019–2024 is out for public comment until 28 February and following this feedback the strategy will be finalised.

The committee also has a vision for a broader and more integrated reporting process for Darwin Harbour and is currently pursuing this. Thank you to all committee members for their commitment to delivering an integrated management plan for our busy city harbour.

We are also supporting economic development and job creation in Aboriginal communities by boosting support for the Aboriginal ranger groups that play such a crucial frontline role in conservation and natural resource management. Further to the Aboriginal ranger grants I mentioned earlier, this government is also investing in carbon farming as an important emerging industry with significant potential to deliver jobs and revenue for remote communities.

This government supports the world-leading Aboriginal carbon industry, which generates carbon credit units by re-establishing traditional savanna fire regimes favouring early dry season burning. On average, the industry generates around \$12m per year in the NT and enables hundreds of jobs in remote areas of the Northern Territory in addition to delivering vast social, cultural, and environmental benefits.

The NT Government also co-funds the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network, which aims to support Indigenous land managers to participate in emerging carbon industries. There are currently 18 registered carbon project areas covering an area of 100 000 square kilometres across the Top End.

The proponents include several Aboriginal ranger programs, and we want to support and nurture their efforts. Carbon farming enterprises complement other land and park management-based industries and contribute to stronger, more diverse regional communities.

New carbon offset methodologies promise to extend the range of viable environments, particularly in lower rainfall areas where carbon farming activities could be undertaken, thus increasing Indigenous participation. This Labor government will work with stakeholders to ensure communities and enterprises are best prepared to fully realise the future carbon farming opportunities.

The NT Aboriginal Carbon Industry Strategy was launched in October 2018 following extensive consultation with major industry stakeholders and participants. Carbon farming offers enormous potential for economic development and job creation in remote Aboriginal communities, and this government will continue to work with Aboriginal people to build strong and sustainable foundations for this important emerging industry.

Given the devastating bushfires experienced by the eastern states and the subsequent announcements of a royal commission into matters such as land management and bushfires, I expect that carbon projects and the success of the Northern Territory's savannah burning projects will be highlighted as an economic opportunity as well as a public safety and environmental one.

When talking of the bushfires, the summer of 2019–20 can only be described as one of the most devastating periods of wildfires in our history. The devastation these fires have caused through the tragic loss of life, homes, livelihood and wildlife will be felt for a long time. These bushfires are undeniably a reflection of climate change.

This government takes climate change seriously and we understand that Territorians support action on climate change. Unlike the former CLP government, of which the Members for Blain, Spillett, Daly and Araluen were all part of—the CLP were the great climate change deniers. Territory Labor understands that climate change poses a serious threat to the Territory lifestyle that we all hold dear.

The Territory is already experiencing the consequences of a changing climate, with a number of temperature records broken across the Territory during 2019. That is why, after the previous CLP government shamefully scrapped the NT Government's climate change plan and Territorians lost four years of planning our response to climate change, the Territory Labor government has put climate change back on the agenda for government. Developing and implementing an effective response to climate risk will require a contribution from all Territorians.

Last year, this Labor government developed and released the draft Climate Change Response: Towards 2050. The draft response provides a long-term vision of our approach to addressing climate risk and harnessing new opportunities. It identifies three goals that need to be delivered to reduce, mitigate and adapt to the risks and impacts associated with climate change.

The draft response also includes an aspirational target of net zero emissions by 2050, in line with aspirational targets set by all other state and territory jurisdictions. The draft response was released for public comment

in September 2019 and after review of the public comments, the final response is anticipated to be released in the coming months.

The Northern Territory Government has established the Office of Climate Change within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Office of Sustainable Energy in the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation to implement the climate change response and deliver its emissions and renewable energy targets.

The Northern Territory Government has committed to 50% renewable energy by 2030 for electricity supplied to Territory households and businesses. Achievement of this target will assist in delivering the aspirational target of net zero emissions.

In addition to the development of a climate change response, the Northern Territory Government is implementing its roadmap to renewables commitment of 50% renewable energy by 2030 for electricity supplied to Territory households and businesses, and has invested more than \$59m in renewable energy and energy efficiency including:

- \$5m over three years for the Rooftop Solar in Schools initiative
- \$8.3m over two years for Territory Generation's five megawatt battery energy storage system in Alice Springs
- \$31m over two years to contribute to Power and Water Corporation's Solar Energy Transformation Program, SETuP, which rolled out 10 megawatts of solar generation in 25 remote communities; the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, ARENA, also invested \$31.5m in SETuP reducing diesel use and taking trucks off the road
- \$5m over three years to establish the Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy at Desert Knowledge Australia to deliver collaborative projects on future grid options and transferring knowledge and technology on renewables and electricity system integration.

The Leader of Opposition has already said that she does not believe the NT should have a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030. This is further proof that the CLP are out of touch. If elected, they would roll back our environmental protection laws, scrap our climate change strategy and our investment in renewables putting jobs at risk.

Our government has a clear plan. We are looking to jobs of the future and supporting job-creating projects like Sun Cable's proposal to build a \$20bn, 10 gigawatt solar and storage farm in the Barkly that could generate 1000 jobs in Darwin and 300 jobs on-site.

We have allocated \$14.3m for Territorians and Territory businesses to undertake energy efficiency work and solar energy installations stimulating the local economy and saving Territorians and Territory businesses almost \$10m per year in lower electricity costs and reduced greenhouse gas emissions; the equivalent to taking 7000 cars off the road every year.

These projects are just some of the exciting opportunities the Northern Territory can harness by growing the renewable energy industry and taking smart climate change action.

We are restoring trust and certainty through the implementation of a robust, clear and transparent framework for how the environment must be protected through changes to the Environmental Impact Assessment processes and legislation, and the introduction of a single environmental approval at its conclusion.

A development process without strong environmental regulation, transparency and accountability, delivers nothing but uncertainty and poor environmental outcomes. That is why we are delivering an effective but clear system of checks and balances that will improve the robustness and transparency of our system and will restore community and industry confidence in our environmental regulatory framework.

One of the significant steps the Territory Labor government has achieved was in creating a contemporary environmental protection regime by passing the *Environment Protection Bill 2019* in parliament last September and will commence alongside the new Environment Protection regulations in May this year.

The new legislation replaces the outdated and ineffective *Environmental Assessment Act 1982* and provides for a modern environmental impact assessment and approval system, commensurate with, and responsive to, environmental risks associated with large developments.

This new act will provide better environmental outcomes for the Territory, while improving certainty for industry in assessment and approval processes and facilitating investment. It addresses community concerns about failings in the Territory's environmental regulatory framework.

The reforms of the environmental impact assessment will also provide for new features expected in a contemporary legislative framework. For example, the act provides for a power to have offsets apply to environmental risks that cannot be fully mitigated and will provide for the establishment of offsets in law.

To facilitate this, we have commenced work on developing an offsets policy with the release of the draft Northern Territory Offsets Policy for public comment, which closed on 14 February 2020. The draft policy provides a guide for the development of both mandated and voluntary offsets arrangements and will initially be used to guide biodiversity offsets assessed under the new Environment Protection Act. However, the application of the draft policy is also intended to apply to the offsets of greenhouse gas emissions in the future.

The Northern Territory is proposing to implement a target-based offsets model that fits our unique circumstances. Development of this model will be tailored through public consultation and expert advice from academics and practitioners. However, activities under the model could include the reduction of landscape-scale threats such as fire, weeds and feral animals. Regional-based targets and indicators, and appropriate governance and operational systems, will be developed to support implementation of the policy.

We will continue to work with stakeholders to establish an offsets policy that delivers the best outcome for Territorians.

The new *Environment Protection Act* provides an ability for assessments to be undertaken at a strategic scale. This means that a collective assessment for a class of projects or a developmental program may be considered at a regional scale, reducing the need for individual project proponents to undertake separate assessment. Strategic assessment is also able to better consider cumulative impacts from multiple developments, and so deliver improved environmental outcomes.

Greater transparency about how decisions are made about the environment and its protection, and more opportunities for involvement from the community in the impact assessment process, is a key feature of the current bill and the reforms overall. All projects referred to the NT Environment Protection Authority for assessment—not just those requiring an environmental impact statement—will be publicly disclosed, along with all of their referral documentation.

Public disclosure of decision-making is a fundamental tenet of good administrative law, and has the added benefit of growing confidence in the rigour and integrity of the assessment and determination of decisions. This, in turn, builds confidence in those projects and the protections to the environment now and into the future that will apply.

The new act will also provide for greater public and proponent input, as well as a new onus on proponents to effectively consult with impacted communities. The regulations that support the new act will clearly identify the processes to be followed for assessment, including periods where the public is invited to input into the decision-making process by providing comment on the project. While the majority of proponents undertake their own consultation with communities that may be impacted by a new project, an obligation on them to consult will be enshrined in law.

As part of streamlining and simplifying environmental regulation, government has transferred responsibility for environmental regulation of petroleum into the Environment and Natural Resources portfolio. This is to ensure a separation between those responsible for compliance and enforcement of environmental conditions of approval and those responsible for the promotion and development of the gas industry.

In 2016, Labor promised that we would restore trust and certainty in environmental governance through the implementation of a robust, clear and transparent set of rules and guidelines stipulating how the environment is to be protected. Part of this promise to all Territorians was to put in place a moratorium while an independent inquiry into hydraulic fracturing in the Territory as undertaken. This is what we delivered.

I know some people in the community are concerned about onshore hydraulic fracturing. However, I can assure you that this government is listening to the science and putting in place the strongest safeguards for the environment. Our government is implementing all 135 recommendations of the inquiry to make sure our decisions are based on science and delivered through a tightly-prescribed regulatory environment, in contrast to the previous CLP government which approved hydraulic fracturing and well testing for exploration in the days prior to the 2016 election without clear protections in place.

Central to the effective delivery of the inquiry recommendations is an improved regulatory regime that separates the responsibility of environmental approvals from those responsible for the promotion of the industry. This is now occurring. The approval of Environment Management Plans (EMPs) for petroleum activities is now the responsibility of the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, supported by independent expert advice received from the NT EPA. Since February last year, I have approved 10 EMPs under this new arrangement, all of which are publicly available on the government's website.

A range of codes of practice have also been developed providing mandatory minimum standards for how various technical aspects of the gas industry must be undertaken, ensuring appropriate protection of our natural environment and water resources.

A stringent wastewater management framework supported by legislative changes, that will not allow disposal of hydraulic fracturing waste to aquifers or streams has been implemented, supported by amendments to the *Water Act 1992*.

These amendments also included changes to ensure prohibitions on taking surface water for petroleum activities and the location of bores for hydraulic fracturing within one kilometre of a stock and domestic bore, satisfying further recommendations of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing.

The Northern Territory government finalised implementation of the pre-exploration recommendations of the inquiry. This allowed exploration applications for drilling and hydraulic fracturing of shale gas wells to be considered.

Environmental and water resource management requirements will be upheld through a detailed compliance and monitoring strategy with results published online on a continuous basis and imposing tough criminal penalties.

As mentioned earlier, to safeguard our precious water resources, the *Water Act 1992* now requires water take for petroleum activities to obtain a water extraction license. In addition, the expanded Daly Roper Beetaloo water control district was established in July 2018 and will require a water allocation plan to be developed for this area.

The development of science-based water allocation plans, in areas where hydraulic fracturing may occur, will enable the community to be engaged in water allocation and appropriate sustainable allocation decisions for beneficial uses.

Ensuring water and the environment are appropriately protected through a proper understanding of the values present in prospective gas regions will be achieved through the development of Strategic Regional Environmental and Baseline Assessments, SREBA.

The SREBA process will provide detailed baseline data that can be used to assess risks and ensure potential cumulative impacts to the environmental and water resources are accurately identified and mitigated. The SREBA will improve understanding of the groundwater resources in the region and the natural values associated with them.

A draft framework that describes all the data collection activities to be undertaken during the SREBA was released for public comment in mid-December and closed on 14 February 2020.

Regional baseline assessment and planning has commenced for the Beetaloo Sub- basin in conjunction with the Commonwealth's Geological Bioregional Assessment program.

The development of science-based water allocation plans in areas where hydraulic fracturing may occur will enable the community to be engaged in sustainable allocation decisions for beneficial uses. The plans will be informed by the environmental, cultural, social, economic, water quality and quantity baseline information and modelling prepared through the SREBA.

This Labor government has achieved a lot and we are not taking our foot off the pedal, there is much more work to do as we look to the future; a future that is sustainable and ensures our diverse and unique environment can be enjoyed for generations to come.

The team at Department of Environment and Natural Resources are incredibly knowledgeable with a wealth of skill and dedication. I thank them for their efforts to deliver this reform. They are a great team working to ensure Territorians now, and into the future, will have access to clean water, clean air and be able to enjoy the great Territory lifestyle that we experience now, day in, day out.

We promised to conduct a review into the granting of water licenses, to deliver a sustainable water use policy that used a consultative approach to water planning, reinstated water reserves for Aboriginal Territorians, and ensure that mining and petroleum operations are subject to the *Water Act 1992*.

We promised to ensure that science and evidence are at the centre of all environmental decision-making, for processes to be transparent and accountable to the community and to transfer all environmental approval, assessment, oversight and enforcement powers to the environment portfolio.

We promised to implement a moratorium on unconventional gas exploration and extraction activities until the completion of an independent scientific inquiry with thorough community consultation and development of a regulatory framework that would ensure appropriate environmental protections and safeguards.

We promised to provide the NT environment groups with operational funding to enable them to engage with government on environmental policy matters. That is what we have delivered. This is a stark contrast to Terry Mills and the CLP who shamefully scrapped the NT's climate change strategy when they were in government.

They do not support renewables and have an appalling record when it comes to protecting the environment. They over-allocated water resources, took away strategic water reserves, cut funding to environmental groups and the list goes on. They ignored science and the best interests of Territorians and wasted four years of government action they could have used to address climate risk and transition to a low-carbon economy. You cannot trust the CLP or Territory Alliance with the environment or our future. Under them it would be a free-for-all without strong safeguards in place for future jobs. Are these the people we want leading the Territory?

The Territory Labor government recognises that the natural environment is one of our best assets and a huge part of what makes living in the Territory special. Protecting our environment creates jobs and good environment policy is smart economic policy. We will continue our work protecting the environment and creating local jobs because we know these don't have to be exclusive. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order.

Mr HIGGINS (Daly): I'm going to briefly speak on this rubbish statement we just heard. My first question in regard to this is around the ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Deputy Opposition Leader, please pause. Honourable members, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was respectful in not interjection whilst the minister delivered. I ask you to award him the same courtesy. Deputy Leader.

Mr HIGGINS: The first thing I'd really query here is the timing. Ministerial statements had to give an update on how things are going in someone's portfolio or two, or brag about an achievement. I searched for the last of these, and I was only thinking last week that we have not had a ministerial statement for a long time. I found the last ministerial statement I can track is the Chief Minister's from 23 August, which is six months ago.

I am so excited if that one comes back because I get twelve minutes to go on it. You actually have to ask the question, and I think the Member for Stuart got it right; this is actually about a bi-election and nothing else. It's simply about a bi-election and some comments that were cut and put on television over the weekend. We really have to ask how many people ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please pause. Member for Katherine, you are on a warning. I have just asked honourable members to cease interjecting and let the member be heard. If you have something to say, then save it for your contribution to the debate. Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HIGGINS: I would love to do a little straw poll in here. How many people really put their money where their mouth is? I would like a list circulated around here saying how many people actually have solar on the roof of their houses. It would be interesting to find out. I do— well the ones that are in here of course because when the sun goes down the lights probably go out at home— and we have lights in here at the moment ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I'm being very clear. I have asked members not to interject. You are directing your comments through the chair, so let us not go to straw polls in the chamber. Deputy Opposition Leader.

Mr HIGGINS: It would be an interesting result, would it not? If we consider some of the things being thrown around here today— let us actually listen to what the Treasurer said in one of her answers, 'we fully support a gas industry'. I say that is well and good, I also support gas and renewable industries as well. You have to say, 'how do they balance the sort of opposite ends of the scale here?' Because if we use a gas industry for power production et cetera, what is the impact or carbon that comes out of that? You have to ask that question. Do you need gas to produce those solar panels that we are talking about and the copper that we are going to have to put in that underground sea cable that is going to export all of this solar energy? You have to ask if you need both of them. You do.

The mining industry says that you cannot survive without the mining industry. They have a whole book that tells you what metals you use in which product. If you are going to talk about renewables and zero emissions, you have to think how can you have zero emissions? How are you going to produce the solar panels? You have to be able to answer those questions and have a realistic view.

Then when we talk about the Pepper report. We never hear anything then about the Hawke report. In my understanding, and reading the two of them, they are very similar and looked at exactly the same issues. When you turn around and say all the people on this side and environmental vandals—sorry but who did the Hawke report? We did. They were input into the Pepper inquiry. So many people over there are so hypocritical.

We had the Member for Braintree criticising me for my credentials. I will remind her that I was the one who got the \$60m from the federal government of which \$30m was invested in the solar panels at Daly. The other \$30m was spread around a lot of the communities and their solar installations. When people say we are climate deniers who do not want renewables—I have given them two challenges, how many of them have solar—put your money where your mouth is—and who actually went and got all that money?

I heard the minister in her speech say that the CLP government in their dying days allowed fracking to go on. I will just remind her of a little thing. The CLP never approved any production wells. All they allowed was exploration. She then said in her speech that they put a moratorium on—and her words were—'exploration and production.' I can recall the Chief Minister when we criticised and said you had killed an industry and nobody will go and do any exploration, he said they can still do exploration. You did not put a stop to it.

You have to wonder what they are doing here. Just trying to create a case for their by-election, or what? It is about time you people started to tell the truth and acknowledge reality.

We talk about water. I want to remind them of some of the things I did when I was the water minister. In fact, prior to being the water minister, I remember sitting in this House when a member of my government criticised Stuart Blanch who was the head of the Environment Centre. I stood up and defended him and said that everyone needs to listen to arguments from every side if they are going to make an informed decision.

I remember the text I got from Stuey that day. It said 'that looks like a career shortening move, Gary.' Look at the result. It did not shorten my career. I am here. People have to look at views from every angle. I have always had a very good relationship with the Environment Centre and the Arid Lands Environment Centre. Every time I go to Alice I try to meet with Jimmy down there and we have open and frank discussions. A lot of people need to go and listen to both sides so that when they come up with an opinion it is fully informed.

I have never backed away from the Strategic Indigenous Reserve. I have always been a supporter of it and I was one of the instigators of it when it came up through the community reference group in the Daly River Management Advisory Committee and I stand by it to this day. When people generalise and criticise, they need to know the true views of people rather than trying to paint them with a broad brush.

The issue of course is that when I became the minister, one of the first things that landed on my desk was the committee that had looked at the Berry Springs aquifer. The clear recommendation they made through the department was that there could not be any more bores put into that aquifer without having a major impact on the environment. I did not shy away from that and I put that freeze in place.

I also took the opportunity at the time to look at the exemptions that we had in place. One of the issues you had with water—and still have to this day—was the massive lack of information on how much water was being used. One of the problems we had in the Darwin rural area was that exemption that said that if you pumped less than 15 litres a second you did not need a licence. That was introduced in the 1990s to encourage horticultural development in that area. That had occurred and we had that development. Then we had an overuse of water and we needed to find out how much water was actually being used.

I removed that exemption. It became incumbent upon anyone who was using water for production, for profit, or whatever, to have a licence. That is now completely in place. My understanding is most of the commercial users have licences now and that will enable the department to get a better handle on how much water is being used. To give people an idea, that area was basically the triangle that would be, if you drew a line, the Finnis River in from the west coast across to say, the Adelaide River and then to the north coast, including Darwin and all the rural area. That exemption only applied in that area, nowhere else in the Northern Territory. It was making an even playing field all the way across the Northern Territory.

That was the first of the changes I made. The other thing I did—and people in here say they re-established their advisory committees. Sorry, they were already being re-established. I had already appointed a few of them before we lost government. You people over there are quick to stand up and tar everyone with the same brush. As I have been saying, it is a new CLP sitting over here. We have completely different views. There is nothing wrong with having that.

People over there need to sit back and say, 'Is what we are saying really correct in this place?' The answer is no. People out there are getting tired of it and are saying, 'We are sick and tired of this government blaming the CLP' For what?

Even today we heard about undergrounding power. My understanding is we are accused of stopping the undergrounding of power. I am sure the Member for Blain will be able to clarify this. My understanding and recall of it is that the previous Labor government did not have funding in its final budget for undergrounding of power. It was not in the budget. If someone can correct me on that, I would be very pleased to have that correction, but my understanding and recall is that the last budget of the Labor government in 2012 did not include funding for undergrounding of power. To twist that to say the CLP did it is a red herring from you people. People understand that. When they hear the truth they are so disappointed in this government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, they are the only things I wanted to get on the record. Some of the other things I have been involved with—I sat on the Wangamaty Landcare Group for well over 10 years, so I have a complete understanding of the environmental impacts around the Daly River. I will stick by them all the time. I sat on the Daly River Management Advisory Committee for more than 10 years.

I want to know where is the involvement of those people on the other side in this? Where is there skin in the game in these things? Or do they just want to come in here and try to score political points when we are leading up to a by-election? As person who will not be running at the next election but will be casting my vote, I will be saying it is purely trying to get political point scoring. It is not the facts or the truth, it is just political point scoring.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what I see in this statement today is a pathetic point-scoring exercise. It is disgraceful that it would even be brought into this House.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I get part of the way to support the sentiment expressed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because we are presented with a very serious matter. It is a complex matter. We need a proper assessment of what the challenges are. They are not political in nature.

It was the most excruciating Question Time I have witnessed for some time. It reminded me of precocious Year 8 kids beating their chests and believing their own shallow talk about very serious things. The obvious challenge we face is ...

Members interjecting.

Mr MILLS: Yes, so you get up, walk from desk to desk and laugh and snigger. But there are serious matters, such as how we as a community navigate this time of significant change. It is easy when things are in one paradigm and we are moving along on the old system. Then we can speak aspirationally about what lies over the horizon and lose ourselves in rapture about how great that will be, but lose sight of our role as a government of how we transition from where we are now to the next phase.

That is the role of government; that is the challenging part. There are a number of matters I wished this government would take seriously and be honest about: the real work of government. At the macro level—well, I have experience with the money flows in the Territory.

In Question Time I asked about the increased deficit and the debt carried by Power and Water Corporation. We have to manage that carefully. We have to be bold and know what we are up against. We have to be coherent and honest so that we can bring the community with us—the business community, mum-and-dad punters—and tell them the truth so we can go on the journey together. They are over the hype, the froth and aspirational the pie-in-the-sky and out-of-reach talk.

I believe there is a better future but the focus needs to be how we get there, not how great it will be when we get there. Because sitting behind all the shallow talk, that is about a centimetre deep and a mile wide, is a political objective: how you win the by-election; how you win the next election; how do you posture ourselves on the stage in such a way that we are more liked by more people than the other mob?

We use a ridiculous thing like it is some kind of pseudo-religious debate, we will burn people at the stake because they do not believe. We have to be a bit more sophisticated than that because we are faced with real challenges. I will outline some of those as it see them.

Last Thursday, I asked the minister responsible for resources to describe in some detail—I thought it would have come out in this speech—how you navigate from exploration to production with onshore gas. We need to know the details of how that decision will be informed so it will be done in an environmentally sustainable way.

It is obvious to me there is a heightened level of concern in the community about what effect this will have on the aquifers. As a former wheat and sheep farmer in arid country where we had to drill for precious water and hopefully got water that was palatable to our stock—we know how delicate these aquifers are. Many of us love seeing water come over waterfalls and the like. We see Rapid Creek, for example, if you want to bring that in—they are thinking about the aquifers and what effect this will have.

I find those concerns entirely legitimate and require a mature government to help navigate through that in a sensible way and provide the necessary leadership. You cannot just cite the Pepper inquiry and all of the recommendations and not drill down a bit further and say, ‘Once the exploration process has reached a point, have we gathered enough data from that to inform the next decision regarding the security of our aquifers?’

I have not heard anything about that. The minister jumped straight to jobs and missed out the important part which is related to good governance. How do you assure people who are concerned? People want a bit more now than just hype. This is serious business. So that is missing and it needs to be there because we are thinking about this more than in the timeframe of the next by-election in a couple of weeks’ time or the August election.

I am thinking about this for my children and for the grandchildren and so we have to get this right now. This is the opportunity. We do not hear much about that. We hear froth and bubble and aspirational talk and how great we are and burn the unbelievers at the stake. It has got to be a bit better than that.

Secondly, just from my own observation, if the energy market is changing and we have already acknowledged challenges in terms of the debt load around Power and Water Corporation, Jacana and T-Gen, we need to have a conversation how we manage the transition of a market place. Do we have the appropriate mechanisms in place? That is the real work of government. Not propaganda and hoopla but changing our market mechanisms to be able to accommodate the shift. That is the challenging work, the real work and that is what real people expect of a government. That is the approach that I would take if given the opportunity to provide some leadership in this space.

My wife and I took up the opportunity, with the encouragement of friends, who said ‘Get the solar panels on your roof’. I know what challenge that faces at a macro level, the debt burdens and the viability of our existing system. I knew that but I expected the government to also know that and help us manage that transition.

I am further concerned when I hear those that are producing significant amounts of power through solar generation, like the airport for example, cannot get it into the system because there is not the capacity to do so. That to me is a problem. What is the response to that?

How does ENI, for example, with their commitment to build three solar farms which are talked about here endlessly, the technical part of this is, how does that get into the grid. How have the requirements changed on ENI that place a discouragement on them to make those next decisions because ENI have had the landscape changed. The rules have changed.

They had an agreement with Jacana and they had their stakeholders. They put \$20m into a serious investment and it appears that the (inaudible) has changed. They are now required to spend more than they expected and their investment is now questionable because the changed requirements that have been placed on ENI which they based their investment decision on with all their stakeholders was altered without any grandfathering clause. You would assume fairly that it would apply forward but it was applied to those that had already made an investment decision with money, with investors with an agreement with Jacana.

That is the sort of stuff you need to talk about. How does this other energy get into the system? Talk to us about the battery systems that you have planned to make this work. Let us have a more mature debate about how that is going to work and how is that going to change the investment appetite for ENI and anyone else that wants to do business in the Territory. You cannot trade on hype, you have to have good governance to be able to navigate in this challenging time.

The expanded challenge is the money market is moving, it is changing. We have to know about that and understand how we can best position ourselves. At the same time meeting the expectation of our community in a sensible way of how we are going to maximise the return to Territorians and the protection of the environment.

That is the conversation that people are hungry for. Not this silly binary fundamentalist debate, but something technical with more grist to it. Informed by real science and the knowledge that this requires an extraordinary level of good governance and leadership at a challenging time.

As anyone knows if you go fishing and the tide changes it is a challenging time to navigate. The tide is turning:

- our money markets favouring renewables
- our production of renewable energy
- how do we get that into the grid
- how do we drop power prices through increased production
- where do the batteries fit in, do they fit in, what are your plans for that.

This time of change with regulation that needs to be brought in place to manage the change, we knew nothing about that. We just: 'here go for the ride, it is going to be a jolly good ride, we will all have a great time'.

That is why we have to be serious about this. We have great opportunity, but at a time of opportunity there is also some significant risk, to the environment, managing of our economy, the transition from one to another, how long it will take, how well we manage it

It can be extraordinarily disruptive and will require a level of courage, strength and wisdom to get through it. I hear none of that. You spend half your time talking about Josh and getting caught in the headlights at the Rapid Creek markets; you get your jollies off that. That is silly, we have more important business here and I do not hear much reference to that at all.

When it comes to our previous water resources. You have not done much when it comes to the protection and the management of water, you have not done enough to allay peoples' concerns about that.

Members interjecting.

Mr MILLS: Oh yes, we all arc up now, it is something we can relate to. You are still permitting massive amount of water to be taken out of our aquifers to feed our horticultural industry. Where is the cut-through thinking and the courage to recognise that the Adelaide River off-stream storage project is something that must be approached with far greater urgency than the cavalier and casual approach we have from the current government.

Ms Lawler: We are doing research at the moment.

Mr MILLS: That research has been going on for 20 years. It is time for a decision, particularly when you have the Darwin River Dam which was built in 1972 and your big plan is for us to use Manton Dam—we have a conflict with recreational use while you continue research on something that is self-evident.

I spoke to Senator Matt Canavan yesterday and asked if there was an appetite in the Commonwealth for support of a project such as this. He said yes.

Ms Lawler: Matt Canavan, back bencher? Why did you not talk to me when he was in Darwin?

Mr MILLS: Calm down, I will tell you the story, stay on the bus. He said of course there is, the problem is we have not had any leadership shown at the Territory level.

Ms Lawler: Oh, he would say that.

Mr MILLS: There you go, it is a political issue? It is actually a leadership issue. We have a serious problem and we have no response except push it over the horizon 20-years on and talk about it. You will just like any other outfit that has appeared in this place. Do not actually do anything and just have hype.

You have wasted four years. You came in saying you were going to rebuild peoples' confidence in the political process, you have decimated it. People were annoyed at the last administration, they are devastated by the performance of this Labor government. You have mucked around and done very little and all you have basically said is that you are not the CLP. That is good, we got that in the first week. How about developing your own agenda.

I told you many times. I was laughed at for saying such things, but now we come to this point and we will see what happens. I have talked about some important matters which require real leadership and the management of the transition from one market to another. But we do not hear anything about that, you would prefer to talk about Josh Thomas and his interview on the ABC. It makes you excited.

The Territory community is desperate for some real leadership. That is why Territory Alliance has been given the support it has. We will take it seriously and involve people around the table and try and work it out together.

Forget the silly politics which is going to get us nowhere except, perhaps, disappoint people even further if they believe this nonsense. We will have no traction whatsoever. All we will have is another administration that blames the last one. We have to change that. Make no mistake, the transition from one to another is the most challenging period. That is the issue. I have not heard enough detail and the community has not heard that, to show that you understand it and are providing the leadership necessary.

I acknowledge the speech, an interesting speech but we need more grist in this for us to know that you are leading us.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I support this statement that has been brought forward by our Minister for Climate Change, our Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources.

Let me firstly remind people that we brought back the portfolio of climate change after it had been wiped off the face of the planet in the last term of government. The word was that apparently people in the public sector were not even allowed to talk about climate change. Would you believe? Climate change. What a disgrace because it is one of the greatest challenges that we face right now locally, nationally, internationally. It is a huge challenging issue.

That is why we value the environment so much. We understand that our environment is precious. We have a responsibility on this earth to take care of it, to make sure that we do the best we can to leave it in good hands for the next generation so that more people can go on to appreciate it and thrive in it. We have a lot of challenges across the planet at this point in time. It is really important that everybody does their bit locally and does their heavy lifting. That is why we are doing that, as a government.

It is important that we talk about the work that has happened because the environment is critical to everything in the Northern Territory, socially, economically. That is why, as a government, we have spent so much time ensuring that we are delivering strong environmental policy and taking the right actions required to preserve, protect and enhance the Territory environment.

I have just listened to the Member for Blain, the leader of the Territory Alliance Party, who has responded to this statement here about the environment. I have heard no plans from him, no policy positions. I have just heard him talk about AROWS which is already being investigated by this government. Water security is a very important issue, socially but also economically here in the Northern Territory to make the most of opportunities, making our land as prosperous as possible for everyone to enjoy.

We heard high level statements from the leader of the Territory Alliance Party, a lot of aspirational talk and no detail. He sat there telling us that we are big picture and no detail yet we have heard nothing from him with regard to the positions of the Territory Alliance Party on renewable energy. Will they honour the 2030 50% renewable energy target? Or about their climate change policies and the actions they would take?

He made a statement about this government doing nothing in the space of water. That is one that I have to throw straight back because there has been a huge body of work which I will go through. We had to do a massive body of work after the last term of the CLP government.

Very high level talk, but no detail, no policies. If they are going to be a credible alternative to people in the community then they need to have policies. They need to tell us what they stand for and stop making big high level statements. I had to bring that up.

When we came to government—and why we went to the 2016 election with the policies that we did—we saw massive change in the environmental space under the former CLP government, huge change. I will go back to one of the first things they did because it is important to note. These organisations are important out in the community. They are about holding the government to account, about driving more debate and better policy, and making sure that we strive to be better in the environment space.

The CLP defunded the Environment Centre of the Northern Territory and the Arid Lands Environment Centre—they cut the funding. They are two important organisations that stand up for the environment every day. Governments might not always like to hear the criticisms or agree, but it pushes more robust debate, better policy and better actions on the ground. You need that scrutiny. The funding was cut and we reinstated it when we came to government because it is important to have that level of scrutiny when it comes to the environment.

Strategic Indigenous Reserves were removed—with regard to water allocation. There was over-allocation in some of the aquifers. There was a huge amount of debate in the last term of government with regard to water allocation. We were greatly concerned about the approach the former government took. We had to do a huge amount of work when it comes to reform in regard to water, which the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources has pursued.

They scrapped climate change as a policy area in the last term, which we brought back. We did not see much action when it came to renewable energy policy. It just seemed that the easy answer was to put in more gas-fired turbines.

As for fracking, onshore gas, the development of the industry—yes, there had been some work done, but not to the rigour of what we did through the Pepper inquiry. That was an extensive body of work with experts who looked thoroughly at the onshore gas processes in the Northern Territory. From that we accepted all 135 recommendations, which put rigorous regulation to make sure the environment would be protected. It was a very thorough process. What we had formerly was a CLP that was willing to frack a lot more quickly, without the level of regulation that the Pepper inquiry found was required to ensure good process and environmental protections.

The question is for the Opposition Leader and the Territory Alliance Party. What would you do with the 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry? Would you maintain them if you were in government? Would you ensure those protections were in place? The answer is no. We know what they were willing to do in 2016, and it was not with anywhere near the same level of regulation to ensure the best practices, to get the balance right to develop an industry, and to ensure the right environmental protections so the community and traditional owners could have a genuine say about what happens on their county. That was a very important part of it.

I stand by our environmental record, as the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources talked about. We have done a lot of work on climate change. We got climate change policy out. It is a real issue that confronts Territorians. It was disappointing on the weekend to hear the CLP candidate for Johnston's comments on climate change. It is clear that he does not appear to believe that climate change is real. He

seems to think it is not an issue of great seriousness. The newly elected Senator for the Northern Territory has spoken about the environment and climate change, and her views on it are also concerning.

We have committed the Territory to 50% renewables by 2030. This is a very important industry for the Northern Territory. It will create jobs and is the right thing to do. It is the way the world is heading. We have so many advantages—the level of sunshine in the Northern Territory. We have seen the interest in the Sun Cable project in the Northern Territory. We are working through a very complex piece of work to deliver more renewable energy. It is not as simple as building it and plugging it in. We need to have the right conditions in place, learn the lessons from the east coast, and have a secure and reliable energy system at a lower cost.

It has been disappointing to hear the opposition say they would scrap the renewable energy target of 50% renewables by 2030. What is their view when it comes to renewable energy and its future in the Northern Territory? What will their energy policies be? Will they be the type of energy policies that support the environment? Are they going to be the contemporary practices of energy policy that mean we have a cleaner environment and tackle the issue of climate change? We want to know.

In government, we have worked on environmental protection and reform. There has been a huge amount of work done on the *Environmental Protection Act*. That was a massive body of work that the minister brought forward to ensure we have contemporary environmental legislation and robust assessment processes so people have certainty that the right environmental checks are made as development happens.

We have worked on ensuring sustainable access to water. There has been a significant body of policy and legislative work. We brought back Strategic Indigenous Reserves so Aboriginal people have more control over water resources and can be involved in the economic development opportunities on their own country. That is important to us and is something that the former CLP government scrapped.

We have been working with the coastal and marine sector to look at the Northern Territory Coastal Marine Management Strategy for 2019–29. This has been an important body of work. We have looked at Aboriginal ranger and carbon industry programs as well. Aboriginal ranger groups are such an important part of the Northern Territory. They know their country better than anyone else. They know good practice and know what works and what does not. They have been around caring for the environment and their country for thousands of years and we must listen to them. They know how best to manage it. That is why we have invested in our Aboriginal rangers on land and at sea. They bring skills and knowledge that ensure we preserve that environment for generations to come. They do a wonderful job and we have invested heavily in that space.

There is no doubt that the environment is near and dear to Territorians. We want to ensure we have a great environment for our children and future generations. We know that a healthy environment is going to create a stronger economy going forward.

This government has done a lot of heavy lifting in this space. My hat goes off to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They have been a powerhouse of work in this term of government when it comes to legislative reform, putting good programs in place and protecting our environment going forward.

This is a government that stands by its record on environmental protection, putting in place the right legislative frameworks, taking the right actions on the ground and honouring the commitments we made to Territorians on the environment. We are deeply committed to ensuring a sustainable environment going forward.

We have heard from the Member for Daly, who will be departing the parliament at the end of this term. It will be interesting to hear from the new Opposition Leader on their views on the environment, particularly on renewables, climate change and their stance on that, strategic Indigenous reserves and water allocation and those important policies because they were a highly contentious part of the last CLP government.

We did not hear the response about what Territory Alliance might do in that space. We heard some very high-level statements.

Madam Speaker, I support this important statement in the House. We must do everything we can, as members of this parliament, to preserve and protect the environment for future generations to come. It is our duty and responsibility.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this ministerial statement to the House.

Last week in adjournment, I acknowledged the concerns of constituents from the electorate of Stuart and across Central Australia regarding fracking, water security and climate change. It is good to see this government has finally felt the pressure of the last two weeks of this by-election campaign to also acknowledge their constituents' concerns.

Many people will feel that this sudden revitalisation of a climate conscience is too little too late. Northern Territory industries—both long-term and developing—have been suffering. The Northern Territory communities continue to suffer, whether they are big or small. The impacts of climate change are here in the Northern Territory and are very real. This jurisdiction is small and, outside of Darwin, very poor with limited resources and even less ability to adapt and be resilient in the face of climate change.

This government will need to lead with innovation and provide water security, water storage, flood mitigation, a range of energy and transforming new energies, and design better housing, particularly public housing. The government will need to move much quicker than it has in the past.

These things cannot just be spoken about when there is an election or a by-election. These things are top priorities.

This government has tried very hard to walk on both sides of the road by both supporting the development of a fracking industry in the Northern Territory and spruiking other policies to reduce climate emissions or fight climate change.

Meanwhile, we have had a massive bushfire in Central Australia in the Tjoritja National Park—some people know it as the West MacDonnell National Park—which caused devastation of local flora and fauna and contributed to the process of densification. We are seeing densification in Central Australia based on climate change right now. It is not an esoteric thing, it is happening right now. We need to be responding to these things, not just having political debates about it. We need to be having policy responses to it.

This national park has been nominated for world heritage in the past—by Labor governments—because of its importance to threatened and vulnerable species. It is a very important part of our natural infrastructure, if you will.

This park is also very important to our tourism industry in Central Australia, with major trail riding events, hiking events, including on the Larapinta Trail. There is also a new mountain bike trail to be built there. It is interesting to see the innovation of product that is being delivered and developed on the Larapinta Trail. For those who do not know, the Larapinta Trail is a multi-day hiking track—one of the best in the world. It is right up there.

I believe we are lucky in the Northern Territory to have two of the best long-distance hiking tracks in the world. One is the Jatbula Trail at the Nitmiluk National Park in Katherine. It is a gem of a multi-day trail. It is about 63 kilometres long. I have had the privilege of walking that several times. Even though I was involved in the construction of part of the Larapinta Trail when I was a ranger and led ranger-guided tours on the Larapinta Trail in the 1990s, I have not yet walked every stage, because there are a number of them and it is 230 kilometres long.

I have walked a lot of the Larapinta Trail. It is interesting seeing the innovation of product on the trail: there are permanent camps for concessionaires who do guided tours; I saw advertisements in a walking magazine about the Larapinta Trail portfolio project that combines yoga; and trail tours that raise funds for organisations from mental health, breast cancer prevention and all sorts of things.

You can see how important the environment is to us in the Northern Territory. It is not a political football or something we talk about when we have by-elections, it is important every day. It is also fundamentally important to Indigenous people.

What is the government doing to protect this unique environment, the park and our tourism assets? Where are the resources to battle bigger and hotter fires? Where are the resources to manage buffel grass? It is an invasive grass that is not yet a notifiable grass but it is causing a lot of problems in Central Australia. Where is the early work to work on how that is affecting our biodiversity and the conservation biodiversity values of our parks?

I have constituents suffering in public housing when the summers are getting hotter and longer. Public housing design and air conditioning is not keeping up. Remember, in a lot of communities—and I am not being critical of the current government or minister, I am just saying that we need to recognise that the vast

majority of remote Indigenous housing in the Northern Territory that is provided by government—and most of the tenants have no option of any other housing in the private market or home ownership, their only option is government housing—is not air conditioned. There are opportunities to air condition it with a window rattler, or whatever, yourself but environmentally they are not very sustainable and pretty hard on your wallet and power card.

We have these very real issues to work on. One of the things affecting our urban centres in Central Australia already—and probably in the Top End—is that people are finding it difficult to stay in their remote communities in summer. They are coming to town for air conditioning and cool places. These are things we need to work on.

They are elderly and ill people who are stressed and have nowhere to go to keep cool in some of these remote communities. I have talked about places like Kintore where there are very few air conditioned public spaces or homes. I am travelling to Kintore early next month. I believe I am going with the Member for Namatjira and we are travelling with an esteemed member of the land council.

I am travelling there next week and know that people will be asking about that again. They will be interested in the innovative things that we might be able to do and look at to make these houses easier to live in during extreme heat.

People, industry and the environment in the Northern Territory are all suffering the effects of climate change now. This is not something the government needs to address in the future; it needs to be addressed now.

Perhaps I am repeating some of the things I said last week, but it bears repeating. I do not believe you can walk on both sides of the road. I believe that governments at all levels should not be subsidising the gas industry in any way. Any government subsidies of this type should be directed towards research and development for renewable energy, not just half or enough to make it look like window dressing, but that is where the funding goes.

If the onshore gas industry is so environmentally necessary and vital for the Northern Territory, why did it take the federal government to have to commit \$8.4m to open the Beetaloo Sub-basin for exploration development? If these industries are sustainable and are so important as part of our future, why do they require this type of public money to subsidise them? I am not convinced.

I am environmentally opposed to fracking, but I do not normally need to get to that position because I do not think it stacks up economically. It is not the silver bullet to fix the economic issues in the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory needs a diversified economy that is inclusive of Indigenous land and labour and includes the geography of the Northern Territory across the Northern Territory. I do not believe that this industry is going to help us in any big way.

If there is an economic future for a fracking industry without these subsidies, let us see it. For now we do not see it. Why did federal Labor in the last federal election promise up to \$1.5bn to develop and connect gas by pipeline in the Galilee and Bowen basins in Queensland and the Beetaloo sub-basin? This is the other side of politics. This is federal Labor promising \$1.5bn in an election campaign to develop pipelines to try and make the economics of the Beetaloo sub-basin work.

If you pick up the blurbs from the industry or the government, this is the most important thing and it is going to bring in all these royalties and jobs. If it is going to bring in all these royalties and jobs, why does it need that level of subsidy from the public purse? That is a legitimate question. It is also legitimate to ask that if there is the availability of those sorts of funds for subsidies from the public purse, why can we not direct them to something that is more sustainable that will not produce all the CO₂ emissions?

Why will the Northern Territory go begging to the Commonwealth to offset as much as \$4.3bn of carbon emissions per year? That number comes from the Pepper report and the reports done by others on the figures in the Pepper report. If we end up with a fully developed CO₂ emitting industry in the Northern Territory based on fracking, to offset the CO₂ emissions of that industry—which we as a jurisdiction are taking no responsibility for—we are just writing to the Prime Minister and telling him it is his problem.

If the Prime Minister was to offset those in the carbon market as we know it now, it would be costing \$4.3bn a year. We sit in this place here and say we are going to create this industry that produces all these carbon emissions and we are just going to go to the Commonwealth and ask them for \$4.3bn to offset it which will just put us back to line neutral. It will not improve our carbon emissions at all.

Through government subsidies to develop a fracking industry in the Northern Territory, Australia's CO2 emissions are likely to go up by 5%. That is not the Territory's emissions; that is Australia's emissions. These increased carbon emissions affect climate change. Anyone that knows how the carbon cycle works knows that CO2 emissions affect climate change and cause global warming. We know that and we have talked about that in the Northern Territory for a very long time. We have talked about that at a government level in the Northern Territory since before the 1990s. We talked about these issues in this place and around the Territory in the late 80s and early 90s. We started talking about CO2 emissions when the main issue at the time was the ozone layer.

The minister herself has said that climate change threatens everything that makes the Northern Territory lifestyle great. Yet, it appears it is up to another jurisdiction—the Commonwealth Government—to offset the emissions you plan on making from your fracking industry that you plan on subsidising. It is—I will interpret the word before I say, it is a Pitjantjatjara word—it means totally crazy; that is *kata kura*. It is totally crazy. The idea that on one hand you can say you are the people that recognise climate change is real and then you want to produce \$4.3bn worth of emissions.

People are not taking you seriously. That is why the Greens did not preference you. They did not stop giving preferences to you because of some idealistic issue with who is wearing what coloured shirt in the Northern Territory. They did not preference you because they do not like that type of duplicity. It is duplicitous to say what you are doing to offset carbon emissions from producing electricity in the Northern Territory is really important, to some number that does not matter to anyone on the big scale. Although all those matter, because it is accumulative.

It is all good to make a 50% by 2030 promise about our energy coming from renewables, but that will mean nothing if you have a fully producing fracking-based carbon industry in the Northern Territory. That will blow it out of the water. It will be pointless work.

We have to be honest about these things. I go back to what is happening now. Some of these things can be dealt with by people's perceptions, but perceptions are powerful in social movements particularly.

I was talking to real estate agents in Alice Springs recently. A number of them are not as progressive in politics as I am. I am sure they have some ochre coloured flags hanging around their premises. They are not engaged in the debate about climate change, and they say that people who are selling their homes in Alice Springs are citing the fact that the summers are getting hotter as a reason to sell their houses.

There are other things that we know about, such as crime, the economy and other things, but apparently a lot of people selling their homes in Alice Springs are citing climate change. The response of this government is to support \$4.3bn worth of carbon emissions. That does not make sense to me. I am not trying to be smart; I am trying to be a thinker.

Not only will these extremes and variability of climate affect the liveability of remote communities for old (inaudible) suffering in the public housing that has no air conditioning, or people in Alice Springs thinking they will move down south. These extremes in events will affect all our existing industries—pastoralism, horticulture, agriculture, even extractive industries can be negatively affected by climate change. Large rain events are a real issues for pit mines, for example, as well as underground mines.

We need to be aware of these things. Here we are again, saying we want to increase our carbon emissions, not just by a bit, but by incredible amounts. I do not have the numbers in front of me; I did not include them in my speech because they were so big they did not make sense to me. They would not make sense to people who are interested in this debate. I am amazed that we can talk about supporting this jurisdiction under the power of this government producing all those emissions.

Beyond the increase in carbon emissions, we need to understand that this industry uses massive quantities of water—incredible quantities. I apologise for being a politician and using the high-level numbers—cherry-picking, or whatever you call it—but a really good average for a condensate or a very light crude is that for every barrel of oil you get—a five gallon US barrel, or 205 litres—you consume about five litres of water.

The most important part of the process of fracking is not the chemicals that people talk about, although they are worrying. It is not the other detergents that get people concerned. It is not the fact that they use vast quantities of certain types of sands and other mineral extracts. The thing that they use that is most important in the physical process of fracking is water under high pressure driven by air. It uses massive quantities of water.

We already know that the Northern Territory is under deep water stress, whether we look at the rural areas around Darwin, at small remote communities like outstations or large remote communities like Yuendumu. We know that there are lots of other places suffering water stress around the Northern Territory and we want to improve an industry that uses exponentially more water than any other industry. Have we really thought that through?

I am not saying that we have done nothing. I am trying to have this debate in this Chamber; that is what this Chamber for. We are supposed to be preparing the Territory for the future; that is our job in here. I am asking some very legitimate and respectful thought-out questions.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCONNELL: In some areas of eastern New Mexico and west Texas—some precipitation is snow but they get about 13 inches of rain a year which is similar to what we get in Central Australia—some of the ranchers are making more money out of selling their water to frackers than out of their other ranching industries because water is becoming such an important commodity; clean water.

They have a cute name for water that has been used in the fracking columns that comes out as a by-product. Remember five barrels to one, so massive quantities of water come out. These massive quantities of water are not only polluted as we know from some of the chemicals that are used in the extraction, but they are also highly likely to have picked up chemicals from the strata that the gas came from. They are likely to have picked up all sorts of things so they have heavy metals, all sorts of things in them and quite often they have radioactive trace elements in them and all sorts of other things. They are cleaning this water, kinda sorta, and they are calling it produced water and they are using it to irrigate crops.

Now what do we think is the potential flow-on effect of this? As the Member for Katherine knows all too clearly, look at the issue we have from PFAS in Katherine and other military bases and other places around Australia.

I know another place that I can tell you about from my experience in North America is also in New Mexico. There are two small towns called Portales and Clovis. There used to be a big dairy industry there. That dairy industry used groundwater and hay grown locally to feed dairy cows. Hay grown on centre pivot feeding dairy cows and then the water they were drinking also coming from the local aquifer. You know what? That industry does not exist there anymore and do you know why? It is because of PFAS. There is a large US military base there and they now cannot do those industries there because of PFAS.

We need to think about the flow-on effects of this. I know these things have been addressed by different reports that we hear about but they are still concerning the community. The community are still speaking to me about these things all the time. The top three things that people are speaking to me about—and this is good for all of us that are getting into campaign mode soon—are crime, environment and economy. That varies dependent on what place you go to. It seems to be present in Darwin and Palmerston. It seems to be present in Alice Springs or in a remote seat. It seems to be present in Arnhem Land or wherever. It seems to be that those three things are already important.

We need to think about this. The community is by no means convinced by our reports, politics or media releases. The community is still deeply concerned.

We have these water security issues across the Territory already. I am concerned about some things and I might need to speak to the minister about this a bit more. I am concerned that as long as I have known Ti Tree—which is in the electorate of Stuart 200 kilometres north of Alice Springs—it has always been promoted as an important place for the horticultural industry.

At the moment, we have two people actively working in the horticultural industry there. We have one operator growing hay, which is Rhodes grass and other things on centre pivot irrigation. We have another person growing table grapes. They are already water stressed and do not have enough water. There are water reserves being left there for the potential of a fracking industry in that region. Why? I am concerned about that.

Remember, I agree with a lot of the work that is being done by this government. I understand the consumptive rule is 20:80. As far as I know the consumptive rule is 20:80. I am concerned that at the moment we have

these two operators. If we want to have a viable horticulture industry in Ti Tree we need a lot more than two operators and there is already water stress there now. Yes, there is water allocation licences that are not being utilised now, but these are all very legitimate things to be asking about.

I am concerned that the water consumption of this industry and the issues we already have with water security at the moment are not just an environmental issue, they are an economic issue. I am worried about this new industry affecting those existing industries. I am particularly worried about what I believe are fairly sustainable industries like horticulture, so long as they do not start water mining and over draw down the aquifers. I believe that this government has the regulations in place to stop that from happening.

The other thing I am really concerned about that needs to be brought to the attention of this place is that there is a move globally and within the federal government to enshrine some of our commitments to reducing carbon emissions into legislation.

I commend the Independent member, Zali Steggall, for her push for a bipartisan support of a bill addressing climate change aimed at transitioning Australia to a de-carboned economy. We need to do that, not only for the environment, but because that is the economically smart thing to do.

We have seen General Motors Holden fail to adapt to the market in Australia and now they are gone and we are all lamenting the loss of them. We should have been pressuring them to make the change earlier. We might love being addicted to our diesel-power motor cars or whatever. I lived in England for a while and I loved the smell of coal-fired fires. It is probably poisonous but I love that. There was nothing better than a heavy English frosty morning and this beautiful smell of coal in the air. Not so much now—I am more than happy now to have it ...

Mr Wood: Where do you think coal came from? Coal is organic.

Mr McCONNELL: Of course it is organic. These things are all natural and part of the carbon cycle. That is why you have to really watch how much of that CO₂ you put in the air column ...

Mr Wood: They are getting organic.

Mr McCONNELL: Sorry, the use of organics—I agree, yes.

We need to recognise that these issues are very really all the time, they are not just a matter for us around election time. The community is thinking about them all the time. We have had a real opportunity to think about climate change with the bushfires we have had this summer.

I support legislation that supports a lower-carbon economy. I am not sure I like penalties or know a lot about some of the other instruments that can be used, but I know the Northern Territory needs to be a leader in this space. I am not sure that being one of the last to produce an economy that is highly dependent on high carbon emissions through a fracking industry shows we are on the leading edge.

Members interjecting.

Mr McCONNELL: I am not sure that it does. I think we were among the last in the world. The places I know where—the fracking and the way that technologies are used now were developed by the first Bush administration. Most of the fracking that has been done in North America is now done and dusted. Most states in North America have no new gas fields based on fracking.

I think I know a bit about what I am talking about. I do not know everything. It is really short-sighted and so do our constituents. They are particularly worried about water and air quality and impacts on climate change. In Farmington, in New Mexico, you cannot breathe the air because of the CO₂ emissions from the fracking industry. The air is seriously horrible because of methane seeping out of wells.

They are trying to harvest the methane because it makes them money.

Madam SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I do not intend to talk on fracking but I do not agree with everything the Member for Stuart said. I spent quite a bit of time in the United States in Wyoming, Ohio and British Columbia. The industry is still developing in those places. There is no doubt there are some issues, but if you go back 20 years, the industry has changed from what it was a long time ago.

There are no deep-water wells in Litchfield, all our wells for water are shallow; fracking goes down kilometres. Most bores in the rural area will probably reach a maximum of about 100 metres. We need to make sure that if we are to give out information it has to be accurate.

I spent time in Maranoa and visited places in Roma. I saw the irrigation they get from coal seam gas for pastures. I am not saying there are no issues; that would be foolish. They produce cattle off the irrigated pastures and I would imagine if there was any contamination of the cattle they would not be allowed to be sold. I know how our meat export markets are so sensitive. If anyone knows the history of cotton in Queensland, where endosulfan was sprayed over cotton—endosulfan got into the meat being exported to Japan—they know the dangers of that to our economy, especially the beef economy. Japan immediately stopped importing our beef.

For me the environment is a big word for a lot of issues. You can have a social environment, which is about how we live and get on in our community; there is an economic environment—the heading here says, ‘Protecting our Environment’. The minister has a finger in two pies; one is in Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and one is Environment and Natural Resources. At times they intersect.

If you are planning something which will require development it does not take Einstein to realise the environment will be affected. Everything we do, every time we hop in a car, wear the rubber off our tyres or turn on the TV we affect the environment.

If we look at this in a too-simplistic fashion—we can sound good when the Johnston by-election is coming up but we have a responsibility to talk to people in a sensible manner away from all the politics. Some of this statement today is aimed at the upcoming by-election. I try and move that away from the discussion I am having today and look at the issues that the minister has put forward.

For me, if we are talking about the natural environment, the issues of concern to me is how we look after the natural environment and have sustainable development at the same time. Sustainable development is the type of development that will not cause future generations money to repair. We need to do things in a way that we will not have to then turn around and spend millions of dollars trying to fix up.

A classic example is gamba grass introduced into the Northern Territory as a pasture species. It now costs us millions of dollars. I notice in this statement that there is no mention of gamba grass. I could not believe that. One of the worst weeds we have in the Northern Territory—although we have another one coming along called siam weed—especially considering its potential to destroy the natural environment has to be Gamba grass. There is not a mention of gamba grass in this document. Maybe the Member for Namatjira will also mention buffel grass.

Ms Uibo: I am going to talk about gamba.

Mr WOOD: Okay but it should be in here. This is the lead document we have today and I would have thought it would be in there.

We have tourism—tourism can be fine do not get me wrong—but it can also cause problems. You can over-develop an area where you are eventually going to reduce the number of people going there or repair some of the damage that is caused by unintentional use of that area.

The other area is mining. The problem I have is that you cannot pick on fracking. It is just one form of mining. Most of our mines use water. McArthur River mine were recently concerned they were going to run out of water. It is very rare that you have a mine that does not use water. Sometimes the problem is that it has to get rid of water that cannot be put back into the environment because of the mineral content or the acidity.

Mining—and how we manage that mining—is important. We have had mines in the Northern Territory which still cause us problems. I would love the minister to give us a report on where Mt Todd mine is. I was here nearly 20 years ago and I remember the then minister saying the government was going to subsidise the rehabilitation of the Mt Todd mine. I do not think the Mt Todd mine has produced any gold yet. I would be interested to know if it has. I think it is Vista that has the mine.

Madam SPEAKER: Do you mean Mt Todd number three or number one?

Mr WOOD: I am not sure which Mt Todd but I have not yet heard of that mine producing commercial quantities of gold.

Madam SPEAKER: Not Mt Todd number three.

Mr WOOD: It is an issue that has been around a long time and it highlights—like the Redbank mine, I have been out there and seen the damage that did. We need to deal with sustainable development. We can have development and in this day and age, we should be smart enough to do it. I was down at Cosmo Howley mine—and there are mines there that we let sit for a while probably because the technology at the time did not really let us know how much gold was in some of those places.

You go there today and they have a computerised analysis of what is under the ground and they can drill straight in to a particular ore body. That is what Cosmo Howley is doing. It has gone from an open cut mine to a shaft. A shaft does not cause as much damage to the environment as a big open cut mine.

You also have the use of water and that is an issue we need more discussion about not just from the point of view of agriculture and mining ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 9: I draw your attention to the state of the House.

Mr Paech: There are 10, including one up the back.

Mrs Finocchiaro: That person is not included.

Madam SPEAKER: There are nine people—it is okay now, there are 11.

Mr WOOD: I do not mind talking to empty chairs.

There is a couple of interesting issues here regarding water. The minister has spoken about sustainable water management. She spoke about how management of our water resources is crucial to both protect the environment and to support cultural values, and to provide certainty to industries that rely on water. Water is an enormous public benefit and its management requires transparency, accountability and shared obligation for its effective use. I totally agree.

However, what concerns me, especially in the rural area—and the minister has written to me—is that where we should be trying to be more responsible with water use and, at the same time, allow sustainable development, is to allow sub-divisions either to be connected with reticulated water or to be able to use rainwater tanks. You will not find a mention of rainwater tanks in this discussion paper.

We seem to be bound by this rule that anyone that sub-divides land has an entitlement for a stock and domestic bore. It does not make sense in the rural area that if you are connected to town water and the government is concerned about the amount of water being extracted from a particular aquifer, why you would not change the law to say 'if you are on reticulated water, you cannot have a stock and domestic bore unless you have exceptional circumstances'. Then the director of the water division would have to make that decision.

At the moment, we are holding up sensible progress in the rural area because we are not looking at changing the *Water Act*. If there is another reason why you cannot change the *Water Act*, then it would be good to tell people why not. There are sub-division owners in my electorate who for many years were told, 'if you have reticulated water, you cannot have a bore'.

I have someone here in this Chamber who knows that a previous owner of a block of land asked me to get permission for them to get a bore on their two-hectare block when they had reticulated water. Most of us believed you could not have a bore if you had reticulated water. The minister has sent me some information stating that is not correct. My concern is that that allows people who can get at the space between their septic tank and their bore to take more water out of the aquifer than is necessary, especially if they already have reticulated water. That is an issue if we are looking at water conservation.

The minister talks about water advisory committees. I admit I was on a water advisory committee for I do not know how long, way back. They stopped for a while when the Member for Katherine decided to turn them into catchment water advisory committees. Then I came back on to a water advisory committee and all I know now is I am not on a water advisory committee—at least I think.

A member: You can be on one when you retire.

Mr WOOD: No, I think it died. We never heard much. From one of the most important water advisory committees, which has one of the most difficult jobs to do and that is trying to work out how to manage the water in the Litchfield area, because it is something that already happened before controls were put in place. I would like to hear a bit more from that water advisory committee because I do not hear anything. They are good. The Member for Daly was on Doctor Mack for a long time; we heard his independent views even when he was in government about how water should be retained. He was strong on strategic Aboriginal water reserves.

The water portal is an important thing. I thank the government for having that. It opens up more transparency and accountability to who has water. It gives information out to people and where that water is. That is important.

The review of the water licences was very important. I was worried about what was happening at the time. Everybody would know about the Mataranka water license. It was good that when government came into power, it decided water licenses should be reviewed.

The issue that needs clarification is water trading. We need some control over the price of water. We are giving water to growers for free and someone could buy that water from several growers and sell it at inflated prices.

Water should be controlled. I would rather it was controlled by government and any water trading regulated so it does not become a profit-making resource. This is essential if we are to grow our agriculture, horticulture and mining industries.

We need the science to allow us to deal with water licenses in a place like Litchfield, which has quite a few stock and domestic bores. Government could pay a random sample of 100 or 200 people across all the aquifers to collect information about water use, potentially using meters on Wi-Fi.

Then we would know whether to allow people to pump as much as they like or to limit how much they can use without paying. Above that amount, they will have to pay for it. For the benefit of retaining the sustainability of the aquifer, we may have to limit how much you can pump. It does not mean you cannot have water, it might just be that you cannot have more than you require.

There has been discussion about off-river dams and I support off-river dams, but only if the environmental science supports it. To put it in simple terms, if you have a big Wet Season and you have an off-river dam and the river is able to flood the floodplains and at the same time fill the off-river dam, that is fine. When there is not enough water, you may only be able to partially fill it or not at all.

According to the ABC's Landline, we are going to have the lowest crop of cotton since production began, because cotton growers have strict licenses. If they do not have the water, they do not grow the cotton. The water license is not selected for a particular crop; they could grow anything. They happen to grow cotton.

It is the same in the Territory. If you do not have enough water, unless you are a priority user, you will have to use less. That is the way it should be, so we allow the environment to survive and for seasonal adjustments in how much water can be allocated. That is sustainable agricultural development and sensible use of water.

I lived on the Daly for quite a while and lived through three or four floods and I know what the river is like when it is flooding. That is a hell of a lot of water; surely we can harvest some of it. There will be those who say we must never touch the water, but they forget we need water to help our economy and to feed people.

We are starting to grow things in the Northern Territory. It has taken a long time but we are moving in the right direction.

I had grant funding here and I wondered what the heck that was for. I did not even see the mention of the Darwin Turf Club. It was about Aboriginal ranger groups and arid lands environment group and those various groups. They are all important.

I have some little knowledge of ranger groups. There needs to be an audit at time to make sure they are effective and are not just a ranger group that goes out and does some clean-up. Audits of how effective they are would be important, especially if government is putting money into them. They are important, not only just for the environment but employing people locally.

I must admit I did not look at the Darwin Harbour strategy. Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee is one of your headings, minister. I used to be on that many years ago, that is how old it is. It then was dropped and has come back again. It was around in the times when they were looking at damming the Elizabeth River. I have not looked at the strategy but a lot of the things it has been tasked to do are very similar to what was tasked many years ago.

Climate change causes lots of issues and discussion in this place. I am a person who believes that the climate is changing. I am annoyed that people start to wear this like a badge of honour, as though if anyone has a slightly different point of view, they are a heretic and should be hung, drawn and quartered or burnt at the stake. I probably come from a slightly different perspective when it comes to climate change ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43, I seek an extension of time for the Member for Nelson.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WOOD: On climate change, I have always had a slightly different approach. We should do our best to make sure we do not pollute our waterways. We should apply the same principle to our air. If we applied the same principle to our air, we would not be sticking all that stuff into the air that we do. We should be doing our best to have clean air, not just because I believe there are changes in our climate.

I have a good friend who lives in Central Victoria who I went to horticultural college with. He keeps very precise records of when his fruit trees flower. He is retired and has a range of fruit trees. He knows when those fruit trees will produce flowers. He has noted, over the last umpteen years, a change in those dates. Normally, in years gone by, he could nearly predict when the apples would produce their flowers. Now there are changes.

Just from looking at some natural things in the environment, you can see there are changes. Of course, there are a lot of people going back and forwards with what causes it et cetera, but it is happening.

What we are looking at and discussing is how we can reduce our carbon emissions. I hear a lot in this parliament, but I do not hear a lot of science. I hear clichés. Clichés are nice for the population when it comes to an election, but I want to hear more science.

Minister Wakefield will be talking next month or this month at a fairly expensive forum, which I would like to attend, but at a cost of \$3500 or something, plus airfares, for two days is a big much. She will be speaking on hydrogen. I have travelled around the world looking at hydrogen and I believe it is something this government is not putting enough emphasis on. The Member for Barkly is a keen supporter of it.

When we talk about having a 100% emission-free Northern Territory in 2050, how will you do it? I ask a simple question. We have an agricultural industry that relies on trucking—big trucks, triples that run on diesel. How will they run in a carbon-free environment? One of the ways is with fuel cells which are operated by hydrogen. We do not hear that discussion because transport takes up at least 30% of our emissions. We also do not also hear the fact that we still have to supply gas, which is a carbon emitter, for our power station. We also do not hear about the negatives of introducing more solar into the system, making it more costly to run the gas-fired power station at Channel Island. How much money will the taxpayer have to subsidise to keep those power prices down? That does not mean that we are against solar. It says you need to debate this issue with your feet on the ground and go through all the issues.

I just heard a little discussion on the TV about BHP wanting to try to reduce its carbon emissions. One of the issues you have, for instance, when people talk about coal—they talk about coking coal, which is what is used for steel. Steel is what makes your renewable energy equipment, like wind-powered turbines. They are made from steel, using coking coal.

We can talk about coal for producing electricity, but it is not just coal and then no more discussion. It is broader than that. My worry is that we discuss things in a shallow plain. It is easy to catch the headlines, or kids in schools—whatever. These things need more discussion. Who discusses the cost of batteries, how we recycle them, what alternative we have to batteries?

I went to Newcastle and looked at the possibility of using silica sands baked by solar thermal towers to 1000°C and stored instead of using batteries. I do not hear much discussion on that at all. I do not know if it is too difficult, but if we are to have a real discussion about renewables then it has to be the total picture.

We hear about solar panels on schools, which is fantastic, but have we looked at what the cost will be over 15 years? What will happen to those solar panels? What is the overall carbon footprint of doing that? It might be positive, but it has a negative side that we do not seem to look at properly in this debate.

I am a fan of solar. My sister-in-law has solar at Bulgul, which is great, but they also have \$25 000 worth of batteries, and they do not last that long. They have to go somewhere when they are finished. It is the complete picture. You can say solar reduces emissions. It might reduce emissions from producing electricity, but what are the other consequences, the other emissions that are required to recycle to product to get rid of it, and how can we reduce that side of it as well.

You can paint a pretty picture, and that is good, but as mature people discussing serious issues in regard to climate change, we need to make sure our answers are not over-simplified. The Member for Stuart talked about the problems with gas emissions. We still need gas—places like Japan still want gas. We have offsets—ConocoPhillips and INPEX asked that Aboriginal people reduce the way they burn. The big problem there is what happened this year; there were fires that were not part of that program.

Aboriginal people would have lost some of their income because they would not have been able to set the targets they were asked to set. If gamba is burning, how much will that offset the positive side of controlled burning in an area like Kakadu? Again, those are questions that need to be asked.

The minister spoke about environmental reform, and there has been a bit of legislation on that. Environmental reform is important, but it is about finding the balance between allowing industry to continue and protecting the environment.

I thank the minister for her statement on the environment. Environment is a big word and covers a lot of things. If the Territory uses its brains and keeps the idea that we can develop, at the same time as looking at protecting the environment with clever people, we can do it. If we learn from the mistakes of the past, we can do it. But we should not also lock up the Northern Territory forever. We should be able to use the benefits the Territory can give us by developing it in a proper way, whether that is agriculture, mining, tourism or whatever. As long as we do it properly and in a well-thought-out way, we can advance as a Territory. We need to because we simply cannot live on the GST forever. One day when they take that away, we will be in dire straits. We need to develop our own economy and that is the way to do it.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing on this very important environmental statement. It is interesting to note that when the question was asked by the Member for Daly about how many people in the House had solar on their roof, everyone in the House raised their hands. That is very good to see.

As the Members for Daly and Blain have mentioned, there is an election coming up in the seat of Johnston and Territory families have a very important decision to make at the polls. They need to make decisions on the environment and what different parties have done and have not done.

Labor takes the environment very seriously from our best-in-the-world fishing to our wonderful and diverse wildlife, our famous national parks and all our plant life within them. Labor do care.

The Territory Labor government believe in biodiversity and we understand that every plant and animal have a special place in the world and their interaction to carry out important jobs. Whether it be our bees that pollinate the flowers and make honey, or our dragonflies appearing and letting us know that the dry season is approaching. Our winds that carry the seas to regenerate trees and plants to our water tidal cycles and marine life food chain that it provides. It is important for these cycles and interactions to continue for the survival of everyone and everything in this world.

Many years ago I studied biodiversity at the famous Charles Darwin University. I was very interested in our environment and these interactions. For my major assignment, I interviewed elders across the Territory and listened to their many years of knowledge about the environment and the wildlife around them. I also listened to what had changed and what had stayed, what was most important to them and what they cared about. It was a very enlightening study and one that provided a very-well researched report and timeline of events that happened across the Northern Territory.

I am pleased that our Labor government understands biodiversity. We want to protect our environment and everything that lives, moves and interacts with it. It was such a great study that it even received a high distinction, something myself and my Larrakia family were very pleased with. That is why the Labor

government have delivered on our commitment to strengthen and protect our natural environment in so many ways and in less than four years.

That is why although the Greens put Labor last on the ballot paper for the by-election, Labor to its credit, still put the Greens at number two. We believe in the environment and climate change and we support it and we support Green voters who want to protect our environment as much as we do. We take the politics out of the issue and we keep focussed on our children and families for a better future. Labor puts the environment and our families first, before politics.

The Territory Labor government understands how important it is for our current and future families to have clean water, clear air and a growing and diverse healthy environment.

Labor believes in climate change and is making a difference—the biggest difference any NT Government has ever made toward climate change and protecting our natural habitat and wildlife. Have no doubt, Labor believes in human-associated climate change and that all humans need to make a choice and a difference.

That is why this Labor government has committed to renewable targets of 50% and is already making huge inroads into this as, within a year, we are heading toward 14%.

Labor has developed the climate change strategy and is strengthening environmental protection laws and developing a climate change offset policy. Our economy relies on a healthy environment; it is so important that we protect our environment no matter what. We need to create jobs and put food on the table for our families and children.

Labor is so serious about the environment that we have delivered the following within four years of government:

- a new *Environmental Protection Act 2019* to protect our environment for future generations to come
- the *Water Act* to ensure the mining and petroleum industries require a water licence and to ensure that any industry operating in the Territory understands that the Labor government treats water as a very precious resource
- a reinstated, very important water advisory committee, that will ensure any water allocations meet the community expectations
- a reinstated Aboriginal water reserves policy to ensure water is reserved for any Aboriginal economic development—we have seen many commence from oysters to barra opportunities

Labor believes in climate change and we have developed a science-based climate change approach that outlines the vast opportunities in taking climate change action now.

Labor set a target of 50% renewable energy by 2030. Labor has increased renewables from 2.6% to 14% in this year alone. Labor is growing the renewables sector and growing renewable jobs for our Territorians.

Labor significantly increased our Aboriginal ranger powers to protect our environment, allocated a massive \$5.8M in grants across to protect the environment and create jobs across the Territory.

Labor developed the NT Coastal and Marine Management Strategy 2019—2029, which is a strategy to protect our waterways and marine life.

In four years, Labor has done so much more than any NT Government to sustain and protect our environment and we wish to continue on this path.

In contrast to the CLP and the Terry Mills' days—the contrast policy on climate change. The CLP does not believe in climate change. Regarding marine and coastal issues, the CLP had nothing in place.

In 2012 the CLP scrapped the Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserve Policy.

On environmental protection the CLP, in the Terry Mills' days, had the seven key pillars to energy, minerals, agribusiness, education and training, Defence, supply and service. But they had no policy on the environment.

Labor listens and believes the science of climate change. We listened to the science of fracking and implemented the world's best and tightest regulations for fracking in the Territory.

Labor have protected a significant amount of the Territory from fracking by declaring massive areas as no-go zones, including banning fracking in national parks, tourism areas, residential areas, conservations reserves, Aboriginal protected areas and areas of cultural importance to Territorians.

Labor has kept its promises to Territorians and their families for stronger environmental protections. They are committed to climate change, renewables and jobs for Territorians.

It is clear that if the CLP and those opposite get into government that they will frack the fracking frack out of the Territory; cut our renewables; sell the farm; privatise; sell Territory assets; and cut local, rural and remote jobs. It is in their DNA. As I said last week, history shows that the same CLP members are still here today, under different coats. People must remember that underneath these coats they wear the same conservative spots. They align with some of the far-right wing conservative ideals. They will not be supportive of Labor or the Green's environmental policies.

That is why it is so important to put Joel for Johnston as number one or two on your ballot paper, as Labor supports Green voters, climate change and renewable energy. Labor has made many laws, regulations and provision to protect our environment—far more than any other government.

Labor want to continue working with all Territorians to ensure our families and children have local jobs in a safe and sustainable environment. I hope that in two weeks' time Labor will have another member on the parliamentary floor in Mr Joel Bowden, who is an exceptional candidate and leader in his own right. He will stick up for the families of Johnson—and I went door knocking with him last week—and progress our environmental commitments.

I commend the environmental statement to the house.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it is hard to know where to start in responding to this statement.

Ms FYLES: This century, perhaps, not the ice age?

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I pick up on the interjection from the Attorney-General, I am sure she is eagerly waiting to listen to my response.

We all care deeply about the environment. Without an environment we have nowhere to live, no future and no prospects or opportunity. The environment is important because we love it and need it, and we have a unique environment in the Northern Territory. As the Member for Nelson said 'environment' can mean a lot of things to a lot of people.

It is ridiculous and embarrassing that Labor talk about 'the environment' like it is something they created, as if they are the only people who know what this thing is. They talk about it like they are the ones who discovered biodiversity and flora and fauna. It is quite remarkable—the level and calibre of the debate of this motion and the legislation from earlier. Today has been a low moment for the Labor government regarding the calibre of their debate.

We all want to protect our environment for future generations. It is critical and fundamental to everything that we do and are. The Member for Drysdale talked about being born here, her kids being born here and having grandchildren. Sure, that is fantastic. Many of us are in the same boat. My father was born here, I was born here and my children were born here. For some in the Chamber it will be the opposite: they will not be from here or have only been here a short time. They still love the Territory and want to contribute.

It does not matter how long or short you have been here, you want to see the Territory thrive into the future, and have the jobs and opportunities of the future. You want to see our incredible national parks preserved and enhanced so that visitor experiences are incredible and they go and tell all of their friends about it. We want to preserve our natural environment and cultural sites of significance.

There is no limit to how much each of us love and cherish our environment for different ways, whether through:

- enhancing visitor experience in tourism—the Tourism minister talks about new developments such as mountain biking, again to areas of cultural significance
- enjoying our unique Territory lifestyle
- wetland management and preservation to ensure the hunting of magpie geese is sustainable and ongoing
- management of fisheries to ensure we are doing everything we can so that people can enjoy recreational fishing, as Territorians love to do.

There are a number of ways to talk about the environment. There is a lot of talk about climate change. I do not understand why this government cannot grasp the concept that the CLP are not climate change deniers. I have publicly and privately said on multiple occasions, on record, that the CLP understand that humans are having an impact and that we need to do our bit to slow that down.

We need to transition to renewables responsibly, sustainably and affordably. As best we can, we need to reduce our emissions, look at all the modern technologies that help us achieve these things and advance the industries around them.

But as this government talks about so much, even if it were to achieve its unachievable 50% renewable target by 2030—which it is not on track to do, could never do and has not been able to articulate how to do. Let us take them on their word that they will be able to do it. Even if they can do, where is the other 50% coming from?

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, a point of order! Standing Order 20, the Leader of the Opposition has clearly said she will cut the government's renewable energy target. She is misleading. .

Madam SPEAKER: No, she is not. It is not a point of order.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Attorney-General, I expect more from you, being the first law officer. You could at least hear what I am saying. I do not know where this came from. I just said that even if your target can be achieved—which it cannot. I am not sure how you think that is misleading parliament.

I am saying that even with your renewable target of 50% by 2030, where will the other 50% come from? The government does not want to talk about these things. It wants to take the high moral ground. It is a very moralistic government with utopian views of the world. They are demonstrating how out of touch they are with everyday Territorians.

I noted their pathetic attacks on Josh Thomas, the Country Liberal's candidate, in Question Time.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, a point of order! Standing Order 31, it is offensive. The candidate for Johnston said:

Climate change will always change, the weather will always change. We had an ice age 15 000 years ago.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not offensive.

Ms FYLES: We are quoting him and she is saying she is offended.

Madam SPEAKER: Opposition Leader, offended by the statement and not finding it offensive are two different things.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Attorney-General, it would pay for you to listen. I am not sure what you are taking such serious objection to. I just said you made a pathetic attack against the Country Liberals candidate Josh Thomas in Question Time today. Your pathetic attack is continuing on. What Josh and others are reflecting is that of course the environment is important. Of course is climate change. Of course these are things we need to spend time, energy and focus on and give careful consideration to, but let us have a serious, realistic, honest debate about how collectively we can achieve that.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They do not want to hear what I have to say because maybe it is ringing home some truths to them. What Josh is saying is that on the doors and in the community, people's number one concern is about jobs and job security. That is why this Labor government is really quite reckless in its debates when it comes to environment and climate change. It is really reckless in its debate because it will not have the honest conversation because it is out of touch.

People in Johnston are worried about how they are going to keep putting bread and milk on the table because your government has destroyed our economy and any opportunities or future hope that people have and you come in here talking about climate change like you have been sent from somewhere to come and save us all from ourselves. It is completely outrageous. You yourselves have gone out to the savannah and found all of the flora and fauna that we need to have a biodiverse environment. It is unconscionable the way you put yourself up on this pedestal.

Let us face it. What has really motivated you all today—do you know what you are really upset about and a few of you mentioned it in your debate particularly the Member for Brennan who always has something interesting to contribute if I can put it the way, is the Greens will not even preference you. Your own Greens. The Greens will not even preference you. That is how much your policies lack credibility. It is unbelievable.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: You come in here and you blame the CLP for all your problems. You make up garbage. The fact that you are peddling this rubbish that we are climate change deniers which is not true and I am on the record. The previous CLP government are the ones who created the independent EPA.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members keep the noise down.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I have upset them because what I am saying is the truth.

Ms Fyles: Because you are a climate change denier.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Again, what is your plan?

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They do not want to have an actual conversation about this. They do not want to have a proper debate about this. They want to stand on their pedestal and peddle their scaremongering rubbish to the community who are concerned about this issue and all Labor care about doing is capitalising on that fear. It is reckless, irresponsible and it sends the wrong message. It is not leadership.

Territorians deserve for us to have a proper conversation about this and a proper plan going forward. The Member for Blain asked a really good question today about the take or pay gas. We are paying for this gas, what are you doing with it? What is your plan for our gas future? What is your plan? You are anti-onshore gas, then you had the moratorium, now you have lifted the moratorium, you are on go-slow, you are peddling about the CLP not supporting the Pepper inquiry. We have never said that. I am on public record and I will say it again.

I hope you are listening this time, Attorney-General, because we do not want a third-time-unlucky situation where you jump up and make a point of order that is ridiculous. We support the recommendations of the Pepper inquiry—all of them. You are peddling absolute nonsense; it is untrue and reckless fearmongering. Territorians deserve better from their government.

It is astonishing. I think the way in which you are playing politics with an issue that a lot of people are concerned about is disgraceful to the industry. People have genuine fear and concerns about onshore gas and what that might mean. You know that. You did the Pepper inquiry in the first place to go through a significant consultation process to bring people on board and show people it can be done safely and that risk could be mitigated.

That is an important process. We have done that process now, we need to move forward. Instead, you are sending messages like, 'dirty dangerous fracking'. That is a really reckless statement to be making for

pathetic political gain to an industry that has already suffered under your government and is incredible important for the jobs of the future. People are sitting at home right now, having dinner, and wondering what the next thing for Territory will be. Instead, you continue to erode confidence in the system. You are eroding confidence in your own inquiry and mechanisms to deliver the jobs of the future.

It is disgusting, despicable and unconscionable that you would do that. You and I know—we all know—that it can be done safely, which is why you are going ahead with it, and it is important for the future not just for jobs, but as part of our carbon emissions story. We know that gas is much cleaner than other forms of energy and has an important role to play in driving down our nation's carbon emissions.

Let us start having a bit more of a sophisticated conversation on these issues. Today you are focused on trying to get some sort of green narrative out there for the Johnston by-election. But your willingness to burn the house down to achieve that objective is truly short-sighted and irresponsible.

I look forward to releasing our comprehensive policies on environment, climate change and water—on all the issues that are important to our future; economy; social, cultural and historic fabric. The government says whatever it likes about when they think we should release those policies.

Ms Fyles interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It might come as a surprise to the Attorney-General, but our policy announcements do not revolve around you. Territorians will judge us on what we present to them.

Today's calibre of debate has been very low and it is appalling the way the government is politicising this issue that is important to Territorians and our future, yet they cannot have a credible conversation about it.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to see the government work with rangers. It has taken a long time to increase the powers of ranger groups in our communities. Now the legislation has passed to allow rangers to apply to become conservation officers with greater powers. That is very important.

I have to ask the question now: the law is there; is it happening? How many rangers from these communities are now in training? I am hopeful that the government is working across the Northern Territory to provide training in language for many of our rangers in this important work. I would like to see many rangers become conservation officers in my region.

On the issue of climate change, I am concerned. As I said last week, people have been sharing stories of buffaloes that cannot manage the dry, hot weather dying before the rain comes. I mention the fire that was burning into the mighty Arafura swamp, burning for days into the ground. I share the concerns about climate change. What does it mean if the animals cannot survive the seasons? Is there a time when we cannot survive the seasons?

One of my main concerns is government supporting fracking. This support will impact climate change. This support will impact whether my people can survive the seasons and live off the land. The decision risks power, water and our country. It is selling our water and our livelihoods to big businesses. I am told that in Victoria the government have banned fracking. In Tasmania, they have a moratorium on fracking until 2025.

In England, last year the government stopped all fracking. They now have a moratorium on fracking until they are sure it is safe which means they do not believe it is safe right now. In Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, New Zealand, Spain, parts of the United States of America, they all have bans on fracking.

A ban on fracking is what we expected of this Labor government. A ban on fracking, like many other places in the world who do not believe that fracking is safe. These countries will not risk their environment and their water and they believe that strong action is needed in relation to climate change.

Strong action on climate change means that we do not support fracking and we move towards renewable energy. I support this government in making moves towards renewable energy.

Communities in Arnhem Land and many other communities in the Northern Territory have clearly said that we do not want fracking. That is what people want to see here in this Chamber; a government that will protect our future.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that debate on the statement be adjourned.

Motion agreed to; debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, for almost four years now I've served the good people of Namatjira. During this time I have worked as hard as I could to ensure that the people of Namatjira have had a strong voice, a voice that has never been afraid to stand up for them.

Together we have laughed, we have gone hunting, and we have worked together to keep our communities strong. We have also said goodbye to far too many of our loved ones. The people of Namatjira will always be strong, passionate and resilient, and will always have a special place in my heart. From each corner of the electorate, we worked as hard as we could.

We have many good things to reflect on. We have stood tall and proud to stop the industrialisation of rural areas, because rural means rural. Let us keep it that way; let us keep it rural.

I have delivered much-needed upgrades to the Ilparpa Road in partnership with the council. In my beloved bush and remote communities, the place I feel most at home, we have worked together to see positive change.

Under my term in Namatjira, we have delivered new houses, room to breathe programs and full refurbishments rolled out across the electorate. We have delivered and will continue to deliver upgrades to sports facilities, like the Docker River lights, Amoonguna Oval upgrades and other upgrades right across the bush.

I have always supported my constituents in calling on the Territory and federal governments to do more for bush roads, because bush people matter. Bush people deserve to have quality roads so they can get to town and visit their loved ones. They deserve it because it is about getting cattle and produce to markets on time and in good condition.

I have stood up for the people of Namatjira against the CLP and the federal government on bad policies, such as the CLP support for CDP, the Centrelink changes and the cashless debit card.

We have come together, myself and the good people of Namatjira, to make sure our voices are heard. We have appeared before the Australian Senate together to give evidence of the injustices of bad policies that those opposite, in the CLP, continue to support.

I have stood up for country. I love country and I will always stand up and call for more investment in caring for country.

As they say, all good things come to an end and on 22 August I will be handing over the reins when it comes to the electorate of Namatjira as a result of the electoral boundary changes by the Northern Territory redistribution committee. I am disappointed by their recommendations to change the electorate of Namatjira, making the seat more hybrid and urban.

I am, however, excited with the Labor candidate for Namatjira. I am sure they will do an outstanding job and will continue to see those investments in the electorate of Namatjira. I hope the good people of Namatjira, the people dear to my heart, will get behind and support the Labor candidate for Namatjira at the August election. Support them, because together, you will continue to do great things and see great results in the bush.

As I have said in this Chamber many times, I am here to make sure the voice of the bush is a strong voice that will always stand up with and for the bush. I am humbled to recently be announced as the pre-selected candidate for the electorate of Gwoja, formally known as the areas of Stuart and the western side of the electorate of Namatjira.

The electorate includes the wonderful communities of Docker River; Yulara; Mutitjulu; Imanpa; Wallace Rockhole; Hermannsburg; Areyonga; Haasts Bluff; Papunya; Mount Liebig; Kintore; Nyirripi; Yuendumu; Yuelamu; Laramba; Willowra; Lajamanu; Kalkarindji; Daguragu; Pigeon Hole; Yarralin; Amandigji; and Bulla.

I look forward to meeting members of the community and catching up with friends and families in those communities, to understand your dreams, wishes and desires to keep our community strong.

As a bush member and proud Aboriginal person I know that our people are not restricted to electoral boundaries. I have always worked hard for people who call the bush home, no matter where you are. I will always work hard for you, and welcome you to sit down so I can listen to and learn from you. I will always stand with you to support our cultures across the Territory because they are important. Ceremony business, sorry business, and you are important. I will always work with and for you.

I want to work with the bush to see a bright future, a continuing investment in remote sports infrastructure, and in lights like Kalkarindji and Hermannsburg. Upgrades to remote facilities in Yuendumu such as change rooms and toilet facilities. I want to see recycled water become a possibility in remote communities so that we can continue to look at having green spaces, cool spaces and shady trees in communities. I want every person in a remote community to flourish, and people to feel safe and supported and continue to be strong.

To continue to work with my colleagues in the Territory Labor Government. To make sure that our kids are cared for and supported and our families remain strong places full of loving people, because our communities right across the Northern Territory are full of great, vibrant people. The bush is where I am strongest and happiest and where with the help of the good people of the bush we can continue to make a difference. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening, Madam Speaker.

Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin): I stand tonight to acknowledge the role the wonderful Chinese community place in the very fabric of the Northern Territory, particularly the colourful and energetic contribution to the electorate of Port Darwin. It is an absolute pleasure to have the Chung Wah Society based in Port Darwin and I've been extremely blessed to get to know these hard working Territorians well over the last few years.

The history of the Chinese people is something I really enjoyed learning about over the last couple of years. The first group of Chinese people known to have come to the Territory arrived in 1874 as indentured labourers. Many were highly skilled tradesmen employed on roads, in the mines and overland telegraph and railway construction. Obviously the history in the mining community is very well known throughout the Northern Territory. In the late 19th century there were up to 7 times more Chinese people in the Northern Territory than any other ethnic group. Since then the Chinese community have continued to play an important part in the history, culture and development of the Territory.

In the early 20s the Chinese rec club was formed and really came to life in the 1940s. The club involved Chinese Territorians in a variety of sports including basketball, tennis and baseball. They were active in organising social events for young Chinese, arranging social dances and picnics as well. The club used the premises which became known as the Stone House in Cavanaugh Street and the area became known as Darwin's Chinatown, as I'm sure we have all heard of. After significant disruption to Territory business including Chinese enterprises caused by World War II, most surviving buildings in Chinatown had to be demolished. The Chinese community were no longer concentrated in one area but dispersed through the city and surrounding suburbs.

Attitudes changed and they sought strength in unity, so the Chung Wah Society was formed in 1946. However, the first executive committee was not elected until 1949. In December 2019 I and a number of MLAs were privileged to be part of the Chung Wah Society's 70th anniversary. We have been very privileged over years, particularly in the last six months, to see some amazing events. That one really highlighted how well and in high regard the Chung Wah Society is held here and nationally as well. There were interstate visitors that came up for that occasion.

It was wonderful to see. As light-hearted as the Laksa Festival was—and the Chung Wah Society were able to take that under their wing and hold that wonderful event in the city last year, it shows the diversity and the tenacity of the Chinese people and how hard working they are.

Following on with the theme of recognising the role of the Chinese community and the culture, it has been a great pleasure to have Chinese New Year celebrated right across the Territory.

The Lunar New Year of 2020 fell on 25 January and the festival extended through to 8 February. It was wonderful to have them in the Chamber last week to do the official opening again. It is always a very colourful affair.

2020 is the year of the rat and according to Chinese zodiac, therefore 2020 is a year of new beginnings. Through some of the reading that I have done, I believe William Shakespeare was born in the year of the rat also. We have some auspicious people in history that have been born in the year of the rat.

A feature of Chinese New Year celebrations is the traditional Chinese dragon and lion dance, a tradition that dates back to the early days of imperial China. It is believed that this tradition was brought to Darwin by the first Chinese settlers to the Territory and has been passed on from generation to generation. That really stands out when you go to any event at the Chung Wah Society or any of the events that they hold around town. There will be some fantastic events coming up this weekend as well. The young members of the family are intricately involved and are welcoming of other people into those events and their families to help celebrate and learn more about their culture.

The lion dance is believed to scare away evil spirits and brings good luck, joy, fortune, and happiness. It is often performed at the openings of businesses, religious festivals, cultural ceremonies, and special occasions but mostly can be seen during Chinese New Year celebrations.

During the 1950s and 1960s, many businesses in Darwin were owned and operated by Chinese families and a dedicated group of people would perform the lion dance during Chinese New Year to bless these business houses to scare away evil spirits and to bring good luck for the new year ahead. That is something that sticks out to me. At all of their blessings that I have been to recently, they have a really active engagement with young Chinese lion dancers and some of the little kids that get involved and the passion and enthusiasm that they put into the dances is a wonderful thing.

By the late 1970s, a lion dance troupe was well established and conducted blessings of businesses and homes that were owned by both the Chinese and non-Chinese people of Darwin. Today, the Chung Wah Society dragon and lion dance troupe is made up of dedicated and energetic individuals who have learnt and preserved this traditional art.

The busiest period for the Troupe is Chinese New Year where more than 400 businesses and homes are blessed in Darwin and Alice Springs. Once again this year, my electorate office was blessed on Saturday 8 February by the Chung Wah Society dragons and they are always welcomed into our office. Our daughter Layla has a fixation with the lions as I know a lot of other young children do. She loves to watch them come in. She is particularly fixated by the destroying and the eating of the lettuce and how that gets kicked around the room afterwards. She was fortunate enough to be in the Chamber here with us last week and if the spreading of the lettuce is good luck well Layla got it all through her hair so she must be in for a very fortunate year. It was a great privilege to be a part of that with our families. It is a very Territorian welcome to the new sitting year and to the opening of parliament.

We will have the Chung Wah dinner on Friday night. We very much look forward to that. They always put on an amazing dinner and celebration. The dancers will be present again. It is a wonderful sign of respect for the Chinese community—the amount of people go to enjoy their food, the dinner, the dancing and the entertainment and energy in the room. All things Chung Wah Society will be celebrated on Saturday, at the Marrara netball centre—I think it is the first time they held the festival in that centre.

I look forward to that. It must be a lot of hard work to get their cooking and businesses that get involved—I know that Jimmy Choo and other prominent Territorian chefs will get involved and help out the Chung Wah Society. For everybody to go to the netball centre will be a wonderful thing. I hope it goes very well. As we know, planning events in the north of the Territory this time of year can be a very difficult thing to do because of the weather, so it is fantastic to see them using the beautiful new netball centre and finding other ways to make use of it.

We look forward seeing that on Saturday. I congratulate the Chung Wah Society, which is a beautiful and rich part of the fabric of the Northern Territory. We look forward to having a fun weekend with them. I will try to have a hit of table tennis with Austin Chin, the President of the Chung Wah Society. We always enjoy a hit of table tennis when we get the chance. We look forward to that and wish them all the best for the weekend.

It is my older daughter, Alannah's, birthday. She will not be embarrassed about this because she will not be listening. I would like to wish her happy birthday.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I will talk about a topic I am quite passionate about—and many members in the Chamber are—which is our renal dialysis services across the Northern Territory.

The Health minister, the Hon Natasha Fyles, launched our Renal Strategy 2017–2022 when we came to government. I remind the House that there are several key priority areas that our renal strategy covers.

The key priority areas are:

- (1) prevention—to increase the focus on primary prevention to prevent and reduce risk factors
- (2) intervention—detect, manage and decrease chronic kidney disease through early intervention and health promotion
- (3) collaboration—deliver a coordinated, collaborative and integrated renal service
- (4) participation—support consumer participation
- (5) accessibility—care closer to home
- (6) skills—promote a suitably skilled and culturally inclusive workforce
- (7) sustainability—achieve financial sustainability while meeting service growth and demand.

Minister Fyles spoke proudly of the good work we have done so far as a Territory Labor government in investing in our renal dialysis services across the Territory, in particular, one of our major service delivery centres, which is the Nightcliff Renal Unit. That unit does amazing work and supports many Territorians. Unfortunately, many of our remote Territorians have to come to Darwin for that life-saving renal dialysis.

The upgrades are half completed. They have opened a large section of the renal dialysis unit. There is still some work happening on the other side of the block. That new facility is amazing. It is quality care and the staff who work there to support the patients do an amazing job.

I visited there on Saturday. I picked up my mum, who is a dialysis patient. She does dialysis three days a week. Each treatment is usually between four and four-and-a-half hours.

It was great to see the new facility. I have heard about it a lot. Minister Fyles has spoken very passionately in the House about the work her department is doing in healthcare delivery. I acknowledge the upgrades and the big difference it is making to the dialysis patients.

In acknowledging some of the great work that has happened already in the last three-and-a-half years of a Territory Labor government, we have a lot to go particularly in some of those key priority areas. We have heard from bush members in the House asking questions and getting briefings about the service delivery that is available to their constituents in remote parts of the Northern Territory. In our regional areas I know the Member for Katherine has spoken about the service delivery in Katherine and how we can support the expansion and support the people coming from remote areas into the regional hub of Katherine.

I know all too well, because it is a big issue in my electorate of Arnhem. I have patients travelling in to the dialysis centre in Katherine from some of the Arnhem communities and it is physically exhausting for those patients particularly when they have to arrange their own travel if there are no alternative travel arrangements for services into Katherine. I have constituents from Barunga and Beswick who travel in to Katherine.

One of my constituents, who is a very feisty, savvy and wise lady who travels in and sometimes she has had to drive herself. In terms of safety of driving back after dialysis treatment, I know when my dear mother has to do her treatment, she is not a driver but my father picks her up and within the first hour of getting home she has to have a really big sleep. She is usually out for a couple of hours on her dialysis treatment days. It is physically exhausting and I worry about the travel arrangements that constituents have to make.

There are subsidies available through our patient travel system which is great but unfortunately not everyone has a car or fuel and not everyone has a carer or family member who can transport them three and sometimes four times a week, an hour return and sometimes in the dark if you are on a night time dialysis session. You have road safety to worry about when you are driving in the dark especially when there is rain or crossings with water over them or animals on the road. It can be quite unsafe particularly if someone is driving themselves and they are tired.

Some of the areas that I acknowledge we have done very well. I have lots of conversations across the Arnhem electorate and the Territory about those priority areas. A big concern in Central Australia as well as the Top

End is making sure we have a skilled and capable workforce. Often people are scratching their heads and asking why can we not have a renal dialysis unit here on country? Unfortunately the reason is that we do not have trained staff to deliver that service.

If someone is a self-care dialysis patient, they are able to do the training—it is quite intense training and it is often recommended that a family member or a carer does that training alongside the patient and then there is good support from the Department of Health to be able to return to community and do that self-care dialysis. Unfortunately a lot of Aboriginal Territorians in our remote areas are either uncomfortable to do the training or do not live long enough to do the training and have that as an option while they are on the kidney donation waitlist.

It is a terrible cycle that we see and one that continues to grow in the Territory. It is an area where we must all work together to look at some of the solutions to support dialysis on country. Purple House—I know you are a big supporter Mr Deputy Speaker—Sarah Brown and her team have done absolutely commendable work in Central Australia right up to the Top End. The Angurugu Dialysis Unit on Groote Eylandt are supported by Purple House and that has allowed Anindilyakwa family members to return to Groote Eylandt and do treatment in Angurugu which is fantastic.

The Mayor of Roper Gulf, Judy McFarlane, the Deputy Mayor, Helen Lee, and Jilkminggan and Mataranka community members are lobbying hard for a dialysis unit in Mataranka so residents in Jilkminggan and Mulga can receive that critical care in Mataranka instead of making a three-hour return trip on dialysis day.

We will continue to lobby and advocate for locally-based solutions. I know the Mataranka clinic is a Sunrise Aboriginal Health Corporation clinic, but there are ways the government can support it and create opportunities for Territorians not only in our workforce but our patients receiving that vital care.

Lastly, I thank Minister Fyles and her department and office. I recently wrote to her about the Ngukurr portable dialysis unit, which is no longer needed in Ngukurr because there has been a new dialysis room built into the new clinic which was opened at the end of 2017.

The plan is to look at moving the portable renal unit from Ngukurr to the neighbouring Minyerri community. There have been some positive moves on that and I look forward to working with Minister Fyles and the Member for Barkly to make that happen.

I will continue to advocate for renal health care across the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.