

Mr Deputy Speaker Paech took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS
Bees Creek School

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery this morning of Year 5 students from Bees Creek Primary School accompanied by their teachers. I have been told by your local member, Kezia Purick, that you are the brightest students from the rural area. On behalf of all honourable members, welcome to Parliament House.

Members: Hear, hear!

LEAVE OF ABSENCE
Member for Daly

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 224, I seek leave of absence for the Deputy Opposition Leader, the Member for Daly, until lunchtime.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Establish an Independent Commission Against Corruption Standing Committee

Continued from 12 February 2020.

Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move the following amendment, to remove all the words after 'That this Assembly' and replace with:

1. This Assembly establishes a Standing Committee on the ICAC and designates it to receive reports and perform other functions in relation to the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption pursuant to section 5 of the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017*.
2. The functions of the committee are to:
 - (a) perform the functions of the Assembly committee under the act
 - (b) examine each annual report of the commissioner and the inspector under sections 128 and 137 of the act.
 - (c) report to the Assembly on matters relating to tabled reports which have been referred to the Legislative Assembly by the commissioner under sections 53 and 54 of the act.
 - (d) examine trends in similar bodies in Australia and internationally, including trends in the legislation and administration of these bodies, to ensure the NT ICAC remains fit-for-purpose.
3. The committee's functions do not include:
 - (a) investigating a matter relating to particular conduct, or
 - (b) reconsidering a decision to investigate, not to investigate or to discontinue investigation of a particular complaint, or
 - (c) reconsidering the findings, recommendations, determinations or other decisions of the commissioner or the inspector, in relation to a particular investigation, preliminary inquiries, audit, review, referral, or complaint.
4. The membership of the committee will be two government members of which one will be Chair and the other the Deputy Chair of the committee, one opposition member and one non-party aligned member. Membership of the committee will be subject to conflict-of-interest considerations to ensure members are free from perceived or actual bias.

I thank the Member for Goyder for her recent motion on the establishment of an ICAC Legislative Assembly Standing Committee. My government fully supports the establishment of a standing committee, which is provided for under section 5 of the Independent Commissioner ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Chief Minister, please pause. Has a copy of the amendment been circulated to all honourable members?

Mrs Lambley: No.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: We will have that circulated now.

Mr GUNNER: I confirm that my government fully supports the establishment of a standing committee, which is provided for under section 5 of the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017* (the ICAC Act).

The amendments I am proposing today have been carefully considered in the context of existing parliamentary and legislative frameworks. They make sure that the role of the commissioner and his office and that of the ICAC inspector are clear and independent, and that the roles of existing committees that oversee the administration of the Office of the ICAC are not duplicated. We must also be careful that the functions of this standing committee do not erode the independence of the commissioner, which is a founding principle of the ICAC Act.

To quote section 21, Independence of ICAC:

The ICAC is not subject to direction by any person about:

- (a) the way the ICAC performs the ICAC's functions under this act; or*
- (b) the priority given to any particular matters.*

The wording of this motion, therefore, makes sure that the roles are clear and the independence of the ICAC is confirmed.

Establishment of the ICAC: The creation and establishment of an ICAC was a cornerstone of the trust and integrity reforms my government committed to when we came into power in 2016. To ensure all Territorians had their say, the ICAC legislation was released as an exposure bill for extensive public consultation before it was introduced to parliament. The legislation also went through the scrutiny process. While we accepted most of the recommendations, government rejected the recommendation to reduce the level of scrutiny for politicians and their unsatisfactory conduct. I will come back to this point in a moment.

The ICAC Act was passed by the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly in November 2018 and implemented an anti-corruption model which aligned 50 of the 52 recommendations made by the Commissioner, the Honourable Brian Ross Martin AO QC, in his *Anti-Corruption, Integrity and Misconduct Commission Inquiry*.

It created an ICAC with comprehensive powers to investigate the most serious, sensitive and systemic corrupt conduct by public officers and public bodies, including the parliament in which we stand today. As an additional safeguard and accountability mechanism, the legislation mandates the appointment of an inspector to accept complaints about the commissioner and his office.

As members of this Assembly will be aware, Mr Bruce McClintock SC was appointed the ICAC Inspector. Additionally, the ICAC Act provides for the opportunity to form a Legislative Assembly standing committee. The ICAC model now in place in the Territory is based on best practice from anti-corruption commissions around the country. While governance and oversight arrangements differ across jurisdictions, our amended motion will provide the standing committee with similar functions to those in other jurisdictions while recognising the existing and independent compliance and oversight role of the ICAC Inspector.

As set out in the original motion, section 5 of the *ICAC Act* allows the Legislative Assembly to, by resolution, designate a committee of the Legislative Assembly to receive reports and perform other functions in relation to the ICAC.

The establishment of a standing committee is not being disputed. I reiterate my government's full support for this to occur. The reports referred to in section 5 are those set out in sections 53 and 54 of the *ICAC Act*.

Under these sections, the ICAC can refer a matter to the relevant minister if the commissioner is not satisfied a referral entity has adequately dealt with a referral.

If the commissioner is then not satisfied with the minister's response, the commissioner can further escalate the matter to the designated Legislative Assembly committee, or in the absence of such a committee, to the Speaker. This is delegating what currently sits with the Speaker down to the parliamentary committee.

The ICAC Act does not confer any other specific requirements or powers on the standing committee and so, it is these other functions proposed in the original motion which need to be carefully considered. Every jurisdiction's anti-corruption commission legislation provides for some form of accountability, either to a parliamentary standing committee, or an inspector, or both.

The common theme of standing committees in other jurisdictions are to monitor and review the operation of the anti-corruption bodies. However, it should be highlighted that each jurisdiction, either directly or indirectly, places limits on the powers of the standing committee. As highlighted by Commissioner Martin in his inquiry, the standing committees cannot act as a formal review of particular decisions of the anti-corruption commissioners.

Commissioner Martin, in his inquiry, recommended that particular attention should be given to the appropriate limits that should be placed on the role of the standing committee. Commissioner Martin stated that the standing committee should not be able to interfere with the day-to-day operations of the commissioner or his office, and performance of their functions, nor should it be able to review a particular decision or investigation conducted by the commissioner. This is about protecting the independence of the committee and making sure that politicians cannot overturn decisions they do not like about themselves.

The amendments I am proposing today will ensure that the scope of the standing committee is clear and precise, with clear delineation of the roles of existing committees and legislation. The amendments will ensure that the work of the committee does not conflict with the functions and powers of the commissioner and the ICAC inspector, or interfere with upholding or maintaining the independence of the ICAC and the ICAC inspector.

The independence of the commissioner is paramount and critical for him to be able to effectively carry out his functions. The commissioner has extensive and far-reaching powers to uncover corruption and misconduct across all public officers and bodies. This oversight includes honourable members of the Legislative Assembly. This is why we rejected the scrutiny committee's recommendation to reduce the level of scrutiny for politicians by the ICAC when the bill was being considered in 2017.

The ICAC Act appreciates this and carefully sets out a governance framework which established the independent statutory role of the ICAC inspector tasked with overseeing the ICAC. It would be undesirable, duplicative and unnecessary for this role to also be undertaken by a standing committee.

The primary role of the ICAC inspector is ensure that the ICAC is acting within its powers. The inspector's functions are set out in sections 135 and 136 of the ICAC Act and includes:

- evaluating the ICAC's performance and reporting on the evaluation
- receiving and dealing with complaints about the ICAC or its staff
- making recommendations to the ICAC or public bodies regarding practices or procedures in relation to the performance of functions under the ICAC Act.

I emphasise subsection 2 of section 135 of the ICAC Act in keeping with the independence of the ICAC inspector's role:

The inspector is not subject to direction by any person about the way the inspector performs the inspector's functions.

I emphasise this because the original motion borrowed heavily from the New South Wales legislation which does not include a similar clause. It does not explicitly highlight the independence of the inspector.

With this in mind, it is important that this Assembly considers carefully the proposed role of the committee and its operation within the context of the ICAC Act, and that this is not the exact model that exists in New South Wales or any other jurisdiction.

The role and authority of the ICAC inspector in the Northern Territory's legislation is clear. An absolutely independent statutory officer, not subject to direction, who can access the ICAC's records to ensure the ICAC is acting within power and can investigate allegations of impropriety by the ICAC.

Appointment provisions: The appointment provisions for the commissioner and ICAC inspector are considered best practise and have been used as a model for other integrity statutory appointments in the Territory such as the Ombudsman, Auditor-General and Electoral Commissioner.

The appointment provisions are clearly set out in the legislation, creating a robust and transparent process for the appointment of a commissioner and inspector with the right expertise, integrity and independence from each other and political influences.

Both positions must satisfy strict eligibility requirements and are appointed by the Administrator on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. The appointments are then required to be tabled in the Assembly within six sitting days.

As the Assembly will be aware, Mr Kenneth Fleming QC was appointed as the Northern Territory Independent Commissioner Against Corruption on 13 June 2018 and Mr Bruce McClintock SC, who is also the inspector of the New South Wales ICAC, was appointed to the position of the ICAC inspector for the Northern Territory on 28 September 2018.

Both are held in the highest regard and I have the utmost confidence of their ongoing integrity, impartiality and independence in these roles and in holding public bodies and government to account. This is also the view of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly which supported these appointments through an open and transparent process.

The inspector has provided feedback on the original motion expressing deep concerns that the proposed standing committee's functions at 2(b) and (c) of the original motion diminish the independence of the ICAC and inspector. He sees them to be contrary to the spirit of the legislation and impose additional and undesirable controls upon the commissioner.

In particular, Mr McClintock wrote that the commissioner's title includes the word 'independent' and that is what the legislation requires him to be.

New motion: I have given serious consideration to the Motion which has been put forward and am now respectfully proposing an alternative set of functions for the ICAC standing committee.

The functions are intended to set the scope for the standing committee. Once established, members of the standing committee can develop their own terms of reference, in line with the motion that we are proposing today.

The amendments maintain the examining of annual reports from the commissioner and inspector, as provided for under sections 128 and 137 of the ICAC Act and reporting to the Assembly on matters referred to it under sections 53 and 54 of the ICAC Act.

The amendments also maintain a role for the committee, in relation to examining legislation and administrative trends in similar bodies in Australia and internationally, to ensure the role of the commissioner and the NT's ICAC legislation remains fit for purpose.

The specific ICAC oversight functions are already provided for through the independent inspector role, as outlined previously, and as such these specific monitoring and review functions are captured through the ICAC legislation. Of course, the committee will have all the usual powers under the *Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act 1992* and associated standing orders to inquire into and report on matters relevant to its terms of reference.

In terms of a monitoring and review function for the role of the inspector, this was deemed to be an unnecessary encroachment on the independence of the inspector which, as I have described, is 'not subject to direction by any person' under section 135(2) of the ICAC Act.

The inquiry function over the administration of the ICAC office was also considered unnecessary as it duplicated existing scrutiny by the Public Accounts Committee and other financial and public sector legislative

frameworks, such as the *Financial Management Act 1995* and *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*, which the commissioner as the CEO of his office must adhere to.

We agree that the remit of the standing committee should not include any capacity to inquire into, interfere with or reconsider any particular function or decision of the commissioner or the ICAC inspector in the performance of their statutory functions. The amendments broaden this clause to include not just investigations or complaints but also preliminary inquiries, audits, review and referrals, as set out in the legislation for both the commissioner and the inspector.

Lastly, the amendments propose that the committee members be two Government members, one opposition member and one non-party aligned member. I note the Speaker's comments in the original Motion last week that the composition and Chair of the committee is not the important issue here and this amendment is simply to align the standing committee with the membership of other Assembly committees.

Concluding comments: I have proposed this alternative motion in the Legislative Assembly today to ensure that the functions of the standing committee align with existing frameworks, are consistent with the role and powers of the commissioner and Inspector and are in line ...

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Standing Order 237; the Chief Minister in his contribution mentioned that the Inspector had provided feedback. Is he able to table the feedback for the Assembly for us to consider it as part of our consideration of the Motion?

Ms FYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I am not sure that is the right Standing Order?

Mr GUNNER: If I can be of assistance? I quoted from a letter written by the inspector. I am happy to table that letter.

Ms Finocchiaro: Thank you.

Mr GUNNER: I would like to thank the Assembly who have supported the establishment of the ICAC and acknowledge the critical role that this independent anti-corruption office plays in addressing the most serious corruption in the Northern Territory.

The amendments strengthen the integrity framework already in place. We as politicians cannot disagree with a decision that we do not like out of that ICAC committee, which goes against the independence of the committee. If the decision is found against one of us, we cannot say in parliament that we disagree with the ICAC and refute the findings made against us. That is an important protection for the independence of the ICAC Commissioner.

I commend the alternative motion to members of the Assembly.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support what the Member for Goyder and the Chief Minister have put forward. I have researched the matter, but listening to the Chief Minister's fairly detailed response, it is hard to take all that in.

If I were to have an amendment, and I am not saying I do, this is an opportune time, as we are coming to the end of this Assembly. The Member for Goyder may not agree, but this should have gone to a scrutiny committee—because that committee can hear matters related to the Assembly—to look at what you have put forward and compare it with what the Member for put forward.

It is very hard to make a judgment in such a short time to either agree or disagree with what you have said. But I would have thought the possibility of this going to a scrutiny committee would allow time for the committee to balance out the different points of view. To some extent they are close—but 2(e) is not included except for trends in administration of similar bodies in Australia or internationally, so there are some other matters there.

I have issue with whether having an annual report would cover other reports that the commissioner does. Another section was not included—any matters referred to the committee by the Assembly for consideration et cetera.

There was another issue raised about the numbers of the committee. You can argue the toss. I was looking at the number of people who might be on a committee—it varies from state to state. I am a fan of an opposition

or independent person being the Chair of those committees. That tends to take it away from government-controlled committees and is more about bipartisanship.

Having listened to the Chief Minister's detailed response to what the Member for Goyder put forward, my suggestion is to set up such an important committee—we would also be able to ask people like the inspector to come before that committee. We might ask other people who may have experience in these matters to give us their opinion on how we can have the best committee that can fulfil the roles of what is required in the act.

I am reluctant to support the motion the government has put forward. In that short time I have heard a fairly detailed consideration of why the government does not totally agree with what the Member for Goyder has put forward. The best way would be to send it off to a scrutiny committee. It does not need the same number of days as if we were dealing with legislation. It could be reported back to us by the next sittings, but it would then at least allow this to be in the public arena a bit more. It would allow the Member for Goyder to develop her reasons why she does not agree with the government's point of view.

I do not know anyone who does not support the idea that the Member for Goyder has put forward. It is a good motion, it is just the details we are going to debate as to whether they are good or will they limit what the Member for Goyder has been trying to put forward to the extent that it loses some of its ability to investigate all matters that are appropriate, recognising that the ICAC is independent. Should there be the ability to look at some of those issues that the Member for Goyder has brought forward?

There are some matters here which the government has not agreed to and they have given us some reasons why and they have just tabled the document from the inspector although I have not had time to read that either. My feeling is—and I do not know whether the Member for Goyder agrees with me or whether the government agrees with me—we would be better off sending this to a scrutiny committee and having a report back at the next sittings which are in March.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to start by saying that I think it is disappointing that we have only just received this letter from the inspector that the Chief Minister has just tabled, given it is dated 13 February, an entire week ago. I question whether or not that letter should have been sent to the Assembly, given it is Assembly business brought by the Member for Goyder, as opposed to sent to the Chief Minister. In any event, being provided with it now—which is good and I am grateful to have the information—we need to have an informed debate and we cannot have an informed debate if we do not have the information.

The Chief Minister is correct to the extent the he says we do not want to do anything that erodes the independence of the ICAC, it cannot be said that is the Member for Goyder's intention. This is a committee that has the authority of the act to be established under Section 5. It is something that the government should have done.

The Member for Goyder said it very well last week along the lines, when you have a new piece of legislation do you not have a checklist that you are supposed to go through and check that you have done everything you were supposed to do? The government's great surprise last week that this committee was proposed to be formed pursuant to the ICAC came as disconcerting to me because I thought the government would have done some work on that. For it to come at great surprise and then come back and amend the Member for Goyder's motion, to me signalled that the government had done no work in this space which is disappointing.

There is no question we want it to be done right. It needs to be within all of the appropriate bounds. The ICAC, both commissioner, the office and the inspector of course are independent and everything needs to support that independence. It is interesting that one, the government has failed to do any work in this space twelve months down the track and two, it is disappointing we have only just received this letter.

On my quick reading of this letter I cannot see whether or not the amendments the government have made go in excess of what is discussed in the letter from the inspector. At very quick glance—perhaps a government member could clarify this—in the Member for Goyder's proposed motion which came at 2(e) which the government has amended—it talked about budget and staffing, that this committee would not be able to discuss matters or involve itself in matters around budget and staffing. Now that is not mentioned in the letter from the inspector. My question to government is, have you only implemented what is recommended by the inspector or have you gone further? If you have gone further, why? Did you receive other advice that Assembly members should be aware, so we can help construct the most appropriate committee going forward?

Going back to Justice Martin's review—it was Justice Martin who was the person who gave the advice and prepared the report around what our ICAC should like. He raised concerns and we as the opposition, and others, raised concerns at the time of passing the ICAC legislation that it is really important the ICAC Commissioner does not have to come, cap in hand, to government on budget.

It is interesting that the government removed this provision in 2E(ii) and I might read from ...

Ms Fyles: Estimates—that is right, you boycotted that.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: She has started up already this morning! Good morning, Attorney-General, it is nice to have you making an actual contribution to something meaningful. I know you just prefer to snipe from the sidelines. We are actually talking about something very important, that is very complicated ...

Members interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They are all upset now because I called you out. Your pathetic disintegration of debate continues ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please pause. Honourable members, there are children in the gallery and I expect you not to carry on like children. If you are going to interject, please do not. You have an opportunity to speak to the amendment this morning. I will ask that all honourable members award that same respect.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Part of the Martin review was concerns about the ICAC Commissioner having budgetary independence. If they needed more money to fulfil their duties they could have that money. Of course, the way the government has constructed it is so that the ICAC Commissioner has to then come back to government and say, 'We need more money'.

At that time I think it was the Treasurer was saying, 'Well, of course, we would give them more money if they needed more money', and 'That is a given' and blah blah. There is no mechanism to achieve that other than that direct interface. In the review, Justice Martin made the recommendation that there would be a CEO of the commission as well as the commissioner so that the CEO could undertake that more budgetary role, providing another layer of independence for the ICAC.

I just raise that specifically and would like the government to answer that. Why was budget and staffing removed—on my very quick read ...

Ms Fyles: It was in the Chief's speech. She did not even listen.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Attorney-General, I just asked for interjections to cease. Again, I do not want to warn you.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: I pick up on the Attorney-General's interjection. I hope she will make a meaningful contribution to this debate, but I doubt it. The Chief Minister spoke at a million miles an hour—with respect—so it was very difficult to capture everything he said. We have only just been provided with the advice that government has held—for a week, without any care of providing it to the remainder of the Assembly, presumable including your own back bench.

Ms Fyles: We spoke to your Whip last night.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: We did not have this last night. I again pick up on the interjection of the Attorney-General. This is a ...

Ms Fyles interjecting.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Well, maybe we can do a straw poll. Has anyone other than the Chief Minister seen this letter before just now? I am getting a lot of nodding heads that mean no. Unless the Attorney-General can prove otherwise, that is the first time I have seen this letter.

It is fair enough that we stand here and ask where the amendments are coming from. They are either coming from the advice of the commission, government or the Solicitor-General. I do not know where, but I think we

have to understand why things are being removed and changed. That is fair enough, we deserve to understand why things are being amended.

Moving to the composition of the committee, I will outline what happens in other jurisdictions:

- In the Australian Capital Territory, the membership of its committee is one government, one opposition and one cross bench member and the Chair must be an opposition member.
- In New South Wales, the membership is one government, one opposition and one cross bench member and the Chair is elected by the committee.
- In Victoria, the membership consists of two members from each House, I am not sure how those are split; and the Chair is elected by the committee.
- In Western Australia, the membership consists of three members from each House and the Chair is elected by the committee.
- In South Australia, the membership consists of three members from each House and the Chair is appointed.
- In Tasmania, the committee is represented by each party with more than three members—I do not know the proportions—and the Chair is elected by the committee.
- In Queensland, the membership is determined by the percentage of non-government members in the House and the Chair is appointed by the House on nomination by the leader of the House.

It seems like the version that the Labor government is going down today—and I am happy to stand corrected because I have not had the time to thoroughly go over this, as I ordinarily would. I am happy to be told I am wrong but I do not think the letter goes to anything about composition. Why the government felt it necessary to change the composition in the motion, I do not know. Perhaps they can explain that because in other jurisdictions the membership is very clear.

Generally speaking, the Chair is always elected by the committee or the representation of the committee is very equal across the breakdown of parties, aligned, non-aligned, Independent members. Why the government is going down this road of having to—let me get it correct:

... have two government members, one of which will be the chair and the other the deputy chair of the committee.

It is extraordinary and out of step with what happens with every other committee in the Assembly currently. Yes, we have government-majority committees, but we still elect the chair and the deputy chair. The government, in all of its wisdom—and again, please shine a light on this because I did not read it in the letter. Why is the government feeling that the chair and the deputy chair have to be government members.

I know the Legislative Scrutiny Committee, Robyn? Yes, the Member for Araluen is the deputy chair of that committee. I cannot speak for the others ...

Mrs Lambley: No, I am not.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Not any more. You were?

Mrs Lambley: I was.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Yes, you were. That position is elected.

Again, why does the government feel it is so necessary to have such control of this committee of the Assembly when every other jurisdiction—I acknowledge there is a variety of ways and I do not fully understand how a couple of the jurisdictions do it, but it seems very clear that they are proportionate committees that do not feel the need to have such a heavy level of government control over. I genuinely question that. We are talking about a standing committee and I do not understand why the government feels it is so important to—even prescribes that the deputy chair is, quite frankly, desperate in my view. It is out of step with the current practice of ordinary committees of this Chamber.

I also want to raise concern about why the government—it is very difficult to match everything up. I thought if the Chief Minister or whichever government member might speak next—I note from my quick read that the letter says that 2(b) and (c) are problematic. Sorry, I am just trying to find the quote. I quote:

My concern is particularly about paragraphs 2(b) and (c) which do not appear to me to be authorised by the ICAC Act.

Then, I believe—here we go—that the government is still leaving (c). Is that right? You are removing 2(b), 'monitor and review the exercise of the commissioner's functions under the act', but not (c) 'monitor and review the exercise of the inspector's functions under the act' ...

Ms Purick: They are removed.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: They both have been removed? Okay, I stand corrected. Both have been removed. Thank you, Member for Goyder.

I will leave my comments there. Suffice to say, there are more questions than answers. I believe the establishment of this committee is very important. It is, obviously, provided for under the ICAC Act, so it must be done in any event. It would be very prudent of the government to respond meaningfully to the concerns I have raised, as opposed to politically, which is their go-to, happy place.

Mr Deputy Speaker, of course, we are talking about something significant. It would have been good to receive this letter a week ago, as you did. If we have the right information we can raise the standard of debate in the Chamber.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak to the amendment, particularly about the makeup of the committee. I know why the government wants to chair the committee and have the deputy chair of the committee also appointed by them; they can manipulate the committee and have it controlled by their backroom. They do not allow people in this Chamber to represent their constituents. They manipulate this place and the way they do business on the fifth floor to control the debate from the outside.

I am interested in the makeup of the committee and whether there is a plan for it to be a standing committee; of course there can be ministers. Is it your intention to have the Attorney-General on this committee—that would be a conflict but other people who know more can speak to that.

The makeup of the committee should be chaired by an opposition or independent member, there is precedence. There are two qualified lawyers in this Chamber; the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Fong Lim. It would be remiss not to have both members on the committee, they would be the appropriate Chair and Deputy Chair.

If we are committed to transparency—decisions being made by elected members not by backroom people; people being removed from Caucus by former Chief Ministers in private meetings at their own private residences—if we are not going to do business that way and have a government that is elected to govern the Territory, let us do these things properly. Here is the opportunity.

I thank the Leader of the Opposition for outlining the makeup of other committees and how they work. The fact is that all Attorneys-General, other than our own, are qualified lawyers—I have doubt about lawyers from time to time. When you are administering and making laws why would you not want lawyers in these roles. This is extraordinary.

I know why we do it; we are in a jurisdiction where things are controlled by the backroom. Decisions are made by people who are not elected on the fifth floor. The chiefs of staff of the Chief Minister write letters on behalf of constituents for grants. This place is not controlled by elected members, one reason why we have to commit to an ICAC, why the ICAC must remain independent. The selection of the committee will be important in administering that independence.

Lastly, I ask why is this being brought by someone other than the government? Why is this not part of the process of getting the committee in place? This is extraordinary—political convenience.

Regarding the debate last night about the statutory limit to borrowing; the reason you have not worked on that is because it is not politically convenient. You are working on your political conveniences forgetting your election promises in 2016. You are engaged in serious self-interest.

We are in a situation where the constituents of Johnston are going to a by-election because your chief Minister cannot lead; cannot lead your own team, extraordinary. This is the leadership of the Territory. We have serious economic conditions, issues with crime and law and order and social inclusion.

Things are deteriorating. I rode along the foreshore last night, not slowly, and I had people attacking and throwing rocks at me. This is our capital city. I know who these people are—people in this Chamber would refer to them as long-grassers. They are not long-grassers to me, they are constituents of the Northern Territory and they are living in our parks and gardens around Darwin because this government is failing to deliver services in the remote communities they come from. This is happening across the Territory. That is why we need to have a fully-functioning and independent ICAC with the committee in parliament that we are talking about today—because this government and successive governments are not delivering to the constituency in the Northern Territory. We know this is true and is occurring right now.

Let us get on with this. I am not sure that the appropriate processes are being followed. I agree that it should have gone to a scrutiny committee and all sorts of other things, but we need to get on with the business of this parliament and stop this parliament being manipulated for pure political purpose.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is amazing that these things have not been done by a government that came to power about independence and transparency. Their decision on just the private grandstand at the Fannie Bay race club, in the electorate of the Chief Minister—just that one thing—is a window into the fact that this government does not function openly and transparently, it operates in its self-interest. They will probably pay the price for that at the polls in August.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Mr Deputy Speaker, I add my comments to what the Opposition Leader and the Member for Stuart have said, in particular about this amendment and the makeup of the committee.

The government needs to stop its fixation with command and control and be open to proper debate and discussion. The makeup of the committees in other jurisdictions that were mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition give a clear indication that other jurisdictions are clearly more mature than this one.

As for the numbers—two from the government and two from the opposition—I have no problem with that. I know why you want the chair and the deputy chair as government members. It is because you want that casting vote all the time so that you continue to have control of the committee.

You have got yourselves into the situation you are now—facing defeat at this coming election—because of this command and control method of governing. The fact that they cannot open up and have proper adult discussions with people who may know something about what they are talking about is the classic failing of this government.

That being said, I support any further amendment to the amendment that would change that makeup. The Member for Stuart mentioned that, as a standing committee, there is potential for ministers to sit on the committee. I am interested to know whether the government is intending on having the Attorney-General on the committee, because I would have thought that is close to a conflict and is something that would not be desirable for a committee of the Assembly to be overseeing these sorts of issues and considerations when the Attorney-General is the minister responsible for ICAC.

They are the only real concerns I have. We did not have enough time to consider the letter that was provided by the inspector. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition on that point. That being said, having a look at the amendment, I do not have any particular problems with the proposed amendment. It is sufficiently broad in its language in what the committee can look at. I have a sneaking suspicion that it might be broader than you want it to be, but that is to be seen.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will provide comments on the amendment to motion to establish an ICAC standing committee. Apart from the fourth part, on the detail of the committee—which I object to. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition and other members from this side of the Chamber that is not kosher—it is not okay that the Chair and deputy Chair of this committee both be government members.

The Leader of the Opposition illustrated clearly, citing the makeup of other similar committees throughout Australia that is not the way business should be done. It contravenes the Latimer Principles we are all party to, which says that any committee should not be chaired by a government member. We have to go along with the government and the fact they like to have their government members as Chairs—they get the extra financial remuneration that comes with being a Chair. It always has to go a government member—I think,

first and foremost for that reason and secondly so they can have complete control of every committee in this parliament.

Apart from the recommendation I support what the government has put forward. I congratulate the government for taking control of this motion. The original motion put forward by the Member for Goyder was, in my view, very concerning. I support the fact the government changed a number of the aspects to the original motion. I congratulate them for jumping on this.

The parts of the motion I support changing are in part 2, sections (b) and (c), the monitor and review functions. That is above and beyond what any parliamentary committee should be doing when it comes to an independent commission and corruption.

The other part I agree with is the last sentence in the amendments, which is:

Membership of the committee will be subject to conflict of interest considerations to ensure members are free from perceived or actual bias.

Absolutely—I have no questions about that.

That brings me to some of the other points I will make on this motion. A week ago, this was tabled by the Member for Goyder and, through the sensibility of the parliament, the debate was deferred for a week. A week is a long time, particularly when it comes to politics and this parliament.

Over the last week there has been a lot of discussion about this motion put forward by the Member for Goyder. Many of you in this Chamber would have been contacted by the media. I had two calls from two journalists from different media outlets asking me if the Member for Goyder is subject to an ICAC investigation. My response is that I do not know. I cannot confirm or deny that. Why the Member for Goyder put this motion through has created a lot of interest in the community. The fact we now have a conflict of interest mentioned in this motion brings this to a head in my mind.

I do not know whether the Member for Goyder is the subject of an ICAC investigation but, given the form of the Member for Goyder over the last couple of years and, more recently, last year, I would not be surprised if she was the subject of an ICAC investigation. I think it probably highly likely.

Ms Purick interjecting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: No, I am not, because it raised questions throughout the community as to exactly what your motivation is for putting this motion forward. I think it is a reasonable question, Member for Goyder, seeing that you interrupted me. It is a reasonable question, given your behaviour in this parliament over the last 12 months and beyond.

It is a question based on your form, Member for Goyder. The form is that even just last year, we had the Member for Goyder, the Speaker of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and her assistant, Martine Smith, colluding to try to prevent the establishment of a political party in the Northern Territory. This became the concern of this parliament. There was a lot of debate and a lot of consternation and great concern about the Member for Goyder's behaviour.

I know she does not want to talk about it. I know she thinks it has been put to bed, but it has not. It had consequences. It did great harm to the reputation and respectability of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Of course the Member for Goyder decided to wash her hands of it and allow her assistant, Martine Smith, to take full responsibility for what happened. She claimed she had nothing to do with it and it was all concocted by her assistant—her secretary in the Office of the Speaker of the Northern Territory—and that she had no part in that despicable act.

The Member for Goyder has form. I could cite many other examples of how she has tried to manipulate things and tried to manipulate the things that have gone on in this parliament and the running of fair and transparent democratic process in the Northern Territory.

I think it is quite reasonable to ask the question, why has the motion come about. Why has the Member for Goyder decided to run it? Is it purely because out of her personal interest and the interest of the Northern Territory that this committee, ICAC standing orders committee should be established, or is there some parallel agenda? With the Member for Goyder you really have to consider that there is a parallel agenda, that there is something else happening.

The Member for Goyder spent some time last week moving around certain members of this Chamber talking about the behaviour of the ICAC Commissioner. I have spoken to at least three members of this Chamber who told me that she was spreading scuttlebutt about the ICAC Commissioner; that he had approached the government and was attempting to interfere with this decision of parliament to set up an ICAC standing committee. This has to be put on the public record. This is behaviour that is unacceptable and it is typical of the Member for Goyder. It should not be accepted. It should be talked about publicly. I have had years of this.

She has the ability to repress people and shut them up and that is not on. I am not here to make friends. I am not here to listen to nonsense and I am not here to collude or be a part of the nonsense that the Member for Goyder regularly tries to engage us all in. She has gone around to different members of this Chamber telling the story that the ICAC Commissioner is somehow trying to influence this decision of parliament and it is reprehensible and unacceptable. I did go to the Deputy Chief Minister last Wednesday and had a conversation with her about that behaviour. It disturbs me, it concerns me and it needs to go on the public record. I am not having any party to this sort of nonsense that the Member for Goyder carries on with.

A conflict of interest needs to be declared at all times by members of this Chamber. The Member for Goyder needs to come clean and declare her conflict of interest in terms of the Independent Commissioner Against Corruption at this point in time.

Is she being investigated by the ICAC Commissioner? Has she been asked questions? Has she been interviewed regarding any matter concerning herself or the Office of the Speaker or indeed her role as the Member for Goyder? Has she been required to provide evidence of any kind in any ICAC investigation? If the answer to that is yes, then she has a conflict of interest which she should have declared upfront.

It is probably worth this Chamber asking the ICAC Commissioner himself to clarify whether or not the Member for Goyder has been, or is currently, the subject of an ICAC investigation because it reflects poorly on all of us when this sort of behaviour is conducted in a very public way. The integrity of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory was brought into question last year by the bad behaviour of the Office of the Speaker, the Member for Goyder. I do not want her to use this Chamber, this parliament, this Legislative Assembly again for the same reason.

Let us draw a line in the sand and talk about what is really going on, Member for Goyder. Is it about your concern to set up an ICAC standing committee or is this some sort of sick way of trying to subvert an investigation that you may or may not be under? Is this a smokescreen, a deflection, a distraction? If it is, come clean, because we are all fed up to the eyeballs with your little tricks and cunning manoeuvres that we have seen for many years in this place.

I, for one, am over it. I am too old and tired. I have other things to talk about. Crime in Alice Springs is more of interest to me and my constituents than being led by the nose by a cunning member of parliament who is not necessarily truthful.

I congratulate for taking ownership of this motion and taking it away from the Member for Goyder, who cannot be trusted because she has a conflict of interest, I am sure of. She is trying to use this parliament for reasons that are not respectable or acceptable by any measure.

For the most part, I support the amendments to this motion, apart from the makeup of the committee itself.

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.

Welcome to Parliament House. Enjoy your time here.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, wow! What an extraordinary outburst. Someone got out of bed on the wrong side this morning.

If the Member for Araluen had read and understood the workings of the ICAC Act, she would know that if I am under investigation I cannot talk about it. That is one of the key components of that legislation. But I am not, so I can say that I am not under investigation.

To all the media people listening in—I know Mrs Lambley has form when it comes to leaking to all the media outlets in the Territory—I am not under investigation for anything. Put that on the record.

As for the rest of her comments, they are not worth dignifying at all, so I will move on.

The intent of this motion was simply to get the committee established. That is what the act requires. I said it last week. It is in the legislation and it should have been done before today, so my question to the government—which they will not answer, but that is okay—is, why did the Chief Minister's office not come about this legislation before today.

I am pleased the government supports it. Of course they would; everyone in this parliament would support it. It is about getting the best systems, procedures, legislation and operations for the Northern Territory going forward. It was overlooked by the government, and I do not know why, but if they have overlooked to establish this standing committee, as required under the ICAC legislation, what else have they not done in regard to legislation in the Northern Territory? What else have they not done in regard to the establishment of the ICAC legislation?

Hopefully, because of this motion to establish the committee, the relevant people will go through the legislation to ensure that everything that should have been done will have been done. We all want to ensure this organisation and the people who work within it do everything to the best of their ability and in compliance with the legislation.

I can live with the amendment, but I share concerns—as did the Opposition Leader—not so much with the letter from the inspector, Mr McClintock, but why it took a week to give it to members, particularly the last sentence, which says:

I am happy to discuss this further with you or your office or, indeed, any member of the Assembly.

Why did the Chief Minister not—because it is written to the Chief Minister specifically—as a courtesy, circulate it to all members for this debate today? As a courtesy, I let all members know that I would raise this motion in the next day of parliament.

I have a few concerns. I have no issue with what is in the letter; I can live with that. I am trying to get the committee established to ensure that we have the best operational commission that we possibly can. I am concerned with the last paragraph from Mr McClintock that says:

I have a more general concern that this resolution may be an attempt contrary to the spirit of the legislation to impose additional and undesirable controls upon the Commissioner.

I accept his concerns. I do not agree with them. I want to stress that the intent of this motion is to establish the committee. If there are people who are seeing shadows, you have to deal with it. There are no shadows; there are no spooks. It is about getting the right committee established according to the legislation.

To those who think that there is something clandestine going on, like the Member for Araluen who has some serious issues, and needs to see someone, I get concerned when people have this compulsive-obsessive nature about other people in this Chamber. But I digress.

The motion is honourable, decent and logical. People who think there is something else untoward, that is plain nonsense—some people in this Chamber. That is nonsense. There are many of you who do not believe that, and that is good. There is nothing (inaudible).

The one concern I have—I agree with the Opposition Leader—is the composition. I thought what I had was reasonable; it was in line with what happens in other states, which the Opposition Leader spoke about. I also spoke about it in the speech last week. It raises concern, and I agree. There is concern with the chairman and deputy chairman being with government. Presumably the chairman would get a casting vote.

However, I can live with it because the government will not support changes—two, one and one members. Who the government puts on it, that is entirely up to them. Who nominates from this side, it is entirely up to

them. I have no issues with the amendments. I have concerns with the composition but time will tell how the committee works under that structure.

Mr MILLS (Blain)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been observing this and thank the Member for Goyder for bringing this forward because if it was not for the Member for Goyder bringing this forward, all the business going on here would have missed that this important committee needed to exist. Then it gives rise to the question as to why at 10-minutes-to-midnight this occurs.

That question then goes to the Labor government which came into the Chamber with the raised expectations of our community that the parliament would be opened up. We would open up parliament to the people. Part of that would be the way we conduct our business so that people's confidence in the democratic processes, as they operate in this parliament, would be enhanced.

The question that arises is why, then, did the government not move on this more swiftly? Why was it up to the Member for Goyder to put this ball into play at 11.50 pm? Then why does the government then give a reasonably comprehensive response, which is almost satisfactory, at 11.55 pm—just before we go to the polls in August?

It leaves some questions as to what is really going on here. Was the Territory Labor government sincere when it said it wanted to open up parliament to the people? It would indicate not really, because it has taken this long and the initiative of the Member for Goyder to activate this very important matter that has been overlooked. Though the response from the Territory government—prompted by the actions of the Member for Goyder—are almost satisfactory, albeit at 11.55 pm, why has it placed that evidence of its continued desire to control the politics of this by ensuring that its team is in control of that committee? That really sticks in the craw. It also betrays that, in fact, they were not sincere in opening up the Territory parliament to the people, because you see no evidence. The spirit of that is not contained within that aspect of its amendment, reinforced by taking all this time to respond and by the initiative of the Member for Goyder.

I tend to agree with the Member for Nelson, that this is a bit odd and awkward when it is such an important matter. Maybe the way forward is either we move a motion that this goes to the scrutiny committee so it is done properly and we remove all the other guff around it and do it properly, or we just let this go through, raise our concerns and fix it after August, and have a genuine opening of the parliament to the people and reorganise the business of the parliament so that people could then have some confidence in what goes on in here.

Another question. I would have thought—maybe it is just me and I am old-fashioned—if the Member for Goyder saw this omission at 11.55 pm and thought, 'Why has somebody not done something about that?' that the person so concerned would have gone to the person concerned—either the government or the commissioner—and talked to them about it and organised it in a way that is above and beyond any question. Number one is 11.55 pm, number two, were the parties concerned involved in this response? Were they advised? Was it a collaborative approach? Or was it a reactionary approach? That raises a little question too in my mind. That does not seem right. I would like to have those questions resolved. Maybe I never will.

Some of the matters that the Member for Araluen raised cannot easily be dismissed. They also sit there in the context of all of this 11.55 pm business and how this has come to be, why the government has been so slow and has now responded in a casual way by bypassing proper engagement with the other members who are concerned about this. It causes me to think that the Member for Nelson is right—we just need to do this properly. The ICAC commissioner is really serious business.

In all of this, raising questions about the commissioner and his actions and the lack of output from the commission does not seem to help, because we should be talking about the office, the function, the purpose. To me, the things of greater importance are the things the commissioner has said on the public record about resourcing, appropriate empowerment, the culture in the public that has pushed back against some investigations.

As a parliament, we need to take heed of some deeper issues and make sure we take the matter of exposing any corruption to the bright sunlight. These are important matters and this is an important issue—more about the resourcing and empowering of the commission to do its job. That is of greater concern.

Having weighed it up, acknowledging it is five minutes to midnight, ie an election is coming and everyone's auction will be sucked into talking about what a candidate said when the spotlight was on them, trying to score small points, meanwhile Rome is burning.

The best way forward would be to accept the Labor government's contribution, acknowledging it is unacceptable that you have inserted yourself in the process to control it. This is wrong. It is shameful that it has taken you this long to respond and it has taken the prompting of the Member for Goyder.

I acknowledge the questions about 'due process', the motives and manner that has brought this into play, are in full view of everyone. Nonetheless, we need to proceed and get on with the business.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms PURICK (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, as stated previously—my speech is in *Hansard*—my intention to bring forward this motion was to have the standing committee established as require under the legislation.

I will not rehash that the government should have done it. I do my own research—some members on this side should understand that takes some work—and you find things out and seek advice. We have the disposal of two researchers who helped me and I drafted the motion accordingly.

If people say 'you should have told us ages ago', that is now how it works in here. It is called politics; the government was called out not doing something. I am not bagging the government, let us move on.

This is not clandestine or having a go at anyone outside this Chamber. I do not know or have ever met the commissioner in my capacity as Speaker or as the Member for Goyder. I know there are approximately 30 staff, I do not know anyone. They are busy. I am busy making sure the legislation this Chamber passes, which we all contributed and agreed to, works. That is what it is about.

There is speculation and complete lies coming from the Member for Araluen—I am shocked that she did not know the requirements of the legislation. When you are under investigation, you cannot talk to anyone except your legal representative or perhaps your partner?

Under the legislation, it is your legal representative, which is obvious. For her to say I am under investigation, she would know that I would not be able to talk about—clearly, she does not know the legislation. For the record, I am not under investigation for anything. I cannot stress that enough.

Yes, there was the incident last year. My staff member has apologised, both in person to the Members for Blain and Araluen. Yes, she was spoken to severely by me. Yes, it was a gross error of judgment. Yes, she accepts and takes all the blame. Yes, clearly she is my staff member so I have to be partially responsible. I accept that too, I have apologised to the members. So, for them to keep banging and harping on about it, clearly they have some issues that they need to deal with. I have made an error. I spoke to the member and my staff member and I thought that was done with it.

I am staggered that there is still this issue, because the Member for Araluen told my staff member that she should get away from me because I am toxic. That is what she said to my staff member. The Member for Blain also said similar things to my staff member. She also said, 'Get away from her, she is not good'. I have never said that before because that was between me and my staff member. Clearly, there are some issues here. I do not have any issues, I am quite comfortable in my skin. I have made mistakes in life—we all make mistakes. Personally, clearly, I have make a bad mistake with my arm. But, move on.

This motion is bigger than everyone. Getting a standing committee and getting it right is very important.

I thank the Chief Minister—and welcome back, Chief Minister, good to see you here. There is nothing worse than a dicky ticker, that is for sure. I am glad your dicky ticker is fixed because I would miss you if you were not here, big time.

I am disappointed with the committee composition, but I can work with and live with it. I do not know who government will nominate, but I am sure everyone over there is amply qualified to be on this committee. First meeting? We might discuss the scope of things and see how the annual report is going and things of that nature—I do not know. But it is a requirement, it is a standing committee in this parliament. There is one in every jurisdiction in Australia, with different terms of reference and composition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have what we have so let us make the best of it. I commend my motion, as amended, to the House.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**MARINE POLLUTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 109)**

Continued from 17 October 2019.

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Marine Pollution Legislation Amendment Bill was introduced on 17 October 2019 and referred to the Legislation Scrutiny Committee. We will be supporting the passage of the bill and the scrutiny committee's recommendations.

The current act deals with marine pollution for vessels and the intention of the bill is to clean up any flaws in that act which may have been brought to light times when enforcement was required.

The current restrictions on how documents can be served and the time limit on when the proceedings can be brought make the current act unworkable and this bill removes the statutory limitations on the bringing of proceedings for the *Marine Pollution Act*.

This bill facilitates the serving of documents on the owner or agent of a foreign-owned ship by clarifying the definition of 'agent', removing any geographical restriction on the status of the agent, requiring the regulator to be informed if a person is no longer the agent of a vessel, clarifying the definition of 'owner' and enabling documents to be served on an owner, a previous owner, an agent or a previous agent. This will ensure that the document are able to be served on the person responsible for the ship at the time of any alleged offence.

There is a question about whether or not consultation was undertaken with port operators, ship owners, et cetera. That is a matter for government to respond to. We do not know which of the scrutiny committee recommendations will be adopted, although I note there is an amendment schedule that has been circulated.

We will not be opposing this legislation, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr WOOD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I probably will wait around for the committee stage because I am not 100% sure. I am trying to work my way through those amendments that got dropped off this morning and we have had other things on our mind. I will listen to the minister when the minister brings in those amendments. There is nothing worse than amendments to a bill that is an amendment in itself, and trying to find the right clause can sometimes be difficult.

I would like to thank the department for giving me a briefing the other day.

I too support the bill. I understand there has been some issues in relation to the ability to prosecute and I understand one of those cases was dropped simply because it was too long a period investigating it and there were limitations on the time that the government could investigate a case of pollution.

It is interesting reading this bill and I will give some background to it. The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships called MARPOL, addressed ship-sourced pollution. MARPOL is aimed at preventing both accidental pollution and pollution from routine vessel operations.

MARPOL includes regulations covering pollution by oils, chemicals, garbage and other substances. I note in the legislation for the particular bill it also includes noxious liquid substances, packaged harmful substances—I am not sure what that means, it sounds like people throwing things overboard that might have illegal substance in them hoping they will float to shore—and sewage and garbage. There are certainly things you do not want floating around in the sea and our legislation I presume is also in line with that international convention for the prevention of pollution from ships.

Australia implements MARPOL through various Commonwealth legislation and the national agency Australian Maritime Safety Authority—AMSA—which is a statutory authority. The Northern Territory implements MARPOL through the *Marine Pollution Act 1999* which this bill is amending.

On 19 August 2016 the ABC reported there was an oil spill in Darwin Harbour. The minister said the investigation into that spill by the Northern Territory EPA was successful in identifying a foreign-owned ship that had been the cause of the spill however the legal proceedings highlighted the *Marine Pollution Act* shortcomings including the ship owner was not in a jurisdiction that allowed the Northern Territory to legally serve documents as the master of the ship had left Territory waters, the ship was foreign-owned and the

statute of limitations of two years—as I mentioned before—does not allow sufficient time to complete investigations and prepare a legal case particularly for foreign-owned ships.

According to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources witnesses at the public briefing on the bill on Wednesday 30 October 2019, this was the first legal action under the *Marine Pollution Act* and the proceedings were ongoing.

An overview of the bill, the Marine Pollution Legislation Amendment Bill amends the *Marine Pollution Act* and the *Marine Pollution Regulations 2003* as far as is possible within the Territory's legislative capacity. The bill introduces practical deficiencies in the legislation that are restricting the Territory's ability to serve documents on persons suspected of causing marine pollution in Territory coastal waters. These include clarifying the meaning of owner in relation to a ship and agent; removing a geographical limitation on the meaning of agent; improving the provisions concerning the service of documents on the ship's master and the ship's owner or foreign owner or agent past and present; and to address circumstances of an owner which includes selling the ship to avoid legal proceedings and avoiding begin served documents by declaring a person not their agent; and removing existing limitation on when proceedings for offences may be commenced.

When you see the changes to the bill that have been put forward today and what is presently, for instance, a definition of an agent, if you were new to the business you would say that there are certainly some deficiencies in the legislation. There were three points in the existing legislation in regard the meaning of an agent and the new legislation there are at least five with quite a large number of subclauses in it as well. The issue of who is an agent and when a person can be given documents is very important when it comes to taking a person to court. The same goes with the definition of an owner, it is broad and substantial. It has about 10 sub-items.

An interesting one in that—minister, you might be able to answer in your response—talks about an owner in relation to a ship meaning any of the following. It talks about someone who has exclusive possession of the ship—that sounds like a pirate. Is that what it means? Even if a pirate takes possession, does that mean the person is the owner? It then talks about a person who is a demise or sub demise charterer of the ship. I probably should have asked when I had the briefing but I was more concerned about making sure we could prosecute people who dumped garbage outside our sea boundary and allowed that to come back into our area.

It also talks about who was the time charterer of the ship, who has a beneficial interest in the ship. I am interested to know what you mean by a beneficial interest in a ship. It is broad. Beneficial means you have gained something from having that that ship. Does that you make an owner? There are a couple of sections in there that may need clarification as to what they mean.

When I read this this morning I looked up—it talks about who was responsible for the ship. This is in the existing legislation under section 3—I am not sure if 3 will be amended. This under 'Who a document is to be taken to be served'. I think this is in legislation. It says, 'The owner of the ship' and we are dealing with that. It says, 'An owner's agent' and we dealing with that. Then it says, 'The ship's master'.

I am wondering—the ship's master is not the agent or the owner, but is the person working for those people to talk the ship. Is there a requirement for the ship's master to pass that document on? For instance, a ship is seen dropping garbage, sewerage or oil into the water and the document has to be served on the ship's master. According to this, the ship's master is also regarded as the owner of the ship. Is that how I read it?

I did not see anywhere else in the documents that the ship's master was necessarily regarded as the owner of the ship, but that is the way it reads in section 3. It was just a clarification of who can serve the documents and why the ship's master is classed, under the existing act, as an owner of a ship—not the agent and the owner itself.

It is only a clarification, it is not a major concern. I had an opportunity to ask that. I will support the bill. Anything that makes sure our waterways—people who talk about the great recreational and commercial fishing industry in the Northern Territory realise we do not want pollution on or offshore. We need legislation that enables us—even if rarely used, that is sufficiently strong enough for a prosecution to occur.

It appears the problem we have at the moment is that—I got this in the briefing—while you can trace oil that has dropped into the sea back to a ship because you will know which ships were leaving Darwin Harbour at what time, so you could take a sample of the oil from and again when it reaches its next port. You can identify that and bring forth a prosecution. Obviously that is not so simple. It is a bit of a longer process than me just saying it. Then you have to get the people before the court to follow through with that prosecution.

I do not know how it works with other things such as sewerage and garbage. With garbage you hope something gives away something that was bought from a shop in Darwin. It may be a bit harder to find when it comes to garbage, but in the case of oil you can sample it and trace it back to where it came from.

Any legislation that puts responsibility back on ship owners—not only ship owners. I imagine if you are running a charter boat or a tinny you have a responsibility to care for our waterways. You should not be throwing rubbish in there.

We talk a lot about plastic bags in this part of the world. Plastic bags are not the problem; humans are the problem because they do not deal with plastic bags in a proper way. They throw them away and they blow away, but have we ever thought of making sure they do not?

I try not to have plastic bags at all. We have a responsibility, whether we are in a little or big boat, or just fishing off a jetty, to look after the waterways. If we want to advertise the Northern Territory as a pristine area for fishing, for tourists and locals—we pride ourselves in wild-caught fish, unpolluted—we have to make that efforts to ourselves, not just say, 'Big ships shouldn't do this', because it applies to little ships as well.

I support the changes to the legislation and am interested in following up the new amendments that have been placed before us this morning.

Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this bill to amend the marine pollution legislation. It is important that authorities have powers needed to protect our waters from pollution, and that we can charge those vessels that pollute our waters.

This may create a strong deterrent and a more conscious approach of ships in our waters that they take better care of our waterways. While these amendments address the issue of charging the agent of a ship with pollution offences, I am also very concerned about the rubbish that is washing onto our beaches from across the seas.

In Arnhem Land there are volunteer groups and rangers who have been collecting bags and truckloads of rubbish off our beaches. I understand there are national waste management policies taken at a Commonwealth level. I believe in this area we need a strong Territory response as well. How do we control this flow of rubbish once the pollution has taken place?

We need to employ rubbish controllers in our region, resource our ranger groups for those challenges, and the Territory can be part of leading discussions with countries in our region to tackle the problem together and in partnership. This is a regional issue. This pollution is coming from across the ocean, and I understand one of the problems we have when it ends up on our beaches is that we cannot even do a good job recycling the plastics.

Many volunteers clean the beaches in Nhulunbuy, a town where recycling is not available to residents. Rio Tinto, as leaseholder, need to address this problem and assure residents they are not leaving a legacy of rubbish in the future, which otherwise could be recycled.

Residents have started their own recycling programs which is a great achievement. All remote towns need easier ways to take part in recycling. I know some towns have 'cash for cans' programs, a great option. I am sure we can do even better.

We need to be driving education programs about single-use plastics and look at alternative options which require engagement with community elders and leaders to work out how to create sustainable communities. For many people in Aboriginal communities, who live in over-crowded houses with small incomes, single-use plastics is part of our day. We need to have thoughtful conversations on how to shift our communities and work with local organisations and shops.

I hold great concern about pollution, from any source, in our waterways. I worry about the future of our ecosystem—the mangroves, beaches, marine life—and our ability to live off our waterways; hopefully to build sustainable businesses.

I am pleased to see the government working to create stronger deterrents for pollution this needs to continue engage in an even broader discussion with our remote communities who are dealing with the issue of water pollution every day.

Ms UIBO (Aboriginal Affairs): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this important bill and I thank the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources for bringing it to the House.

The bill before us continues our Labor government's agenda to improve the way we protect the Territory's environment including the strengthening of our environmental protection laws—of which we are proud.

The Territory Labor government knows that a healthy environment creates stronger economy and more jobs for our local Territorians. Good environmental policy is smart economic policy. Today we are debating an important and necessary change to the *Marine Pollution Act* which will enhance our ability to take action in relation to marine pollution offences from ships operating in our beautiful Territory coastal waters and across our ports.

Through this legislation, our government is working to ensure that both our children of the future and Territorians for many generations can come to enjoy access and appreciate the wonderful environment, making a great lifestyle for the Territory, of which we are very proud. Our coastal marine environments are a treasure and we must treasure, protect and nurture this beautiful gift we in the Territory have been given.

It is especially important that we have all the tools that are necessary to manage the threats to our coastal and marine environments, especially as we see more development and use of our marine waterways as our population expands across the Territory.

It is also important that we have the tools and action against polluters, even after they have left the scene. Improving our ability to tackle marine pollution is timely, given the increasing traffic and risk of pollution and our growing knowledge about how pollutants impact on our pristine environments in the Territory.

Already, 53% of Australia's maritime exports depart Australia by ships from northern Australia. That traffic will surely continue to grow in the future, particularly as we expand more in partnerships regionally with Southeast Asia.

Here in the Northern Territory we already see about \$1.5bn of international exports through our ports, whether that be export of minerals, cattle and buffalo out of the Port of Darwin, timber from Port Melville on the Tiwi Islands ...

Mr Costa: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO: The Member for Arafura is very supportive.

Or the minerals from Groote Eylandt in my electorate of Arnhem. Also, there are exports from the port in Bing Bong and in northeast Arnhem from Gove.

Darwin Port, for example, already manages 38% of the nation's live animal exports to our northern neighbours. We are continuing to see vibrant growth in the cruise ship industry and, more and more, the cruise ships travelling our northern shores and calling into NT ports, both in the capital of Darwin and into Arnhem Land.

The growth of our cruise ship tours have been great for Darwin. I was pleased to see recently that the overnight visit to Darwin by just one cruise ship *Queen Mary II*, provides approximately a \$700 000 boost to our local businesses ...

VISITORS
Sanderson Middle School

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister for Education, I will take a moment of your time. Honourable members, in the gallery today we have, I believe, the Year 9 students from Sanderson Middle School. Welcome to Parliament House and please enjoy your time here. We are currently talking about marine legislation.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms UIBO: I will quickly digress and welcome the Sanderson Middle School students. I am an ex-student of Sanderson when it was a high school. I did three years of my schooling at Sanderson. I started doing my first experience of Youth Parliament as a participant when I was a Sanderson student. Very much welcome. I

have a special place for Sanderson because of my great experience there as a student. One of my friends I went to school with is a teacher at Sanderson, Francie Wild—welcome Francie, great to see you here in parliament. Hopefully, I will be able to catch you guys when we break for lunch. Ms Wild, very much welcome. We are very big fans of Sanderson and we have both been to Sanderson for many years. It is great to see you teaching the next generation of future leaders from Sanderson.

It is vitally important that in the Northern Territory we have contemporary and appropriate legislation to help ensure the protection of our highly-valued marine and coastal resources. In the Northern Territory we are blessed with a largely pristine coastline of about 11 000 kilometres and some 887 islands, contributing to a wonderful mosaic of largely pristine marine and coastal habitats.

A total of 35% of all mangroves in Australia are found on our coast, an incredibly important thin green line acting as both a nursery for our coastal biodiversity and a protector of our coastline. Our healthy and productive marine environment already supports 15 wild harvest fisheries, the third largest contributor to our primary industry sector, and last valued at \$87m per annum. This includes our high-value prawn and pearl fisheries, both susceptible to pollution and biosecurity threats.

As well, we have a much prized recreational fishing resource and a \$70m-plus economy based on recreational fishing, with over 80% of that recreational fishing taking place in our marine waters and estuaries. The Member for Brennan is a big supporter of our recreational fishing industry and is an advocate for protecting the environment in that sense. It is a great pastime of the Territory.

Our guided fishing tour industry is valued at over \$26m. People come and enjoy the Territory and our pristine coastlines for this very reason, to be able to enjoy nature and the environment, as well as the quality product we have in our marine and coastal environment, without the pollution we see in other parts of the country and other parts of the world.

A 2018 study of the economic values of the NT marine and coastal environments led by Neville Crossman from the University of Adelaide, found that marine and coastal tourism alone directly contributed \$156m annually to our economy, with a total contribution of \$700m per annum. The same study found that our marine and coastal waters directly support over 6000 jobs and our Northern Territory marine and coastal ecosystems contribute \$1bn per year to the Northern Territory economy.

As well as the impressive and important value of our marine and coastal waterways to our economy, it would be remiss of me not to also mention the critical importance of our marine environments to Aboriginal Territorians. Our seas and coasts are central to the day-to-day lives of our coastal communities in terms of cultural stewardship of sea country, protection of sacred sites, and customary livelihoods based on coastal resources.

Nearly 80% of our coastline is held in ownership by land trusts established under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and Aboriginal Territorians also have rights and responsibilities in relation to non-exclusive native title rights in our marine areas.

I am pleased that in my role as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs includes the carriage of our government's *Aboriginal Land and Sea Action Plan*. I had the honour of launching this action plan in April last year in Alice Springs, in the heart of Australia. It sets out 10 key actions to support the resolution of outstanding claims to maximise the opportunities, including job and economic opportunities, that land and sea ownership can provide Aboriginal Territorians.

A vitally important part of that is the wonderful work of our sea and land rangers across the Territory coastline, with over 40% of Territory coastline currently managed with the support of Australian and Northern Territory governments as Indigenous Protected Areas or IPAs. Some of these IPAs include Yanyuwa IPA, Anindilyakwa IPA, Laynhapuy IPA, Djelk IPA, South East Arnhem IPA, Marthakal IPA, and Marr Jabin IPA.

In addition to these Indigenous Protected Areas, we are also seeing more involvement of Aboriginal Territorians in establishing marine-related businesses and enterprises, for example, the North Wind coastal fisheries in Maningrida, aquaculture industries being developed in Groote Eylandt as part of the local decision-making agreement and work supporting oyster farming at Warruwi on South Goulburn Island, and the Pirlangimpi and Milikapiti communities located on the Tiwi Islands.

Similarly, I welcome the recently released draft management plan of one of our key marine parks, the Limmen Bight Marine Park. I am proud that it was a previous Labor government that made the commitment and declared Limmen Bight a marine park in 2012. Last year, I was privileged to visit the Limmen Bight Marine

Park, alongside the Member for Barkly, the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Culture and myself visited the marine park last year and spoke with traditional owners from different parts of that country—my area of Arnhem and bordering the Barkly electorate. We worked for many months on the draft management plan and it was great to see that finalised last year. I thank the minister for her work in that space.

Working with local people, a draft plan of the management has been developed, setting out how important values of that park can be maintained and nurtured; at the same time supporting new employment and sustainable tourism opportunities.

The Member for Nhulunbuy pointed out the pollutants which can be seen in North East and South East Arnhem. We need to think about working to protect and look at economic opportunities across the environment of how we can manage waste and pollutants and mitigate the risk, not just to our flora and fauna but also to the industries such as the recreational fishing industry.

That is a project on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, in my electorate. It is a partnership between the Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers, who are working with the Anindilyakwa Arts Group. They are collecting ghost nets, old fishing nets which are floating and wash up in South East Arnhem Land.

They have tracked some rubbish and some ghost nets are coming from Indonesia's coastline. The sea rangers are collecting these nets for the predominantly female artists at the art centre. They weed through the supply for useful nets, cut them and use them to weave art.

Instead of using pandanus leaf for baskets and sculptures, the artists are recycling the nets—a threat to the environment—and transforming them into beautiful artwork; weaving ghost net baskets, placemats and other art work. It is fantastic to see the partnership which is enhancing the economic opportunities for the Groote Eylandt artists. They sell the art not just on Groote, but across Australia and internationally.

There have been partnerships between the Makassans and South East and North East Arnhem hundreds of years ago. It is an interesting journey which has transformed into a partnership; some artists are travelling to Indonesia sharing skills and knowledge.

Our Territory Labor government has produced the Northern Territory Coastal Marine and Management Strategy; one that celebrates and sets out a strategic plan in recognising the important values of our coast and marine waterways—whether they be economic, cultural, historical or relating to biodiversity conservation.

I am proud to be part of a government that continues to put in place active plans and strategies to ensure proper attention to both the protection and sustainable development of a most precious resource, our waterways.

This contrasts with a lack of thought or action by the previous CLP government, who lurched along with a casual 'she will be right' attitude in relation to the marine environment, which Territorians take very seriously.

This is stark contrast to what we, as a Labor government, have been committed to and implementing in legislative amendments. This is exemplified by the CLP's clumsy handling of the environmental impact approval process of Port Melville on the Tiwi Islands. This was a time when plans for a deep water port at Port Melville were able to proceed without an environmental impact statement and adequate advice from the Environment Protection Authority. This was a time when the current Deputy Opposition Leader, the Member for Daly, was the then Environment minister, and had to concede that:

'There is no responsible minister for signing off on a port development.'

And that there was a loophole in the legislation. This is from the ABC News of 6 May in 2015.

It is especially important now, more than ever, that we have all the tools to protect and manage the threats to our coastal and marine ecosystems. The bill before us proposes important changes to the *Marine Pollution Act 1999* and enables changes associated with regulations.

The key purpose of the *Marine Pollution Act* and supporting regulations is to minimise pollution from ships being discharged into our coastal waters and, where pollution might occur, to take appropriate legal action. One of the key issues is the proposed amendment that gives regulators more ability to hold the connections of a polluting ship to account, even after the ship has left Territory waters.

As Minister Lawler said:

The community expects our environmental regulatory systems to be robust, with fair and reasonable mechanisms to respond to people who do the wrong thing and pollute or harm the environment.

Recently, our ability to hold polluters to account was found to be wanting. As the minister for the Environment has noted:

The ability of the Territory to pursue justice for marine pollution caused by foreign-owned ships in Territory coastal waters was found to be ineffective.

I support the bill before us because it moves to address this deficiency with current arrangements and further provide protection for our Northern Territory environment. In particular, the amendments outlined in the bill will amend the definition of 'owner' in relation to a ship, as well as the definition of an 'agent' acting on behalf of a ship. Under the current arrangements, an agent is no longer the agent when the ship is not in Territory coastal waters. This obviously presents a problem for regulatory authorities, and we should have the capacity to identify an agent of a ship that can be a conduit to the owners, even after the ship has left Territory waters.

As the minister for Environment has noted, the proposed change to the act will mean that regulatory agencies can have contact with an agent for a ship when the ship is coming to the Territory and not yet arrived, while it is in the Territory, or even after it has left Territory waters.

The bill also amends the definition of 'owner'. These amendments reflect the complicated ownership arrangements that can exist for ships and allow more capacity to identify the functions a person may perform resulting in the person being in control, or exerting a level of control, over the ship. This is an important amendment because it allows the Territory to legally serve documents on such persons connected to a marine pollution incident. This will enable documents to be served in the event of an offence and a legal case to proceed and be heard in Territory courts. These are important amendments that will allow a timely response in holding polluters to account, including where the people responsible for the pollution should be supporting the remediation of their act.

Removing the current limitation on commencement of proceedings is another important change. While timely response to an incident is critical, it is also true that in some circumstances it can take some time to correctly identify the source of a pollution incident and the people who are responsible. As the minister has highlighted, this can sometimes only happen after a vessel has left Territory waters. It is important that our regulatory authorities have time to correctly identify the source of pollution and track down and hold to account those responsible for the pollution.

I note that the minister also has some further amendments before us for the committee stage, which will be arising off the work that has been provided by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Debate suspended.

The Assembly suspended.

QUESTION TIME

Economy – Improvement

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

I note you have been out today claiming credit for minor cherry-picked statistics showing an improvement in the economy. If you are to be claiming credit for minor improvements of a very low base, then you also have to own the blame for the relentless bad news Territorians have suffered, and continue to suffer, from your disastrous reign, including lower-than-average earnings, lower property prices, construction workers decline 60% year-on-year and many long-term businesses closing their doors while Territorians move south. While claiming credit for cherry-picked stats, will you also apologise to Territorians for three years of failure by your struggling Treasurer?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, coming into this term, we knew it would be a tough couple of years for the Northern Territory for a couple of reasons. One is the CLP failed to plan that post-INPEX construction phase, which is

unfortunate. They failed to plan so we had to hit the ground running with our own plans, knowing that the CLP had sold and spent everything last term and left \$1bn deficit. Instead of saving the money for the rainy years, they spent it while the sun was shining. Unfortunately, the Territory saw awful economic planning under the CLP. Then we had the Scott Morrison GST cuts to Territorians, which took money out of our budget as well, which was a real shame. It was the INPEX construction phase wind-down and the GST cuts and the CLP's \$1bn deficit because they sold and spent everything.

We made sure we had a plan in place to invest in infrastructure in the Northern Territory and maintain those jobs. I understand that the CLP does not like these jobs. They are job snobs, they do not like tradies and do not support the construction we are creating for tradies. We have made sure we have kept those jobs in the system with our infrastructure plans and our strength and Buy Local plans.

Today we talked about last month's stats that saw 100% of that work go to locals—proof that our plans are working and that we are creating those jobs for Territorians. We are doing a jobs-led recovery, while we note that the CLP's economic recipe is deep cuts, steep power price rises and asset sales.

This year 2020 is the year of the economic comeback for the Northern Territory. We have seen a series of critical investment decisions from the private sector supporting the work that government has been doing. We have been doing the heavy lifting now for a couple of years, but we have seen the private sector start to invest.

The announcement late last year of the Tanami \$1bn gold mine expansion is huge. We have been working on the shiplift—\$400m, the CDU in the CBD for \$250m and we have the Darwin backfill decision coming which is about \$1bn they have indicated the first quarter this year of \$2.5bn worth of work. That is the economic turnaround.

Critically, we have done that work over the last few years to maintain the capability and capacity of the construction sector so Territorians can take the benefit of that economic turnaround. That is what is critical—you have to do it all for Territorians. You have to create those jobs. That is what we have done—a jobs-led recovery as opposed to the economic recipe of the CLP which is deep cuts, steep power price rises and asset sales.

She sacks, she sell, she cuts, we create jobs. It is unfortunate to see the CLP and the ex-CLP with the same tired plans for the Territory that will take the Territory backwards, while we plan for a positive future Territory and more jobs for Territorians.

Creating Jobs – Labor

Ms NELSON to CHIEF MINISTER

You have just touched a little in your response to the Leader of the Opposition, but could you outline the actions of the Territory Labor government to create jobs for Territorians, and elaborate more on the alternative approaches that we are progressing?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, the Territory government's first, second and third priorities are jobs, jobs and jobs. Jobs for today, jobs for tomorrow, jobs for Territorians. Jobs, not cuts. That is our focus. There is no doubt the Territory has been through tough times. The INPEX wind-down hurt the economy and so did Scott Morrison's savage GST cuts.

These would have been a challenge for any government but, in tough times, Territorians stick together. Most importantly, our government has kept Territorians in jobs. After a tough period, the Territory economy is now on the road to recovery and we are doing it with jobs, not cuts.

There is more encouraging news today. We have seen the latest construction update. Thirty-three projects all went to locals. That is local jobs for Territorians. Every contract, every dollar, to a local business. These are directly supporting local jobs as well as indirect jobs in the economy. So far in this financial year, 99% of projects have been awarded to Territory businesses. That is a great result, minister.

Our approach is a plan for local jobs. There is another approach, of course: the CLP approach, the CLP plan for more cuts, including cuts to jobs. They are job snobs who cut jobs. Speaking of jobs snobs, I noticed that

on her first day in the new job, the Opposition Leader promised public servants, 'your jobs are safe'. If I had not already had a heart attack at that point, that statement from the CLP might have done me in.

That statement is shocking for its shamelessness, shocking for its dishonesty. If the promise 'your jobs are safe' sounds familiar that is because it is. It is the exact promise, word for word, that the then Opposition Leader, Terry Mills, made when he was CLP leader. It was the promise he made, the promise that the CLP then broke. The new CLP leader has copied it all, even the promises she intends to break. Let us be upfront with Territorians. Right now, we know where the CLP stand. They will cut. It is in their DNA. They cut last time; they will cut again. They will cut teeth.

The CLP promised that they would not cut jobs before. The CLP broke that promise before. Territorians have not forgotten. Just in Education, over 500 staff had gone; just in that one department. This is not any old department. It is very hard to argue that Education is not an important, critical department.

There is a by-election in the division of Johnston next week. There is a clear choice for residents, a choice between the job creators or the job cutters. Only Labor has a plan to create more local jobs and protect public servants. The CLP's only plan is to cut more, sack more, sell more. She cuts. She sacks. She sells. We cannot go back to the CLP. The Territory cannot afford the cost of the CLP.

Policing in Remote Communities

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

Minister, I wrote to the federal minister of Indigenous Affairs, Ken Wyatt, on 24 June 2019, informing him of the policing situation in remote communities. Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of that letter.

Leave granted.

Minister, you have known about this issue for a long time and we have known about this issue for the same time. We took action. What have you done and when?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I have directly lobbied the federal government with regard to remote policing. I have done it in a few different ways, Leader of the Opposition, because I regularly caught up with ministers and say I had a concern. We raised it in parliament last year. I was asked a question when we had the then former Senator of the Northern Territory, Nigel Scullion—who I have to say did an appalling job in this space of standing up for the Territory when it came to remote policing resources—stand behind an underfunded package that was being implemented by the federal government. The federal government accounts for about 6% of the Northern Territory police budget but post the Intervention, there were huge additional asks placed on the Northern Territory police.

We have seen a federal government that continues to step further away from the additional responsibilities that are there, in that agreement that the Northern Territory funds. The Northern Territory funds a lot more of the positions that the Commonwealth is meant to be funding.

We have seen some of those Themis stations there ...

Higgins: That is not true!

Mr McConnell: That is absolutely untrue! Table the agreement, that is not true!

Ms MANISON: Goodness me!

Mr McConnell: You are misleading the House, minister!

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Stuart, if you believe something you need to move a substantive motion?

Ms MANISON: We continue to lobby the federal government. We have the new incoming commissioner, Mr Jamie Chalker APM, someone who understands the dynamics and the policing needs of the Northern Territory.

He has come through the Northern Territory Police College and has worked his way up the ranks, has served in remote communities and done an incredible job and he is now the Commissioner of Police. He has valuable input where he can work and brief Minister Wyatt.

It has been wonderful and refreshing to have Minister Wyatt in the chair, working on the issues that are important in the Northern Territory, particularly in Aboriginal affairs. He will sit at the table and genuinely try to understand the issues. We have seen him often, which we appreciate, as we do not see many other federal ministers make such an effort. We applaud him and the fact he makes himself available to the ministers. It was wonderful to have him here yesterday; he spent time with various people looking at issues such as suicide and remote policing.

We will continue to lobby the federal government. We have had promising conversations with Minister Wyatt but there is no doubt the federal government needs to lift its game in this space; they have been underfunding this agreement for years.

Underground Power Program

Mrs WORDEN to TREASURER

This question could not be timely, given the strong storm that came through the northern suburbs last night. Could you please update the House on our government's continued underground power program?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Sanderson for her question, she is passionate about seeing this program up and running.

We are a government that believes that Territorians should have access to safe, reliable and affordable power. We saw the devastation and destruction caused across the Top End after Cyclone Marcus. Power lines were out and it was clear we needed to bring back the undergrounding power project—previous Labor governments had worked on and the CLP government scrapped.

We brought it back and announced that it would go out to 9 schools. I am pleased to report that five of those schools are completed. Alawa Primary School, Namarluk School, Wagaman Primary School—a school that experienced particular devastation after the cyclone, I think their power was out for a week; the power lines across the road were smashed—Larrakeyah Primary School, Jingili Primary School. Moil Primary School will be finished in the next few days.

We will then commence the next lot of work to go to three more schools: Stuart Park Primary School, St John's College and Parap Primary School. The advice I have received from the power and water engineers is that it is complicated at those schools, it requires more engineering and civil work. There is rock in that area and it was described as the difference being able to get through four metres a day versus 40metres a day.

We brought that back because it is important. We want to ensure that after a serious event such as a cyclone, everything is back to normal as quick as possible. An important part of community resilience is getting schools back on-line and kids back to school so mum and dad can return to work—it is an important part of everyday normality.

We were thrilled with how this is going so far. We have seen some great results for those schools. We have seen some excellent work by local contractors, so well done to them. This is investing in local jobs which is very important because we do support local jobs and this is in stark contrast to the CLP because we know their form on this. They scrapped undergrounding power, they sold off TIO, we saw what happened to the port, we also saw them put up the price of power by 30% for Territorians. We are very pleased with the undergrounding power process.

Johnston By-election – Labor Dysfunction

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

Chief Minister, you are quick to point out the failings of previous governments but very slow to recognise your own. Your government was elected on a platform of stability, openness and transparency but over the last three years you have shown you do not even know what those words mean.

Instead of stability we have seen spinelessness with unelected advisors manipulating ministers into \$12m grants and arranging for Labor members to be turfed out of Caucus. Instead of openness and transparency we see deception and arrogance with your government regularly overruling recommendations of the scrutiny committee, a committee in which your government controls.

Chief Minister, will you apologise to voters in Johnston for forcing them to go to the polls due to internal Labor dysfunction? Will you apologise to homeowners for ignoring the evidence of your scrutiny committee and for failing to be even close to open and transparent?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I think the people of Johnston have a very clear choice at this by-election. They back in renewables. They can back in a jobs-led recovery or they can back in cuts, they can back in asset sales, they can back in a candidate for the CLP who does not believe in climate change. They are blunt choices.

We have heard the CLP say they would scrap our renewables targets. If you believe in renewables, back in Labor. It is only because you have a government that believes in renewables that you are seeing a \$20bn investment in the Territory. Sun Cable and the power line all the way to Singapore is happening because we have a government that believes in solar.

What do you get if you choose the CLP? You have a party that wants to scrap the renewables target and are saying we prefer nuclear to solar. What did the CLP's candidate for Johnston say?

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

...

We had an ice age 15 000 years ago.

The CLP are not prepared to deal with the challenges that face the Territory today. An example is their rejection of the science around climate change and their rejection of renewables. Nothing damns them more as a modern party than the fact that they cannot bring themselves to support solar.

We say to Territorians we can plan for cheaper power to Territory homes, we can plan to power up the manufacturing precinct at Middle Arm by renewables. We can plan for solar. This is the technology of the future delivered today and the CLP cannot get behind it. This is how you deliver a jobs-led recovery rather than one that is led by cuts, led by asset sales. That is what the CLP do, deep cuts, steep power price rises and asset sales. That is their economic recipe, that is what is in their DNA and that is the clear choice for voters at this by-election.

We are delivering when it comes to jobs. We have the first rocket being launched from the new space base at northeast Arnhem Land this year. We have the massive solar project I have already talked about. You have Sea Dragon saying they are going to spend \$200m this year with local. That is all huge. You have shiplift that it going into construction this year; a project that we have delivered to create that new marine services industry. Jobs, jobs, jobs. Jobs for today, jobs for tomorrow, jobs for Territorians. What do the CLP do? They cut, cut, cut.

Oral Health Care for Children

Ms AH KIT TO MINISTER for HEALTH

Minister, good oral health is an important part of a child's development and their future health outcomes. Can you explain what government is doing to support children to improve their oral health care?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this Territory Labor government believes in Territory kids, believes in giving them the best start in life and making sure that they have good oral health. Good oral health is good for overall health. We will continue to invest in healthcare and Territory kids and support families unlike the CLP who have failed to identify children as a priority. They have made no commitments to invest in child health or development programs. We saw what happened last time they came to government. They cut in schools ...

Mrs Finocchiaro: You cannot even answer your own dixer.

Ms FYLES: The Leader of the Opposition cannot even listen for more than 30 seconds to this response before she feels the need to interject. Is that because she has no policies to fall back on? They cut within our schools. They cut youth services. Given half a chance they will cut again.

As a government we are committed to children and young people. I was with the candidate for Johnston, the fantastic, hardworking candidate for Johnston Joel Bowden, at the Casuarina dental clinic where there is a free service for children up to 18 years of age.

Not only does this provide regular check-ups and cleaning but there is an emphasis on preventative measures. As part of that children can receive free mouthguards. As the mother of children who are playing sport—and we need them to look after their teeth ...

Mr Wood: I am giving out free ear guards.

Ms FYLES: We also support seniors, Member for Nelson. I am sure the Minister for Territory Families will talk about those initiatives.

The people of Johnston want a government that invests in young people and supports families. These mouthguards are available twice. Children lose teeth and their mouths grow. All they need to do is get a letter from their sporting club saying they participate in that sport. It was great to be there with Joel. He knows the importance of wearing a mouthguard.

Mr Collins: Good on you Joel.

Ms FYLES: I pick up on the interjections of those opposite. They get a little jealous. Good on you Joel. They are jealous they could not come out. I did not realise dental health would fire them up so much.

Members interjecting.

Ms FYLES: Territorians want a government that supports them. For children at school, there are 17 school-based dental clinics around the Territory. Where is the Member for Stuart? He is always asking what we are doing for the bush. We also have remote services that visit remote communities to ensure that all Territory kids can access high quality dental care.

As a government, we will continue to invest in children. We have policies and will provide funding to support Territory families.

Investment Territory

Mr HIGGINS to MINISTER for BUSINESS and INNOVATION

How much investment has Investment Territory secured for the Territory since beginning operations on 1 July last year? It is one of the key recommendations of the Langoulant plan for budget repair and has one purpose: to create local jobs through private investment.

How much private investment and how many jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, unfortunately—and this hurts a bit—the Member for Daly has not been listening to me talk in the Chamber about all the jobs we are creating and the projects we are supporting. I will have to go through it again.

What I talked about in great detail last week—it is modern infrastructure and they do not understand it—is the Vocus investment, which will see the Territory go from 400 gigabits to 20 terabits. For those who do not understand what that means, it will see data in the Territory fly.

For perspective, Adelaide is advertising at their airport 10 gigabyte speeds in their CBD as something extraordinary. We are going from 400 gigabits to 20 terabits. We are going to be front and centre of the technological revolution. We are going to be the telecommunications hub for Southeast Asia and this country.

These are crucial jobs. This is a brand new industry we are creating for the Northern Territory. This is big.

Singapore is stretched for power. It is one reason why the Sun Cable project works. Another project we have been talking about that we are creating with a \$20bn investment in the Territory that will create over 1000 jobs in construction and 300 jobs ongoing in Tennant Creek. Let us not go to that one yet.

The reason Sun Cable works is the same reason why data centres will work. The power resources in Singapore are stretched; they are talking about putting a cap on data centre. Darwin is perfectly placed for this. We have the affordable land and a government that understands these things. We have renewable, which some tech companies are insisting on. Again, renewables, which is a policy to opposition want to scrap.

We have affordable land, a government that gets modern technology and renewable power. We are the obvious spot for data centres; we stack up. We are seeing global links come to the Territory: California to Guam to Japan and Singapore to Darwin. That will see Darwin perfectly placed to be the centre for data. That matters and it is just one of the exciting projects my department is working on that will create jobs.

We put \$1m into the aircraft storage and maintenance in Alice Springs. It went from 20 aircraft to 50. That is significant to get extra jobs in Alice Springs. We have the Sun Cable project; I have talked about that a lot in this Chamber. Coming up, we have the Santos/ConocoPhillips decision on the backfill of Darwin LNG, which is the decision they made prior to expansion and second train decision. There is order to this and significant jobs there.

We are working on the manufacturing precinct. There are three new projects planned for Middle Arm to create a brand new manufacturing industry in the Northern Territory with 550 ongoing jobs onsite between those three projects—as much as INPEX delivered.

Those are just some of the jobs we are creating in the Northern Territory—jobs under Labor or cuts under CLP.

School Infrastructure Investment

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for EDUCATION

How is this government investing in school infrastructure to ensure everyone feels welcome at school?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are a government that provides investment in education for all Territorians ...

Mr Mills interjecting.

Ms UIBO: ... regardless of what electorate they are in, Member for Blain, we do not discriminate. Our students across the Territory deserve the best quality of education and infrastructure possible. Our Territory Labor government is committed to that.

All children have the right to a great start to life. They deserve to be welcome and have resources in their schools; they deserve this regardless of their location across the Territory.

A vast majority of our Territory schools have aging infrastructure. A lot of them were built over the last 30 to 50 years. Upgrading infrastructure for our students and educators is important in supporting the quality education we strive to provide across the Territory.

Some of our schools have been celebrating 50th anniversaries over the last couple of years and a few are coming up. We need to consider, particularly the access to these buildings and the infrastructure when we look at students with additional needs and access for those in our community with disabilities.

Last year I was very proud to launch the Territory Labor government's Framework for Inclusion, which is part of our election commitment to invest a further \$40m over four years for early intervention, flexible schooling models and particularly focused on supporting our students with additional needs.

We are able to support this investment in our framework with a further \$5.2m for accessible infrastructure through our building for inclusions program over next 12 months to support our students with additional needs to access quality education provided in our NT schools.

This money will be used to upgrade special annexes, including our autism units at selected schools—acoustic upgrades, which is really important. You cannot learn if you cannot hear. Over 20 classrooms will be upgraded with modifications to the existing infrastructure to help our students learn at an amplified level making sure they are not left behind in the learning space.

We know that our students experience many challenges in their learning journeys, so we want to make sure all these barriers are removed so they can access education and an equal standing in the Territory.

This is in stark contrast to the CLP, which did not invest in education—\$135m out of education and very sadly, 500 teachers and support staff ripped out of our education system. The Territory Labor government is focused on delivering for students with additional needs and in quality education in the Territory.

Cavenagh Street Milkwood Tree

Mr WOOD to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS on behalf of Minister for TOURISM, SPORT and CULTURE

I sent you details on 12 December regarding the 140-year-old milkwood tree in the Cavanagh Street car park or the old Darwin Primary School playground, alerting you, the Chief Minister, Member for Port Darwin, the mayor, CDU's Paul Henderson and all Darwin City councillors that although the tree was on the list of trees of significance it would be secretly cut down by the Darwin City council and CDU. No one replied except you, with just an acknowledgement. Three days later, the tree was deliberately cut down in the early morning after locals thought it had been saved as it was under consideration for heritage protection.

Why did you not step in and use your powers under section 36 of the *Heritage Act* to stop this wanton bastardry of an historical tree before it was evaluated, or was this simply a Labor conspiracy between the council, the Chief Minister, the local member, the university and you to make sure the tree was destroyed so it never got in the road of the council and uni's grand plans and avoided the public having a say in whether it should be saved as true Darwin heritage and included in any future plans for the development?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is an important question. I will refer to my notes I have here. On 6 December 2019, the Heritage Council accepted the nomination of the four milkwood trees in the Darwin CBD and resolved to proceed with the assessment process. But before the assessment process began, two of the trees were cut down on the weekend of 14 and 15 December.

Questions regarding the cutting down of the milkwood tree, as we have said previously, should be directed to Darwin City council and CDU, as this specific part of the City Deal is strictly between these two organisations.

As a government, we support the CDU campus coming into the CBD because it will one of those projects we think will bring people into our CBD.

Heritage assessments of the two remaining trees will proceed. The concerns you raised have been heard. Obviously, there has been a lot of attention about those trees and that heritage assessment on those remaining trees will proceed, but it is an issue for CDU and Darwin City council ...

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Relevance. Part of the question was why did the minister not use her powers under section 36 of the *Heritage Act*? I know it is difficult to answer that question because you are not the minister, but the nub of this is why did the minister not use her powers to step in and save the tree, at least for the time being?

Ms LAWLER: I would have to refer to the minister, but I have notes that any future reviews of the *Heritage Act* will, no doubt, consider nomination processes to make sure they are meeting community needs without unnecessarily holding up development.

It is an issue for CDU and Darwin City Council. The issue of those remaining trees will be looked into very carefully. I understand your concerns, Member for Nelson.

Rapid Creek Flood Mitigation

Mrs WORDEN to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

Although we are experiencing particularly low Wet Season, we know that when there are heavy rains it can create flooding issues in certain areas across the Territory. Can you please provide an update on the flood mitigation works at Rapid Creek that are, in fact, located in the wonderful electorate of Sanderson, but have real benefit for the people of Johnston and the surrounding areas?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is one of my favourite projects that I have been involved in as the minister. It is one of those that people drive past are not really aware of or just take it for granted that flooding can occur in the Rapid Creek catchment when heavy rains combine. Many old Territorians or people who have been around for a long time have often been blocked when Kimmorley Bridge floods and you cannot get through.

We listened to the community to reduce the risk and impact of flood events in Rapid Creek to ensure the surrounding homes and properties were better protected. At some of those homes along Rapid Creek Road, when there was a high tide, as well as rains, there were high levels of water. I understand, having lived here all my life and having seen it on quite a few occasions.

In July last year the Territory Labor government completed the \$10m construction of the Rapid Creek stormwater detention basin and associated drainage. It was built by Sitzler and it supported more than 280 local jobs, including eight apprentices and 40 Aboriginal employees. Sitzler did an amazing job on that project.

I was out there a couple of time and for the completion and opening with the Member for Sanderson. It was great to see those young people working as apprentices and the Aboriginal employees as well. Sitzler was very proud that 100% of their suppliers and subcontractors were from the Territory. Opposition Leader, I know you call these construction sugar hits, but that is not what Sitzler would call it; that is for sure.

We have had a pretty poor Wet Season this year, but the Member for Nightcliff sent me a photo of the detention basin when we was coming from the airport in December, when it was filling. The concept is that it will temporarily detain the storm waters from Anula, Moil and parts of Marrara. It will hold that water for about 24 hours. It is about 37 Olympic-sized swimming pools' worth that will be held.

The work complements our flood mitigation measures to significantly reduce the impact of flooding, giving properties more protection such as an early warning system, additional flood mitigation works at the Darwin airport, backflow prevention devices, and special-use zoning which will allow impacted properties to redevelop their properties so the minimum floor level is above the floor level.

Sitzler has done an immaculate job there. It is looking great. There are huge spaces that can be used in the Dry Season for different activities, such as dog parks. There are a heap of facilities for young people to be active in as well.

Well done to Sitzler on the \$10m construction and 280 local jobs in the electorates of Sanderson and Johnston.

Renewable Energy – Plans

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

Recent decisions of your government have exposed the Territory as an investment destination to reputational damage and increased sovereign risk. Eni has entered an agreement with the NT and made an investment to build three solar farms then the rules are set to change. That sends a wrong message to the investment community. Noonamah Ridge development had investors working with your government and ministers in goodwill for a number of years. On the basis of those assurances they made investment commitments, but within seven months of an election your government pulled the pin on the project.

Any political decisions or other reasons aside, these decisions send the wrong message and give rise to greater concerns about the quality of governance in the Territory and reputational damage as an investment destination.

How do you plan to deal with these very real problems?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, unfortunately this shows a misunderstanding about how government makes decisions and the time line in which it does so.

The NT is an attractive place for investment. We are seeing that with the projects that are occurring. We are seeing solar farms that will take us from the 2% mark under the CLP for renewable energy to 10% this term, with more solar projects coming.

One of the big things with renewables is that it provides power at an extremely competitive price. At the same time you have to guarantee reliability in the system. Everybody who is involved in renewables understands that those are things to work toward. There have been very open conversation with all people in this space about what is happening and what time frame it is happening so that everyone is working in the same field.

It is critical that we provide reliable power to Territorians at as cheap a price as possible. That is what renewables can provide, and why the CLP's decision to oppose renewables is so shocking. Labor supports renewables and CLP opposes it.

That is the fight we are having in this Chamber, about something that should be very straightforward. We have seen a number of critical investment decisions made in the Territory because we have a go with the will and the vision to see these things happen.

Coogee Chemicals choose Darwin for its methanol plant because there is a government here with the will to make it happen.

We are in a strategic location close to Indonesia, and we have access to gas at the right price. But, as we said at the time, this is a government with the will to make it happen. Sun Cable; the data centres; space, and the first rocket this year—a government with the will to make it happen. That is why we have an investment opportunity here.

The same is true for the manufacturing precinct. On the back of Coogee we are now able to deliver clean fuels and micro LNG because we can provide them with the guarantees. Because of our plans for renewables, they can plan like we can for a time that they will be powered by renewables at the site, which is what they are looking for.

We have a considered plan for the economy which grows jobs, how you get out of the boom and bust, in contrast the CLP or ex-CLP whose plans consistently go back to cuts, asset sales and steep power price rises. You can choose jobs under Labor or cuts under the CLP. It is a clear choice for Territorians; we want jobs and they are job-snobs.

Creating Jobs – Local Football

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for ENVIRONMENT and NATURAL RESOURCES on behalf of MINISTER for TOURISM, SPORT and CULTURE

I wish to welcome back the Chief Minister; that heart is running at 200%, great work.

How has the government supported our community and encouraged participation in local football as well as created local jobs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Brennan, I know he loves his sport. We have been fortunate in our Palmerston electorates to support sports.

I will talk today about Bagot Park and the oval. I remember the days when it was speedway, that is how old I am. Territorians love sport and love to play in the cool of the evening.

Members interjecting.

Ms LAWLER: The opposition do not believe in climate change. One strategy about climate adaptability is to make sure we have lights. We will acknowledge that the Member for Daly got lights at Wadeye and they were gratefully received.

Bagot Oval is one of Darwin's busiest sporting venues. The CLP may have overlooked the importance of soccer in this community, but this sport is one of our largest sports for junior participation. If you travel past Bagot Oval you will see lots of children and parents enjoying ...

A member: Mindil Aces.

Ms LAWLER: ... and having a go. Bagot Oval is the home of the mighty Mindil Aces Soccer Club and we are proud to provide much-needed lighting to support this family club. The club has about 645 players, one of the largest clubs in the Territory, fielding 52 teams in all age groups—under-6 upwards. We are installing lights to increase pitch uses times at the oval to help Mindil Aces continue to grow their participation base and allow for the growth of soccer broadly.

Ms Fyles: More girls.

Ms LAWLER: The Football Federation NT continues to work hard to grow participation, particularly for females as mentioned by the Member for Nightcliff, and having one of the busiest venues lit will greatly assist the CEO Bruce Stalder and his hardworking staff with their push to grow the game. He said:

Having lights at our oval allows training times and game times to be extended into the cooler evenings which is wonderful, not only for players and referees but also for spectators.

We are creating jobs by installing lights at these busy ovals with local business. ESPEC Electrical Specialists won the contract to design and construct the Bagot Oval lights. We are supporting sports, jobs and giving families flexibility to play and watch their favourite sports in the cool of the evening.

National Aboriginal Art Gallery

Mrs LAMBLEY to CHIEF MINISTER

I would like to welcome the Chief Minister back; I hope you are well.

It has been three-and-a-half years and there has been no progress on the site for the national Aboriginal art gallery. There are whispers in Alice Springs that something might be happening soon. Could you update the House on the site for the national Aboriginal art gallery?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, there has been some progress with the Alice Springs art gallery and the site. We have made it clear that there is a good location which will deliver on every measure that matters; particularly putting Aboriginal art in the heart of Alice Springs—the heart of the nation—which will drive the economy for everyone. That is a real win.

There are ways of doing it. What the community wants is important, I respect that. The Alice Springs Town Council has returned to that site—I am confused how often the council changed their position on various sites, but I will not go through the ins-and-outs—and we are in negotiations with the council about the Anzac Hill Precinct site. That is significant progress.

We have been consistent about where we want to go. They are not back at that table saying, 'We get it and we understand why that is the right position and we are prepared to talk about that spot.' That is significant progress. We are going at the pace of Alice Springs Town Council. An investment in that spot will trigger other investments in the town which is critical.

There has been a series of other works happening led mainly by tourism and culture on the curation of works and the other planning you do for a new institution like this. We are on track with everything. It has been positive to see Alice Springs Town Council come back to the table and commence negotiations on the Anzac precinct site so we all keep moving forward. It is very positive.

I thank Alice Springs Town Council for making the decision to come back to that location. That has been critical and a huge step forward. We are working at their pace now with those negotiations and we will see where we go from there.

We can all agree that this will be a magnificent art gallery. It will help drive significant tourism to the centre. This is how you guarantee those flights at the right prices to the centre. We have seen what happens at Yulara when it is a destination. We want to make Alice Springs a destination. This will do that.

It is not just your classic tourists and your international visitor. We want to build in the educational tourism part so every student around the country wants to come to Alice Springs as part of their curriculum. It is about building in week-in week-out, year-round traffic not just international or Australian visitation but students wanting to go to Alice Springs and learn at the heart of our nation. We have a beautiful spot in Alice. There is a lot we can do with Alice.

The art gallery might be a trigger for things. There is a lot more going on in Alice Springs than just the art gallery. We want to get in behind tourism, Aboriginal art and local Arrernte culture. What a fantastic spot to do it in.

Renewable Energy – Economic Future

Mr PAECH to MINISTER for RENEWABLES, ENERGY and ESSENTIAL SERVICES

How is the government's support for renewable energies delivering power prices and ensuring the economic future for all Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Namatjira who is a passionate supporter of the environment and also knows what an amazing solar resource we have particularly in Central Australia and the Barkly. We have world's best quality sun radiance that will drive power right across the world. This government knows that through renewables we will get lower power prices, more local jobs and a more secure economic future.

There is no doubt that the types of storage available are expanding and this will lead to a cheaper form of power that is not only good for consumers and the economy but also good for the environment.

We are implementing our plan for 50% by 2030 and because of that we know we can deliver those achievements to Territorians. There is no secret that the transition to renewables is complicated. That is why it is even more important to have stable government that believes in renewables and is prepared to do the work to overcome technical challenges to deliver reliable power for Territorians that is good for the environment. We are working through those carefully and methodically to deliver cheap, reliable power to Territorians.

We are making solid progress and I am pleased. When we came to government it was disgraceful. Only 2.6% was being generated by renewables. At the end of 2020, we will be hitting over the 10% mark. There is much more to do. There are costs to solar and this is a very fast moving area. In the time I have been minister, the steps forward in technology have been extraordinary. In the Northern Territory we have the know-how. I am very proud that we have funded places like Intyalheme to do that work, be leaders in this area and to focus on how we can best leverage the most modern technology to get the outcomes that we need.

Those on the other side do not believe in climate change. If you do not believe in climate change you cannot believe in the solutions to fix it. This is absolute denial. It still astounds and shocks me that they are even considering nuclear power. It just shows that they are a bit divided on that side. They are not clear. Every time someone opens their mouth there seems to be a new policy position. To get the best benefit for Territorians you need stable government that believes in evidence and climate change and is working hard to deliver the outcomes for Territorians.

Local Businesses – Payroll Tax Burden

Mr COLLINS to TREASURER

There are at least nine well-known local businesses in Darwin teetering on the edge of insolvency. A large part of the reason for their parlous position is the burden of payroll tax. You like to talk about jobs—these

businesses employ around 300 Territorians. You talk about job snobs as well. Why are the 70 short-term jobs at the Fannie Bay racecourse, at a cost of \$171 000 per job, more important than the 300 long-term jobs of Territorians?

What will your government do to help these local businesses that are struggling with the payroll tax burden?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, importantly our government has the right frameworks to support businesses, especially small- to medium-sized businesses in the Northern Territory because there is no doubt it is the lifeblood of our economy. That is why we have some of the most generous payroll tax thresholds and best schemes in the nation.

That is why we also have a payroll tax freeze. There is no payroll tax for those who put on new employees—extra employees. We put that into place two budgets ago. We have seen Territory businesses put that up. As a government we have put in significant changes to encourage companies to invest in employing Territorians over FIFOs. We have seen that get some traction, particularly at some mine sites. We told them that we do not want them flying people in and out from overseas or interstate, we want them to employ Territorians first. That is why we have invested in those schemes. We have been getting good results.

We made sure we have a competitive taxation regime to have something that encourages people to invest in local jobs and employing local Territorians. We made those changes because we listened to businesses and they told us loud and clear that it was what they wanted to see. We delivered that payroll tax cut a few budgets ago to encourage people to employ Territorians. That is a very important thing. We listen to businesses. We are bringing more jobs to the Territory and getting more projects over the line.

We heard from the Chief Minister this Question Time talking about some of the new and exciting opportunities out there. We have done what we can to diversify the economy here because we want to see ...

Mr COLLINS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. The question was: What will you do to help these local businesses that are struggling with the payroll tax burden?

Ms MANISON: As I pointed out, we have one of the most generous payroll tax schemes in the nation. We also have a payroll tax cut in place for businesses that employ additional Territorians. That is what we are doing to encourage them to employ more Territorians. That is our plan.

I would like to know what exactly the CLP's plan in this place? We have swapped leaders here and had the now deputy leader saying they would make significant changes to payroll tax but they never told us what they would do. They have not costed it or told us what they would do with regard to any of those lost revenues. We are interested to find out.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION
Local Businesses – Payroll Tax Burden

Mr COLLINS to TREASURER

What are you doing for the businesses that are putting off long-term Territorians now?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I just answered that question. This government that is making sure we have a very competitive regime that has a payroll tax cut in place. They are the type of cuts we like, where we make it better for business as opposed to a CLP.

We are making sure we have a more competitive environment by putting incentives in place to encourage Territory businesses to employ Territorians and not look over the border interstate. We had some really good results in that regard. We are also putting the shoulder to the wheel when it comes to things like the Infrastructure minister said, putting good projects up but also diversifying this economy. That is what we are about, getting on with the business of supporting Territorians, creating more jobs and supporting local business.

Students – Needs-based Support

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Minister, how is this government supporting those students who have additional needs and require extra support?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Karama who is also the assistant minister for education and Workforce Training for her question and her interest for what we are able to do as a Territory Labor government to support our students with additional needs.

Similar to my earlier answer Member for Karama we do invest in education for all Territory students regardless of where they live, particularly focused now on being able to better support our students with additional needs across the Territory.

Last week I have the privilege and the honour to visit the Mimik-ga Centre located in Wanguri in our northern suburbs of Darwin. I would like to say a thank you to the principal who was able to spend time with me and show me around the centre and provide some detailed information about the support services that are based at the centre but also do lots of outreach across Palmerston, Darwin and our rural area to support our students with additional needs.

Something that I thought was really nice about the visit was Mimik-ga Guligi, which means growing children in the Larrakia language, is a bit part of the philosophy around the Mimik-ga Centre. There was a beautiful painting by local Larrakia artist Jason and Trent Lee and it was a demonstration of the way that we can work together to be able to support our Territory students. The painting signified the support services for the family, for the student, for the school, for the allied health services, specialists and programs that all wrap around to be able to support students who attend the Mimik-ga Centre.

Thank you to Greg Robinson, who is the director, for his work received a Chief Minister's Award of Excellence in 2019. Not only are they achieving for our students, they are setting a great example across the Northern Territory of what we can do to support those students and their families.

A key focus of the Mimik-ga program is the students maintain their contact with their mainstream base school sharing time between the base school and the Mimik-ga Centre and gradually they increase the time they are able to attend their base school with those strong wraparound services, which is fantastic. We are talking about the opportunities for students to be supported by those mainstream schools the opportunities for our educators in those mainstream schools to better support those students with additional needs.

We are proud to announce that there has been \$4.3m to provide directly to our Territory schools in regard the support of the needs-base funding model for students with additional needs for specialised equipment and employing additional staff to support our students. Something that are very proud of is making sure that we leave no Territory behind by providing the best resources possible and access to those quality education services.

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

MARINE POLLUTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 109)

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms UIBO: (Aboriginal Affairs): Madam Speaker it is with pleasure that I resume my comments on the debate about the legislation that has been brought to the House by the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources.

The scrutiny committee's legal advisor identified a potential concern that Section 4(1) of the *Marine Pollution Act 1999* may operate to limit the extra-territorial application of the proposed legislation where a vessel discharges pollutants outside of Territory coastal waters and those pollutants subsequently enter the Territory's coastal waters.

Concern was also raised regarding the meaning of agent of a ship owner in proposed section 8 due to a lack of clarity as to when a person ceases to be an agent and whether a person will be able to be identified as an agent at all relevant times.

I note that the government has accepted both recommendations from the scrutiny committee that have come from the report. I support both further amendments which will be discussed today.

The bill before us continues this government's agenda to improve the way that we protect our environment, including strengthening our environmental protection laws, which the Territory community expects.

Territory Labor knows that a healthy environment creates a stronger economy and more jobs locally for Territorians. We also know how important our marine and coastal environment is, particularly when we are looking at the elements environmentally, economically, culturally and socially.

I am pleased that this bill has come before the Assembly as we strengthen our marine pollution legislation after the 2016 pollution incident that occurred in Darwin Harbour and look to the future, making sure that our environment is protected, particularly our beautiful, pristine waterways across the Territory.

We are anticipating more traffic and shipping movements around the Territory coast. Our economy will continue to grow, which is a great thing. However, we need to continue to grow the protections for the environment and ensure the environment is not the cost of this development and the increase in the local economy.

I thank the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources, her ministerial office and staff for their assistance, as well as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for their hard work in making these amendments for the bill. It is extremely important that we protect the Territory's most valued assets. We cannot put value on things like our beautiful environment and the waterways.

The body of work that is being completed, and being able to clarify and crystallise some of the questions and uncertainties in the legislation, means that this amendment will ensure that the protections are not only relevant and contemporary, but that they work to protect in to the future. Also, those who are regulating any type of mishap or offences have the legislative powers to ensure that the regulations are kept in line with the intentions of this act.

I am very happy to stand here and contribute to this important debate today. My thanks to the minister, her team and the department for their hard work.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleagues, the Member for Arnhem, the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Nelson and the Member for Nhulunbuy for speaking on this important bill.

Member for Nelson, the scrutiny committee recommendations are all being accepted. The department consulted with port operators. It did not consult specifically with shipping owners as that was not considered necessary given the technical nature of the bill and the fact that it is aimed at ensuring the legislation is enforceable.

The definitions are deliberately broad to take into account the various complex arrangements in ship ownership which often involves a number of companies and shell companies. The definitions are consistent with the Australian marine laws. Demise and sub-demise are well understood in the marine and shipping industry. Demise charter gives charter of the ship full control of the ship, including appointing the master and the crew. Sub-demise gives charter of the ship but using a master and crew appointed by the owner. Slightly different. Time charter is for a set period and uses the owner's staff.

Member for Nhulunbuy, the *Marine Pollution Act 1999* is about pollution from ships. You raised some interesting points that are ones that we are all passionate about as well, for example, the rubbish washing up on the beaches, particularly in East Arnhem. We see that across the world. You were talking about single-use plastics. Some of those things are part of our government's phase two environmental protection bill as well, so those will be addressed when we bring that work in as well.

The *Marine Pollution Act 1990* and supporting Marine Pollution Regulations 2003 form part of the Territory's environmental regulatory system, aligning with national and international approaches for managing marine pollution. The overall purpose of this legislation is to minimise ship-source pollution from being intentionally or negligently discharged into Territory coastal waters.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Marine Pollution Act* and Marine Pollution Regulations to rectify identified shortcomings in the legislation, increase administrative efficiencies for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and contribute to improvements to the Territory's environmental regulations.

I introduced the bill into the Legislative Assembly on 17 October 2019 and the Assembly subsequently referred the bill to the Social Policy Scrutiny Committee for inquiry. On 10 December 2019, the Legislation Scrutiny Committee provided the report of the inquiry into the Marine Pollution Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 to the Speaker.

As part of the inquiry into the bill the scrutiny committee held a public briefing on 30 October 2019. The committee received one written submission, which supported passage of the bill. Given the somewhat technical nature of the bill, the scrutiny committee sought expert advice to inform its considerations. This expert review identified some areas of uncertainty about the potential operation of the act. After consulting with the Solicitor for the Northern Territory, my department provided a response to the committee that addressed these concerns.

At this time, I thank the committee and those persons who took the time to consider this bill and prepare submissions.

The scrutiny committee's final report includes three recommendations. The first proposes passage of the bill with amendments. Recommendations two and three identify the amendments required and reflect the advice provided by my department to the committee during the inquiry.

The amendments to the bill that I am introducing here today address the issues raised by the scrutiny committee and some other matters identified during the drafting of the Assembly amendment. Some additional minor amendments to the bill are also included.

I will now talk to the Assembly amendments that address the report's recommendations and other matters that will support the overall intent and purpose of the act.

The first amendment put forward by the committee relates to the application, as provided in section 4 of the act, and the observation that the territorial jurisdiction of the legislation may be limited only to when a ship is actually located within Territory coastal waters. Section 4 of the act states that the act applies to all ships in coastal waters—meaning Territory coastal waters. This raises uncertainty about the application of the act in circumstances where a ship discharges pollutants outside Territory coastal waters, but the pollutants then enter our coastal waters. It is clear that the act intends to apply to ships outside Territory coastal waters if they discharge pollutants that enter coastal waters.

Section 9 of the act states that a discharge of a pollutant that happens outside coastal waters is taken to be a discharge in coastal waters if the discharged pollutants enter coastal waters. Furthermore, the limited application will potentially restrict a person's status as an agent under the act for the periods of time when a ship is in coastal waters. This does not support the intent of the legislative amendments of a ship's geographical location not having a bearing on the status of a person as an agent of a ship's owner.

To address the limitations identified with section 4, the Assembly amendment being tabled here today proposes to remove the extra territorial limitation. The Assembly amendment will ensure that the act applies to all ships in coastal waters, all ships outside coastal waters that are on a voyage to or from the Territory and all ships that discharge a pollutant to which section 9 of the act applies. This amendment aligns with recommendation two of the scrutiny committee's report.

The second amendment suggested by the scrutiny committee relates to the proposed meaning of 'agent' in section 8. The expert review identified a concern that the proposed new meaning of 'agent' is not completely clear in specifying that a person remains an agent after completing an activity of an agent or the performance of a function for a ship. This creates uncertainty about whether a person could be identified as an agent under the act at all relevant times. To address this concern, the committee recommends amendments to section 8(2) that identify that a person will remain an agent of a ship owner for the duration of the voyage and while the ship is in the Territory.

The Assembly amendment being proposed addresses this recommendation by inserting new subsection 8(2)(a) and 8(2)(b). Subsection 8(2)(a) identifies that any arrangement made or function performed by an agent includes activities that are preparatory to the ship's voyage.

Subsection 8(2)(b) identifies that a person is the agent of the ship owner for the duration of the voyage including during the time the ship is in the Territory or any period of the ship's voyage that is outside coastal waters.

To support these amendments subsection 8(2) is being revised to ensure that agents related to ships which section 9 of the act applies can be identified as agents irrespective of whether the ship is on a voyage to or from the Territory or the person is acting as an agent in the Territory or elsewhere in Australia.

This is important because we need to account for the possibility of ships operating outside of the Territory, for example in northern Queensland or Western Australian coastal waters being the source of pollutants entering Territory coastal waters. In such circumstances, the ship owner may not have an agent in the Territory because the ship does not enter a Territory port. However, an agent of the ship owner may be able to be identified elsewhere in Australia which will allow for service of documents under the act should the need arise.

This amendment aligns with recommendation 3 of the scrutiny committee's report and supports the changes to section 4 of the act. Other minor amendments being proposed here today relate to ambiguity in the bill concerning when a document is unable to be served on the master of a ship and corrections to the bill due to a reference error and a superseded amendment.

This government is committed to ensuring we have the very best legislation and processes in place to protect our environment. The amendments being introduced by this bill and associated Assembly amendments strengthen the Territory's ability to respond to ship-source pollution incidents in our marine and coastal environments.

The Territory has seen an increase in shipping associated with economic development and industry. We need to ensure this is complemented by good legislation that allows the Territory to be an effective regulator and protector of one of our greatest natural assets.

I thank each of my colleagues, the Leader of the Opposition, the members for Nelson and Nhulunbuy for speaking on this bill. I thank the scrutiny committee and persons who took the time to review and comment on this bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clause 1-3 taken together and agreed to.

After clause 3:

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move amendment 1 to insert new clause 3A after clause 3 and before clause 4 to amend section 4: application of the act.

Assembly amendment 1 deletes the subsections (1), (2) and (3) from section 4 of the act to remove a potential limitation to the extra-territorial jurisdiction of the legislation.

A new subsection (1) has been inserted to make it clear that the act does have territorial application. This amendment reflects recommendation 2 of the scrutiny committee's report and is important to ensure the overall effectiveness of the amendment and operation of the act.

The jurisdictional limitation potentially restricted a person's status, in their capacity as an agent, and raised concerns about the power of the act to apply to ships outside Territorial coastal waters and discharge pollutants that then enter Territory coastal waters. To remove uncertainty, this amendment clearly identifies that the act applies to all ships in coastal waters and all ships outside coastal waters that are on voyage to or from the Territory and to all ships that discharge a pollutant to which section 9 of the act applies.

Section 9 of the act identifies that a discharge of a pollutant outside coastal waters, that subsequently enters coastal waters, is taken to be discharged into coastal waters. When taken in consideration of the act, existing section 9 clearly anticipates that the act applies to ships outside coastal waters if they discharge pollutants that enter coastal waters. This amendment is clearly consistent with the overall intent and purposes of the act.

Mr WOOD: One thing that changes with this amendment is that the definition of coastal waters has changed. I thank the department for its briefing but it is worth raising that there is a definition of coastal waters under the present act, 4 (2): 'coastal waters may be generally described as the area extending from the low water mark on the coast of the Territory to an imaginary line three nautical miles seaward from that mark'.

In the definition section of the act:

... coastal waters means the coastal waters of the Territory within the meaning of the Coastal Waters (Northern Territory Powers) Act 1980 of the Commonwealth and includes under waters within the limits of the Territory that are subject to the ebb and flow of tide ...

My understanding is that we are scrapping 4(2). I can understand that coastal waters means a line as the area extending from the low water mark on the coast of the Territory to an imaginary line three nautical miles seawards, to the one that includes other waters within the limits of the Territory that are subject to the ebb and flow of tide.

Why did we not retain that definition of coastal waters—a layman's version—rather than the technical version of coastal waters.

Ms LAWLER: This is a general description of coastal waters, not the definition. The definition is contained in section 6 and is not being changed. Removal of this general description provides greater clarity about the application of the act and reduces uncertainty in interpretation.

Mr WOOD: We have been talking about coastal waters outside the Territory, generally referring to Commonwealth waters. What is the arrangement if a ship is moved into Queensland or Western Australian waters? Is there discussion with the state or are these rules not distinguishing between whether a ship is in Queensland or Western Australian waters or the Commonwealth waters. Will this legislation apply?

Ms LAWLER: The legislation we are dealing with today, the Marine Pollution Legislation Amendment Bill 2019, refers to Territory waters. Queensland and WA have their marine pollution legislation and there is federal legislation.

Mr WOOD: This act is about whether someone pollutes outside our territorial waters and that pollution comes back. We have been talking about Commonwealth waters, but the act similarly applies if that pollution came in from Queensland or Western Australian waters?

Ms LAWLER: I have been advised that jurisdictions would talk to each other and work out who would take the lead.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 3A inserted.

Clause 4:

Ms LAWLER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move amendment 2 to clause 4(1). Assembly amendment 2 is correcting a reference in the bill in relation to which definition of 'owner' that clause 4 proposes to omit, and replace with proposed new section 8A, inserted by clause 5. The correct reference of the definition of 'owner' should be the first reference of 'owner', not the second reference, as currently noted in the bill.

Mr WOOD: This clause, 4(1) is an amendment to the bill or the amendment?

Ms LAWLER: To the bill. I moved amendment 2 to clause 4(1).

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, are you referring to the act or the regulations?

Mr WOOD: We have an act to amend the Marine Pollution Act and the Marine Pollution Regulations. Section 4 of that amendment, which is amending the act, is being amended by what we have on our desks today, which is that 4(1) of the amending legislation refers to second reference, inserting first reference.

I think I am all good now.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is good to clarify.

Amendment agreed to.

Ms LAWLER: I move amendment 3 to clause 4(4). Assembly amendment 3 is omitting clause 4(4) in the bill as it is no longer required. Clause 4(4) proposed to amend a reference to the Penalties Act 1999 in section 6(2)(b) and change it to the *Penalty Units Act 2009*. Since introduction of the bill, the amendment has been superseded by the passing of the Statute Law Revision and Repeals Act 2019 in November last year.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5:

Ms LAWLER: I move amendment 4 to clause 5. Clause 5 replaces section 8 to provide a new meaning of 'agent' and insert new section 8A, meaning of 'owner'. The meaning of 'agent' in section 8 is amended to provide clarity and a more realistic reflection of the types of activities a person is likely to perform as a ship owner's agent, remove the geographical limitations on a person's status as a ship owner's agent and as a result of the location of the ship, and provides information requirements on the ship owner and a ship owner's agent in instances when they advise the department that the person is no longer the ship owner's agent.

Assembly amendment 4 omits and replaces proposed new section 8(2) and inserts new subsections (2A) and (2B) to provide further clarity to the meaning of 'agent' with regard to agency duration in circumstances when a person can be considered an agent for the purposes of the act, including in circumstances when a ship operating outside coastal waters discharges pollutants that then enter coastal water, irrespective of whether the person is acting as an agent in the Territory or elsewhere in Australia.

The proposed new subsection (2) is being amended to accommodate the insertion of new section 8(2)(d) that specifically identifies that a person who performs a function, or makes an arrangement for a ship in their capacity as an agent, extends to circumstances anticipated by section 9, discharge outside coastal waters that enters coastal waters of the act. This amendment complements the amendments being made to section 4 by Assembly Amendment 1 that clearly identifies the act applies to ships located outside coastal waters and removes uncertainty with regard to the sanding of a person as an agent in circumstances when a ship located outside Territory coastal waters discharges pollutants that subsequently enter Territory coastal waters, irrespective of whether a ship is on a voyage to or from the Territory, or the agent is located in Darwin or elsewhere in Australia.

The proposed new subsections 2(a) and 2(b) intend to remove uncertainty concerning the duration of an agency by clarifying that completion of a task by a person in their capacity as an agent does not automatically cease the statutory agency relationship and that any task performed by the person that are preparatory to a ship's voyage also forms part of the agency's duration. This amendment reflects Recommendation 3 of the scrutiny committee's report.

Mr WOOD: Mr Deputy Speaker, just a point of clarification now we have the bill and the amendments. Section 8 is to be replaced, which is the meaning of 'agent'. Then we have an amendment to that amendment. How does that work? We have another one of the amendments that were dropped on our desks this morning, which is clause 5 for section 8(2), which amends the amendment that was introduced into parliament for the scrutiny committee to look at.

Do we vote on clause 5 first to agree to the amendments, or how does it work in practice? The minister has made a speech which has covered both the amendment to the amendment, which will then amend the main legislation. There are two lots—this clause is being amended once and then it is being amended again. How does it work in practice? Do we vote on the first part and then vote on the amendment to the amendment?

If you look at what is in front of us, we have two amendments and they are on separate sheets of paper.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, it is standard process of what we usually do. The amendment that the minister is moving ...

Mr WOOD: Includes that amendment?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Includes that amendment.

Mr WOOD: I was just asking from a practical point of view. How, then, would I debate that if I only wanted to debate the second amendment? Would I have to say I just wanted to debate that part of the amendment? I am not saying I will, I was just trying to follow the process ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, you would just discuss it and then the minister would have the opportunity to respond because it is within clause 5 where we are looking to move the amendment.

Mr WOOD: That is okay. Thanks.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry. Did you have any further questions?

Mr WOOD: No, I was interested in the minister's answer and the reasons why there was an amendment to the amendment. It makes sense.

Ms LAWLER: It is complicated legislation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 9, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 10:

Ms LAWLER: I move Amendment 5 to clause 10. Clause 10 amends section 97, Service of document, to provide improvements to the manner documents may be legally served for the purposes of the act.

The clause is designed to ensure that documents can be served on the ship's owner either directly or through the ship's master or ship's owner's agent, including if the persons are previous owners or agents provided the previous owner or agent was the ship's owner or owner's agent at the time the conduct occurred that is the subject of the documents being served.

Assembly amendment 5 amends the wording of subsection 97(2) to remove the word 'cannot' in order to clarify that service on a ship's master only has to be impractical and not impossible for service to be permitted on a ship's owner or owner's agent. This amendment has been included on advice from the Solicitor for the Northern Territory that term 'cannot' raises uncertainty as it can imply both 'impossible' and 'impractical.'

Mr WOOD: Just a practical question here. If the person in trouble is either the owner or agent and the document is served on the ship's master, I imagine there is a requirement for the ship's master to pass that on to the owner or the agent. Is that correct?

Ms LAWLER: There is no explicit instruction but we presume that would happen. We would not specify.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

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

Ms LAWLER (Environment and Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION
Protecting Our Environment

Continued from 19 February 2020.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity to provide my comments on the views and aspirations of many people across the Northern Territory when it comes to the environment. I thank the minister for the environment for bringing this important statement to the House. The environment that many Territorians are passionate about. Many Territorians work in environmental spaces and as a born and bred Territorians myself, I have had the opportunity to grow up in one of the most beautiful countrysides ever in Central Australia.

Before I get into detail I will take a few moments to talk about the Northern Territory's environment from my experience. As someone who is very passionate about the environment and country, I understand the need for continuing environmental reforms and the urgent need to conserve the Northern Territory's environment.

I also speak from a position of understanding the complexities and challenges that we face in the future as a person who has worked in the environmental matters facing the Northern Territory now and into the future.

The Northern Territory's environment is unique, beautiful and rare. Right across the Northern Territory there are many places of high biodiversity and ecological value. They are places that we, a Territory Labor government, continue to work with to ensure their preservation for future generations to experience those important places. It is important that we ensure that we do not see endangered plant species or wildlife becoming extinct in particular parts of the Northern Territory.

The fundamental mechanisms to overcome those challenges in the futures lie in making sure we have good environmental regulations and laws and a commitment to working with our environmental organisations across the Territory to protect the unique biodiversity areas and ecological places of significance.

Our Northern Territory environment has provided the foundation for the world's oldest continuing human culture and the health and wellbeing of many Indigenous Territorians. It underpins our economy from tourism to primary industry to our arts and creative industries and, of course, our resources sector.

It provides a wealth of opportunity for our research community who, by unlocking it and understanding it, can create jobs and make important contributions to better understanding the ecosystems we all rely on. A healthy ecosystem and protected biodiversity is key to a happy, healthy and prosperous community. All Territorians are incredibly proud of and passionate about our environment. Looking after it for future generations is a job we are all entrusted here to do.

That is why we must continue to do our bit to curb climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which are having devastating consequences on our natural habitats, wildlife and ecosystems here in the Northern Territory.

If everyone in this Chamber is serious about creating a vibrant home for our future generations making this a place for the rest of the communities and countries to envy, we must have tough environmental protections in place to protect this unique and thriving system.

Legislative reforms such as the Environmental Protection Bill that our Labor government introduced this term that reinforce my pride and passion of being part of the Labor team—progressive, responsive and informative, was in line with community expectations and focused on action in delivering in the space of the environment.

This piece of reform we passed recently was a significant piece of law. Some people will say that it is not perfect and does not go far enough or has gone too far. But what is perfect? Our commitment to continue to work with stakeholder groups in the future to strengthen and refine our overall environmental protection networks here in the Northern Territory, because we care about the environment.

Our policies ensure that some of the most fundamental aspects are at the core of what we do. They are why we were here, to enhance and protect them. The Environmental Protection Bill underscores Labor's commitment to caring for country and protecting country.

I will take a few moments, as I have done previously in this Chamber, to talk about caring for country because a large amount of people across Australia do not often hear or understand. To people who live on country, caring for country is more than just environmental management. As important as that is, caring for country is

about Aboriginal people's connection to land and sea. It is about the unique landscapes they have. Caring for country has the benefits of socio-political, economic and cultural, physical and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous people and the wider community.

There is a growing field of research documenting that caring for country is intrinsically connected and linked to maintaining cultural life, identity, autonomy and health. Caring for country is important, not just for local places but for the coordination of environmental issues that have national reach. We cannot take serious steps regarding climate change if we do not seriously support initiatives that care for country.

I take a few moments to talk about the significant investments the minister for the Environment and our minister for the parks and wildlife have made in resourcing our Indigenous ranger groups across the Northern Territory. It is important to make sure Indigenous ranger groups across the Northern Territory have access to quality infrastructure and support so that they can work on their country to protect the unique eco-systems, so that they can maintain fire breaks, and so that we do not see savage wildfires in the Northern Territory, is important.

Indigenous ranger groups are important because they map where heavy fire loads are developing and where water is stored; these are places of deep cultural and spiritual significance. There is a saying that I hear a lot out bush and it nails it for me: Healthy country, health people. If the land is sick, if communities are running out of water, if one-hundred-year-old gum trees are dying from the heat, and if bushfire emergencies are occurring at rates unprecedented, we do not have healthy country. We do not have healthy people.

When Aboriginal Territorians talk about country, they do not talk about it like it is a place or a location. It is not like we are going for a drive to see country today. People talk about country the same way they talk about a person. They speak to country. They sing to country. They visit country. Many of them worry about country and feel sorry for country. When many of them have to make that hard decision to commute into town, they long for country. They long to get back out on to country because they know they have a deep connection with country. They also have a cultural responsibility to care for country for future generations.

Country knows. Country hears. It takes note. It has emotions and reactions. It is a living entity with a past, a present, and a bright future under a Labor government. It has a yesterday that we must preserve and acknowledge, a present that we must work with, and a tomorrow that we must ensure comes to pass. We cannot ensure that our country is well and healthy if we do not address the issues of climate change.

I want to reinforce that Labor cares for country. Labor cares for all aspects of the environment. I acknowledge the positive work my government is doing in the larger cities and towns across the Northern Territory and its commitment to reducing the heat in Alice Springs and Darwin through heat studies. We must look at why temperatures are rising and work to reduce our footprint.

We cannot continue to be naïve like some members opposite in this Chamber are. I am incredibly proud of our ambitious road maps to renewables. Speaking with some of my colleagues in this Chamber on the development of this policy, I am excited for the future as we continue to invest in renewables across this great Territory.

The Northern Territory is well placed to be the country's leader in renewables. Renewable energy is energy that can be harvested and located from the sun. We are in the perfect place in the Northern Territory to harvest that energy, to be a leader in our nation.

Central Australia and the Barkly region is home to some of the world's highest UV rays. There are other places; some of them are over the Indian Ocean and there is only a small pocket in Africa. We are equipped in the southern region of the Northern Territory to be the leader in the world. We are equipped to be the powerhouse of the future, harvesting the sun.

In our vision for the future of the Territory, it is a bustling place with green energy in remote communities, communities that are powered by solar power. We also talk about water being one of our most precious resources. I am excited to be working with colleagues in the Territory Labor government about what we can do in the space of water, understanding that it is a finite resource, that it is something that we regard as precious and sacred.

We must look at how we can work in that space. I have often said in this Chamber is that the key to overcoming some of these challenges is looking at how we recycle water in our larger towns and remote communities. We need to look at recycled water as not a waste product but as a commodity, as something

to value. It has a huge economic value tied to it. We can use recycled water to help economic opportunities arise from the ground in remote communities. We must look at it.

The Territory Labor government is committed to providing a modern environmental protection system that supports better decision-making, where industry know the rules and the public have the opportunity to have a say and shape the future. A system where future development and growth are achieved without compromising places that have cultural significance to our First Nations brothers and sisters. A system where places that have community significance and value to Territorians are protected. All Territorians deserve the right to stand up for areas that need to be protected so future generations can enjoy them for years to come.

We have been committed to having the systems in place which will deliver responsible oversight of the development to protect the Territory's waterways, rivers, lakes, landforms, marine environments and biodiversity from irreversible harm. Harm that we saw occur under the Country Liberal Party's government. Harm that is still talked about in remote communities when their voices were ignored. Harm when people in my home town of Alice Springs were shut out on being informed and consulted on the Territory's water.

The Territory Labor government has changed that while we have been in government. We are open, accountable and consult with Territorians to make sure that people are brought along on the journey. That is important to reiterate. We are committed to responsible oversight to ensure that we do not see our natural ecosystems destroyed so that someone can make a quick buck. Rushing environmental matters often results in disaster.

For too long, the Territory has been home to many environmental mishaps. Large-scale mines—because people did not follow process or environmental protection orders—to civil developments compromising our unique ecosystems and ways of life.

Sustainability is the key to a vibrant Territory. In order to achieve that, we must deliver projects that are ecologically sustainable and non-invasive to our homes. We must not lose sight or focus that emerging industries like solar, wind and—as the members for Nelson and Barkly often talk about—hydrogen energies, are energies and industries that we have discussions about. They will help us move to a cleaner environment that we can all enjoy.

I am a believer that the Northern Territory can and should position itself as that leader in renewables. As I said earlier, the Northern Territory has enough sun right across our vast land areas. I am sure many First Nations people would rather investments on their country rather than digging up their country.

I acknowledge the outstanding role that many of our Territory environmental organisations play across the Territory:

- Environment Centre NT
- Arid Lands Environment Centre
- Environmental Defenders Office
- Desert Knowledge Australia
- Labor Environment Action Network, LEAN.

It is through the hard work and dedication of these groups which help the voices of the environmental often be heard. I thank them for their work, now and in the future.

Our government has been listening to the concerns raised by the public about hydraulic fracturing and the Territory's monitoring of resource industries. We have made these changes to protect the Northern Territory's environmental future.

While these changes are designed to improve the regulatory regime associated with hydraulic fracturing activities, they have also been prepared in a way that will allow ministers to request particular advice and scientific evidence. To take advantage of the opportunity to use our Northern Territory environmental experts to get the best outcomes for the Territory.

Unlike those opposite who brought in their mate because they needed a pension top-up, we are not going to do that. We are going to support our environmental experts because we are a government based on expert advice from the experts, the scientists who know best.

Most people know my hesitation for some time on particular issues but, rest assured, if the CLP are ever elected to government they plan to remove any regulation and have a free-for-all for these industries with no checks and balances, putting our environment at risk. Turning the Northern Territory into a barren wasteland is the plan of the CLP. That is a vision I do not want to think about.

It is a Territory Labor government that has and will continue to support our environmental groups our Indigenous ranger groups across the Territory because we, on this side of the Chamber, value the significant and important work they do each and every day.

A point of order, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 43; I move an extension of time to complete my remarks.

Motion agreed to.

Mr PAECH: Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, there is much to talk about with the environment, I could be here all night.

It is a Territory Labor government that continues to invest in caring for places of great significance, such as the Todd River in Alice Springs. The Lhere Mparntwe Management Plan 2019 is our commitment to providing a way for a coordinated approach to maintaining ecologically healthy rivers in Alice Springs. This is a strategy that we have worked on with the community:

- to protect and enhance the natural and cultural values of the rivers
- encourage locals and visitors to use the rivers in culturally and ecologically appropriate ways
- ensure governments, traditional owners, business and the community work collaboratively to care for them.

The Todd River is an amazing, beautiful place and is home to dozens of large, mature river red gums—*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*. Sadly, a large number of illegally lit grass fires which has resulted in many of them, over 500 years, lost, sacred sites gone. We must continue to work so that we do not see that happen.

The Central Australian region is home to many wondrous national parks, iconic landmarks and there is a strong commitment of all Centralians who care about the environment.

Sadly over the last few years we have seen such dramatic changes in our climate. We are now experiencing temperatures which are unprecedented, which, if we do not address, will have significant impacts on our way of life in Central Australia.

Over the sessional break from parliament I spend time out on country talking with families, catching up with friends and talking to the good bush folk. I spent time listening to their stories of good times, hard times and the becoming of people. I heard stories of sadness in people's voices. The sadness the people from the bush talked about where bush tucker once flourished—is gone. Places where people would once hunt and be able to find kangaroos, emus and goannas—gone.

I heard the heartache in their voices that these places are becoming harder to find. Areas once known to be sacred places and guaranteed to hold water are nothing but dried-up river beds now.

The stories of climate change are stories of lived experiences from Territorians. Our people who, over Christmas, had to tolerate record temperatures in homes with minimal air conditioning, in some instances becoming climate refugees in their own country, having to flee to larger towns to get some reprieve from the sweltering.

They do not have swimming pools or flash air conditioning or green spaces. They have a government that will hear them, act on science, recognise climate change and has a minister for climate change. They have bush members who stand with them. We know that we must work with our bush folk to maintain a strong bush that where people can continue to thrive, stay on country and connected to country.

We know we need to work in how we green our remote communities in an environmentally friendly. I believe the answer is simple: we invest in recycled water. We turn what is seen as a waste product back into a valuable commodity. Imagine seeing remote communities with lush green ovals, tree lined streets, shaded parks and recreational spaces. Imagine communities where community gardens flourish, provide nutritious fruit and vegetables for families.

I will not for a second accept that this model or idea is not possible. It has been done across the country before and it will be done again. I will not be told by a bureaucrat that it cannot be done because of health regulations, that is simply untrue. The great community of Amata in Central Australia has a wonderful oval being watered by recycled water. We can do that in the Northern Territory.

I will not accept that we cannot do it. That is why we as a Territory Labor government will continue to work with our environmental sectors to understand the challenges occurring in the bush, how we can overcome them and support the environment here in the Northern Territory. Our track record proves we are the best government to look after the environment.

In addition to the range of reforms we have introduced, such as the Environmental Protection Bill, we have also delivered a Climate Change Response, a Roadmap to Renewables with a 50% renewable energy target by 2030 for electricity supplied to Territory households and businesses.

We have invested \$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; \$31 over two years to contribute to Power and Water Corporation's Solar Energy Transformation Program, 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.

The Member for Brainting and I were very excited about the \$5m over three years to establish Intyalheme Centre for Future Energy at Desert Knowledge Australia to deliver collaborative projects on future grid options and transferring knowledge and technologies on renewables and electricity systems.

Not too long ago in this Chamber, as I said, we introduced the Environment Protection Bill. I had great pride, as a Labor member, to speak on this bill as it was such an important thing to do. What is also important tonight is to remind people in the House that there are no jobs on a dead planet. There is no bustling economy in an environment that is struggling because people choose to deny that climate change is real.

Let us face it, those opposite are scaremongering about jobs because they are scared. They have no plan to protect the environment.

There are significant economic opportunities arising in the very near foreseeable future in jobs, investment, the environment and Parks and Wildlife stages. Looking after country has a important cost. If we do not look at and address that cost, we will not have other industries coming here to call the Territory home.

I remember not too long ago the dark days of the CLP and what that meant for the environment. Those are times we do not want to go back to. We need to have a strong Territory. In order to have a strong Territory we have to have strong environmental protections and look after country and Territorians. That can only be achieved through a Territory Labor government's investment in renewables, protecting the environment and understanding our unique water systems in the Northern Territory. That can only be achieved by us on this side of the Chamber because those opposite are more happy to line their friend's pockets than they are to look after the environment.

This is important, we must do it. This is a transformative, reformist government which is standing up for the environment. You have a by-election coming up and those opposite are trying to hide the fact that they are nothing but climate change deniers. Whether you go for the extreme right Territory Alliance or the CLP, if you put them number one, you are putting the Territory's environment last. Remember that. A one for Territory Alliance, the CLP or, in fact, The Greens, is putting the Territory's environment at stake. Invest in Labor and support us. We will deliver that environmental reform that is needed to protect the Northern Territory.

Mr KIRBY (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I also speak on Minister Lawler's statement about protecting our environment. It has been a very interesting debate so far. There have been some amazing statements made in the House over the last couple of days.

It is great to see a few different people taking an interest in the environment now. It is also great to hear the Leader of the Opposition and perhaps even the deputy leader—I just have to check where he is before I

speak about him so much—now claiming that they support all of the 135 recommendations from the Pepper report, which I find fantastic. I also find it a little amazing because that was yesterday. Today, they were screaming across the Chamber asking how our moratorium was going and that the moratorium might have slowed things down.

I do not want to be alarmist or treat people as though they are nincompoops or a little silly, but I want to slow down and explain to people that you cannot have the 135 recommendations without the moratorium and the Pepper report going through. We just to be clear on that—you either support what we have done in slowing down and making sure we get the regulation right and we protect the environment going forward and enact all of those 135 recommendations, or you do not support that. It is very easy in here to say that they support them, all of a sudden. That is fantastic and a wonderful thing. But we also know that a couple of years ago people were told their jobs were safe. Then, a few months later, they were not so safe.

Are the 135 recommendations safe or are they not? Do they support the moratorium that developed the 135 recommendations or do they not? There are a lot of unanswered questions. I am sure we will get the opportunity to flush some of those out in the future.

Our government has, critically, done the hard work to strike the right balance between industry and environment. It is informed and underpinned by science, something we have concentrated very hard on.

We have heard from the other side of the Chamber, from the CLP particularly, that they do not believe the science. As much as they may say they do, we know there will times in the future—when it suits them—when they do not believe in the science. They deny the science of climate change.

This Labor government backs the Territory in tough economic times. This government has dug in hard. I spoke yesterday about the hard work we have done as a government. It is not easy; we do not shy away from the hard work and we do not make throw-away decisions. Renewables and protecting our environment is where we need to be in the Territory. It is a big part of the Territory's future.

We continually hear the Member for Stuart speak about an economy that includes the bush. They can and will be included in a renewables future, a clean economic future for the Territory.

Gas will make up a big part of the Northern Territory's future. It is no secret that whenever you go to industry conferences, the very CEOs of APPEA and those bodies will readily admit that gas is a part of the mix going forward, as we switch to a more renewables driven energy market. It is part of the mix; there is no point trying to deny that. That is why the government has taken the time to take a step back, get the regulations right, get the Pepper report and the scientific evaluations, and commit to implementing all 135 recommendations.

We will continue to push for Commonwealth assistance and investment. To clarify that, the Member for Stuart also brings up carbon emissions through the Northern Territory. In the Beetaloo Basin, and some other basins that will be explored in the future in the Northern Territory, we sit on a global resource. We are a tiny economy and are working as hard as we can at the moment. Beyond INPEX, with not a very bright future for the Territory, we have done the best we can to make sure we are investing in jobs and the right projects across the Territory.

The future of the Territory relies heavily upon that global resource of gas that we have. That will be well sought, not just by us Territorians, and not just by the east coast of Australia, but internationally as well. There is a cost to getting that out. A small jurisdiction of a couple hundred thousand people cannot hope to offset that cost on our own. It stands to reason that some of that carbon offsetting needs to be done by the federal government.

If the Member for Stuart does not understand that, we are more than happy to give him a briefing so he does. A small jurisdiction like the Territory, which has the good fortune of having a massive gas supply that the carbon abatements—we will need assistance in offsetting those.

Hydrogen will be a massive part of our future in the Northern Territory. That is an extremely clean form of energy, but the professionals will tell you the numbers do not stack up. A decade ago, people would have told you that the numbers for renewable, battery storage and solar panels would not stack up. And we see the size of and capacity of projects that are a reality now.

A decade on, they stack up. In a decade's time we will be having a completely different conversation about hydrogen. The Territory will still be at the forefront of that, with our access to gas and beautiful, clean sunshine. We look forward to that.

I am proud of and excited by the care and protection of the land and animals around the Northern Territory. Whether it is talking to cattle farmers, pastoralists, people who have worked on the land for generations particularly through the ag industry but not only through the ag industry.

Even through the mining industry to talk with people about their care and their love of the land and how much time and effort and energy they put in, to making sure that their lands are sustainable into the future. It is a very heartening thing and I look forward to continuing to discuss all of those economic and environmental concerns with those people going forward.

In mining we have had opportunity to speak a bit about that over the previous few days here in the Chamber. It does create jobs, it helps build our regions, it grows wealth for Territorians and it continues to improve essential infrastructure such as transport corridors around the Northern Territory. It underpins our economy and I could not be prouder how the Labor government steps through making sure that every one of those opportunities comes to fruition in the Northern Territory but comes to fruition in an environmentally safe and sustainable manner.

The minerals industry was the largest industry sector contributing over 18% of gross state product and employing over 4400 people. They are fantastic numbers.

Our \$26m Resourcing the Territory has given great opportunities to co-invest with private enterprise so that they understand the wealth creation, they understand the opportunities here in the Northern Territory and those investments are paying off. We had a wonderful luncheon yesterday with the Minerals Council and acknowledge Drew Wagner and all the hard work that he does. They are extremely proud of the work they do. They are often the unsung heroes of the Northern Territory economy.

The minerals exploration expenditure in September 2019 was a massive \$36.4m which is up 12% on the same quarter in 2018. That activity is going to increase so to have all of that money coming into the Northern Territory, to have our economy underpinned by that, but by being honest with companies that are coming to the Northern Territory in working very closely with the Minister for Environment, we know there is a path through all this mineral exploration and production. There is an ability and a capacity for us to make sure that these proponents that come to the Territory are good corporate citizens. They have heard us speak about the necessity for them to earn their social licence to operate in the Northern Territory and protecting our environment is at the forefront of that.

I remember not long after coming into this role, speaking about the importance that the Chief Minister had impressed upon me that the gas industry and how that will develop over the coming months and years and decades is critically important to the Northern Territory but it cannot be at the expense of any other industry. All of our other industries put together are so important to the Northern Territory and we have been extremely diligent in making sure that every different angle and every opportunity is taken to make sure that all of our other industries are protected through the Northern Territory.

Our department does collaborate closely with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on these regulatory reforms to make sure that sustainable development is right at the front of the Territory's mineral resources.

These reforms includes the changes to the *Water Act* and the passing of the *Environment Protection Bill*. Some of those changes mean that some of these operations—mining and petroleum operations—are now required to apply for a water licence. That is in stark contrast to how water was treated by those opposite when they had their opportunity to manage such a previous resource, not too many years ago. When you think back about how water was treated under the CLP's last term of government you would be excused for thinking that must have been decades ago that they thought that behaviour like that was okay, that it should be okay through the Northern Territory, that it should be okay through anywhere in Australia or across the world where everybody knows that water is such a precious resource. That is taken very seriously by this Labor government.

Ensuring that mining and petroleum operations are subject to the same regulatory framework as all other industries helps protect our precious water resources. The environment protection legislation improves and replaces some outdated and ineffective legislation that was in sore need of updating.

We will diligently work our way through all of the 135 recommendations of the Pepper inquiry. We are extremely proud of what that does to protecting areas like national parks, towns, areas of cultural and

ecological significance that have been declared under the reserve blocks under the *Petroleum Act* and never subject to onshore petroleum development.

I would like to hear the Opposition guarantee that they would take the areas of high tourism value, the towns and residential areas including areas that have assets of strategic importance to nearby residential areas, our national parks, conservation reserve, areas of high ecological value, areas of cultural significance and Indigenous protected areas as importantly as this government.

We have left no stone unturned in making sure we have the regulatory reforms right for this industry to progress through the Northern Territory and we will continue to do that over the rest of this year.

Our department will continue to negotiate with holders of exploration permits to relinquish areas that are identified as reserved blocks. We committed to do that through the Pepper report. We knew there would be some areas that already had applications and licences over them. We have committed to work with the proponents in those cases. We are a government that do what we say we will do. We do not skirt around the tough issues. We make sure we listen to Territorians and do what we say we will do. We will continue to enact those regulations and all of those recommendations as we go.

As we have seen over the past couple of weeks and months, Santos and Origin have started work again in the Beetaloo Basin. There are other juniors that will not be far off either. I highlighted yesterday that INPEX had made another solid investment in that area and they will do more through the Northern Territory. It is a sign that if you take the time you can get the regulatory regime right to encourage investment but also protect the environment.

In protecting our unique natural environment we have also made sure that we have looked after local jobs and we will continue to stress this with all proponents. Local jobs are the most critical thing for us and it is important that local contractors have opportunities to get into this work and this industry that will have a long and safe future in the Northern Territory.

I will continue to work with my colleagues and industry to make sure that the emerging onshore industry focusses on local employment and local business opportunities with the protection of our natural environment being right at the front.

We have world-class gas reserves that will be explored in the future. We are a small jurisdiction—nobody denies that—with a couple of hundred thousand people. That gas will be utilised here, interstate and overseas as well and we will continue to have discussions with the federal government about the assistance we will need to get this commodity to market in a timely, safe and reliable manner.

Some of the other areas of my portfolio where we do some great work is in our primary industries. That is an important economic driver across the Northern Territory. Our Labor government has worked to support our food and fibre industries through research and development, economic development initiatives, introduction of industry building legislation, and facilitated mentoring programs.

Our Labor government has worked to support our food and fibre industries that are making some outstanding achievements of which all Territorians can be proud and have benefitted from. They will benefit from these well into the future. We punch well above our weight. Whether it is our agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, we will continue to work hard on making sure that Aboriginal businesses have the opportunities to be included in these businesses.

We do not need to look any further back in history than the last few months: the devastating fires down south. However, we need to look at the care and nurture that Aboriginal people have had for their lands across Australia over thousands of years and the lessons that we can learn from them to ensure fuel loads are kept low and that our land is managed as sustainably as it can be. We make no apology for learning our lessons from Aboriginal people where we can.

Our mango industry is another beautiful industry that brings in thousands of dollars to the Northern Territory. We are extremely proud of that. The Australian mango industry is worth approximately \$100m. The Northern Territory produces a large amount of that yet uses under .7% of the total area of the Northern Territory. It is a small footprint. I will speak a bit more about the footprint from agriculture industry.

We are able to sustainably and responsibly develop just 1% or 2% of the entire Territory's land mass for the exciting high value crops that are emerging as opportunities. We can go close to doubling the gross value

production of our agriculture sector. We encourage all of that in a sustainable way across the Northern Territory.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant of Standing Order 43, I request an extension of time be granted to the minister.

Motion agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: Our agriculture production can be increased. We have to do that sustainably. We have made some tough decisions. I highlight the hard work that the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources and her department has done. They are not easy decisions when you have people come to you who want more water and want to expand, if we know that there is no water available at this time. I commend the minister for making those tough decisions.

We work hand-in-hand in trying to ensure that we encourage businesses and the agriculture sector, and get those decisions right. I am extremely proud of the work that we do together to support and grow the agriculture sector across the Territory in a sustainable way.

In the buffalo industry, wild buffalo cause devastation across the Top End. However, it is an area that we can grow in the future. The hard-working team at NT Farmers—Laura is finishing up there soon; we wish her all the best in her endeavours. Paul Burke, Simon and the rest of the team do some amazing work. We enjoy a close relationship with them. We will continue to work with them to try and further cotton and other crops through the Northern Territory that have come a long way in the last decade or so, and are very water-wise and sustainable now. It gives a great opportunity in the Top End.

We have the opportunity to be a clean producer of crops and foods because there are lot of areas, particularly to the north, that just cannot do that. We look forward to growing all of these opportunities in the future in a sustainable way.

We will map out some of the programs we need to do and some of the advice we need to take. We will continue to work on our aquatic resources. We have spoken before about how important they are, and the opportunities they will present in the future, and how keen we are to ensure that we get Indigenous businesses heavily involved in the aquaculture future. Who better to rely on for advice about sustainable opportunities through the Northern Territory than people whose ancestors have been here for thousands of years.

We look forward to an economic perspective of developing our fisheries and aquaculture. It had a gross value of production of \$120m in 2017-18 and we know that will grow on a yearly basis from now.

Our Labor government is dedicated about ensuring that we have an effective legislative and regulatory framework. I mentioned before that at times some proponents who come to the Territory do not enjoy that. But we do not apologise for it, it is just a part of having to do business in the world in this day and age. It may not have been part of doing business in the Northern Territory under the CLP Rafferty rules days. They are not the days we operate in anymore.

I am happy to say that the professional proponents we deal with understand that and are happy to meet those heavy requirements that we have set. They know if they want to be a part of doing business in the Northern Territory in the future they have to meet those world's best practice standards. We look forward to a very long, fruitful and great business relationship with those people going forward. They also understand that there is nothing more important to our government than protecting our environment.

We enjoy our social fishing opportunities through the Northern Territory. Our commitment is to programs like the \$15m rec fishing fund with the opportunities that provides for people to grow different fish stocks through those artificial reefs. We look forward to seeing fisher people and families enjoying that well into the future.

I have had the opportunity, on a number of different occasions, to explain in the House how proud I am, as the Member for Port Darwin to be in a government that has put more time, effort, energy and focus into the CBD than any other government previously. With the cooling of the city, there are some people who do not understand or believe that we are headed in the right direction. We have put cooling structures in place and have taken different opportunities trying different road surfaces, footpath surfaces and shade structures though some of our laneways. They will start to cool down this end of the city. As we start to get those hot bitumen car parks pulled up in the coming months the top end of the city will start to look completely different. All of that maps in extremely well to try to cool the city down, making it a better and more environmentally

friendly place for people to come, relying on much more shade to cool people down as they move around the city.

I am extremely proud, as Member for Port Darwin and Minister for Primary Industry and Resources that, not only in the local electorate, but across the Territory in every facet of my portfolio, I can stand, hand on heart, and say that we are working closely with business, major players and smaller players to make sure they get opportunities through the Northern Territory. At the front of all of that is to make sure our environment is looked after for generations to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the House and the minister for bringing this to the House. It has been a privilege to take part in the debate.

Ms NELSON (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to also contribute to this in response to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources' statement.

As I listened to the minister speak, I could not help but think back to the days when I was much younger and living in Sydney, growing up in Liverpool. I remember standing in Martin Place in front of one of the pubs there—I would have been about 17 or 18 at the time—listening to Bob Hawke deliver his famous 'our country, our future' speech. It was in that decade that the environmental movement reached a peak in Australia. Popular Australian culture began to embrace the social justice and environmental messages of rock bands like Midnight Oil.

The environmental movement also became a very hot political issue. It was then that some of us who were already members of the Australian Labor Party, in particular, became excited for the first time because we felt that our environmental concerns, agitation call for politicians to focus on the environment, were finally validated. It was at this time that Bob Hawke brought the environment into election campaigning with a national conservation and soil conservation strategy.

In 2006, then Opposition Leader, Kevin Rudd, proclaimed climate change as the greatest moral economic and social challenge of our time. He called for a cut to greenhouse emission by 60% before 2050. The Rudd government began on 3 December 2007. As his first official act after being sworn in, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd signed the Kyoto Protocol. At that time Rudd stated:

Australia's official declaration today that we will become a member of the Kyoto Protocol is a significant step forward in our country's efforts to fight climate change domestically – and with the international community.

We have learned that environmental decisions are rooted in social justice as it is inevitably the poor who most often pay most for environmental degradation. The Australian Labor Party has had some failings and delays over the last decades in regard to environmental policy. We have never lost sight of the significance and importance of delivering sound environmental policy because we know that a healthy environment is intrinsic to not just upholding Labor's core values of social justice, access to good education and decent health care, thriving cultural life, social housing, efficient public transport and so on, it is intrinsic to our way of life in Australia and, in particular, in the Northern Territory.

Ensuring the environment is healthy, the air is fit to breathe, the climate is able to protect us, our ecosystems continue to function, is a common good we must all provide collectively. Territory Labor's vision must be bigger than a crude material one, recognising our reliance on the natural world physically and spiritually.

My government realises that smart economies need to be focusing and gearing up towards the promotion of a clear energy future. That is why we are focused on developing good policy and putting in place stringent regulations that protect and preserve our environment because we know that our natural assets are central to our survival.

Most importantly Territory Labor has an ethical tradition where things are fought for and defended because they are right. Delivering protection for the environment is core business, because it is the right thing to do. We will not be abandoning building prosperity and social opportunity for Territorians, we remain committed to improving the lifestyle and opportunities of this great Territory's most vulnerable.

I continue to be very committed to ensuring that this will be done in an environmentally ethical manner in a way that has minimal negative impact to our environment while also delivering maximum positive impact for our communities.

We have delivered on our commitment of a moratorium. We delivered that commitment within the first few weeks of being in government. We committed to be consultative and followed through with this commitment by inviting the public, our constituents, to participate in the setup of the terms of reference to be used as guidance with expert panel members who conducted the review of unconventional hydraulic fracturing.

Katherine is an incredibly diverse electorate with people who are passionate about the environment for varied reasons. The traditional owners of the land tell and show us how intrinsic the environment is to their social, emotional and mental wellbeing.

If the land is sick, so are they. If the water is sick, so are they. If the air is sick, so are they. It does not get any simpler than that.

I will not elaborate any further on the minister for the Environment's statement, there is no need for me to do that. It was clear, concise and easy to understand.

This is my last February sittings. I will elaborate on my commitment to the electorate of Katherine and its residents. That is to reassure them that I am here until August

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Ms NELSON: It is my last February sittings ever. I am going to elaborate on my commitment to the electorate and residents of Katherine. That is to reassure them—I am here until August—that my focus and message has never changed in almost four years. My commitment to being honest, transparent, selfless and supportive of my electorate and my constituents has been paramount.

I am very lucky to have the colleagues that I have on this side of the Chamber. They are just as passionate about the environment as I am. Colleagues that firmly believe that we can have a sustainable, prosperous economy without being so reliant on industries and practices that are detrimental to the future of a healthy environment.

I am also lucky to have colleagues and a government that puts in place regulatory measures to ensure that the health of our environment is what leads our decisions. We are at a critical moment here in Australia to influence climate change. If we choose not to act, to keep climate change within 1.5 degrees centigrade change, then scientists have predicted that we will reach a change between 2 degrees to 6 degrees by 2100.

This is the tipping point where we will not be able to do anything at all to influence further climate changes. Restructuring the economy has to happen gradually. Reducing our reliance on fossil fuels will result in economic challenges—there is no denying that—but if we make a deliberate and gradual change to our energy industry and support those who work in these industries, rather than wait for global market forces to force the change, we will be much better positioned for the future.

The Environment Protection Bill 2019 was a huge, significant step in creating a contemporary environmental protection regime that will guide the Northern Territory down the path of ecologically sustainable development now and into the future.

Last week I watched and read the news about the preference swapping decisions made by some of the candidates I was quite stunned. I am a bit sympathetic to the CLP candidate. He was like a deer caught in the headlights when he made that statement but wow, what an unfortunate statement to have made at this time.

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

...

That's a fact. We had an ice age 15 000 years' ago. Where were the Greens then?

That is what he said, poor fella.

The CLP has said that they will remove fracking regulations if elected. They have said it. This tells us a lot about what the CLP's policies in regards to our environment will be. For the Greens candidate to then give preference to the CLP candidate and other candidates whose parties have said that they are pro-fracking—this is the Greens candidate giving top preferences to those candidates and putting Labor as last in their preference choices left me totally speechless. I was speechless and dumbfounded.

This is Bob Brown's party. Who would have thought in a million years that a branch of Bob Brown's party would be sitting around a table at their admin committee saying 'let us teach Labor a lesson and put them way down and we are going to go with the candidates whose parties are saying they do not care too much, they care more about economic prosperity than the health of the environment, we will give our preferences to them.' They are a little more aligned to our climate justice warrior manifesto.

It does not surprise me in any way that the convenor of the Northern Territory branch of the Greens is a recent resident of the Northern Territory who has been here all of seven months. They have absolutely no idea whatsoever of the political climate or the environment here in the NT. Once I had learnt that, it did not surprise me. I have to wonder what her federal national colleagues are thinking about this.

I have friends that are members of the greens party and a number of them are federally elected members of the greens party. The comments they made to me immediately after that preference deal was announced and the how to vote cards made public, was that it was not in agreement with the decision the Northern Territory Greens Party branch made. They were as shocked as I was.

One of my friends asked, 'What in the world is going on?' and my response was, 'That is your party, why are you asking me what is going on? Reign them in yourself.'

It is astonishing because they have given preference deals in the Johnston bi-election, to elected members that say climate change is a hoax. This is not even close to the greens' climate justice warrior manifesto. It boggles the mind.

I reiterate what you said in your statement, Mr Deputy Speaker, that a vote for the greens is a vote for parties and candidates that are pro-fracking and put more emphasis on economic prosperity than the environment. This is not what I thought the greens would be. Shame on that greens convenor for making such a stupid decision.

I am sympathetic towards the CLP candidate. It was a misstep for him and as much as it amused me, I am sympathetic. He did not get the memo where they say you can no longer deny climate change. Instead, you are supposed to use phrases like adaptation, resilience and meeting and beating targets.

It does not mean a commitment to a stronger climate policy when you use these phrases, of course. It does not mean you believe that climate change is linked to the bushfires; it is just word salad that sounds sort-of like you might do something or that you have an actual policy in the pipeline.

Using those words might even fool those pesky greens, and obviously it did. The preference deal suggests they are OK with the CLP stance on climate change and reducing regulations on fracking.

The health of our urban, agricultural and natural environments on land, in our rivers, streams and wetlands and in our coastal and marine areas, underpins the productivity of our economy and the health of our society. If we fail to protect, restore and build our natural assets, there will be long-term costs to the economy and the wellbeing of our communities and society at large that go beyond project-by-project considerations.

Quality of life relies on other common good such as thriving cultural life, social housing, and efficient public transport. In the 2010s and beyond, ensuring the environment is healthy and the air is fit to breathe are a common good that collectively, we must provide.

Environmental decisions are rooted in social justice. They impact economically, as smart economies gear up to capitalise on the clean energy future. That is exactly what we are doing. Environmental law reform is necessary for safeguarding our natural assets and places and is an acknowledgement that vibrant, healthy ecosystems underpin our economic and social wellbeing.

The World Resources Institute ranked Australia as 37th of 70 in its global environmental democracy index, behind Mongolia, Cameroon and Russia. I do not think their methodology is great, but whatever the weakness with the methodology, it reveals that our laws, nationally, are not the world's best practice.

I think this environment protection bill 2019 introduces the best practice. When Australian Labor was designing the first environment laws in the late seventies and eighties, those laws had as a central precept that the community had a right to be involved in the processes associated with deciding how public assets are used. Over time commercial interests have eroded this key concept and sadly governments of all stripes have often just gone along.

Thankfully in recent years Labor leadership has steered us back to what they started in the late seventies national. Community involvement and recourse is slowly being enshrined in environmental laws, policy and practices. That is exactly what we have done here in the Northern Territory almost immediately upon being elected into government. I am not going to apologise for any of that. I am not going to be apologising to anybody for putting the brakes on and applying due diligence and scientific evidence and taking a slow-measured, careful approach into how we continue with resource industry development and all of that because the environment needs that, it needs us to be that careful.

I am not going to miss the opportunity to talk about the federal government's lack of action on climate change as well and how this is seriously damaging our relationship with our Pacific neighbours and our global reputation. In last year's Pacific Island forum in Tuvalu it highlighted the great divide between the position of Pacific Island leaders and Australia on climate change.

As leaders arrived on the island of Tuvalu they were met by the children of Tuvalu sitting in a moat of water to illustrate the depth of the climate crisis to their tiny island. Pacific leaders see climate change as an existential threat to their nations that requires immediate action. In contrast Australian leaders acknowledge climate change is occurring but they believed that it can be managed in a way that does not seriously impact on the Australian economy. The Pacific Islanders want a ban for example, on new coal-fired power stations and coalmines. Australia is not going to be doing anything that would endanger its coal intensive industries. At the end of that forum Australian representatives were able to dominate the agenda and succeeded unsoftening the language on climate change and getting all mention of coal removed ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms NELSON: ... besides one little reference from the final communique and what was left in that communique was not the global call for action that the Pacific Island leaders wanted to issue before the UN sponsored climate summit in New York on 23 September but a very watered down document to limit temperature rises. Tuvalu's Prime Minister said to Scott Morrison, 'You are trying to save your economy, I am trying to save my people', showing a spectacular (inaudible) for the tensions evident at the Tuvalu forum and for our historical blackbirding past.

Deputy Prime Minister McCormack helpfully opined that the Pacific Islanders would survive because so many Pacific Island workers would be coming to pick our fruit, insinuating that hey, they are not on their island to drown when their island goes underwater.

We are most definitely at a critical moment in our ability to influence climate change. Restructuring the economy does have to happen gradually and reducing our reliance of fossil fuels will result in those economic changes. In the meantime we need to have these stringent regulations in place. Everybody would know and remember that I am not a supporter of unconventional hydraulic fracturing and I would love to wake up tomorrow morning and find out it is banned. That is not going to happen. I am incredibly supportive and proud of the immense work that we have done in our environmental protection laws and through the Minister for Primary Industry and Resources in the *Petroleum Act*. It is an immense level of work. The departments and ministers have been very busy ensuring we put these regulations in place, implement them and then follow-up.

We committed to all 135 recommendations and we are working on them. The Minister for Environment and Natural Resources has done a significant amount of work as well with reviewing and reforming the EPA laws and regulations. It has been a long, hard road but we have stuck to it and not lost focus. We are doing so much better than the alternative.

Unfortunately though, our current Commonwealth Government's time in office has been categorised by its enthusiasm to do the complete opposite. They have cut climate change science funding, dismissed advice from expert bodies in Australia and internationally, routinely provided misleading or even delayed reports that show poor performance on key indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions, used discredited statistical methods to make our record look better for example the Kyoto carryover credits, and cut or abolished programs that have been effective like the renewable energy agency.

I could go on but suffice it to say our current Commonwealth Government's failure to make any attempts to tackle climate change will be the defining legacy of that government.

In decades to come we will look back on this time as a catastrophic failure of leadership and missed opportunities by our Commonwealth Government. Australia has some of the best wind and solar resources in the world. We have good trading relationships with the region, a strong manufacturing base and small population which makes it ideal to be the leader in reducing the region's reliance on coal, oil and gas and embracing renewable energy sources.

There are already projects in development in the Northern Territory especially Katherine where it started with the solar farm. The \$20bn plan to build a solar farm here in the Northern Territory to provide energy to Singapore is an incredible opportunity for us to lead Australia as a renewable energy hub and deliver thousands of local jobs. This is one of the few bright spots when most parts of Australia show no sign of any serious transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Our position on a national level, without the support from the Commonwealth Government, makes no economic or geopolitical sense.

The Pacific nations have asked us to stop opening new mines at a critical time when Australian and the world's emissions are increasing and ocean levels are steadily rising. It is sad to hear that the Australian Government had misinterpreted, or quite frankly wilfully pretended to misunderstand, that this was the Pacific nations asking us to shut down that resource industry. When I watched that press conference I could not help but be moved by their words.

If the moral arguments to act on climate change are not enough then perhaps it will be the geopolitical situation that forces the Australian Government to act. However action is not just about funding aid projects in the Pacific countries, patting them on the head and saying 'here here take a shiny silver dollar and go on your way.'

Pacific countries are looking to Australia for real leadership and real action on climate change. If we continue to ignore our responsibilities as a good neighbour and a responsible global citizen we will firstly lose our influence in the Pacific region and then lose our geopolitical influence and moral authority in the world in regards to climate change. It is a global problem where we must all contribute to the solution.

We need to reduce extreme weather events by acting on climate change, and when heatwaves, fires, floods and storms hit, we should be working together to help each other recover. Climate change is threatening people's homes, livelihoods, health, quality of life, employment and the cost of living. We need governments to take effective action on climate change and to support people, communities and community sector organisations to become more resilient to extreme weather and natural disasters.

No one should have to suffer extreme heat without escape or have to go to bed freezing cold. While some owners can afford solar panels and to make their homes more energy-efficient, people on low incomes are struggling with electricity bills going cold in winter and sweltering through summer heatwaves.

Although climate change affects all life, the people experiencing disadvantage and poverty are the most vulnerable to its impacts and poorly-managed transition to clean energy. Australia is already experiencing the impacts of high temperatures, sea level rise and more frequent and intense weather events such as heatwaves, bushfires, flooding and drought. All of this impacts people's homes, livelihoods, health, quality of life, employment as well as increasing risks and burdens for future generations.

Our strategy that we have employed—that the minister for Environment has worked so hard on—is a tool to help our government and future governments transition and is effective in protecting our environment which is so important to us all. When it is managed well, the transition to a cleaner economy is an opportunity to create a more just, equitable and sustainable territory. I stand in support of the minister's statement. I go back to the *Environment Protection Act 2019* which was a huge step in creating a contemporary environmental protection regime that will guide the Territory down the path of ecological sustainable development. I am very supportive of it.

Ms WAKEFIELD (Renewables, Energy and Essential Services): How we respond to environmental concerns of this century will define us in history. Our grandchildren and their children will look at this decade and wonder why we did not act or they will be grateful for the steps that we take. It is not just about mitigating disasters like fires, floods, droughts and water shortages. It is about how we take hold of the benefits and opportunities presented by a low carbon economy and turn them into jobs, new industries, better living standards and a more equal society.

The impacts of climate change will be felt disproportionately by poorer people. Already people being impacted around the world by rising sea levels and natural disasters, many of them living subsistence farming lifestyles or in poorer communities with limited economic and infrastructure resilience. In the Territory, we will see the impacts first on our most remote towns. It will be regional towns, in particular, that bear the biggest cost.

If you do not believe in climate change, you cannot help secure regional and remote communities from the challenges faced by the environment. Not only the environmental challenges, but also health challenges, child development challenges and issues of social cohesion.

Securing our natural assets means a stronger economy and local jobs. It can no longer be argued. There is a trade-off between jobs and the environment. On the contrary, reducing carbon and increasing renewables will provide the Territory with an unprecedented economic opportunity. It is only a Labor government that can capitalise on this opportunity. You cannot create these jobs and seize this opportunity if you think climate change and renewables are a hoax. You cannot create these jobs if you want less renewable energy, not more. You cannot create these jobs if you think nuclear power is the answer.

These views peddled by the CLP and Territory Alliance are, in my view, economic vandalism. They mean fewer jobs now and for our kids in the future.

Securing our natural assets means a better quality of life and lifestyle. Secure natural assets and sustainable communities are the bedrock of a prosperous job-creating economy. Smart protections help create economic certainty and investor confidence, which means more jobs.

The Territory will experience immense opportunities in a future low- or zero-carbon economy. The demand for low- and zero-carbon products is growing and their value is increasing. We are perfectly placed to reap the economic windfall of this global economic transition. We have land; some of the best solar resources in the world; good infrastructure, with the recent terabyte announcement; roads and a rail up the centre; gas pipelines; and the closest port and air infrastructure to Asia.

Without a plan on how to take up these opportunities, the Territory will not meet its economic opportunities or potential. The CLP is not planning for a low-carbon future and would prefer to roll back fracking regulation and introduce nuclear power than support solar jobs.

Everything happening in markets around the world shows us that our target of 50% solar by 2030 is achievable. It should not be contentious politically, and should be seen as the first vital step towards environmentally sustainable energy production.

I will further explain where we are heading with renewable energy, but I also want to inform the House about the importance of transforming our economy, how we can set ourselves up to be major exporters of clean energy; manufacture and export clean, green hydrogen—the fuel of the future; and grow mining and other industries while reducing their carbon footprint through cheap, clean power.

To protect our environment, we need to be active in addressing the causes of climate change. Electricity generation accounts for about a third of Australia's carbon emissions, and somewhat less in the Northern Territory. This is why we have set a very achievable target of 50% renewables in our electricity generation by 2030. It is achievable, but it requires careful planning to ensure an orderly transition that uses the very best science and technology.

We will not put our power supply at risk. This transition is based on the strong principles of maintaining secure and reliable power at least cost for consumers and taxpayers.

Energy systems are complex. Across the world jurisdictions are facing similar challenges that require careful management. This requires planned, calm and stable government to manage this transition. Markets need certainty—which we did not see from those opposite. It is no wonder why. When we came to power the share of renewables was just 2.6%.

During the CLP government we had three Essential Services ministers: Dave Tollner; Willem Westra van Holthe; and Peter Chandler. We have had two: the Member for Barkly, a passionate supporter of renewable energy; and me.

There were five Treasurers as the GOC shareholding ministers: Robyn Lambley; John Elferink; Dave Tollner; Adam Giles; and Dave Tollner again. We have had one: the Member for Wanguri.

In the Member for Blain's contribution he raised some good and valid matters. As he clearly understands, there is much work required to get us back to where we should be had we not experienced four years of chaos under the CLP government, which he first led.

We are in the midst of significant uptake of renewables without the necessary long-term planning and policy settings in place due to the failure of the previous government. They split up Power and Water with no plan other than to sell the government-owned corporations. The whole of system planning was lost, with no plan on how to do this after structural separation.

We are filling this gap. We have established the Office of Sustainable Energy to provide whole-of-government policy and planning. Reform of this nature is complex and we are working hard to catch up. There will be further announcements over the next couple of months about how we will safeguard the security and reliability of our power system, while continuing to capture value from the opportunities to increase solar power across the Territory.

Under this stable government we have been able to encourage private-sector investment and a transition to cheaper, cleaner renewables. By the end of this year, we expect to be over 10%, well on our way to 50% by 2030.

We have already, as a government, invested more than \$59m in solar energy and energy efficiency, including:

- \$5m over three years for the rooftop solar in schools initiative;
- \$8m over two years for Territory Generation's five megawatt battery energy storage system in Alice Springs;
- \$31m over two years to contribute to the total \$59m solar energy transformation program set-up, which rolled out 10 megawatts of solar generation in 25 remote communities; SETuP is reducing diesel use, I have to say the results of that program have been extraordinary—it is not just the diesel use, it is also taking diesel 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.

In addition, we have Defence and NT Airports adding significant solar PV resources. This is because they see the power and the value of renewables in reducing emissions and that they are cheaper. The business case stacks up.

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

This government knows that cleaner, cheaper power will deliver jobs. The challenge for the Territory is to harness this abundant energy from the sun and create high-value jobs and prosperous businesses across the Territory. Investors have begun to realise this opportunity. Sun Cable's proposed Asia/Singapore power link is a lighthouse project demonstrating how bright our economic future can be—high-paying local jobs and a prosperous economy that works for the whole of the Territory.

They completely get what the CLP fails to see, that the world needs clean energy and is prepared to invest in it. This huge project will see a huge solar and storage farm in the Barkly consisting of 15 000 hectares of solar arrays, a 10 gigawatt of solar capacity, 3800 kilometres of high-voltage direct current cables and 20 gigawatt to 30 gigawatt hours of battery storage. It could directly generate 1000 jobs in Darwin where solar technology could be manufactured by an Australian renewable technology provider, as well as 300 on-site solar farm jobs in the Territory. We have awarded this project major project status in the NT government.

I note the CLP candidate for the Barkly is in the gallery at the moment. He has been strangely silent about this project ...

Mr McCarthy: He is trying to claim it.

Ms WAKEFIELD: Oh, trying to claim it? Really? This just shows how split the CLP is. The CLP for the Barkly is trying to claim this project, Sam McMahon the Senator for the Territory, saying we need to go to nuclear power and candidates in Darwin barely knowing when the ice age was. It is concerning and again shows they are divided and chaotic.

Just this week, the Minerals Council said that the [inaudible] proposal could create massive opportunities for the mining sector to provide raw materials. The thought of there being copper from the Jervois mine in Central Australia in solar panels in the Barkly, sending power to Singapore, makes me smile. It is an amazing opportunity for the Northern Territory.

This is why our government is looking forward to diversifying our economy through a low carbon future. As the Minerals Council highlighted, renewables represent potential for us to capture more in the value chain. This is good economics.

From raw minerals to solar panel production to exporting power to Singapore. It is not just mining that will benefit, but a long-term and sustainable stimulus to manufacturing, small business and the transport sector.

This government understands the importance of critical minerals to provide the materials for a renewable energy future, and has released a three-point-plan to communicate the Territory's potential as a key destination for international investment, and to play a greater role in the critical minerals value chain.

The Territory's critical minerals plan helps position the Northern Territory as a strategically important jurisdiction in the production, processing and manufacturing of minerals important to the high technology battery and defence sectors.

The NT has strong reserves in critical minerals including copper, lithium, rare earths, tungsten and cobalt. The plan seeks to accelerate exploration, support projects to commence production and grow refining, processing and manufacturing of critical minerals in the NT.

The availability of clean, green, renewable energy at an industrial scale such as the sun cable project or similar, to our mines around the Territory, will help ensure we can maintain our carbon emission target.

It is also important that there are opportunities in recycling or repurposing solar PV panels, which can then unlock raw materials and other valuable components and offer additional economic opportunities for the Territory. Globally, the value of recovered material could exceed \$15bn by 2050. There is currently only one facility in Australia for recycling solar panels and the Northern Territory Government is funding research to investigate this exciting opportunity.

There are massive opportunities in a hydrogen future. The Member for Barkly has been a strong proponent of one of those opportunities, over many years. The Northern Territory has the capacity to not only integrate renewable hydrogen across the Territory's economy, but also to export to domestic and international markets.

With the space to develop large-scale renewable energy generation, our proximity to Asia and our energy corridor for domestic and international export-rail, pipeline, road and port-the Territory is an attractive location for renewable hydrogen investment.

Hydrogen and hydrogen-based synthetic fuel, such as ammonia, are widely projected to play an increasing role in meeting global demand for energy by the end of this decade. Hydrogen could play an integral role in our energy system, for example, and has the potential to:

1. increase energy grid resilience, providing a fast-responding load for variable renewable energy generation
2. potentially replace diesel as a primary fuel source in remote locations, therefore increasing our energy security
3. replace fossil fuels in carbon-intensive manufacturing processes, including steel, fertiliser and cement.

Japan, the world's third largest economy has developed a multi-decade plan to transition to a hydrogen-based society in a bid to decarbonise and achieve energy security. Additionally, South Korea has signalled a strong commitment to hydrogen-based economic development. Singapore and China are both potential markets. Across Japan, South Korea, Singapore and China, the potential demand for imported hydrogen is projected to reach \$9.5bn by 2030.

The global hydrogen market is projected to reach US\$154bn by 2022 and potentially meet 18% of global final energy demand by 2050. In December 2019, the Australian Government released Australia's National Hydrogen Strategy, a roadmap to develop Australia's hydrogen industry to enable greater energy security and affordability and reduce long-term emissions.

The strategy outlines a path to accelerate the commercialisation of hydrogen and avenues to reduce technical uncertainties and enable domestic hydrogen production.

Mr McCARTHY: Point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order: 43. I request an extension of time for the minister.

Ms WAKEFIELD: It is projected that, with the right policy settings, Australian hydrogen exports could contribute \$1.7bn and provide 2800 jobs by 2030. The Territory Government is working on a hydrogen strategy to ensure we are in a position to capitalise on this market as it develops and not being left behind the 8-ball as we were with the CLP's failure to plan for a solar future.

The market is talking about the uptake of renewables. Australian business legends Mike Cannon-Brookes and Twiggy Forrest get it. They know renewables make sense. We can export renewable energy to Singapore. They know the Territory has the potential to be the renewable energy heart of south-east Asia.

Industry sees the opportunities that renewables can bring as shown by the Minerals Council's recent support. The CLP's stance is stuck in nuclear power. Talk about a blast from the past. According to the CLP's Senator, Sam McMahon, and the new Minister for Northern Australia, Keith Pitt, nuclear is the solution to cheaper power prices.

A study by the CSIRO and the Australian Energy Market Operator found that wind and solar are clearly the cheapest form of bulk energy at half the cost of fossil fuel alternatives and one-fifth the cost of nuclear. Even with storage, renewables are still one-third of the cost of nuclear power.

I look forward to seeing the CLP's costings for their proposed power plants and how they are planning to pay for these. What will they cut to fund the design, commissioning, operations, security, waste management—a very important part—and decommissioning of a nuclear power station. I am not sure there are enough Territory Government assets for them to sell to fund that type of project.

The best nuclear energy we can be using is from the giant fusion reactor called the sun, 147 million kilometres from earth. There are no commissioning or decommissioning costs, no security costs and no toxic waste issues to manage.

The business community knows that renewable energy is a critical part of our future economy and will drive cheaper, cleaner power. This government is delivering it. The opposition has been left behind and shows no signs of catching up. They do not believe in cheap renewable energy. They do not believe in a brighter future for the NT economy. They never did, even when the Member for Blain was their Chief Minister.

That is why I find it extraordinary that the Greens are prepared to put the CLP and the Territory Alliance ahead of Labor in the Johnston by-election. I do not really get hot under the collar, but this decision really did make me pause to think about the future of the Northern Territory.

This would have been the first time a party which supports nuclear and whose candidate does not believe in climate change, has been put ahead of a progressive party with a record of achievement in addressing environmental concerns. Let us be clear, the first time.

I respect people who vote for the Greens, many of my friends vote for them. I know they are intelligent people. The thing that calms me down is that I know that Green voters are educated voters and they will make their own mind up on the ballot box and how to use their preferences because they are across this issue. They know that a vote for the CLP and Territory Alliance is a vote for nuclear power and policies that do not support the future of not just the Territory, but the entire world.

I want to change the tone and talk about work that I am very proud of in Alice Springs. The Territory Labor government launched the Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy late last year in Alice Springs. This is a local initiative which will protect and enhance the natural and cultural value of rivers in Alice Springs because they are such important icons to all Alice Springs residents. It ensures that governments, traditional owners, business and the community work collaboratively together to care for them.

The Todd River, one of my favourite places to walk alongside in Alice Springs, is home to dozens of large, mature red gums. Sadly, a large number of illegally lit grass fires within the Todd River and Charles River in 2017 destroyed many of these trees. Some are believed to be about 500-years-old and were also registered with sacred sites. This caused a significant amount of distress with the community and traditional owners.

As a response to this, key stakeholders have come together to work with government on protecting and managing the natural resources within the Todd River and its immediate catchment including the Charles River. The committee identified fire management as a key element that was affecting river health and it forms a major component of the strategy.

I thank those who have been working on that. It is important work by the Minister for Environment, she came to Alice Springs to launch it with TOs. It is a vital part of our town for Mparntwe people and the cultural significance is hugely important. All you need to understand the importance of that river is to see that when it flows, the whole community comes out to celebrate and enjoy it. It happened recently a couple of weeks ago and it really brings an enormous amount of joy and community spirit. Everyone understands why that river is so important to traditional owners when that river flows.

I thank the minister for Environment for progressing that work, it has been really difficult. I thank the staff of the department who have led that work and I look forward to continuing to support making sure the Todd River is a healthy environment for many years to come. I am proud to be part of a government that takes the environment seriously. We are a progressive government that has done an extensive body of work on the environment.

I know there is more to do and there any people who are disappointed with some of our decisions, but they have been done within the context of an evidence-based thorough processes with checks and balances. If we want a healthy and strong environment which will lead to a healthy and strong community and economy, a progressive Labor government is the only option next Saturday at the election.

Ms FYLES (Health): Thank you. Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the Environment Minister's statement on protecting our environment. I know that you love our natural environment. We hear your stories from pottering around your block, and you are passionate about the rural area. It does not matter where Territorians live. Whatever their backyard is, we know Territorians are passionate about it, and they care.

We also know that here in the Northern Territory, our unique environment is particularly vulnerable to climate change. As someone who was born and bred in the Territory, some of my fondest memories are as a child camping, travelling across our unique landscape. Perhaps because of my parents, particularly my father—his love for nature—I got to experience the natural environment before it was trendy, and tourists would come in droves to see what we have as being unique.

I am also proud to represent of course, the whole Territory—I feel that every one of us in here has a responsibility—but my coastal electorate in Nightcliff has a range of natural environments. We have the beautiful mangroves of coconut grove—I will speak more about them later—but they are truly beautiful, they are sandy, natural mangroves. I have had the opportunity to be with scientific experts down in there, listening to the value they add to our environment. Right around the beautiful coastline, the cliffs, to the Rapid Creek mangroves and the space around Rapid Creek that flows into the ocean.

We know the Territory home to unique and precious habitats. Maintaining those habitats is crucial for creating jobs, maintaining our lifestyle, and safeguarding our Indigenous cultural values. Within the marine ecosystems, there is an incredible array of flora and fauna. Thousands of jobs in fishing, tourism, aquaculture and research industries. We want all Territorians' future generations to have access—not only to clean water; clean air; green and lush flora—but to abundant animal life. We know that healthy environment contributes to healthy Territorians.

Before I speak about the work being done around my portfolio of Health, work that is being done for the environment, I would like to outline some of the important goals we have achieved as a Government. We have done a significant amount of work. It has been a long road, but it will remain a focus for us. I will certainly continue to advocate for an evidence-based environmental and scientific climate policy.

We in the Chamber this week—particularly those opposite—have had a focus on it. That started from the comments from the CLP candidate for Johnston, where he said

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

...

We had an ice age about 15,000 years ago.

Sadly, that is it. That is the Country Liberal's view on climate change. They think it is normal; Nothing to worry about. We could certainly see from the look on the Leader of the opposition's face as she stood next to her candidate talking nonsense about the ice age, not only was it priceless, but she was trying to act like everything was fine. If it was not so serious, it would be funny. What happens when you put these climate deniers into the parliament? You put our environment, our future sustainability, and jobs at risk.

That is the way the CLP do it. They do not accept climate change, they do not support renewables, and they do not back the jobs it creates. The leader of the opposition—I heard the radio interview live, it was one of the first interviews she did as the new opposition leader—she said she would cut the Government's renewable energy target. We know that if you cut renewables, you cut investment, you cut jobs. I think Territorians need to take the time to understand what is at stake, and also the huge amount of work this Labor government has done—I acknowledge the portfolio minister, the Minister for Environment, and also the Ministers for Renewables, Energies, and Essential Services, and Climate Change—The work that has been done in those portfolios.

We delivered a new and contemporary environmental protection act late last year to better protect our environment for future generations. We improved the environmental impact and assessment approval systems. This improved certainty for industry and assessment and approval processes, and addresses the community's concerns about failings in the past from the Territory's environmental regulatory framework. It provides greater transparency about how decisions are made for the environment and its protection, and more opportunities for involvement from the community in the impact assessment process.

This is really important work. This needs to be clearly articulated to the community. Businesses want this; they want the certainty of it. They want to make investment decisions knowing what they have to follow. Businesses care about the environment, but the contrasting policy from the CLP refers to seven key pillars: energy; minerals; agribusiness; international education and training; defence; supply; and service. No mention of the environment.

We have completed an independent review of water extraction licences granted by the previous CLP government and implemented 95% of the recommendations to date. We have improved the allocation and management of our water resources through changes to the *Water Act* to ensure the mining and petroleum industry require a water licence. We have reinstated the water advisory committee to ensure water allocation meets community expectation. We have developed four water allocation plans across the Territory.

Water is a key issue—I know it is for you, Madam Speaker, in your rural electorate. It is an issue of concern. The CLP government scrapped the Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves, ignored the science and was careless with the management of the Territory's water resources. That is not only wrong for the environment, it is wrong for Territorians and business.

The CLP took a cavalier approach to managing and allocating water, and the effects are being felt even now. Its failed water policy damaged our unique environment, business confidence, investor certainty and trust in government processes. It cost jobs in the Territory. Tina Macfarlane and the water licences—there were a number of questionable decisions.

I want Territorians to understand that under the previous government there were cuts to positions in the public service. People who had a strong record of having oversight and making sure these resources were protected—some of those positions ended. We saw the climate change position within the government go. We saw these things disappear, and then we started to see the shady decisions, water licences being handed out to mates, and questions were asked.

We have focused on making sure the water resources of the Territory are sustainable, that we have Strategy Aboriginal Water Reserves, and that we follow science. I acknowledge the minister for Environment for the strong work she has done in that regard.

I am particularly passionate about the Coastal and Marine Management Strategy 2019–2029 to better protect our waterways. I have had the opportunity to go out along the coast—from Dundee to the Peron Islands, the Tiwi Islands and Limmen Bight. We have beautiful coastal areas in the Territory. We have funded Charles Darwin University to research climate change threats on mangroves. We saw huge areas of mangroves die off a few years ago—right in our back yard.

We funded the university and re-instated the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee. Those are some of the things that slide under CLP governments. You have these oversights disappearing, then we see decisions being made. The CLP does not value our environment, which puts it at serious risk of damage. The CLP oversaw major developments like Port Melville, involving sensitive marine habitats without any environmental assessment.

The CLP oversaw significant deterioration in the health of Darwin Harbour, according to the CLP's own report.

We have seen the effects of climate change this summer. Territorians have felt it. People have come to me who were down south on holidays and said, 'Do you know what? I have always been worried about this, but I was impacted by that. My family just lived through the most horrific thing.'

If we cannot listen to the scientists who are calling on bipartisan support and evidence-based policy, can we listen to the members of our own community? There will be people in your community, Madam Speaker, who were impacted by the bushfires, whether it was volunteers or professional firefighters who helped, or people who were on holidays.

We consulted on the draft NT climate change response and will release the final strategy in the coming months. We want to protect the environment for future generations. We want to address climate risk and create new economic business opportunities, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We heard from the Member for Brainting about some of the amazing economic opportunities in the Northern Territory. We will see the impact of climate change sooner than the rest of Australia. We will have more severe climatic events and our climate will make the lifestyle we currently enjoy, harder to live.

We have goals such as growing the renewable energy industry, reducing our emissions across the economy and adapting to the impacts of climate change. We also set a target of net zero emissions by 2050.

Those opposite do not believe in climate change. One of the first things the Leader of the Opposition said was that she would cut the government's renewable energy target.

The opposition is the alternative government. This week, we are not sure what will happen next week, but this week they are the alternative government. And when you first become the leader, you want to show how your leadership is going to be shaped, how you will shape a potential government. To say you will cut the renewable energy target is a disgrace to Territorians.

They do not support renewables and have an appalling record when it comes to protecting the environment. Our federal Senator, Sam McMahon, wants to turn the NT into a nuclear power. That is not a solution to climate change.

I read the quotes from the CLP candidate for Johnston that dismissed the most significant factor impacting our environment as a trivial matter. He demonstrated zero understanding of the impact climate change has on our environment, with a totally uneducated view. We cannot risk putting our precious resources in to the CLP's hands.

We have introduced law to have the power to apply offsets to environmental risks that cannot be fully mitigated, where appropriate, and will provide for the establishment of offsets. We released a draft offsets policy for public comment and that will help guide our offsets arrangements where projects are likely to have a significant residual impact on the environment. Those comments just closed.

I put that in my local community newsletter and I am sure those opposite did not. They have no idea what offsets are about. This draft policy provides a guide for the development of both mandated and voluntary offset arrangements and will initially be used to guide biodiversity offsets assessed under the new *Environmental Protection Act*. The draft policy is also intended to apply to the offsets of greenhouse gas emissions in the future. I encourage those opposite to read those documents.

I have experienced first-hand our wonderful Aboriginal ranger and carbon industry programs. I had the privilege of being invited to Kabulwarnamyo in Arnhem Land. It is an amazing community. Their programs not only provide jobs and support their community, they care for our environment.

We have awarded more than \$4m over two years for one-off capital grants of up to \$100 000 to help Aboriginal ranger groups purchase essential items such as vehicles, boats, radios and communications. I

understand this funding has supported 46 ranger groups to date. We have awarded \$5.8m in grants to Aboriginal ranger groups for conservation and land management across the Territory, to protect the environment and create jobs on country.

We launched the NT Aboriginal Carbon Industry Strategy in October 2018, following extensive consultation. Carbon farming offers enormous potential for economic development in Aboriginal communities, particularly remote communities. We will continue to work with Aboriginal Territorians to build a strong and sustainable foundation for this important emerging industry.

Kabulwarnamyo is a beautiful community. They have natural springs, they are up on the high country in the back of Arnhem Land. You have to travel around the Maningrida road to reach the community; it is behind Gunbalanya as the crow would fly.

Everyone in the community was heading off for four and five days, looking after country with low emissions and controlled back-burning. They have contracts with multi-national companies. They do not have to rely on the government; they are pitching to the multi-nationals. This is one example of many in the Territory that we are supporting.

We have spoken about hydraulic fracturing onshore and I know from your background, Madam Speaker, you have a well-informed view. We introduced the moratorium on hydraulic fracturing of onshore unconventional reserves—as we said we would—and we undertook a scientific inquiry. We accepted all 135 recommendations from the inquiry's final report and are delivering a highly-regulated industry with the world's best protections in place in tightly prescribed areas.

This is a difficult conversation. People approach me who do not want to see this. But we have had an independent scientific inquiry. We are now implementing all those recommendations. We are not just cherry-picking the few that are easy, the ones we like—all of them are going in place.

Those opposite say that we are the hand brake to industry and we are the ones who are getting in the way. No, we are protecting our environment. We acknowledge that there is an industry and people want to take part in that industry, but we are protecting our environment. We are making sure we look after it for future generations.

I quote the Leader of the Opposition, who said:

You put a hand brake on our economy with your gas moratorium.

No, we did not, we put the environment first. We listened to those Territorians—and this is a divisive issue. There are people who have different concerns about the process. They are concerned about water, the social impact in their community and whether they have a say about it or not.

We have made sure that we have that environmental regulation of petroleum in the Environment and Natural Resources portfolio. That is to ensure there is 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.

We have introduced the code of practice for onshore petroleum activities in the Northern Territory to provide minimum standards that the onshore petroleum industry in the Northern Territory must adhere to. We have listened to the community and created no-go zones to keep almost half of the Territory free from this exploration or production activities as part of our commitment to protect the natural environment. We have made sure we have safeguarded water and the environment.

We have amended the *Water Act* to require gas companies to obtain a water extraction licence and have a stringent waste water management framework so there are tight regulations and control for that. Our new compliance options such as infringement notices make provisions as part of the legislative amendments providing ongoing security of our very important ground water.

We have sought public comment on the draft framework for the strategic regional and environmental and baseline assessment, the SREBA. We know that this is an issue that concerns Territorians. Most Territorians want to see jobs and want to know that when industry is developed they will be looked after. We have made sure, by those 135 recommendations, that we are putting the environment first and not just short-tracking it and later saying, 'Oops, we made a mistake there'.

We have seen that, Madam Speaker. You may disagree with me, but we have seen that with the mining industry before in the Territory where people have gone in to make the quick buck and we, as taxpayers and a community, have been left with a bit of a pickle or mess or environmental disaster. We are making sure we do this right—we are doing this slowly—so we consider and protect our environment.

Madam Speaker, you were part of those four chaotic years. They made for good media—radio, television and newspaper headlines—but they did not help the economic opportunities, business confidence or the environment in the Territory. It was a sorry period in our political history that we saw red flags to people who cared about the environment.

In my community, we saw an island proposed offshore—no consultation with the community, we were suddenly getting an island and we should have seen the good points of that. I had a very passionate debate in here one night with the former Member for Fong Lim, Dave Tollner. I am sure he will not mind me naming him about it. He implied that I was off with the fairies about this proposed man-made island of 3000-odd people. All would be channelled through one road in our community in an area that is pristine mangroves—those mangroves I spoke about in my opening comments.

This was the type of thing that was not fairy tale, it was reality under the CLP. I remember the headline of the *NT News*. We thought it was an April Fools' Day, but it was not 1 April, it was a regular day under the CLP government.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 43, I ask for an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FYLES: We saw, under the CLP's Nightcliff island proposal, a lease granted without consulting our community, having a social impact analysis or any environmental impact statement and without consulting the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

We are a government that is committed to transparency and accountability. We have now centralised our online water portal that allows Territorians access to information and decisions made about water licences. Not like those opposite who handed out water licences to their mates.

We value the environment and the views of Territorians about the environment. When we came to government, we were acutely aware that community and industry confidence in the NT environmental regulatory framework was at a low after four years of the chaotic CLP government. That is why we are investing to realise our vision and ensure we meet our targets.

We have encouraged the next generation to be environmentally aware by investing \$5m over three years in schools through our rooftop solar program. In my electorate, the Nightcliff Primary School has a wonderful solar electricity system installed. The children are learning science and maths through that system. The school council invested dollars alongside the government investment so that school not only saved significantly on their electricity bill—I cannot remember the figure but it was astronomical. Nightcliff Middle School will soon get solar on their rooftop as well as many other Territory schools that have benefitted.

Territory Generation has earmarked \$8.3m over two years for the five megawatt battery energy storage system in Alice Springs and \$31m over two years for the solar energy transformation program leaving the legacy of solar generation in 25 remote communities. Investments have been made in Desert Knowledge Australia to work on projects that extend our knowledge and technology on renewables.

Those opposite, the CLP, have shown contempt for scientific advice and community views on important environmental issues. They oversaw ad hoc development approvals without any consideration given to the cumulative environmental and economic impacts of those decisions. It was mind-boggling that the CLP scrapped the program designed to provide development for our regional and remote Aboriginal communities in the Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserve. That is an important policy that provides opportunities for increased economic outcomes on Aboriginal land providing them certainty about water for development.

One of the first things the CLP did when they came to government in 2012 was scrap the Energy Smart rebate scheme. That was a scheme that encouraged householders to buy a range of energy saving items. They could claim up to 50% of the cost of installation, capped at \$200 per household. They just did not believe in it. Scrap every scheme. If it was environmentally sustainable, get rid of it. It was a simple way for Territorians to save money and to conserve power and help preserve the environment.

I do not need to go on about the 30% rise in power prices that we saw. They cut funding to the Environment Centre NT and to COOLmob which is all about working with the community to shape a sustainable future. They could not even summon up enough interest—I think they had 16 members—at a high level meeting of state and territory ministers and climate campaigner Al Gore. Shameful.

We have been listening. There has been concern from researchers for some time that the changes in climate will lead to increased health concerns. Addressing the impacts of global warming is a priority for us. We know the climate has changed. Figures from the January 2020 Lancet medical journal indicate that Australia has warmed by more than 1% since 1910 and projections show days with high to extreme risk of fire will increase by 70% by 2050.

Here in the tropical north, our extreme humidity levels are likely to have an additional impact. New record high temperatures are the norm and we can expect more days of 35 degrees. Just 15 years ago we had a significantly different climate. The dry season was different. We cannot ignore these sorts of figures and we are experiencing an unfolding climate emergency.

In my portfolio of health, we are all too aware that we must be prepared for increased morbidity and mortality due to global warming. We will see increasing numbers of natural disasters, rising temperatures, sea level rises and altered rainfall patterns that will have the potential to adversely impact on the health of Territorians.

Direct effects from climate change include increased exposure to heatwaves and weather events, flooding and fires. Indirect environmental effects include increased exposure to contamination, pollen, particle air pollutants and carriers of new disease. The consequences of climate change are also expected to have adverse mental health and community health effects. People living in remote areas, working outdoors, those who are socially isolated, the elderly, visitors and the very young are more likely to be affected by these changes.

The Northern Territory has the highest premature death rate in the nation and evidence points to rising temperatures contributing to an increase in this rate. The health community are very well-informed and educated and I have spoken to many clinical professionals who are concerned about the impact of our health system on our environmental and carbon footprint. These are doctors, clinical leaders in their fields who are proactively advocating for change and the way we do business in the health sector.

They had some compelling arguments about what needs to be done to mitigate the impact on our environment so that we can continue to enjoy our wonderful outdoor lifestyle. They, along with senior health staff, have shown real leadership in providing input into the development of a sustainable healthcare strategy. This strategy has four main areas, reducing general and clinical waste, improving energy efficiency, reducing water consumption and changing behaviour throughout the health services.

Work is ongoing but has already resulted in positive changes. Existing health facility buildings have been modified with energy-efficient lighting and air conditioning to help contribute to the reduction of the department carbon emissions. We are seeing new buildings are designed to incorporate energy-efficient designs. Reducing carbon emission is a key issue being tackled by our hospitals and health staff. Work is underway to actively improve waste disposal. Staff are being educated about the importance of separating clinical waste and general waste to reduce the environmental impact.

It is things that we do not necessarily think about. One of the big impacts to carbon emissions is air transport. Can we use telehealth? Can we leave people in their communities safely and use telehealth as a way to save on that air travel? Clinical waste and general waste—we have different classifications. There are the purple bins for toxic waste and then clinical waste. How can we make sure we are efficient? Obviously, hygiene comes first. We have seen a shift in medicine where we went from having everything sterilised and reused to having one-off items. These types of things are what the clinicians and department are looking at.

The Department of Health has shown leadership in establishing an intergovernmental multidisciplinary advisory group to examine the effects of climate change on the health of community, strategies to mitigate the health impact of climate change on our communities and strategy to mitigate the environmental impact of health services.

The Department of Health is working with the NT Environmental Protection Authority and the University of Tasmania in relation to air quality. They are particularly looking at the matter of bushfire smoke. Senior health officials sit on and attend state and national forums to tackle the effects of climate change. The Department of Health is also partnering with Menzies and the National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre on a research project to document the effects of heat in the NT.

The Top End Health Service is seeking to join the Global Green and Healthy Hospital Network which represents more than 5000 hospitals and healthcare settings around the world. This network provides a comprehensive framework for hospitals and health systems to achieve greater sustainability and contribute to improve public environmental health.

The framework focuses on 10 action areas including reducing waste, minimising the use of harmful chemicals, increasing energy efficiency and buying safer and more sustainable products. Hospitals that join the network endorse the principles and commit to begin by implementing at least two of the three goals. I am pleased to advise that our central Australian colleagues, the Central Australia Health Service is committed to joining the Global Green and Healthy Hospital Network.

There is real commitment and enthusiasm from the ground up. As a government, we are looking right across our health facilities to reduce the impact of our health facilities on the environment through improving recycling, reducing waste, improving energy efficiency and reducing water consumption.

I reiterate that the Territory Labor government is investing in evidence-based policies and processes to protect our environment and address climate change. We are not denying it, we acknowledge it is real. We are listening and taking a proactive and decisive action.

Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP **Independent Commission Against Corruption Standing Committee**

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I seek leave for the Government Whip to nominate two government members of the ICAC Standing Committee; the Opposition Whip to nominate a member; and the Independent members to email the Clerk their nomination to establish the membership of the ICAC Committee.

Leave granted.

Mr Mills: For clarification, if there is an opposition and Independents—there is another party here. I am not an Independent. How does that work?

Ms FYLES: I am sure that by classification of the party, you are an Independent. We are the government, they are the declared opposition ...

Mr Mills: Those two are, but I am not an Independent.

Ms FYLES: By matter of the parliament you are Independent. We know you are the leader of your party, but you are considered Independent.

Mr Mills: I am not sure of that. I want to make sure.

Madam SPEAKER: I am not so sure. The Member for Blain is in a political party.

The motion that was agreed to today ...

Ms FYLES: It was two government members, one opposition member and one Independent.

Madam SPEAKER: Correct. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to do what I could not do during Question Time, because as an Independent I do not get much opportunity to ask questions in sequence ...

Ms Wakefield: Oh, you are Independent now.

Mr MILLS: Sorry. As a non-opposition person who is a member of a party. Things are getting a bit complicated, and perhaps they will get more complicated. I digress.

The point is, I do not get much of an opportunity to ask questions. This is something I would have loved to raise during Question Time but could not even ask one question.

The matter concerns an organisation I am a member of. It is a valuable tourism icon in the Top End, that is, the Deck Chair Cinema. It has come to my attention as a member, and most would know, that a proposal to develop the car park near the Cenotaph to have an RSL facility in the existing car park will be of grave concern to the viability of the cinema.

Anyone who goes to the Deck Chair Cinema, sits back, relaxes and enjoys that magical place will know that the line of sight of that proposed facility is behind the screen. That by itself is of concern. I wanted to raise that matter and say I support those who believe the Deck Chair Cinema's concerns are very valid—it has been there for quite a long time. Not only is it the concern of the members, but it is a very important facility. It had to move once before, as I understand.

More than that, I have been contacted by members of the RSL who are not so much attached to the proposal but to the importance of the Cenotaph and the original plan of Goyder, in establishing the Esplanade. They asked that their names not be brought up, but they represent veterans whose names are on the Cenotaph. They feel it would be offensive to have in that car park a club. It would be dishonouring the memory of those whose names are listed there, whose names we honour.

There are names from a couple of the conflicts whose families are here now, who are also members of the RSL, and it is of concern to them.

It is a matter of concern. I urge the government and minister—I am sure I do not need to lecture, as I get told off for daring to suggest anything to the minister—to pay urgent attention to the matter. I feel there will be great controversy around this. There are some deep sentiments not only from the Darwin Film Society and the Deck Chair Cinema—its importance as a tourism icon. When anyone comes here and asks what they should do, that is one thing I heartily recommend, as well as Aquascene and the museum. I know people love it.

This seriously threatens the viability of the Deckchair Cinema. I am troubled by some of the reported comments made by the Mayor that it creates the impression that whatever is going to happen, something will be built on that carpark site.

I do not often do this but I am concerned about the way this appears to be going. I bring it to the attention of the House, the Territory Government and the ministers concerned as a matter of great concern.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about some of the health clinics that are located in the Arnhem electorate. Some have been newly built in the last years which are fantastic facilities, some which are adequate for the time being and some which are in desperate need of upgrades.

As of the end of today, I will be travelling back into the electorate. We have not had as much rain as what we were expecting for this time of the year. It has its plusses and minuses. It will mean that I am able to travel to a lot more of the communities over the next couple of weeks which would normally be inaccessible by road.

I will list some of those communities and what the infrastructure is like in those clinics. I am doing this because as I travel around other parts of the Northern Territory, I get to see some of the infrastructure that has been built in our remote areas in particular. Unfortunately we have not seen our federal Liberal National government come to the table to identify opportunities to improve infrastructure for remote Territorians who are predominantly Aboriginal and deserve to have quality infrastructure supporting the health needs of their communities.

We will not be able to see any type of movement or improvement in meeting the health targets of Closing the Gap if we do not see the federal government invest in our remote clinic infrastructure and support the training of our local workforce, professionals and specialists to deliver health services in isolated and remote parts of the Northern Territory and across Australia.

I will go through the list of those clinics that are in the Arnhem electorate, what type of facilities they have and what I envision we see with the advocacy of the Territory Labor government and our colleagues who fight hard for us in Canberra including Senator Malarndirri McCarthy and the Honourable Warren Snowdon, the federal Member for Lingiari and the federal Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling.

Our three federal counterparts all sit on the First Nations Labor caucus. The last lot of community-changing investment in remote clinics was delivered by a federal Labor government. That was thanks to our colleagues and particularly the Honourable Warren Snowdon who I like to tease has been in politics about as long as I have been alive.

Some of these clinics are operated by the Aboriginal controlled health organisation of Sunrise and they are in the Nyirrangulung region of the Arnhem electorate. I start with Mataranka one of my three townships. It is a reasonably adequate facility for the size of the community in Mataranka and Mulga Town Camp. They do a great job in delivering services and supporting residents in that area.

Going up to the Central Arnhem Road, the clinic in the beautiful community of Manyallaluk, also known as Eva Valley, is adequate for the size of the population and local staff work hard alongside some of the sunrise doctors who travel in and out to the community from Katherine-it is about an hour from Katherine by road.

Next we go further up the Central Arnhem Road to Barunga community and they have an adequate clinic, but there could definitely be some infrastructure upgrades for some of the facilities in that area. They are lucky because they have a small portable-dialysis unit. Unfortunately, it is not as utilised as it could be.

As I mentioned in one of my earlier adjournments this week, having local trained Aboriginal health practitioners able to support dialysis on country is preferable to having to rely on self-care dialysis patients to be able to administer the treatment for themselves. Unfortunately, no one in Barunga is trained to do that service, but they have a small facility able to be utilised with expertise to support the Barunga service.

Next up we go to Wugularr, also known as Beswick. They have an adequate clinic. It has been extended with a couple of demountables, but unfortunately it is in the flood zone. We have not seen any affects this Wet Season because we have not had a good Wet Season, but in the past, they had to evacuate most of the medications and vaccines out of the facility and move them to the shop in the new subdivision.

Being in the flood zone is a concern for the sustainability and longevity of the clinic and hopefully we can support Sunrise Health Aboriginal Corporation to negotiate some of the leasing in the new subdivision at the top part of Wugularr so our clinic space can be built and not affected by floods when it does become a big Wet Season.

Further up the track, we go to Bulman which services Bulman and Weemol communities. This is a small, poky facility. It has been extended, similar to Wugularr, with demountable transporters for extra space for clinical examinations, but this is one of the communities that needs more infrastructure and a purpose-built facility to be able to service the people in that area properly. They are often cut off in the wet for many weeks, without being able to travel to Katherine or up to Gove. They are almost in the middle of the Central Arnhem Road and they need new infrastructure for a good facility on site for locals and travellers.

Further up, as my electorate boundary starts to come to an end, is Gapuwiyak community, also known as Lake Evella. It is the second-largest community in the Arnhem electorate, with almost 1000 people and servicing several homelands in the surrounding region. The infrastructure is appalling. The last time I was there, the underneath section of the building was being repaired so it did not collapse. Unfortunately, that is the facility the people of Gapuwiyak and the surrounding homelands have to put up with.

That has started to transition to Miwatj health, which is a good news story, but I will continue to advocate when we are transitioning clinics, we need to make sure there is quality infrastructure and housing attached to that transition so we can support our Aboriginal health controlled clinics.

Urapunga on the Roper Highway is small but adequate and run by sunrise. Ngukurr is a beautiful, brand-new clinic officially opened in 2017. It is fantastic, so is Numbulwar clinic which we opened in 2017, and Umbakumba clinic on Groote Eylandt. Those three new clinics were some of the infrastructure that took a couple of years to hit the ground under the federal Labor government. We were able to open those in partnership in 2017.

Staying on Groote Eylandt, Alyangula has older infrastructure. It is quite old but adequate. Angurugu Clinic in Angurugu community is appalling infrastructure—old, pokey, not fit-for-purpose anymore. That is one that definitely needs more infrastructure built.

Across the water to Bickerton Island, Milyakburra is adequate. It is a small population. I has quite nice—what do you call it?—on stilts buildings. They are good.

At Jabiru, through the master plan, we are looking at upgrades for that clinic, if not a new clinic. Across the river into the Arafura electorate, the Gunbalanya clinic is in need of new infrastructure.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, there is a list and something I will be putting to Minister Ken White and the federal Minister for Health, Greg Hunt.

Mr PAECH (Namatjira): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, another year, another closing the gap speech, another year of grim news for First Nation Australians. It is no surprise to learn that we need to do more in this space.

First Nation people do not a glossy report to tell us what we already live with: we die younger, our babies are at greater risk and too many of our young people die each year from suicide—more than any other young people.

Our people live in abject poverty and all that it entails. In the days before I came to parliament for this sittings, I was out bush in my remote communities. I was in places like Santa Teresa, Titjikala. I visited Yuendumu and Papunya. I spoke to people and people spoke to me in Warlpiri, Luritja, Aranda, Pitjantjatjara and in English. They shared their stories about their lives in remote communities, the homes, the country, their place, where they are connected, where their sacred anchor hold them and their cultural and spiritual values and their kin-based relationships.

I sat down with families—the mums, dads, kids, elders—who link these places back to the Dreamtime. Sadly, they also told me it was getting harder and harder for them to live on their home communities on their country, to raise their kids connected to country and culture, and the day-to-day struggle to access basic services, telecommunications, water and jobs. Access is getting harder.

The federal government talks about resetting relationships and as new way of doing things, but without a fundamental reset of the continuing policy failures and the stubborn determination to forge ahead with policies that have no evidence base, such as the flawed and discriminatory cashless debit card, is offering no solution. Our people are doomed to continue down the same sad path.

The CLP and the Liberal government's refusal to abandon failed community development program known as the CDP, which entrenches disadvantage and does nothing to create employment opportunities is only widening the gap.

Across my electorate, I have met more than half a dozen young people in every community I have been to who are not receiving any form of income at all, because they have been breached by Centrelink, the federal government.

You cannot talk about a new way of delivering and measuring progress in Indigenous affairs if you refuse to change the policies that are causing, entrenching and disadvantaging the very people you are trying to help overcome disadvantage. It makes no sense and it eroding the hope of First Nation people across this country.

It is difficult to accept that the federal government's commitment when half a billion dollars was cut from the Indigenous affairs budget by this government.

It is hard to comprehend when the federal government cuts people off Centrelink and pushes them into town with no food or money and then wonders why we seen an increase in antisocial behaviour. Rather than making sure our bush folks—our bush brothers and sisters, my family and friends—have access to food and funds, they would rather send them into town hungry and sad.

Instead they hold a crime forum in Alice Springs and use the opportunity to seed hate and fuel racial tensions. The way forward is a voice, truth telling and agreement making. You cannot claim to be committed to Closing the Gap of Indigenous disadvantage yet rule out what was so eloquently laid out in the Statement from the heart; the constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country.

The Australian Senate is set to debate the cashless debit card legislation next week so I urge Territorians to contact Sam McMahon your Liberal senator for the Northern Territory and let her know about these bad policies. You do not want her to support her government starving out fellow Territorians.

We need to end the bad Centrelink processes that this government supports. We need to end the cashless debit card. We need to replace CDP with a program that empowers people. Involve Aboriginal people in proactive conversations and only then and truly then will you begin to see the gap closing. You cannot close the gap if you continue to ignore the people who need the help in remote communities to overcome disadvantage. You are failing with your policies.

I urge every Territorian to get on the phone, emails or Facebook, and message Senator Sam McMahon and tell her enough is enough. If you have had enough of crime, get on the phone and you call Sam McMahon. It is her government that is driving people into town without any opportunity. It is her government that is telling people we do not want you on country, we want you to move into town, we want you to be sad and hungry because we do not care about you, we do not value you.

It is Senator Sam McMahon, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition—all CLP elected members—who do not care about the bush. If they cared about the bush they would stand up against CDP and the cashless debit card which is destroying lives in the bush and driving up antisocial behaviour. Let us get this clear. It is the failure of the federal government and their punitive and racist policies which is having an impact on the Northern Territory.

We are doing the heavy lifting with what we can do in our space. We need the federal government to stand up and actually say that they are committed to overcoming disadvantage.

The Minister for Education and Member for Arnhem just spoke in this very Chamber about remote health services. I have a number of remote health services in the electorate of Namatjira and the greater Central Australian region. They need help from the federal government because those clinics need to be upgraded. Whether they are government or independent AMS, the federal government has a responsibility to Indigenous Territorians. It is time to pull your finger out, stop sipping lattes on the east coast and get back here and deliver for Territorians in the bush.

When we are out of this country and we are talking to people around the world that is the beautiful culture, stories and Dreamtime that everyone wants to hear about. Let us put our money where our mouth is. Let us support remote Territorians. Let us support remote Aboriginal people right across this country. If there was ever a time that they needed us as a nation, it is now. This federal government does not care about Aboriginal people at all.

I urge everyone in this Chamber to get onto your federal Liberal senator. Tell her that you do not like these racist, punitive approaches of the CDP and the cashless debit card. If you cannot get hold of her because her phone is engaged, ring the Deputy Opposition Leader or the Opposition Leader. I am sure they can pass on the message.

Ms AH KIT (Karama): I want to talk about suicide prevention, a topic that my colleague, the Member for Namatjira, spoke so eloquently about. It is a topic that is close to my heart and many Australians because we lose too many people. It is a movement I have dedicated eight years of my life to before entering this parliament. It is the reason I am standing here today.

I do not want to talk about the fact that the Northern Territory has the highest rate of completed suicide for any Australian jurisdiction because to me, it is not a competition. Instead, I want to talk about what is being done to protect our most vulnerable Territorians. I first became aware of the term lived experience 6 years ago, and came to understand how important it is to hear the voices and experiences of those with lived experience to guide the important work undertaken in suicide prevention.

At that time, I was working with local people to address suicide prevention in our community through the Darwin Region Indigenous Suicide Prevention Network after hours. During the day, I worked as an indigenous suicide prevention project officer in the NT Department of Health. As the assistant minister for suicide prevention, it has been wonderful to keep abreast of the fantastic work that lived experience groups continue to do to prevent suicide. I thank groups like Come Walk With Me, Sabrina's Reach 4 Life, DRISPN and the Darwin Youth Suicide Prevention Network for their important work at the grass roots level and for keeping our community members safe.

Darwin was selected as one of 12 national suicide prevention trial sites and two are Indigenous-specific sites. Those involved with the trial met here in Parliament House two days ago where I was fortunate to accompany my co-chair of the trial site committee, Natasha Fyles in partnership with the federal Minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt. Throughout the meeting, it was fantastic to see so many people engaged in this important conversation. It is a glass half-full approach.

From the first meeting I attended over a year ago, it has come a long way. It made me really happy and proud. We were treated to presentations from YMCA, Balunu Foundation and the Darwin Indigenous Men's Service who are funded as part of the trial to deliver suicide-prevention activities and programs. It was wonderful to learn about YMCA's partnership with Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation to deliver youth camps and a young father's program.

It was great to hear from Michael Torres at the Darwin Indigenous Mens Service to hear about their men's camps and fathers program and to know that the YMCA will reach out to DIMS to partner up and see how their fathers programs can link. It was great to hear from Noeletta McKenzie and the team from the Balunu Foundation about their youth healing camps. It was a great reflection and great way to acknowledge the hard work that everyone is doing and the wonderful achievements that can be made as a collective.

I congratulate all those organisations for their work and look forward to learning of the positive impact that their work will have on their clients, families and our wider community in general.

As a previous suicide prevention advocate volunteer, I know all too well how hard it can be to share information and engage with community members without having the resources. This is why I advocated strongly for suicide prevention grants to be allocated to community groups to help them undertake this important work. They are the best place for people to do that. I am pleased that our government took that on board through the leadership of the Minister for Suicide Prevention, minister Fyles. We released \$600 000 worth of suicide prevention grants that commenced with \$200 000 being released in 2018, a further \$200 000 last year and the final \$200 000 will go out this year.

The impact these grants have on the local community to encourage them to keep doing what they are doing— at times it can be difficult so this has made some huge improvements. So much so that in 2018, with the \$200 000 offered we received over \$450,000 worth of applications. Last year with the further \$200 000 we received \$600 000 worth of suicide prevention applications

People out there really want to get involved and help out. It was wonderful to see so many people. The flip side is that there is only \$200 000. What do you tell the other \$400 000 worth of applicants?

While every application would have been worthy, I was grateful that the Department of Health did not just tell everybody that their application was not good enough. They tried to link them in with other grant opportunities and that is leadership right there. That needs to be commended.

Each year, we as a nation, bury more people from suicide than car accidents. We need to re-think the way we operate, because our efforts are not achieving the reductions we need. I acknowledge the Prime Minister for his appointment of Ms Christine Morgan as the National Suicide Prevention Adviser last year. Christine was also the CEO of the National Mental Health Commission.

Christine's role is to provide advice to the Prime Minister on what action needs to be taken to re-think Australia's approach to suicide prevention so we can all get the benefit that we need. I thank Christine for her extensive engagement with many Australians and for highlighting the fact that almost half of those Australians who have succumbed to suicide, had no engagement with the mental health system. This is the scenario for me and my family and a lot of other families I have spoken to in the Northern Territory.

This is commonplace like in my own lived experience, and it was comforting to hear Christine say:

In talking to individuals and communities over the past six months, it has been clear to me that we need to co-design our suicide prevention approach in a way that is led by those with lived and living experience of suicide.

Although I was not able to meet with Christine during her visit to Darwin, I really appreciated the opportunity to meet with Jaelea Skehan, who is the Chair of the National Suicide Prevention Taskforce that supports Christine in her role. I met Jaelea a number of years ago at a suicide prevention conference where she was working for Mindframe, talking about the media's reporting of suicide and how we needed to educate everybody to report more carefully and be more mindful. It was great to catch up with her to talk about some

of those things we spoke about when I was at that conference six or seven years ago and to see us in different roles still fighting for what we believe in and that is to keep people safe.

I also thank the federal government for their recent announcements of further investments in suicide prevention and for extending the trial in Darwin. There is nothing worse than giving people the opportunity to work together as a collective impact model to make a huge difference and then you cut it. I am glad that is going to continue for another year with an extra \$1m in support. Thank you Minister Ken Wyatt.

As local member, I view my world through a suicide prevention lens. I always have since I lost my younger brother to suicide. Every single day when I wake up I get out there and I look at my community and I try and figure out how best I can serve my people on that day to keep them safe and protected. Yes there is much despair out there. I am sick and tired of reading the bad news stories on Facebook. We need to share the positives everybody. If we could all take it upon ourselves to make that positive difference, to celebrate one another's success and to understand that unfortunately life and the world is not perfect, but as imperfections go when we can still do what we can to make every day a little brighter and a little better.

To everybody in my community who is doing it tough, hang in there. Know that there is light on the horizon and you are not alone. We have so many wonderful people out there working to make a difference and it is important for me to make sure that gets on the record. Thank you to everyone who is doing everything they can to make the world a brighter place.

Mrs WORDEN (Sanderson): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, the Member for Blain has formed a new political party. He has called for a fresh new start. He says he thinks politics will be done differently but Territorians needs to consider the difference between what the Member for Blain says and what he actually does. When Territorians know the facts they will see the Member for Blain as I do; a wolf in sheep's clothing.

I rise this evening to place on the public record my concerns about a contract between Midian Pty Ltd and the Northern Territory Government negotiated with the agreement of discredited former Chief Minister Adam Giles. I seek leave to table a copy of the contract.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: The contract, strangely executed on 11 April, is the vehicle through which the Member for Blain was appointed as the Territory's representative in Indonesia and ASEAN. Honourable members will recall that 11 April was the day before polling day for the by-election caused by the resignation by the Member for Blain to take up his appointment. Strange timing, indeed.

I seek leave to table a timetable relating to the Blain by-election of 2014.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: I am aware that the total cost to taxpayers incurred under the contract exceeded \$374 000 for the first 12 months. This comprised a base sum contract exceeding \$250 000 for a 12-month period, plus approved expenses in excess of \$124 000. The contract was for a period of two years and 10 months, with an option for a two-year extension if agreed by the parties.

The prospective payments to Midian therefore exceeded \$1.2m under the extension provisions contemplated in the contract. This was a lucrative deal approved by an incumbent CLP Chief Minister for a retiring former CLP Chief Minister.

No expressions of interest were called and the contract was negotiated and executed with undue haste. Why the haste, secrecy and generous terms of contract? Why did the Chief Minister, Adam Giles, refrain from announcing the appointment of the government's representative in Indonesia until after the by-election created by Terry Mills' resignation as the Member for Blain?

Territorians are entitled to know the facts about this expensive and hasty deal, what they got for the money, what trade deals were signed and what reports provided.

The appointment of the Member for Blain to this position is problematic from a number of perspectives. The appointment of a company, Midian in this case, through the agency of a former Chief Minister, to represent the Northern Territory Government overseas, is unprecedented.

Let me be clear. In the 41 years since self-government, ASIC records indicate that the Member for Blain's spouse held a beneficial interest in Midian, which underscores the very unusual arrangements inherent in his appointment as the Northern Territory representative in Indonesia and ASEAN.

I seek leave to table the relevant ASIC documents.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: The architect of the deal was the former Chief Minister, Adam Giles. The Member for Blain and the CLP were, and still are, joined at the hip, united by personal ambition and political necessity.

In his answer to written question No. 204, Chief Minister Giles stated, 'The Territory is not aware whether Mr Mills' spouse had any involvement with the company'.

The former Chief Minister's answer is difficult to accept. Why? Because Terrence Kennedy Mills and Roslyn Matilda Mills were the beneficial owners of Midian when it was registered on 26 March 2014, only 16 days before the contract with the Giles CLP government was executed.

Why the deception? Why did the former Chief Minister Giles not simply confirm the identity of all persons with a beneficial interest in Midian? What did he have to hide?

On 11 June 2014 during Estimates hearings, the Chief Minister was asked who offered the position to Mr Mills and who approved the appointment. The Chief Minister stated, his CEO, Gary Barnes made the offer to Mills and approved the appointment.

I seek leave to table the relevant Estimates Committee extract from 11 June 2014.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: Consistent with what seems to be an ongoing pattern of deception, this assertion is contradicted by the Chief Minister's answer to written question No. 204, in which he stated that he approved the appointment.

I seek leave to table an answer to written question No. 204 from the previous parliament.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: Mr Giles was also asked whether there were discussions between himself and any other ministers or advisors with Mr Mills regarding his appointment and if so, when. In the implausible response, Mr Giles stated, 'There was discussion during the time Gary Barnes was talking to Terry. I was made aware of it and spoke to Terry about what the role meant. It was about the time the agreement was done. I cannot give you a date. It is not a diary entry, but I had a chat with Terry.'

I seek leave to table an extract of Hansard of the Estimates Committee from 11 June 2014 that confirms this on page 99.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: The inference that there was no formal or informal approval or knowledge by the Chief Minister prior to the Barnes, Mills discussion, defies credibility in my estimation. The content of the chat mentioned by Mr Giles might be informative in the wider context of questions surrounding Mr Mills' appointment.

The timing of the discussions between Barnes and Mills and Giles and Mills is also vital information which could inform any investigation into Mr Mills' appointment to the NTG representative in Indonesia and related issues.

The pressing date for both of these former CLP Chief Ministers was the by-election polling date on 12 April 2014. They both wanted the contract with Midian signed before that date. Under conventional arrangements, certainly under our government, appointment of an overseas representative would be approved by Cabinet, with full details of costs and reporting arrangements.

But this was not the case with this appointment. A seminal document in exposing the arrangements between the government and Mr Mills (Midian) in the contractual agreement between the parties was executed that day before on 11 April 2014.

Schedule 2 of the contract between the NTG and Mills provides for a base contract sum exceeding \$250 000 per 12-month period, and provides for payment of additional expenses incurred in delivering such services on the basis of prior approval of the expenditure.

Chief Minister Giles' answer to Written Question 278 identified expenditure of \$124 536 additional to the contract sum, including expenditure of \$69 271 for leased accommodation. The answer also identified expenditure of \$9484.90 on legal expenses, presumably incurred by Mr Mills or Midian, but lacks sufficient detail to determine their purpose or whether this expenditure item legitimately represents value for money.

It is also noteworthy that there is no information on the public record concerning lease arrangements and related negotiations or prior approval for the accommodation costs, who owned the leased premises, who conducted the negotiations and who approved the lease.

Based on the expenditure I have outlined the total actual cost of Mr Mills' appointment could exceed \$400 000 for that first 12 months. Whether this total cost represents value for money is a matter for others to judge, but it could be informed by details of the concrete achievements of Mr Mills or Midian while representing the Northern Territory in Indonesia and other considerations.

The decision of the CLP government to abruptly terminate Mr Mills' appointment and not replace him could also inform any value for money assessment. An article by Amos Aitken in *The Australian* on 18 February 2015, the following year, stated that Mr Mills said he had been denied opportunities to brief Mr Giles or Cabinet during his term as the NT representative in Indonesia.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a copy of this article.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: The article also stated:

Mr Mills accused the government of misusing the position to instead contain his own public profile for largely political reasons.

And:

I found the role I had been given was to reduce my profile in the Northern Territory and to malign it if possible.

In other words, the \$400 000 of taxpayers' money paid to Midian went down the drain for an ulterior motive. But when the lucrative contract was signed or first dangled, the Member for Blain expressed no such reservations.

Broader public interest considerations might include the proximity of dates between Mr Mills' appointment and the Blain by-election, and whether there were related discussions concerning the extent of his prospective support for the CLP candidate and campaign in the by-election for his former seat.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table a timeline of dates relevant to these discussions.

Leave granted.

Mrs WORDEN: Therefore, negotiations on the related contractual arrangements and discussions on the extent of Mr Mills' involvement in the by-election campaign simply overlapped. The appointment of Midian or Mills took effect from 3 March. He was, therefore, linked effectively on the NTG payroll seven days after his resignation.

ASTOUNDINGLY, according to ASIC records, Midian was not registered until 24 March, some time later. The haste of these arrangements has never been explained. Whether the backdating of the contract was lawful should be considered by a competent NTG body. With respect to probity, the fundamental question is who approved the 3 March date of effect and why? Expressed alternatively, why were backdating provisions included in Schedule 1 of the contract?

The by-election was very high stakes for the CLP and Chief Minister, Adam Giles. The CLP's parliamentary majority and Mr Giles' leadership were threatened by a potential defeat in that election. I recall polling conducted prior to the election indicated a very close result. The appointment of Mr Mills or Midian by Chief Minister Mr Giles and antecedent discussions and negotiations, therefore, opened up the potential for serious conflicts of interest in the context of the must-win election scenario. The CLP was simply desperate for Mr Mills to hand out how-to-vote cards on polling day for the Blain by-election. Mr Mills was desperate to tie up his arrangements as the Northern Territory representative in Indonesia before polling day. He did not trust the Chief Minister, did he?

Is this why the contract between Midian and the CLP government was executed on 11 April 2014—the day before polling day? This was a marriage of convenience, in my estimation, between two mortal enemies for mutual benefit.

The facts I have outlined call into question the timing, financial arrangements, accountability and probity concerning the Mills' appointment as NTG representative in Indonesia by the CLP government led by Adam Giles. The Member for Blain and the CLP have lots of questions to answer.

But the real question remains. What benefit did Territorians get for the contract the Member for Blain accepted? What political deal did Terry Mills do with Adam Giles? Territorians want have a right to know.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

DRAFT