

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENT
Chamber Photography**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have given permission for a photographer to be in the Chamber to get photographs of this memorable occasion for the Member for Johnston.

**RETURN TO WRIT
Division of Johnston**

The CLERK: Honourable members, I lay on the table the writ issued by Her Honour the Administrator, Vicki O'Halloran AO, on 2 March 2020 for the election of a member for the electoral division of Johnston on 29 February 2020, certifying election of Joel Francis Bowden.

Joel Francis Bowden made and subscribed the oaths of allegiance and office required by law.

Madam SPEAKER: On behalf of the members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly I congratulate you on your election and welcome you to the Assembly as the Member for Johnston. Now your troubles really will begin.

Members: Hear, hear!

**MESSAGES FROM ADMINISTRATOR
Message Number 30 – Assent to Bills passed in February**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message Number 30 from Her Honour the Administrator notifying assent to seven of the eight bills passed at the February meetings of the Assembly. The message is dated 17 March 2020.

Message Number 31 – Allocation of Public Monies

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received Message Number 31 from Her Honour the Administrator recommending to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act that authorises an amount to be paid from the Central Holding Authority, for the purposes of the agencies specified in the bill, for the year ending 30 June 2021. The message is dated 23 March 2020.

**TABLED PAPERS
Annual Return of Members' Interests**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, pursuant to a resolution of the Assembly on Wednesday 19 October 2016, I table an Annual Return of Members' Interests.

Members' Satellite Phone Report 2019

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Members' Satellite Phone Report 2019.

Auditor General for the Northern Territory March Report 2020 to the Legislative Assembly

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General for the Northern Territory March Report 2020 to the Legislative Assembly.

**SPEAKER'S STATEMENTS
Appointment of Acting Deputy Speaker**

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise that I have appointed the Member for Daly as an Acting Deputy Speaker.

Changes to Legislation Scrutiny Committee

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have been advised that Mr Sievers has been elected Chair of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee and that Mr Bowden has replaced Ms Ah Kit on the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, I have closed the public galleries for today's meeting of the assembly. Those who wish to view the meeting can do so the Legislative Assembly's website.

I encourage honourable members to practise social distancing and advise that hand sanitiser is available in the Chamber and throughout the building.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE Members for Namatjira and Nhulunbuy

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

Motion agreed to.

REORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, Pursuant to Standing Order 59, I move that the routine of business in Sessional Order 1 be amended for today to read 'Notices, petitions, questions listed under clause 3 commence at 12.30 pm' rather than 2 pm.

OPPOSITION OFFICE HOLDERS

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I advise the House of the allocation of shadow portfolios amongst opposition members and seek leave to table a list of shadow portfolios.

Leave granted.

Mr MILLS: Mr Terry Mills, Member for Blain—Leader of Opposition; Shadow Minister for Northern Australia; Education; Workforce Training; Trade and Major Projects; Business and Innovation; Tourism, Sports and Culture; Defence Jobs and Veterans' Affairs; Treaty; Aboriginal Affairs; and Multicultural Affairs,

Mrs Robyn Lambley, Member for Araluen—Deputy Leader; Shadow Treasurer; Shadow Minister for Health; Public Employment; Territory Families; Children; Disabilities; Local Government, Housing and Community Development; and the Leader of Opposition Business, Opposition Whip.

Mr Jeff Collins, Member for Fong Lim—Shadow Attorney-General; Shadow Minister for Justice; Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Primary Industry and Resources; Environment and Natural Resources; Renewables, Energy and Essential Services; Climate Change; Corporate and Information Services; and Arafura Games.

PAPER TABLED

Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into Justice Legislation Amendment (Domestic and Family Violence) Bill 2019 (Serial 113)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the report from the Legislation Scrutiny Committee's inquiry into the Justice Legislation Amendment (Domestic and Family Violence) Bill 2019 and the associated Minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 18 March 2020.

MOTION

Note Paper – Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into Justice Legislation Amendment (Domestic and Family Violence) Bill 2019 (Serial 113)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, this legislation amends the *Bail Act 1992*, the *Criminal Code Act 1983*, the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*, and the *Sentencing Act 1995*.

This bill seeks to enhance responses to domestic and family violence in the Northern Territory, and improve the safety of victims, increase accountability of defendants, and provide greater impetus for defendants to change their behaviour.

The committee received eight submissions to the inquiry, all of which supported the policy intent of the proposed legislation. The committee also received advice from its independent legal advisor, Professor Ned Aughterson. One of the primary concerns raised by the submitters was that proposed amendments to section 23 of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* relating to orders regarding tenancy agreements will have limited effect in the absence of consequential amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act 1999.

Concerns were also raised regarding the implementation of the proposed Part 2(11)(a) of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* which relates to rehabilitation programs. In particular, submitters noted that the calibre of declared rehabilitation programs and the monitoring of defendants while they are participating in programs will be critical to the success of this initiative. Following consideration of the evidence the committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill with recommendations 2 to 6.

On behalf of the committee I thank all those that provided submissions or appeared before the committee. I also thank Professor Aughterson and the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice for their advice on the bill.

Finally, I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I move that the report be noted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, thank you very much. Speaking to the Member for Brennan and tabling of that report, I am on the scrutiny committee and participated in that legislative process. There is a large part of that legislation that is very positive. The committee made recommendations that the legislation be reviewed in 12 months to acknowledge that there are some unknowns, I suppose you could say, in relation to this bill. I wanted to put on the record and if the government decide to bring this legislation to the Chamber then we will debate it in full, but I have some concerns around the mechanisms in the bill, particularly around exclusions for mandatory sentencing.

With domestic violence we need to ensure that we have as much deterrent factor out there as possible. Domestic and family violence is something that unfortunately the Territory faces, particularly our most vulnerable have to deal with it. Many in this Chamber would have received a letter from the women's legal services yesterday raising some concerns and concerns were raised during that scrutiny committee process but I very much am concerned about the bill's erosion of mandatory sentencing through exemptions for people who may participate in programs.

It is very important that people are given the opportunity to rehabilitate, to change their ways and to be supported to be better people. All of us are in this Chamber because that is our obligation to Territorians and that is why Corrections is called Corrections because it is supposed to be providing correctional support to people who have been deemed to have broken the law, and I certainly feel that the bill does not address and is in fact silent on monitoring for people who may be effectively ordered to undertake programs in lieu of a prison sentence further down the track. In my mind the victims come first and foremost so I have some concerns practically how this legislation will work, I have concerns around any erosion to mandatory sentencing for domestic violence offences. I will go into greater detail about that in the bill but just noting the most recent concerns from the women's legal centres who undoubtedly wrote to many of us today and I wanted to place that on the record.

I thank the government. There are large portions of this legislation that is very good and the committee's report indeed reflects that.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I too am a member of the Legislative Assembly scrutiny committee and I participated in the deliberations and scrutiny of this particular piece of legislation. Like a lot of things that we will consider today in parliament the lines have changed, the boundaries have changed and the goal posts have changed when it comes to domestic violence.

If the government does choose to bring on this legislation later today we will be having a very interesting debate around how this legislation fits into the current climate.

The Member for Spillett mentioned that we have been contacted by agencies representing women who are victims of domestic and family violence. They have expressed extreme concerns about this piece of legislation. The fact that this piece of legislation has the potential to make the lives of victims of domestic and family violence even worse, it potentially opens the door to perpetrators having access to the victims of domestic and family violence.

I agree with the Member for Spillett, much of this legislation is quite positive but there are some aspects that are problematic. One obvious problem, from my perspective from Central Australia, is that part of the legislation will be referring perpetrators of domestic violence to 'behaviour change programs'. There are no behaviour change programs in Central Australia and I am not aware of any behaviour change programs in the Northern Territory.

We have alcohol rehabilitation programs, drug rehabilitation programs but where are these specific behaviour change programs related to domestic violence. They do not exist.

Members interjecting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am hearing some comments from the opposite side of the chamber, they like to tune in. You can stand up and have your say in a minute. We are here to debate.

There is concern amongst the domestic and family violence sectors that these programs do not exist—this was discussed in the scrutiny committee. The government is setting these provisions to allow people to leave gaol and attend men's behaviour change programs when they do not exist. This, in itself, is an obvious problem with the government's proposal.

Given the coronavirus, experienced worldwide and now impacting the Northern Territory, we should be considering now how to keep women and children safe. This has to be paramount.

Considering the current climate, any legislation that has the potential to compromise the safety of women and children has to be put on hold. It is not the time to be making changes that expose women to domestic violence more than protecting them. This is not the time to be tweaking things for the sake of political expediency or for other reasons that are unclear.

We need to take a deep breath, to consider the current climate we live in and make sure that every decision we make today and during this week of parliament is closely tied to the context that we live in. It is a game-changer. How does this particular legislation help the safety of women and children. I am hearing from the domestic and family violence sectors, that it will not help the safety of women and children.

I caution the government, if you intend to bring this on this afternoon or evening—which I am hearing you possibly are planning—you need to take this into consideration. Do not drive it through for the sake of it. Social isolation is domestic violence and women and children, throughout the Northern Territory, now more than ever before will be more isolated than ever.

With the restrictions being placed on everyone, it is not the time to expose women and children to potentially more domestic and family violence.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PAPER TABLED

Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into the Sexual Offences (Evidence and Procedure Amendment Bill 2019 (Serial 117))

Mr SIEVERS (Char of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislation Scrutiny Committee report inquiry into the Sexual Offences (Evidence and Procedure Amendment Bill 2019 and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 18 March 2020.

MOTION

Note Paper – Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into the Sexual Offences (Evidence and Procedure Amendment Bill 2019 (Serial 117))

Mr SIEVERS (Char of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, In response to the Let Her Speak campaign, the primary purpose of this bill is to amend the *Sexual Offences (Evidence and Procedure)*

Act 1983 to enable complainants of sexual offences to consent to being identified in a publication, statement or representation provided that consent is given in writing; the complainant is an adult with the capacity to consent at the time of consenting; and the proposed publication, statement or representation does not identify directly or indirectly another complainant, unless the other complainant has also given consent.

The committee received 10 submissions to its inquiry, all of which support the introduction of amendments to the act. However, several issues were raised regarding the drafting of the proposed amendments. In particular, significant concern was raised by a number of submitters regarding the extent to which the bill, as drafted, achieves some of its objectives, as the bill intends to modernise legislation, bringing the Northern Territory into line with other jurisdictions and giving the survivors a voice.

While the committee has recommended the Assembly passes this important bill, it has proposed a number of amendments, as set out in recommendations 2 to 6.

On behalf of the committee, I thank those who provided submissions or appeared before the committee. I also thank the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice for its advice on the bill.

Finally, I thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

I move that the report be noted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Brennan and all those who made submissions to the committee.

I have one concern in regard to age of consent—more of a comment for government in our deliberations. It uncovered that the age of consent was not in line with provisions in the *Youth Justice Act*, and I thought it might be worthy of government to go back and see if any streamlining or amending was required.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I note recommendation 5, which says the committee recommends that the bill be amended to remove proposed section 7.

Section 7 deals with whether a defendant's name should be allowed to be publicised. The report goes through many reasons as to why that should be the case. It talks about modernising the bill, that attitudes have changed et cetera. I do not necessarily disagree with what has been said, but it raises some issues that we should have more discussion on before passing the bill.

In fact, the department, when commenting on recent amendments to South Australian legislation, said—on page 27 of the report:

The Department reiterates its recommendation that whether to retain or amend proposed section 7 be the subject of wider consultation.

The department said this needed more discussion.

I found it disappointing that perhaps a mention should have been given of the submission by the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commissioner in regard to this matter. It is important, as this issues is prominent today.

It said:

Social media platforms have provided a liberating and empowering opportunity for survivors of sexual offences to expose their abusers and have them brought to justice. Unfortunately, however, social media platforms have also served as a serious threat to the criminal justice system. That is because the system depends on those persons burdened with the duty of judging the facts of a case not to be influenced by gossip, rumour or fake news, but to confine their deliberations to consideration of the evidence lawfully admitted at trial.

The Commission submits that, subject to the two matters raised above, the Bill strikes an appropriate balance between giving survivors the opportunity to speak about, and protecting the rights of an accused to a fair trial. However, the Commission further submits that, in some cases—and the recent trial of Cardinal Pell pending before the High Court of Australia, may be one such case. It may be impossible to keep the noise of social media out of the jury room and in turn to avoid contaminating the trial.

Accordingly the commission submits that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly should give serious consideration to introducing the option of judge-alone trials at the election of an accused, with appropriate constraints to ensure that justice is administered fairly as an alternative to jury trials for serious offences. Judge-alone trials have long been available in New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and the ACT. Beyond this issue is of course, beyond the scope of the terms of reference of this inquiry, but nevertheless the commission encourages the members of the committee, as legislators, to consider this broader issue.

To some extent that has been a serious omission. Even if it might have technically been outside the reference that the scrutiny committee had to look at. To some extent it should also be included, because the Legal Aid Commission's submission is not mentioned in this section. It raises the issue that, if we remove section 7 without looking at the broader ramifications from the point of view of a fair trial, how will our Legislative Assembly approach that matter?

The department says that we should be looking at whether we should amend or retain it. In this case the scrutiny committee has said that we should amend it. Legal Aid Commission stated the problems with doing that. Before we go down that path we need to take the step that the Legal Aid Commission and the department has said, which is to allow for more consultation on this. In the words of the Legal Aid Commission, the need to make sure there is no serious threat to the criminal justice system needs to be taken into account.

How we make sure that the principle of a fair trial is established in our legal system is retained, considering that social media is so much a part of our society, is worthy of debate. Even though it is a recommendation of the committee, a wise move would be for the government to say that, whilst it accepts what the committee has put forward, it understands the department has a slightly different view. The Legal Aid Commission put forward a reasonable submission highlighting some issues that this recommendation could raise. It would be far better for the Legislative Assembly to come back to put the matter out—as the government does sometimes, not necessarily through the Have Your Say site, because I will never see the submissions—for discussion to see what comes back. That would be the wise move.

I thank the scrutiny committee for its report. This is an important bill that has been out there for public discussion. I look forward to the debate on the bill when it comes before parliament.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PAPER TABLED
Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report –
Inquiry into Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 (Serial 114)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislation Scrutiny Committee report on the Inquiry into the Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and association minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 4 March 2020.

MOTION
Note Paper – Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report –
Inquiry into Ports Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 (Serial 114)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, The bill was introduced in response to issues raised in a general review of the ports management legislation and the Utilities Commission 2018 Ports Access and Pricing Review.

The primary purpose of the bill is to provide the regulatory framework for the control, management and operation of all designated ports in the Northern Territory.

The committee did not receive any submissions to its inquiry. However, given the technical nature of the bill, the committee sought advice from its independent legal counsel, Professor Ned Aughterson. As detailed in the committee's report, Professor Aughterson sought clarification regarding proposed section 38, Directions by a port operator, and proposed sections 39 and 40A, which allow for the removal of vessels under particular circumstances. In both cases, the committee was satisfied with the responses provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Professor Aughterson also questioned why proposed section 20A allows the regional Harbourmaster to delegate any of their powers and functions to a person without requiring that that delegation be in writing or any qualification as to who the person might be.

In addition, Professor Aughterson highlighted inconsistencies in the protections provided to a person with a known interest or a registered interest in a vessel in situations where a vessel is sold by a Harbourmaster or port operator as set out in clause 10 of the bill.

Following consideration of the subsequent advice provided by the department, the committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill with the amendments proposed in Recommendations 2 and 3.

On behalf of the committee, I thank Professor Aughterson and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics for its advice to the bill. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to the legislative review process.

Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PAPER TABLED
Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into the
Petroleum Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislation Scrutiny Committee report on the Inquiry into the Petroleum Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019 and associated minutes of proceedings. The report was sent to the Speaker and made public on Wednesday, 18 March 2020.

MOTION
Note Paper - Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into the
Petroleum Legislation Miscellaneous Amendments Bill 2019

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, this bill further progresses matters raised by the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory. Its primary purpose is to give effect to a number of the recommendations the inquiry made in relation to regulatory reform.

The amendment focuses on land access agreements, compensation, environmental security bonds, the release of land blocks, setbacks and the requirement that principles of ecological sustainable development be considered in ministerial decision-making.

The inquiry generated a moderate amount of interest with 10 submissions received by the committee. A key point of contention for many submitters was the inclusion of provisions on compensation and land access agreements in the regulations rather than the act.

Several submitters also considered that the determination of blocks to be released should be conducted prior to inviting applications for exploration permits, rather than these processes being conducted simultaneously as permitted in the bill.

Having reviewed the evidence, the committee considers that the bill largely achieves its aim of giving effect to selected recommendations of the scientific inquiry, whilst acknowledging submitters concerns regarding the implementation of some inquiry recommendations through the regulations rather than the act.

The committee notes that unless an inquiry recommendation specifically states that the act must be amended, its implementation is not limited to the inclusion of explicit provisions in the act, but can also occur through regulations, codes and policy documents or a combination of such instruments.

Following the consideration of the issues raised and the evidence received, the committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill with the proposed amendments as set out in Recommendations 2 to 6.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the organisations that made the submissions and appeared at the public hearing. I also thank the Department of Primary Industry and Resources for its advice and attendance at public hearings and the briefings. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan commitment to this legislative review process.

Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PAPER TABLED

Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into Liquor Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 124)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table legislation scrutiny committee's report inquiry into the Liquor Amendment Bill 2020 and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 20 March 2020.

MOTION

Note Paper – Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into Liquor Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 124)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, the primary purpose of the bill is to clarify that the Liquor Commission can approve a substitution of premises where the proposed premises are under construction or yet to be constructed and to remove the like for like requirement for a substitutional premises.

The committee received eight submissions to its inquiry with seven submissions opposing the intent of the bill and one submission supporting it. A number of submitters recommended amendments to the bill. The committee sought advice from the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice on the amendments proposed by the submitters and the impact those amendments would have on the operation of the bill.

After careful consideration of the evidence received from all the submitters and the department's responses to written questions the committee considers that the Assembly should pass the bill with no amendments.

I thank the organisations that made submissions to this inquiry and the department for their advice on the bill. I also thank my fellow committee members for their bipartisan support in the examination of the bill.

I move that the report be noted.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I will not go into length about my comments on this piece of legislation but suffice to say that this saga around the Dan ban that has plagued the government for the last three-and-a-half-years is finally coming back to roost here in the Assembly.

When coming to government the Labor government implemented its 400 square metre regulation only very quickly to move that in to law only to have the Riley review say that it is not a way to curb the harm from alcohol. Then we saw the revocation of that legislation and a long battle for entities like Dan Murphy's to come to Darwin. Then after the liquor commission hearing and the NTCAT hearing the Chief Minister said, 'don't worry, we will bring legislation into the Chamber to fix this' and the Attorney-General took the baton and ran with it as she diligently does and here we now have this piece of legislation which goes part way but it does not go the whole way. It does not address community interests components to the liquor reforms that the government has implement, but this is a classic example of the government's rush and haste to implement its wide ranging, wide reaching liquor reforms without thinking through the intended and unintended consequences and this legislation really does exemplify that.

I look forward to debating this whether it is today or tomorrow or another day but I wanted remind members of the long history and the long and detailed saga that has ensued to get to this point.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I look forward to a debate that will support the Riley recommendations—which were supported by the Opposition and the government at that stage—and ask the simple question, 'What happened to your support?'

This report mentions the Riley report and this legislation absolutely opposes the Riley report. If you read this carefully you will see why—and I will be happy to discuss that at the time we discuss this legislation. Section 3.5 of the report says:

... this is contrary to the Riley review recommendations relating to substitution premises.

I do not know how people who said one hand way back when the Riley report was brought down, both sides of parliament said we support the recommendations and now are happy to throw those recommendations out. That is really sad because we have an independent liquor commission which we should support and it seems to me that when things are not going the way we would like them to go politically we will change the rules.

It annoys me that there was no public consultation. This was rushed through, it was a strange set-up, having the 30-day period and then going to a scrutiny committee.

The Liquor Commission prepared a detailed analysis of this application by Dan Murphy and this bill is specifically lined up for them. We know the Liquor Commission submitted over 100 pages as to why they recommended that Dan Murphy should not be in that location. They have not dealt with the issue of the density, that it was in the wrong place and there were limitations associated with the substitution application. To some extent this bill looks at that, refer paragraphs 131 to 133 in the Liquor Commission's response: 'appropriate site can be identified and prove that the density impact can be reduced'.

There were other reasons why it should not be approved, but without going into details of the debate, it appears the scrutiny committee has not looked at the issues and reasons Justice Riley raised and ignored it.

Justice Riley said like-for-like means exactly that, otherwise you have a requirement to have a new application for a liquor licence. The scrutiny committee ignored that. The bill will remove the requirement to apply for a new licence. That throws the idea of a moratorium on take-away premises out the door and in theory it opens up a can of worms later.

We have a scrutiny committee that, if it looked at the changes the government is bringing forward, would have seen that these changes will water-down Justice Riley's recommendations. A scrutiny committee should be non-political when looking at an issue from the basic philosophy of the *Liquor Act* and the basis of Justice Riley's recommendations.

The committee should have looked at the recommendations from a neutral perspective—what is put forward, how does it fit in with the recommendations and remind ourselves that we support Justice Riley's recommendations. That has not happened, the response is political both by the opposition and the government—the opposition as it was then—stating we support Dan Murphy's and we do not care if the law is changed to make it fit or whether Justice Riley's recommendations will be ignored.

It is a sad process which is disappointing. Someone as wise as Justice Riley, saw problems with the like-for-like. A classic example is a small licensed premise turning into something ten times bigger. He said if that is like-for-like, then a new liquor licence has to be applied for through the Liquor Commission for a new application. If you look at the act, that will not happen. That is very sad.

I do not support this report. It is infiltrated with politics, because an election is coming up. It is good to be seen to be supporting something that a lot of people support. You have to remember the Liquor Commission did not say that it does not support Dan Murphy's; it said the location was wrong.

Some parts of this parliament are looking their best to say, 'Well, so what? We want it because it is popular,' and there does not seem to be any other logic about whether it is in a good place or whether it will have an effect on the community. There is a clause that says that says some consideration must be given to the community. But when you look at the bill—what we have now and what we will have—this is defined to make things a lot easier for Dan Murphy's to try again regardless of what the Liquor Commission said.

I look forward to the debate and would love to hear the reasons the government has gone against its own recommendations. I am sad that the scrutiny committee did not support Justice Riley when it came out with his report.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, as a Member of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee I will make a few points. I thank the Member for Brennan for tabling this report in parliament today.

The Member for Nelson is right, some members of this parliament have flip-flopped in their position on this. Some of us have not. You will find that the members of the Territory Alliance have not flip-flopped. This is a position we have held all along. We have always supported the ...

Members interjecting.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I love it when you react; it makes me feel like I am doing my job of opposing government and holding you to account. Not that that is the purpose of this speech today.

The report delivered by the scrutiny committee is completely consistent with our position. Some of us have not changed our position. Some of us did not commit to every recommendation of the Riley review into alcohol. A mistake that a lot of governments make is supporting recommendations, *carte blanche*, from reviews and royal commissions, finding they are stuck when they decide, in hindsight, to change their minds.

The other point I will make is that the moment has almost passed. Three-and-a-half years of the government saying no to Dan Murphy's or the substitution of their liquor licence to enable the whole Dan Murphy's proposal to go ahead—it has passed. We are now in a point in history where it is extremely unlikely that a Dan Murphy's will proceed.

I quote what Minister Fyles, the Attorney-General, said in her speech to parliament when she delivered this bill:

With all pieces of legislation once operational, some issues have come to light. It has become apparent that some aspects of the substitution provisions in the Liquor Act do not align with government's intended policy position. Crucial to that is the ability for business to grow. We need to support business development and allow our act to achieve the policy's intention, as a government.

That is all in hindsight—a massive flip-flop. But do you know what? This government has left it too late, because it is extremely unlikely that we will see any new businesses like Dan Murphy's being established in the Northern Territory in the foreseeable future. That all lies at the feet of this government for blocking what would have been an amazing shopping centre development in Darwin, employing people and giving people choice. Which are the things that other Australians enjoy everywhere else.

This government blocked it three-and-a-half years ago. Now they decide to do a monumental flip-flop and it is too late. It is your fault, to some extent, that we find ourselves in a position of being in a fiscal crisis. On top of that you have the Coronavirus crisis.

That is all too little, too late. I look forward to the debate on this later this afternoon. I understand it is first up on the order of business. It will be interesting to hear how the government defends its position of blocking business and investment in the Northern Territory for the last three-and-a-half years. Now, at the eleventh hour—all too little, too late—trying to get this through.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PAPER TABLED

Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into Treaty Commissioner Bill 2020 (Serial 119)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report Inquiry into the Treaty Commissioner Bill 2020 and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 18 March 2020.

MOTION

Note Paper – Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into Treaty Commissioner Bill 2020 (Serial 119)

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to implement the contents of the Barunga agreement, a memorandum of understanding between the four Northern Territory land councils and the Northern Territory Government signed at the Barunga Festival in June 2018.

The committee called for submissions on 14 February 2020, to be received by 11 March 2020. No submissions were received and the committee has no matters to bring to the attention of the Assembly. The committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill.

Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

PAPER TABLED

**Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into
Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 120)**

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, I table the Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report Inquiry into the Transport Legislation Bill 2020 and associated minutes of proceedings. Pursuant to Standing Order 200(4) the report was sent to the Speaker and made public on 18 March 2020.

MOTION

**Note Paper – Legislation Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into
Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 120)**

Mr SIEVERS (Chair of Legislation Scrutiny Committee): Madam Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend 11 pieces of Northern Territory transport-related legislation as a consequence of the repeal of the Motor Vehicle Standards Act 1989. As noted in the explanatory statement, the proposed amendments seek to ensure that current nationally-consistent arrangements relating to registering vehicles, driver licence classes, regulating vehicle standards and providing motor accident compensation can continue upon commencement of the new Commonwealth law.

The committee called for submissions on 14 February 2020, to be received by 11 March 2020. No submissions were received and the committee has no matters to bring to the attention of the Assembly. The committee has recommended that the Assembly pass the bill.

Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted.

Motion agreed to; report noted.

BILLS PRESENTED WITHOUT NOTICE

**Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 127)
and**

Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128)

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I seek leave for the following government bills to be presented without notice:

1. Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 127)
2. Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128).

Leave not granted.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

**Pass Bills through all Stages – Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 127) and
Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128)**

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that so much of the standing and sessional orders be suspended that would prevent the immediate presentation of:

1. Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 127)
2. Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128).

What we are facing today is unprecedented. Even a fortnight ago none of us could have imagined what we would be facing. Worldwide over 350 000 people have been diagnosed with the Coronavirus, and over 14 000 deaths. In Australia there are 1800 cases. There were 100 deaths overnight in America and over 600 in Italy.

We are not talking about a disease in countries with underdeveloped health systems, it is ravaging the world. There are tough decisions. In this House today we need to support the suspension of standing orders to allow us to introduce and pass these two important bills.

Many of us cannot fully imagine the Coronavirus. There was another case in the Territory this morning—a 75-year-old who had recently returned from overseas and had been following self-isolation.

We are putting in place unprecedented measures. This afternoon at 4 o'clock anyone entering the Northern Territory borders will be required to quarantine for 14 days. Police will be at the checkpoint to ensure that these requirements are met.

Our health services and health professionals are working around the clock. I spoke to people at the Centre for Disease Control this morning who had worked through the night, working on testing results to get Territorians' information.

In this House we have one job to do today—that is, to pass two bills on urgency. My bill, the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill is to support the public health emergency that we are facing. Briefings have been provided to those opposite. We hope we can count on their support to ensure that we are able to introduce and pass these bills. It is something we do not take lightly. These two bills are important pieces of legislation that are required to ensure that we can respond quickly and decisively to the COVID-19 pandemic to save the lives of Territorians.

What you have seen from those opposite, Madam Speaker, is pure politics—interjecting before we can even introduce the bill. They have not even heard the full introduction speech. They have been offered a briefing, which they undertook yesterday.

This bill will ensure that there is clarity of the powers of the Chief Health Officer during the declared period of the public health emergency. As I have just outlined, this COVID-19 pandemic around the world is rapidly evolving. Whilst we have been working, preparing for the potential pandemic since mid-January, whilst observing the escalating transmission of the disease overseas and, tragically, those increasing number of deaths, in Australia our national and local plans have successfully to date managed to contain the spread of COVID-19 for several weeks.

We continue to try to flatten that curve, but this disease does not recognise borders. With the current rates of transmission, particularly in communities in the eastern states, we have escalated our responses over the past few weeks throughout Australia.

Last night, all the state and territory Health ministers and the federal Health minister held a telephone hook-up. A month ago I would not have thought I, as the Chair of COAG, would be facilitating that. But we are working, with the Chief Minister sitting on the National Cabinet, the first time since war that has been enacted. It is meeting three and four times per week, every couple of days.

The severity of COVID-19 is unprecedented in the Northern Territory, Australia and around the world. We know we must act now. All of us have been getting endless messages—I challenge anyone in this House—from Facebook, text messages if they have your number and emails urging us to act and do something. That is what this government is doing—we are acting early and decisively to protect the lives and health of Territorians.

It is important that the Public and Environmental Health Act is working effectively, with the ability to support the Chief Health Officer to exercise appropriate powers for the health and safety of all Territorians.

This legislation is actually quite administrative in nature. But the Member for Araluen wants to play politics. There are no complex legal issues. The crux of the bill is to ensure we are operating as efficiently as possible during the emergency. There is no justification to delay. We should not be debating whether or not we do this on urgency, we should be doing everything we can to work together to get this bill through the House so that Territorians know we are acting in their best interests.

The need for this amendment was identified with the increasing severity and duration of the pandemic—something we explained in the briefing. Typically, our public health emergencies have been based around severe weather events—cyclones and floods, something that last just a few days. That is not COVID-19. COVID-19 will go on for weeks, potentially months. In all the briefings I have had, we are talking six months.

In declaring a public health emergency, the current maximum duration is five days, with extensions of no more than five days. That has clearly served us well in the past. But in this unprecedented time in our lives, COVID-19 pandemic means we need to have a more agile response to minimise the impact for the months ahead.

COVID-19 will not wait for us to ponder legislation for 30 days. It will not even for one day. We must act with an act of urgency. The looks from those across the Chamber, Madam Speaker! I challenge them to go back

and read the *NT News* from 30 days ago and see where we are in this rapidly evolving situation. Some of the directions we may have expected to do next week, we did not need yesterday, but we are doing them. We are putting the measures in place, so we need to have the assurance in the declaration and directions process, and this bill will provide that.

All members of the House have been offered or provided a briefing prior to this parliamentary sitting, and delaying the passage of this legislation is one that will impact lives.

We are putting Territorians first. There are so many Territorians working day and night. There are people on the frontline, health professionals, police, and the people supporting them. Many Territory businesses are facing the fight of their life but they are still putting our community first, providing that support.

We will not get caught up in petty politics from those opposite. We will suspend the standing orders so that we can debate and pass these two bills in the House today. I commend the motion.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, there is no intention at all for an obstruction to be placed in the way of government and this parliament to provide the support. It is the requirement to ensure that there is a full communication flow. This is based on the assumption that there is no parliament tomorrow. We have not been advised of that.

That conversation needs to occur. We have been briefed and we fully appreciate those briefings. We seriously understand the situation we currently face. Through that briefing and our understanding of how a government can respond in a time of crisis, we also know that there is the existing capacity now to operate in an emergency situation for a period of days.

The clock is not ticking in the manner that we have had explained to us. We are simply asking is that it not sit, as you suggested incorrectly, that the intent is to hold it off for 30 days. Not at all. We are fully aware of the crisis. We need to ensure that there is a full understanding and a respectful engagement so that we can have the understanding as to why it should all occur today and not sit on the table for at least 24 hours. That conversation has not occurred. That information needs to flow from government so that we are with you and able to fully support you in this. That is the intent of this; it is not politics.

I acknowledge that the Attorney-General/Health minister, from the feedback I have from the community, is doing a fantastic job. People are admiring the role of the Chief Minister. Make no mistake. But our role too is to honour the Westminster system and to defend that where we possibly can. In no way is this to send any other signal than to ensure that we have coherence around the decision-making process at the parliamentary level. That is all it is.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): I am not sure if the government will answer the question because at the briefing today I raised it—are we sitting tomorrow or next day because ...

A member interjecting: We do not know.

Mr WOOD: Well, you are the people that ...

Member interjecting: We do not know.

Ms Fyles: National Cabinet meets tomorrow.

Ms Lawler: Perhaps if Coronavirus is here, we will not be meeting tomorrow.

Mr WOOD: That is the first answer we have as to whether it should ...

A member interjecting: We do not know.

Mr WOOD: I know. We could stay up all night. There is only 25 people in this room. We are not breaking the law. I would certainly be happy to go late into the night if it needs more discussion. I am not opposing this bill either but from the point of view whether we have room for some reasonable debate. We can take it to a committee stage. Is that right Madam Speaker? Because it is a bill; it has amendments to it. Maybe we can ask questions in that period.

It is a reasonable question as we are also dealing with other legislation today. When someone says to me 'it is the Coronavirus' and we cannot sit tomorrow', someone must know something more than I do.

A member interjecting: Well, the feds are not sitting.

Mr WOOD: I am not disagreeing with you and I know that too. In fact, my argument about supporting this now would be that the feds have done it.

How do we have a discussion about this bill that allows some flexibility to ask some questions? Normally, the only place you will ask questions is at the consideration in detail stage, and at that stage we are generally only allowed to ask questions—I remember the words of our Deputy Speaker about the amendments and whether that allows flexibility to ask the questions that need to be asked.

I support this bill. I was just talking to my friend the Member for Daly about how the federal government passed it in one day. I wondered if there was a way that the consideration in detail can be flexible enough to allow questions to be asked during that stage. I would be happy if that was the case. I understand the urgency, Attorney-General, if there is the opportunity to ask questions.

We had a half-hour briefing, which was important, but I think if members here have some other questions regarding what is being put forward, we can use the consideration in detail stage. That would be a better way to do it.

Motion agreed to.

EMERGENCY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 127)

Ms FYLES (Health): Madam Speaker, I present a bill entitled the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 and table a copy of the Explanatory Statement and a Statement of Compatibility with Human Rights as defined in section 3 of the Commonwealth Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Act 2011.

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

The purpose of this bill is twofold:

- to amend the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* to allow declarations of a public health emergency for a period up to 90 days, instead of the current five day limit
- to amend the *Information Act 2002* to allow frontline staff from government organisations to collect and handle personal information, if necessary, in relation to the public health emergency of COVID-19 as may be required in an emergency situation.

The Northern Territory, like all jurisdictions across Australia and the world, is implementing public emergency health measures on an unprecedented scale in response to Novel Coronavirus, known as COVID-19.

Currently, the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* allows for a declaration of public health emergency and directions for a period of five days.

This short time frame was determined to be appropriate at the time the act was commenced in 2011, as the type of emergencies envisaged were typically short term such as with a cyclone. For example, if there was contaminant in the water supply causing a risk to the health of the population, following an extreme weather event such as a cyclone, the five-day period would cover the immediate need to address the water supply risk.

However, in the extraordinary situation where we find ourselves now with a global pandemic, this short time frame is impractical for community, business and governments to operate on, with declarations and directions that are less than weekly.

This bill extends the period a declaration or direction for a new longer time period of up to 90 days. The longer time period allows for declarations and directions to remain consistently available and accessible to the public for a period of up to 90 days.

The bill also allows for the declaration to be extended for periods not exceeding 90 days, instead of the current five-day period.

Our government believes the community needs clear and consistent advice to manage through this difficult situation. We are providing that advice through the Department of Health and Secure NT with clear and comprehensive directions to the public in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This bill helps achieve these goals.

The 'Declaration of a Public Health Emergency' is made by the Minister for Health under section 48 of the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011*. The current declaration covers the whole of the Northern Territory arising out of the serious public health risk from COVID-19.

The declaration enables the Chief Health Officer to issue Directions under section 52, which are 'necessary, appropriate and desirable to actions to alleviate the public health emergency'.

Directions were issued last week to:

- prohibit non-essential large gatherings of:
 - more than 500 people outdoors
 - more than 100 people indoors
- self-quarantine following arrival from overseas.

As you would be aware, National Cabinet has escalated the restrictions over the weekend and all states and territories have enacted these restrictions.

The new directions entail:

- self-quarantine upon arrival in the NT from interstate or overseas
- restrictions on visits to aged care facilities to essential services only
- further detail on indoor gatherings to reduce the density of people present to one person per four square metres of indoor area
- closure of businesses including:
 - a. hotels, pubs, clubs, food courts, restaurants, cafes; however they may provide food and beverages for takeaway purposes
 - b. casinos
 - c. gyms and indoor sporting facilities
 - d. cinemas, theatres, nightclubs, entertainment venues
 - e. religious places of worship, except weddings and funerals
 - f. assistance of police officers to ensure compliance with the directions, for example:
 - i. closing a place
 - ii. directing a person to remain in a place for self-quarantine
 - iii. escorting or taking a person to a place for self-quarantine
 - iv. preventing entry to a place or exit from a place

Exemptions are in place with the border controls' self-quarantine requirement in specific circumstances. They are:

- people involved in national and state security and governance
- active military personnel required to be on duty in the Territory while in the Territory

- a member of the Commonwealth parliament who is ordinarily resident in the Territory
- health service providers and personnel
- some transport, freight and logistics
- specialist skills critical to maintaining key industries or businesses or infrastructure
- emergency services
- other individuals or groups will be able to apply for an exemption to the Chief Health Officer; for instance visiting a terminally-ill relative or medical grounds or interstate travel for essential medical treatment

Those travellers, who are found to not be exempt, will be required by law to self-quarantine for 14 days upon arrival, with penalties applying to those who do not comply.

Section 56 of the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* provides for an offence for failing to comply with a direction given by the Chief Health Officer under section 52(3) of that act. The maximum penalty for this offence is 400 penalty units or approximately \$62,800.

A person is not guilty of this offence if the person has a reasonable excuse. These are tough penalties for a very important reason. Simply put, the lives of Territorians are at risk from anyone not complying with these orders.

Turning now to the second component of this bill. It also makes an amendment to the *Information Act 2002* to enable existing rules for the collection, use and disclosure of information in an emergency to apply in the current public health emergency.

Section 81A of the *Information Act* was inserted in 2015 by the *Information Amendment Act 2015* to ensure that appropriate collection and sharing of information could occur in an emergency situation. At the time section 81A was inserted; the kind of emergencies envisioned were cyclones and floods. These kind of weather events would typically be responded to under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.

The definition of an 'emergency situation' for the purposes of section 81A does not include a public health emergency as defined under the *Public and Environmental Health Act*. Section 81A recognises that in order to deal with an emergency, additional information may need to be collected and shared without getting caught in red tape. Examples of the kind of situations in which information gathering may be needed in an emergency are provided in the current wording of section 81A and include:

- coordinating operations for the response, management or recovery
- identifying individuals who are or may be injured, missing or dead as a result of the situation, who are or may be otherwise involved in the situation
- assisting individuals involved in the situation in obtaining services such as repatriation services, medical or other treatment, health services, financial and other humanitarian assistance
- assisting with law enforcement in relation to the situation

Section 81A allows the information to be shared only for the purpose of the emergency response and only for the duration of the emergency situation. Any extension of the period requires the approval of the independent Information Commissioner.

This bill fixes this gap which has come to light in this situation. It amends the *Information Act* to ensure that section 81A also applies to the most serious kind of public health emergencies, meaning those that meet the criteria of section 48 of the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011*. This act is the legislation we are reliant on to alleviate the public health emergency. Through these amendments, the declarations and directions will apply for up to 90 days.

As we have heard in this House and from the people we represent—our friends, family and world-wide—this situation is rapidly evolving. We, as a Northern Territory government, need to remain agile and to respond quickly and decisively.

During this 90 day period, the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* still allows for changes to be made to declarations and directions in response to Coronavirus pandemic developments.

The Department of Health will continue to act on the best available advice and make directions that are timely, proportionate to the threat, necessary and serve the public health interests of all Territorians.

I am pleased to commend the bill to honourable members and I will move that the bill be passed on urgency.

Motion agreed to; bill read a first time.

Ms FYLES (Health): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be declared to be urgent.

Just a moment ago I talked about the pandemic crisis that we face in the world today and is still hard for us to grapple with. Over 350 000 people confirmed cases with Coronavirus around the world. Over 14 000 deaths, numbers that each day we wake up to and talk about those countries. Countries close to us such as Indonesia seeing high death rates and countries far away where we have loved ones and friends-some of us family.

Italy-over 600 deaths last night alone. The United States of America, 100 deaths. It is still hard for us to image but here in the Northern Territory we are putting measures in place to protect our community and we have a very special community in the Territory, and we represent them in this Chamber, from Central Australia to the Top End from our urban areas to our remote areas.

It is that in which we bring this bill before the House today. COVID-19 knows no boundaries. We are working so hard to stop it from transmitting in our community. The cases that we have seen to date have been from people that have travelled overseas, and I thank all those people travelling back from overseas and from interstate who have isolated themselves and have made their life uncomfortable for 14 days to protect our community.

We have such a vulnerable population we represent. We all know someone who has an underlying illness, they might be receiving treatment right now. Our Indigenous Territorians, our Aboriginal Territorians the oldest living culture on earth something we are so proud of and is the focus of our tourism campaigns and industry that has been absolutely decimated through COVID-19, but we will rebuild.

First we must deal with Coronavirus, COVID-19. We must protect those communities and you have seen from the Chief Minister extraordinary actions but actions to protect our community, protecting our remote communities, ensuring they are getting the services and supplies they need but putting in place measures that will hopefully stop the community transmission. That is what we are aiming for. So often over the last few weeks we have all be talking about the graphs, the different statistics coming out of different countries and one thing we know is we need to flatten that graph. We need to flatten that curve. That is advice from the health professionals.

The Territory has had a unique position in this situation. It was us that was on the frontline when we stood up when the rest of Australia needed us to repatriate those Aussies home. We did not know at the time, I do not think any of us imaged how much it would then go on to impact our communities, but through standing up the Howard Springs facility, and I acknowledge the National Critical Care and Trauma Centre and all the amazing health professionals and logistics people that set that up-it has honed our skills and we are now using those skills to protect Territorians.

We are racing around the clock. We are trying to get more testing resource right across the Territory. We are looking at different scenarios. The Department of Health has been scenario testing both in the Top End and Central Australia. We do not know where or when COVID-19 will impact the Territory but we know one thing, it is coming, and it is. This House today must on urgency pass this bill. To those opposite, they have been offered briefings and we have outlined the facts.

There is two points in this bill going from five days to 90 days. We can work with five days. We could keep coming back and signing that paperwork every five days, but we do not even know if we will be here tomorrow. I heard the points from the opposition. We have three days of parliament scheduled but we do not know what will come out of national Cabinet tonight. I do not think any of us imagined, on Sunday night, that we would be sitting there being told that our gyms, restaurants and cafes would be closing.

We will continue to act on the advice of the health professionals, the AHPPC, our national medical officer and Chief Health Officers around the country—the people who have been working tirelessly to provide us with advice and guidance.

In this House today we will pass this bill and the Treasurer will pass her bill. Territorians will be assured that we are working to make sure our Chief Health Officer and the delegates below have the appropriate responsibilities and powers to keep Territorians safe and that we have a supply of budget to pay for medicos who are working around the clock. We are working to provide for the logistics—police officers who are moving out and mobilising on our borders.

If those opposite want to get caught up in petty politics arguing the urgency and saying that we should bring it back tomorrow, they should think for a second what their communities want them to do. They want them to do everything in their power to protect Territorians from COVID19, because it does not know state and jurisdictional borders, it does not understand. It is coming, which is why I move that we pass this bill on urgency today.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that this is an emergency. We support the government. We back you 100%. We offer any help that we can provide you to do your job. You have shown great leadership over the last few weeks. The Leader of the Opposition has just commended the Attorney-General and the Chief Minister on their roles in what they have achieved over the last couple of weeks. Good for you; you are showing exemplary leadership and providing a sense of confidence and stability during this rough time for Territorians. I commend you.

We are standing in the Northern Territory Parliament. This parliament has certain rules and ways of going about things. It is always preferable that things are not brought through on urgency. But in this instance we understand that Territorians have to come first. Given that the government has now indicated clearly, for the first time in the last week, that we may not be sitting tomorrow, that changes our position.

We have come to parliament today only with the knowledge that we will be sitting for three days of parliament. Now we know there is a distinct possibility that will not be the case. Given that, we will support you today. We are not here to block or obstruct anything you need to do to provide Territorians with safety and conditions which will reduce the pace at which this Coronavirus is spreading.

We are behind you; we are not in dispute about what you are putting forward. It was a sense that—if we could have 24 hours to go back to our communities, like we always do, to talk to our constituents about what you are putting forward and allow some discussion about these pieces of legislation.

As I said, given that you have now clearly indicated we may not have that opportunity, we will not object to these pieces of legislation going through on urgency.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, we support the government in moving these bills on urgency. We have taken a very cooperative approach with the government, which is taking the lead on such an unprecedented health and economic crisis and we thank the government for that.

We are in unprecedented times. That will take agility, leadership and a new level of cooperation from the parliament to ensure that what needs to be done is done.

I spoke with the Chief Minister last week and told him that he has our support. We want to support wherever we can. Of course, that does not mean it is not transparent scrutiny, or that there will not be rigour around these things. We recognise that we are in uncharted waters and these are challenging, very rapidly-moving unprecedented times that require responses. We have no objection to the urgency motion the government is bringing today. We thank the government very much for availing us of the opportunity to have briefings this morning, both in relation to the bills and, of course, an update on this health crisis.

I again encourage that continued two-way conversation, but not just with us. It is very important at this time that Territorians feel connected and are understanding of the clear message that the government is providing. Whilst that messaging changes rapidly, it is very important that it is clearly articulated to all people in the Northern Territory, no matter where they live. A lot of that responsibility falls on us, as members of parliament, to ensure that those messages are getting out.

I thank you, Attorney-General, and we support your urgency motion.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I also support the urgency motion now I have had a little more information. Attorney-General, I am not just asking a silly question—urgencies normally have a little break between when they are introduced and when they are passed. I am simply asking for an explanation of how this would work.

I support what you are putting through. I may have a couple of small questions to ask when the bill is debated. You have said a lot about many things—matters I think we would all support. I do not want this parliament to end up using this discussion as a political bandwagon so one side can outdo the other. This is a really important time.

As the Member for Nelson, I have been part of the very early interventions that have come to the Territory, with the use of the INPEX village, first for those who came from Wuhan and second for those who came from the ship in Yokohama—I think it was—where there was consideration concern about what the government was doing. There was fear amongst many people—they came to my office, I had to ring them, I had emails. I went to the meetings at Good Shepherd College and listened to what people had to say. I understood they had concerns about what was happening in their back yard.

We have moved on from that. Of there is one good thing that has come out of what happened at the INPEX village it is that people now have a much better understanding of what this issue is about. Of course, it has now come home to roost much faster than when that was happening a couple of months ago now ...

Ms Fyles: Four weeks ago now.

Mr WOOD: Yes. But since then, has not life changed in a hurry?

I support everything you said, minister. I support the hard work our Deputy Chief Health Officer has done, you, as minister, and all the other people who are working hard and risking their lives to ensure we do not have, as you say, a sharp curve. Hopefully, we have no curve at all, because we have six cases that have all come in from some other part of the world. If we can stop that spreading from person to person it will be a great achievement.

This bill needs to be passed on urgency. I also have a great fear—partly because of my relationship with my family and wife—that if we do not act firmly—we got that impression from listening to Police Commander Chalker today—and keep it out of Aboriginal communities, we have a real problem. Anyone who has worked on Aboriginal communities know that many of those people will be vulnerable to an infection such as the Coronavirus.

We have to act with urgency. If this bill requires urgency to bring it into place to make it easier for the Territory government to act in an urgent manner, then I will certainly support it. However, I reiterate that we need to act as a parliament, more than a government just acting as the government. This needs to bring us all together so that Territorians see us as a unified body supporting what the government is putting forward, because we want to work for the betterment and the health of all people in the Northern Territory.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I support the government's motion of urgency. We need to see some leadership from this parliament. We have seen leadership from the government, and I commend all members for working very hard, as well as the public service and everybody who is doing some great work.

We still have a lot more work to do to get the message out there. What better way than to guide the people of the Territory in understanding how urgent this is than by passing this motion on urgency. That is why these principles and instruments in law are available to us. We use them in times of crisis, as we are in today.

I will take the opportunity to speak to all Territorians. This is a very serious crisis. We have had some bad things in the Territory before; we have had cyclones, floods, droughts, economic crises, even war. This is right up there with the most significant things that have happened in their lifetime—previous lifetimes included.

Please, take this very seriously. Thank you to the parliament for showing the seriousness of this. Thank you to the government and everyone leading it for demonstrating how serious this is to us all.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, to make it absolutely crystal clear—there is full support for urgency. The Member for Nelson made the point very well that to ensure at the core of our Westminster system, there is a display of core unity.

It is interesting that the twofold purpose of the bill is the *Information Act*. If it had been explained to us that a decision was made that the parliament would not be sitting tomorrow, that is not a problem, but that piece of information was missing.

Not taking any time to delay this. I offer our support for urgency.

Motion agreed to.

Ms FYLES (Health): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the uncharted waters that we face as a community in our decision-making processes—they say a crisis like this is a stress test for every aspect of our community and the systems we have in place to be able to respond. This stress test has allowed us to see that there is a need for a change to the way we legislate to permit the capacity for the response to be extended beyond five days to 90 days.

It is perfectly understandable. There is no concern whatsoever on that front. We are completely convinced.

The *Information Act*—the briefing was clear and there was no concern about that. It is completely understood. The briefing this morning was superb. The community is starting to really pay attention. They will be turning their eyes more and more to us to ensure there is a clear flow of information. There will be a diminishing of the noise—people wondering what is going on.

We tighten up where the information flows as we turn our attention to where our points of vulnerability are. It is for that reason we, as the opposition, fully support the government and have indicated our preparedness to work in a collaborative way with the Northern Territory Government. That is also sending a signal to the community that we are working together in a time of crisis.

Once again, the Member for Nelson has made a superb point on that. It is very important that the decision-making process, the operation and function of the parliament and parliamentary democracy is seen as very important and at the core of this. That is why there was a conversation earlier about the flow of information so that as this unfolds—make no mistake, this is beginning and there will be a middle and an end—hopefully, we are all together to be able to prepare for the next phase. Every day it changes in remarkable ways.

I take this opportunity to indicate the nature of the opposition's offer. To use Mr Chalker's words, our posture is one of genuine assistance. We, of course, have signalled that to the Prime Minister. There have been a number of communications to the Chief Minister to indicate exactly and precisely that. In many ways, we would wait for an opportunity to assist where it is appropriate, but there are leadership groups around the Territory that are now looking to include alternate voices in their decision-making processes, above the normal so there is a higher level of reasoning together and working out how we can respond together, and developing that refined sense of unity and a proper understanding of the nature of the problems we face so that, collectively, we can solve them.

I do not expect that the Prime Minister of our country will get everything right, but he will be very well-supported. It is critical that we understand that no one would expect everyone to get every part of this right. That is why it is important that we have a functioning decision-making process where there is goodwill and unity at the core of it.

It is the same in the Northern Territory. I believe I should state this important point. What is important at this time is that each state and territory may have a slightly different approach based on its specific context. It is vital that we work together across the nation to form a coordinated. When the Chief Minister and Health Minister are engaged in the process, our opposition team, on behalf of Territorians, will be scrutinising what they are doing—it is our job and obligation—and assessing the advice they are provided with, as you would expect your alternate government would do. However, we will not be making contradictory statements in the media. We will provide our views directly to the Chief Minister and the Northern Territory government to provide that quality of assistance. The nature of this crisis is that information flows must be constructive and we view this through a problem-solving lens and not a political one.

All of us are, day by day, becoming increasingly aware of our vulnerability and the need for us to have a coordinated and energised response. Fundamentally, all of our actions—every one of them—is about the saving of human life. We are all beginning to look around and see the impact that that is having on communities.

I head from Indonesia this morning that there are people falling in the streets and it is impossible to bring about social distancing and have the measures we have in our community for people to have some kind of social welfare support so they can stay at home—day by day, they do not work or eat. In East Timor and other societies close to us, there are struggling with this in particular ways. That may, ultimately, have an impact on us.

Personally, my mother is 84. She is a good-hearted volunteer. She is very sick at the moment with a terrible flu. We phone her constantly, 'Mum, have you had that checked?' She said, 'Yes, I have'. The doctor said, 'Have you been in contact with anyone from overseas?' She said, 'No, apart from my volunteer work welcoming people on the cruise ships that came to visit Geraldton'. That raises alarms in all of us. Fortunately, apparently, we want it double-checked. She is still very sick today. We are phoning her constantly. She says she is okay. We know that our mother would say that. We want to make sure she is.

This can break out in any manner of ways. It will affect all of us in one way or another. Every decision we make, every action we now make is going to be seen through a different calculus. It is in that spirit that our position to government is one of genuine assistance. At the same time, we are preserving the capacity of a community blessed with a democratic system, such as we have with the Westminster system, that we are able to show that coordination even at this level. I trust that this will be seen because these are just the early stages.

It is remarkable the position we are currently in. If we can hold this, if we can manage this, we might be able to get through it with minimal damage. I am sure that all of those who are close to this know the huge risk that we face as a community.

I commend the government for their actions to this point. This is a threshold moment in some respects as the parliament's first meeting in the face of the Coronavirus. I trust that from this point forward we will begin to coordinate in a far more robust way with every member of this Chamber knowing clearly what their roles are, and that we collectively provide strength at the core to steer our community through these challenging times and get through the other side with the capacity to recover.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I will reiterate what the Leader of the Opposition has just finished with about the opposition's commitment to working collaboratively with all members in this Chamber, to work through this really dire situation we find ourselves in.

This is the most significant challenge facing all Territorians, that is, trying to flatten the COVID-19 virus transmission curve to save lives. The electors in my electorate of Fong Lim—as no doubt they have in all your electorates—have been hit hard with the collapse of businesses, with many coping direct frontline impacts.

Small businesses in tourism, events, hospitality and retail saw their customers disappear as increasing social distancing and shut down measures come into place. Very few are questioning the serious measures being taken by both commonwealth, state and territory governments through National Cabinet. I wholeheartedly support these measures and the economic stimulus packages being delivered by both federal and Territory governments.

However, while we debate here the necessary increase the powers of the Chief Health Officer and the timeframe of those powers extending out to 90 days, we need to be very mindful that people are losing their jobs. Small business owners, who have worked so hard to create and build their businesses, are literally having their dreams shattered right now. Their livelihoods are lost.

Everything our government can do to support these Territorians through the anguish of the pandemic impacts, it needs to do. I am heartened by the community response, local groups, and residents reaching out to neighbours, who are also reaching out through social media to offer help.

My office is reaching out to the elderly and the most vulnerable to offer help as I am sure other members are as well. My office will stay open as long as it is able to, as we will at all times be following the advice of the Chief Health Officer.

We respect self-distancing and all hygiene measures. We will ensure that we do everything to provide support while mitigating risk of community transmission.

We have multicultural communities and many vulnerable Aboriginal Territorians living in our urban environment. I have an emergency shelter providing food and emergency relief to our homeless at Vinnies, across the road from my office.

Everything the government can do to provide additional support to these emergency shelters to improve personal protective equipment stocks, hygiene for clients and food, would be appreciated. I look forward to direct advice as to what additional supports the NT Government is providing to groups, such as Vinnies.

I ask that all information, translated into languages, be distributed to all our local electorate offices so we can assist in better informing our culturally and linguistically diverse residents. Send through the Bahasa of self-distancing and hygiene practises poster or information and I will give it to Amye Un who owns Laksa House and has shifted to takeaway only, like other outlets, but will continue to get good customers. We would be happy to post informative posters on our Stuart Highway location.

Nations, such as South Korea, are flattening the curve from community testing rather than NT existing protocols where you need to meet clinical criteria. I have been advised in our briefing with the CEO of Health, Cath Stoddart, that much preparation has occurred by our hard-working health staff who have been working extensive shifts with some reaching exhaustion.

I thank the dedicated health officials and staff for their stand-up work. We hear that testing has reached into the hundreds. What is our capacity to ramp it up into the thousands to move to community testing beyond the existing clinical criteria? It is something we need to know. I ask this, not as a criticism of the existing hard-work, but because many people are asking us that question.

It was heartening to hear that Territory Health has two weeks supply of personal protective equipment, and important direct access to a national stockpile. I look forward to the minister for Health advising the existing protocols with regard to PPE distribution across all sectors of our service delivery, including small businesses, such as tradies and the like.

The government is to be applauded for the trade stimulus package and I look forward to being advised by the minister for Health, what measures are in place to ensure those tradies going into peoples' homes have access to appropriate PPE and hygiene equipment. We are asking people to stay at home, to practise self-isolation as much as possible whilst we are also importantly trying to save jobs by sending tradies into those homes. These are important issues we need to consider in the scheme of things.

I thank the Police Commissioner, Jamie Chalker, for his briefing this morning to non-government members of parliament. The Opposition has been seeking this briefing since last week and had asked for it to occur yesterday, but we acknowledge that everyone is extremely busy and we thank Commissioner Chalker for his informative briefing.

As at 4 pm today, the Territory borders are closed to all but essential services, compassionate travel and people moving through to their end destination. Both the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force have stood up to support the Territory's logistical border efforts and they are to be thanked. It is great to see our forces cooperating.

This will be no small task. In terms of the Territory road network, we have many routes in and out of the Northern Territory and to list them: Victoria Highway, Duncan Road, Buntine Highway, Tanami Road, Tjukururu Road, Amata Road, Stuart Highway, Mount Dare Road, (inaudible) Line, Plenty Highway, Sandover Highway, the Barkly Highway, Westmoreland Road and many other no-name Four-Wheel drive accesses.

When it comes to border patrol security and coastal access, our hard-working border patrol staff, police and defence will be dealing with ports in Darwin and Nhulunbuy, and the barge landings at Alyangula, Umbakumba, Maningrida and Ramingining. Sea Swift also supports our coastal remote communities on Croker Island, Elcho Island, Goulburn Islands, Numbulwar, Bickerton Island and Gapuwiyak.

I look forward to advice as to the work being done on the essential transport logistics train to implement best-practice health measures to prevent any potential spread of the virus. This pandemic is tearing apart the lives that so many people have enjoyed in our beautiful Top End. People are trying to access enough food to feed their families and are looking in a mixture of disgust and despair at the empty shelves in supermarkets.

We all know many people who have lost their jobs and their businesses, and we all know people who care for elderly relatives, and family and friends who have health vulnerabilities such as compromised immune

systems. This is hitting home to everyone. Our health professionals are working around the clock and facing a scenario whereby, despite their incredible efforts, this virus will further spread.

We are advised by the experts that we are about two weeks behind the eastern seaboard, which is seeing spiking rates due to community transmission. My thoughts go to at what stage we, as a community, deal with the vexed issue of school closures. That is close to my heart as I have two daughters.

There are teachers in our system who have elderly family members they care for. The personal protection equipment that health staff have access to does not exist across all agencies. There are senior schools that students travel on public buses to get to and from; our teachers and students are potentially exposed because there is not the ability to provide the 1.5 metre distancing in these schools.

The days coming I have no doubt further measures may be enacted. I ask the government to work in a bipartisan and collegiate manner with all of us on the non-government side, to respect that we are all the elected representatives of our communities regardless of whether we are government, opposition, CLP or Independent. Take the politics out of this now, follow the lead of the Prime Minister, who is engaging the Opposition Leader daily, and his shadow ministers, to be inclusive in discussing measures required.

It is time for us all to work together. That is what the opposition is keen to do to assist in minimising the health and economic impacts on Territorians, which are dire enough as it is. They deserve nothing less than all of us in this place working together. I support the bill.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill and thank the Attorney-General and government for bringing this legislation to the Chamber, especially for doing so on urgency.

There is no question the Territory and the world are facing unprecedented times. Everyone in their own way is coming to terms with working through what this means for our future.

This is a health crisis. It is a crisis of a magnitude that perhaps we do not even understand yet. It will take decisive leadership and will require the government to be agile and operate differently. It will require us as a parliament to equip the government with the legislative framework it needs to get the job done. At the end of the day, we all stand here shoulder to shoulder, together, as representatives of our great Territory and Territorians to do everything in our power to keep them safe.

For us on this side, who are not in government, that means we have to empower government with the powers it needs to get the job, flatten the curve and ensure the health and protection of as many Territorians as possible. We have an obligation to do that.

That does not mean it is unfettered, scrutinised or that the power should go unchecked and without transparency. But it requires us to operate a little differently and stand united together in what it is we are trying to achieve here and not just for this next six-month period.

We already need to be looking ahead to when we come out the other side of this crisis that is engulfing every element of our society and will increase—what measures we put in place for after, so that we can have the most appropriate recovery possible.

It goes without saying that the health toll, the job losses already taking place, the financial pressures people are under, the heartbreak and the isolation from loved ones is already having an impact. Territorians are afraid; we have to acknowledge that.

As colleagues we talk a lot about the mental health impact of this crisis and what we need to do to keep people focused on how they support themselves, their family and each other through this crisis. It requires everyone to play their role and observe all rules on isolation that have come out, hitting our hospitality industry very hard. They are all there for very good reasons. We all stand shoulder to shoulder during these unprecedented times.

I thank the government for the briefing this morning. The information we received is very important and helpful for us to enable us to advise Territorians in our community, and our constituents, as they expect us to. I believe the Attorney-General was talking about the statistics earlier. This morning we were told there are 300 000 positive cases internationally, 14 500 tragic deaths, 7000 cases in Australia and 313 new cases overnight in our country.

Whilst we do not have community transmission in the Northern Territory at this point in time—thank goodness—and the government’s actions are working in terms of flatten the curve, we know we are not immune and must do everything in our power to support Territorians and their health outcomes through this.

Currently the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* allows a declaration by the minister of a public health emergency to expire after five days unless extended and an additional five days as needed.

This bill will extend that period, as the Attorney-General articulated, to 90 days, allowing an increased time line to apply emergency powers of the Chief Health Officer including to issue warnings in relation to the emergency, to segregate or isolate individuals as may be required, to evacuate individuals, to control the movement of vehicles and to direct a person to undergo a medical examination. The Chief Health Officer must keep written records of all of these actions and report to the minister following the cessation of the emergency declaration.

This bill also allows for the collection, the use and the disclosing of personal information during a public health emergency consistent with those allowed during an emergency situation under the *Information Act*. That is very important in order to coordinate response and recovery; identify those involved in the situation; assist individuals to obtain services, such as repatriation, health, financial and humanitarian assistance; and, importantly, to assist with law enforcement, particularly as we are seeing that landscape change due to enforcement of our borders et cetera.

The ability to collect this information will apply only for the duration of the emergency situation and can only be used for the purposes specified by the emergency situation and must not be used following the emergency situation.

In the Territory, we are not strangers to disasters. We have learned to prepare, respond and react quickly to events such as cyclones, floods and fires. We get the job done and help each other through it. We move on, better prepared for the next disaster.

There will be no quick fix to COVID-19, but this legislation will undoubtedly help the government respond. We are all in this together and we are in it for the long haul. We will do the same as we always do in every emergency—we will get the job done, help each other and stand together to get through it. We will be as prepared as possible and do whatever it takes to keep people safe.

We support this bill and commend the government for bringing it to the House.

The Assembly suspended.

PETITION

Petition No 45 – Request a Scrutiny Committee Investigate the Transfer of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct Land Back to the Darwin City Council

Mr WOOD (Nelson)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders, from 26 petitioners requesting a scrutiny committee investigate the transfer of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct land back to the Darwin City Council.

Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

*DARWIN CITY REVITALISATION CAMPAIGN
DARWIN WATERFRONT PRECINCT (2006 Darwin Waterfront Act)
Verse
DARWIN CITY COUNCIL (2008 Local Government AGO*

Dear Darwin Stakeholders (owners, residents, retail and commercial business owners, tourists?)

- *Did you know?*
- *Residents of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct are not permitted to vote in the Darwin City Council (DCC) Elections; includes approximately 258 residential apartments*

- *Why? The Darwin Waterfront land is legislated as 'unincorporated' and managed by the Darwin Waterfront Corporation (DWC) board*
- *Darwin Waterfront owners and residents believe this is 'undemocratic' as municipal levies are charged to DWC whilst Darwin town planning decisions directly affect the Waterfront community?*

Please sign this petition: Signatures will be presented by an NT MLA during the 2019 NTG Parliamentary sittings to request a scrutiny committee investigate the transfer of land back to the council; this will also help revitalise the Darwin CBD by initiating integrated management systems.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be referred to the Legislation Scrutiny Committee to consider whether it should be debated.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION TIME

COVID-19 Pandemic – Health, Economic and Societal Issues

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

COVID-19, as we know, is having an unprecedented effect on the whole community. While we have not seen large numbers of infections in the Territory as yet, thankfully, we are aware of how fast and deadly the disease can be from what is happening around the world. I applaud your involvement in the National Cabinet. Please inform the Chamber on just how big a health, economic and societal issue we are facing.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I believe that Territorians know that we are doing all we can to protect them from the Coronavirus. I have said I will do whatever it takes. We can see the scale of this is immense. But more importantly or critically—however you want to look at it—it is scaling up constantly. You have seen that in our health and economic responses. We are acting to save lives and, in doing that, you must also act to save jobs, as our decisions have a ripple effect out across this country.

What we are seeing in the Northern Territory is mirrored in every state—it is across the nation. We are also seeing, tragically, the devastating consequences in other countries as they deal with Coronavirus. In many ways, Australia is ahead of them and the Northern Territory is ahead of the rest of Australia. This is a devastating pandemic right now.

We have seen countries deal with it well and others deal with it badly. I believe, as a nation, through the leadership of the Prime Minister bringing together every state and territory on the National Cabinet so there was unity and strength in action and purpose, we are seeing us deal with this with resolve. I thank the Prime Minister for his leadership and for what he has done and, obviously, all my colleagues for how they have participated in that process. It is critical for us.

One reason I am on the National Cabinet is to make sure there is no opt-out. That no state goes its own way and, in doing so, becomes a danger to the rest of the nation. There is no threat of that right now, every Premier, Chief Minister and the Prime Minister are cooperating. Our way through this is if we all do it together; everyone buys-in.

That is one reason why you have seen some of the decisions we have made. There have been people who have not bought-in and our compliance has had to get stronger and enforcement tougher as people have not made that decision to think: how can I be good to my fellow Australian? That has unfortunately seen us as a government, the Australian government and our fellow states and territories make those even stronger decisions and actions.

We are not out the other side of this yet, it will get harder before it gets easier. There will have to be more tough decisions to come. We have National Cabinet tonight. I predict there will be a big day tomorrow, off the back of that, as there has been after every National Cabinet.

This is the biggest challenge Australia has faced based on the historical context of what we saw during the world wars and the depression. That is what we are walking into if we do not get this right.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Protections for Territorians

Mrs WORDEN to CHIEF MINISTER

Territorians, like everyone, are completely shocked as the Coronavirus continues to cut a swathe through not just the Northern Territory but through the world. Can you inform Territorians what our government has been doing to protect them and why you have pushed so hard to introduce such far-reaching measures?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have promised we will do whatever it takes. People have seen our resolve has been strong, we have made and enforced those decisions. This is a promise we will keep to Territorians until we have beaten this menace together.

These are tough times, times that call for extraordinary measures. I thank Territorians and Australians who have got it. Our ability to deal with this is based on people understanding why we are dealing with this and genuinely, the majority do. While we have seen some non-compliance, the majority understand.

For now, the Territory remains the safest place in this country and we are doing everything we can to keep it that way. We have seen things down south get worse. We have to make sure we do everything we can to keep Territorians safe and that is why we have taken such actions to keep us ahead. Nothing is normal. It has been dramatic days and weeks and many people have adjusted rapidly to the changing normal. We will do everything we can to limit the spread of this virus.

We acted early and prudently and acted on our remote communities. We have some of the most vulnerable people in Australia in the Northern Territory and that is why we acted swiftly with them, based on their leadership and telling us, here are things we think you can do to keep us safe. It is important to make sure in doing that, we let them know they are not isolated or forgotten.

We are having strong conversations and can guarantee the supply chain. To be protected in a remote community they must have a guarantee that they will get the food they need, essential services and essential repairs and maintenance for those services. We have been clear on that from the start.

Across the nation, parents and teachers have been anxious. What do we do with our schools and how do we make sure our kids, teachers and parents are safe? From today, we have said, you know your kids and your home and we trust you to make the right decision for them. From term 2, education will be compulsory. Kids must learn and we will be flexible with how we deliver that education.

Our economy is being hit worse than any national disaster. We will do what it takes to get you through, we are throwing the kitchen sink at this and we will look after our businesses.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Strategic Approach

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

Is the strategic objective of the Territory to slow the spread of COVID-19 through a track and trace approach and therefore hopefully allow our health system to keep up, or is the strategic approach go hard now in an attempt to eradicate COVID-19? Can you provide advice on the current rate of testing per day to meet critical criteria as established and any intended expansion to community testing as the depths of the measures and duration of these different strategies are quite different in terms of shut-downs or lock-downs?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are in suppression. We do not have community transmission. You see our early decisive action around remote communities and around securing our borders. All goes to the fact that we do not have community transmission in the Northern Territory yet so we are doing everything we can to suppress.

Some of the things that the Leader of the Opposition is talking about goes to what you do if you move past that stage. We are still in the denial phase, the suppression phase, the stopping of community transmission phase. This is critical. We have been able to do this longer than others we are going to try to do this longer than others. We have gone to 14 day isolation for people who come in to the Northern Territory, whether it is interstate or overseas without having community transmission. We are in that phase.

When it comes to testing and who you test and when you test and how you test that is critical decisions made by our medial fraternity. That is who I trust to make those decisions and how they make those decisions and when they make those decisions.

I have said very clearly from the start there has to be a clear chain of command about who does what when. We have that structure in place. We are lucky as a jurisdiction that we have had to deal-it is not lucky-we have unfortunately had to deal with emergencies in the past, whether it is cyclones or other issues, we have a very good well understood chain of command and process in place. We are not lucky that we have that we just have it.

We can do this. We are going to do it for a longer duration than we have ever had to do it before but we will do this. We will respect the expert advice and we will do what it takes to keep our Territorians safe.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Effect on Economy

Mr BOWDEN to TREASURER

Can you please update the House on how the Northern Territory economy will be affected by the devastating global spread of Coronavirus?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, Coronavirus is going to be absolutely devastating. It is going to be devastating on a global scale and a national scale and it will be devastating on a local scale when it comes to our economy. Our early estimates that are showing that there is going to be a significant impact on GSP for the Territory in 2019-20.

We have already seen significant restrictions implemented in this country that will impact the economy. We have seen cafes close, restaurants reduced to take-away, only services with the cafes, pubs, gyms, cinemas and clubs. We have seen the impacts on tourism. We have seen the ripple effects of having to shut down our borders nationally, and today we are moving to secure our borders within the Northern Territory just as Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania are doing.

Our number one priority as government is to protect human life. Another priority of this government is to save jobs. We are doing everything we can to act upon that and to make sure Territorians know that we have their back and that we are doing everything we can, as the Chief Minister said, we are throwing the kitchen sink at it to save jobs and businesses because we will get through this.

There is another side to this-we will get through this. We are doing everything we can to ensure that as many jobs, businesses and industries as possible stand at the end of this. It will not be easy. That is why we have taken action early on initially with the \$2m resilience package for tourism but we have had to act again, as too has the federal government, the RBA, the banks and other state and Territory governments around this nation.

We have released our first stimulus package, the \$65m jobs rescue and recovery plan. We have also released our \$50m small business survival fund to keep businesses alive, to help businesses to adapt, to help prepare businesses for the recovery of when we get through this.

To the people across the Territory, I say we have your back. We are doing everything we can. Your industry leaders are working with us, hand in hand, to make sure we get the money flowing where it needs to go, the support to where it is most needed to make sure we tackle these economic challenges head on. We must all do this together. We are all in this together.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Food Supply

Mr MILLS to CHIEF MINISTER

Chief Minister, we all recognise that panic buying must stop. However, Territorians, like all Australians, are very anxious. They are concerned about food supplies—from Foodbank, who provide meals to our most vulnerable and which are now facing critical shortages, to empty supermarket shelves by mid-morning to food running out in remote communities, for example Gangan.

Chief Minister, what dialogue have you had with large and small food chain suppliers and distributors, including the not-for-profit sector? What plans have come out of that to assure them and the public on the short- and medium-term supply to give confidence to Territorians around food supply?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an issue that has not only dominated the security and emergency management committee—which is the sub-committee of Cabinet dedicated to emergency management—and the Cabinet, it has also been an issue that we have discussed formally through the National Cabinet. I have made sure that at every level we are talking about and working on this, to be able to provide that guarantee.

We know as a nation, and this is critical for the Territory, we have the food we need in our warehouses and distribution networks. At a Territory level, we have discussed it with the companies involved in those distribution mechanisms to make sure we have the continuity of supply and the guarantee of supply to everyone, particularly our remote communities, who right now are in the safest place in Australia from Coronavirus but are also incredibly vulnerable to Coronavirus.

We have had those direct conversations with the whole of the supply chain network for the Northern Territory. We have also had them with our NGOs. I am concerned about Foodbank's capacity to supply. This is the critical flow-on impact from panic buying. There is the obvious problem of it not being on the shelf when you go in. They have done the vulnerable hour and other measures to deal with that and the limitations.

However, when you panic buy, when you clean out those shelves and you put food in your cupboard—some people are buying months' worth of supplies—you are not allowing Woolworths and Coles the generosity they normally show in how they pass on food to Foodbank. This is a real concern. The panic buying is taking away from the chain that we have in place organically in this nation to entities like Foodbank.

We are actively working as a nation—this is not just a Territory problem—to make sure bodies like Foodbank are getting the supplies they need. But that is a consequence of panic buying. People are not thinking of others when they do that, and we need to stop and pause and think, 'do I need this food? Do I need it?'. From National Cabinet down, the advice is clear: If everyone did their ordinary shopping—maybe throw in a few extra cans or lifelong milk—if everyone did just that, we would have over-supply of food in this nation. Not just enough, not goldilocks—we would have more than enough.

As the Prime Minister said, please stop it. Think about other people and buy what you need to buy. That is it. Do not go beyond. We are not asking much. As a leader, prime minister, chief minister, premiers, we are not asking for much. Do an ordinary grocery shop and buy a few extra cans, and everyone is going to be okay. But please make sure you think of others, think of those less fortunate who rely on Foodbank, think of the consequences of your actions.

COVID-19 Pandemic – NT Health Preparation and Support

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for HEALTH

What is NT Health doing to prepare and support Territorians during the COVID-19 pandemic?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we cannot deny that Territorians, Australians and countries around the globe are facing an unprecedented health crisis. We know that here in the Northern Territory that we have some of the most vulnerable people, not only in Australia, but in the world.

We have all heard the horrific news from overseas, where the death toll is rising rapidly from this awful disease. That is why it is so important that we have taken the necessary steps to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. I point to the response the Chief Minister provided to the Leader of the Opposition, which was, 'We do not have community transmission. We are doing everything we can do to suppress. We will throw every measure at this.'

My heart goes out to the businesses and Territorians who are being negatively impacted, but these measures are essential to save the lives of Territorians. It is as blunt as that.

The Northern Territory Department of Health has been involved in preparing for this health crisis since mid-January. I take a moment to acknowledge the hard-working clinical staff, the people who support them, the logistics staff and everybody who has been working to ensure we are prepared.

We have not done this alone. We have been working together with our interstate colleagues, as a nation. The Chief Minister is making sure the Territory is at the national Cabinet and each minister, in their portfolio, is working with their colleagues.

As I said earlier in the House, the Territory really was on the frontline first with the Coronavirus, when we stood up the Howard Springs facility. I take a moment to acknowledge, Member for Nelson, the people of your community. Because we did not know much and things moved very quickly. What we saw out there was a typical Territory response. People responded with open arms. The school children supported those people who had been stuck in a foreign county, having gone on holidays, stuck with family and friends and then those stuck on a cruise ship who had to come to a place they had not planned to come to.

We have six positive cases in the Territory. We have managed to contain the spread so far and every effort will be thrown at that. The testing we are doing is based on the AHPPC advice.

We will continue to put the needs of Territorians first. The pandemic clinic is open at Royal Darwin Hospital and at the Howard Springs former INPEX site. We have a clinic ready to go in Alice Springs—for when it is needed. The GP clinic at Tennant Creek Hospital is providing tests and we have plans for Nhulunbuy and testing at the hospital campus in Katherine hospital.

There is also testing at some private GPs. It is important for Territorians to remember to practice good hygiene, social distancing and stay at home if you feel unwell. Make sure you carry out the self-isolation criteria and if you need support, reach out to the hotlines provided.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Police Safety

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to MINISTER for POLICE, FIRE and EMERGENCY SERVICES

In the last few weeks the Northern Territory Police Association has raised concerns over the unprecedented role that our brave police are being asked to undertake during this devastating health crisis. Our borders have been ordered to closed, our communities have closed, public gatherings in venues are banned and our police will be asked to do an ever-increasing role to oversee compliance. Our police resources are stretched; they were stretched before this crisis.

Could you please explain what your government is doing to ensure our police and their families are protected from this virus; that police, including PALIs are provided with all the resources, particularly PPE and training to keep them safe; public safety at this time, when our police will be stretched, conducting a wide range of other activities.

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I want to say a big thanks to our police on the frontline serving our community. In the face of the COVID19 mass issue we are seeing, we always know police are ready to step up and they never fail to disappoint. They are all out there. Many who do not necessarily wear the uniform when they go into the office, have quite happily put on the uniform in the last few days, are hitting the frontline to support people across the Northern Territory.

I thank the Northern Territory Police Association for the constructive work it is doing with police in managing COVID19 across the Territory. Under the leadership of Commissioner Jamie Chalker APM, we are seeing that Taskforce Protect is in place. A huge amount of work is happening across the Northern Territory and as at 4 pm today, our borders will be secured.

The Australian Defence Force has come to help the Northern Territory. I thank the federal government for its support. The need to have Australian Defence Forces involved was communicated very early and it provided that supported.

I also thank the Australian Federal Police, Minister Dutton and Commissioner Kershaw, because the AFP will be working with us as well. They are doing a magnificent job out there.

We have also looked to fast-track the current recruit squad we have in the college—59 recruits who will be graduating next month and reporting for duty. Our police college has great experience. These recruits are ready, well-trained and looking forward to being out there to preserve and protect our community.

We have the police who are doing an immense job. There is no doubt that this is resource-intense. We have seen the commissioner announce additional patrols to our towns and CBDs to ensure calm remains in our community and discourage people from doing stupid things like panic buying and to ensure there is orderly behaviour during these unprecedented time and give the community that reassurance that we are safe and they are out there to protect them.

We know we are facing some unprecedented times. Police have acted and are responding swiftly to the needs of the community. They have a big job ahead, particularly as we keep the borders secured and people in our very remote and isolated places supported. We will continue to work with the NTPA on those important issues of how we ensure we keep our police safe on the front line too. It is important that when they go out to serve and protect our community we are protecting them as well so they have the best conditions in place.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Supplies for Communities

Mr COSTA to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING and LOGISTICS

I know people have been concerned about our food and freight supplies getting through, particularly with the new border security measures commencing later today at 4 pm. What is this government doing to ensure continued supply of freight, including food and medical supplies, to our urban and remote communities?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it goes to some of the comments made previously by the Chief Minister. I can assure Territorians that, as minister, we are connecting and continuing to have regular phone link-ups with our federal counterparts. I was on a phone hook-up yesterday and was assured by one of the federal ministers that we have food in Australia for a population of 75 million people. We only have 26 million people, so three times the amount of food. We have a strong food manufacturing industry in Australia. I assure people in the Territory that there is plenty of food being produced in Australia every day.

We will secure our borders from 4 pm today. We have put in place some very clear guidelines which are available on the [Coronavirus.nt.gov.au](https://www.coronavirus.nt.gov.au) website. If you are a truckie who is coming in, a barge company that is looking to go out to a remote community, a trucking business that is distributing from Darwin or Alice Springs, there is a website there for you to process the paperwork for that. We are talking to all of our stakeholders about what needs to happen.

It is about assuring Territorians that what we are seeing is a restocking issue, not a supply issue. As the Chief Minister said, people are purchasing large amounts of goods from shopping centres. It is about those shelves being restocked, it is not necessarily about the supply. We will ensure our supply chains continue through the trucking industry, the road transport, the trains, the barges, our ports. The department has worked very closely with those to make sure there are protections in place and the workers are very clear about what they need to do to continue social distancing, to make sure they are not putting the health of any of the people in our remote communities at risk.

There are strong protocols in place for those suppliers and industries that will supply essential foods, medicine, pharmaceuticals, building materials—whatever is needed—in our remote communities and from interstate into the Territory. It is about continuing to work with our federal and state counterparts to make sure that food supplies come into the Territory and get out to our very remote communities

COVID-19 Pandemic – Protection of Prisoners and Staff

Mr WOOD to ATTORNEY-GENERAL and MINISTER for JUSTICE

What is the government doing to protect Northern Territory prisoners and staff from being infected by Coronavirus. Of concern, is the fact that the majority of prisoners are Aboriginal and more likely to be at serious risk, if infected?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we have a Territory-wide response but within that there are certain cohorts. We need to make sure that no matter who or where they are—the prison population is unique—that we provide that level of health care.

When the Coronavirus was evolving, I was concerned about our prison population—a large group of people living in relatively close confines. There was the potential for a visitor or staff member to unknowingly bring in the Coronavirus, before some restrictions came into place. I immediately began working with the Corrections Commissioner on making sure that our prison population was protected.

All Australian Corrections Commissioners have been working together. In the Territory we think we are a couple of weeks behind the eastern seaboard which is why we are working hard to suppress the cases and to stop the community transmission. The Corrections Commissioners have provided advice and the National Cabinet—I hope I am not disclosing National Cabinet secrets within parliamentary privilege—discussed the matter of correctional facilities.

Victoria has stopped visits. In the Territory we have reduced visits and we will look at stopping them. Visits are important to our prison population, but we need to make sure that we manage the health and welfare of corrections staff and the inmates. This is a complicated area but they are provided health services as if they were outside the wire.

The Corrections Commissioner has put in place measures to protect the possibility of transmission—reduced number of visits and looking at their activities. As we see the Coronavirus pandemic and the impact in the Northern Territory spread further, we will take further measures within our correctional facilities to protect both them and Territorians broadly.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Health and Safety of Children and Teachers

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for EDUCATION

Could you please advise what planning has been undertaken to ensure the health and safety of our children and teachers? Could you also advise on the continued provision of education in the event that school closures become necessary?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Karama for her question, which is on everyone's mind in the community, particularly our members who represent their electorates across the Northern Territory.

Schools, our children, staff and their wellbeing is a priority for our government and we are taking the lead on during this health crisis. In the Territory we have 200 schools. Our teachers and principals have assumed responsibility above and beyond their normal duties during this time. I thank them, our education staff and our communities across the Northern Territory during an anxious time, particularly regarding the safety of our young Territorians. I acknowledge the work of our teachers and educators is vital. I acknowledge their leadership which has shone through during this time of uncertainty.

I have established a working group: Department of Education, Australian Education Union, NT, NT Council of School Government Organisations, COSGO, and Northern Territory Principals' Association. I have tasked this group to work on the plans and provisions of school closures, the upcoming school holiday break—which is on many peoples' minds—and the event of having to deliver and learning in an alternative model of delivery if we are looking into the future, particularly in Term 2 of this year.

The Department of Education convened and established an emergency management committee. They did this on 31 January this year. This has been very close on our minds in terms of making ensuring we have the right preparation and support for our teachers, our principals, our school communities, our parents, our carers and for our Territory students. It is essential that we have the support for those in our classrooms and schools providing leadership and education for our students.

I thank the Education department for their work in making sure that this is a priority. I can assure the community and the House this is work that has been undertaken since the end of January.

Our government and non-government schools have been in close contact with the Department of Education to allow for the provisions and emergency action plans and I thank the collegial nature of that particular relationship.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Support for Sports, Art and Culture

Ms NELSON to MINISTER for TOURISM, SPORT and CULTURE

Sports, art and culture is such an integral part of our communities and because of COVID-19 like all other sectors it employs thousands of Territorians and they are facing truly challenging times now and ahead. Can you please advise the Chamber what support is available for our valuable, creative industry sector?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, obviously like everybody the creative industry sector is one that is adapting quickly to the measures that have been put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 and we all accept the very necessary measures that have been put in place to make sure that the health of Territorians is at the forefront of government's mind.

Without a doubt we completely appreciate that the creative industries in particular are a sector who were impacted almost immediately. When we saw some of those measures coming through with restrictions around mass gatherings, for example, a lot of people had cancelled gigs, festivals and events that are the livelihood of much of our creative industry sector.

It employs around 2400 Territorians directly and indirectly and today we released a package—it is reprioritised funding from within the department of \$2m to address some of those immediate needs. They include a digital adaption program and that is about making sure that our arts organisations can establish an online presence. They are building the capacity to deliver online performances, art work and they are able to ensure business continuity and allow for remote operations as well.

We are creating an online platform where we will be able to stream live Territory arts to the world—some of the digital content that people are already starting to create. We have released two additional grants rounds to keep money flowing to people who are currently struggling and have lost a significant amount of work. We have a package of support for our screen sector to keep work rolling out because film producers and film makers are still creating work, and we will be providing grants to both of our peak bodies in Desert in Central Australia and ANKAAA across the Top End who support all of our Territory art centres so that have some confidence working with art centres on their cultural maintenance plans, on their business continuity plans, on the health safety and wellbeing and the communication to those artists, art workers across the Northern Territory.

We are moving as quickly as possible. I want to make it absolutely clear that we can all acknowledge the roll of our creative industries in the social and emotional wellbeing of our community. It has never been more critical than it is now and it will be critical to the recovery of our community.

The creative industries completely understand their role in that and are a part of working together and I look forward to continuing to work with the sector to provide them with the immediate and long-term support they need.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Youth Services and Engagement

Mrs LAMBLEY to MINISTER for TERRITORY FAMILIES

Groups of children and youths—some of them large groups—are continuing to gather on the streets of the Northern Territory at night. This remains a problem in Alice Springs. This is causing a problem for them and the public. What are you doing about that? How are you dissuading these children from gathering on the streets of Alice Springs and other places at night? When do you intend to close the youth centres that are attracting kids out at night?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, this is an area that we are working very hard on. We know that this has been an ongoing issue. We are discouraging public gatherings, including informal ones. That is where we are working.

We had an emergency meeting in Alice Springs this morning to talk about how we step through the school holiday period coming up when there is usually a lot of activities—Territory Families funds a range of activities to keep young people entertained—knowing that that will not be possible.

The first message we are giving very clearly to a whole range of people is the best place, the safest place for you to be is your home community. We would like to thank Tangentyere and Larrakia nations, who have been working. I know that Kalano in Katherine has also been working very hard with the 'return to country'. Several hundred people have been returned home to country where they are going to be the safest.

We need to also make sure that we are getting information to young people in a way that is very clear and consistent, and gives those health messages strongly. Tangentyere youth patrol have been working on that with understanding about why gathering as a group is no longer, even in an informal way, a safe way to go. We need people to be at home and we need families to step up and work with those.

We have been working closely with police who have been working very hard around this issue. I thank them for their work.

If people are doing the wrong thing, there will be action taken, as always. We will be taking action but we will also make sure that the information is going forward.

We also know that many young people are dependent on Schools Breakfast Programs but also young people get food through those processes. We are working to make sure that there is also an ability for young people to get access to that food if they are not on Youth Allowance. There has been increased capacity into the welfare system so we are hoping that some of those issues around poverty will also be addressed by that additional money going into household budgets and that young people will not be as reliant on those food programs at the youth centres.

The youth centres have been working with the Health department around the sort of activities and supports available because we also need to acknowledge that some of those young people have significant mental health issues or a range of other issues. We need to make sure that they still have access to support. They may be in houses that are not safe. We also need to make sure there is access to those supports while acknowledging that there is a strong chance that rates of domestic violence will increase over this period.

There is a large range of planning happening. Safety in community, safety in confidence is the first priority of police of this government.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Public Service Response

Mrs WORDEN to MINISTER for PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

Minister, can you please update the House on how our hard-working public service is adapting to the threat we are now facing from the Coronavirus?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are facing uncertain times but Territorians will look after each other. Our Northern Territory public sector employees are already stepping up to that challenge, working around the clock and serving Territorians in these difficult times.

Thank you to all our public servants, particularly those directly involved in responding to Coronavirus. Things are changing rapidly. As a result, our responses and communications are also changing rapidly. Our public servants deliver critical services for Territorians and will continue to do so in line with medical advice.

If an NTPS employee is required to self-isolate, is not unwell and can work from home, then they should. If an NTPS employee, including casuals, is required to self-isolate, they will be able to access special leave for the self-isolation period. If they are confirmed to have the virus, they will move to personal leave. In a case where an employee has no personal leave, or the personal leave runs out, they will be able to use special leave for the remainder of the time they are unwell.

Employees need to advise their manager as soon as reasonably practical that they need to self-isolate. Managers will work with employees who may be vulnerable and concerned about attending work as normal. If an NTPS employee has travelled overseas or interstate after the dates that travel restrictions were put in place, the employee will need to self-isolate using their annual leave.

All NTPS work places will implement social distancing and continue to update their practices as the medical advice is updated. Social distances, washing hands and not touching your face is our best defence against this virus. We must all remember to follow the medical advice provided and keep up to date with changes.

I acknowledge the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development and its CEO, who is in the final stages of completing a skills audit of all employees across our department, which is a big department. This is about skills in relation to attending emergencies, specific skills to assist health and health interventions, international languages—our ministers on this side put the call out that public servants, who want to step forward and help out in different areas, will be supported and integrated into addressing this crisis. I was really pleased to understand that through a briefing yesterday. It will be good when we know that all of our public servants are safe at work, at home and in support of the community as usual.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Economic Response

Mrs FINOCCHIARO to CHIEF MINISTER

We acknowledge your government's \$65m stimulus package and your \$50m small business package. We welcome these and thank you for moving quickly on that. But we cannot sit still and people want to know what is next.

Health is our first priority, but we need to ensure we are supporting businesses and keeping people in work where possible. Can you explain what the government is doing next? Can you confirm whether the government is exploring payroll tax relief, including waiving any outstanding debts for those already struggling under the weight of our economic environment? Will the government be providing any additional relief on power and water bills, particularly for our vulnerable, unemployed, reduced income, pensioners or disadvantaged Territorians?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, we are considering the additional things we may need to do to scale our economic response to the health response. We are not taking anything off the table but, over recent days, with the decisions that have been made over recent days we have seen specific impacts as a result. It is about constantly trying to tailor our response to the decisions and the impacts.

We are trying to be flexible as a Cabinet to respond to what is happening. Some things that we were thinking about doing have become redundant. That is why it is important to be mindful about what we are looking at.

If you think back five days, we announced a business structural adjustment package of \$5m, which allowed for businesses to adjust to the change in the rules. There were two aspects to that. One was a physical aspect and one was an online aspect. The physical aspect is redundant; partition gone—do not need partitioning. That whole stream of decision-making to curtail the spread is gone. The digital bit is still important and we rolled that into the \$50m small business survival package to allow businesses to adapt.

Physical things that will now be needed are different, with regard to how you might do a delivery or takeaway service. We are trying to be nimble. Unfortunately some of the things the Member for Spillett said just then may not provide relief.

For example, the Australian Government—this is not a criticism. When you go back to the announcement of its first package, it was legit. It said, 'This part of your BAS, your tax claim—keep that cash, do not give that cash back to us, that is your cash.'

As business crashes, money is not in that column. The cash is not there to be kept; they are not paying that tax. It is not going to give the benefit the government originally saw as flowing through, so it is important that we think of ways to do this to make sure it returns.

Giving people a break on their payroll tax if they are not employing anyone does not help them. What do we do that will have an impact on them? For a lot of these businesses it is beyond whether you pay payroll tax or not, it is about how you pay for some of the fixed costs you have to keep you alive—the rent and other things that they cannot dodge. A landlord may be generous but there are still some fixed costs you cannot dodge. How do we help them through that?

This goes back, again, to the Australian government package we are currently negotiating with them. It has some packages that are reliant on the business being active. I get that—you do not want to give money that is dead and does not exist. However, we have businesses we have made decisions about and the reason they are not active is because of us. How do we help that business stay alive so it qualifies for the federal government's stimulus package, while at the same time we are negotiating with the feds if they can redefine

this in a different way. We have to be nimble and flexible and make sure the things we do will impact that business and keep it alive. This is survival for some of these businesses. Some will not be able to adapt. Some just have to find a way to survive through the next few months. That is what we have to work on.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Supplies for Agriculture and Resource Sectors

Mr SIEVERS to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRY and RESOURCES

COVID-19 is a very serious issue. Can you update the House about the steps you have taken to ensure the continuity of supply chains across the Territory's agriculture and resources sectors?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, it is an extremely important question. It is unheralded ground we are on at the moment. The health and safety of Territorians being our number one priority has been the foundation of all the discussions we have had. It is not our only priority in the complex problem we face at the moment, but it is our number one priority.

As other ministers have done, I give a big shout out to our department. The amount of work it has been able to do in a small amount of time under some very trying situations, and without a rule book to follow at the moment—they are stepping through everything in a wonderful way and doing some immense hours. I very much tip my hat to them and thank them for their assistance, as I will to the Minerals Council, the Farmer's Association, Cattlemen's Association and all of agriculture and primary industries, our fishing and resources and gas sectors.

All of their advocates have stepped up and come forward with assistance and plans. They know it is not just about their businesses at the moment. They know how important they are to the Northern Territory, but it is about continuity of supply through the food markets. We need to ensure people have guarantees about that. We also need to ensure that people have legitimate work to continue on as we come out of the other side of this remarkable problem. And we will come out of the other side of it—there is no doubt about that.

I commend the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics as well. My department has been working very closely with it to try, as this problem extends out to our borders, to ensure we have a physical presence there. If there are queries at the borders about technical issues to get people through, the police and our services that are there will have the assistance they need.

We know our agriculture industry across the board is very important. Food security is extremely important. One of the earliest things the Farmer's Association brought our attention to was to make sure we get the opportunity to have a 2020 harvest. We have to be able to do that. We have to have people in the Territory to do that. We are making connections now between the people who have lost their jobs and the industry that needs people for those jobs. We are very proud of the people who are doing that body of work.

I understand what some people say about locking the borders down and not having FIFO workers coming in. The repercussions of that are dire. We may not have power in the future if we simply go about it like that. We have to have assistance in the Northern Territory. We have to be very smart about how we go about letting that assistance through. People are currently working through Covid-19 management plans that are being signed off by the Territory health officers to make sure we have that highest level of scrutiny of anybody who is passing through the Northern Territory.

We are meeting with our federal agriculture and resource ministers as well ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

COVID-19 Pandemic – School Closures

Mr MILLS to MINISTER for EDUCATION

You are very well aware of the concerns of Territory families in regard to the vexed issue of school closures. We appreciate that you are following the best public health advice and a rapidly-changing environment. Are you currently considering bringing the school holidays forward and closing schools on 30 March?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in an earlier answer, to the Member for Karama, the working group that I have established is going through different scenarios and options to allow our schools to be best placed in regard to any planning, particularly if there is any directive by the National Cabinet about school closures nation-wide.

The advice from the Prime Minister in his address on Sunday evening is that schools remain open and compulsory. Today there is some more leniency in regard to non-compulsory schools. We encourage families, if they are to keep students home as of today onwards, to notify schools so we know that they are at home.

A very strong statement by the Prime Minister, echoed by our Chief Minister, is that this is not keeping kids out of school; it is keeping them at home. There needs to be clear definition that if families choose to keep students home, they are to be at home. I am making that clear for all members and the community.

In regard to options for school holidays, the department has been working on this for a couple of weeks, bringing into the fold some key education stakeholders so we can work through the practicality of it. Each of those stakeholders bring to the table multiple perspectives, particularly in regard to industrial protection for our staff and their wellbeing, as well as the practicality of implementing anything to do with school closures. There are multiple options on the table, but there is no official decision in regard to a formal date if there were to be any changes to the school term.

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Standing Order 110: relevance. The nub of the question is the consideration of 30 March.

Ms UIBO: As I have mentioned, multiple options are on the table which are being discussed, particularly in regard to the practicality of those options being implemented, as well as the impact on staff, students, families and carers. That is why it is very important to have all those voices at the stakeholder table, including the Department of Education, to explore those options and see what is practical, viable, will have the least impact on school routine, and will make sure the health, wellbeing and safety of Territorians is paramount.

COVID-19 Pandemic – Air Services

Ms AH KIT to MINISTER for INFRASTRUCTURE, PLANNING AND LOGISTICS

What is this government doing to secure critical air services into our regional and remote towns so they can continue to access essential services and supplies?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, as we all realise, the aviation industry across the world has been decimated with the Coronavirus. The Territory aviation sector has been significantly impacted as well. The regular air services to remote and regional towns—many of us in this House travel on those RPTs to get to the Tiwi Islands, Maningrida, Papunya and others. We believe there needs to be a minimum service that continues for RPT travel to get people in and out, deliver goods and services and deliver mail. All that needs to continue.

We announced a \$2m support package to ensure the minimum RPT services continue for the next month. I am working with the federal government to see how we can access the \$1bn remote and regional package that Simon Birmingham and Michael McCormack are administering. Minister Moss and I are working hard with them to make sure we can access ongoing funding to keep those RPTs going. We know just how valuable they are.

Airnorth, Fly Tiwi, MAF, Chart Air, NT Air Services, Katherine Aviation—there is a long of large and small aviation services that need to continue their businesses because if they wind down and shut up shop, getting them back up when we are through this will be extremely difficult because they are leasing, they need pilots—and all those stories.

An immediate package of \$2m is not a lot of money. It will not keep them going for probably more than a month. We need the federal government-anybody on the other side if you are talking to your federal government counterparts, Simon Birmingham or Michael McCormack—we will continue to write and to talk to them. We need to ensure the RPT flights continue in our remote communities as they are highly valuable. Territorians and our remote communities rely on those services.

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

**EMERGENCY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 127)**

Continued from earlier this day.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I also contribute to the debate this afternoon on the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 brought to parliament this morning by the Attorney-General.

To recap, the purpose of this bill is twofold in the words of the Attorney-General, one to amend the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* to allow declarations of a public health emergency for a period up to 90 days instead of the current five day limit, and second, to amend the *Information Act 2002* to allow frontline staff from government organisations to collect and handle personal information if necessary in relation to the public health emergency of COVID-19 as may be required in an emergency situation.

The Opposition certainly do not object to either of these intentions of the bill. The bill really is a sensible and practical response to any many people have described already today in parliament an unprecedented crisis we are facing in the Northern Territory and throughout the whole world.

I take this opportunity to talk a bit about the impact of this pandemic and the preparation around a possible outbreak of Coronavirus in Central Australia. We all have our own patches that we look after and to some extent the response to each region and community will be a bit different.

Like everywhere else, in Alice Springs people are really worried about jobs, work and the survival of businesses. There have been lots of people that have lost their jobs already in Alice Springs. We saw the shutdown of the Lasseters Casino which I understand involved the loss of over 100 jobs which has a profound impact on our small community of Alice Springs. We only have a small population around 26 000 people for more than 100 jobs to be lost from Lasseters Casino is really significant.

A lot of cafes in town have closed, they have certainly closed for sit-down patrons, but a lot of them are on the cusp of closing all together. It is no longer viable for them to operate. A lot of businesses in the CBD are finding it really tough. People are not going in to the CBD of Alice Springs any more. Obviously we have all been advised to minimise our travel and contact with other people, minimise the amount of spend mixing with people in various locations whether it be shops or school or work. It is impacting profoundly on the town of Alice Springs and as the Chief Minister alluded to earlier this is just the start.

One of our great concerns in Central Australia are our Aboriginal people living in urban areas but also remote areas and we are hearing stories of people from remote areas coming in to town, they do not want to be isolated, they do not want to be stuck out on their communities and they are coming in to town so they can access the services and the facilities they need.

This is obviously perfectly natural that people do not want to be stuck anywhere but it does place more pressure on the services that will remain open.

I just received an email, and I am sure other people in this Chamber did too, from the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association. The problem they are highlighting in this email is that people on stations, living outside of urban areas, who would normally use the click and collect online bush order system, are advising that it has been shut down for 12 days.

This is a huge problem for bush people. They do not have the convenience of dropping in to the corner shop to collect supplies. The major supermarkets such as Coles and Woolworths have advised that people cannot buy in bulk anymore. The Cattlemen's Association has highlighted this issue for its members. This has to be changed and addressed.

Ashley Manicaros stated:

Someone in a capital city has shut off this service without a clue as to the impacts and here we are seeing the consequences of it despite the matter is being addressed.

These unforeseen impacts of the changes in supermarkets, all about food security and making sure people have access to food, have unintended consequences for other people, such as the members of the NT

Cattlemen's Association and people who live on stations. They buy in bulk when they come to town once a month or once a week—sometimes every six months. It is an interesting scenario that needs to be addressed, and I hope the government picks up on this email which was sent just an hour ago.

Other people are saying that the supermarkets in Alice Springs, and probably everywhere else, have lifted their prices. They are price gouging. I have not done a lot of research into this. It is an allegation and I do not know how true it is, but people think the specials that are usually available in Coles and Woolworths are no longer there.

The local cafe owners in Alice Springs were telling me that they buy their cut-price milk from Woolworths and Coles because it is cheaper, and they can keep the cost of providing their coffee, tea and milkshakes at a lower level. With the limit of only two cartons of milk per customer, that option is off the table for them now, so they have to increase the cost of their products. That type of thing is impacting on business and will eventually lead to them shutting their doors.

I was talking earlier about Aboriginal people in Alice Springs. The concern about Aboriginal people's health is front and centre for the government, as it is for everyone in a community like Alice Springs and other places throughout the Northern Territory. Aboriginal people can be more vulnerable to infections and diseases. They will be particularly vulnerable when it comes to Coronavirus.

Looking after that section of our community is very important to us. I look forward to hearing more information from the government about the specific strategies that will be in place to protect Aboriginal people.

The Minister for Territory Families answered a question I asked about the gathering of children and youths on the streets at night. This has been a problem for years in Alice Springs, particularly over the last few years. Even though I have been in Darwin for the last four or five days, I still hear about children gathering in large groups on the streets of Alice Springs at night. That is creating all sorts of concerns, not just about the health and wellbeing of the kids but of the whole community. It also concerns the safety of businesses in town, because there are so few people in town at night due to the restrictions. With these kids still on the street there is more opportunity for youth crime with fewer eyes watching them.

I have been approached by CBD business owners who are really anxious about their properties. In Alice Springs, we know that vandalism and crime perpetrated by kids is a huge problem. With fewer people around to observe and hold these kids to account, the fear is that youth crime will escalate as a result of these restrictions.

We need to know from the Minister for Territory Families exactly what is occurring in this space. Exactly what is the minister doing to educate the kids? There is a lot of interest in this. People want to know regarding the health and welfare of these kids, but also the health and safety of the broader community. What efforts are being made to educate these children and youths about staying at home? Who is doing that education? Are the parents being involved? Is any effort being made to visit the parents or the carers of these children who spend a lot of time on the streets of Alice Springs at night?

It is a wonderful opportunity and there probably not too many opportunities attached to this Coronavirus outbreak at all. I have to say there is a real opportunity here to change the behaviour of these children and their parents. It is an opportunity to educate them about the Coronavirus and the risks it poses to them, but it is also about generally maintaining and ensuring the safety of children all the time—Coronavirus or no Coronavirus. It is an opportunity to change the behaviour of these kids, which the Minister for Territory Families and this government should be embracing. I know many other people in Alice Springs are feeling the same.

Just like everywhere else, we have elderly people in Alice Springs we love and cherish and we want to keep safe. I think it was the Member for Fong Lim who talked about how kids going to school, possibly picking up the Coronavirus at school, going home and being around their elderly or sick grandparents. That is also a concern. I am interested to see what happens in the space of education.

The Opposition Leader asked a really good question before, which I do not think the Minister for Education answered—maybe she could not answer, things are changing and evolving. How long will the schools be open for? I see that as an anomaly in the broader restrictions that are in place. I understand why the schools are remaining open—primarily so that people who are frontline workers can continue to provide that essential service. But at some point, it will be inevitable that kids will stop going to school. That is probably a good thing, given the high likelihood or prospect of cross-infection of elderly and sick people living in the same house as young kids.

I want to touch on a few issues that are being raised by people in my community. My daughter has just landed in Alice Springs from Brisbane. She started university a few weeks ago. She was so excited and looking forward to a wonderful new life at Griffith University. Like many other kids in her position, she is flying into Alice Springs—and no doubt others to Darwin—today. She said the plane was packed full with all her old school mates returning home because the borders of Queensland and South Australia are closing at 4 pm this afternoon.

Our lovely lady who has been cleaning for us on and off for a while lost her job. She was working full-time at a local hotel. She is now out of work and she is begging and asking me to talk to people about getting her some work. Things are changing hour by hour, day by day. We are all affected. One of the most symbolic visions I have seen so far of the impact of this Coronavirus was the dole queues. The queues of people lining up to sign up for unemployment benefits, which colloquially we refer to as dole queues, will stay in my memory forever.

Last night, on the news, I watched people standing there, waiting to sign up. For some of us who have been around and learnt history at school, we saw pictures during our history lessons about the Great Depression and people queuing up and signing on for the dole back then. There is a direct memory of that with what I saw last night.

These are extraordinary times. I commend the government for getting on with business. It is a good opportunity today for all of us to talk about the impact Coronavirus is having on our communities, our electorates, to date. This is the start of it. Who knows where it will end. If we all work together—I agree with the Member for Nelson, his words—as parliamentarians, we all have a role and we should work together.

I extend my hand of friendship and collegiality to the government. We are a new opposition but we, the Member for Blaine and I, have been in this Chamber for a long time. It is not always adversarial; it is about working together for the greater good of Territorians.

If anything positive comes out of this Coronavirus pandemic, is that we can all work a bit better together.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I endorse what other speakers have said so I will not go down the path too much in that direction.

I will deal with the amendments to the bill and ask a few questions that are specific to this period we are going through that I could not ask during question time. Maybe the Minister can answer them during this debate.

What has been amended here is the *Public Environmental Health Act*. It allows the Chief Health Officer to declare an emergency declaration for 90 days rather than five days. Obviously, five days might have been fine with a cyclone but 90 days was something that the government had to put together in relation to Coronavirus because we still do not know when this emergency will finish. It might be that the Minister has to come back and extend it for another 90 days. We hope that is not the case because, theoretically, in 60 days Hawthorne might be back winning a few more games against Richmond.

It is a change that makes sense, regardless of whether we have the Coronavirus or not, because we could have other epidemics where the Chief Health Officer has to state that there is an emergency. She needs those powers.

The Chief Health Officer's powers relate to controlling the movement of vehicles within an area, preventing persons accessing or entering into an area or a particular place. One of the questions I put to the Attorney-General was—she mentioned it in her debate, and it has been mentioned today—that we are closing the borders. I know that when the Chief Minister was talking about this, he mentioned whether it was constitutional.

I am interested to know whether the Territory acts under a different set of rules. Does it have to have Australian government approval to shut down a border, or is it using something like—it was mentioned this morning at our briefing—biosecurity? What powers does it use to shut down the border? If we do not have this declaration of emergency at the present time, what is the background for shutting down the borders? I raise that because when it was first announced, I got the impression that the Chief Minister did not know whether that had been tested. We, of course, come under the Commonwealth self-government act, so we do not necessarily have the same powers as the states. I am interested in what the minister has to say in relation to that.

Maybe the Chief Health Officer's powers to segregate or isolate persons in an area or a particular place comes under the *Information Act*. I listen to the New Radio more than any other station these days to get some news from other sources like the Public Broadcasting Service in America, the BBC and others like that. They talked about the powers the South Korean government had brought in in relation to tracking people to make sure they are self-isolating. One was to use the phone.

I do not know whether we have the technology. I mentioned it to the CEO of Health today and she said that perhaps we do not have the technology to do it, but one way to make sure people were self-isolating was simply to ask them for a phone number for their phone—admittedly they could give that to someone else. We need something like that to make sure people are not wandering off and are definitely self-isolating. If the government is saying things could get worse, perhaps we have to be smarter. If they are saying there are a lot of young people who are not self-isolating and think this is not so serious, then perhaps those sorts of powers need to be enforced, if that is possible.

Another issue the minister might be interested in—maybe he could let me know how it works—does the Chief Health Officer presently have powers outside of the declaration of an emergency? For instance, who has the powers to tell cafés they must close down? Where is that coming from? Obviously, if the CEO has powers under the emergency declaration, the Chief Health Officer can tell a café that they have to close down.

Attorney-General, yesterday when I walked down the mall, I noted that cafés were closed and only selling takeaways, yet when I went to the Galleria there were still tables and chairs. It was put to me by one of the café owners who basically had to supply takeaway foods that there were two rules. Should one lot of cafés be allowed to have tables and chairs where they are in a large area like the Galleria or maybe even Casuarina Shopping Centre? Are they permitted to have tables and chairs or should they be the same as a café in the mall or other places where they had to remove all their tables and chairs? The concern was if that is the case, then they feel there is not a level playing field. If they have rules to stop cafés having seating to eat meals, then it should apply to everybody.

It was a question I was to ask in parliament, but I saw it yesterday because I went down about 3 pm yesterday afternoon to see if I could get a late lunch. I sat down for a meal in the Galleria. I went down later, about 7 pm, down further, and that person said, 'We were not allowed to sell anything'. He went next door to McDonalds, and because they are a big national company, they had rules straightaway. They shut down straightaway.

It worried me because we know these businesses will struggle. We need to make sure that one is not disadvantaged from another.

My other concern is: will Aboriginal people understand what an emergency declaration is? I have an Aboriginal wife and sister-in-laws and they have an education but it is not advanced—they did not attend high school or study science. They have beliefs, religious or cultural, and sometimes word can get around, especially now because of social media in communities.

We need to get the message out, the dangers of Coronavirus in our communities and getting people to understand what they have to do, otherwise this is what is going to happen if it enters their community. How many people would understand what a virus is? They might think, wash my hands with this and it will kill the virus.

My wife has asked me a number of times what Coronavirus is and where did it come from. Those basic questions need to be answered. Pressure will come because the amount of information coming from social media will drown people and they may get depressed. They might think there is no end in sight to something not fully understood. The government needs to work with Aboriginal groups: land councils, interpreters, AMSANT, to ensure people understand what this is about.

I support this important legislation at a serious time in the history of Australia and the Northern Territory. I did not think I would be standing here thinking this could be my last day. We do not know the future. Five o'clock this morning the rooster up the road started crowing, on time. When I go for a run in the morning—although I did not go this morning—a couple of dogs up the road greet me and coming back I see the sun rises. Regardless of everything that is happening in this world, some things never change. You have to keep your feet on the ground.

Let us hope that things change. I believe it is worth praying for and sometimes I pray for the scientists to produce a vaccine as quickly as possible, our best hope. I feel for countries that have not got the advantages

of Australia. Many people in Australia will have relations overseas—I have forgotten what the percentage of Australians who come from another country. How many would be concerned?

This might cheer you up. I had my haircut the other day at Annie's Barber Shop in Palmerston; it did not take long. She is an Irish lady—I think she might have got her permanent visa—and her concerns were not about here, they were about her mum and dad in Ireland. She is concerned about some of the statements—I am unsure of how people have died in Ireland—but she regards us as a safe place.

We are lucky—we want as few people as possible to pass away. That may not be possible if we have not yet got to the peak as the Attorney-General said. However, we will do our best to make sure that we keep it as limited as possible.

We must also remember that somehow we are going to have to pay for this in the end. The amount of money that both Territory and Australian governments are putting into this is a loan. It might take ten or twenty years for us to recover. If that means we save lives and that means we can pull ourselves together at the end of it, enjoy a holiday somewhere, watch and play footy, it will be well worth the pain.

In the meantime, let us try and help our fellow Australians, especially those who do not have a job, the ones that had a job yesterday but do not have today. We need to support them. As has been said about hoarding, I agree with the Australian Prime Minister, it is un-Australian. For too long, we have thought of ourselves as the most important. I have to look after myself. But it is time to realise it is the 'we' that is what we are about.

Ms FYLES (Health): Madam Speaker, I thank the Member for Nelson and all the members that contributed to the debate today.

As we heard this morning and as discussed in question time in great detail, Australia, the Northern Territory is facing the Coronavirus pandemic. We are throwing everything at it, as the Chief Minister said.

This emergency legislation amendment bill is a critical piece of legislation to enhance the governance and management of our public health emergency response. As I outlined this morning, it has become apparent that this was set up for a natural disaster-type event.

I will try and answer a couple of questions that the Member for Nelson had. It is the Chief Health Officer's directions that people arriving in the Territory must quarantine for 14 days. There are exemptions for health, military, freight et cetera. People need to give a declaration of the place that they will travel to, to quarantine for 14 days. All that information is on www.coronavirus.nt.gov.au.

In terms of the Chief Health Officer's directions relating to closure of businesses, it was from 12pm yesterday: entertainment venues, gyms, indoor sport, cinemas, clubs et cetera.

People coming in from the communities: We acknowledge that our Aboriginal Territorians and those with underlying illnesses are very vulnerable. We have been getting the message out that the safest place is to go back to community, to go home. We have facilitated that through Tangentyere and Larrakia Nation to support people.

In terms of the bush orders for cattle stations—the Member for Araluen raised that. The Cattlemen's Association today has raised a very important point. The Chief Minister at the National Cabinet is making sure that the Territory's perspective is being put up there.

There were some comments about prices allegedly being increased or specials not being offered. That will still be a matter for Consumer Affairs, and related laws and other pieces of regulation are still in place.

As I made clear this morning, the purpose of the bill is twofold:

- to amend the *Public and Environmental Health Act* to allow for declarations of public health and emergency for a period of up to 90 days instead of the current 5-day limit
- to amend *Information Act 2002* to allow frontline staff and government organisations to collect and handle personal information, if necessary, in relation to the public health and emergency of COVID-19 as may be required in emergency situations.

Some people raised questions about what happens in other states and territories. All states and territories have varying periods for their public health emergency powers. 'For periods up to 90 days' has been seen

as the preferred duration. Several jurisdictions have advised that they are in the process of now amending their duration periods, like we are today, to allow for substantial periods of up to 90 days to improve the administration of their act.

New South Wales—90 days under section 7 of the *Public Health Act 2010*.

Queensland—seven days with extension for no more than 90 days. That is the *Public Health Act 2005*, and that extension period of up to 90 days was amended last week in their parliament because their previous extensions were for no more than seven days.

Victoria—four weeks, with four weeks extension for a total of not more than six months. That is section 198 of the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act of Victoria*.

South Australia—14 days, and further periods which may be any length may be approved by the Governor. That is in the *South Australian Public Health Act*.

Tasmania—presently seven days, with extensions of no more than seven days at a time.

Western Australia—six days, with 14-day extensions.

ACT—five days, with two-day extensions.

We saw Queensland's; we are passing our legislation today.

In regard to information-sharing, just to reassure the House and the community, the same organisations that can share information during a cyclone watch, cyclone warning or other types of Territory emergency are specified under section 18(1) of the *Emergency Management Act*—this is public sector organisations as defined in section 5 of the *Information Act*. This includes agencies, statutory authorities, Charles Darwin University and local government councils.

It also includes the contractors of these organisations to the extent that they handle personal information on behalf of public sector organisations. Such contractors are still bound by the terms of their contract as to what they can do with the personal information.

These laws for emergencies were developed after public consultation in 2014 following lessons learned about the information disruption during the Christchurch earthquake in 2011, where the New Zealand Government faced challenges in quickly identifying who needed assistance due to a lack of certainty about what information was legally allowed.

It is unfortunate that a public health emergency was not contemplated at the same time as the Territory laws were developed, as all our scenarios were in consideration of cyclones, floods and earthquakes.

Information-sharing is limited in the same way as it is limited for existing emergency powers for cyclones. It is for the best interests of Territorians and to care for them in this situation.

We are responding to the crisis of COVID-19 in a nationally consistent manner. I understand that later this afternoon the Chief Minister will have to leave parliament to attend National Cabinet once again.

It is an unprecedented global health emergency. It requires unprecedented actions across every community. While we have been in this House today the number has risen. There are now over 380 000 cases of Coronavirus around the world. We are hearing of cases in Singapore—we thought they had flattened that curve—India and Africa.

This is an unprecedented global health emergency. As we have seen, the current five-day period for the declaration of a public health emergency under the *Public and Environmental Health Act 2011* is grossly inadequate for our current needs. It served us well in the short-lived emergencies we have had to date.

Only two years ago Cyclone Marcus hit the Top End. Reflecting on that time, I do not think any of us would ever have thought we would be here today. It served us well for those short-lived events such as cyclones and floods, but it was not designed for an all-encompassing global pandemic, which we are facing.

Having the longer period for a declaration and extension of up to 90 days will reduce the administrative burdens of the current system. It will allow our hard-working Chief Health Officer and his team to focus on

the actions we need to implement to operate efficiently rather than spend their precious time on preparing new instruments and orders.

This also provides Territorians with certainty and with clear and constituent advice to manage that difficult situation, which we have heard in debate today.

As I presented this morning, the current declaration I have made, as the Minister for Health, of a public health emergency covers the whole of the Northern Territory arising out of the serious public health risk of COVID-19.

The declaration enables the Chief Health Officer to issue directions under section 52 which are necessary, appropriate and desirable actions to alleviate the public health emergency.

The COVID-19 directions issued by the Chief Health Officer are the mechanisms which we are using to implement the decisions of National Cabinet here in the Northern Territory.

Direction 1 covered the initial guidance on prohibiting non-essential large gatherings and self-quarantine following overseas travel. The direction has already been revoked by the new COVID-19 Direction 3 for Territory border restrictions, which will be effective in less than a couple of hours, at 4 pm on 24 March 2020.

People entering the Territory will be checked at the border. They must travel directly to a place of self-quarantine, and for 14 days must not leave that place. Social distancing is required for any other person who resides in that place. There are specific exemptions such as law enforcement, military, health practitioners, freight services, emergency service workers et cetera.

Direction 2 covers restrictions on visits to aged care facilities to ensure that only essential services such as staff of those centres, health or pharmaceutical service providers or emergency management or law enforcement are just some examples.

Direction 4 provides further clarity on indoor gatherings to reduce the density of people to be one person per four square metres of indoor area.

Direction 5 enables the assistance of police officers to ensure compliance with all directions, for example, closing a place, directing a person to remain in a place for self-quarantine, escorting or taking a person to a place for self-quarantine, preventing entry to a place or exit from a place, and

Direction 6 provides for closure of businesses, including hotels, pubs, clubs, food courts, restaurants and cafes. However, they may provide food and beverages for take-away purposes. Casinos, gyms and indoor sporting facilities, cinemas, theatres, nightclubs, entertainment venues and religious places of worship, except for weddings and funerals where that strict indoor limit applies.

It is not easy to talk about the impact of what these measures are—the impact on our businesses and our community. Many people have been trying to support local businesses, take-away coffee, many are offering take-away meals and it is important that Territorians where they can support those businesses.

We will also make an amendment to the *Information Act 2002* to enable the existing rules for the collection, use and disclosure of information in an emergency to apply to the current public health emergency. It adds a definition to the *Information Act* of a public health emergency and the Information commissioner has been notified around this and about the amendment and did not provide any negative comment.

There is nothing new or controversial in this provision. I assure the community the same rules apply on who can share the information the same rules apply on how information can be collected. All it does is enable section 81(a) of the *Information Act* to include public health emergency such as COVID-19 as well as the current definition of emergency situation.

The current section 81(a) provides the restrictions on the sharing only for the purpose of the emergency response and only for the duration of the emergency situation. This will now also apply for public health emergencies and such as one that we are facing right now.

This bill, the subject nature is not straight forward. The world has never seen, the Northern Territory has never seen what we are facing in COVID-19 but this bill is a straight forward administrative bill to improve the governance of public health emergencies.

In closing, I sincerely thank all public servants, all of the people working and all of the businesses—thinking of Territorians right now—but to the officers in the Department of Health, the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice and to the Office of Parliamentary Counsel worked all weekend so we could have this bill before the House and we need to acknowledge their excellent work and the dedication for this rapid development and progress.

I will keep my comments there. I have tried to address some of the questions that members placed in their speeches, and I would like to acknowledge all members that spoke in their contribution.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Ms FYLES (Health)(by leave): I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**BILLS PRESENTED IN COGNATE
Supply (2020-2021) Bill (Serial 126)
and
Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128)**

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I seek leave for the Supply (2020-2021) Bill 2020 (Serial 126) and the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128) to be considered through all stages except for consideration in detail, where they will be considered separately.

Leave not granted.

**SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS
Take Two Bills Together
Supply (2020-2021) Bill (Serial 126)
and
Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128)**

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me from immediately moving that these bills be considered together.

Motion agreed to.

**SUPPLY (2020-2021) BILL 2020
(Serial 126)
and
FISCAL INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY AMENDMENT BILL 2020
(Serial 128)**

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I present bills entitled Supply (2020-2021) Bill 2020 (Serial 126) and the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 (Serial 128), and table the explanatory statements and human rights compatibility statements.

Today I present two bills in cognate: the Supply (2020-21) Bill 2020 and related papers; and the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Bill 2020 and related papers.

Madam Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented health emergency that is having a severe impact on the global economy. There are six confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the Territory. There have been almost 2000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Australia. Of those cases, seven people have died from COVID-19.

Across the world there have been more—the latest figure I heard from the Health minister is that there is about 380 000 confirmed cases of COVID-19. These numbers are extraordinary.

In China there have been 81 603 cases and over 3000 people died. The figures from Italy are extraordinary, with over 64 000 and over 6000 people have died. In the United States there have been around 33 000 cases and 500 people have died. In Spain there have been about 33 000 cases and over 2000 people have died.

Across the globe, countries and states are shutting their borders to contain the spread of COVID-19. We are seeing places like Italy, the UK and New Zealand go into full lock down, meaning that all non-essential businesses are shut; social events have been cancelled; and day-to-day life, as they know it, is not doing on as normal.

All around the world, parliaments are being suspended. The Australian federal parliament has announced it will suspend further parliament sittings until August 2020. We have seen similar activities in Queensland, looking to suspend for six months.

This is the uncertainty we are trying to deal with. The future of public gatherings is uncertain. Parliament will not ignore any advice received from Health authorities.

When it comes to Coronavirus, the NT is well prepared. We are ahead of the game and we will do everything we can to stay there. There continues to be no community spread of the virus in the NT. We have a dedicated team working round the clock to protect Territorians as much as possible. We will do whatever it takes to save lives and livelihoods of people in the Territory. But success in containing the virus comes at a price of slowing

Extraordinary measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, quarantines, travel restrictions and social distancing measures, are causing major disruptions to economic activity, with extreme uncertainty as to how large or how long lasting the effects will be.

We have seen our way of life change significantly:

- the global travel industry, all but shut down
- panic buying stripping retail shelves of everyday items
- principal places of social gathering closed or restricted to online or takeaway services
- major sporting events, festivals, entertainment stopped
- hundreds of billions of dollars wiped from share markets, seemingly overnight; the ASX has fallen 42% in 23 days.

There is no doubt that more economic pain is on the way for households, employees, businesses, industry and markets. The sad scenes outside Centrelink offices around this nation, and in Darwin yesterday, shows what is happening in this nation.

Australia's borders are closed; the NT's borders are closed as of this afternoon; Tasmania, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia have all moved to close their borders.

The economic impact of these measures will be significant and will flow through to impact on own-source revenue collections and GST, increasing budget pressures. For this reason, the Territory and Commonwealth assistance packages represent support equivalent to over 10% of GSP.

The Territory government acted quickly to deliver Australia's first stimulus package last month, a \$2m *Tourism Resilience Package* to protect tourism businesses and jobs.

Last week, we went even further to save jobs, protect businesses and keep the Territory's economy on the road to recovery, delivering a \$65m *Jobs Rescue and Recovery Plan*. This plan is all about keeping shops open, cash flowing and Territorians working.

It includes:

- \$20m Business Improvement Scheme—13 April
- \$5m Business Structural Adjustment Package
- \$5m Immediate Works Grants for non-profit clubs—20 April
- \$30m Home Improvement Scheme—6 April

- freezing increases in government fees and charges until July 2021
- extending payroll exemptions for employing Territorians
- encouraging Territorians to support local tourism, hospitality and retail operators.

Yesterday, after we saw the extraordinary moves by the National Cabinet, the Chief Minister provided details of our \$50m Small Business Survival Fund, to keep businesses alive, to help businesses adapt and to prepare businesses for the rebound that will come when this crisis ends.

Thank you to a well-known businessman Dick Guit who is working on this important fund with some prominent industry leaders across the Territory. We are determined to save jobs, lives and to make sure the Territory gets through this.

Our Territory response complements the federal government's \$189bn package, including generous cash payments and unprecedented actions from the Reserve Bank of Australia, which has already slashed interest rates to a record low of 0.25%.

We have seen huge changes to business support, Newstart, CDP in the Territory. But all the advice keeps coming, this will only cushion the blow.

Phillip Lowe, the Governor of the Reserve Bank has said:

I am not able to provide you with an updated set of economic forecasts. The situation is just too fluid. But we are expecting a major hit to economic activity and incomes in Australia that will last for a number of months.

We are also expecting significant job losses. The scale of these losses will depend on the ability of businesses to keep workers on during this difficult period.

We saw during the global financial crisis how flexibility in working arrangements limited job losses and this benefits the entire community. I hope the same is true in the months ahead.

The ongoing uncertainty about COVID-19 and the evolving response has seen the National Cabinet agree for all jurisdictions to delay their budgets until later in 2020 to coincide with the revised federal government's 6 October time frame. Addressing media last week, the Prime Minister said:

Putting budgets together during this time, with great uncertainty that exists, is not something any state or Commonwealth should be doing.

The idea that you can put together any sort of forecast at this time is simply not sensible.

This is reiterated in a joint statement of the federal Treasurer and Finance Minister:

The situation is unprecedented and there remains a high degree of uncertainty surrounding how the virus will evolve and its full economic impacts. This uncertainty makes it extremely difficult to formulate reliable economic and fiscal estimates over the next few months.

Having regard to this situation, the government has decided to defer the 2020-21 budget until 6 October 2020. This will provide more time for the economic and fiscal impacts of the Coronavirus, both in Australia and around the world, to be better understood.

It will also ensure that the 2020-21 budget can set out the path to economic recovery. This means the government will move supply bills in the parliament next week to ensure the continuity of government in 2020-21.

Deferring budgets until later in the year will provide more time for the economic and fiscal impacts of Coronavirus in the Territory, Australia and around the world to be better understood. It is also crucial that during this time we continue to ensure the proper functioning of government services and the continuation of vital programs. Therefore, the Territory government, like governments across the country, is deferring the 2020-21 budget and introducing legislation to ensure the supply in the interim.

The Supply (2020-21) Bill 2020 and the related Fiscal Integrity Transparency Bill 2020 are an important part of the Northern Territory government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring the continued delivery of essential government services.

The Supply (2020-2021) Bill 2020 seeks to guarantee the provision of essential public services through the supply of interim appropriation for the financial year 2020-21 of \$3.42bn.

The *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* specifies that expenditure by government cannot occur without enactment. The *Financial Management Act 1995* specifies that appropriation lapses at the end of each financial year. This means that government cannot spend money from 1 July without some form of legislated appropriation.

The 2020-21 Appropriation Bill was scheduled to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 5 May 2020 to provide authority for expenditure to be incurred by general government sector agencies from the commencement of the new financial year. But in line with the National Cabinet's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Territory budget will be delayed until later in the year, to be delivered after the Commonwealth budget which is now scheduled for 6 October 2020.

The Territory government's service delivery obligations under various legislation—health, housing, policing and education—will continue, and the proposed 2020 Supply Bill will make interim provision for government expenditure to ensure the continuation of essential government services and infrastructure from 1 July 2020. It will provide for up to six months of expenditure.

The proposed appropriation is based on 50% of total appropriation as at the 2019–20 Mid-Year Report, plus a contingency amount in Treasurer's advances to fund major spending requirements, known and emerging, including the Jobs Rescue and Recovery plan and maintaining support through infrastructure spending.

This will provide \$3.42bn in total, comprising:

- output appropriation for recurrent expenditure of \$2.08bn
- capital appropriation to progress infrastructure projects—\$0.26bn
- Commonwealth appropriation to continue services provided under Commonwealth funded programs—\$0.51bn
- Treasurer's advance capacity of \$300bn
- other costs met from the Central Holding Authority of \$0.27bn.

The amount of \$300m in Treasurer's advance makes provision for emergency packages already announced and any others that may yet be required. Note that any use of the Treasurer's advance will be reported in end of year reports, as one of the government's budget repair commitments.

In a similar vein, I note that the emergency funding package passed by the federal parliament last night included a provision for the federal Finance Minister—Treasurer's advance of \$40bn. In announcing the package, the Prime Minister warned that 2020 for many will be the toughest year of our lives.

The bill provides appropriation by agency, output, capital and Commonwealth purposes; however, given the unorthodox and quickly changing fiscal and economic circumstances, there will likely be a need to reallocate appropriation to agencies with greater or specific needs.

Under the *Financial Management Act 1995*, in my capacity as Treasurer, I have authority to transfer appropriations between purposes throughout the financial year. This ensures that the government has flexibility to redirect resources to priority areas as they emerge.

We would all be in agreement in this Chamber, that health is one of those priorities.

Furthermore, reporting obligations for the Under-Treasurer with respect to the publication of a pre-election fiscal outlook in 2020 are proposed to be suspended since there will not be a budget to base them upon.

As members know, the Territory relies very heavily on Commonwealth revenues which account for two-thirds of our total revenue budget. Without a Commonwealth budget in place at that time, forecasts of GST and

other Commonwealth revenues to the Territory are uncertain. Our own-source revenues will be highly uncertain, given the unprecedented economic circumstances still likely to be prevailing at that time.

The level of uncertainty about the fiscal and economic outlook, come August this year, would render a pre-election fiscal outlook report ineffective for its purpose. However, for transparency and accountability purposes in respect to supply, quarterly updates on expenditures, revenue and economic conditions will continue to be publicly available.

The bill introduces a special exception for 2020 if an appropriation act, other than on an interim basis, that is, other than the Supply Act, is not enacted before the issue or the writ for the election.

Government is doing whatever it takes to keep the Territory's economy well prepared to react and respond to the emerging issues. Mostly importantly, it is about looking at the road to recovery and the bridge we build to it. Our Government will continue to evolve our response as the Coronavirus situation evolves, because in times like these we need to band together to project Territorians and local jobs and to keep our businesses open.

We know we cannot stop the virus or the economic hit that is coming, but we can make sure we are all still standing at the end. We will do everything we can to cushion that blow and make sure we grow out of this and come out of this stronger.

Madam Speaker, the Supply (2020–2021) Bill 2020 and the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Bill 2020 are an important part of our ongoing response to mitigate the impacts of Coronavirus in the Territory. That is why this bill needs to be considered on urgency. At this stage, we just do not know what the next health advice will be, what will come from national Cabinet and what the restrictions will be or what they will mean for gatherings such as parliamentary sittings.

I take this opportunity to say thank you to our hard-working staff across the public services for these bills to Treasury. They have been working around the clock with the federal government and government agencies, industry groups to respond to the issues. We have all lost track of what day of the week it is, because everybody has not stopped working.

I place on the *Parliamentary Record* some comments made in the speech by Philip Lowe, Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia on 19 March 2020:

We are clearly living in extraordinary and challenging times. The Coronavirus is, first and foremost, a very major public health problem, but it has also become a major economic problem which is having deep ramifications for financial systems around the world. The closure of borders and social distancing measures are affecting us all and they are changing the way we live. Understandably, our communities and our financial markets are both having trouble dealing with a rapidly unfolding situation that they have not seen before.

As our country manages this difficult situation, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that we will come through this. At some point, the virus will be contained and our economy and our financial markets will recover.

Undeniably, what we are facing today is a very serious situation, but it is something that is temporary. As we deal with it as best we can, we also need to look to the other side when things will recover. When we do get to that other side, all those fundamentals that have made Australia such a successful and prosperous country will still be there. We need to remember that.

To help us get to the other side, though, we need a bridge. Without that bridge, there will be more damage, some of which will be permanent, to the economy and to people's lives.

Building that bridge requires a concerted team effort, with us all pulling together in the country's interest.

Madam Speaker, I commend the bills to the House.

Motion agreed to; bills read a first time.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the bills be now declared urgent. As I said in my first reading remarks, it is vital that we pass these bills on urgency today. We have seen that the situation

with COVID-19 is rapidly changing. If I look at some of the things that were on my desk and some of the decisions we were making three months ago, a month ago, a week ago or three days ago, it keeps changing because the response that this nation and the Territory needs to make to keep our people safe is at the front of our minds.

We have seen rapid changes to how we live our lives and how we go about business. Overnight, we have seen the UK move to shut down. We have seen New Zealand move to shut down. We have seen Coronavirus take a hold in communities such as New South Wales and Victoria. At the moment, we have seen six cases in the Northern Territory. We can track where they have come from. We want to keep it that way and keep Territorians safe because the impact of what we have seen with Covid-19 has been devastating.

I keep coming back to those images of Italy and what we are seeing there and what can happen if you do not act swiftly, decisively and fast to tackle Covid-19. I do not want to see our health practitioners ever being put in a position where they have to make choices about who they treat. That is something we have seen in international overwhelmed health systems. We are doing everything we can here to ensure the Northern Territory does not end up in that position. That is why we have acted early and decisively and have taken action to protect Territorians.

We have taken additional actions, particularly out bush, because we know that our remote communities have some of the most vulnerable populations in this nation. We are doing everything that we can to protect them.

As I said, this situation is rapidly changing. We have seen about 14 000 people die globally from COVID-19.

We have seen that the National Cabinet continues to move, based on health advice, to make the decisions that need to be made to keep Australians and Territorians safe. On Sunday we saw some unprecedented measures with regards to pubs, clubs, cafes and gyms, just to name a few.

There is a National Cabinet tonight. They made a decision not to have budgets until the federal budget is delivered in October and as Treasurer, I have a responsibility to ensure supply. We need the Health department, hospitals, police, housing officers, teachers, public servants, all on the job doing the urgent work to protect the community from COVID-19.

This bill is about ensuring supply. I find it difficult to wrap my head around that it is hard to predict where the world will be in two weeks, two months or six months. We have seen the federal parliament suspend until August.

Seventy percent of the Northern Territory's budget is based on Commonwealth revenues and agreements. It is important to understand to do an accurate budget that is meaningful to understand the impact on revenues that COVID-19 will have nationally.

When the pool of consumption is impacted, even before COVID-19 really took off, we knew that Australia had seen subdued economic activity. The GST pool had already been affected. We will see a big hit nationally when it comes to COVID-19 to that pool of consumption.

Other revenues will be deeply impacted in the Northern Territory. It is vital to make sure we have the guaranteed supply to address the needs of Territorians, to tackle the COVID-19 crisis we have seen globally and to make sure we are protecting Territorians.

We will still have our quarterly reports that go to the actuals of expenditure across government and we will make sure as soon as we are in the right position for the government to ensure that the budget is delivered to work with the Commonwealth to see what the impact of COVID-19. Hopefully we will be on a pathway to recovery and rebound at that point, later this year. We will be ready to act.

I cannot stress the importance of urgency for these bills, to ensure we can deliver the important services Territorians need now.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I support the bill and the urgency. It is time for us all to work together as Territorians and citizens of our great country as well.

I have concerns about the lack of a budget and the budget process, but I can live with that. This is a crisis, it will have a deep effect on the community. The best decisions we make now will reduce that effect, but there will still be an effect and everyone needs to understand. We need to remember we are at the beginning and there will be a middle and an end, but we will get back to the beginning.

There are problems in the Territory with structural inequality and where large cohorts in our population do not participate in our economy adequately. We do not have adequate development across industries in the Territory. We have known about this for a long time and we agree with the basic principles that we need to work on these problems in the future. At the moment we need to work on making sure there is a future.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I want to contribute to this debate but first I will unpack it a bit.

The government has decided to debate two bills in cognate, the Supply (2020-2021) Bill 2020 and the Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020. They are two quite different pieces of legislation but they are connected by the crisis we find ourselves in. That is why we initially objected to them being debated together. It does not create enough transparency for Territorians to understand what is happening. It is important that they understand what is happening in parliament today.

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, a point of order! Standing Order 35: we are debating the urgency, not the bill.

Madam SPEAKER: There is a little bit of latitude. Member for Araluen, please continue.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Given that we are debating the urgency, I will still clarify what is happening. Territorians are listening—as the Treasurer explained in detail, this is a crisis, people are looking to the parliament of the Northern Territory for clear communication and messaging.

To clarify it upfront—they are two separate bills with very different messages. The opposition would have preferred they were debated separately to provide greater clarity for people who are trying to absorb it. The government decided to put them together and proceed.

We have no objection to these bills being debated on urgency. We understand the pressure on the government and that these changes need to be put in place as soon as possible—or for the most part, some of these changes.

I leave it there. If we are to debate urgency up front, these are the comments I make for the time being.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, we have no objection to the government moving these bills in cognate and on urgency.

Motion agreed to.

Ms MANISON (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a first time.

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

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Speaker, I start by looking at the Supply (2020-2021) Bill 2020. The Treasurer is ensuring the supply of funds to the Northern Territory over the next six months; the amount promised is \$3.42bn. This is in lieu of the fact that the Northern Territory budget will not be delivered until after 6 October.

The contents of this bill are inoffensive; they make sense. As the Treasurer stated, it includes a contingency of \$300m held in the Central Holding Fund. That is for the Treasurer to use an advance to pay for things associated with the pandemic. How she spends that money will be reported in the end of year report. As she said, transfer of funds from that Central Holding Fund can be made as she sees fit. As the Treasurer of the Northern Territory she needs to be able to respond to the demands of the Northern Territory and to the people of the Northern Territory. She is absolutely right, we have to listen very carefully to the people of the Northern Territory, we need to embrace all the information coming from our federal counterparts and we need to be in a position to respond.

The opposition has no problem with this piece of legislation. The \$300m is, we think, a modest amount given that we will find ourselves in a worsening fiscal position over the forward estimates over the forward months, the forward days-\$300m over the next six months for the Treasurer to use at her discretion is reasonable and we have no problem with that.

I will just park that there and now I will move on to this second piece of legislation which is different and slightly more controversial. The Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Amendment Bill 2020 which the Treasurer did not really nut out in enough detail, but what this bills means is that for the year 2020 the Under Treasurer need not publicly release or table a pre-election fiscal outlook report.

Essentially what that means is that leading up to the Northern Territory general election on 22 August of this year there will be no budget or no pre-election fiscal outlook provided to Territorians to contemplate how they intend to vote on 22 August, and that is extremely unusual. These are unusual times, they are extreme times, and we are facing a crisis but this is highly irregular and Territorians need to be very clear what is happening here.

The publication of the PEFO, which stands for the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook Report is a requirement of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act*, or the FITA which is what it is commonly referred to, that provides for the release of updated financial and economic estimates for the budget year plus three years forward within 10 days of the issue of a writ for a Northern Territory general election. The PEFO, the Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook Report is required to include the same information disclosures as those for other financial reports and is based on the same external reporting standard the uniform presentation framework—and I am reading from the August 2016 PEFO, or Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook Report.

An additional requirement in the preparation of the PEFO is advice from the Treasurer as to whether the government has entered in to any commitments that could have material, fiscal or economic consequences for the Territory that the Under Treasurer could not reasonably be expected to know about. The Treasurer's advice in this regard is included at the beginning of the PEFO and advises that there are no additional commitments.

A PEFO is a critical document provided by the Treasurer of the day just before an election to provide clarity around the Territory's financial and economic position. It is not only of interest to the general public because, of course, it is our money. It is Territorians' money. It is not the government's money and it is not the public service's money it is the money of Territorians. People have a right to know exactly what the position is of our finances going into an election critically but also the position of the economy.

After the election that Pre-Election Fiscal Outlook is referred to by a new government, if there is a change of government, and it is used as a guide as to what to expect when they start looking under all the rocks and looking into all the nooks and crannies trying to find out what the government has really been up to over the last four years—or the previous government.

It is an essential report, not just for the people of the Territory but for future governments. It is one of the foundations on which we proceed into an election.

What you just heard the Treasurer say, is that with the election on 22 August 2020 there will be no budget and no pre-election fiscal outlook. The reason she has given sounds quite reasonable. Across the world there is a distinct state of fragility, changeability and crisis. Minute by minute, day by day and month by month, things are changing.

The dilemma for Territorians is, how do you vote in the August election not really knowing how the current government has performed? That alone is a big dilemma for Territorians; it is a real problem because we know that, prior to the Coronavirus a few weeks ago, this Northern Territory Government was performing extremely badly at managing the finances of the Northern Territory. We were in a fiscal crisis before the Coronavirus.

Our debt-to-revenue ratio is sitting at around 100% as we speak, which means we are spending as much as the revenue we generate. The debt is climbing; we are looking at \$8.31bn in 2022–23 escalating to \$30bn in 2035, I think it is. We were in dire straits financially; all economic indicators and outlooks suggested that.

Prior to the Coronavirus the population was decreasing and employment was fairly stable. But things were bleak before the Coronavirus. The point I am making is since the Coronavirus things have changed dramatically but we have to look at three different phases: before the Coronavirus; during the Coronavirus and after the Coronavirus. At the moment it seems that our Northern Territory election is sitting right in the middle.

I am not sure that the government has offered Territorians enough in putting this bill forward today. There are so many questions that need to be answered. We were briefed by the Department of Treasury and Finance this morning. I thank them for the briefing; it was very informative. But we were told that—the last

economic and financial report that was tabled in this parliament was the MYEFO in November 2019, which is the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook—we will not have another financial report tabled until November, possibly, of this year.

There will be twelve months in which Territorians will not really know what is going on financially or economically in the Northern Territory. That is a blind spot; it is a problem. It is the government saying, 'Trust me, I will look after things and let you know when I am ready at the end of the year'.

That is not how this parliament works. Irrespective of Coronavirus ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Araluen, your time has expired.

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I suppose it is trite to say that these are extraordinary circumstances, arising out of a never-before-experienced pandemic that has created a plethora of effects in our nation. This necessitates extraordinary responses.

It is crucial that our government agencies are able to get on with their work. The supply bill we are supporting on urgency today provides them with the appropriations to support their efforts.

The opposition members stand in a bi-partisan approach to support measures the Northern Territory Government is taking to deal with the rapidly changing fiscal circumstances. Our only point of difference was to respect a parliamentary scrutiny and have the bills introduced today for passage tomorrow, which would not have hindered the important functioning of government.

In addition, the supply is a separate issue to the amendment to the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act 2001* which removes the pre-election fiscal outlook commonly referred to as the PFO.

Integrity and transparency is crucial. We should always be willing to be transparent and accountable to Territorians. The PFO amendment could have—and, we believe, should have—included a provision for the publication of the Northern Territory's fiscal and economic position one month prior to an election. We all know these figures are volatile and changing due to the pandemic. The publication of our fiscal and economic position would provide Territorians with a snapshot in time of what any government, post-election, would be contending with. This is our point of difference on these cognate urgency bills.

Let us be clear. We are supporting these supply measures that provide the appropriation of six months' funding to our government agencies in anticipation that further appropriation will occur in October with the delivery of the postponed Northern Territory budget.

As bills are now cognate, we have no choice but to support the (inaudible) amendment to remove the PFO as well. We call on the government not only to publish the Treasurer's quarterly report which provides an update on expenditure, but to also publish quarterly updates on our economic indicators: gross state product; state final demand; population; employment; unemployment rate; consumer price index; and wage price index. We are all mature enough to recognise that these figures will be volatile but they are also need to be known and to be published.

With regard to the matter of supply, the bill provides appropriations to agencies to enable them to continue to support all the important jobs across the public service, and to support all the important work our public servants undertake to maintain the capital allocations required to continue the critical infrastructure investment.

In addition, there is a \$300m Treasurer's advance, the equivalent of about 1% of gross state product which provides for a contingency to fund stimulus measures. We are advised by treasury officials this morning that they anticipate that \$300m Treasurer's advance will be sufficient to cover these contingencies through to December this year.

I thank the treasury officials for explaining the interest payments on our loans. Appropriations is \$123.4m over a six-month period. The opposition is keen to ensure that, while we are in this period of rapidly changing fiscal and economic conditions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also understand where we are. Essentially, what was our baseline prior to the pandemic?

For this data, we were advised by treasury that they rely on the Mid-Year Report 2019–20. The mid-year report shows the net debt-to-revenue ratio was forecast to be 102% in 2020–21, growing to 120% in 2022–23. This was already an unsustainable position. The pandemic stimulus responses required by government

will most likely worsen these forecasts so we all need to be mindful of our critical relationship with the Commonwealth to assist our Territory through this challenging time. We are in it together.

The Commonwealth has a genuine role to play in looking at fiscal support through special purpose payments and national partnership payments. The reality is the GST pool—and therefore revenue shares to the states and territories—will also be affected by the pandemic. People are losing their jobs. They cannot spend as they did before. This affects the GST.

In addition, we have continued to see a loss due to net state migration, with some 669 people moving interstate and 278 people moving overseas. The good news is we still continue to grow on our own, with a natural increase of 580 people. I thank Treasury for their provision of the September quarter data released on 19 March which shows that the NT population dropped by 0.6% on an annual basis. This means that we are seeing a reduction in our GST share as a result of a reduction in our population.

Our concerns are that we may not be able to turn this around in the context of a pandemic where people are literally being told to stay at home and businesses are contracting, so they are unlikely to be hiring interstate. The businesses hiring, such as Coles and Woolworths, to help stack their shelves overnight to meet food access demands, are likely to be hiring our own Territorians. This we commend them for.

I move now to state final demand which is the economic indicator of our domestic Territory economic position. Sadly, that has been in the negative for consecutive quarters prior to the pandemic which means we have actually been in a recession. The December quarter economic data provided by Treasury shows a year-on-year drop of 10.3%. There had been more positive outlooks contained in the mid-year report, with a then predicted 1.7% estimated contraction in the 2019-20 financial year. I believe we can all accept that this will be far worse due to the pandemic impacts.

I do not say this to provide doom and gloom. We need a reality check by understanding we were in recession prior to the pandemic and things will worsen before—as many people say—we get over the bridge to growth again.

Debate that comes from transparency is healthy. Publication on a quarterly basis of fiscal and economic conditions provides an opportunity for all Territorians, especially our business community, to pull together and play to our strengths and get over that bridge and into growth. In short, of course you needed to bring forward this supply bill. We believe you also needed to be open and transparent by publishing quarterly fiscal economic updates to strengthen the bonds we will all feel to support our great Territory to recover.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, a point of clarification under Sessional Order 12, in relation to timing of speeches.

Madam SPEAKER: Ten minutes.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: It is 10? Okay, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

There is no question that these are extraordinary times and that the legislation we are debating is unprecedented, but this bill is essentially a budget that will guarantee supply past the normal close of financial year and budget process. We will not be having a formal budget presented, as the minister has outlined, until the end of this year and at the earliest. Therefore, the normal democratic process of scrutinising that budget and ensuring that Territorians' money is spent responsibly will not have the same capability to take place as it usually does.

I could surmise my comments my saying that what the government is asking us to do is place an enormous amount of trust in them—trust at a time when we are in crisis. I am not disputing that trust is required, but what we need to know is that the mechanisms of transparency will be there. This will be a great test of this government's leadership and their connection and communication with Territorians on how they handle this situation. It is hard to imagine another situation where we might be debating this type of flexibility in this House. There is no disputing that this global health crisis necessitates extreme, unusual and unprecedented measures.

It was announced last week that the federal budget and those of states and territories would be delayed until after October. I note that the federal government passed this last night.

That being the case, the Territory government needs to continue to spend. We need supply guaranteed beyond the 1 July deadline. The government will have to make some difficult, expedient, challenging and complicated decisions over the next few months to get the spend going where it needs to be, whether that is pouring more money into Health and Police, or providing serious and tiered stimulus measures to ensure that we cushion the blow for business and people who are losing their jobs—closing their doors under extreme financial and budgetary pressure.

It raises the question of why it has been brought forward in these sittings, given that we have sittings scheduled for May. I want further clarification from the minister, perhaps in the consideration in detail stage of the bill if she is so inclined, to provide greater information on how this will work going forward, what this transparency process will look like, so that Territorians can have confidence in the way in which the Territory government will spend their money.

We acknowledge the fact you will need that flexibility. Like you said, you might need to pull money from somewhere and stick it somewhere else. That is entirely understandable, but Territorians need surety around that process. Questions like, 'What will replace the PEFO, if anything'; 'What will the government do to provide these quarterly updates to the budget'—I do not know that quarterly is frequent enough or how the government intends on doing those.

We have not had a lot of time to consume this legislation in full—recognising the government's need to bring it on urgency. But it goes back to my initial point about trust. How will we receive that level of transparency? Whether it is publishing this quarterly data, whether they will make the time frames shorter so it is more frequent information—which we would support—whether a committee of the parliament will fulfil some form of scrutiny role, I do not know. I recognise the government's need to be agile, however, and I am not trying to throw roadblocks. I am merely asking questions about what this looks like into the future, practically speaking.

The government has essentially halved the mid-year budget and added the \$300m stimulus for additional spending. There is no question that we need to spend more, and it is terribly unfortunate that our economy is in the situation it is to this point. We have talked about that until we are blue in the face, and now is not really the time to hark back on what could have been.

Suffice to say, we do not have the resilience in our economy at the moment because of our dire fiscal situation before heading into this unprecedented crisis. How the government responds with that \$300m and the remainder of its allocation will be critical.

The Chief Minister said in Question Time today, very fairly, that the government is exploring a measure and moving to the point of executing whatever the plan might be, and then the rule of the game change. I recognise that that probably comes at great frustration and difficulty for government, but also for the people on the front line needing the implementation of the measures coming out as soon as possible. That is really a key focus.

How will the government be agile enough to implement new measures quickly enough for them to have some impact before things change again? That is the great challenge for this government when we speak economically.

Of course, and we have all said it today, first and foremost is the health of Territorians and how we do everything we can to slow that curve. We are fortunate to not have community transmission at this point in time. I commend the government for that. We are talking to the bill in a largely economic context.

It will be important for the government to be very clear about the stimulus, how it is being spent, whether it is being spent wisely and whether it is effective. Going back the Chief Minister's point, if you are allocating money to something and then the rules of the game change and the stimulus, how you redeploy that into something that will target and relieve a new pressure point will be critical.

In terms of stimulus, I am very encouraged by what the government has done so far. Of course there is more to go. I recognise the challenges around this. I am encouraged by the task force set up yesterday by the Chief Minister, with industry and business leaders to ensure government is understanding directly where the pressure points are, where the most relief needs to be applied and at what point in time it needs to be applied. We will continue to offer our suggestions to government on what could create the cushioning for some. Of course, recognising that many have already lost their jobs and are suffering terrible financial strain.

We are pleased to see that this bill will provide certainty to our frontline workers, who are doing an incredible job. We spoke in Question Time about our police. It is not just our amazing police, it is our healthcare workers, first responders, public servants and others out there every day, doing everything they can, working extraordinary hours under extraordinary amounts of pressure to do what they can to keep Territorians safe. We cannot thank you enough for what you are doing; it is incredibly important.

To know that the money will continue to flow so that you can do your job is critical. It would be reckless of us to take any other approach. But questions remain and I hope that, during committee stage, the government can provide greater context on how that transparency will operate so that we can supplement, as best as possible, the processes that we are all very familiar with whatever the new processes in this new world will look like.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I will make some observations on the state of play here and now. All that has been said about the acknowledgement of the serious situation that we find ourselves in; the requirement to get our footing and respond to this; the need for urgency for these two bills, and the one debated earlier; receiving support; acknowledgement of democratic process and the decision-making mechanisms we have through our parliament, how important they are and how important it is not to view this, in any way, through a political lens, but a genuine community leadership lens and involve those who are elected in the process, as far as possible, to ensure at the core we have strength and confidence in a display of unity.

For government to get this wrong would have severe consequences. The Member for Spillett is quite correct. The reference to mechanisms need to be creatively considered so that we can have that confidence, even at the core, when our responsibility is to assist in the role of governance in the Northern Territory.

To be honest with you, I expect there would be some creative thinking about the mechanisms that could be provided to satisfy that element of this crisis. We had already displayed this morning that there was even the absence of information about whether we are sitting today or tomorrow, so no explanation provided so it puts us in an awkward position.

I will not put too much pressure on this but I make the point, I would expect soon something to come from government to explain how we are going to maintain a level of good governance and transparency as we proceed through this very challenging time.

You owe it to Territorians. Not just here and now, not just for with the reference of the next Territory election but for our children and their children because this will have long lasting effects. Anyone who has read history have used this scenario as like a wartime scenario.

A wartime scenario is quite different. In a wartime everyone is employed in one way or another, whether it is manufacturing or fighting or supporting the troops. This is more like a depression scenario where the entire financial market collapses and that requires an extraordinary level of response. I would suggest to government very strongly that its creative thinking is required to ensure that we manage that risk and that the core is good governance and proper reporting-and a proper discussion not through a political lens but a proper discussion through what is the right thing to do in these dire circumstances regarding the next Territory election given there would be no budget to be considered at that time.

These are open conversations that need to occur and we need to have that kind of contribution from the Territory government in order for us to do as you ask us to do, and what is required to completely trust as far as we possibly can and contribute in a manner that builds unity at a time of crisis.

This is just the beginning. The health crisis the saving of human life is the highest priority right now. Anyone can see just beneath this is an unfolding economic crisis, already existed now it will compound to a magnitude that is hard to image. We also need to be very aware of that and to think through that carefully.

From the Opposition's point of view we will once again cooperate and collaborate as far as we possibly can. I would make sure I play my role as a Territorian and a member of this parliament to develop a strong connection with those colleagues interstate, like the minister for Finance and the Prime Minister. This is a Commonwealth matter. We need to have other lines of sight on what is actually happening in the Territory. We will make sure that does occur because there needs to be maximum transparency and scrutiny and accountability.

As I said, not for mischief but because the need to maintain strength at the core for government to be held to account, but not for mischief, to ensure that government is able to do their job well. For a good government needs a good Opposition and you will have that in this regard and respectfully so within a crisis. If those lines of communication are opened up as we have asked for them to be opened up, and I trust they will be, then we would contribute directly to those concerns—the Treasurer, the Chief Minister and the like—not for open dialogue just for the sake of scoring a political point because the community does not need that at this time.

The Prime Minister is absolutely correct—a wartime Cabinet is necessary. That kind of approach in the Territory is necessary where we just put the other things aside and begin to work together and be very honest about the nature of this problem. It extends way beyond the next Territory election but we have not even opened that door for discussion. It seems to be fairly tight at the moment. This is just the beginning.

I make those comments in regard to this. Of course there is support for this. It is understood but there are other elements to this that have not been brought in to play. I would urge the government to start to loosen up a bit because you are going to need assistance in this. You cannot do it alone. You will need other assistance. You need the support and the encouragement of the community.

Granted we have one day of sittings, what comes after this—heaven know—tomorrow and the days following. We, once again, commit to support this process and do what we can. The statement made earlier in regards to our communications to the Chief Minister and the Treasurer remains a solid commitment.

Motion agreed to, bill read a third time.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 124)

Continued from 13 February 2020.

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

Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, this legislation is the proverbial rod for your own back. The bill has only come about as a result of the government's own internal and external inconsistency. Importantly, it does not seem to achieve its stated aim, given the council for Dan Murphy's submitted in a supreme court hearing after the bill was introduced that he did not think the bill addressed the issues that were on appeal. It is interesting how we got here.

For three and a half years, we have listened to the Attorney-General talk time and time again, how this government has been focused on the number one problem facing the NT—alcohol. No one on this side disputes that; it is the number one problem that we face. There is a situation where you talked that up and introduced regulations limiting the size of bottle shops to 400 square meters and realised that it was not going to achieve the stated aim. It was vulnerable to legal challenge. So you introduced an enactment—you enacted the 400 square meters within the act. At the same time, you were proceeding with the Riley report, which we have heard time and time again about the government's commitment to the Riley report.

Public opinion seems to run in favour of Dan Murphy's, so the Chief Minister turned around and indicated that this legislation would be introduced to get Dan Murphy's up. It seems like, given the way the bill has been drafted and the reaction of council for Dan Murphy's that it is more a slide of hand than anything else. You introduce a bill, which seemingly is aimed entirely at appeasing those people who would like to see a Dan Murphy's in the Territory, but you do not achieve that goal.

The inquiry had 8 or 9 submissions, all but one were opposed to the legislation. It is notable that all of those groups who opposed the bill are the groups that you have been touting for more than three and a half years as supporting your approach to reducing alcohol-related harm in our community. Yet, you sit there and proceed with this bill as it is. The only submission in support of it was Endeavour Drinks, the owners of Dan Murphy's. I find it amazing that you can proceed with this with a straight face.

I find it amazing that you can proceed with this with a straight face. Yes? So, you cannot. It is disingenuous to an amazing degree. It was your interference with the process, effectively, which stopped this development going ahead originally. If you had not bought into it at that time, this project would have been up and running and would have employed Territorians through a difficult period. Here we are, trying—I suggest—to pull the wool over the voters' eyes by pretending you are trying to do something they might support, but in fact, you are not.

Madam Speaker, I really have nothing more to say other than this is an exercise in political cynicism that should not be supported.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I speak in support of this legislation. It has been a long time coming and it seems crazy to, well and truly over three-and-a-half years later, still be talking about whether or not Dan Murphy's can come to the Territory. It is really quite astonishing.

We have to right back to the start of this government when they seemingly, out of nowhere, came up with their 400 square metre regulation on the size of takeaway bottle shops. The anger, outrage and uproar that caused at the time had people scratching their heads as to why the government was doing this and what was going on.

There was the proposal then for Dan Murphy's to come to the Territory and establish its bottle shop at the airport and inject about \$40m into our economy. At that time—I suppose it would have been early 2017—our economy was not as bad as it is now. But even at that time Territorians recognised that \$40m worth of construction, employment and job opportunities that it would create. Of course, the flow-on activation that an outlet like a Dan Murphy's could bring to the remainder of that airport precinct all had so much promise. But it was shut down by this government single-handedly.

We saw them scurry in the face of what may or may not have been a legal challenge to enshrine that 400 square metre regulation into law in its best attempt to dig its heels in. That ended really embarrassingly for the Labor government, as we well know.

We then had the extensive and comprehensive Riley review. To the government's credit, I suppose, there was nothing in the Riley review that said 400 square metres would reduce alcohol-related harm. So, they backflipped and repealed that legislation. The government should be given some credit for that. But to have even arrived at that point was a total farce. It was the most ridiculous ongoing saga we had seen. It was really some of the first cracks we saw in this Labor government.

Since then, it has gone from worse to worse. Then we saw the government bring in its new liquor laws, which are wide-sweeping reforms that arguably—not all of them but many of them—do not reduce alcohol-related harm in our community, which was the intent of the entire legislation.

We know that alcohol is a huge cost socially in respect to its correlation to crime and domestic violence, with the cost of delivering health services to people. There is a terrible impact of alcohol in the Territory. Everyone wants to reduce alcohol-related harm. But by punishing our corner stores the Territory government was not on the right track. There were all manner of changes made in that legislation regarding local corner stores not being able to advertise on the sides of their shops. There is a fantastic example in the Member for Nelson's electorate. He often cites the example of the Howard Springs supermarket precinct being next door to the bottle shop. The bottle shop is allowed to advertise, but the tiny bottle shop adjoined to the supermarket is not allowed to do the same.

There was all the rigmarole regarding the delineation within stores and the huge cost to small business that would have. There was the arbitrary 25/75% rule, which is still threatening to shut down some of our much-loved local supermarkets that have been a part of all our childhoods—riding our bikes to buy a bag of 10-cent lollies and enjoy the good. I do not think you can buy many lollies for 10 cents now. I used to get quite a bang for my buck from Gray shop. You could get a lot of salty plums back in the 1990s for 10 cents.

Time has moved on—I am not older than I look, Member for Nelson.

Our much-loved corner stores came under nonsensical attack from this government. We maintained that enforcement is an important part of anything you do. If you have a rule and you do not enforce it, what is the point? Under the existing mechanism if—and I say if because I do not know, we often heard the government talk about potential rogue operators. If there are rogue operators then enforce the law. Sort them out. Get onto them. If people are doing the wrong thing they should be dealt with appropriately—everyone understand that. It is the base of our societal system. If you do the wrong thing, you get pulled up for it.

There is responsibility—if you are a liquor licence holder it comes with rules and regulations. If we needed to beef up licensing or enforcement the government should have turned more of its energy to that rather than punishing everyone because of the alleged misdeeds of a few.

We had petitions in parliament with thousands of signatures; the media around this dragged on and on because we were hearing from store holders and people affected. A couple of weeks ago—I am trying to remember where I was—somebody stopped me—I was at the Freds Pass markets—a couple from the Member for Daly's electorate had a chat. They were saying how angry they still are about not being able to be part of their wine, or access specials—all of the problems they have with that. This is targeting them.

The government came out and ridiculed people for buying lower-priced wine, as if they were some sort of lower class of citizens. The debate on this got very messy and totally off track from reducing alcohol harm in our community to become about a Labor government enforcing its ideology on Territorians. There is no better example on this legislative overreach—when a government goes too far. People expect governments to make laws, have regulations, enforce them and set the boundaries for our community. But some government go one step too far and people push back.

The floor price is a classic example. Territorians did not accept it lightly and were very angry about the new tax—that is effectively unmeasured. The government are not collecting KPIs and there is no information on the impact it is having. There is no question that there are some good results, if you take the reduction of alcohol harm Alice Springs as an example. But let us be real—that is because of the PALIs.

The PALIs have been put in front of the bottle shops and are doing a terrific job. To allow the floor price to take credit for the hard work of the PALIs is a bit rich. With the floor price, where does that additional revenue go? It goes straight into the pockets of the bottle shop owners. It is imperfect.

Dan Murphy's then went to the Liquor Commission and the Liquor Commission gave a very extensive ruling. Part of that was it did not meet the community impact assessment for that location. Things then transpired and the decision about Dan Murphy's ended up before the NTCAT where this issue of substitution of license has bobbed up its head.

In response to both the Liquor Commission decision and the NTCAT decision, our Chief Minister came out and said 'This is a kick in the guts for Territorians'. Everyone fell on the floor rolling around laughing because the only people who are kicking Territorians in the guts over this issue was the Labor government. It was disingenuous for the Chief Minister to come out and (inaudible) people understood that they had been doing everything they could to stop it at this point. We are here now and we have reached a point.

The changes are sensible. I do not think it necessarily solves Dan Murphy's problems but the new substitution arrangements are much more logical and practical. After all, we are talking about business people selling a legal product to people who are legally able to purchase. We have to be a bit sensible about these things. I am pleased that the government has finally got to this point. It is disappointing that it is three-and-half years down the road, and does not necessarily alleviate the hurdles for Dan Murphy's. Nonetheless, it is here.

We support it and I commend the legislation to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, listening to the Member for Spillett talking about her support for Dan Murphy's, liquor is not a normal product of sale. Liquor has always been a product that has needed permission to be sold in the Territory. That is why we have liquor commissions to make the decisions. I make it clear that the Liquor Commission has never said that we should not have Dan Murphy's; it just said it was in the wrong location. We need to keep this in perspective.

Minister Fyles' second reading on this bill that is now proposed to be amended follows on from the statement made by the Chief Minister in the NT News on 23 September, last year, regarding Dan Murphy's. I quote the newspaper,

Chief Minister Michael Gunner on Monday night pledged the store would go ahead. "I strongly support responsible drinkers having more choice and this decision by NTCAT is a massive kick in the guts to Territorians" he said. "This decision is technical, impractical and we will fix the legislation in February to allow for Dan Murphy's to operate in Darwin".

Minister Fyles explained how that was going to be achieved by these proposed amendments to the Liquor Act and said,

The objects of the bill are to amend the Liquor Act 2019 to:

- *Clarify that for applications for substitution of premises under the Act, such applications may be granted even though the proposed premises are yet to be constructed or are still under construction*

- *Remove the current requirement that substitution can be only made where there is no significant change in the operation of the business which has been commonly referred to as like-for-like requirement*
- *Clarify that the Liquor Commission may impose conditions when approving applications for substitute of premises.*

Let us look at the first point. According to the NT News, it was said that the NTCAT rejected this appeal by Endeavour Drinks stating—again, I use a quote from the NT News:

Understands NTCAT rejected the Booze Barn's appeal as it decided liquor retailers could not transfer an existing licence to a store which did not yet exist.

This matter was also mentioned by the Liquor Commission under paragraph 133 of its hearing. It said:

Although no issue was raised by any of the objectors over the limitation of our powers under section 46A(6), we do now have concerns as to whether a substitution application is open to an applicant when the proposed premises are yet to be built.

According to the NTCAT report on their hearing, FARE and the Liquor Commission contend that the reference in section 46(A)(1) of the *Liquor Act 1978* to the substitution of other premises must be read as referring to premises that in fact exist. They point to the fact that there is nothing about the ordinary meaning of the expression 'other premises' nor anything in the language of section 46A to suggest that the expression should be read as extending to premises that do not yet exist.

Further on, NTCAT says:

The words actually used in section 46A(1) are more consistent with the conclusion that the section only contemplates the substitution of premises that exist, than a conclusion that the section also contemplates the substitution of non-existent premises.

The proposed change to allow a substitution where a premise has not been built makes sense. That is the only part of this I agree with.

To put it in context, what I would expect this to mean is that even if there was a non-existent premise, it would be more or less the same size as the existing premise that is being moved to another place; that is how it should read.

What we have before us is more than just fixing a point of clarification about whether a license can be transferred to a premises that does not exist but removes important sections of the existing act and they are changes that are shameful. They destroy the credibility of the government and show its hypocrisy when it cries out how serious it is about supporting Justice Riley's recommendations; supporting an independent Liquor Commission; and its heartfelt concern about the effects of alcohol on our community, especially the Aboriginal community.

Minister Fyles said in her second reading:

This government is tackling the causes of crime and social dysfunction through a plan to combat alcohol abuse and investing in appropriate rehabilitation strategies based on evidence and the findings from the Riley review on Alcohol Policies and Legislation 2017.

We have a strong plan to reduce alcohol-related crime and violence based on the 219 accepted recommendations from the government-commissioned Riley review.

I will repeat, the CLP also said it supported the recommendations.

We have worked efficiently and have already delivered on a number of recommendations from the Riley review, such as: re-established the independent Liquor Commission chaired by Mr Richard Coates; established a community impact test for significant liquor licensing decisions; extended and expanded a moratorium on all new take-away liquor licenses.

That bit is important.

The bill represents a key component of alcohol reform in the Northern Territory and highlights the commitment of implementing the recommendations of the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review final report, the Riley report and the Northern Territory Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan.

As we know, Justice Riley said:

A licensee cannot substitute premises for the licensed premises and must apply for a new licence. However, the commission may amend a licence to substitute other premises for the licensed premise if there is no change to the operation of the business and the substitution satisfies the public interest and community impact test.

That is important, because that is exactly what Justice Riley said and what is in the existing act. If you change it, you throw out Justice Riley's recommendations. You cannot get up here and say you support Justice Riley who put it clearly in his report, reflected in the legislation exactly as he said, and then say no you are going to change it. That is what you are going to do. All because someone wants Dan Murphy's to go ahead.

After all that talk about support for Justice Riley's report, they have done a complete turnaround. What is recommended in the amendment bill is to scrap what Justice Riley recommended.

Let us remember two things. The Justice Riley report, as I mentioned, said:

Firstly, the commission may amend a licence to substitute other premises for the licensed premises if there is no change to the operation of the business and the substitution satisfies the public interest and community impact tests.

Why did Justice Riley say that? By allowing something that is not like-for-like, such as the Stuart Park store versus the Dan Murphy's store, you are going against the government's policy which is extended and expanded moratorium on all new takeaway liquor licences. This is exactly what Justice Riley warned in his report, when he said on page 56:

Substitution should not be available to remove the need to apply for a new licence or to circumvent moratoriums that may be in place from time to time.

That is exactly what you are going to do. You are going to circumvent the moratorium. If you read the act—if you want to go down this path under section 75 of the act, where it says:

If a licensee wishes to substitute other premises for the licensed premises, the licensee must apply for a new licence for these new premises.

The only way you can do that without applying for a new licence is by saying we are going to operate the same sort of business. You are doing exactly Justice Riley said. But no, this is what is changing.

Dan Murphy's is not like-for-like because there is a big change in the business. It is about ten times bigger than the Stuart Park store and therefore is regarded as a new licence. NTCAT also said:

The Dan Murphy's substitution application plainly involves the proposal to substitute premises of a size and character that bear no comparison to the Stuart Park premises at which the BWS liquor store was operated.

They have said that.

Moreover, when section 46a is considered in the context of the other provisions of the Liquor Act 1978 relating the grant of liquor licences and subsequent dealings with such licences, it is clear that there is no need for section 46a to have the broad operation for which Woolworths and the Liquor Commission contend.

Those other provisions provide an obvious and coherent means by which applications to establish what are, in substance, new liquor outlets may conveniently be made and determined. Conversely, if such applications are made and determined under section 46a, they are likely to be beset by the same issues of incoherence as were identified above in relation to the non-existent premises question.

I finally note that quite apart from the observation just made, an interpretation of section 46A of the Liquor Act 1978 that requires substantial similarity between proposed substituted premises and the licensed premises being replaced would also be entirely conformable with the purpose of that act to the extent that purpose is given new or different expression in a moratorium on new takeaway liquor licences.

If section 46a is able to operate in a way that could lead to the replacement of a modest BWS takeaway liquor store with an outlet of the size and scale of the proposed Dan Murphy's outlet, then the moratorium is rendered essentially toothless.

That is the end of the quote from NTCAT.

Secondly, the government is trying to assist Dan Murphy's by changing section 75 of the present *Liquor Act* which says, and I quoted before, but under section 75:

Substitution of premises

- (1) If a licensee wishes to substitute other premises for the licensed premises, the licensee must apply for a new licence for those new premises.*
- (2) Despite subsection (1), instead of issuing a new licence the Commission may, on application by the licensee, amend a licence to substitute other premises for the licensed premises if satisfied that:
 - (a) no significant change in the operation of the business will occur as a result of the substitution.**

The government is doing three things. It is scrapping the concept of like-for-like which was recommended by Justice Riley. It is breaking its promise of a moratorium on takeaway licences by removing that section I just read, section 72(2)(a) of the existing bill, to excuse businesses that are not like-for-like to avoid having to apply for a new licence.

The independent Liquor Commission, luckily, has made a decision about why Dan Murphy's should not be located near Bunnings. They have a 103-page document which clearly shows why they came to the following conclusion. They said:

Having now heard all the evidence and considered the detailed and thoughtful submissions ...

You have to remember this went for a long period of time and had many people discussion this matter:

... the commission wishes to make clear that it is not opposed to the concept of Dan Murphy's ...

Not opposed:

... to the concept of Dan Murphy's store in Darwin. However, this is provided that the limitations associated with a substitution application averted to in paragraphs 131 to 133 can be addressed, an appropriate site can be identified and provided that density impact can be reduced.

All that this changes, from the point of view of the Chief Minister making the statement that he will pass legislation that will allow Dan Murphy's to go ahead, does not address the appropriate site, nor the density impact. Thankfully, we still have that as part of the reasons why Dan Murphy's cannot go on that site.

Regardless of whether paragraphs 131 and 133 that the Liquor Commission quoted can be addressed—which is what the government is pitifully trying to do—the commission clearly said that Dan Murphy's is in the wrong place. The government should drop these amendments, except for the one about an existing premises, and stop making specific laws to appease a big liquor company. You should be making laws that reflect what you have said so many times in this parliament without fear or favour.

These changes to the *Liquor Act* show that you know there is an election coming up and you want some brownie points. You are too scared to get out of favour with the *NT News* and you do not have the courage of your convictions. All this is summarised by this statement by the Chief Minister, 'This decision is technical, impractical and will fix the legislation in February to allow for Dan Murphy's to operate in Darwin'.

The decision that the Chief Minister is talking about is only a very small part of this whole debate and it is part of it which I have agreed with. But this technical change will not fix the issue because, as I said, the Liquor Commission has raised a range of issues that still have to be dealt with.

When the government throws out its principles and rejects what Justice Riley recommended, then honestly, it does not deserve another term. Hopefully, if this goes back to NTCAT, new clause 2, which in part says, regarding a substitution application:

If satisfied that substitution satisfies the public interest and community impact requirements ...

And that is a quote from the new amendments. If that is in, that is still very much an important matter that NTCAT will take into account when it hears this. I presume it will go back to them because that is what I think their intention is.

That quote will come into play in conjunction with the Liquor Commission's report and any appeal by Dan Murphy's and, hopefully, then thrown out.

I also had to laugh at Endeavour Drinks Group submission. You are really clutching at straws. If you wanted a dangerous precedent, this is it. Under point two of Endeavour Drinks submission, it says:

Ministerial power to grant a licence.

The previous government, I have no doubt, probably agreed with them, but I am hopeful this government would not have a bar of this. But it said:

Endeavour Drinks notes that the government's extensive efforts in developing new liquor licensing regime under the 2019 act and the efforts through this bill to resolve the issues under the liquor regime do not align with the government's policy's intent.

In addition to addressing the specific issues that have arisen, Endeavour Drinks believes that there is an opportunity at this time to include in the bill a further mechanism that ensures the government's policy's intents are not in the future prevented by similar matters arising. It is suggested this could be achieved by including in the bill amendments which are detailed in the proposed section 60A (See attached) ...

Which I do not think I have. It continues:

The proposed powers are only available to be exercised in strictly limited situations where significant development proposals are involved and they require the minister to consider the purposes of the 2019 act when exercising their power.

Further, the minister may develop such guidelines as is considered appropriate to guide his or her exercise of this power. Any exercise of this power would be subject to judicial review. These limitations and mechanisms ensure the necessary protections are in place to ensure the power is exercised appropriately.

If that was to be the policy of any government I would say that you leave yourselves wide open to corruption. If you were going to make decisions when you have an independent Liquor Commission and then allow the minister to override—I can see donations at election time and decisions being made that go against the very principles of the Riley report. It would also stop the Liquor Commission from being independent.

There are a number of key issues here that I find disappointing. One is that we have a Liquor Commission and it has made a decision. Regardless of that—what is a small change that may be totally appropriate is that it does not make sense to ask someone to build a building before they have the licence. That is a minor thing that could be change.

From the Liquor Commission's point of view, that was far greater than that relatively small issue. It was about the effect on the community in that area. What is the effect on Aboriginal people in the area? Is the Chief Minister saying, 'I support Endeavour Drinks at the airport?' That is what needs to be asked here. Because, if he does, he goes against the very thing the Liquor Commission was trying to stop—where it goes will affect the community, which includes many Aboriginal people. Read the report! There is a big section on what the effect in the community will be.

That is why they said it was in the wrong place and that there is an issue of density. We know the density of liquor outlets will affect the community.

You have an independent Liquor Commission and a Riley report and you are saying through the Chief Minister, 'Nick off. I want Dan Murphy's to go there, regardless, because I think it is a good thing for the economy.' I have heard the CLP say it. The CLP is not particularly worried about the Liquor Commission's or Riley's recommendations; it is interested in saying that it is a \$40m investment. Where do you put your priorities? Do you build a \$40m investment in the wrong place? What is the future harm of that? That will be greater than all the so-called benefits you get from a \$40m investment, because you will be picking up the tab from people's problems with alcohol, which this government continues to tell us it is trying to do something about.

The government brought forward a piece of legislation which is so blatantly against what it claims it stands for. That is the thing I find so difficult with this.

I have sat in this parliament and listened to people talk time and again. To see a piece of legislation come before this House, which has clearly been set up to—it may not achieve what it was trying to do. There are other reasons that Dan Murphy's was rejected. The attempt by this government to give Dan Murphy's a bit of a hand-up by removing the existing section 75(2)(a), which clearly said:

No significant change in the operation of the business will occur as a result of the substitution ...

There was an argument about what substitution meant. Substitution, when you look at it, was meant to be something like-for-like. That was deemed debated. The reason is there was not to be any significant change in the operation of the business. You put in Dan Murphy's; you changed the operation of the business. The government knows that. 'To get around that, let us get rid of it.' There is a big line through mine. It does not get a mention any more. It just says:

Despite subsection (1), instead of issuing a new licence the Commission may, on application by the licensee, amend a licence to substitute other premises for the licensed premises ...

It does not mention anything about a significant change in the operation—that is gone. It goes on:

... if satisfied that:

...

(b) the substitution satisfies the public interest and community impact requirements.

(2A) To avoid doubt, the Commission may, under subsection (2):

(a) impose conditions on the substitution; and

(b) substitute premises that are not yet constructed or are still under construction.

Big deal. What you have done is taken out the very core of what Justice Riley said—the very thing you agreed to.

I refer back to my reason for not being on a scrutiny committee. You said all bills would go before a scrutiny committee, except those on urgency. Then you put two major bills through without going through the scrutiny committee. You just wanted to do it on convenience.

You wonder why I tear out what little hair I have and ask, are you for real. Do you really mean what you say? I read the Attorney-General's second reading and how concerned she is about the problems with alcohol. I hear what she is trying to do with floor prices and the BDR and helping people. I might ask whether they have all proved to be effective, but I will give the government this: it has said it is trying to do something. I give the government a pat on the back for having a go at something which has been a curse in our society for many years. So many people, especially Aboriginal people, have died because of this curse.

When it comes to the crunch, however, a \$40m company comes along and you listen to it! Then your principles go out the door, and you change legislation which has been changed specifically because the Chief Minister wanted it. He said:

I strongly support responsible drinkers having more choice and this decision by NTCAT is a massive kick in the guts ... This decision is technical, impractical and we will fix the legislation in February to allow for Dan Murphy's to operate in Darwin.

If he had read the report, he would never say that. He would have said, 'I will support Dan Murphy's finding another location and we will work with the Liquor Commission and the community to do that'. He basically said, 'I will support Dan Murphy's; we will change the law—stuff Justice Riley's recommendations. Who cares about what we promised? Who cares about what effect this will have on the community?'

Read the report. Read about the people who were concerned—local people, the community, who would be mainly affected. If Dan Murphy's goes somewhere else, surely you can drive there. The reason it is not in the right place is that people can get there on foot, people can get there fairly easily and there were problems with traffic. There are a heap of things as to why the Liquor Commission thought it was the wrong place.

Why is the government not sticking by what it promised? When the minister sums up this debate—I ask this. Do you support Justice Riley's recommendations? Do you support an independent Liquor Commission, which this entire parliament agreed to? It came up with the recommendation that Dan Murphy's should not go there and it should find another spot. Do you support that? If you do not, please do not make another speech saying how concerned you are about what will happen to Aboriginal people, especially, because of the problems with alcohol in our society.

I am so sad that this legislation has seen the light of day. I honestly believe, minister, that you should drop this legislation. You might lose some brownie points, but you have a mechanism to say to the community, 'We support Dan Murphy's and the Liquor Commission's view that it is in the wrong place, and we are quite happy to work with the appropriate parties to find another appropriate site for Dan Murphy's to be'. You would think that would be a simple matter you could put out to the public to say, 'We are not against another Dan Murphy's but we are against that it goes in that location'.

Personally, I could not care two hoots about Dan Murphy's. I see enough grog for sale in this community to say, 'Who cares?' How many BWSs are in our community? How many Liquorlands are in our community? How many grocer shops sell grog? We are not short on places to buy alcohol. This tends to be about cheaper grog. I have been approached by some people who say, 'Yes, it is a deliberate ploy to try to kill off other businesses'—and their businesses. There are other things involved in some of this about the companies that are involved that are beyond me when it comes to what else is behind this idea of setting up Dan Murphy's. You may know more about that than I do.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, from my point of view, this is bad legislation and it goes against the principles the Territory government has told me, time and time again, it holds. It is against Justice Riley's report. I am so disappointed in what has been put forward today and I sincerely ask the government to drop this legislation—not to put it to a vote but just say, 'When we looked at it, it has gone against what we believe and what we have said publicly, so we will just drop it.'

Ms FYLES (Attorney-General and Justice): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank those members who spoke to this bill—the Members for Fong Lim, Spillett and Nelson. We have spoken time and time again—not just in this Thirteenth Assembly but in many of the parliaments of the Northern Territory—about the devastating impact we see of alcohol in our community—the alcohol-fuelled violence and crime.

As a government, we have committed to the most comprehensive reforms of any government. I have spoken about those statistics we have seen: the 12.5% decrease in ED presentations in NT hospitals for the period of January to December 2019 compared to the same period in 2018; and a 15% reduction in NT hospitals for January to December 2019 compared to the baseline years in 2017. That has a flow-on effect of a safer community, but also in the economic costs to the Health budget overall.

We know from the Menzies School of Health Research the social and economic costs of harms of alcohol consumption in the Territory. That figure was \$1.38bn, which is a total estimated impact of \$7500 per Territorian.

We know this is hard policy, and that it takes courage to put that policy into place. But we will do that. There are a number of stakeholders—health and justice stakeholders, welfare stakeholders ...

Members interjecting

Ms FYLES: Madam Speaker, I pick up on the interjections from those opposite. It would be interesting to know what they would do. Would you scrap the floor price? Will you scrap the BDR? What measures will you put in place? We need to remember that when the Members for Blain and Araluen were in government for their short time, they put in place alcohol mandatory treatment, which cost \$57 000 per person for one mandatory treatment episode, compared with about \$17 000 ...

Mrs Lambley: Tell us about your rehab programs, minister—non-existent.

Ms FYLES: They do not want to hear it because they rant that they want to have a bipartisan approach, but as soon as you start putting facts before them and reminding them of their ill-fated decisions—alcohol mandatory treatment was one of those—they do not want to hear it and start interjecting.

Alcohol mandatory treatment cost \$57 000 per treatment episode compared to \$17 000 per person for a voluntary treatment in the community. We know that alcoholism is a health-based issue and that it takes people a long time and a lot of courage. It will be very interesting to be in that Caucus room and hear the Members for Fong Lim, Araluen and Blain debating that alcohol policy. I think you will find they are very different views.

The alcohol mandatory treatment failed to reach a significant proportion of the population who would benefit from accessing assessment and treatment services.

With this bill we have done the hard yards in alcohol policy. We had the Riley review, which I have spoken about many times. We believe that this bill addresses a mismatch between our policy position and a substitution of premises in the *Liquor Act 2019*.

The bill provides certainty for business development and allows a business to grow into a new premises while retaining their existing liquor licence. It allows the Liquor Commission to impose further conditions where that is considered appropriate.

As I said before the bill went to the scrutiny committee, it provides a clarification that applications for substitution of the premises under the act may be granted even though the proposed premises are yet to be constructed or still under construction. The removal of the current requirement where the substitution can only be made where there is no significant change in the operation of the business, commonly referred to as the 'like for like requirement', and clarifies that the Liquor Commission may impose conditions when approving applications for the substitution of premises.

The government accepted the recommendation regarding the like for like requirement of the Riley review and implemented it in the *Liquor Act*; however, upon further consideration, it became clear that the like for like requirement is restricting potential business growth in light of the moratorium on new takeaway licences.

By removing the like for like requirement, it will allow business to grow in a reasonable and responsible way. All substitution of premises applications must still satisfy the public interest test. They must still have a community impact test—the same test that new liquor licences have. This is considered a safeguard that finds the balance for a business to be able to move premises. Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, your electorate and all of our electorates have examples where a business is established in an old premises; their lease may be up or they may look at a new commercial area and they want to move. The current bill does not allow for any increase at all or change in the size of that store.

The bill is concerned with applications to substitute different premises attached to a liquor licence and removes the current requirement that there be no significant change to the nature of business as part of that substitution. If a licensee sought to increase the area of a licence premises subject to their current authority, that licensee would need to make an application for a material alteration of their premises—not to substitute for a different premises.

Both applications will require an applicant to address the public interest and community impact test. They provide that any refused application for substitution of premises may be reconsidered under the new laws, including where the Liquor Commission or NTCAT has previously refused an application and we believe that any outstanding application should be resolved in a timely manner. To ensure this occurs without extended delays, the bill provides NTCAT and the Supreme Court may not remit an application to the Liquor Commission.

The new changes are not intended to prevent any concerned member of the community from participating in the process. The NTCAT, when conducting a review, stands in the shoes of the initial decision-maker, which

is the Liquor Commission, and has the same powers as the Liquor Commission. These powers include the powers of the Liquor Commission under the *Liquor Act 2019* section 22(1)(c) to grant leave to a personal body to appear who has otherwise not lodged a valid objection and power to request any other person to give any specific information or documents to the commission. Further, under NTCAT section 55, the tribunal has general powers to full inform itself during a proceeding and under section 89, has powers to require a person to give evidence or produce evidentiary material that would assist with the proceeding.

There has been commentary as to whether the minister should be given the power to issue a liquor licence and that is not the policy position of the government. The government has established the legislative framework to support an independent Liquor Commission as the primary decision-maker for applications under the *Liquor Act 2019*. The act is due for technical review later this year and these amendments will form part of that review. We believe that the changes in this bill match the government's policy intention with the legislative framework we established under that act.

I thank the scrutiny committee for their consideration on the bill in a timely manner, noting that we asked them to do it in 30 days. I acknowledge that their report recommends that the bill be passed. I acknowledge the staff at the Department of Attorney-General and Justice and the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel.

I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 3, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr WOOD: Mr Deputy Speaker, in the Attorney-General's response to the debate she said that the changes match the government's policy. I am referring to what is occurring in this debate whereby you are removing existing section 2, which talks about substitution of a premises and includes no significant change in the operation of a business.

You said it matches government policy. What is the government's policy, or where is that defined?

Ms FYLES: The government policy was to have a moratorium on takeaway licences. We acknowledge that there were a lot of them in the Northern Territory, so we wanted to see the existing licences reallocated to greenfield sites and for people to be able to move them around.

Once the new act was put in place it became apparent that that was not possible, and therefore the *Liquor Act 2019* was not meeting the intention of government policy.

Mr WOOD: I quote from the NTCAT summary. It says:

If section 46A is able to operate that could lead to the replacement of a BWS takeaway liquor store with an outlet of the size and scale of the proposed Dan Murphy's outlet, then the moratorium is rendered toothless.

Justice Riley said:

Substitution should not be available to remove the need to apply for a new licence or to circumvent moratoriums that may be in place from time to time.

Is this change not doing the exact opposite to what Justice Riley said, and you are actually circumventing the moratorium on new liquor licences?

Ms FYLES: No, we want it to go through the process. It still goes through the process of the independent Liquor Commission and there is the public interest and the community impact test that both have to be applied. All we are doing is allowing for it if someone wished to move a licence under these conditions.

Mr WOOD: You said 'all you are doing' but you are doing exactly the opposite of what Justice Riley said. Substitutions should not be available to remove the need to apply for a new licence or to circumvent moratoriums that may be in place from time to time.

We are not worried about whether the building is being built. This is the important bit. This is the bit that takes away the restriction which makes sure that we do not have a new takeaway licence. We had a small takeaway licence. The law says you can substitute it and if you want to have it bigger than that—in other words, if you change its operation—then you have to apply for a new liquor licence because it is bigger. You cannot do that under the present five-year moratorium that the government itself put in place. Surely that is what this is all about.

Ms FYLES: Just a point of clarification. It is within the category so it is a takeaway licence to a takeaway licence. You cannot go from a restaurant licence to a takeaway licence. This supports the moratorium and it supports the cap on takeaway liquor licences in the Territory.

We understand that there is going to be new areas developed. With the density of liquor licences in the Territory, where there is perhaps ten licences in a particular area, and there is a new area opened up and developed, if they want to have a liquor licence in that area, it still goes through that process of the independent Liquor Commission with the community impact and public interest test. They have to stay within their category.

It is removing the fact that the building has to be built. We understand in a commercial nature that someone would want surety that their liquor licence can be transferred so that is one aspect. It is being flexible within that like-for-like within the category of liquor licences. You cannot suddenly find an obscure licence that someone might have had running a small restaurant and then suddenly trying to transfer that to a takeaway licence. It is still within the same category.

Mr WOOD: Justice Riley does not say that at all. It just says a new licence and NTCAT in its response says:

The replacement of a modest BWS takeaway liquor store with an outlet of the size and scale of the proposed Dan Murphy's outlet, then the moratorium is rendered essentially toothless.

This is a big difference. It is not me saying it. It is the expert saying it. Do you agree with what NTCAT said?

Ms FYLES: Mr Acting Deputy, I have provided explanation about the question. This is not about one specific example. This is something, that once we implemented the act, became quite apparent that it was not working as we had intended. I have outlined what the changes are and what measures are in place to ensure that you see a transfer of liquor licence still going through that commission. I cannot provide anymore explanation.

Mr WOOD: I was expecting that answer at some time because I have been through this process a number of times with the Attorney-General. The point is that Justice Riley—you said you agreed with his recommendations—is telling you, that you are wrong. Not me. Substitution should not be available to remove the need to apply for a new licence or to circumvent moratoriums that may be in place from time to time.

You have just told Justice Riley that you do not agree with him anymore. Do you agree with the recommendations of Justice Riley or not?

Ms FYLES: I have provided the answer.

Mr WOOD: I do not agree that the minister has provided the answer. I have some time to discuss the matter in this debate. That is an answer that really shows the government is hypocritical when it comes to the recommendations of the Justice Riley report. If you agree with Justice Riley as you have said time and time again you cannot support this in good conscience. I would rather you got up and said that is one section of the Justice Riley report we do not agree with. You should have said that in 2019 when you brought the act in. You said you do not agree with it, you do not put it in. Now because Dan Murphy's made a lot of noise, a big stink, the *NT News* said, 'Oh, this is terrible', the CLP said, 'Everyone will be out of work'. Well, the Chief Minister got up and said, 'This is a kick in the guts, we are going to change it'.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think you have made the point, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: But I have 10 minutes. I have sat down before, realising that I have some time here. It is a very important debate. It is a very important principle and is not about whether we have Dan Murphy's or not. It is about the government's principle when it said it supported Justice Riley's recommendations. What we have now, when the government votes for this change in the law is that they are voting against the recommendation they supported, not only when Justice Riley brought down his recommendations, but when it wrote the *Liquor Act 2019*.

In one year's time the section of the *Liquor Act* is no good because someone put pressure on you and an election is coming up. You got tired of the noise created in the media about not allowing Dan Murphy's instead of sticking up for the Liquor Commission and the Riley Report and saying, 'Look, we are not against Dan Murphy, we are supporting what Justice Riley said and the Liquor Commission. We will go along with what people said is the right way to go.' But no, you sold everyone down the gutter and said, 'No, we will change the law to get what we want.' To me it is a case of expediency when it should not be.

I have said that I agree with Section 2A(b). Obviously no one will build any sort of building unless they know they can get approval ...

Ms FYLES: That is okay if you agree with it. But if you do not agree with it, it is not.

Mr WOOD: No, it makes sense. I read the Liquor Commission's report and the NTCAT report. That is the only thing that was mentioned in the second reading. You got up and spoke about the changes you were going to introduce. And the only thing you mentioned was about substituting a premises not yet constructed, or still under construction.

The really important bit that you missed out in your explanatory statement was the bit you deleted, which is the significant change in the operation of the business. That was not discussed in the second reading.

Ms FYLES: We will send the *Hansard* to you later.

Mr WOOD: No, it is not. You have a second reading that is 90% about what a wonderful job you have been doing to help people in the Northern Territory.

Ms FYLES: Someone has to say it.

Mr WOOD: Have a read of it. I do read your second readings. You will find, page after page of, 'Oh look, assaults, Banned Drinker Register, police under cover and all sorts of things. You have to get to the end before you find out what they are doing. Page 5 out of page 7 starts to talk about the bill.

That is fine. You got up here and said, 'Look at all the fantastic things we are doing'. Yes, there are few things there that need to be discussed. I find it difficult to debate something where the minister will not answer the question, because the question is, 'Does this go against the Riley report? Does the exclusion of existing section 2A and being replaced with the new 2A fit in with Justice Riley's recommendations?'

Ms FYLES: I already answered the question.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I have a question about clause 4. Picking up on a comment you made in your conclusion speech for the second reading, you said that you amended the like-for-like requirement in response to concerns about certainty for business development. Can you provide a bit of insight into that? What triggered this change in your policy?

Ms FYLES: It is when a business might be operating in an existing premises and gets an opportunity to move to a new location. You would have seen that in developments across Darwin. The original Casuarina Square is very different to how you build a shopping centre nowadays.

If you built a house in the 1980s you would have three bedrooms and one bathroom; nowadays you would have four bedrooms and two bathrooms. It is to accommodate the different styles as you see the developments change over time.

Mr WOOD: That is not a liquor licence. Since when do you need a liquor licence where you build your house?

Mrs LAMBLEY: Is there any specific trigger relating to takeaway liquor outlets and liquor licences, which is what this bill is about? Was anything that precipitated this change in policy?

Ms FYLES: We acknowledged the NTCAT decision that came out last year, which showed us that our legislation was not working as intended.

Mr WOOD: In a non-constructed building.

Mrs LAMBLEY: What examples did NTCAT give?

Ms FYLES: It is the case the Member for Nelson is talking about. It pointed out that the *Liquor Act*, as we had passed it in August, was not working as we had intended regarding those two aspects. It was clarifying the legislation.

Mr WOOD: No, one aspect.

Ms FYLES: I am answering the Member for Araluen's question.

Mr WOOD: I am making sure she knows it is only one aspect, otherwise you will tell stories.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Just to recap, the like-for-like requirement was in for about two-and-a-half years, is that correct?

Ms FYLES: Yes. When the NTCAT decision came out about building premises, that you cannot issue a liquor licence for a premises that has not been built, we looked at the legislation and identified the like-for-like—it would be problematic going through the Liquor Commission process. That is important for people to note. This still goes through the independent Liquor Commission. It still has a community impact test of public interest.

It is just a process, and it is not unusual for a new piece of legislation.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Why did it take you so long to identify that the like-for-like requirement was restricting business growth? Why did it take you so long to come to that conclusion?

Ms FYLES: I will let you be the judge of time, but the bill was enacted from 1 October 2019 and we started working on these amendments in December, so it was only a couple of months that we became aware that the new legislation was not working as intended. A few months is pretty quick in my books, but hey.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Was it nothing to do with the fact you canned a \$24m shopping precinct proposed by the Darwin Airport Corporation, possibly employing hundreds in the construction and ongoing operation? Was it nothing to do with the fact you stifled business development in the Northern Territory that we may never see again?

Ms FYLES: That question is not pertinent to the bill.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Questions at this stage need to be related to the clauses of the bill.

Clause 4 agreed to.

[Editor's note: Mr Wood asked that it be recorded that he did not support the clause.]

Clause 5:

Mr WOOD: Clause 5 deals with the substitution of a licensed premises. Under section 326(3) it says:

An application that was determined by the commission before the commencement cannot be resubmitted to the commission for a determination under section 75(2) and (2A).

Is there a legal reason for that? Why has this been put into the legislation?

Ms FYLES: The explanation provided to me is that that is a provision to cater for applications that are currently on foot.

Mr WOOD: Section 4: If an application was refused by the commission before the commencement, the licensee may apply to NTCAT for a rehearing of the application in accordance with section 75(2) and (2)(a). What difference is that compared to a normal application to NTCAT if an application was refused by the commission?

I presume that if I wanted to have a new takeaway licence, I went to the commission, it refused my application, I can go to NTCAT and appeal. This one says, if an application was refused by the commission before commencement, the licensee may apply to NTCAT. Why before the commencement does it stop if they can go for a rehearing? Is it because the commencement was in the previous act?

Ms FYLES: The advice I have is that it is so NTCAT can hear it but it is dealt with under the new provisions. There are a number of applications under foot so that provides a pathway. It is to do with the application being reheard and the process for that.

Mr WOOD: I am presuming a lot of this is to do with the way that this is going to be handled by Dan Murphy's. If you are going to change the act which you are doing, it is a fairly substantial change in the sense that it is a very major change to what was previously allowed, why is it not a requirement that Dan Murphy's takes it application back to the Liquor Commission rather than NTCAT for a new hearing based on the fact that we now have an amended *Liquor Act*?

Ms FYLES: These changes here, as we have gone over time and time again, is like-for-like and the building being built. These points allow applications on foot to be dealt with in an efficient manner. It is providing a pathway and a process for that. I do not think I can explain it in any simpler terms.

Mr WOOD: What worries me is that NTCAT has told Dan Murphy's that they are not going to deal with their issue. So that is it. I presume therefore that if they want to apply for a licence under the new law, they start again and go through the Liquor Commission and not NTCAT. NTCAT is an appeal body. We are introducing changes that make a lot of difference so why does that not go back to the Liquor Commission rather than NTCAT because it has been rejected by the Liquor Commission and NTCAT. That is it. We now change the law so why does it not go back to the Liquor Commission?

Ms FYLES: I have answered the question, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think we have had an answer on that one, Member for Nelson.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Could I just clarify, you can sometimes ask a question and sometimes get an answer. The two sometimes do not bear any relevance to one another. Yes, you have an answer but sometimes I do not think it is the answer to the question I asked. I will go on and ask another question.

Section 326(8) says this section has effect despite any law of the Territory or decision of NTCAT or Supreme Court to the contrary. Could you explain what that actually means in reality?

Ms FYLES: That explains that this legislation has precedence over any inconsistent decision with the tribunal.

Mr WOOD: What do you mean by inconsistent decision of the tribunal? What does that mean?

Ms FYLES: Against government policy.

Mr WOOD: Surely both the Liquor Commission and NTCAT has to deal with the law, not a policy.

Ms FYLES: It is in relation to this specific point around not substituting for something that is not built. That is clarifying that.

Mr WOOD: I get the feeling that this is just lined up for Dan Murphy's. If we did not have Dan Murphy's in this discussion, would we be debating this section today or would we just go back and change the act as you have done and allow things to go down the normal path and do a new application through the Liquor Commission?

Ms FYLES: Was there a question there?

Mr WOOD: If this was not about Dan Murphy's, would section 326 actually be relevant? In other words, is it necessary or is it only there because the future of Dan Murphy's will be helped by this section?

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think the minister answered that question when she answered the questions in regards to section 4. She stated that the substitution of licensed premises came to light when they were looking at the legislation.

Mr WOOD: I am not sure if I am debating with the Speaker now. I do not agree. What I am trying to find out is if this is part of the changes we are debating. If you go back to when the Chief Minister said that he wants Dan Murphy's to exist—if you took Dan Murphy's out of this situation and just deal with the basic changes to

section 75(2A), would this be necessary or has this section 326 been specifically created because of the circumstances around Dan Murphy's?

Ms FYLES: I have explained what the section does and I do not need to say it 50 different ways. I provided the explanation and I have nothing further to add.

Mr WOOD: I realise that but there is a whole sections which, regardless of the individual section, has been put in there for a reason. All I am asking is has it been put in there for Dan Murphy's or would it have been put in there regardless of who was asking for a liquor licence?

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: That has been answered.

Mr Wood: Well I will dig it up in Hansard if it is there.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that clause 5 stand as printed.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 16	Noes 2
Ms Ah Kit	Ms McConnell
Mr Bowden	Mr Wood
Mr Costa	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Ms Fyles	
Mr Higgins	
Mr Kirby	
Ms Lawler	
Mr McCarthy	
Ms Manison	
Ms Moss	
Ms Nelson	
Mr Sievers	
Ms Uibo	
Ms Wakefield	
Mrs Worden	

Motion agreed to.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the remainder of the bill be taken as a whole and agreed to.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 16	Noes 2
Ms Ah Kit	Ms McConnell
Mr Bowden	Mr Wood
Mr Costa	
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Ms Fyles	
Mr Higgins	
Mr Kirby	
Ms Lawler	
Mr McCarthy	
Ms Manison	
Ms Moss	
Ms Nelson	
Mr Sievers	
Ms Uibo	
Ms Wakefield	
Mrs Worden	

Motion agreed to.

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

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

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

REORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 59 I move to reorder Government Business Orders of the Day Number 3 Petroleum bill to become Number 2.

We advised the opposition and Independents; the scrutiny committee report came back this morning. We wish to proceed with petroleum and just switch them around.

Motion agreed to.

PETROLEUM LEGISLATION MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS BILL (Serial 116)

Continued from 28 November 2019.

Mr KIRBY (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, this is a difficult matter for the opposition to support, notwithstanding the scrutiny committee report today which seemed to cover off on all contentious matters. There are some matters left, I believe, that are not addressed adequately, particularly when you consider the times in which we are conducting this consideration of this amendment bill. This does not appear to be the right time for the consideration of such matters, but nonetheless, proceed we must.

I wish to raise a number of concerns the opposition holds regarding this. Many of these are borne out of a community that needs to have a heightened level of trust in government that says one thing and can be trusted to be saying something you can bank on. It seems to be that the words that are spoken to the community with apparent confidence with regard to the protection of the environment and the managing of the Pepper inquiry and its recommendations say one thing but the actions seem to drift away from the principle of the recommendations. Yet, it does not seem to trouble the minister or the government to say that they are honouring all those recommendations, when they are not. That is the matter that concerns the opposition.

I will get through a couple of those. I will give the opportunity for government to respond to this so they can reassure people that when they say something—as we have just heard in the previous debate—that they actually mean what they say.

There are also some other matters, and I ask that the minister take these and respond to them. It is the belief that the Territory government will give fracking exploration workers an exemption to the travel bans. Is this the case? That would need to be addressed, particularly at a time like this.

Is the exploration work deemed to be essential? The development work may take several years, but we are in the midst of a crisis. How is this being responded to at this time? Will there be movement in remote areas during this period, because this is deemed to be essential? How will this affect supply issues?

However, going to the issue being attended to in this amendment bill and hearing what pastoralists have to say, out of respect for what government has said and what it is doing, I find it difficult that they have not enshrined the requirements within the act regarding the land access agreements. That has been said, but has not been done. There has been drift from that, which is a concern.

I do not make that just to find point of argument, but the community has a certain expectation based on the position the government has described. That drift is a real concern. It means that Labor, which says one thing to one audience, can then easily be swayed to another position. We have seen that well exposed by the excellent work of the Member for Nelson.

I do not entirely agree with the position, but the exposing of the hypocrisy was well done; it was on full display for anybody with a conscience to see or sense. There are a lot of people out there, as the Member for Johnston would have noticed during the by-election—with an expectation that government would honour the position it describes itself as having. But rather than just move from exploration, quite swiftly, it seems like the door is already open. You are using a form of words but not honouring the recommendations.

The requirement of a statutory land access agreement to include standard minimum protection for landholders does not seem to be adequately addressed, when that is the recommendation of the Pepper inquiry—the lack of legal clarity surrounding the land access arbitration process and decision-making powers of its committee to bind landholders and gas companies to outcomes.

The draft bill fails to meet the requirement set by an adoption of the Pepper inquiry at 14.6.1.5, which states that there must be a statutorily enshrined land access agreement prior to any onshore shale gas activity on any pastoral lease. That was the recommendation, but you are drifting from that within this amendment.

Currently the NT Parliament is considering a bill to amend the *Petroleum Act* with regard to land access, yet the NT draft bill fails to implement the land access recommendations of the Pepper inquiry. It leaves out the critical legal requirement for a land access agreement that will be dealt with in supplementary regulations. That may be a fine point, but in a time like this when you have a Labor government that went to the election on one point, spoke for two years about the Pepper inquiry, which we recognised and respected that process. When the recommendations came out we knew it got the balance right—implement all of these and you will satisfy the concerns of the community about the environment and then we can proceed.

Drifting away from certain elements of it and saying that you are fully supporting it is the concern there. That is why it is difficult to support this. You need to sharpen it up because we are headed into difficult times and you need to have the right tension between what you say you intend and what you actually do.

If you are to shift from it, say it plainly. You cannot, at the same time, trade on both sides of the fence and say that you are honouring and implementing all recommendations when, plainly for anyone to see, you are not. That is the concern; it is called hypocrisy. This is a time when people need to trust government and your trust is being traded away with clever words, manoeuvring and an assertion of something which is not true.

There are genuine concerns in the community about these matters. They trusted the government when it came to the Pepper inquiry and thought it was an excellent process. It did take a lot of time; we had that discussion before. Obviously you felt that it was a necessary process to implement. It was the choice of government; we went along with it. We followed the process, listened to the final report, met Justice Pepper and thought that in balancing the needs and concerns of the community that this was the way to go.

If you start drifting away it is a concern. Further, Pepper inquiry recommendation 14.7 states that:

... in addition to any terms negotiated between the pastoralists and the gas company, the statutory land acts agreement must contain the above standard minimum protections for pastoralists.

What provisions are there in the bill that set out the standard minimum protections for pastoralists, as required in recommendation 14.7? Where are they? Granted, the scrutiny committee has looked at it but they have drifted away from these things. It is necessary—as a former farmer, knowing how important land is. When you get precious about these things you know when other interests start to intrude on the land you have that you have these basic rights enshrined and respected. That was the expectation of the pastoralists.

It is an opportunity to plainly explain why there has been this level of drift. You can regain the trust of pastoralist and those who have a concern for the impacts of these amendments.

There is a requirement from sectors of our community that the minimum requirements outlined in the act be strengthened—as was expected, but is not the case.

I hope there is opportunity for the minister to respond as to whether there are currently exemptions to the travel ban for those involved in the exploration phase during this period; it would be good to know. There is concern out there on that matter.

I understand that the Central Land Council has moved to stop all exploration and that the Northern Land Council has not. It is a matter to the side that does not apply to the amendments at hand, but these were important matters to consider in light of whether there are travel bans relating to the exploration phase.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak on the Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2019 and welcome it. It has been a long time coming. This legislation means that we are one step closer to onshore gas production in the Northern Territory Government. This is a good thing. The Country Liberal Party are focused and open with Territorians about our position on this industry.

It is an important industry for the Territory. It is a shame that there was a two-year moratorium; it did not have to happen. We respect and support the Pepper inquiry. But make no mistake—there is a place for onshore gas in the Northern Territory because it will provide jobs, opportunities and growth. Perhaps now, more than ever before, it is needed. When we come through the other side of this devastating health crisis we are facing there will be something at the other end to stimulate our economy, jobs, growth and opportunity well into the future.

I found it—the Member for Blain used the word ‘hypocritical’. He is being a bit hypocritical here and trying to have a bet each way. You do not get to have a bet each way, you either stand for something or you do not. What I am unashamedly saying is that we support a well-regulated onshore gas industry. Territorians can have no dispute about that. They can choose to not accept that from us and that is fine, but at least they know where we stand on this issue. It is very clear.

On that point, we have had a lot of mischief making on this topic over a number of years and we have had the Labor government recently out there saying that their plan for fracking is the wonderful clean, green, mean, lean machine and that the CLP’s is the dirty, dangerous fracking. What absolutely ridiculous, political mumbo-jumbo statements to make. There is no policy difference between the two.

We want this industry going. We support the Pepper inquiry and all 135 recommendations. Do we think we should have stopped everything and had a moratorium? No. Because if we did not do that we would be in a better economic position now than what we are and in turn, in the face of this unprecedented, unimaginable crisis that we are heading straight into there would have been a little more meat on the bones.

A well-regulated gas industry is important and if we did not have that two-year moratorium, we would be very close to that all important extraction phase which is where we see that significant money flowing through our economy.

I note that we just received amendments to the legislation that have just been circulated by the government. We have not had any time to go through those except to say I had a quick chat with the minister and he said they merely align with the recommendations of the scrutiny committee, of which I am a member, which we support.

Those amendments are not of concern to me at this stage. This bill is essentially enabling legislation and as with many actions taken by the government, the devil is always in the detail as to the eventual effect it will have on business, industry and stakeholders.

Perhaps the most noteworthy clauses, particularly clauses 16 and 17, simply provide for the making of the regulations. Those regulations will be what puts the meat on the bones as I said earlier and are currently the subject of intense debate and speculation.

Clauses 16 and 17 respectively provide for the regulations governing compensation to the owners of land and compensation for the right of access to land. Those regulations which will serve as the real foundation of this legislation have yet to be finalised or released in any draft form and it is our understanding that is because they are still subject to negotiation.

Testimony received by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee suggested that these negotiations regarding land access between parties including the government, prospective producers and the Cattlemen’s Association are progressing and have been productive to date. That is encouraging as it is in all of our interests that we get the onshore gas industry up and running in the Territory as soon as possible.

Clause 21 provides a framework for the regulations. Proposed new section 118 subsection 6A of the *Petroleum Act 1984* for example, states that the regulations in relation to land access may provide for a number of things including the process, parties to and minimum requirements for a land access agreement as well as consequences for breach and provision for security payments.

As illustrated by the NT Cattlemen's Association and APPEA to the Legislation Scrutiny Committee there are a number of outstanding details to iron out when it comes to land access and related issues under the new section 118 subsection 6A.

With the consultation and negotiation process on the regulations currently underway, there will be an important role for the Assembly to play when those regulations are completed in ensuring that they correctly balance the rights and responsibilities of the industry, pastoralists and all other stakeholders. In any case, there is also the fall-back mechanism for the resolution of disputes concerning compensation for land access in the NTCAT.

In its submission to the committee, APPEA pointed out that because NTCAT plays a role in both making initial determinations and reviewing decisions, a situation may arise where NTCAT would effectively be reviewing its own decisions, leading to inefficiency.

The department, in its advice to the scrutiny committee, concurred with the committee and accepted this recommendation and suggested that the new section 82A should be amended to rule out an NTCAT review of NTCAT decisions. I imagine that is now why I have this in front of me and it is in here. Okay, that is fine.

The bill also incorporates the principles of ecological sustainability into the decision-making process and provides amendments to the application and approval process for exploration permits. Amendment section 16 will provide for the publication of applications for exploration permits and invitations for submissions which must be considered by the minister under new section 16A.

The Legislation Scrutiny Committee made a commonsense recommendation based on evidence gathered from submissions and at the public hearing that a notice inviting application for the grant of an exploration permit should be published by the Department of Primary Industry and Resources on its website, or something similar, as well as being printed in a newspaper to allow for the greatest possible exposure, which is reasonable given we are in this digital age.

The bill also adds restrictions on the places where petroleum operations may take place. For example, new section 111 provides that operations may not take place within 50 metres of a residence, yard, garden, orchard or cultivated field and not within 200 metres of a cemetery without consent, or artificial water source. The section also includes a number of other sensible restrictions such as prohibiting operations within two kilometres of a residence and one kilometre of a bore unless consent is provided.

The Legislation Scrutiny Committee recommended adding detail to the section concerning residence, suggesting that any habitable dwelling should be included in that restriction, which is reasonable and in line with Justice Pepper's recommendations. The committee also recommended that native title claimants, as well as native title body corporates, be able to provide waivers of restrictions on operations adjacent to residences, cemeteries and bores, which is also unobjectionable.

Additionally, clauses 8 and 9 amend the act to allow members of the public to object to the proposed grant of an exploration permit, rather than just continuous landowners and for those objections to be published on the department's website. While APPEA did not object to the inclusion of these provisions, it did raise concerns about the subject matter on which objections may be made, suggesting:

Guidance should be given as to the ground on which an objection should be made.

The department indicated that such guidance might be acceptable. Nonetheless, the scrutiny committee rejected this recommendation, concluding that guidance would limit the information available to the minister. Whilst this may be regrettable, it is likely that objections unrelated to matters concerning exploration activities will be of little relevance and should not be given great weight for the purposes of the minister's decision in any event.

Finally, APPEA suggested that it might be desirable to include an offence provision similar to that included in section 149 of the Territory *Mineral Titles Act 2010*, which makes it an offence to interfere with authorised activities or the right of a title holder under the act. That offence is punishable by 400 penalty units or two years imprisonment. The scrutiny committee added this suggestion and recommended that such be added to the Petroleum Act. I imagine that is in the amendments I have on my desk.

While onshore gas may be an energy and revenue source, the industry is incredibly important to the future of all Territorians. Even with an unimaginable advance in technology that makes renewables exponentially

more economical and efficient, natural gas will still be an important industry which will power homes, industry and provide electricity for many decades to come into the future.

The fact that natural gas is far less harmful to our climate than other sources of fossil fuel such as diesel and coal, also makes it a really viable transitional source. Therefore, it is in the best interests of the Territory, and indeed our country, to pursue our natural gas reservoirs such as the plentiful Beetaloo Basin.

There is no question that this can be done safely, with minimal impact to our environment, which was demonstrated by Hawke Hunter and now the Pepper report. The economic benefits to the Territory from a safe and well-regulated onshore gas industry are potentially game changing. We have talked about this many times in this Chamber over a long period of time.

It is true we are still in early days, but if we can act prudently and intelligently as a parliament we may be able to harness the benefits of onshore gas and really transform the Territory. We may be able to flatten out our cyclical economy and provide wealth and security for Territorians into the future, particularly when we will be needing those shining lights on the horizon—when we get through this year and the devastating impacts that COVID-19 will undoubtedly have on the Territory and Territorians.

We may be able to use the wealth created by natural gas as a lever to move Australia and the world into new forms of energy production, including hydrogen. It is rare that we get an opportunity to do the right thing that benefits everyone.

We need that far sight and long-term vision, because we are not in here just planning for ourselves and what is in our immediate lifetime of interests. Most importantly, we are here for future generations. We are in the Chamber making the Territory a better place for our kids and their kids. That is something we can never lose sight of.

At the time when we are looking down the barrel of this unprecedented health and economic crisis, we must think to the future not only to provide hope, but because it will require and appropriate measures now, much like the legislation we passed earlier today, to be able to get us to that point. We must think of the now and act, and do everything humanly possible to protect Territorians, support business and support jobs, but we also need to forward plan so that when we come out the other side we are ready to go.

Through the Pepper inquiry we know this can be done safely, efficiently and economically. There is no dirty, dangerous gas. The government can be silly about that all it likes. People understand that we have an enormous opportunity here to make a big difference in many people's lives for many reasons. It is very important that this legislation is passed today. It provides a roadmap.

I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KIRBY (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I thank everyone for their contributions. It is a bit surreal on a day like today to try to get on with the business of enacting a very important industry in the Northern Territory, making sure the protections are right for the industry and the people on the land. It is important business, and I appreciate everybody's comments.

I thank the Legislation Scrutiny Committee. It is a power of work that the people on those committees have to do: the Members for Spillett; Araluen; Katherine; and Brennan, as the Chair. I thank the Member for Karama for her hard work as the previous Chair. Our new Member for Johnston is starting to learn what committees are all about, and the detail of the work that goes through them.

I also thank the department, which has done a power of work to get things where they are. Before I lead in to the detail of it, I will clear up a couple of issues.

There are travel bans through the Territory. People know that the borders were locked down this afternoon while we were in here. If companies have workers in locations, and they can prove that it is safe for them to proceed, as with the rest of society they are proceeding as they have done. That is how things are proceeding today. If workers need to move through the Territory or interstate there is another level of complexity.

As much as some people say we need to lock the entire Territory down, the best examples we can give would be Central Petroleum in Alice Springs regions or Eni near Wadeye. If we stop people going to those sites, we are going to be in for some pretty rude shocks through the Northern Territory very quickly because we will not have power and we will not have it for quite a few months. The next level down from that is making sure that people are safe to travel through those areas. Processes have been developed to make sure that

people have plans and those plans are signed off by the Territory health officers and that they adhere to those plans as the government has set out to not come into contact with other members of the community or remote communities.

It is not worth me trying to explain the detail of those plans because they vary in each instance. There are exemptions that people are able to work through but they still have to be able to prove to the Territory health experts that they have done that body of work. There are ways to work with the restrictions that we have in place.

The Leader of the Opposition brought up a couple of queries about our land access agreements and tried to assert that we were moving away from our convictions on the Pepper inquiry and report. ‘Start drifting away’ was the terminology. The bill that we will put before the House today will allow the regulations to be developed.

The Cattlemen’s Association, APPEA and pastoral leaseholders will all be involved in the development of these regulations and have been involved in getting this bill and the detail to be worked out in the regulations. The regulations will be enshrined under the act so it still has the same effect. There has been no watering down and no straying. They will make sure that land access agreements are in place before any of these movements happen over people’s land.

We are very confident and stand here hand-on-heart to say that all these minimum provisions will be covered in the regulations. That is a commitment that we gave to industry, the cattlemen and the pastoral leaseholders and we have not strayed away from that.

I appreciate the Member for Spillett’s involvement in the committees and the hard work that they do. We may not agree on the capacity to have all of those 135 recommendations enshrined in that Pepper inquiry that gives Territorians the comfort they need to progress with that industry without the moratorium. There is no way that we could have got that body of work done while industry was progressing.

I wanted to go on record and explain clearly that we could not have had one without the other and that everyone through society understands the 135 recommendations are some of the world’s best regulations. Companies have worked their way through them and have had to meet a higher level of regulation than they ever have previously. There have been times when they have not enjoyed that but they have worked their way through that and they will continue to operate in the Northern Territory.

I thank everybody on those committees. I was pleased to see participation from a lot of members of the community for this bill. The community engagement has been fantastic. The assessment of the comments received from the public is crucial in getting this bill before the Assembly today.

The committee sent its report to the Speaker on 18 March 2020 and was tabled in the Assembly on 24 March 2020. I am pleased to say that the committee has recommended that the bill be passed with some minor amendments. We accept all six recommendations from the Legislation Scrutiny Committee’s report on the bill. We will discuss how the amendments are being adopted in the bill during the committee stage.

In reaching this point of the debate I express my thanks to the Department of Primary Industry and Resources staff—some of whom we have in the box with us today. They have worked not just bill but in my time as minister over the last 12 months, they have done a massive body of work. As with some of the stuff we are working our way through with COVID-19, there is no rule book if you have not had an industry or an incident like this in the Territory before. I wholeheartedly thank them for all of the hard work they have done and will no doubt continue to do.

I thank the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for their hard work as well. This bill has been a bit challenging with the time frames and we appreciate everybody’s hard work.

The Pepper inquiry was required to investigate the environmental, economic, social and cultural risks and impacts of the hydraulic fracturing. In this respect, the inquiry was comprehensive and wide-ranging. Justice Pepper created an inquiry where people’s concerns were listened to and the community’s views regarding hydraulic fracturing were acknowledged and noted—both for and against. The inquiry mapped Territorians’ issues and risks with hydraulic fracturing. It set about investigating these in the context of the existing legislative frameworks and community expectations. It also made detailed recommendations in the final report to mitigate to acceptable levels or eliminate completely these risks.

It is clear that Territorians engaged with the inquiry in a very thorough manner. The stats from the inquiry showcase the huge effort of Territorians to be engaged with the inquiry. There were 151 public hearings in which more than 1250 public submissions were received and considered. There were also 52 community forums in which thousands of Territorians participated.

I have mentioned in this House before that is probably one of the widest ranging consultative processes that has ever happened in the Northern Territory and we are extremely proud we gave Territorians the opportunity to have their say.

The inquiry determined in its final report that if the 135 recommendations were implemented, they would mitigate to acceptable levels or eliminate altogether the risks associated with an onshore petroleum industry in the Northern Territory.

The government's implementation plan was published in July 2018 and provides a staged approach to implementing the inquiry's recommendations across government. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken, not only in the Department of Primary Industry and Resources in completing recommendations, but across other departments as well, including the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of the Chief Minister. I thank all of those hard-working public servants and ministerial staff who have been involved in all of that.

This whole-of-government response to the inquiry is central to the effective implementation of the recommendations to mitigate or eliminate risks to the onshore petroleum industry.

The government appointed Dr David Richie as the independent officer to oversee the implementation of the inquiry's recommendations. The role of the independent officer is to provide independent advice to government on how the implementation of recommendations is progressing and being managed. The implementation of 135 recommendations requires careful management and coordination and the appointment of the independent officer is an important mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability.

Since his appointment, Dr Richie has provided four reports to the Chief Minister. Dr Richie's latest report provides that he remains of the opinion that implementation continues satisfactorily in accordance with the inquiry's recommendations.

To date, 55 of the 135 recommendations have been completed, including recommendations that had to be finalised before exploration could recommence. We laid them out in a chronological order to make sure we got the right ones done first so exploration could commence.

We are also pleased that the data also shows that the new regulatory framework is not a deterrent for exploration, as I have mentioned before. The recent stats released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that, as of December 2019, the expenditure for onshore petroleum exploration through the Territory reported to the Australian Tax Office was \$229m in 2019, an increase of \$80m from 2018.

Exploration is important for the Territory more generally, for some of our small and medium businesses to be involved in that processes. Businesses provide services to the petroleum industry and employment opportunities for Territorians in regional areas. These small business can include anything from local firms providing on-the-ground environmental surveys to the drilling of water bores for monitoring purposes, to civil works for access roads onto pastoral properties.

The passing of this bill is significant for further strengthening the laws surrounding the development of the onshore petroleum industry in the Northern Territory and enhancing the public engagement in decision-making under the *Petroleum Act 1984*.

The passing of the bill is critical because it implements, in whole or in part, nine additional recommendations of the Inquiry. The bill does this in two ways. The first is creating a head of power in the act to amend regulations under the act to enable the progression of several recommendations including in relation to land access agreements. The second is through direct changes to the act to complete recommendations when the bill is passed.

The bill inserts a regulation-making powers into the act to:

- allow the regulations to prescribe statutory land access agreements for entry onto pastoral leases in accordance with recommendation 14.6 from the inquiry

- allow the regulations to prescribe minimum protections in statutory land access agreements with pastoral lessees in accordance with Inquiry recommendation 14.7
- allow the regulations to prescribe minimum mandatory compensation for production activities on pastoral leases in accordance with Inquiry recommendation 14.8
- allow the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016 to prescribe environmental security bonds for regulated activities in accordance with recommendation 14.13 in part.

In making its recommendations the inquiry focused on mandating outcomes and setting objectives. The inquiry generally did not specify how those outcomes and objectives were to be achieved. This is in recognition of the fact that the government has a whole range of tools available to regulate the onshore petroleum industry including through the act, regulations, codes of practice and policies or a combination of those instruments.

I am confident, as was the Legislation Scrutiny Committee, that the implementation of the four recommendations, including for land access, can and should be implemented through regulations. The inquiry's recommendations about land access have been of great interest to the petroleum industry and pastoralists. My department has engaged with the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association and the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association about land access agreements and the practical implementation of the inquiry's recommendations. We stand here proud knowing that both of those key players are on board and willing participants in assisting us draft up those regulations. I am pleased to report that those discussions have been productive and collaborative and that there is much common ground between these stakeholders.

A key issue I hear from all stakeholders is the need to create certainty and making regulations for land access agreements will do that. Specifically the regulations will:

- require a land access agreement to be in place prior to any access to the land
- remove any concerns as to a power imbalance between the petroleum industry and pastoralists
- create 24 standard minimum protections in every statutory land access agreement, creating a solid base for the petroleum companies and the pastoralists to negotiate from and form an ongoing and productive relationship.

It is envisaged that once this bill is passed, the drafting of the regulations can be commenced.

The bill also makes direct changes to the act to amend the current process regarding land release for exploration in the act so that there is public engagement on issues of coexistence between the onshore petroleum industry and the current land users. This is in accordance with inquiry recommendation 14.2. I am confident that with this amendment and the public's engagement, I will have the best and most detailed information available to make a decision on the release of land for exploration. This is also consistent with this government's promises to restore integrity to government and by building trust through transparency.

The bill amends the act to allow for public objections to the intention to grant an exploration permit. This is in accordance with inquiry recommendation 14.10 and again, ensures that I have access to all the relevant information in my decision-making. Currently only people with an interest in the land within the application area can object.

The bill amends the act to ensure that the principles of ecologically sustainable development are considered when making decisions under the act and the regulations. This is in accordance with inquiry recommendation 14.11.

Broadly, the principles of ecologically sustainable development are about development that meets the needs of Territorians today while conserving the environment for the benefit of future generations. The Member for Spillett touched on that before. We are not just making decisions for the here and now and not for the people in this Chamber, but for our kids and the Territory going forward.

It is the aim of this Government to have an onshore petroleum industry while protecting the Territory's environment for our children.

It also amends the act to create consistency between the Code of Practice: Onshore Petroleum Activities in the NT, which is empowered under the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016 and the act. The code of

practice was made and has been in force since mid-2019. The code, which provides minimum standards, has been enforced by the regulators since that time. All environment management plans must be compliant with the code.

The Inquiry made recommendations mandating setbacks of certain petroleum infrastructure from improvements on the land. These setbacks are cautionary. Government remains committed to ensuring the remainder of the 135 recommendations are completed prior to production approvals for unconventional reservoirs are considered by the relevant ministers.

The balance of these recommendations will require further consultation with the community and the petroleum industry, we understand that. These recommendations will require further legislative change and policy development. There is still much work to be done by this government. We acknowledge the significant work we have done so far and thank all who have been involved.

We will have the strongest laws to protect the environment; ensure protections for landholders, instil community confidence in our regulatory system and create jobs for Territorians through the development of an onshore petroleum industry in the Northern Territory.

I thank everybody for their input and I commend the bill to the House.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

After clause 5:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 1 that clause 5A be inserted into the bill. The effect of this amendment is to clarify that the minister must be satisfied that a person is an appropriate person when granting a permit or licence and also when renewing a permit or licence.

Section 15A of the act was inserted in 2019 to complete inquiry recommendations 14.12 and 14.20. This amendment strengthens the appropriate person test to capture the renewal of a permit or licence, not just the initial granting of the permit or licence. This is in accordance with the Pepper inquiry recommendations. It is not a recommendation of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee but is being made to ensure that the inquiry's recommendations are implemented in totality.

This amendment is consistent with the inquiry recommendation 14.11 and 14.20 of imposing a robust fit and proper test in the act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5A inserted.

Clause 6:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 2 that clause 6(3) be amended to omit 'insert' and inserting in its place new wording set out in the amendment schedule. This amendment addresses recommendation 2 of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee which requested that when the minister gives notice inviting applications for the grant of an exploration permit, the minister must publish that notice in a newspaper circulating in the Northern Territory and also on the agency's website.

This amendment is consistent with the inquiry recommendation 14.2 in providing notice to the public of any proposed land released for exploration.

Mr WOOD: This question is on behalf of the Member for Daly. Why are we still advertising in the newspaper if you are advertising on the agency's website? Is there any reason? That has obviously been added and I know the scrutiny committee mentioned it. Was there a push by those people who were putting submissions in that just having it on the website was not sufficient?

Mr KIRBY: It is originally in the newspaper so the broadening has been the electronic version that gives us consistency across the board because that is how we advertise for some other opportunities in the mining industry. It gives people much better access to see those opportunities come up.

Mr WOOD: I do not necessarily agree with the Member for Daly but I thought I would ask the question. In this case I know that some people do not have access online and the community does like to be involved in the discussions especially around hydraulic fracturing and sometimes the only way they can find out what is going on is through the newspaper. I probably support this recommendation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7 to 14, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

After clause 14:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 3, that clause 14A be inserted. This amendment, amendment 5 and amendment 12 all address Recommendation 6 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee. The committee recommended that the bill be amended to make it an offence to interfere with authorised activities conducted by a permittee or a licensee under the act. This is consistent with other resources legislation such as the *Minerals Title Act 2010*, and is important for safety reasons including human, animal and environmental reasons.

Section 65(3) makes it an offence for a person to interfere with rights of a permittee or licensee to access their title areas. Amendment 3 omits section 65(3) because the matter will be dealt with in the new offence to be inserted under this amendment schedule at amendment 5.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14A inserted.

Clauses 15 to 17, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 18:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 4 that clause 18 be amended to insert section 82B after the proposed section 82A. The effect of this amendment is to provide that the Northern Territory Civil and Administrative Tribunal only has original jurisdiction to deal with specified disputes under the act, including in relation to disputes about compensation. The amendment removes the tribunal's review jurisdiction on their own original decision for certain petroleum matters, although an appeal from the tribunal is still available to the Supreme Court.

Amendment 4 addresses Recommendation 3 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 5 that clause 18A and 18B be inserted. Those clauses provide that section 93 is amended and that section 108A is inserted. The amendments to section 93 are to provide that the transfer of 100% of the shares in a permittee or licensee require ministerial approval and that the minister must be satisfied that a person is an appropriate person to hold the permit or licence.

This amendment strengthens the appropriate person test to capture when parties seek to avoid the ministerial approval process by transferring shares, as opposed to transferring the permit or licence itself. This is in accordance with the Pepper inquiry's recommendations.

Proposed section 108A makes it an offence for a person to interfere with activities conducted under a permit or licence. The penalty for interfering with a petroleum activity is 400 penalty units or imprisonment of two years. This is consistent with the current penalty under section 65(3) for interfering with access to authorise under the act. The maximum fine under this offence is \$62 800 and it shows how serious we are about safety on petroleum sites.

Amendment 4, amendment 3 and amendment 13 address Recommendation 6 made by Legislation Scrutiny Committee. The Legislation Scrutiny Committee made the recommendation given the importance of the safety in the petroleum industry and the risks to safety if there is interference.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 18, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 19:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 6 that clause 19 be amended by omitting the reference to ‘residence’ in proposed section 111(1)(b) and inserting in its place ‘habitable dwelling’ as set out in the amendment schedule. This amendment is consistent with the language of the inquiry recommendation 10.2, the Code of Practice: Onshore Petroleum Activities and recommendation 4 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 7 that clause 19 be amended by omitting the proposed section 111(2)(b) and inserting in its place the new wording set out in the amendment schedule. The effect of this recommendation is that a permittee or licensee must not carry out certain operations without the approval of the registered native title bodies corporates and claimants.

This is consistent with the *Native Title Act 1993* and addresses recommendation 5 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 8 that clause 19 be amended by omitting the proposed section 111(3)(b) and inserting in its place the new wording set out in the amendment schedule. The effect of this recommendation is that a permittee or licensee must not construct a well or a well pad without the approval of registered native title bodies corporates and claimants.

This is consistent with the *Native Title Act 1993* and addresses recommendation 5 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 9 that clause 19 be amended to insert, in subsection (5) a definition of habitable dwelling as set out in the amendment schedule. This amendment provides for a definition of habitable dwelling that is consistent with the language of the inquiry recommendation 10.2, the Code of Practice: Onshore Petroleum Activities and includes a broad range of buildings including permanent sporting facilities and schools.

This amendment addresses recommendation 4 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 19, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 20, by leave, agreed to.

Clause 21:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 10 that clause 21(1) be amended by omitting the proposed wording and inserting the new wording set out in the amendment schedule. This is not a recommendation of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee, but it is being made to ensure the necessary regulation-making powers exist in order to impose fees for the registration of land access agreements under the Petroleum Regulations 1994 and is part of the comprehensive land access agreement scheme.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 11 that clause 21(2) be amended by omitting the proposed section 118(6A)(f). This is a technical drafting amendment, the matter which was provided at proposed section 118(6A)(f) is now to be provided at proposed section 118(6A)(k).

This is not a recommendation of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee, but it is being made to ensure the necessary regulation-making powers exist in order to make regulations for a comprehensive land access regime.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 12 that clause 21(2) be amended to omit proposed section 118(6A)(j) and insert the new wording set out in the amendment schedule. This is not a recommendation of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee, but it is being made to ensure the necessary regulation-making powers exist in order to make regulations for a comprehensive land access regime.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 21, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 22:

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 13 that proposed section 133A is inserted into the act in the amendment schedule. This is consistent with recommendation 6, made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee to insert an offence into the act about interfering with activities authorised under the act. Proposed section 133A is a transitional provision for that offence.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 14 that clause 22 be amended to insert reference to subsection (1). This issues a technical drafting amendment and is required because of additional amendments in this amendment schedule.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 15 that clause 22 be amended by omitting the word 'residence' and inserting the word 'habitable dwelling' in the proposed section 134A. Proposed section 134 is a transitional provision which means that if a permittee or licensee is constructing well-headed pipeline or petroleum processing facility before commencement of this bill then it is not an offence under proposed section 111 to complete that work.

The effect of the amendment is to have a consistent use of language in referring to a habitable dwelling as opposed to a residence. Amendment 15 addresses recommendation 4 made by the Legislation Scrutiny Committee.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 16 that clause 22 be amended by inserting a new subsection at proposed section 134. This new subsection includes a reference to habitable dwellings and is a definitional reference. This is a technical drafting amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr KIRBY: I move amendment 17 that clause 22 be amended by inserting references to additional decisions at Schedule 1 in accordance with the amendment schedule. This is not a recommendation of the Legislation Scrutiny Committee but is being made to ensure that all relevant decisions are identified where the minister must consider and apply the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

Clause 5 inserted Part 1A into the act and requires that the minister considers and applies the principles of ecologically sustainable development. The department determined that further decisions in relation to permits and leases granted under the repealed Petroleum (Prospecting and Mining) Act should be added to Schedule 1 to implement, in totality, recommendation 14.1.1 of the inquiry.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 22, as amended, agreed to.

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

Mr KIRBY (Primary Industry and Resources): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION
Status of Opposition

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move a motion without notice to determine the official opposition in the Assembly. I move that this Assembly:

1. agrees that the party or group that the official opposition remains unclear
2. declares therefore that the office of the Leader of the Opposition is vacant
3. conducts a ballot pursuant to chapter 21 of the Standing Orders to fill this vacancy
4. agrees that a ballot so conducted be a choice between the Member for Spillett and the Member for Blain only
5. agrees that the result of the ballot, regardless of the numbers of members participating, determines that the party or group led by the successful candidate shall be the official opposition
6. agrees that this resolution merely binds the thirteenth Assembly.

Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 44, I move that the question be put.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the question be put.

The Assembly divided.

Ayes 17	Noes 3
Ms Ah Kit	Mr Collins
Mr Bowden	Mrs Lambley
Mr Costa	Mr Mills
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Ms Fyles	
Mr Higgins	
Mr Kirby	
Ms Lawler	
Mr McCarthy	
Ms Manison	
Ms Moss	
Ms Nelson	
Mr Sievers	
Ms Uiho	
Ms Wakefield	
Mr Wood	
Mrs Worden	

Motion agreed to.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the motion be put.

The Assembly divided.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): A point of order, Madam Speaker! I am concerned that we are proceeding down a path without adequate legal advice. When simple—there are three and two. According to the

understanding we have from the Solicitor General's advice that is clear—there needs to be legal advice to clarify this matter. I fear that we are walking into a place that is leaving us exposed.

Madam SPEAKER: The CLP Leader, the Member for Spillett, has used the standing and sessional orders. I have not given her advice. I know what has come because I have to maintain order in the Chamber. The standing orders and sessional orders have been used. If that group of people have gone off and got their own advice that is their business.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The determination of opposition status was yours.

Madam SPEAKER: No it was not.

Mrs LAMBLEY: You allowed us to become opposition based on the fact that there were three.

Madam SPEAKER: It is not a point of order.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I am just seeking clarification.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker. Sorry it is not a point of order.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order that I want to raise.

Madam SPEAKER: Just let me do this tally first.

Ayes 17	Noes 3
Ms Ah Kit	Mr Collins
Mr Bowden	Mrs Lambley
Mr Costa	Mr Mills
Mrs Finocchiaro	
Ms Fyles	
Mr Higgins	
Mr Kirby	
Ms Lawler	
Mr McCarthy	
Ms Manison	
Ms Moss	
Ms Nelson	
Mr Sievers	
Ms Uibo	
Ms Wakefield	
Mr Wood	
Mrs Worden	

Motion agreed to.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! We have not been able to communicate with you at all since we formed three on Wednesday morning. You have allowed us to assume the role as opposition...

Madam SPEAKER: No, Member for Araluen, you are wrong. I have not assumed anything. You had the three, you have had your party, you took opposition, the Chamber seating was changed, the officers were changed, your salaries have been changed etc. I do not deem opposition. I do not give opposition. Neither does the government. What happened here is the will of the Assembly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of clarification; what constitutes an opposition in this Chamber?

Madam SPEAKER: I cannot answer that. There have been papers written on it. I cannot answer that.

Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business): A point of order, Madam Speaker! We are focussed on other matters. In terms of this, a ballot is to take place so we will not participate in that ballot ...

Madam SPEAKER: Attorney-General, please pause. Honourable members, as the Assembly has agreed to a ballot, I will now advise of the procedure for the conduct of a ballot. Before we proceed with the ballot, the bells will ring for three minutes. Members will be provided with a blank ballot paper upon which they will write

either the name of the electorate or the name of the member from the two proposed to be chosen as the Leader of the Opposition as specified in the motion.

Clerks will move around the Chamber with ballot boxes. Members are to place their ballot in the box if they wish to cast a vote. Once the ballots have been collected, they will be presented to the Clerk who will count the ballots. The Clerk will report back to the Speaker with the greatest number of votes. The Speaker will then give out the results. Over to you Mr Clerk for the ballot.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! At the end of the day, this Chamber cannot act illegally. What is happening now is illegal.

Madam SPEAKER: I cannot comment on that. All I know is that it is being done according to standing and sessional orders and that is the rule book for the Assembly.

Mrs LAMBLEY: I propose, and I will move this, that this process be suspended until we get legal advice from the Solicitor-General of the Northern Territory on this whole matter. We sought legal advice during this term of parliament and based every decision of opposition on that advice from the Solicitor-General. What we are doing now is in contravention of the advice given by her three years ago. It is not fair, just or democratic to proceed with this motion when it is in direct conflict with that advice.

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Opposition Leader, the Solicitor-General cannot give advice to the Assembly; she or he gives it to the government. If your party has concerns you can take it to the Supreme Court.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO: Madam Speaker, in speaking to the point of order, the Assembly—there is question before the House.

Madam SPEAKER: We are in the middle of a motion.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Madam Speaker, a point of order! The decision to allow this is undemocratic and unconstitutional.

Madam SPEAKER: As I said, it is in line with the Standing and Sessional Orders. There was nothing before the Assembly, the Member for Spillett jumped—she could have been talking about anything. That is when she started her speech. We had finished a piece of legislation and were waiting to go onto the next thing.

Mr COLLINS: Madam Speaker, a point of order! On what basis does the Assembly have the ability to declare the office of the Leader of the Opposition vacant?

Madam SPEAKER: If it is the will of the Assembly to do something, it can do it. If it is the will of the Assembly to bring legislation, or a motion; debate legislation; suspend or not; adjourn— it is the will of the Assembly.

As I said, the Member for Spillett ...

Mr COLLINS: You have allowed this motion to move forward ...

Madam SPEAKER: The Assembly has allowed the motion to move forward.

Mr COLLINS: ... in circumstances where not all members are present—numerous members are not here and have not been available to be here.

Madam SPEAKER: That is not correct—two members have been given leave.

Mr COLLINS: That is right, but they are not here because of the current situation. You are allowing the ballot to proceed ...

Madam SPEAKER: It is the will of the Assembly, Member for Fong Lim.

Mr COLLINS: ... in circumstances where it is contrary to the advice government sought and that you provided to all of us throughout the term of this parliament. That advice was very clear. You have made it clear on a number of occasions that you do not make the decision.

Madam SPEAKER: I am not making a decision.

Mr COLLINS: I know, but the numbers are the numbers. That is what the advice came down to. The party with the greater number of members on the floor of the Assembly is the opposition. It is on that basis that we have occupied the offices over the last few days.

This motion is completely out of order. It is petulance at its highest degree. Sorry?

A member interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Funny, so funny.

Madam SPEAKER: Continue, Member for Fong Lim, if you have other things to say.

Mr COLLINS: Yes. It absolutely makes a mockery of this place, Westminster traditions—as I said, what are we going to have in the future? One person turn up and call a ballot and because they are popular, well, they can be the Opposition Leader?

No, the fact is that the advice received from the Solicitor-General was very clear. It is about numbers and party.

When three members went to the Speaker the year before and said that they had an agreement between themselves, the advice came back—very clearly—that it cannot be a group of Independents, it has to be members of a registered political party. That is what we now have.

Here we have the members of the opposition turning around and taking advantage of the fact that members are not here.

Mrs Finocchiaro: Oh, rubbish.

Mr COLLINS: It is no rubbish. The rubbish is that you want to maintain this position, which you have frittered away over the last three years and seven months.

It is an anathema to this institution and the parliamentary traditions that we are supposed to uphold. Okay? Over the last three years, you have complained about the Members for Blain and Araluen and other members because they have asked for a fair allocation of resources. Okay, same with the government. It is all about us, all about personality. What is this?

Mrs Finocchiaro: Madam Speaker, is this a point of order? What is the Member for Fong Lim talking about?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Fong Lim, your time has expired, even though there are no time limits to it.

Mr MILLS (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I do not want anyone to think for a moment that this is something we have engineered or conspired to achieve. It is a result of the three members of this Assembly. On the advice we received up to this point, we proceeded in good faith. So much so—and a demonstration of that—is the Member for Nhulunbuy said to me, 'If you need me to come to provide cover if something happens, please come.' But in good faith, I thought, how could anyone do that on the strength of the advice and the democratic process it seemed to be fairly clear. I suggested to the Member for Nhulunbuy, 'Attend to the business you have in Ramingining'. He is not here, his voice is not heard. In good faith, he was given leave, not expecting for a moment this would occur.

However, in that good faith, if this is the outcome, let the people observe this and make their own consideration on this matter in this very critical time in the Northern Territory and across our nation with a terrible crisis arising.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I understand it is a difficult time and I would rather this did not come before the House today. But it has come and I have made my decision, even though it is a ballot.

I will be honest with you, Member for Blain, I was not happy with the way the opposition formed its opposition, mainly because I listened, over time, to a number of people—the Members for Fong Lim and Araluen. It did not give me the impression that this was done for the reasons I felt should be the reasons an opposition would be formed. The issues about whether you have sufficient resources was a constant issue. I understand that because I have been part of the Independents who I felt did not get what they needed to do their job properly.

I listened to the Member for Araluen speak two weeks ago when she said she really had not time of the Territory Alliance. To me, that has left me with doubt about—I am not saying you do not have three people—the legitimacy of what has happened had been done for reasons of convenience and you will get extra people—which you have. I am telling you how I see it.

I also know—would you believe?—that many people who have spoken to me were not happy with what happened. They have not seen this as the right time for the opposition to change. They have seen it as something that should not have happened at this time. If you wanted my opinion, the Territory Alliance would have been far better off to say, 'Whilst we have the numbers ...'—and I do not know where that is written down, by the way. We could argue the toss that that is the opposition. I would have thought you would have won more support in the community if you said, 'Yes, we have a party that now conforms to the opposition, or we hope will form an opposition'. The community would have said, 'Good. We have other things on our minds at the moment. We understand where you are, but the last thing we really want to be discussing is this stuff about who should be the opposition and who should not.'

It is small beer when it comes to the matters before us and that is why I did not feel happy with what has happened in the last week or so. It is not that I am a great supporter of the CLP, I can tell you now. I have had my issues over the years with the CLP. But I felt that this was done in a way that I did not believe was what the people I spoke to supported. They saw something else—there were other reasons you got together to do this, when the issue before us was Coronavirus.

That is why support this motion.

Madam SPEAKER: The ballot results are three for the Member for Blain—even though one was invalid because you were asked to put the name of the person or the electorate. I will allow it to go through because the intent is there. It is three for the Member for Blain and five for the Member for Spillett.

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! What does that actually mean?

Madam SPEAKER: It means that the will of this Assembly has deemed that the Member for Spillett and her team are the opposition.

PAPER TABLED

Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee Report – Inquiry into the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Amendment Bill 2019

The CLERK: Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 201(3)(b) I report to the Assembly the receipt, on 9 March 2020, of a government response to the Economic Policy Scrutiny Committee report Inquiry into the Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Amendment Bill 2019 and lay on the table the minister's response to the report.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if this is our last night, so I did not intend to give a farewell speech. I will give an abbreviated version because if I got a change I was hoping to make it a lot more detailed about the history of my time in the House.

I have spent 19 years in this House. I have enjoyed it in regard to the ups and downs—there have been downs today. There have been some difficult decisions made. I have had my times when I wished I was not in the job, and times when I have really enjoyed what I have done.

I have travelled and done lots of things, which I would detail if I had more time. I want to thank some people in case this is my last night.

I will always thank my good wife, Imelda. How she has put up with me I do not know. Luckily—or unluckily—her long-term memory is fine, so she can remember what she has had to put up with. I thank her for all the love and attention. It is my turn to look after her.

I also thank my children, Angela, Caroline and Joanne; and my grandchildren, Jason, James, Wilhelmina and William, who have all been a bit confused about what their grandfather and father does, but they all support me.

I thank the people who have worked for me over time. People might remember Loz Davies, who used to work for the ABC. She was my first research officer. She was shared between Lorraine Braham and me. There was also Jo Vanoss. She has written children's books, among doing other things. She lived at Port Keats and at different cattle stations. She was my first electorate officer.

There are others; I will not mention them all here. I need to write them all down so I get them right.

I thank Kim, who has been with me the longest time throughout the ups and downs. She supported me when life was crook, and when things were good. She is the one who puts the legislation together for me, especially amendments to bills. She keeps all the reminders. She files things away, sometimes. I cannot find her filing system, but she knows it. She is there to have a good chat with, she gets along well with the people who come to my office, and that is an important role for any electorate officer. I thank her especially.

She can be rough at times, but in a nice way. She loves a beer and a smoke, and a bit of time at the pokies.

Madam SPEAKER: She sounds like a good rural woman!

Mr WOOD: Absolutely. I thank her very much for all the good work she has done for me.

There are other people, like Michelle Nuske, who held the balance of power.

To the people who thought I could be a minister, the reason I did not stick my hand up to be a minister is because I thought that was inappropriate. The decision was made on the good governance of this parliament. She helped me not only through those times, we travelled all over the Territory. She is a bit of a speedway driver because she comes from that background in Alice Springs. I knew what going around corners at Robinson River was like in a four-wheel drive.

Mark Russelin from Busting Builders has also supported me. There are lots of other people. If I have the opportunity, and I might say to the Speaker, if there is a possibility that we can come back just for an adjournment debate before the end of the sittings that would be good. I would love to go through a lot more detail ...

Ms Fyles: Another committee stage?

Mr WOOD: Yes. I should remember my sister, Trish Butler and her husband, Tony. They gave me a lot of support. I am sure I will forget some people. That is why I thought I would do an abridged version of what I would like to do.

I also thank all of the people in my electorate, the people in the Territory and in this parliament. I had a picture that I did not bring, of my first parliament. There were some very young faces. I see Delia Lawrie's young face in the picture and Terry Mills' picture and how young we were. Although I was just as bald that long ago, it didn't make any difference.

I also thank the staff who have been through. I have seen a number of Clerks; people like Kaye Henderson from the library; the two research people upstairs—lots of people have gone through the papers area, it is not used as much now because we do not collect all the annual reports like we used to. We could have a chat when we were in there; it is now all online.

For the time being—and hopefully I will get a better chance. I changed my tie a little while ago. When I first came to parliament I wore this tie. It is a hatched chicken, which was drawn by Jo Van Os and embroidered by a lady who ran a business in Coolalinga. It is a chicken that has just hatched. It is on my media releases and says *cessi foro gallinarum sed surgo*. A little bit of history—ex-Chief Minister Burke said, when he was Chief Minister, that I was a failed chicken farmer. I spoke to my old Latin teacher, who has long passed away, and asked him to write up a Latin motto for me. *Cessi foro gallinarum sed surgo* means: I was once a chicken farmer, but now have risen.

That is what I wore on my first day. If I can come back to have a more detailed discussion about my time in this parliament, I will wear it again.

Thank you everybody.

Members: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: The best part about the Member for Nelson's job is that I am one of his constituents along with the other 27 members of my family.

Mr McCONNELL (Stuart): Madam Speaker, I am adjourning on an adjournment. The most powerful person in this parliament in the work that he does, the conscience he keeps and the conscience he keeps for this place is Gerry Wood.

His contribution to this place has been extraordinary. I remember watching the deep emotions Mr Wood had when he made a clear choice about government in the previous Labor government. I know how much he considered that choice; I know he made that choice in the best interests of his constituents and the whole Territory. I know the great work he did when there was the Council of Territory Co-operation.

I gave evidence to that a couple of times when it came out to visit. It was good. It operated in a very good way of keeping a balance on parliament, when we have a unicameral parliament. I still remember once, when we were talking at a previous place of my employment during a parliamentary committee. I did not have my phone on silent and I had recently lost a bet with my wife so my ringtone was *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*. It was an interesting break up of what we were talking about—something very important to NT outstations. I know that Mr Wood has advocated for everyone in the NT to the best of his ability for the entire time he has been here, as well as he has kept us an incredible schedule being a judge in this and a referee at that and all the other things he does. I encourage everyone here to adjourn on the contribution of this man.

Ms MANISON (Wanguri): Following that, I will speak on the contribution on the Member for Nelson and what he has done in his 19 years of parliament. On behalf of the government, I thank you Gerry for the immense contribution you have made to the Northern Territory to your constituents in Nelson, but more broadly, I have never seen you as someone who is just there for the people for Nelson, I have seen a deep level of commitment to the people of the Northern Territory.

You have always been very diligent with your work; you put great time and effort into everything that you do. You have held multiple governments to account and even when you had an arrangement in place to secure government, for the Henderson government, you did a very good job of holding that government to account. The Council of Territory Co-operation—the level of scrutiny that you gave to many programs the government was looking to deliver there. You made genuine, constructive input into policy debate, ideas, efforts and actions on the ground throughout that time. You did it in a constructive way,

I have never once seen you compromise your integrity. No matter how hard the topics are, no matter how hard the debate, you always stand firm to your values, yourself and the people you represent. I have seen some horrendous things in this Chamber, working previously for the Martin-Henderson government but also as a parliamentarian. I will never forget some of the times people launched over from this side of the Chamber at you and put you under pressure; you never relented. You always stood proud to yourself, what you believed in, why you were here and the views you were trying to represent. That has always been something I have greatly admired

Another thing I always say about you is that I have never met a better Catholic than you in the sense of forgiveness. One thing I have never been able to get over is I have a line in life and if you cross it, you are gone. But with you, time and time again—this can be a heated place where people have said things that are very unfair to you—I always see your ability to continue working with people because of that forgiveness. That is a wonderful trait to have and is a great example to set for other people.

Before I entered this parliament, I had great admiration for you because of the hard work you put into the job; it is clear for everyone in the Northern Territory to see. That is why you are seen as someone of great integrity in this parliament. Ultimately, many times in my life, I have said that what Gerry says has a profound impact on the community sentiment because that is how deeply they trust you. You always stand proud to your values and never compromise your integrity. That says a lot because this is a difficult place to operate in and those values are often tested.

The other thing I have to say about why you have been such a great role model to other parliamentarians is because it is not just the effort you put into the electorate, it is the fact that you put in such effort into other activities in the community. I have played a few games of football in the middle of the day where it is Gerry Wood umpiring on the weekend. You have umpired football, soccer, cricket, what other ones?

Mr Wood: They are the main ones. And athletics.

Ms MANISON: Athletics. There we go. You have a go. You still go out and you participate in different activities. You put your hand up and you are somebody that is very active going out to events and just being a wonderful community member. I have said to you before, your poor wife is not going to know what to do now that she has to see you all the time. We know that this comes with great pressures and sacrifice to your family because you have given such a deep level of commitment to this job.

I have no doubt that it will not be a retirement for you because I do not think you can sit still. I do not think it is possible. I can see that you will be going out there and contributing to the broader community still. I cannot see Gerry Wood stopping but I am hoping because you will have less demands in this building and in this place that your family will truly get to enjoy your company a bit more.

On a personal note, I have thoroughly enjoyed your company for the time I have been a member. I wish you the happiest of all retirements and I hope we see you in here from time to time, popping in to some of the official things if I have the privilege to be in here after this year. Thank you Gerry Wood. You are an outstanding example of what a parliamentarian should be.

Mrs FINOCCHIARO (Spillett): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I also rise to acknowledge the incredible contribution of the Member for Nelson over an extremely long time. It is a testament to him. Everyone you bump into and meet has something good to say about Gerry and that is because he is a good person.

He is an amazing local member. I cannot tell you how many people in my electorate say to me, can you not write newsletters like Gerry Wood does? They are voluminous exposes about everything you can think of. They are incredible and he is out there, while the rest of us are sitting in the front row as dignitaries at functions and events, do you know where Gerry is? He is out there on the side by the stage, on field, wherever it might be, taking the photos so that he can put those photos of the community and his electorate into his amazing newsletter.

Gerry is a tireless worker and I mean tireless. He is here during parliament extraordinarily early in the morning and he stays back very late. Sometimes we sit very late but he does not just go home, he stays here. If you go into that office once you have made through the menagerie of chickens and other various things that are in there, you will find reams and reams of paperwork and folders, all logically ordered. He knows where everything is at. Once again today, he displayed that with his forensic inquiry into the liquor amendments that were passed and other bills. I do not think there is hardly ever a bill that goes by that Gerry does not make some form of substantial contribution on.

That point I will make again because it is not just that he makes a contribution, he makes a substantial contribution. He does not just come in and say something quickly at the end or come in and say something off the fly. He has spent hours working through it, workshoping it, going through the detailing, preparing himself for committee stage, thinking about and road-testing the arguments with his community, and going out and speaking to the stakeholders. That takes a lot of effort.

He is such an amazing community member to have. Gerry, if we are like you when we are more mature than we are—to say that delicately—then we can all be very proud. If I grow up to be like you, I would be proud of that is what I am trying to say in a roundabout way.

I know there are so many people who want to say so many things. I happened to get an email while I have been sitting here today from Bart Irwin and he asked me to read this out so I hope I can have the indulgence of the House:

My wife Michelle and I move to Howard River Park in September 2003 because we wanted a rural lifestyle and the ability to have a horse for the kids at arms length, having agisted our horse at Berrimah for two years while we lived in Wulagi.

A week after we moved to Howard River Park it was mooted that our area would be rezoned and not allow stock to be kept on a 2.5 acre blocks. My wife rang Gerry's office that morning for clarification. It was a sitting day. Gerry rang her back at lunchtime, allayed her fears and said he would ring back around 8 pm that night to discuss the issue further. He did that too.

He then arranged a public meeting in Parakeet Avenue and in the end changed the decision. We were permitted to keep the horse on the property.

Since then, Gerry has always done his best, in our eyes, for everyone in the rural community and the Northern Territory. He has upheld the highest standards of any MLA over his nearly 20 years in

parliament. He has held the Litchfield Council to account on so many issues. He has supported NT Field and Game, our members, hunting and conservation in the NT. He attended just about all of our large annual events. Gerry will always be welcome among us. We will all miss his input but we still hope to have him out for a shoot with us in his retirement.

Thank you Gerry. Omnia omnibus—all things to all men.

That was from Bart.

Gerry, it is amazing that you now will spend time to focus on Imelda and your family. That is exactly what you should do and I hope you enjoy it. I wish you both all the very best in this next journey. I echo the comments of the Deputy Chief Minister. I do not think you will know how to retire and I am sure we will still be seeing you a huge amount of time because it is not just in you to sit still. We would not have it any other way.

Gerry, best of luck and all the best. Thank you for all of your support and leadership in this Chamber over such an extended period of time. God bless you and your family.

Ms UIBO (Arnhem): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I echo the comments from my colleagues in holding the Member for Nelson in high regard. It is amazing work he has done, probably three-quarters or two-quarters—excuse me, I will get my maths right—two-thirds of my life that you have spent in this House advocating for the people of the Northern Territory and particularly your constituents.

I remember one of the first times I met you, Member for Nelson. I was younger at the time. I have a great memory. I was the youth Speaker here for our Youth Parliament program which I love and have always advocated for returning. It was one of the areas that led me into being able to do what I do and love today. I was the youth Speaker for that year and you were one of the hard-working members of parliament who came to our opening of Youth Parliament. I have a great photo of you standing next to me while I was in the Speaker's Chair, which my dad still has a copy of.

When we heard of your plans to retire this year before the election, Member for Nelson, I have tasked my dad with finding where that photo is—it is a hard copy photo—and get a print to be able to share that with you.

It was amazing. I never in my wildest dreams thought I would be a member of the same parliament as you, Member for Nelson when I was the youth Speaker. In the aspirations of being able to represent people of the Northern Territory, you definitely show that in all stages of community. It is a privilege to stand here as one of the younger members of parliament and recognise the work over many decades you have done in our community across the Northern Territory, particularly as a member for parliament.

I stay very late here and I work very late at night—that is just the way I operate—and there are often no cars in the car park except yours, Member for Nelson. That beats me. Sometimes it is very late at night—midnight or 1 am—when I am leaving and your car is in the car park. You are in your office, doing your research, scrutinising bills in every detail. You were doing that because you are great at your job, but more importantly, you care about the Northern Territory, your constituents and about what happens to the people of the Northern Territory. That is very clear by your work ethic.

The Member for Braitling and I were discussing earlier that we do not see that work ethic in our professions across the diversity of the Territory anymore, but it is something you embody. Regardless of our values, opinions or morals being different in what we are advocating for, you are always true to your word, you have high integrity and you are not afraid to fight for that and make sure that you are presenting some different ideas and you are representing the different voices of our community across the Northern Territory. I admire that, Member for Nelson.

I remember going to the Freds Pass Show many years ago as a younger person and seeing you out there talking to constituents. I remember my Dad, who is very savvy and interested in Territory politics, pointing out who you were and the fun fact that you used to be a chicken farmer. How great is it that you can come from any background and any part of our community, and as you said once 'a chicken farmer is now rising', you can contribute to your community if you are passionate, dedicated and hard working.

I remember seeing you there and I think you had some funky little Gerry Wood Member for Nelson balloons with little chickens hatching out of the egg. I thought what a great part of the world that we live in where we can have that diversity of our community represented in this place with a high level of integrity.

I know it is a very hard decision and I echo what the Member for Spillett said in terms of thinking you will not slow down in retirement. I am pretty sure we will see you up in the galleries looking down on the 14th Assembly, checking in and making sure people are doing their job as members of parliament representing our community.

More importantly, you will be able to spend that time with your family. I grew up with your niece in Batchelor, up the road, and your sister-in-law, so I know that family very well. It is wonderful that you will have that time to spend with your loved ones and that they will be able to keep you more for themselves. You have been so generous with your time with the rest of the community and in this place with your long hours and the time away from your family and the sacrifices that you would have made to represent people across the Territory to the best of your ability.

We will all be quite sad seeing you walk out on your last day of parliament but we know you will have your head held high because you have done the Territory and this Chamber proud. You have a lot of history to share and I am sure you will continue to share that. We do not expect you to slow down but please use that time for your family and yourself knowing that the community appreciates what you have done over the years.

I say this to anyone who asks about parliament: you are a bloody hard worker, you are dedicated and it is a privilege to be able to share this Chamber with you. All the best for your retirement.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I too rise to pay my respects and to honour the Member for Nelson. I arrived here in 1999 in a by-election and after that the Member for Nelson arrived. I observed Gerry during that time and from that point until now, we have travelled some very interesting paths through this parliament.

All that time, I found that you, Gerry, were a constant for me in particular where there are matters that people weigh in certain ways but you and I had a similar ethical basis to certain matters that sometimes we felt quite alone. It was a treasure having you here and it still is until you are no longer here. I honour you for that; it has meant a lot to me personally and to many outside this Chamber.

I recall some of the savage attacks that you endured. They were terrible. They were very dark times, and the way you managed to show courage and continue on, no matter how difficult it was, and sometimes it was very hard to endure—even though they were members of, let us say, the side I was sitting on, I was appalled at what I was witnessing. There needs to be a level of decency in this Chamber, and I saw you exhibit that the whole time you have been here.

My son lives in your electorate. It is a smile whenever I visit his property to turn the water on, or whatever, and find one of your newsletters hanging on his gate. You have written a short magazine as a newsletter and delivered it personally. I find it so humbling that you put in that enormous effort demonstrating your love for the people you serve so well. When I look at your newsletter I notice they do not contain photos of you, but of your community. That says a lot.

Your focus has always been on the community, and you have been a treasure to our community. You set an example that would not easily be replicated. Each of us takes something from the way you have conducted yourself, the way you have served and worked very hard, as an example for each of us. I still take that as my personal guide, the example you have set. It would have been so much harder if you had not been here.

I take some of that into what I thought we were proceeding with in good faith, with all the information we have received recently, to move into opposition, which is no longer the case. Believe it or not, I was to carry some of those concerns regarding resourcing and, respecting the non-government members, it was something I wished to proceed with.

I can only hope in the adversarial contest that was lost—there is no opportunity to really express that. I said a number of times that we needed to make sure there was adequate sharing of resources, which has not occurred to this point. It was meant to, but it will not now. Maybe it will—heaven knows.

Gerry, I thank you. Your love for your work is clear, as is your love for your community. If it was not for your greater love for your wife, Imelda, you would remain here. That is a tremendous example of a loving husband who is serving his wife so well.

Mr SIEVERS (Brennan): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I also pay my respects to the Member for Nelson. He has been a great mentor. I have watched him in parliament over many years.

Not only has he been a great advocate for many pieces of legislation over the years, but I remember sitting with him when I was a director in Health, and he was grilling me about legislation and policies. He was very fair, and I will always respect that about him. He is the same in here and when he umpires on the football field. I remember coaching Buffaloes many years ago, and I know he is fair on the field.

I must mention Mark 'Noons' Noonan. He would like me to say a few words and pay his respects to you as well, Gerry. There are only two words that come into my head when your name comes up—they are good words—and they are 'true blue'. You are true blue, Gerry.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Araluen): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I also pay tribute to my colleague, Gerry Wood. I have been working with him for 10 years, although it does not seem that long. I guess that is a long time, and certainly a long time in politics.

You will be missed, Gerry. We were talking earlier about the fact you bring things to our attention that might otherwise slip under the radar. Your work ethic astounds me. You have applied yourself to just about every piece of legislation that has come before the House and you always pick up something different and quirky which escapes me. It has been a privilege just to know you, you are a legend and I would not say that to many people but you are a unique, legendary character of the Northern Territory. I know you were not born here but you may as well have been. Your commitment to the Northern Territory is beautiful. Your commitment to your family—we have heard how much you love and adore your family—your daughters and wife.

I will miss your company, quirkiness and contribution to this Chamber. You are an unforgettable person in this place and the legend will live on. Best of luck and may God be with you.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Young fella, you have a lot of sway around here. There is a Westminster tradition called a valedictory speech that is not timed and I think the Member for Nelson should be lobbying and advocating—and we must—return to this place to hear your valedictory speech because it will not close a chapter in Territory history, it will close a book. You better turn your attention to working very hard to make sure this Assembly reconvenes at some time when it is under medical advice to do so, so that we can listen to your speech. I very much look forward to it.

I will take your advice and learnings that you have given me to never let the opportunity for a good debate go to waste. Sorry mate, it is over for you, it is about Barkly in Northern Territory because I know it is very dear to your heart.

COVID-19 has overtaken world events. It is declared a pandemic that has come to Australian shores and to the Northern Territory. It is interrupting all of our lives and you will hear the clichés about how we have to change the way we live; it is going to affect everything including the Legislative Assembly. I have to conform to the best medical advice and to medical health and safety protocols and I will be returning home to the electorate. To all the constituents in the regional and remote areas engaging in the best remote housing program that the Northern Territory has ever seen—designed and implemented under a Labor Government—will also be affected.

There was a social media post from a person I am fond of from a remote community and you could hear the sadness in the tone of the words of 'I live in an overcrowded house and it is planned for room to breathe but I have a big family. Why can the work not start on my house now because of the coronavirus?'. That resonated with me because for all those regional and remote residents, they will all incur frustrations and time delays in delivery. Essential services will continue and it is important that you understand those health protocols around that.

We, as a government, are working with the land councils to see what we can do about the continuation of remote indigenous housing construction. It is considered an essential service and we do not want to lose momentum. There are so many Aboriginal Territorians engaged in this program over the last three and a half years who want to continue being role models for their community in working and earning wages, gaining skills and most of all being that person in their community to say, 'I was a big part of building your new upgraded house and new bedrooms. It is going to be a tough time and we have to make sure to stay focused and work through this.

You will hear a lot of things and a lot of things will be said, but I can guarantee one thing: this is the only government that will continue with that remote program after COVID-19. We are the only government with the cred, the runs on the board and that will be ready to roll back into full-scale construction across all our programs in the regional and remote Aboriginal communities.

You must think about that very clearly. You need to process that and a lot of mischief that will be paraded in social media and other communication networks.

I am looking forward, as is the Department of Local Government, Housing and Community Development, to be given the green light to get back in the saddle into a full-blown construction program that we have had to scale back because of the health protocols and importance of dealing with COVID-19 pandemic that has gripped the globe.

Having said that it is important to understand that the best protocol is staying home, staying on country, pulling the family together and being there for each other. It will require incredible discipline when the younger people want to break out and when other people with challenges want to go to town. When there is that need for movement you will have to be disciplined. It is the same for people in town, in the cities and the other states and jurisdictions of Australia.

If you watch your news bulletins you will see countries that have completely locked down the population, like Singapore that are starting to see a change in the pandemic among their society. You have to stick with this. We have to pull the families together. We have to be strong and disciplined.

Having that opportunity now, with family close and at home, let us focus on what is a real opportunity to stay safe. When we stay safe at home it does not just mean your own personal space and hygiene. It is about a healthy home. We have to focus on hard surfaces, bathrooms, wet areas and make sure that this aspect of living in a home is focused on, addressed and is a real priority.

We have to be aware now that it is about looking after our children and our old people. It is about staying home with an opportunity for healthy homes and being focused on getting through this together.

The federal government will be providing assistance with extra money into Newstart, the job allowance award. Payments will be provided through the Commonwealth Government's Centrelink processes. We will see extra money loaded in that you will need to stay close, staying home, keeping the family together and feeding the kids. It will be important to make sure those kids are active, but safe, in their community. With extra resourcing, with this opportunity where we are staying home and staying close, let us focus on the whole family, on each other, our health and our healthy homes.

As soon as we get through this crisis, I want to get back to business as usual. You have seen the policy, the implementation and we are only three-and-a-half years into this 10-year program. We have five years' commitment by the Commonwealth. The person on the social media post who showed real frustration, 'Oh, this Coronavirus, why can't I have the Room to Breathe work start on my home. It is a crowded home. I have other family members here. I want them to move out. I want space in my home.' Just stay with us and be patient. We will get through this and be able to return and scale back up.

I acknowledge the land council and in particular the Northern Land Council and its latest statement where they are advocating new construction for Indigenous homes in remote communities is essential for their health and wellbeing and their future. That is a very powerful statement and I thank the NLC for it.

It is now how we can work together and design these systems so that it will be medically safe, secure and we can get this program back into scaling up and full-blown construction out there.

To all those Aboriginal people I have met travelling the Northern Territory who have been working on our building sites, stick with it. It is so enjoyable to get on-site and meet with you and talk and learn from your experiences. Do not get despondent, do not give up. This is a process we will get through together and you will be back on the tools. This program will scale up—and it will scale up under a Labor government, Madam Acting Deputy Speaker—the government with the runs on the board, the cred and the will to make this happen.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.