

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

### VISITORS

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Elton Consulting staff, Martin Klopper, Wendy Smith and Georgina Dornier, and Year 7 Rosebery Middle School students accompanied by Ms Alison Stringer. Welcome to Parliament House, and I hope you enjoy your visit here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

### STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Points of Order during Question Time

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, in light of concerns regarding how Question Time is conducted and following discussions with the Chief Minister and the Opposition Leader, if there are to be points of order I ask that the standing order is specifically referenced. If I feel questions or points of orders are frivolous, there will be two to three allowances and then the member will be placed on a warning.

Also, to try to streamline Question Time the clock will be stopped automatically when a member rises to their feet to call a point of order. Question Time will still be one hour, but the more points of orders the less time for questions. Are there any questions?

### VISITORS

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Year 7 Rosebery Middle School - I have seen you before - accompanied by Alison Stringer. On behalf of honourable members, I welcome you back and hope you continue to enjoy your stay at Parliament House.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

### SUPREME COURT AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 20)

Bill presented and read a first time.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):**

Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill provides that the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory has the power to make Rules of Court relating to the Supreme Court's functions under Commonwealth legislation as well as Northern Territory legislation.

The bill is applicable to matters where the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, including

the Court of Criminal Appeal, has jurisdiction and other functions under Commonwealth and Northern Territory legislation.

This bill arose from consideration of an issue raised by the Chief Justice of the Northern Territory early in 2013 concerning the making of rules for the purposes of *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* of the Commonwealth.

Under the act, the Supreme Court has functions but there is no explicit power for the Northern Territory Supreme Court to make rules whereas there is such a power in the act concerning the making of rules by the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory.

The Chief Justice noted that the current provisions of section 86 of the *Supreme Court Act* may be sufficient insofar as rules may be made for the practice and procedure necessary or convenient to be prescribed for the conduct of any business of the court.

It is arguable that 'any business of the court' includes business under the Commonwealth law. However, the Chief Justice also pointed to other provisions such as section 29 of the Northern Territory's *Corporations Reform (Northern Territory) Act* under which the Northern Territory law explicitly sets out the powers of the court to make rules for the purposes of the operation of a Commonwealth act.

In that case, the Commonwealth *Corporations Act 2001* provides the Supreme Court with functions. The power to make necessary Rules of Court is contained in the *Corporations Reform (Northern Territory) Act*.

This bill will remove any doubts such as those raised by the Chief Justice regarding the ability of the Supreme Court to make rules necessary for the administration of justice in the Northern Territory relating to functions provided under the Commonwealth legislation.

For drafting reasons, the bill removes the whole of section 86 and replaces it with a new section 86. The new section 86 will also operate so it can be a source for making rules for the operation of any Northern Territory act, even if another act also contains a rule-making power; for example, section 29 of the *Absconding Debtors Act*.

The bill contains a transitional provision so that the changes to section 86 do not affect the operation of any rule made under the current section 86 of the *Supreme Court Act* in force immediately before the commencement of this legislation, nor do the changes affect any rules of court made under the provisions of Northern

Territory law such as Rules of Court made under the *Absconding Debtors Act*.

This government is committed to a justice system which provides certainty to the community and this bill will remove any possible doubt about the role of the Supreme Court in administering justice in relation to Commonwealth legislation under which it has powers and functions.

Madam Speaker, I commend this bill to the House and table a copy of the explanatory statement.

Debate adjourned.

**MOTION**  
**Reorder of Business**

**Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly Business Order of the Day relating to the Disallowance of Plans of Management – Instruments of the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* - be called on forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

**MOTION**  
**Disallow Management Plans for the Mary River National Park and the Litchfield National Park**

Continued from 29 November 2012.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, our Whip is not here but I believe we were not aware this business was coming on.

**Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, so I can guide honourable members, this is a last minute change and I apologise. I do, however, point out the comments about to be made by the minister are in closing debate. The debate has already occurred and he has about eight minutes to go. There is no function that has not already been attended to by your side of the House. It is just closing a debate and then the matter is dealt with.

**Ms WALKER:** Madam Speaker, I hear what the member for Port Darwin, the Leader of Government Business, is saying, but it helps us in our preparedness to know in advance what is coming on.

**Mr ELFERINK:** You are quite right and I apologise. Unfortunately, this has been a last minute change - literally this second - thrust on my shoulders and I apologise sincerely. However, this has already been debated and it is only closing comments.

**Ms WALKER:** Yes, okay.

**Ms FYLES (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, further to that, we did not have a fair chance last time it was debated. It was, again, a similar situation - just thrown on the agenda and I spoke to it briefly. There was no guidance we were going to have a fair and proper debate around this and I would like that on the record.

**Mr ELFERINK:** As I have said, I genuinely apologise because what is happening is not entirely fair, but it was a last minute change with circumstances forced upon our shoulders.

**Ms FYLES:** Madam Speaker, it should be on the *Parliamentary Record*. This new government talks about openness and accountability but we have not had this opportunity ...

**Madam SPEAKER:** It is not a point of order. Sit down, member for Nightcliff. Minister for Parks and Wildlife.

**Mr CONLAN (Parks and Wildlife):** That the shadow minister and the opposition did not follow the process last time is not our fault. If you followed the process and progress of what was happening last time you would have had plenty of opportunity to speak to it but you did not. You jumped very quickly last time; you missed the gun. I warned you that was the case last time, and you did it so you blew it. It is your fault not ours.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Legislative Assembly disallow the management plans for Mary River National Park and Litchfield National Park. Plans of management are important documents and set the direction for the management of a park that are usually in force for at least 10 years. Each plan should clearly describe the natural and cultural values of the park. Each plan should also describe how these values are to be protected whilst encouraging and providing for safe and enriching experiences for visitors.

Mary River National Park is located about 100 km east of Darwin and covers 112 000 ha. The park comprises 14 parcels of land from Adelaide River in the west to East Alligator River in the east.

The park attracts about 25 000 visitors per year. It contains some of the most popular recreational fishing sites in the Northern Territory, spectacular Top End wetland and floodplain scenery, and some of the best wildlife viewing of bird life and crocodiles in the Northern Territory. Boating and four-wheel driving are also very popular.

A new plan would expand on the tourism opportunities the park has to offer. The park already offers wonderful sights and adventure activities for visitors, and a new plan would look to improve this. The park is not Aboriginal land;

however, it is jointly managed with traditional owners under the terms of an Indigenous lease agreement and a joint management plan, upon one becoming operational.

Litchfield National Park is located 120 km south of Darwin and covers about 146 000 ha. The park is a major Top End tourist destination for interstate and international visitors with over 272 000 visits in 2011. It features prominently in Territory tourism marketing campaigns as a highlight for any visitor to the Top End, with its spectacular and wonderful waterfalls, safe swimming, and wild, rugged landscapes. The park supports about 50 tourism operators. It is also a popular playground for residents of Darwin and the Top End.

Plans for these two parks have been prepared and are tabled in this Assembly. Both will shortly come into operation unless disallowed by a resolution of this Assembly. The Mary River National Park Joint Management Plan was prepared without consultation with tourism operators who have invested an enormous amount and who operate within the park. Tourism is an important economic driver for the Territory. Disallowing this plan will allow an opportunity to consult with key tourism operators and the plan will be amended accordingly.

When the Litchfield National Park Plan of Management was released for public comment it attracted a number of submissions regarding antisocial behaviour. Disallowing this plan will give the opportunity to further consult with the community regarding antisocial behaviour, and then amend the plan to clearly describe the management actions to be implemented to reduce, hopefully remove, antisocial behaviour from this iconic park. Litchfield National Park is an important park to tourism businesses, and antisocial behaviour has the potential to impact on these businesses.

I put to this Assembly that both plans be disallowed and the Parks and Wildlife Commission be directed to prepare fresh plans. In doing so, this Assembly will be assured that consultation in preparing the new draft plans is comprehensive, and that new plans adequately address the matters of concern to the community.

New draft plans would be released for public comment allowing further assurance that the interests of the wider community are reflected. Plans of management will remain in operation until replaced by a new plan - usually 10 to 15 years. I put it to the Assembly we must, therefore, get these plans right by ensuring plans adequately address the matters of concern to the community.

Motion agreed to.

## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Telecommunications and Broadcasting in the Territory**

**Mr GILES (Corporate and Information Services):** Madam Speaker, today I provide the Assembly with an overview of telecommunications in the Northern Territory and what the new Country Liberals government is doing to pressure the Australian government to improve the proposed telecommunications outcomes for all Territorians, particularly those living in regional and remote communities throughout the Northern Territory.

The Australian government has a responsibility in determining the legislative environment for telecommunications and broadcasting, including the National Broadband Network and the digital television switchover. The Australian government makes the rules and manages the programs to implement any changes to those rules. We intend to ensure the Australian government fulfils its obligation to deliver access to telecommunications equitably and sensibly to all Territorians.

The value of information and communications technology, or ICT, and, in particular, the enabling capabilities telecommunications provide, is undeniable. Governments and businesses worldwide are relying more heavily on telecommunications to deliver services, particularly in rural, regional, and remote areas. The remote areas of Australia would undoubtedly have the most to gain from appropriate and reliable high-speed broadband.

This is particularly the case in the Northern Territory where one-quarter of our population lives in remote regions or communities. These communities have been underserved in many ways for many years. I did not hear Labor beating the drum about poor NBN, mobile phone, or digital TV outcomes for the Territory. The previous Northern Territory government did not say a word.

There is much to catch up, and traditional methods of government service delivery, hamstrung by the outdated philosophies of the federal Labor government, are unlikely to meet or keep up with demand.

Broadband access NBN - we need to be smarter and work smarter to deliver smarter services. A key fundamental to this is the need to have reliable high-speed broadband available across the Territory in our remote communities. The National Broadband Network is supposed to do this for all Australians. We are the forgotten ones in the Northern Territory.

The Australian government asserts the NBN will be delivered to 93% of Australian premises by

fibre optic. Some 4% of Australian premises will receive a fixed wireless connection while the remaining 3% will be serviced by satellite. Once again, we are the poor cousins.

Unfortunately, Territorians figure disproportionately high in the group who will not receive premium fibre-optic access. It seems the Prime Minister and federal Labor are keen on intervening in the Northern Territory for political reasons, but not for real outcomes, particularly regarding mobile phones and smarter outcomes for NBN and digital TV.

Our estimates are that only about 70% of all Territorians will be connected to the NBN by optic fibre. All are in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Nhulunbuy, but not all residents in those areas. Some 4% of Territorians will receive fixed wireless, but all of these are in residential and rural areas of Darwin. The remaining Territorians - approximately 26% of our population or 18% of all premises - will be connected via satellite. Many of these Territorians are in remote areas, but it includes some rural areas of Darwin and Alice Springs. For Alice Springs residents, it is most notably those people south of the Gap.

This is simply not good enough and it does not have to be like that. We recognise the need for satellite communication in many remote areas of the Northern Territory where there is no other solution. For some, there is no real alternative to satellite delivered telephony, television and broadband, but existing infrastructure could be easily put to better use under the NBN in many other communities. This is the frustration I feel and the purpose of this statement.

The Australian government has seen fit to arbitrarily say communities which are considered remote should be serviced by satellite under the NBN. This is crazy. This is despite the fact there are many communities in the Northern Territory already connected to the national communications network by optic fibre thanks to the long involvement and investment in the Territory by Telstra and its predecessors.

I seek leave to ...

**Ms LAWRIE:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I draw your attention to the state of the House.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Ring the bells.

A quorum is present.

**Mr GILES:** Madam Speaker, 34 remote Territory communities are currently connected to the national telecommunications network by optic fibre. This optic fibre is used by Telstra to provide

telephone services, broadband and, for communities where there is mobile telephone service, also connects mobile telephones into the national network. This is critical infrastructure the Australian government is completely ignoring and, instead, proposes to deliver the NBN by satellite to those people who would benefit the most from reliable broadband access. Connecting communities is about connecting people. There will always be a need for satellite telecommunications but it should be a last resort. Satellite is unreliable, affected by cloud cover and rain in northern Australia, and by cloud and smoke in Central Australia. When the weather is at its worst and, arguably, needed the most, telecommunications will be at their most vulnerable. It is not good enough to provide remote communities in the Territory with a second-rate solution where there is no need to. It is a second-rate solution compared with optic fibre and fixed wireless. If it was not, NBN Co would provide broadband to all Australians by satellite.

For very little additional cost compared to the estimated \$30.4bn Australian government investment in the NBN, all 34 remote communities already connected by ...

**Mr VOWLES:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! With such an important statement, Standing Order 36: state of the House.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Ring the bells, please.

A quorum is present.

**Mr GILES:** Madam Speaker, for very little additional cost compared to the estimated \$30.4bn Australian government investment in the NBN, all 34 communities already connected by optic fibre could be serviced by fixed wireless connections under the NBN. These remote communities could be serviced by a reliable broadband service, as they should be. Between \$8.5m and \$17m is the estimated cost to install a reliable broadband service in the 34 remote communities already connected by Telstra's optic fibre to the national telecommunications network.

Telstra is required by law to provide telephone services to remote communities for a period of 20 years. This means Telstra is required to maintain the optic fibre and the associated equipment for 20 years just to provide telephones. Why not also use the fibre-optic cables to deliver even more and enhanced services to communities? This is a question I will again ask the federal Labor government.

Madam Speaker, I table a copy of a map of the fibre optics in the Northern Territory.

It is well understood that most of the Territory's remote communities do not offer an attractive market for business due to economies-of-scale arguments. High costs and very small markets mean these communities cannot attract competition. Telstra is the only infrastructure provider in the remote areas of the Territory and much of what Telstra has delivered has been provided under the requirements of the Universal Service Obligation, or USO. In other words, the Australian taxpayer has already subsidised the fibre-optic cable installation so why are we not capitalising on that investment to use it for even more service?

In 2008-09, an Australian government subsidy scheme to deliver mobile phones to remote NT communities was ignored by the telecommunication companies and the previous Labor government did not say a word - did not fight for anything. No response to the Australian government's request for proposals was received. Logically, Telstra is the only telecommunications company that could deliver mobile telephone services to remote communities, and the only company with the network infrastructure to support the delivery of mobile phone services in these areas. Yet, Telstra ignored the Australian government's subsidy program to deliver mobile phones to remote communities. I can only assume the cost of delivering such services outweighed the likely returns, even with subsidised infrastructure. Did the former Territory Labor government fund the fight? Did it fight hard for the Northern Territory? No.

Why is it that not all Labor's growth towns have mobile access? We heard yesterday about the failure of Labor to put MVRs in the growth towns as promised. Even today, not all growth towns in the Northern Territory have mobile phone access.

It is reasonable to believe Telstra, in an NBN environment, is unlikely to expand its infrastructure in remote communities unless the infrastructure is critical to the delivery of telephone services or funded by government. In fact, it is fair to assume as costs rise some services which currently exist may be allowed to deteriorate where there is no legislative obligation to provide the service. As equipment breaks it may not be repaired or renewed. This could leave some current broadband customers using Telstra's infrastructure with no alternative but to move to an NBN satellite service.

That is a backward step and so unnecessary if the Australian government could see the logic in using the existing fibre-optic infrastructure. This is a no-brainer. Why not use the infrastructure already in place to provide a better service? Why over-build with an inferior product? Of course, Telstra would need to be compensated, just as it is now under

the existing definitive agreement between NBN Co and Telstra. This is another example of poor logic applied to the development and building of the National Broadband Network. This ill-considered and illogical thinking does not stop there.

Digital television - the Australian government will turn off analogue television in the Northern Territory at the end of this year. Every remote community in the Northern Territory will receive the new digital television signal via satellite through the Viewer Access Satellite Television Service or VAST. This satellite service will replace 109 rebroadcast sites that currently operate across the Northern Territory. Satellite broadcasting is the least costly means for the Australian government to provide free-to-air television with the same number of channels nationally. It is about one-third of the cost of upgrading all 109 rebroadcast sites to the digital signal capable of delivering the same number of channels received in metropolitan areas.

Economically, this may make some sense, but I have to ask why there is a need for two satellite systems - one for NBN and one for digital television. Let me make that point: in the bush families can have a satellite dish for Austar or Foxtel, a satellite dish for digital television, a satellite dish for NBN, satellite dishes for the Education department or school, a satellite dish for the police station, and fibre-optic cable running straight past the community. This is crazy. In a digital world, it is only a stream of ones and zeros regardless of whether it is television or information off the web.

When the Australian government developed the VAST network did it consider the NBN could be used to deliver television anywhere the NBN reaches? It would appear not. It would appear there was no logic. We will have two very expensive satellite systems paid for by the taxpayer to do what, conceivably, could be done with one.

I must also highlight what impact all these satellite systems will have on houses in remote communities. Under Australian government's existing policies, there will be a proliferation of satellite dishes in communities all needing to be serviced - a veritable explosion as there will not be one or two, but, in many cases, three or more satellite dishes on every roof in one community. One will be for pay television, one for NBN Internet access, and one or more for free-to-air digital television. What about the STARS system and the police satellite services? Has anyone in the Australian government thought about coordination, particularly when you have fibre optics going straight past or why, in 34 communities, there is an optic fibre in place not being used for new services?

People might ask why more than one satellite dish may appear on house roofs under the digital television roll-out. The issue is simple but, apparently, not considered by the federal Labor government. Many communities have more than one family living in each dwelling. This housing shortage has been critical for many years and is well known, yet the Australian government will only provide one satellite decoder box, satellite dish, and associated equipment for each dwelling in remote Indigenous communities. Those families which currently watch their own television and choose the programs they want to watch will have to negotiate with another person, or possibly two other families, for control of the remote. That is because more than one family lives in a house. Again, remote community residents are disadvantaged with the switchover to digital television.

I recognise the digital television switchover program is now far advanced, but why we are in this situation? Do people not speak to each other? Why is the Australian government duplicating infrastructure unnecessarily yet not using optic-fibre infrastructure that could and should be used to provide reliable broadband and digital television into remote communities?

The VAST network and the conversion to digital television are all but completed. It should, however, not be too late to get it right. Three Northern Territory communities have already been switched to digital television: Nhulunbuy in October 2012, and Batchelor and Jabiru in November 2012. Darwin will switch off its analogue television on 31 July this year. The rest of the Territory will continue with analogue television for a further six months and switch to digital television on 10 December 2013.

There remain a number of issues with the digital television switchover in Darwin and Alice Springs. There are a number of black spots in Darwin and Alice Springs where digital TV cannot be received without additional transmitters. I am advised the federal Labor government is still unsure of all remote residents' locations, meaning when the analogue service is switched off, some residents may be without any television at all. That is from 10 December onwards this year. I call upon Senator Conroy, the minister for Telecommunications, to ensure all black spots and all communities receiving digital television from a terrestrial rebroadcast site will have complete coverage at no additional cost to the consumer.

Far more serious are further examples of duplication and lack of coordination evident in delivering television to our remote communities. This is unacceptable, particularly with the

knowledge the ABC is currently installing terrestrial rebroadcast sites in seven remote communities solely to broadcast ABC channels. It gets crazy! However, the VAST service will provide all television channels, including ABC channels, in these communities. They are doubling up the infrastructure for one TV station. They are rolling out seven sites when it is coming under a different model of the VAST system.

Either the money from one or two of the ABC installations should be allocated to cover the \$1m required to provide every family with their own satellite decoder box and access to the VAST system, or all free-to-air TV channels should be rebroadcast in the community removing the need for any satellite systems to be installed at all. I would prefer to use existing optic-fibre or rebroadcasting capability over satellite delivery. However, the current plan to have all three at once, all subsidised by the taxpayer, seems absurd.

Mobile phones are far and away the most popular means of communication in remote communities. Significant amounts are spent on recharging mobile phones, illustrating how highly mobile services are valued by residents. Mobiles provide access to services and a connection to family and others. They remove the need for copper wire in the ground and provide flexibility and mobility, two characteristics which are highly valued by all Australians, particularly people in the bush.

More importantly, mobile phones can eliminate high quarterly bills and the associated credit issues. Prepaid mobiles have brought telecommunications to the fore and in reach of people in remote communities for the first time. They are also providing an opportunity for increased literacy and education through download opportunity, hence the need for wireless broadband facilities.

Prior to mobile phones, the penetration rate for fixed telephone - otherwise called standard telephone services - in remote communities barely reached 5%. Most of these services were for local government, government workers at home and at work, and small businesses. In communities still without mobile phone services, the public phone remains the only means of communication for most people. Let me make that clear for people listening: in a community, you can have one public phone everybody has to use, and let us hope you can hear it when it rings.

There are 37 remote communities with mobile phone services in the Territory and 28 of those are linked to the national telephone network by optic fibre. All mobile phone services in remote communities are owned and operated by Telstra. Six communities are linked to the optic fibre

network but do not have mobile phone services: Barrow Creek, Palumpa, Peppimenarti, Papunya, Mutitjulu and Newcastle Waters. They have it there; they just do not have access. Why not, I ask? The answer is probably because the revenue potential for a mobile phone installation was considered at the time to be insufficient to justify the cost. I understand economies of scale, but when you are trying to provide social and economic advancement to people in the Northern Territory, surely this is a no-brainer.

In addition, Amoonguna, Barunga, Beswick, Milikapiti, Pirlangimpi, Warruwi and the island communities of Nguiu, Milingimbi and Galiwinku have a mobile phone service without being connected to the optic fibre network.

Modern mobile phone services require large amounts of bandwidth from the base station to the national network. Telstra will generally only install mobile base stations where there is access to optic fibre and where the installation cost can be recovered either through profitable services or through government funding. Most of the investment in mobile services and the building of mobile base stations happened during the Howard government - a Howard government that had to repay a large Labor government debt as we are doing now.

A range of subsidy programs provided the impetus for a significant increase in the number of remote communities with mobile services. Under the current federal government, expansion of the mobile network in regional and remote communities has stalled. Metropolitan mobile services have certainly been expanded over the years, but this has been purely on a commercial basis in response to growing demand and the profits it brings to the telecommunications companies. Telecommunications companies cannot see a viable market for mobile services in the remaining remote communities. In reality, Telstra is the only company that can deliver these services as it is the owner of the entire remote network infrastructure.

Given the popularity of mobile phones and the money spent on recharging phones in communities, Australian government funding should encourage Telstra to reconsider its position and expand its mobile phone services in communities linked by optic fibre to the national network.

Over the next few months, while there is still a Labor government at the federal level, I will be encouraging Senator Conroy to review a number of decisions he made in relation to NBN mobiles in the VAST service.

The primary issue for Senator Conroy is why the NBN is not using existing critical telecommunications infrastructure where it can. Why is the Australian government not leveraging the investment it has already made to produce better returns for residents and the nation as a whole?

The 34 remote communities connected by optic fibre to the national telecommunications network must have NBN fixed wireless to every premises as a minimum to ensure the community can participate fully in the digital economy.

The larger communities, such as Wadeye and Maningrida, could even be reconsidered for the costly fibre-to-the-premise connection as these communities have large populations which are growing rapidly. If there were sufficient housing to address overcrowding in these two communities, NBN Co's requirements for the costly fibre-to-the-premise solution could well be met, although I am not advocating for Labor's federal policy in that regard. It is likely, in a relatively short space of time, these two communities will meet this requirement, but by then the NBN will have passed them by.

Finding the funding to return to these communities and do what should have been done correctly initially will be difficult. This is a one-time opportunity to get it right and the Australian government, and Senator Conroy, need to reassess how the NBN should be delivered to these communities and the other 34 fibre-connected communities.

The Australian government poured money into many of these communities under the intervention and now Labor's second intervention. To date, efforts in these communities could be improved upon. A reliable broadband network will provide the enabling technology to assist and deliver rural community benefits, particularly around social and economic advancement.

Healthcare delivered directly into the home will save thousands of dollars, keep patients in a familiar environment and reduce significant stress levels. Educational material can be provided into the home, building on the work done in local schools. This generation in our remote communities will be more cyber aware than any other, as it is with the broader Australian population. They will be more familiar with technology and use it in more innovative ways which will make their lives, and those of their families, better. It will be criminal if we do not ensure the appropriate infrastructure tools and training are in place to provide every opportunity to current and successive generations.

High-speed reliable broadband will also provide the means by which many communities can expand the economic boundaries limiting them today. The isolation these communities suffer, particularly during adverse weather conditions, significantly limits business and opportunities for growth.

Reliable broadband will expand these economic boundaries to provide new and fresh opportunities for community members. Over the long term, it will provide residents with the choice of remaining in their communities and making a decent living from a real online job. Reliable broadband access will provide the means for these communities to join the digital age.

Senator Conroy must instruct NBN Co to provide fixed wireless to every home in every community currently connected to the national telecommunications network by optic fibre throughout the Territory and, for that matter, Australia.

He must also instruct NBN Co to negotiate with Telstra for the use of its optic fibre to carry communications from these communities to the national network. Additionally, he must reconsider extending the optic fibre from arterial routes to communities only a short distance away such as Yuelamu, just off the Tanami highway.

I also encourage Senator Conroy to immediately implement Recommendation 3.2 of the 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review to provide a source of funding for the expansion of the mobile telephone network. This will give us the opportunity to work with the Australian government, Telstra, and other telecommunications providers if they choose to deliver mobile services into other remote communities. This most popular telecommunications product, and the mobile devices that connect to it, have the potential to allow remote communities to skip over the traditional path of the common computer. Mobile technology is highly valued and I am convinced the smarter mobile devices, tablets and smartphones, will grow rapidly in popularity in remote communities.

This government understands the value of telecommunications and ICT and the very real difference it can make to the lives of all Territorians. We understand the necessity to catapult our remote communities forward into the digital age or condemn them to playing catch-up forever. We understand the benefits the NBN can bring to the Territory and, in particular, our remote communities. We understand the benefits of digital television and see the benefits mobile telephony brings to remote communities. However, we do not understand how the

Australian government can fundamentally misunderstand the needs of our remote communities. We do not understand how the Australian government can mismanage the implementation of the National Broadband Network and ignore critical infrastructure which could deliver superior telecommunications services to remote communities.

I will be doing everything I can to ensure the Australian government understands these issues and does it right.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly takes note of this statement.

**Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, I was expecting a ministerial statement but it was a whinge - many complaints but no solution. However, I am pleased the minister will lobby federal government. Minister, we did that and I wish you luck. It will be a complicated negotiation with regard to which party will be in power. One friendly suggestion: it is not a good idea, if you plan to negotiate with the federal government, to attack the government in this parliament. Unfortunately, that is true with both parties in Canberra.

When reading the ministerial statement, I was hoping to see a comprehensive policy which addressed the changing communication needs of the Northern Territory. I hoped to see strategies to provide better health and education services, means to make government activities more efficient, and some reference to the social media needs of young Territorians, but there was none of this.

Minister, we would have been happy to see you read our ICT policies - the ones we put in place - even put the CLP name on it and claim them as your own as you have done in so many other policy areas. Unfortunately, you have thrown a good set of initiatives out and replaced them with words which reflect this government's disinterest in ICT.

While I have no problem advocating for further improvements and investment, I am positive about the opportunities the NBN can provide. In defence of the federal government, if the conservatives had won the 2010 federal election we would not have the NBN at all and no part of the Territory would be receiving the benefit of this new high-speed network - cable, wireless or satellite.

Indeed, if Tony Abbott was Prime Minister we would have no significant ICT investment in the Territory and thousands of tradespeople and construction workers would not have jobs building the NBN. With the NBN investment in mind, the

previous Territory Labor government had developed a comprehensive framework to take advantage of the new reality - the high-speed Internet services benefiting the vast majority of Territorians and a better service to assist almost all Territorians.

Not only our households will benefit, our businesses, schools and hospitals will all deliver so much more for the community after the NBN is in place. The previous Territory Labor government was proactive in identifying opportunities for both the NBN and advances in technology.

Minister, you were sceptical of ICT policy and the NBN in opposition, and looking at your contribution as opposition spokesperson, it lacked substance.

During the election last year, Territory Labor committed to a range of ICT initiatives following comprehensive consultation with industry. Our policy was well received and strongly supported by the business community and ICT industry bodies. Specific initiatives in our policy came under three main headings: telehealth, delivering internationally recognised best practice medical services in the Territory; digital education, providing superior educational experiences for Territory students; and efficiency and waste reduction in government services through innovative workplace technology.

Our package included a commitment to provide a one-stop shop for Territory government services online. Contrast this with the CLP's ill-fated former policy to charge customers \$20 at MVR, supposedly to encourage them to use the Internet to pay bills.

We were also going to appoint a chief information officer to work across government to improve ICT outcomes and, importantly, formally collaborate with the ICT industry, including the ICTNT association and the Australian Computer Society. As I stated, we had a great working relationship with industry when in government and it is clear from your statement you have not continued down this path.

I am concerned this statement makes no reference to how the NT government will utilise the NBN and technology in our schools or deliver professional development to our teachers. There is no reference in the statement to how ICT and the NBN can provide opportunities in the bush and growth towns, greater subject choice in remote schools, access for artists and art centres to markets over the Internet, and interaction with local government. What about access to e-health in remote clinics and telemedicine throughout the Territory? With dispersed communities and vast

distances to cover, embracing this technology is a must.

I see no reference to the benefit of high-speed broadband to government agencies and what it might mean to the mining and resources sector. I also see no responsibility for the future taken by the Northern Territory government. In its opinion, it is all for the federal government and Telstra. I imagine the minister was a huge supporter of the sale of Telstra so he, better than most, understands we now operate in a different communication environment for better or for worse.

Minister, I would be happy to share our ICT vision with you so you can adopt our ideas and ensure Territory families are best served by the infrastructure and technological advances we are to be beneficiaries of.

You raised digital television and improved mobile phone coverage. I understand the concerns of households as they make the shift to digital television and admit I assisted my constituents understand what the changeover means. I well remember, in 2001 when we had analogue television, many people in Tiwi, Nightcliff and other areas could not receive reception which was supposed to be easier to receive with just an antenna.

I am unsure a different TV delivery model will prevent people having to buy a digital-ready television. This is a distraction on your part, or perhaps you needed something to say in your statement.

When it comes to mobile phone towers, I appreciate the importance of continually improving mobile coverage, but there is no single or simple solution. Local input and a range of funding sources will be required to install new towers. I reject the assertion that the job of the ICT minister is to do nothing and blame everybody else. In government, we worked hard to build strong ICT industry links and invest in our community.

Please, minister, I urge you, next time you make a statement on this important issue at least ensure your statement has substance. Perhaps talk to some business people or chat with me before you do this again. We are entering a new era of telecommunications and fast technology which can be utilised for the benefit of all Territorians. The Territory is a vast land with a small population. I have been to other places and seen the effects and benefits this new technology has brought to people.

I recently visited my parent's village in the mountains at an altitude of 1000 m - a very small village. Everybody in the village had free WiFi

access because the local government took the initiative and installed a WiFi antenna on one of the tallest buildings. The police, the school and the people in the village and the young people visiting had WiFi access. Sometimes it takes local initiative. It is difficult to motivate people, and sometimes it is difficult to get everybody to work together because people have their own opinions. It is easier to provide leadership to show people the benefits of this new technology rather than make a statement in parliament blaming everybody else but ourselves for the current deficiencies of the system.

I agree the government in Canberra should be lobbied. Often people in Canberra have no idea about the Territory and how sparse the population is. They believe Ayers Rock is an hour's drive from Alice Springs. They are very surprised to find Uluru is about 450 km from Alice Springs.

I urge you to talk to the people in Canberra. I have no idea which party will be in government in Canberra after the election, but the NBN will continue. People realise how important it is. Also, we realise how difficult and expensive it would be to go back on signed contracts.

Debate suspended.

#### **STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Death of Mrs Sadie May Ludwig**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, it is with deep regret I advise of the death, on 7 January 2013, of Mrs Sadie May Ludwig, a hard-working, passionate, loving and eternally giving Territorian.

#### **VISITORS**

**Madam SPEAKER:** I advise honourable members of the presence in the gallery of family and friends of the late Mrs Ludwig: Mr Vic Ludwig, her husband; children Alan Ludwig; Wendy Ludwig; Steven Ludwig; Cheryl Ah Kit, daughter-in-law; Pippa Ludwig, daughter-in-law; Stefan Ludwig, grandson; Mrs Ludwig's sisters Mrs Kathy Mills, Mim McGuinness and Joan Angeles.

Honourable members, I also advise of the presence in the gallery of countrymen Dottie Fejo, Edwina Fejo, Esther Caroline, Rosanne Brennan, Sybil Russell, Michelle Howard and Serena Jan. In the public gallery, honourable members, I welcome family and friends of the family: Cheryl Patullo, Joanne Angeles, Margie Copley, Barbara Taylor, Robert Mills, Karen Brown, Judy Saar, Gina Smith, Lynne Thorpe, Marlene Hewitt, Loretta Mott, Janet Roe, Geoff and Margie Anstess, Heather Hyams, Alison Rachow and

Lorraine King. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to you all.

I remind honourable members that on completion of debate I will ask members to stand in silence for one minute as a mark of respect for Mrs Sadie Ludwig.

#### **CONDOLENCE MOTION Mrs Sadie May Ludwig**

**Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly express its condolences at the passing of Mrs Sadie Ludwig, a passionate, loving and giving Territorian, and offer our profound sympathy to her family and friends.

I pass on my deepest condolences to her husband, Vic, and family members here today, and welcome her friends who have joined us. Welcome, and thank you for coming. I pass on the condolences of my mother, Dawn, who sends you her best wishes.

Sadie was born in Darwin in 1931 at the old Darwin Hospital at Larrakeyah. Sadie McGuinness was one of nine children to her parents John, known as Jack, and Violet. Many who had the pleasure of knowing Sadie will know of her passion for her beloved St Mary's Football Club. I would like to share with you a chapter in her very early life that many of us have been fortunate enough not to experience ourselves but all know someone, or have listened to stories of someone, who experienced the traumatic effects of war.

Sadie McGuinness, as she was known before she married, was born in Darwin and lived in Katherine until 1942. She was 11 years old when a single Japanese Mitsubishi Ki-15 reconnaissance aircraft took off from Kupang on Sunday, 22 March 1942, just a month after the Japanese Air Force attacked Darwin on 19 February. Sadie, and her sisters Joan and Moyce – Mim - went to school in Katherine. Almost daily after the 19 February attack on Darwin they dealt with the warning of an attack. They were taught how to spot enemy planes and regularly had air raid drills. The plan was when the siren sounded everyone was to go into the trenches in the schoolyard and wait for the all clear. The town had no warning on 22 March 1942. Being a Sunday, the air raid siren operator had the day off. They did not get a warning until they heard the aircraft in the distance.

Sadie's mother took the family into bushland to get away from the planes. They had a plan to camp in the bush not far from the airstrip, but found themselves in more danger when the Japanese dropped large bombs on the outskirts of Katherine because they thought the boulders were camouflaged planes and equipment.

I share with you Sadie's recollection of this moment from the book *Northern Perspective*:

*It was a Sunday morning when they came, we heard aircraft in the distance, and, looking up, we could see a V-formation, going east. The sirens went and we took cover. Not long after that we heard the drone of engines.*

*Then we saw these little things falling out of the sky and exploding. We didn't know what they were. You couldn't hide anywhere, you just hoped a bomb didn't get you. And the sound of bombs falling was terrifying. We could hear gunfire, but our Army's rifles were useless against high-up bombers, and there were no planes then to challenge them. The Japs tried to put out the airstrip, and the railway bridge, just outside the town. What they didn't know was that there was a large concentration of troops around Katherine and they could have killed a lot of them. As it was, there was only one casualty, an Aboriginal man.*

*After the bombing and the all clear, my father and the soldiers investigated the damage. They found big craters and trees cut off six inches above the ground. The Japs had used daisy cutters, and incendiary bombs. It was a real scary time.*

In March, Sadie, her siblings, mother and grandmother were evacuated from Katherine to Balaclava, South Australia, with many others. Her father, Jack, had to stay in Katherine due to a promotion and was essential in keeping the railway line open. Sadie recalled the experience as horrifying and her mother crying not knowing what was in store for them. She said:

*We went to Larrimah in cattle trucks which was horrible. The cattle smell was still there, especially on a hot day, and we had more than one family on each truck. They put a tarp over us to keep the heat of the sun off but that just made it worse.*

It took the McGuinness family a long time to get back north. Her father, Jack, as an essential worker, had only limited leave. However, when he did get to South Australia in April 1944 he came with good news: the family could go home and the tide of the war had changed. Darwin was still closed to civilians at the time, but the threat down the line had receded.

That is a small glimpse into the experience Sadie had with her family. It is important these experiences and stories are shared. The encounters you have heard are real, and we

should never take life and what we have for granted.

When the family returned to Katherine, Sadie and her sister, Mim, were ready to start high school. They had to board in Alice Springs as there was no facility in Katherine. After Sadie completed Year 10 she returned to Katherine and was keen to get to Darwin to join her sisters.

Sadie loved the tropical, small town feel of Darwin and loved her weekend catch-ups of a cool drink at a local café. During this time she picked up employment as a waitress and part-time cook at Mr and Mrs Wu's Oriental Café in Cavenagh Street. It was here she met her husband-to-be, Vic. Sadie won Vic over a bowl of special long soup and chicken chow mien.

Sadie soon discovered food was the way to his heart and continued to cook for him for the next 65 years. They were married in 1951 at St Mary's Star of the Sea Cathedral, Darwin and moved to a house at Bullocky Point where they started their family. They had five children: Allan, Wendy, twin boys Gregory and Robert, and Stephen. All children were born in Darwin.

Her father, Jack's, experiences and involvement in the union movement and the Aboriginal rights campaign influenced Sadie to ensure her children received a good education. Jack was a well-known and highly-respected citizen of old Darwin and was decorated by the Queen for his community service. The children went to boarding colleges in South Australia, Victoria, and Western Australia.

Like her father Jack, Sadie was a staunch advocate for the rights of workers and was a union member and voted in every election. Sadie shared this passion with her children and encouraged them to vote as Aboriginal people to be granted this right, honour and responsibility. She ensured her children knew the power of the vote to working people and how to use that power wisely.

Sport was a passion. Although she loved reading, dancing, singing and listening to music, it was sport she had a lifelong affair with. During her early years in Katherine, Alice Springs and Darwin, Sadie was known as one of the fastest runners in the Territory. Her sister, Katie, said it was because she used to chase and catch the rabbits in Balaclava, South Australia, for the cooking pot. Sadie held the 100-yard championship in Alice Springs for three years in the late 1940s. Sadie played hockey, cricket, netball, basketball and softball and only retired from hockey in her late 40s.

In 2000, she was awarded an Australian sports medal by the then Prime Minister, John Howard, and Governor-General at the time, William Deane. This award was in recognition of her sporting achievements. It did not stop there. In 2006, she received the Steve Abala Role Model Administrator's Medal in recognition of her illustrious and outstanding sporting achievement and exemplary lifestyle.

Sadie's love of sport is what brought her to St Mary's Football Club where she and husband Vic dedicated much of their time. It may not have gone that way if Vic had been successful in his try-out for Waratahs in the 1950s. That knock-back was definitely St Mary's gain.

One of the highlights of Sadie's involvement with St Mary's Football Club was her introduction to Her Majesty the Queen in 1976. This was when St Mary's was defeated by Waratahs in the grand final. The Queen was wearing Waratah Football Club colours that day and some of the supporters booed her for it. Meeting the Queen was a highlight; losing the grand final was not.

In 1973, Sadie was recognised for her tireless efforts with the club and awarded life membership and, later, a certificate of appreciation by the AFL in recognition of her contribution to the development and growth of AFL in Australia. She was club secretary and committee member of the Clubhouse Building Fundraising Committee. She was also voluntary guernsey washer, footy boots minder, homemaker and mother to many football players. She was affectionately known as Auntie Sadie.

Current President, Shaun Hardy, said recently:

*She was always happy to help and offer supportive advice. Even with her health problems over time she would continue to attend the club's bingo sessions and functions, and support our teams on game day. When Auntie Sadie ever called you over to say 'I need to have a quiet word with you', you knew you had better pay attention real quick.*

Family has been so extremely important to Vic and Sadie. Over the years, their children have given Vic and Sadie the greatest of joy, grandchildren – nine, in fact. They are also blessed with six great-grandchildren. It is with so much sadness we are here today to say goodbye to this remarkable Territorian. I will miss your hugs with Auntie Sadie, she was truly an inspiration. Her passion, her travel and her experiences will never be forgotten and will live on through her dear family and friends. We never truly lose the people we love; they continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their

love leaves an indelible imprint on our memories, and we can find comfort in knowing our lives have been enriched by having shared their love, and having shared the love of our wonderful Sadie.

My deep condolences.

**Mr MILLS (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I also take this opportunity to pass on my deep condolences to the family, particularly to you, Vic. It must be so hard being so close to one for so long - you are always regarded as a single unit. God bless you.

I mark the passing of a truly great Territorian in so many ways, Sadie McGuinness Ludwig. Sadie was renowned for her sporting skills and her passion, with husband, Vic, for their extensive family, which you have to say included St Mary's Football Club. There was such love in that family.

Sadie was one of nine children, with six sisters and two brothers. The claim her family played a major part in the heritage of the Top End is an understatement. Born in Darwin in May 1931, she grew up in Katherine where her father, John Francis 'Jack' McGuinness, was a fettle on the railway. Her sporting genes can be traced from Jack and his brothers, who played for Buffaloes Football Club in the 1930s and 1940s.

Let us remember though, in those days playing sport was not an opportunity open to everybody. The colour bar pre-war prevented many talented sportsmen from joining a team until Buffaloes was founded and, subsequently, St Mary's. As recounted in the 1997 documentary *Buffalo Legends*:

*The Buffaloes actually played a role in opening up the doors of multiculturalism, because we had non-Aboriginal people, Chinese, Greeks. We had the lot. So we really were a multiracial team and I think we were the forerunners of multiculturalism here in Darwin.*

This was the background for Sadie McGuinness Ludwig's upbringing.

Sadie's family was evacuated to South Australia during World War II, returning to Katherine in 1946. Her schooling included Alice Springs Higher Primary School, where she was elected captain of Todd House and won the senior girls' athletics championships twice. In the late 1940s, Sadie moved from her childhood home in Katherine to Darwin, and her reputation as a talented player of netball, basketball, softball, and hockey grew rapidly. Sadie played for Eagles, K-Jets and Saints netball teams, helped found the Health basketball team, which won Darwin's first

basketball premiership, and was also a foundation member of Rovers Hockey Club.

Sadie married Victor, or Vic as he is widely known, in 1951. It was only the pressures of producing five children in eight years, including a set of twins, which brought Sadie's sporting career to an end. Children Allan, Wendy, Gregory, Robert and Stephen, and subsequently grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as her beloved St Mary's, became the focus for Sadie.

A visit to the stadium to watch a game of football featuring St Mary's was always complete when you saw Vic and Sadie together - enjoying the family coming together, people being greeted and feeling you were part of something special.

Homes included Bullocky Point, Katherine, Darwin and, in retirement years, Paperbark Way at McMinns Lagoon. There was always one thing in common, the home of Sadie and Vic was always an open house with a warm welcome to all comers.

There is an addendum which sums up Sadie's life. On 14 February 2006, the then Administrator of the Northern Territory, His Honour Mr Ted Egan, inaugurated the Steve Abala Role Model Administrator's Medal. These awards were presented to a superb athlete in any field whose sporting career has been strongly connected to the Top End and who was considered an ideal role model for our Territory youngsters to aspire to emulate. It was fitting that Sadie McGuinness Ludwig was recognised not only for the year 1954, but because her life, in its entirety, contributed so much to our wonderful Northern Territory.

Madam Speaker, In conclusion, nearly 70 years of loving marriage is a powerful encouragement to all of us who hold marriage dear. Rest in peace.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, everyone has given a wonderful history of Sadie. I did not know her too well. I know Vic better than I did Sadie. Sadie probably knew me because I umpire football and there is no doubt she said some loving, kind and respectful things to me, I will return that compliment because she was a wonderful woman.

Sadie lived in the rural area and she and Vic became involved in the McMinns Lagoon Reserve; they were involved in other things besides football.

Last year I attended the anniversary of the Bombing of Katherine and a great range of people were there. The thing I love about the Territory is you meet so many people from different backgrounds. That is where I learnt much about

Sadie. She spoke to the gathered crowd about the Bombing of Katherine which, obviously, had a great impact on her life.

The Chief Minister mentioned how Vic and Sadie had lived together for so many years: over 60 years of marriage. These days we do not give that much praise or respect and marriage, to some extent, is not regarded as cool and many marriages only last a short period of time.

Sadie and Vic show the rest of us marriage can last. Obviously, they had the advantage of both barracking for the same football team so perhaps arguments were not so common. They lived through their marriage, enjoyed one another's company, raised a family - and is that not the basis of our society, especially in Darwin? As much as this is a very sad period for Vic and he will be lonely without his life partner, we should say well done for such a wonderful contribution as a couple, and also well done to Sadie - I could say for putting up with Vic - for loving him so well. It is a bit hard for me to take as an umpire but I say, 'C'mon the Saints!'

**Mr VOWLES (Johnston):** Madam Speaker, from all my family it is with sadness I speak this afternoon. As shadow minister for Sport and Recreation, it is important to recognise our legends, and today I speak about the passing of a true Territory sporting legend in Sadie Ludwig.

Today we heard of her life achievements and I will continue that with Sadie's involvement in sport and her contribution to our great Territory sporting history. She will always be remembered, as the Opposition Leader mentioned, from Alice Springs to Darwin as the fastest runner we have ever seen. Sadie was not only an exceptional runner, but she excelled in a number of sports including basketball, hockey, netball, softball and, my favourite, cricket.

I remember looking around the room when Sadie was inducted into the Steve Abala Role Model Hall of Fame. It was a pleasure for me to be in the room with so many legends. I remember looking around the room, seeing everyone and thinking how rich our sporting history is and how lucky I was to be sharing time with these sporting legends. It was special for me so I took the opportunity to talk to everyone inducted that day. It is something I will remember all my life.

We cannot mention Sadie or the Ludwigs without mentioning St Mary's Footy Club - the mighty, successful Saints. The commitment of these two great Territorians is the stuff of legends. We all know without the dedicated, tireless and committed volunteers, our sporting clubs - in fact any club - would cease to exist.

Sadie's involvement in the club, as we have heard from the member for Karama, is nothing short of inspiring. Those who knew her know she loved her Saints, her bingo, and being at the club. We have heard how she was inducted and given life membership at St Mary's in 1973, and also in 2006 recognised by the AFL for her dedication to growth of AFL in the Northern Territory. It is fantastic recognition for someone who was not about recognition and awards.

Sadie was a proud and inspiring person who fought for what she believed in, and what she said she did. I am proud to be an Indigenous member of parliament, something Sadie and her family fought for, for many years. I will try to do my best over the next three-and-a-half years to make her proud and stand up for what I believe in.

Not only are her family mourning this great loss, but the entire sporting community and the Territory is mourning the loss of Sadie. From all my colleagues in the House and all my family I pass on our sincere condolences to Vic and the family.

**Mr TOLLNER (Health):** Madam Speaker, it is with sadness I speak on this condolence motion. Sadie Ludwig was a beautiful person. It was interesting listening to the Opposition Leader speak of Sadie's experiences in Balaclava, South Australia, following the evacuation of Darwin during the bombing.

Several years ago, when I was federal member, I put together a history of the Bombing of Darwin, specifically, the evacuation. Much history had been written about the role of the military during the Bombing of Darwin, but very little had been done in relation to the evacuation. I was fortunate to engage Peter and Sheila Forrest, the two well-known Territory historians, and we put out a call for people to write their stories: people who were still alive who had been involved in the evacuation. The Opposition Leader is right, it was an incredible move for so many people to go to Balaclava and live in a tent city for so long.

What hit me when I was researching and talking to those people was the resilience and vigour of people of that generation. I do not know how I, or people I know, would deal with a circumstance like that these days, but they did it well back then. Pretty well everybody who was evacuated from Darwin returned to Darwin, which is amazing considering they spent so long interstate. Sadie was one of those people and she demonstrated that resilience, vigour and good humour of people of that generation.

Yes, it is hard to talk about Sadie without talking about Vic. They are Territory icons: people who are loved, admired and respected by everybody

who knew them, whether you play for St Mary's or not, as the member for Nelson demonstrated.

A few years ago I was fortunate to be appointed a vice patron of St Mary's Football Club. I had no idea what I was getting into and was not a great supporter of AFL football, being a Queenslander and a Rugby League guy, but St Mary's Football Club is amazing. It is one big family and has covered itself in glory in a range of different fields. It is almost difficult to talk about anything in isolation, but something which stands true almost to the test of time with St Mary's is the involvement of Vic and Sadie Ludwig.

My experience with that club is that I was not just welcomed but treated as part of the family. It is very touching and moving. Virtually every Thursday night after we finished a game of basketball, Vic and Sadie would walk around to the front bar and chat to us all. It was always with good humour and great interest to know how we went, and they were like that with everybody in the club. Vic, of course, is famous for his 42 years as president of the club. I do not believe any person in any sporting field has served as president of a club for 42 years.

Vic has often been described as the backbone of St Mary's. If Vic is the backbone Sadie was the heart and soul of St Mary's. I am extraordinarily grateful to have known Sadie for a period of time. Sadie and Vic are both wonderful people who have given so much to our community and we lose so much with the passing of Sadie.

Vic, my deepest condolences and sympathy to you. You and the family are going through a hard time but my thoughts are with you. The other vice patron of St Mary's, Paul Henderson, might be wishing he did not resign from parliament so quickly because he would love to have paid tribute to Sadie as well. Vic, I thank you for the wonderful time and support you have given me and for allowing me to know Sadie as well. I join with everyone here to say thank you for a great contribution and we will all miss the beautiful Sadie Ludwig.

**Madam SPEAKER:** To Vic Ludwig and all the family, I too extend my condolences to you and your family and all your friends. As you know Vic, my family has known your family as far back as the 1960s when my siblings went to school with your children, and through our joint involvement with St Mary's Football Club.

My mother, Noel Padgham, extends her sincere condolences to you and your family as an honorary life member of St Mary's Football Club. Those in your family old enough will know and remember my brother Peregrine, or as he was called, Perry, played for reserves - occasionally in

the A league but mostly in reserves - and he and his family send their condolences and sympathies to you. Apart from the school times and the football times, I recall the St Mary's Football Club functions we used to have on our property under the big shed. Some of you here would probably remember, including Sybil Russell. Dave Russell, her husband, used to play the guitar well into the morning - 2 am or 3 am in a sing-along. I do not recall the sing-alongs because I was well in bed, but my mother still tells the story of how beautiful and coherent his voice was. He is a lovely tenor, even after a few white or green cans. Of course, Sybil would be waiting to drive him home. Those functions were hugely successful and Vic and Sadie were an integral part of ensuring they were successful. They were fun.

Members have also spoken about your strong and intricate entwinement with the St Mary's Football Club. The success of that club over the decades is due, in part, to your guidance, leadership, and, of course, Sadie's involvement. The club has been enormously successful as a result of your and Sadie's involvement, particularly with juniors. No other club in the Territory has been as successful at cultivating young people to get involved in the sport. That is where St Mary's strength lies, particularly in promoting junior players to engage in healthy sport, healthy lifestyle and, of course, your and Sadie's relationship with people on the Tiwi Islands.

I was not that old, but I remember the match with Waratahs the Queen attended. St Mary's lost, but the Queen wore red and white and word went out she must be a Waratahs supporter. Of course, everyone was mightily spooked and upset by this and the rest is history. I have never forgiven her for that.

To you, Vic, and your family and loved ones, I extend my personal sympathies and the sympathies and condolences of my mother, Noel Padgham, and my brother, Peregrine. You have been, and will continue to be, very much a part of the Territory lifestyle. Sadie was part of that lifestyle and will be sorely missed but never forgotten by you, or by me and my family.

My sincere sympathies to you all.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, thank you for your contribution to the motion today. I now invite family, friends, and interested members to join guests for afternoon tea in the Main Hall.

## MOTION

### Note Statement – Telecommunications and Broadcasting in the Territory

Continued from earlier this day.

**Mr HIGGINS (Daly):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for this statement. As he knows, I have a background in the computer industry and a keen interest in developments in communications, especially in the rural and remote Territory. On several occasions lately I have advised I live in the Daly. This important statement affects me and I have some firsthand experience to draw upon and advice for the House.

When I moved to the Daly River Mango Farm in 1998 all that existed by way of communications was a radio phone via a microwave link. This system had solar power and batteries to power the system. Simply, we had a basic exchange and link via microwave back into Darwin using repeaters.

When the solar power was affected by lack of sunshine, I used a battery charger and extension lead to keep communications open. If the river was up and access not possible by car and the phone failed, as it did on a regular basis, there was no means of letting people know.

As for a computer link, think again, that did not exist, nor did a reliable fax service. Yes, that was only 15 years ago. Is that set-up still there? Yes it is. This is the basis of my landline phone service.

Television is not much better. Prior to the Katherine flood in 1998, all households in the Daly area had satellite television via the Optus satellite. Following the flood of 1998, the federal government established a retransmitter system where four stations were received by the community satellite dish and then retransmitted via normal analogue signal to all households using a standard television aerial.

This system has not been maintained since the decision to move to the digital television signal was made and three of the four stations are working as we await the new digital set-up.

The new digital television requires every house to have a satellite dish and decoder box to receive television. Most of this cost in setup will be borne by the federal government using taxpayers' money. Why they do not go to the retransmission setup that already exists I do not know.

There has been some development with phones. In the last few years I have had a satellite phone subsidy available through the Commonwealth and a satellite computer link setup via a dish on our

roof. The system has subsequently become outdated and no longer used.

More recently, a mobile tower was installed in Nauiyu as part of the same subsidy for remote communities with fibre-optic connections. Nauiyu had fibre optics for Telstra phones at that time so was lucky to have mobile coverage. This coverage, however, has a range of 4 km to 6 km.

This system has a 6 km or so signal radius which has enabled Mango Farm to get mobile coverage through Next G and access to a computer connection. The speeds are not that great but it gives basic access. As for other businesses down Wooliana Road or outside the signal coverage area, bad luck, you dip out. It seems this will be the case if we allow the federal government policy to be implemented without amendment.

As the minister said, 93% of Australians will receive direct-to-house fibre connection for computer access. For the Territory, that equates to 70% of all Territorians. The rest will receive satellite.

Our satellite is by no means an alternative to fibre or the existing Next G type links. My Next G connection at Daly runs faster than my electorate office, and the newer 4G connections are faster and will be further improved over time.

The effect on satellite reception caused by simple stratus cumulus clouds is enormous, yet the wireless connections seem relatively unaffected. I already have a satellite dish on my roof for television. Under this proposal, I need to install another one if I am to access new communication technology.

As for television, it is also affected by cloud cover. I overcome this by using a Next G link to download movies - legally I might add - through BigPond. These movies are stored on a T-box to have available when the satellite link goes out with regular monotony. It sounds messy and it is.

As I said in the adjournment debate on Tuesday, I had discussions with residents at Daly and the issue of mobile phone coverage being spasmodic depending on the number of users came up. The system has a maximum number of users. As it reaches these maximums it reduces its output signal strength and the subsequent reach of the signal is reduced. Simplistically, it covers fewer mobiles in a reducing circle. As user numbers drop, it increases the strength to get more users back onto the network.

People need to look at the investment already made by Telstra with this service. In my electorate, for example, a fibre cable runs all the way to Wadeye yet all the communities from Daly

River to Wadeye, including Woodycupaldiya, Emu Point, Peppimenarti, Palumpa, Wudapuli, Nama, Kuy etcetera will need to be connected via satellite.

To me, a much better option is to further invest in the existing technologies provided by Telstra through the Next G networks and install towers in each community giving not only better access to phone services, but also computer access. If we allow the Commonwealth to install satellite dishes on each house the cost would be greater and would limit the opportunity for Telstra to maximise the return on their investment in fibre connections to larger community centres as well as further enhance the current facilities.

I again, use Daly as an example - and add Wadeye to the equation. By installing satellite connections in both these centres the revenue currently returned to Telstra from the existing towers will be reduced and, as I said, we already have limited access from outside the 6 km radius. To cut down on the revenue potential would prevent any enhancements taking place in the bush. Why would Telstra add further phone towers to the bush when they will be restricted to phones only as their source of income?

I also need to raise the prospect of power reliability in the use of computer technology. With wireless connections, the need for power always available is not a consideration. Connection via mobile phones and tablets etcetera to the Internet does not require a power source always available. Telstra towers use a battery system with about six hour's availability in case of power outage. However, satellite connections need a full power supply always available. The current subsidy for satellite phones provided through the Commonwealth is also to cease shortly, so I presume these funds will be used to prop up the expensive schemes suggested as appropriate for the bush.

Power becomes critical during cyclones. As we have a weather station at Mango Farm, we are called upon to feed information to the Bureau of Meteorology. This would not be possible with satellite connection because of cloud cover and power failure. The current system utilises Next G and a laptop with battery life of about eight hours. This has been invaluable over the last few years. Dundee, a few years ago, also had communication problems following a cyclone almost equal to the lack of communication during Cyclone Tracy - that is, none.

This is also relevant to amateur fisherman as they make extensive use of mobiles at the Daly. Any extension of the current range of coverage will impact on them in that there would be little, if any, chance of improvement in the more remote

locations such as Daly. I presume the same situation exists at Corroboree, with limited Telstra coverage. Tourists in the area would also suffer. Many tourists use much computer communication which would be downgraded under the proposed system.

While I speak of Telstra, I note other competitors are free to enter the market in remote communities but the economies of scale do not exist. They have taken up the challenge at Dundee with an Optus tower but will this improve when the new satellite option is implemented? I do not believe so.

Consideration also needs to be given to commercial operations such as mine. Currently, television is available via the retransmission option, but once the digital roll-out is completed I will need to buy multiple dishes and decoders for our accommodation. Any upgrade to the Telstra infrastructure will not be cost-effective, and I will be left with the old radio telephone I started with 15 years ago. The list of communities eligible for subsidy is not extensive, and I ask questions for Emu Point, Merrepen, Perrederr and more.

I ask members of both sides of the House to ensure they understand this issue and that we push our federal members from both sides to have a closer look at the second grade solution we, in the bush, are being offered. We deserve better.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for his very important statement.

**Ms ANDERSON (Regional Development):**

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I support my colleague's statement brought to this Chamber. It is necessary we debate this because having a satellite, an unreliable service, put in remote Aboriginal communities is not what we should expect. This is not, as my colleague explained, a poor service, a second-rate service. To me, it sounds like Indigenous communities and Indigenous people are being treated as second-class. It indicates to me it is not just a poor service, but a black service, and we need to get away from that thought.

We live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and our kids in remote Aboriginal communities have the same aspirations as any young teenagers in cities and towns like Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. They are into the technology of trying to connect with the world outside their small community. If we give a poor service to the remote bush - a black service - we are not giving the same standard of service to the next generations of young Indigenous kids in remote Aboriginal communities. We really need to keep away from a second-rate and poor service. We should be fighting, as Territorians, for the same

service whether we live on a homeland, in Nhulunbuy, Papunya or Yuendumu, or in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine or Tennant Creek. As Territorians, this should be our focus.

We should not separate between the remote bush and towns and have two different systems because that is a handicap and hinders the kids we are trying to help in remote Aboriginal communities lift their standards through education and health. We would be giving them a poor black service.

The member for Casuarina said this type of technology allows that process to happen. You have much more interaction with the health and education system through that technology. How can you have that interaction if you have a second-rate service?

One of the things we have to be mindful of with many satellite dishes in remote Aboriginal communities - two or three satellite dishes sitting on every house, especially in the Top End - is we have the cyclone season with winds of up to 120 km/h in Darwin. What will happen to the satellite dishes? They will become 120 km/h frisbees in communities. Are we going to remind Aboriginal communities to talk to the government or take out life insurance because satellite dishes might be flying around in communities which could destroy buildings or take the life of someone who might be running from the wind? Have we thought of that?

No we have not. That is why, when talking about the federal government doing things in the Northern Territory, we must keep the same standard throughout the Northern Territory so all Territorians benefit. We should not be fighting for separate standards: a lower class, poor black standard in remote Aboriginal communities and a different standard in the towns. As Territorians, as debaters, as politicians, as local members, we should be fighting to ensure the Territory is equal and being looked after by the federal government so any program streamlined into the Northern Territory, whether in the bush or in town, is exactly the same as we would expect in Karama, Casuarina or Nightcliff. I expect the same standard for my nieces and nephews at Papunya and am sure Madam Acting Deputy Speaker would expect the standard of service to be delivered to her family at Yuendumu.

That is what we have to take into consideration and we have not. Until we, as debaters and politicians in this House, start requiring our leaders, federally, to look at a service for all Territorians, not a poor or a black service for the bush, nothing will change; there will always be a separate system. If we are thinking about technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and improving the

lives of Indigenous people in remote Australia, we need to ask for the same service, not a separate service.

I will talk about satellite in Central Australia. You have the dust, the wind, and all these satellite dishes in remote Aboriginal communities - Kintore, Mount Liebig, Papunya, Haasts Bluff, Areyonga, Hermannsburg, Titjikala and Santa Teresa. With a westerly wind, those satellite dishes will fill with dust, pebbles, rocks, and paper which will be taken out by an easterly wind. Have we catered for that? Who will repair the satellite dishes - two or three satellite dishes on every house - when they cannot receive reception? We have not thought about that.

As politicians we have to request the same service otherwise we will allow Indigenous people to receive a second-class service. In this House we always talk about improving the lives of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory - whether it is through health, education or housing - but they receive substandard housing, poor health and poor education. What do you expect? The indicators are showing we are not really moving forward.

We talk about reconciliation, but that happens when we are on an equal playing field. We are not. It is like playing football with 18 but we only have 10 so you are always going to win. We have to stop that type of thing. Let us both have 18 players and good umpires. We are the umpires in this because we are the debaters and decision-makers. As umpires of the Northern Territory, I urge all in this Chamber to always request a system we all benefit from, not a second-rate system Aboriginal people get in the bush.

As my colleague rightly put it, we are always the poor cousins who get the poor system. We have to change that. I congratulate you, minister, for the good things you do, always keeping in mind the remote bush and ensuring, in negotiations with your counterparts in ministerial councils, you keep Aboriginal people in the bush at the top level. Always remember to ensure you get the right service, the good service, all Territorians require in any discussion you have with them.

It is time to change our focus and ask for a system every child in the Northern Territory enjoys in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are not talking about children in Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine, we are talking about all children in the Northern Territory whether they live at Titjikala, Santa Teresa, Finke, Docker River, Casuarina or Wanguri. Let us put our children together and move them forward with the right technology so they can advance their education, health, and be involved in interaction through technology outside the Northern Territory

as well. There are so many opportunities in this to move the Territory forward.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the minister for bringing this statement to the House.

**Ms LEE (Arnhem):** Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I support the ministerial statement brought to the House by my colleague. This has been discussed in the bush for a long time, probably since before I was born. There have always been poor telecommunication services in the bush. I commend my colleague for bringing this to the House and fighting for it because we deserve the same as towns and cities.

It is a step in the right direction. Many government agencies and local businesses rely on telecommunications to deliver services in remote areas. That has been discussed since this government came to power. The services they rely on are training, employment and regional development in our communities. This service will be greatly appreciated; it will give communities what they need. In the future, we are probably looking at training centres utilising this service. It will be greatly appreciated by the bush. Not everyone wants to move from their community into town or to the cities. People want access to communications in their community and the opportunity to have the same as any other Australian.

Our generation in the bush is advancing just as much as anybody else around the world. The bush deserves the same service delivery as the rest of Australia. Remote areas will benefit greatly from the telecommunication service delivery.

Remote communities have been underserved forever and there are not many services in remote areas; you do not have many channels. Things have been switched off so there is no TV or anything to rely on. If you want something you have to pay for digital TV or Austar, which is expensive. This could be funded through the federal government and has not been discussed until now. That is another ring in the bell.

There is a need for reliable high-speed telecommunications in remote areas. Unfortunately, remote communities will not receive premium fibre-optic access because the line mostly runs through towns not communities. Only certain places have fibre optic in place.

Great opportunities can come from this, especially for our youngsters and the generations to come. The government needs to look to the people coming after us: the second and third generations.

There is desperate need in the bush to bring standards to the same as everyone else's. Unfortunately, I have not even heard my predecessor talk about this. That is quite disappointing. I am glad I am in this House and have the opportunity to speak about this because many people from the bush have approached me. This should be one of the most important statements made in this House. I encourage members opposite to talk about this because there are benefits for Indigenous people.

They talk about being the lifesaver of Indigenous people, but when it comes to really figuring out what is needed in the bush where is the support? This is what people need and what we talk about every day. Before I entered parliament this was discussed by local government. Where is the need now?

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am honoured my colleague, the member for Braitling, has brought this to the House. I support you 100%, and will support you to fight the feds on this because it is very important.

**Mrs PRICE (Stuart):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the member for Braitling for what he is trying to achieve. We all know the people in remote communities and regional centres are left until last. We have always been regarded as second-class citizens even though Australia calls itself a fair country.

I have been involved with technology. In the past, I have been involved in fights to get the same recognition for remote communities. What the member for Braitling has been talking about is important and affects most communities in remote areas.

Our people are entitled to everything that can be granted. We have to ensure we are recognised and treated like everyone else in Australia with regard to optic fibre. Nowadays, the whole world is coming into our lounge room and people want to learn more - Aboriginal people as well as people in remote areas, including pastoralists.

It is important we, as government, support each other to ensure every person in the Northern Territory gets what is owed to them and is part of the ever-changing world.

I congratulate the member for Braitling for working to ensure everyone gets a fair share of what is owed to them. As the member for Arnhem stated, some communities have missed out on many of the benefits being rolled out elsewhere. People in the bush are treated as second-class citizens. We, as government, need to stick together and fight for our rights on these things.

I want to speak for my electorate as well because we have optic fibre going through Yuendumu but 20 km down the road Yuelamu does not have it, which is not fair. As an ever-growing community, people are entitled to what is there - what the next community has. Nyirripi does not have optic fibre. People would like to have access to technology like any other person up and down the track or in the major town centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we need to take that into consideration when we say we are all Territorians, all Australians. Once again, I congratulate the member for Braitling.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the economy surrounding digital technology and what we should be doing in remote communities.

I agree wholeheartedly with the observations of the minister and his - what the member for Casuarina calls a whinge - legitimate complaints about promises made and not kept by the federal government, which puts great store in symbolic gestures and saw the former Prime Minister showered with accolades for being wonderful but, in truth, when it comes to rolling out packages into remote areas the symbolism is not matched by effort.

Aboriginal land in remote communities - we are largely talking about Aboriginal land - should provide an income for the people who live on it. It always has. For at least 40 000 years the Australian land mass provided an income for the people who lived here. It is weird this age of miracles and wonder is the only time Aboriginal land does not generate sufficient income for the people who possess it and are possessed by it.

This is the richest time in history and land is providing the least for the people who live on it so they become dependent on external sources for support. That is paradoxical in nature. How can we have the wealthiest community ever and traditional land providing as little as it does for the people living on it? It is mystifying. No, I not am mystified; I know why it occurs and am frustrated it keeps occurring. One thing which can improve what happens in remote areas is this type of technology.

Yes, we need to have better roads and infrastructure. We need to do many things better, but we also need to ensure the information technology going into these places is up to speed.

If we amend the legislative instruments which support people who live in remote areas so they can free up land for better commercial outcomes supported by infrastructure and information technology, we will get better outcomes.

Information technology has improved in miraculous ways from the early mid-1980s when I first worked in remote areas in Central Australia.

At that time, an HF radio was the only tool available to a police officer to communicate with Alice Springs or Darwin, depending on which remote location you were in. That technology, whilst improving, was not substantially different to the technology available with the Traeger peddle radio 40 years earlier. Since that time, the advent of satellite telephones, optic fibre and satellite Internet communications has seen remote places become as potentially well wired up as inner city suburbs of Sydney.

The first time I was in Hermannsburg there was no television in the community. We now have full free-to-air in Hermannsburg so things are improving. It is how you make the improvements and what you intend to get from them that matters.

If we are going to attract investment into communities we have to demonstrate to the investors it is worth their while. One way to demonstrate that is by having the appropriate technology in place.

The federal government said it would change the world of technology in this country with the NBN. Originally, and probably more correctly, the former Prime Minister's idea of optic fibre to the node was a proper way to go. Now we are going optic fibre to the front door, I wonder how much disruption that will cause to larger communities. In our remote communities I would like to see technology appropriate to what the minister said.

Madam Speaker, I would like to see this technology support the economic advancement of remote communities and do it in ways described by the minister. That would be the correct thing to do.

**Mr GILES (Corporate and Information Services):** Madam Speaker, I thank speakers for their contributions today. The member for Arnhem spoke off the cuff and did a good job. Her contribution was excellent. She understands the need for telecommunications in the bush. She talks to me regularly about this and knows the benefits telecommunications can provide by connecting people and giving them a greater level of access to information, one of the keys to assisting people with numeracy and literacy.

The member for Namatjira also made a valuable contribution. Her statement emphasised the desire for equality and removal of duplication in services currently being rolled out. There are opportunities around better cost equalisation and reduction in expenditure in a sensible approach to

delivering telecommunications, particularly around fibre optics.

I encourage the federal government to look at increased utilisation of fibre optics, particularly in the 34 communities, but with an option to extend that further to communities in my colleagues' electorates.

I thank the member for Daly for his comments. He provided valuable insight, particularly with his background in the telecommunications area. Also, the member for Port Darwin added a brief contribution which really emphasised the points I was trying to make.

I was disappointed in the member for Casuarina's comments, although he never really adds much value in this space. It is important to reflect what he said showed the previous government's intent over the last 11 years, where there was no fight on this scale. They did not take up the fight of how telecommunication services can be improved during the last period of government. It is no surprise Canberra is running this hotchpotch model with a range of different initiatives where everybody has a poor outcome of service because we are remote and the approaches are triple-layered. Money is going everywhere. The ABC is putting rebroadcast sites on top of the other three models already there, and people still will not have mobile phone coverage. Structural improvements to the roofing system of houses in the bush will have to be made to hold all the satellite dishes. It is crazy!

The member for Casuarina said this is a whingeing statement. No, this statement identifies issues and concerns. You would not care so much, member for Casuarina, because it is the bush and you do not have much concern in that regard.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later date.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Homelands and Outstations**

**Ms ANDERSON (Indigenous Advancement):** Madam Speaker, before I deliver my ministerial statement on homelands and outstations, I take this opportunity to thank the Department of Regional Development and Indigenous Advancement for the good work they do. I sincerely thank them from the bottom of my heart, also my staff upstairs.

Today I outline the government's policy on homelands and outstations. In recent speeches I have spoken about what Indigenous people have in common with other Australians, or should have in common - things like health, education, and employment. We have lost sight of those similarities in all the talk about separate development. I wanted to bring the conversation back to those fundamentals.

Of course, there are some areas where Indigenous people are different to other Australians, rightly and proudly. Our spiritual connection to the land is unique. Today, I seek to explain and celebrate that, and to describe what this government proposes to do to maintain that through the homelands. Everyone in this country is free to connect with the land as they wish. I welcome their effort to do that.

Our Indigenous connection is a matter of deep history going back well over 40 000 years. Even those of us who have accepted Christianity still feel that connection intensely; it is part of who we are. How we go about keeping that connection alive is crucial to our wellbeing, and homelands are vital to that. They are our ancestral ties and places where, through ceremonies and other means, we can fulfil our obligations to our inherited country and its law. They are safe places where we feel secure and can achieve physical and spiritual health.

I will talk about some of the practicalities of that shortly, but will make one more general point. Indigenous people help themselves be connected to the land, but we help other Australian too. Through our knowledge and ceremonies, our stories and practice of traditions, we give human meaning to patches of dirt and rock, to the creatures that live there, to the sun and sky.

I hope living meaning is valued by other Australians who have already acknowledged it by returning the land in question to Indigenous people. It was never our intention to lock up our land and walk away. It was always the desire of some of us to live on the land and keep that meaning alive while staying connected.

Homelands give life and significance to large areas of this country. I hope all Australians might sense the wonder of that even if they cannot experience it themselves. I hope they can look at the lives of people in the homelands and appreciate something of what the land gives us and we give the land. The homelands make Australia a richer place, culturally and spiritually. In relation to history and imagination, they make it a better place.

The homelands movement, if I can call it that, began with the land rights push in the early 1970s.

Back then, the federal government encouraged homelands in the hope it would improve lives if people were living on their own lands, hunting, fishing and gathering traditional food. The homeland movement has been popular. Today, about 10 000 people live on homelands: one-quarter of the total remote Indigenous population of the Northern Territory.

Since the 1970s, the administrative arrangements for homelands have changed and there has been much confusion. In the early days, it was not intended homelands would compete with the towns for the services and quality of housing they offered. There has now been a shift. Obviously, a homeland will never offer the health services of Darwin, but more money and improvements in technology means homeland life does not have to be rough, as was once thought.

This government is optimistic about homelands. We believe, with the right policies, in some cases new policies, much can be done. We are aware it would be more expensive to have people living in hundreds of small communities gathered around the Territory than restricted to a few dozen towns, but the benefits are, potentially, great: health, wellbeing and social harmony.

On behalf of the government I reaffirm an integral role of homelands in the Territory. I commit us to providing residents of the homelands with the same services as other Territorians, within reason, and accepting that, in many cases, they are starting from a very low base. I acknowledge the considerable work the federal government has done to make homelands a reality for thousands of Indigenous people. I ask the government to continue to work with us to strengthen these places in the coming years.

The previous Territory government's policies produced a drift to the towns which created overcrowding, drunkenness and arguments. The homelands are still there offering a solution to many of those problems. We believe they are worth pursuing. At the moment, there are some 2400 dwellings in 520 homelands. Land ownership is a real problem as it stands, but before I discuss that let me present a few more basic statistics.

This government is committed to providing more than \$100m to homelands in the next decade. The federal government will be providing over \$200m in addition to welfare payments made to many of the people on the homelands and the mining royalties received each year by the land councils. That is a lot of money. As is so often in Indigenous affairs these days, the problem is not the lack of money, the problem lies elsewhere. We plan to focus on the existing homelands that are used as principal places of residence. In

some cases, funds will be available for other projects with the possibility of sustainable development. We will bring back financial certainty and provide long-term parity for residents and service providers. There will be a review of management fees paid to the service providers. We will introduce an agency asset management plan to ensure buildings are gradually improved or replaced. It will be a long task; let there be no mistake.

As Amnesty International and others have pointed out, many of the dwellings on homelands are primitive and overcrowded, others are literally falling down. But there will be a program of improvement, I promise. There will be a reason to hope housing will get better. It could hardly be worse. One of the nasty things of the Northern Territory is government is expected to build not just public housing on its own land, as happens around the world, but houses on private land too. I refer to the half of the Territory owned by the Aboriginal Land Trust and managed by the land council where it is almost impossible for individuals to build their own home. This is a truly bizarre situation.

I have had occasion before in this House to talk about the work of two researchers, Helen and Mark Hughes. They have had a long-running interest in the Baniyala Homeland in east Arnhem Land. They made the point families can now own their own home in Russia, China and native American and Canadian Inuit reservations. Australia's Indigenous lands are the last remaining area of any significance on the earth's surface where this cannot be done.

They propose 99-year leases to give individuals security to build homes. Why can we not do that now? Practically, Aboriginal land cannot be leased to individuals because it is considered not to belong to individuals but the clan; not to one generation, but all generations past and present. I understand that idea, but not all ideas deserve to last forever; to go on unchanged until the end of time when circumstances around them change and an idea which once was good becomes bad. That happened here and it is time to move on.

Property rights are now considered by experts to be crucial to prosperity, to lifting people out of poverty and despair. Why should the Indigenous people of the Territory be denied this great blessing? We need to compromise. The clan can still own the vast majority of the land, but let individuals lease their quarter acre blocks and build houses. That is a change to the old ways - a compromise - but it would not be the first. Many of us have accepted Christianity yet still feel a strong connection to the land and its law. Why not make a similar compromise and change in land tenancy?

Private ownership of housing is good because it encourages people to take out mortgages. Warren Mundine has spoken of the great benefits of a mortgage. Once you think about it, having a mortgage means you can build a better house for yourself and your children. It means you have to get up in the morning, have a shower and go to work to earn money to pay the mortgage. That means you set a good example for your children to get up and go to school. Having a mortgage means you end up owning your house. It means you can borrow against the house to take out a loan to start a business. It means when you move or die your children get the house.

I want that to be the reality for Indigenous people in the homelands as much as anywhere. To achieve that the land councils need to grant private leases to individuals: like 99-year leases you can get in Canberra. If it works in Canberra it will work here. The people of Baniyala have been trying to get private leases for years and have been knocked back by the land council and federal government. Two private homes were built in Baniyala earlier this year, the first two in Indigenous territory on the mainland, but the lease issue remains unresolved.

I am sick of people being held back by ideas dropped in Russia 20 years ago and rejected by Indigenous people in North America. We deserve the best and bad ideas are holding us back.

This government is limited in what it can do about private leases but will do what it can. I will continue to expose the great scandal of the Territory, which is these days bad and expensive housing is a choice not a necessity.

When private leases and private housing become a reality, Indigenous people will have access to government grants such as the \$25 000 for first home ownership and, more importantly, prices will drop. At the moment, it costs the government \$600 000 to build a house in a remote area. For a private owner to do the same the cost is half or less.

The money for mortgages to rebuild every house in every homeland is already there. Last year, Helen Hughes calculated the Aboriginal Benefits Account was receiving \$220m per year from mining royalties. That would fund a mortgage for every remote Indigenous family in the Territory.

With the right ideas we can have good housing in the homelands. We can have assets and a financial future for our children. The land is there, the income is there to fund the mortgages, all we need is a change in land ownership to make it a reality.

I move to education and the homelands. Obviously, most homelands cannot support a high school yet we believe every child from a homeland should attend school every day of the school year. One way or the other, this government has a three stream policy for education: more School of the Air in homelands, boarding schools in larger centres, and mainstream schools for Indigenous people - real education for real jobs. A child in a homeland should not have to stay there forever if she does not want to. When she grows up she should have choices. Where does choice come from? A good education.

Let me get down to the nitty gritty of what we propose to do. While the Mills government policy has been determined, implementation of new policy will not be finalised until there has been appropriate consultation. At the moment, homeland service providers receive four different types of grants to support infrastructure. To make transparency part of the system, we will move from grants to a tender process which will allow service providers to bid on supplying municipal and essential services or home repairs and maintenance. If the service provider feels it has the skills, it may bid to supply both to the homeland or group of homelands. Whichever way they choose to go, service providers will be given certainty through a rolling three-year advance commitment.

In 2012-13, the government administered \$31.8m under the previous grant-based scheme. This produced a complete lack of transparency in how the money is divided. Next year under the new scheme, the amount available will be divided among the number of eligible dwellings with weightings depending on how needy they are. A home that is difficult to access and off the grid might get \$20 000, for example, while one that is much easier to look after could get \$7500. There will also be a means to ensure funds are distributed fairly. Service providers will be expected to provide reports in the interests of transparency and accountability.

Maintenance and repair money can be used for a variety of purposes from upgrading bathrooms and kitchens through to hiring tradesmen or funding work that can be done by residents. Also in the interests of transparency, repairs and maintenance money will be used only for private houses. Government infrastructure - for example schools - will be funded separately.

Our emphasis will be on housing but there is much more to be done. We will be looking at development opportunities in homelands that demonstrate motivation and the capacity to undertake initiatives which create jobs. Jobs will receive the Mills government's full support. In many of those 500 homelands the opportunities

are there, the jobs are there in land management, eco-tourism, coastal security and growing vegetables, even new industries most of us are still coming to grips with such as carbon trading in response to climate change. We will ensure they get the full benefit of every relevant government program.

I hope by now I have made clear we do not see homelands as hermitages or retreats - places cut off from the rest of the world. We see them as unique in what they have to offer, but also vitally connected to the rest of the world. Should economic independence be possible in some cases, it will only make them stronger.

Those are some of the highlights of our policy. There will be plenty of other actions too: work on communications and transport, roads and water supply. It will be a whole-of-government approach under the umbrella of our belief that homelands make life better for the 10 000 Indigenous people who live there and, indirectly, for all Territorians.

When white Australia began to acknowledge its obligation to Indigenous people in the 1970s and return some of our land, homelands were to be the fulfilment of that process. This government intends to do all it can to help that intention of 40 years ago a reality.

When the previous Northern Territory government accepted responsibility for funding remote community services from the Australian government, they did so with no plan for the future of homeland communities. Delivering effective public services to large numbers of small decentralised communities has been difficult over the last 10 years. The difference today, however, is the government recognises living on homelands improves the wellbeing of Aboriginals.

Shifts in technology make serving scattered communities more reliable and effective than previously, particularly the opportunity for kids to access proper educational support online. For government, new technologies can be used to facilitate coordinated service provision and to provide open and accountable delivery models.

A parliamentary committee recently heard evidence of the important role language plays in understanding and transmitting culture, and reinforcing ties between kinship, country, and family. The report found language is inseparable from culture and, therefore, connected to land. As Territory residents just like you and me, homeland residents are entitled to public housing. I fully support this, but it is not sensible to assist people to stay on country when this is cheaper and the outcomes are better. Why have we not been supporting Aboriginal people to live on homelands? The answer is we have, but not

enough. Homelands Extra is a relatively small supplement to support something we know works.

Even if we ignore the cultural aspects of maintenance of language, custom, and cultural practice and look purely at the cost benefit of encouraging people to remain on homelands, it makes sense.

In justifying government support for homelands, you only need look at some of the facts. Aboriginal residents of homelands can have a reduced reliance on store-bought food, be more active, and experience lower rates of substance abuse and domestic violence. There have been outstanding examples of very high school attendance rates for enrolled Aboriginal kids in homelands. Research suggests homelands are good for the environment because they contribute to biodiversity management and ecosystem maintenance. No, we do not own the land or the houses in which homeland residents live, but we must appreciate these people are making life better for themselves. If people can stay on homelands, obviously, there are fewer imposts on public housing and fewer costs in healthcare.

People living on homelands have worked hard to build what they need. These people want to avoid the overcrowding and antisocial behaviour found in larger communities. They also reject the heavy drinking lifestyle of long-grass living miles away from the nearest pub or takeaway food outlet. You will not find Chiko Rolls, buckets of chips or many cans of Coke in these places. That is a good thing not only for the health of the community, but for taxpayers who fund our hospitals, dialysis clinics and CareFlight.

Many of you here today - on whichever side - have at some time shown support for closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes. Under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, the Territory government is committed to supporting the principles of Indigenous engagement, targeting need, delivering sustainable results, providing access to services, and integrated and accountable delivery.

Homelands Extra will support these in a way no implemented policy of the previous government was able to. Implementation of the Homelands Extra Allowance will be undertaken in consultation with stakeholders. Homelands Extra will:

- recognise Aboriginal people's relationship to country and promote cultural connections and maintenance through homelands and outstations;
- support the right and authority of Aboriginal people to own, live on and develop their lands;

- promote the health, wellbeing and economic benefits associated with homelands living;
- recognise the holistic benefit of outstations homelands;
- improve the certainty and transparency of service delivery and funding from all levels of government to outstations and homelands
- encourage homelands residents to participate in education and economic development to increase employment, business participation, ownership and wealth, self-sufficiency and independence;
- clarify expectations of outstation and homeland residents and service providers regarding support and service delivery, and improve transparency and accountability;
- strengthen engagement between governments, outstation homeland residents, service providers, landowners and key Indigenous groups.

As I said, we will be consulting with stakeholders to ensure we implement an appropriate model for the distribution of funding for Homelands Extra. There are a few things about this policy you already know, but I will repeat it to ensure everyone understands exactly what this government will be doing.

Up to \$5200 per annum will be paid to service providers for each eligible dwelling to carry out repairs and maintenance work. Dwellings will be eligible for this allowance only if key criteria are met. First, adult residents must demonstrate active economic participation: work, CDEP or registered volunteer work. Second, residents cannot be recipients of any other government supported accommodation. Third, the resident must meet the requirements of the means test. Fourth, the residential service fee is paid in full. Last, residents' children must be regularly attending school.

Government will continue to make funding available to assist in delivering essential services to eligible homelands and outstations. This funding will be delivered in a transparent way to ensure residents and service providers have a clear understanding of expected levels of service delivery and responsibility of residents.

Service providers will develop service delivery plans to clarify roles and responsibilities and expected levels of service delivery. Funding will be delivered with appropriate controls to meet the expected levels of public accountability.

Eligibility criteria will be agreed with the Australian government and will include factors such as

access to potable water and support from a suitable organisation.

Municipal and essential services funding will be allocated according to published guidelines taking into account relative disadvantage. As part of sharing responsibility for living on homelands, the government expects homeland residents to contribute to the upkeep of their dwelling and homelands.

My department will conduct a review of homeland residential service fees to determine an appropriate fee structure based on what is affordable for residents and what is reasonable for the level of service received.

Service fees are not enforceable; however, the Homelands Extra payment will be linked to ongoing payment of service fees. Government will assist homeland residents and service providers to develop asset management plans for homelands. Asset management plans will be used to guide future investment decisions, including the use of the Homeland Extra Allowance.

Asset management plans will cover communal infrastructure such as essential services, education and health facilities, and houses. Government will continue to work with key Indigenous groups such as land councils and the Aboriginal Benefit Account Advisory Committee, as well as service providers and homeland residents on regional and private sector approaches to infrastructure enhancement for homelands.

Government will focus its financial support on existing homelands which are used as a principal place of residence or the location of a sustainable ongoing social, cultural and economic development program.

The government is not opposed, in principle, to Aboriginal people establishing and maintaining new, economically sustainable homelands with support, but servicing such activities will be subject to conversations between the Territory and Commonwealth governments, traditional owners, land councils and residents.

In conclusion, the Terry Mills government is committed to improving services and living conditions on homelands. This will require the joint efforts of governments, landowners and residents. We all share responsibility for the future of homelands and need to work together to achieve the best possible results. This policy is our commitment.

Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this very important statement to the House today on the Territory's homelands and her, and her government's, vision for a shared responsibility between residents, service providers or homelands resource agencies, and the Territory and Australian governments. I know she and her colleagues are passionate about this and, as a bush member, it is something I am passionate about. I have spoken about that vision on many occasions in this House. It is one the former Labor government held and was delivering on.

I acknowledge the strong and influential role the member for Braitling has played during his four years as CLP shadow for Indigenous Policy. Let us face it, he is the one in the CLP who, after decades of ignoring homelands and outstations, realised any political party in government, or in opposition, could not continue to ignore the needs of the bush, especially the 10 000 or so people who live on homelands and outstations. Here is the policy put out prior to the election - the Chief Minister shoulder to shoulder with the member for Braitling. Whilst this was a headline statement of their policy, this is what we are hearing today - where it has grown from.

I acknowledge the hard work the member for Braitling did during that time. He did the hard yards and I am sure he must be a little disappointed not to be delivering this statement today as CLP government minister for Indigenous Advancement but, there you go.

I also thank my former colleagues, Marion Scrymgour, the former member for Arafura, and Malarndirri McCarthy, the former member for Arnhem, both bush members and, under Labor, ministers for Indigenous Policy. I acknowledge them for their commitment and strong leadership in ensuring Territorians living in remote areas, especially Indigenous Territorians, are valued and recognised for the important role they play in making the Territory the incredible and unique place it is and recognising and addressing the hardship which exists in remote areas. Let us not forget the current minister, the member for Namatjira, when Labor Minister for Indigenous Policy, stood shoulder to shoulder with our then Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, and launched the *A Working Future* policy on 20 May 2009. It was the government of the day's policy.

The *A Working Future* policy provided a vision and map which recognised strategic policy must be developed, implemented and delivered in close consultation with those who live in our remote areas. *A Working Future* was about delivering services, creating employment, generating economic opportunities and planning for now and 20 years time so people can lead strong and

healthy lives in tune with strong cultural values. The policy recognised populations in our remote areas continue to grow like the rest of the Northern Territory and we need to plan and deliver for that growth in the same way similar-sized towns in other regions of Australia work and grow. This takes a whole-of-government approach not just one agency. *A Working Future* included six key areas of which homelands and outstations were an important part. I would like to believe the current government has not thrown the baby out with the bath water and is building on the work undertaken over the period since 2009 when that policy was developed, and continues to build and grow on that.

In her media release of 20 May 2009 when the now minister, at that time the Labor minister, launched the *A Working Future* policy - she did much media as ministers do on these days - she said a number of things including:

*It is about a decent lifestyle, jobs, education for our kids, better health and services that are equal with the rest of country Australia.*

This is the same sentiment the minister expressed in her statement today. If there is one thing I know about the minister, where she is coming from has not changed and, as she said in her statement, it is about wanting to bring the conversation back to fundamentals. She is quite right to do so.

On that day in 2009, the minister also stated to the ABC:

*... I think that this is a gutsy policy, and let me tell you, I've been in Indigenous affairs for many, many years.*

Indeed, the minister has been in this area for many years advocating for the advancement of Indigenous people, something that has bipartisan support in this House. The difference of opinion comes down to how that support is delivered.

I acknowledge there were well-publicised differences of opinion between the member for Namatjira and the former member for Arafura about the direction of the *A Working Future* policy. The current minister defended it, and I quote from an article from the *Alice Springs News* on 18 June 2009 which goes to the heart of the division. The current minister, who was the then minister, said:

*This policy is not about driving people out of their homelands ...*

*Their lives will be improved by the hub and spoke model of service delivery.*

She went on to say the majority will have:

*... better services and better access to those services.*

The notion around urban drift referred to in the statement - it is not in the statement but was part of the headline policy that Labor created urban drift - remains debatable. I refute it, yet during debate the member for Fong Lim welcomed urban drift saying it was a good thing.

The *A Working Future* policy, long after the member for Namatjira had departed Labor's ranks, remained at the heart of Labor's Indigenous policy and part of our whole-of-government approach to working with Territorians who were living, working and raising their families in remote areas. Following the member's departure for the crossbenches, the minister's successor, Malarndirri McCarthy, member for Arnhem, continued to drive delivery of that policy despite mischief making from the County Liberal Party opposition about where the policy direction was headed and unfounded accusations around urban drift.

During my 23 years of living and working in Northeast Arnhem Land and raising my family, especially during my time as an elected member, I have had the enormous privilege of seeing country and meeting people average Australians do not get to - people from many clans who are strong in language, culture, law, are proud of their ancestors and heritage and fierce in protecting and speaking up for their country, their culture, their children and, most importantly, their future for generations to come. This is especially true of those who live on homelands.

One of the first things I had to do as a new member was attend homeland consultation meetings. I was elected in August and the consultations were in December. It is quite a daunting exercise responding to questions and listening to what people had to say. At both Yirrkala and Galiwinku there must have been 200 or so people at an open air meeting where Pat Dodson was the facilitator. It was a daunting exercise but it taught me an enormous amount around the need to listen to people and hear their concerns.

There is no denying since the intervention - the Northern Territory Emergency Response launched by Mal Brough and John Howard in 2007 - it has been an incredible time for Indigenous Territorians and an overwhelming time in the waves of government policy at both a federal and Territory level. Add to that the challenge of the necessary and long overdue local government reforms and subsequent elections across the three tiers of local government and, with it, a change of government through an election process at both

Territory and Commonwealth level - an overwhelming time.

My most valued teachers and mentors about the importance of homelands continue to be my constituents in the Marthakal and Laynhapuy Homelands. I continue to learn from them. What is also highlighted for me - I continue to hear this and it is probably best summed up by paraphrasing the Chairman of Laynhapuy Homelands, who I am delighted has recently been re-elected for another term, Mr Barayuwa Mununggurr who said, 'We want to be able to walk together with you, side by side, not behind you and not in front of you, but side by side learning together'. That is the way it needs to be.

Labor's detailed homeland policy was one of six parts of the *A Working Future* policy. This document was borne out two to three years after some very hard work to consult with homelands and outstation people across the Northern Territory to gather information by compiling a comprehensive audit and report on the state of every homeland and outstation: its infrastructure, essential services, school, if school buildings and health clinics were there, and other types of public or government infrastructure. Also, housing and the needs of every homeland and outstation were taken into account. This was an exhaustive body of work never undertaken previously and confirmed in the comprehensive briefing – thank you, minister – I received from your officers yesterday.

The comment which stuck in my mind from that briefing was when one of the officers remarked it was a consultation and audit process you cannot do over the phone or on the computer; you have to be on the ground and visit these places. That has informed where we are now and where the new government is in finding a way forward and implementing policy.

It should be no surprise that there are elements of the minister's new policy which are remarkably similar to Labor's policy. Whilst there has been a change of government, there has not been a huge change of the bureaucracy working behind the scenes. I acknowledge the work the CEO, Mr Rob Kendrick, has done in this policy implementation and roll-out. It was a role he undertook under the former government, and I am sure he will continue to serve well the new government and the people in homelands and regions. I acknowledge the minister for confirming his appointment as CEO because he is a very hard-working public servant with much to contribute - that cumulative knowledge over the years working in the agency.

Let us be clear that the Territory Labor government always supported homelands and

never sought to deny people the choice of living on homelands. Labor, at Territory and Australian government levels, has invested heavily in homelands and outstations, particularly in the area of health and education infrastructure, and has recognised the deficiencies in housing on homelands and the fact homelands, like growth towns, continue to grow and overcrowding and the state of the housing infrastructure has to be addressed.

The challenge of managing that is now in the minister's hands. Part of the challenge, when we were on the government benches, was convincing parliamentary colleagues in Canberra of the need for ongoing support knowing they are the major funders. It is another reason for the minister to be on a plane to Canberra to negotiate a deal to pay for her party's election commitments to people in the bush. Things were promised and have to be funded.

The minister probably has not got off to the best start with her federal colleague, minister Macklin. It is important to build those relations, but we are not off to the best start by accusing the minister of being in la la land. Whilst I know you feel that way, minister, it probably does not do a great deal to bolster relations and a solid working base. However, you are your own person and will make judgments about how you negotiate though those relationships, difficult as they can be.

Let us take a step back and revisit the history books about the handover or handball of responsibility of homelands being transferred from the Commonwealth to the Northern Territory. The minister was not accurate when she asserted:

*When the previous Northern Territory government accepted responsibility for funding remote community services from the Australian government, they did so with no plan for the future of the homeland communities.*

The Northern Territory was given that responsibility - it was not negotiated – late in 2007. Let us unpack the offer from the Australian government. The Northern Territory Emergency Response rolled out in June 2007. The then Chief Minister, Clare Martin, was given no advance notice of the announcement – not even the courtesy of a phone call - learning about it through the media. Part of it was the plan to roll out SIHIP, the biggest investment in Australia's history in any public housing program.

Whilst I have many objections to the intervention and the premise on which it was driven, I recognised the decades of underspend in the Northern Territory had to be addressed and the money which flowed in as a result was one good

thing from it. The offer was if the Northern Territory government wanted to receive the funding package for SIHIP – the Territory government had to chip in around \$200m on top of \$600m from the Australian government – it could have the housing deal but had to take back responsibility for homelands. 'They are yours, here you go. If you do not want to take them you do not get the housing program'.

That was not much of a deal or negotiation. What was particularly disappointing was the deal did not offer enough money to run homelands. I have a copy of the two-page letter the then Chief Minister, Clare Martin, sent to John Howard as Prime Minister dated 13 September 2007. I will quote one paragraph:

*The Territory is required to accept the responsibility for outstations that rested previously with your government as part of the package. However, the Territory is concerned that the \$20m offered does not encompass the extent of Australian government expenditure on outstations from all sources, including that supported through CDEP arrangements. We would seek your support to ensure that an assessment is made with your government about the ongoing service costs in relation to residents of these communities with provision for adjustment to the package to reflect the outcome of this assessment if necessary.*

There was no additional support or assessment. It was a take it or leave it arrangement. That is how homelands came back to the Northern Territory to manage.

There was no additional or forthcoming support, which put the Northern Territory in an extremely difficult position. We need to remember taking responsibility for homelands, which came into effect on 1 July 2008, did not give the Northern Territory government enough time to deal with - we are still dealing with it - the deficit in managing assets and funding to make the places liveable, and to account for the fact they continue to grow. People still have children. Homelands are strong and healthy places and many people, for good reason, choose to raise their families there.

There was no denying, with the number of areas of deficit needing to be addressed, the Northern Territory focused, rightly, on SIHIP recognising the level of dysfunction, overcrowding and social issues in our larger communities had to be addressed first. We could not deal with everything at once, and the difficulties of rolling out SIHIP are well documented. It was such a massive program.

There was an assumption by the homelands, and the CLP, that they had been forgotten or left out of the picture. That was never the case, and I had this conversation frequently with my constituents in northeast Arnhem, trying to explain to people the priority of needs and that homelands people had not been forgotten. We were continuing to run the schools and health clinics and address the ever-present issues around roads maintenance and access, but always recognising the issue of housing on homelands and an adequate program for repairs and maintenance needed to be addressed and delivered.

The minister has a very thick skin, but has a hide staking a claim on bringing back financial certainty. The battle for financial certainty, which Clare Martin was battling with the Prime Minister in 2007, was taken up by the Northern Territory Labor government and the former Labor bush Caucus. The member for Barkly will remember this. We took the case to our federal colleagues, and minister Macklin, and finally won it in May last year. On 28 March 2012, we finally received confirmation, after much lobbying, that the federal government had to stump up to the Northern Territory and provide funding for homelands. The Northern Territory does not have the capacity to spend the money needing to be spent in homelands. To be honest, a \$221m outstation investment was welcome news for the Territory but not adequate to fund what we need to. It was part of a 10-year package worth more than \$3bn under the Stronger Futures package with approximately \$221m for homelands and outstations.

I am acutely aware, as a member and representative of Territorians, of the opposition to the Stronger Futures legislation - the fact it was encapsulated in legislation. I would have preferred bilateral agreements not legislation. Many people believed the recalibration of the NTER had gone from one legislation to another. Most of the special measures were not part of that, but it was very difficult to convince constituents that was the case. Nevertheless, 10 years funding was a significant win and is financial certainty. That provides the opportunity to plan for the future knowing you have 10 years guaranteed funding. One good thing from the Stronger Futures legislation is a 10-year funding commitment.

I am not sure I agree with the minister about the problem being a lack of money. She spoke the truth when she said the problem lies elsewhere. Remote service delivery in meeting the needs of housing in our remote communities, especially in homelands and outstations, is complex and difficult, not least of which is the issue of homelands existing on private land as private clan estates. I heard a 'hmmm' from the member for

Nelson and know he will talk about that in this debate.

With regard to private land, the minister rightly acknowledged it is not the role of government and taxpayers to provide a continuous supply of public housing. It goes to the heart of what she said about shared responsibility when talking about, in particular, private land.

I note the minister's statement in November 2012 around Indigenous advancement:

*... remoteness makes everything harder.*

Remoteness does make everything harder, so does land tenure.

Before I go to the vexed question of home ownership on homelands, I want to talk about the Homelands Extra Allowance of up to \$5200 per eligible dwelling across the 500 homelands and outstations.

I know it was not a Christmas gift, not a handout, nor a thank you to people who may have voted for the CLP in the bush. The minister scored a win through the ABC's national program *Media Watch* in targeting one media outlet which chose to push that story. However, the minister needs to be more proactive in her engagement with media. She is a well-spoken individual with clear ideas and the daily newspaper in Darwin is not the only media outlet in the Northern Territory. The story should have been nipped in the bud, if not through that outlet - which was a battle - through other outlets. The ABC is always phoning members looking for comment and that story was quite damaging for homelands people.

The minister took out a taxpayer-funded ad noting we are all Territorians united as one. Whilst the message was trying to correct the record on where this money was intended, I am disappointed it did not appear in any regional newspapers. It did not appear in my local newspaper, and given people out bush should have been receiving the message it was a lost opportunity.

Whilst it tries to set the record straight, I doubt taking out a taxpayer-funded ad to have a barney with the Territory's daily newspaper and its senior journalist is particularly good form. The message is clear: the \$5200 is not a gift, not a handout, it is for people who seriously need it to make their homes more habitable.

Talking about the Homelands Extra Allowance, this was Labor's policy about ensuring greater accountability, greater transparency, and homelands residents were actively involved and engaged in planning what happens in their

homeland. Also, there is a line of sight between homelands residents at the end right through to their homeland resource agency or service provider that receives funds right through to government.

The Chief Minister talked about having a line of sight to ensure accountability and transparency and I could not agree more. It was definitely part of the homelands policy we launched at Gan Gan a month or so before the election. People were quite excited at the prospect of being engaged and consulted about where the money was going, recognising if you live close to your service provider, say Yirrkala as opposed to a homeland much further out - the further out you are the more costly it will be to deliver services.

**Mr McCARTHY:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I request the member be given an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

**Ms WALKER:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see many facets of the \$5200 and how it will be delivered, particularly around accountability, as a good thing.

I am interested to see how eligibility is monitored as it is linked to and compliant with school attendance. When we say attending school regularly, what does that mean? Does that mean 80%, does it mean 85%? Tracking kids, knowing they and their families can be quite mobile around the homelands - DECS has capacity to monitor children's movement. However, in ensuring compliance with funding being received, that may be a challenge similar to participation in the economy. What does means testing mean? Who is in, who is out? I am unsure what affordable service fees means. I believe the services fees are voluntary, minister. I am not sure how that will pan out. Obviously, we will be watching it very closely. I understand there are further consultations occurring and I wish you well with them. Consultations are happening soon around regional governance through local government. I am conscious of the challenge of consultations and, minister, your previous comments around people who have been consulted to death.

I turn to the issue of Indigenous home ownership. Yes, we agree this is an important policy gap requiring attention and something we should have pursued harder with Canberra, accepting homelands continue to grow; people need more space to move into.

Through the minister's statement, the issue was pointed back, largely, to land councils and, of course as part of that, the *Aboriginal Land Rights*

(Northern Territory) Act 1976. One thing the minister did not mention in her statement is financing - mortgages and the difficulty as financial institutions will look for some form of transferable tenure to underpin loans and funding for private houses. It is also about people's capacity to meet the financial commitment to service a mortgage.

I have done some research around commentary in this area. This paper is called *Indigenous Australians and Home Ownership* from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research dated 4 April 2008. This paper explores directions and constraints in remote area housing tenure through Census statistics and a regional case study. It argues land title is not the key impediment to, or constraint on, home ownership in remote Aboriginal communities. The key constraint is the economic status of residents of such communities. I recognise this package around homelands and remote service delivery is not just talking about infrastructure. We are talking about the big package around jobs, stimulating jobs, growing economies, and building capacities so people can earn an income and not be welfare dependent and, therefore, able to meet the commitments which go with a mortgage arrangement.

The minister often says Indigenous people should be treated no differently to other Australians. I agree; however, we cannot walk away from the fact we are dealing with disadvantaged people who frequently have chronic health issues and have lived through decades of welfare. I could not agree more that needs to be challenged and turned around but this will take time.

I go directly to the complex issue of new housing at Baniyala, Blue Mud Bay, because it is in my electorate. I am aware of the frustrations there. I am very aware of the advocacy work through the Sydney Cove Rotary Club, Mr Andy Buttfeld, as well as researchers from the Centre for Independent Studies, Helen and Mark Hughes. I have not met Mrs Hughes but have met her son, an interesting individual. He is a cranky individual, perhaps because he is so frustrated with what is happening at Baniyala. Perhaps the less said about our conversation during mobile polling the better.

The easiest way to go to the heart of this is I have all the documents and most of the correspondence between the NLC, the community under the signature of TO, Mr Djambawa Marawili, as well as e-mails from Mr Hughes and Mr Buttfeld. I do not have the date but will get it and pass it to the member for Barkly. This came up as a question during Senate estimates in October 2012 - relatively recently. Senator Scullion asked at supplementary estimates hearings, 'Will the Northern Land Council grant the Baniyala lease

applicants leases as they requested?' The answer provided by the Northern Land Council:

*The NLC's position is stated in its correspondence to Mr Djambawa Marawili of Baniyala dated 29 March, 6 June, 15 July, 24 October, 24 November, and 23 December 2011 (copies attached).*

*In essence, the NLC has requested that the applicants for the grant of leases first provide documentary evidence from a financial institution that it is prepared to loan funds secured against residential leases in Baniyala, or documentary evidence that funding is available through the Commonwealth HOIL program.*

*Mr Marawili, and those advising him, have taken a contrary view, namely, that the NLC should first grant long term peppercorn leases to residents of Baniyala, on the basis that this will automatically or likely lead to financial institutions loaning funds through mortgages.*

*The NLC cannot accept, without any evidence, that this will necessarily or likely occur.*

*In short, the NLC is being asked to grant land for a period of 99 years without any consideration and without any evidence as to finance, despite s 19(5)(c) of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Cth) which requires that the terms and conditions of lease are 'reasonable'. Bearing in mind the statutory context, that course would give rise to potential liability to the NLC.*

*The NLC awaits provision of the requested information.*

That was one perspective. There is another perspective offered by the Central Land Council, from Central Australia. This is an article published in the *Northern Territory News* on 9 February 2013. There is a photograph of Mr David Ross from the CLC and 'No simple answer', a good headline when we are talking about home ownership on Aboriginal land. Mr Ross was responding to a feature article from the minister which appeared a week or two prior. I will quote several comments from this article which is talking about the aspiration for home ownership:

*But for Anderson, property rights have a pretty tight definition: the quarter-acre block.*

*For her and her colleagues, and possibly most of middle Australia, communal title is*

*equated with Soviet Russia and home ownership is the Holy Grail. It's a populist argument that paints Aboriginal land and the land councils as the impenetrable gulags of modern Australia and completely misunderstands the nature of communal title. It's an argument that belongs with the dinosaurs.*

Later, he said:

*... the real impediments to home ownership are not communal title or the land councils, but factors that affect most Australians: the cost of houses and the ability of people to pay for them.*

We are not saying home ownership should not be pursued, it should. I agree with the minister when she said we need a step change in land ownership to make it a reality. However, this is a big step forward, potentially, a generational step away. It is also about developing economies and education as a key part of that step. A good body of work has been undertaken, to date, in addressing homelands and their needs. Much more work is to be done.

Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for bringing this statement before the House. I will be watching closely how this rolls out and is implemented and funded, as well as the ongoing commitment of our federal colleagues.

**Mr KURRUPUWU (Arafura):** Madam Speaker, this is an extremely important statement from the minister. I am pleased homelands are being given the priority they deserve. Homelands are the heart and soul of our people. We are caretakers of our country and we turn to our country to look after and care for us. We have connection to our country which the minister has stated is crucial to our wellbeing, and it is very important that is understood and acknowledged by the wider public. The minister, as an Indigenous person, is more than well-qualified to understand this, and I am glad the minister holds this portfolio.

In recent years, decades even, we have witnessed and experienced a major shift, upheaval, if you like, in the way we have lived for thousands of years. In itself, that is not a bad thing as we have to move with the times. I understand that. I am simply stating a fact we all have to come to terms with as we move forward.

I am one of many who have grown up with Christianity, but that does not mean I do not have very strong ties and responsibility to my traditional country, my people, and my culture. In my life I have witnessed many changes, some of them not for the better. We have a huge challenge ahead

with regard to education, health, social wellbeing, real jobs - and the list goes on.

In all this I am determined to work to the best of my ability to address all these issues. The key to wellbeing for our people is their homeland. When they are in their own environment they are the happiest you will ever see them; we must nurture and support them in whatever way we can. Even though many people were dislocated from their country in 1930, the 1970s brought a new era and an attempt to right the wrongs of the past and I acknowledge that. The homelands movement grew as the government supported self-determination, provided social security and brought in the Land Rights Act. This was a positive for our people and led the way to where we are today. It has been a bumpy road and we have learnt much along the way.

The minister has set the path forward and a commitment of funding from both the Territory and federal governments over the next decade is very heartening. An amount of \$300m on homelands is a major commitment, and I trust this funding will be used wisely and put into areas most needed. The minister mentioned land owned by various land trusts and managed by the land council. Yes, this is a bizarre situation. It is time to look at the option for people to build their own homes and we have started that option at Nguuu, Bathurst Island. I have watched with great interest the effort of people of Banyala and what they are trying to achieve.

Without criticising too much, I want it placed firmly on the record I believe the recognised owners of the land need the right to determine what they do on their own country. I am sick and tired of the Big Brother approach forced on us by organisations set up basically to tell us what we can do in administration and management of our land. If the owners of a piece of land trust land want a 99-year lease organised so they can pursue commercial activities or have ownership so they can trade, then just do it. Our people are not stupid; we know what we want and how to manage our land.

There are all types of opportunities, all types of enterprise, that would go a long way to getting our people off welfare dependency and give them the opportunity to lay a solid economic foundation for future generations. We just have to have a goal. We should not be held back but encouraged and assisted.

The minister mentioned what has happened in other countries with regard to traditional landowners and their ability to manage their land as they see fit. Are we less entitled than other Indigenous people around the world to self-determination? Our land is our life. We have

obligations to that land. Our forefathers have trusted us with this great responsibility and we take that responsibility very seriously. I am proud to be part of a government which takes homelands seriously.

This statement clearly outlines the Homelands Extra Allowance and addresses a number of points. Without repeating them all, the important thing to remember is implementation will be undertaken through consultation with stakeholders. If the stakeholders have concerns, they have the chance to voice them and sort out any issues.

In closing, the minister, in her statement, has gone into great detail and covered many areas that are important to all of us. I commend the minister for that. I sincerely look toward the future and believe there are exciting times ahead.

Madam Speaker, the catchcry of the day is closing the gap and this policy will go a long way to doing just that.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, this is an important issue and one that has been debated for several years. It is probably one of the issues which caused us to have three years of a hung parliament because it was a disagreement over the way outstations and homelands were being addressed which caused some splits in the previous government.

I support homelands. My sisters-in-law live at a small outstation on the western side of the Northern Territory. I thank the member for Arafura for his comments. I support the right of people to do what they wish with their land. However, to provide services to people who wish to live on their land requires government assistance - in other words, taxpayers' money.

Unfortunately, with homelands and outstations over the years, through ATSIIC, many outstations were abandoned. The minister mentioned 500 homelands and said the number of houses is 2400 on 525 homelands. If you go through this book which numbers every outstation, small community and larger community in the Northern Territory, it is over 1200. Not all those are outstations, but it would be fair to say there are probably 1000 outstations

I have visited a number of outstations, abandoned for quite a number of years. There are houses and resource centres going to waste there. The issue is not whether we should have outstations, but the policies to ensure we have outstations that do not waste public money and achieve the goals important to outstations. Many people will ask what an outstation is for. I will read from the *First-Ever Northern Territory Homelands/Outstations*

*Policy* produced in 2009 commenting on the new *A Working Future* strategy of the Northern Territory. This document did not support that policy, but I will give you its definition of homelands and outstations. The document was written by S Kerins through the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences:

*Homelands/outstations are thus best understood in two ways: the people, a distinct social grouping, and the locale or the place, to which they have statutory ownership and/or descent based affiliation. They form a regional residential network that plays a significant role in reducing overcrowding, and in relieving the social tensions that are a regular feature of life in larger townships. They aid individual and community wellbeing by reinforcing rights and responsibilities to country and family, by maintaining community networks and social structure, and by strengthening cultural identity.*

That is a fairly technical definition but it talked about wellbeing. People staying at Bulgul, where my sisters-in-law live, are from Arnhem Land, Roper River and Daly River. They see it as a retreat to get away from issues in their lives. They call it a place of healing, and other places in the Northern Territory do the same thing. People will go there to sit and talk, maybe go fishing, or just enjoy the quiet of the bush. It should not be only for Aboriginal people as many non-Aboriginal people have such busy and stressful lives they need time out to do something similar. There is great purpose in this outstation as it helps people heal. I thank my sisters-in-law because they do not have many facilities and they share what they have there and do a terrific job.

Considering the problems with many Aboriginal people living in our townships, there is a great reason for homelands and outstations to exist. Many homelands and outstations rely on government funding, and that is partly what this statement is about. It is, therefore, our responsibility to ensure the policy the government is putting forward makes good sense, and the finances the government is putting into this policy are well-used.

I lived through the SIHIP period where there was much criticism about wastage of money. The government now wishes to put money into homelands. I would like to ensure that money goes to the purpose intended and is not wasted. They are the more technical questions I ask today.

Keeping on the slightly bigger picture, I would like to hear the government's view on growth towns. I criticised not only the previous government, but also the Commonwealth government, because the

two areas being left out of the equation were small towns and outstations. The money was being poured into growth towns and places like Nauiyu, Barunga, Beswick, Peppimenarti, Palumpa and Santa Teresa received no money for new houses. They had some money for refurbishing, but it was as though no children were being born, no families being established and no new houses. At Nauiyu, people looked after houses, it had a good reputation for building houses, yet they had one house built in 11 years. I ask the government what its policy is because it is not just about outstations; growth towns, small towns and outstations are all interrelated.

The previous policy was a growth town would be the hub and spoke, and any outstation within 50 km seemed to get extra privileges. However, if you were outside 50 km you got nothing. The Bulgul example is not within 50 km of a growth town. The nearest growth town would be Darwin or Wadeye. That did not make any sense anyway. Whilst I understand this policy is looking at homelands, it is difficult not to look at homelands in conjunction with small towns and growth towns because we need an overarching policy so there is a vision. People in the small towns – Barunga, Beswick, Peppimenarti and Nguui - are missing out at present. I am keen to see if the government is moving towards a policy in that area.

The issue of private ownership is interesting. I might end up a test case because my wife wants a house in her country. She is not entitled to a house provided by the government; we own a house so we would have to build one and pay the mortgage. I would need a lease. If I build a brick house with a foundation, I cannot pick it up and move it but I would like some certainty someone will not claim it.

I have some groundwork to do and am now a little worried after hearing the member for Nhulunbuy speak about the letter stopping people at Blue Mud Bay buying their own house. How does the land council know what type of house you want to build? Why can you not give someone a parcel of land and they can get some timber and build their own house? This is a problem. When we visited Hermannsburg there was an issue with leases and a misunderstanding that, by leasing something, you lost your land.

It is like me borrowing a book from the library. The library has not lost the book; I have borrowed it. It is the same with the land. Underneath the lease is your ownership of the land. You do not lose the land.

I am interested in this issue because my wife would like to go back to her country. There are too many people in the house and she would like

some space. I hope to have the area marked out this year. It would probably be a few acres so we can grow a few vegies or keep a few chooks and have some space. I will let you know how we go because it is important.

I was speaking to a gentleman from the Balunu Foundation recently who is trying to do the same thing at Kakadu. He has to do a deal with not only the land council, but the parks as well. He has to have a double lease and said it is difficult.

There has been too much emphasis on getting a \$500 000 loan. 'If you cannot get it, we are not going to lease the land'. You should be able to build a bark hut, a corrugated iron shed or a mud brick house if you want to. The old Parks and Wildlife Conservation Commission issued a book on how to build bush houses. They were well-made houses from local timber and corrugated iron. We need more flexibility and not so much legality in what we are doing.

The big issue in the move to provide funds - I know you have Homelands Extra - the \$5200. Minister, that was sold badly and is why it went off the track. People came to me in Howard Springs saying, 'That mob getting money for their house, I should be able to get money for the house'. I tried to explain it was money for public housing. If it had been sold, there would be X amount of dollars provided for housing on outstations and service providers to use that money for repairs and maintenance it might have gone over better. Unfortunately, what happened as soon as people saw it - and I have your homelands outstation policy...

**Mr Elferink:** That was not what started the racist tirade.

**Mr WOOD:** I know, but I argued for it. I explained these houses had no maintenance work for many years. We worked in other communities but not outstations.

It said, 'Allocate \$5200 per occupied dwelling which is the principal place of residence'. It did not explain that very well and people saw it as some people getting it and some people not.

I explained what it was about so people had an understanding. That is my job. I know what the money was for but it could have been explained much better.

If I compare this with SIHIP, which was required to have leases over all the new and refurbished houses so the government was spending money on its own houses - public housing. This was a directive. It was only about those houses. There was a directive from the Commonwealth government saying all government infrastructure

on Aboriginal land needed a lease, which I am not against in principle. My argument has always been it should not be anything more than a peppercorn rental in some cases, especially for essential services like police, hospitals, aged care etcetera. However, that is an argument for another day. I have probably argued that to death in this House.

The issue is that the real owners of many houses on outstations will be Aboriginal land trusts. Technically, these houses are not public they are private houses belonging to a land trust.

What is the role of local government with maintenance of these areas, particularly roads, because local government is not funded to maintain private roads? It is not funded to maintain my driveway. Years ago it maintained single roads on pastoral properties but that has finished. Many difficult issues need to be solved because you need consistency when public money is spent.

If you want to give \$5200 to someone on an outstation as a loan to repair his or her house that is different. If you want to give it to them for a house which does not belong to the government, the government does not have much control over how that money is spent.

I will not go into the good and bad of SIHIP, but the idea was NT Housing had control over the house because it had a lease and was able to have tenancy agreements. This meant it was able to ensure the house was being maintained in good condition and if people did not they could be asked to leave and someone else could have the house. That is the theory.

With outstation houses you cannot do that because the Aboriginal land trust, technically, owns the houses if there is no lease. A service provider will probably maintain the house, but it is a grey area we have not reached, minister. It is the same issue we have with communities at 15 Mile and Knuckey Lagoon. We have the landowner and a different service provider and it needs to be rationalised. That debate is also for another day. I raise it because it is fundamental to what is being put forward by the government today.

I do not have a problem with outstations receiving extra money because these houses have had no money and I see it as a stopgap idea at the moment. You could be looking at leases or seeing whether people want to buy the houses. That responsibility is then not yours, bearing in mind your draft media release said 'shared responsibility'. If you can help people own houses with a small lease over them that is another option to strengthening outstations.

There are many views on what a homeland is for. Minister, I will read this - I am not saying you cannot change your mind - which shows the flux of the debate about homelands over the years. The *Koori Mail* on Wednesday, 17 December 2008 quoted you as saying:

*Meanwhile, Northern Territory Minister for Central Australia Alison Anderson has said that remote outstations were home to mainly birds and lizards ...*

I agree because there are about 500 of them. I have seen them:

*... and that government could not continue to fund them.*

*She said millions of dollars had been put into outstations where only wildlife lived, and that people should accept they would need to travel to larger communities to access education and health services.*

That was then. I cannot verbal you, but you are partly right and also agree it is not just a matter of shifting people to large towns, we probably should support outstations.

For a long time I was ambivalent about outstations, probably because I grew up when outstations were being built everywhere...

**Ms LEE:** Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move that the member for Nelson be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr WOOD:** I have been around for some time - not so much on outstations - and we knew much money was being poured into outstations. However, since being in this job I have travelled quite a bit. In the eastern part of the Northern Territory, at Chinaman's Wall, there are abandoned houses on outstations. I have been close to Legune Station on the Western Australia border - a whole community abandoned. The resource centre, a power house, houses - abandoned. No one is living there because they decided it was better in Kununurra.

At Mistake Creek there are some people but also abandoned houses. I have been close to Mount Riddock on the Plenty Highway. There are some houses but only one family. There are about five empty houses next door and overcrowding in a nearby community. It makes no sense to me.

My concern is not the principle of homelands and outstations, but the need for people to be sincere about living on the land and who will make an effort to stay there. I am not saying they have to

stay permanently. My sisters-in-law, if they stay for a big Wet Season, would be there for four months; they cannot get out via road. They have to decide to come out otherwise they are stuck there.

A proper analysis of people prepared to make the effort needs to be done. They will not receive much funding, perhaps no running water or electricity. They might have solar power and a well but not the mod cons of the city. They are there because it is country and there are benefits in raising your family in a place without the pressures some of the communities close to towns have to put up with: alcohol, substance abuse and other things. Sometimes they miss out on education. The minister mentioned the School of the Air - if that can be done. I have visited communities in Arnhem Land with small schools - I forget the names - and I enjoyed my time looking at some of the outstations ...

**Ms Walker** interjecting.

**Mr WOOD:** Those people had a community large enough for a small school. It is like cattle stations where the elders and parents are able to teach the children. If they have an education they pass it on.

Yes, there is input from the government to keep these outstations going. That money needs to be scrutinised so it is not wasted, not used for purposes it was not designed for. It is not wasted if it means fewer people are living in a town where we have to pick up the pieces, people are in gaol, in hospital, whose lives are wrecked and which costs the taxpayer a lot of money. I would rather see that money put into outstations so less of that is occurring. We can use this as a means of reducing the terrible scourge people suffer from alcohol and drugs.

Early this morning I was driving to town along Mitchell Street. I had to stop for an old man who probably had a very bad night. He was going so slow that if I had kept going at normal speed - with the bus going one way and me going the other - I would have hit him. On the way back it was the same thing. I would like some hope for these people. If they could go to an outstation - we have been looking at mandatory rehabilitation but that is the last resort. The outstations could be used for part of this; they could serve a wider purpose. My sisters call it healing, and some of these people probably need healing not the big stick. They need healing and support from, not necessarily their own countrymen, but countrymen in general. I have seen people from Arnhem Land and Roper River come to Bulgul for healing. It is support.

Whilst I will be watching how money is spent, and believe there are some major issues over land ownership, infrastructure, provision of services, administration of funds for repairs and maintenance, I put that to one side. Yes, that is important, but what is more important is giving people the ability - the shared responsibility - to make an effort to develop homelands. I see them as a part of the alternative, part of the choice so Aboriginal people can control their lives and make decisions on their future. They can live in a growth town, a small town, an outstation or in Darwin or Alice Springs.

It gives people an option to stay or, if they need some peace in their life, to return, and it keeps the connection with country, which is really important. I understand, from talking to my wife, how important it is. She longs to go back. She has to put up with me here, but from what she says there is a great longing for her own country. She was born at Channel Point. Unfortunately, Channel Point has been taken over by a fairly luxurious resort. It also has a boat ramp. During her lifetime some of that land has become a pastoral property and a tourist subdivision. She still loves her country, and I appreciate why people love their outstation.

There needs to be some strictness over the ownership of houses on outstations. I will not name anyone, but there are people who have a house on an outstation and one in town. People have to decide. They should not be holiday camps; they should be for people who genuinely want to go back to country. That is one issue. I thought under the ATSIC program you could not. I am unsure if that policy still exists. Then, people who deserve houses get them. At the moment, people who genuinely should be living in that country cannot because other people have ownership of houses which, generally, are only used on weekends. That is something the minister might look at.

Minister, I appreciate you bringing this shared responsibility statement to the House. We will have arguments from time to time, but they are to ensure this works and the people who live on homelands get best value for money, the taxpayer gets value for money, and it achieves something. You will not have a problem with taxpayers if they see a good outcome from money being invested in these areas.

Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her statement.

**Ms LEE (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, I support the homelands policy of the Minister for Indigenous Advancement, also Women's Policy. It is an honour to speak tonight, but I was disappointed with the negative comments from the

other side. This talks about long-term financial stability. In Ngukurr, a men's shelter was funded up until August last year - which sounded like an election commitment to me - and has been scrapped. The federal government did not support it after that. There were many more than that.

The member for Nhulunbuy mentioned newspaper ads paid by the taxpayer. She forgot to mention taxpayers pay her rent in Nhulunbuy. That does not happen for the bush members; we do not have our rent paid by anybody. We pay our own rent.

In regard to the economic status in a remote community, if you have not lived in a community you cannot understand. You have to live it, experience it, be born and bred there to know about the economic status of a remote community. Times are changing, generations are coming and going. We need to look forward. In the early 1970s, there was my father, Mr Robert Lee, Mr Galarrwuy Yunupingu, leader of the Gumatj Association, Mr Gatjil who passed away, all highly respected Indigenous leaders from the Arnhem Land region who fought for a treaty for Indigenous people. I have not once heard you - I mentioned this in my maiden speech - support the people on their direction for the future. They know it and I know it. That is the reason I am here. That is what I am here to do. I am here to fight for Aboriginal freedom, as everybody else is.

Our direction for change came from within. Labor lost sight of the aspirations of Aboriginal people. That is why we are here. That is the detail behind it. We are not giving them money and telling them stories as the member for Barkly did. That is your opinion mate, not mine. You can talk about that later on. That is me telling you I know about half the stuff happening there. My partner is from Barkly, born and bred; he is Aboriginal.

In this House we attempt to tackle the issues we face on a daily basis, like our family and everybody else. As the minister said, as Indigenous people we have things in common with the Australian people - health, education and employment - but the NAPLAN results show us the Labor government has not reached the objective of bringing our children up to national standards.

I admire their passion. I have listened to members on both sides of the House speak about health, education and employment in the bush. What makes us unique is the spiritual connection we have with our land and our culture. This government must understand the north is different from the south. That is the same for the east and the west. We are all Indigenous Australians in our ceremonies, language and laws that define us, but it is critical to understand before you judge the

Indigenous people of the bush, having their right and freedom taken away from them has caused many of the problems we see today. Not being heard and represented properly in this House is the reason we are here.

Our history has been passed on by elders to us and will continue to be passed on to the second generation. Homelands and outstations bring that feeling of belonging and connection to our country and law. It is what defines us. Our spiritual wellbeing contributes to the physical wellbeing of an Indigenous person - the sense of prosperity. Over time, Indigenous people have contributed much to society through knowledge, language, law, tourism and arts and craft. What have they not contributed? From day-to-day practice of our 40 000-year-old traditions in the Jawoyn land, in the heart of Arnhem Land, at Gabarnmung - that place is 40 000 years old; older than the Egyptian pyramids. We have paintings there of the first Europeans on a boat. You should check it out. Obviously, you cannot, you are not a TO or traditional men.

Over time, Indigenous people have contributed much to society through knowledge, language and law and have opened the doors for many non-Indigenous people to understand their connection to country and why it is so important to keep it strong. Indigenous people never undermine or judge the roles and tradition of other cultures around the world, especially in Australia. We were patient, mindful to accept the voices which spoke with good intentions, so we thought. Even today, with a change of government, Indigenous politicians are fighting to be recognised as educated Indigenous politicians. It is bad enough being torn apart by the opposition. We are here with our knowledge and traditions to represent our people and concerns with only a few voices to drive it.

The bush communities and towns have potential. Why is this potential not being recognised by the wider community? Instead, we read about democracy in the paper and see it on the news, undermining Indigenous people and painting a picture far from the truth. We all know too well about that. The Rhino Hide Award is the best example of that.

Homelands are, and have been, part of our tradition for many years. They give us life. They play a significant role in Indigenous people's wellbeing. The value of law and order in our tradition carries the same meaning as law and order in the western world. Obviously health, education and essential services are more limited on homelands than in communities and towns, or growth towns because smaller communities did not count under the previous Labor government. It is the sense of belonging to a history and story

told long before the first settlement in Australia. In the NT we are fortunate our law and traditional practices are very strong. We do not want to lock ourselves away from the rest of the world; that is not our intention. Tourists from all over the world come to the Territory to see Indigenous people showcase traditional practices and tell their Dreamtime stories. They do not come to see non-Indigenous people on traditional lands such as Nitmiluk showcasing our culture. We want our own people to do that. Where are the jobs and opportunities for them? They were not there under the previous government. My predecessor did not fight for that.

There needs to be change, not only in the Territory, but federally. We understand the understatement of the former government of people moving into larger communities. It is more cost-effective so they say. That statement alone rings bells amongst Indigenous people. The cost would be far greater now, we understand that. However, we are well aware of the issues it causes. The member for Barkly can reflect on Borroloola and how bad it is with the majority of people living in one town. There are problems; there is fighting and drinking. Why is he not speaking up about that? I have not heard him talk about those issues. Look at Elliott and the issues there. There are people who want to go back on traditional country like Beetaloo who cannot because they were not supported by the current member for Barkly.

Indigenous people have spoken and reached out so many times to help address these problems but no one heard them, definitely not the bush members opposite. The former government created a dilemma in the bush trying to bring Indigenous people into the larger communities. This alone created issues in communities which still exist today. You should check it out or maybe start listening.

The Country Liberal government is optimistic about the homeland policy. With the right policies and direction, we can achieve prosperity for Indigenous people and, importantly, their wellbeing and social harmony. Social harmony needs to be addressed and you should know that, member for Barkly. We are committed to providing the same essential services to homelands as we would to communities. We acknowledge the contribution from the federal government and encourage it to work with us to straighten the homelands policy.

Homelands offer solutions to so many issues and it is worth the argument to pursue it. Refer to the minister's comment of introducing an agency asset management plan to ensure buildings are gradually improved or replaced. That is the first step to ensuring the needs are met and there is

open transparency from the grassroots people to Indigenous politicians and the Country Liberals government.

There are opportunities for our people on homelands who demonstrate they have the capacity to undertake the opportunities for more jobs. We will be fully supported by this government and ensure it sees benefits from every relevant government program.

Look at our Aboriginal land trust managed by the land council which makes it impossible for Indigenous people to build and own their own homes on traditional country. The legislation restricts Aboriginal people from individually constructing a dwelling because it only recognises a majority of clan groups. Where was the fight by the former government on this issue? I have never heard anybody speak up. Even my predecessor did not respect that.

That was the voice of people in the bush. Were they recognised? No. We need to move on. Circumstances in the bush are changing by the generation and we are screaming to educate Aboriginal people but, in the long run, the law restricts them from going any further. Dreams of owning their own home on traditional country are far from a reality. Indigenous people are fed up. They have been held back by ideas long before I was born. We deserve the same as everybody else.

The government, from time to time, has spoken about closing the gap almost every year from what I can remember. Has there been any solidarity in closing the gap? I am still puzzled today. How can we move forward if the government does not respect, recognise and support Indigenous people to close the gap, especially me. In parliament, the member of Barkly runs me down. Is that closing the gap?

Our people want real jobs, training and opportunities. Clarify expectations, improve transparency and accountability, straighten the engagement of government service providers, TOs but, importantly, the residents - the people who live on their country.

Our government will continue to work with the key Indigenous groups to build enhancements for homelands. The CLP government will focus its financial support on existing homelands used as a principal place of residence. This CLP government is not opposed to Indigenous people establishing and maintaining economical and sustainable homelands.

This support will be subject to Territory and federal government, TOs, land councils and the residents of the homelands. It will require a joint

effort from all parties. There is a need for us to work together to achieve the best possible results. This policy is our government's commitment and priority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, the Country Liberal government is committed to improving services and living conditions for people on homelands. We all share the responsibility and need to work together to achieve the best possible results.

**Mr McCARTHY (Barkly):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for the opportunity to talk in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly about homelands. I begin with a preamble to put my contribution into context.

I was a resident of an outstation from 1989 to 1992, the Waanyi/Garawa Land Trust, the 12 500 km<sup>2</sup> block on the eastern Barkly. Our third son was born there and it was Iris Hogan who, when my wife was confined to go to Alice Springs to give birth, noticed there was a jabiru mysteriously hanging around Murun Murula in the springs. Joseph was born in Alice Springs but when he came back she proudly announced to the community his dreaming was the jabiru. From then on, his whole life's responsibility is for the jabiru. She gave him the name of her grandfather, which was Larabungul. Joseph McCarthy loves to share that story with people when he talks about our family connections with Australian Aborigines.

I also put on the public record that my job, as founding head teacher, was to establish three outstation schools, the first at Jilundarina at Siegal Creek, the second one at Nudjabarra and the third one at Murun Murula. We were there from 1989 to 1992. I trained many Aboriginal assistant teachers and we had a great homeland learning centre program going.

It is good to put on the public record that in his first year of formal schooling Thomas McCarthy had the worst attendance record in the learning centre program. The little whitefella had the worst attendance of the Nicholson River schools. It was hilarious and we joked about it. The two old ladies - God bless them and may they rest in peace - Limerick Peter and Louie Foster, would lure him to the river every day and feed him on fish, turtles, and bush tucker. We used that as the reason for Thomas McCarthy's absentee rate, which was unexplainable and out of order. He had the worst attendance in the learning centre program. We explained it with a leave of absence, as he was attending another type of school. He was on the Nicholson River being looked after by the old ladies.

In that time between 1989 and 1992, we were homeless. We did not have a home and at Jilundarina we camped because there were

limited outstation houses. At Nudjabarra we camped. I created a great disturbance with the Department of Education because I built a long drop toilet which my wife wanted a door on. The only thing I had at the time was a Northern Territory flag so I used it as a door. Apparently, it created a ministerial. We were on HF radios at the time, and a telegram came through saying they wanted the situation sorted as it was not appropriate to have the Northern Territory flag used as a door for our long drop toilet.

We were homeless at Nudjabarra until we built the school and we would camp there. At Murun Murula we were homeless as well, but the Aboriginal people allowed us to occupy some old sheds. They were the first established buildings at Murun Murula, down near the springs, which is majestic country in the Barkly if anybody wants to go there. We occupied two sheds. We had one for the school and lived in one as a family. The community moved to higher ground, houses were built and the outstation started to grow. They were great days and I reference that for the member for Arnhem.

I thank my colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, because we are working together in this contribution to debate policy supporting the Minister for Indigenous Advancement. I thank the Minister for Indigenous Advancement's staff who provided a very good briefing yesterday for the member for Nhulunbuy and me. It was great to have a departmental briefing on what is happening.

In her contribution to the debate, the member for Nhulunbuy provided a great background to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth: the steps in building the homelands policy under the previous government. These included the issue of the previous federal Liberal government, clawing back support under the Australian Labor government, the victory for the Labor bush Caucus which brought the federal government back to the table and provided the funds the now CLP government is using to support its policy. It is a good story about working together. We had the policy, the support, and a plan. Voters in the bush spoke and it is now under the jurisdiction of the CLP government.

I will move my contribution to debate to the next level and give a micro example of where things can be improved. While travelling as a local member the first time I was in politics and privileged to be in government, one of the great criticisms was always outstations: the condition of outstations, the lack of service delivery, and the associated issues that created around social dysfunction. There was always somebody to blame and, more often than not, it was the local member.

As local member, I took up the fight and started dialogue with the service provider or Aboriginal resource centre. I tried to get the relationship between residents and the resource organisations or service delivery agencies more consolidated, better coordinated, with better communication, and float ideas about how this could work better. My work in government was exactly that. Through the bush Caucus and Cabinet, I worked hard to have in the previous Labor government's homeland policy a commitment to work with Aboriginal resource centres for better outcomes to ensure service delivery was spot on, giving maximum value for taxpayers' dollar and maximum outcomes for the residents.

It is good to see the new minister is on that trail. Public sector officials reinforced that yesterday. My questions were basic. I know what the previous government did and how far we had gone so what is new in the policy? The minister outlined it in the statement. They have some new bureaucratic processes in place and hope they will provide certainty around accountability and service delivery. That is good.

However, there were a few concerns when I asked about definitions. For instance, minister, the definition of a technical officer will be a link person between the service delivery agency or the Aboriginal resource centre and the residents. That is good. A person we can go to will be on the job. However, it is expected in normal circumstances, say for the north Barkly area, that technical officer may visit an outstation once every two years. That is a concern. I am sure the minister will pick up on that because we need to streamline this approach and create better accountability in this model. It is good to know we are starting to work together and have better contact and communication, but it is all about service delivery.

I will go a little further with the micro model and talk about the north Barkly. On my way to these parliamentary sittings I visited two outstations across four Northern Territory highways. Those outstations have a good association with each other and communicate well. They try to work together and share resources. They have great ideas and ambitions. In an outstation resource centre model, it is reactionary crisis management.

If a number of septic tanks are blocked it will be report after report. It will reach a crisis situation and a plumber will be contracted from Tennant Creek to travel to the outstations and conduct the pumping out of septic tanks at great expense. I am not trying to knock local business, they do a good job. However, for these operations we would even get support from our local plumbers in Tennant Creek where the north Barkly association gets a unit,

receives some training in occupational health and safety to deal with effluent, runs and maintains that equipment and shares it among the outstations to do their own pumping out work. That means a shift in thinking from a reactionary crisis management model to a forward thinking assets, training and employment model. Outstations have CDEP programs so great links can be tied together.

We continually talk about examples and the north Barkly association would welcome a visit from the minister. I encourage the minister, and all other ministers in the Country Liberal government, to visit anywhere in the Barkly because people want to talk to a minister. They want face-to-face communication. The north Barkly association is a progressive group. It has many ties with the South Nicholson Basin where I lived and worked among the people. They have some pragmatic suggestions about how this can be fine-tuned. I talked about that yesterday with departmental officials. They picked up on what I was saying and understood my points, as I am sure the minister will.

To make those connections, I encourage the minister to visit Corella Creek as a central point in the north Barkly. The community of Corella Creek is a strong and cohesive outstation. It has a fantastic school program - an interesting model run in conjunction with School of the Air which the Minister for Education might be interested in looking at. It is a particularly good model, well worth looking at for application in other small remote areas.

Based on a little research of the north Barkly association, you will see what is different in the meaning of the generic word 'homelands'. My colleague, the member for Nhulunbuy, explained the bigger, more sophisticated, more structured homelands of northeast Arnhem Land. They are different places from the small isolated outstations in the north Barkly. It is not the same and they need to be catered for differently.

The minister mentioned in the statement there will be opportunities to provide different levels of support, but it will always come back to ensuring we can streamline service delivery. People want self-determining outcomes. They want to look at infrastructure, assets, delivering basic services and, with CDEP programs and opportunities around training dollars, this is a real outcome with fewer frustrations than in town.

People on outstations generally are more settled and there is more sustainability when operating training programs. With an example like the pumping out of septic tanks, it cannot happen in an ad hoc fashion. Regarding an infrastructure requirement, I talked to the people about creating

an area - a sump - the effluent could be safely pumped into. It takes some infrastructure work to create that. In cost savings and efficiencies, once that area was created for effluent disposal, once the pump-out unit was in place and training occurred, there would be considerable dollars saved in an annual program of sending tradespeople out from local towns to pump out septic tanks. This concept can be grown, expanded, and used in all types of routine building maintenance. It can be used in routine civil works, in the delivery of essential services, and the residents are telling me they want to have a go.

When we had carriage of the homelands policy and went to the election, I went with a good news story that finally we were increasing accountability around how the system works, about the taxpayer dollars going in, government administering those dollars and the service delivery agency accepting those dollars and delivering services to the community.

I am pleased to see the minister has carriage of that, an understanding of it, and that systems are in place to deliver it. That is the most important part of creating better outcomes for the future. If we engage the residents, make people feel good about their lives, have families telling stories about what they did in the community that day, children telling stories about what they did at school that day, we will see an improvement in wellbeing. With an improvement in self-esteem there will be less opportunity for people to feel bad and look for solutions in substance abuse or solutions outside their community which would represent a major distraction, break families up and deliver disadvantage. As the member for Arnhem said, it is about closing the gap on disadvantage and creating improvements.

It is good to tell the story on behalf of Corella Creek and the association of outstations in the north Barkly. It is good to share it with the minister and encourage government ministers to visit, research, gain an understanding and translate that into good policy development.

One important thing from the briefing session yesterday was that a policy review is planned for around 12 months. The generic nature of this policy is not new to me. I was in a team which did much work to get it where it is today. I am interested to see how this policy can deliver better outcomes by tightening up service delivery. That would be the real outcome and this minister would be able to take homelands to the next level, which is being creative and using a private economy to deliver them.

For the member for Daly, it goes back to pig hunting with German bow hunters. If nanna is prepared to make a basket and tell the wives

about it, we will not charge them \$10 000 each, we will charge them \$20 000 each. I know people who want to do this and how it can happen. It is about being creative in developing homelands and creating new homelands.

**Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):**

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is not often I honour another member in this House the way I intend to now. Sometimes when people speak in this House they do so quietly, softly, and with a dignity that resonates in those who bother to listen. I listened very carefully to the member for Arafura's dignified speech today. To honour his speech, I make some observations.

I do not pretend to be an Aboriginal person. I was once given honorary title and a skin name. I recognise an honorary title when I am given one, and it did not give me a greater insight into traditional law.

What I know about traditional law is limited. Thanks to the campfire conversations I have had with many people because of the fortunate happenstance of being the member for Macdonnell for eight years, I was able to spend time with old men and women. I do not want to do an almost romantic, frosted lens-type honouring of Aboriginal people because that is condescending, I want to honour ideas.

The ideas I heard from the member for Arafura are not dissimilar to some described around those campfires in Central Australia. Several things came out of the member for Arafura's speech but, essentially, he said, 'Our land, our law, our decisions'. When I sat around campfires in Central Australia - I will presume the laws of Aboriginal people in Central Australia are similar to the laws of language groups in other parts of the Northern Territory - and spoke to the old people there, they would describe how they saw the world.

Two elements of their law struck me as particularly familiar and are one of the reasons I am critical of the Land Rights Act. I do not want to go on a land council bashing exercise, but I always look at the little I know about traditional law, look at the Land Rights Act and think Aboriginal people must sometimes feel they are trying to eat dinner with their hands in baseball gloves. It is so awkward and does not recognise traditional systems. The Land Rights Act imposes a system so hell-bent on protecting what are presumed to be dull and ill-informed people that it deprives those people of the freedoms it is supposed to give. The parallels are easily recognisable in the history of law. I will refer to several books shortly.

In traditional legal systems not everyone has title to the land. Those people who have the songs for country passed to them by ceremony have title to land. The Land Rights Act recognises no such system. The Land Rights Act has a list of names and says, 'These are the owners of the land trust'. That is wrong and does not suit the history of law in the western world. It does not recognise succession through the generations. As I understood it, traditional people would do, essentially, what western people do in occupations.

Take the law in European society. No one ever goes from their university degree - their first initiation - into a seat on the High Court. The High Court, and the whole legal system, recognises good performance. People learn the songs of the country - those who are studious, intelligent, and clever - and, as time passes, are rewarded with greater authority by having stories passed on to them as they become more senior and demonstrate their worth. Through the system of promotion, you finally end up head of your family or language group. You know the songs of your country because they have been handed to you. That is not a romantic notion. Those songs are a way of memorising exactly what you know and can talk about.

Let us look at the history of succession law. I turn to *Succession - Families, Property and Death Text and Cases* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), Atherton and Vines, by Butterworth:

*In some societies when a person dies, what is called his or her social personality survives to affect his or her relationships. In the Kula Ring in Melanesia, Ubeoi has shown that when a man died his partners join together for one last exchange in his name so that links of exchange would be firmly established for the successor. Such 'positional inheritance' or universal succession is common in many legal systems. Universal succession is the system where what is owned (including any liabilities) by the deceased, passes directly and immediately to their heir.*

*It was recognised, even in ancient Rome in the universitas juris and is presently used in civil law and Islamic law. Thus, various societies shared particular factors in succession law and the whole of the succession law of one society is quite distinct from that of another.*

The principle remains consistent. As I understand traditional law, when an old person passes on there is a succession to the next person who has the song for country and can talk for that country and protect it. The Land Rights Act recognises

none of that. There is a trust instrument and you are listed under a trust. From an anthropological point of view, the people with authority are deprived of it because the presumption is they are all Aboriginal. With land trusts in Central Australia, very senior people were on the bottom of the list just because they were black. The Land Rights Act has failed Aboriginal people in that area.

This is where I pick up on the member for Arafura's statements. Carter, Peden and Tolhurst, *Contract Law in Australia* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed), page 8 says:

*The modern law of contract assumes freedom of contract, that is, freedom to decide whether to contract and to negotiate contractual terms. It also assumes a paradigm situation of one on one negotiation of all the terms of an agreement by parties with equal bargaining strength concerned to maximise their personal positions. It must be recognised that although it is, without doubt, an attribute to a free society that is generally left to the parties themselves to make bargains, these assumptions are frequently contradicted or qualified by events in the real world.*

This says there is an assumption that if you enter into a contract, a meeting of the minds, an agreement - I approach a person who could be black, white, green or have pink polka dots all over them and have a conversation with them. We have a meeting of the minds. His mind and my mind arrive at the same place. When we reach that place we have a contract, a deal, an agreement. The rub in this quote is in these lines:

*It is generally left to the parties to make themselves the bargains. These assumptions are frequently contradicted or qualified by events in the real world. In many situations, adjustments must be made in the conceptual application of the principle based in these assumptions.*

In other words, freedom is not necessarily always in the law of contract because we make assumptions. Let us talk about the assumptions the Aboriginal Land Rights Act makes about Aboriginal people. It assumes freedom is taken away because 'we want to protect you' say the authors of that legislation. What are we protecting Aboriginal people from in this racist act? Is it because they are illiterate and not able to make a contract? That is nonsense. If you go to the history of common law in England, a sale of land was a regular contract entered into by illiterate people. The local shire reeve, sheriff nowadays, would attend and the title of the land would be transferred from one person to another. The vendor and purchaser would be present, several witnesses would be present, and they would walk

around every corner of the land being sold so everyone knew what was being transferred. Then the vendor would reach down - you will recognise this - grab some dirt and pour it into the hand of the person receiving it. That is what Gough Whitlam did with Vincent Lingiari.

Was Vincent stupid? Was he literate? Probably not, I do not know. He was not stupid and I saw a meeting of minds. There was no doubt what that action meant. Yet, the result of that process was a Land Rights Act which deprives the person who owns that land from doing the same thing.

What I heard from the member for Arafura was a plea for freedom; the capacity to make choices about his land which, I presume, he has authority to speak for through his system of law. The western system of law could easily accommodate traditional law through the law of succession I referred to earlier. If we recognise the ownership of traditional lands through traditional means, and that those lands pass from one generation to the next through the law of succession, and the people who pass those lands on have the right to because they speak for the land in accordance with the law they know and obey, why can we not allow those laws of ownership and succession to be recognised in a way the law of contract can achieve when it says:

*The modern law of contract assumes freedom of contract, that is, freedom to decide whether to contract and to negotiate contractual terms.*

I do not pretend to be an Aboriginal person because I do not need to. I am happy with who I am. I do not feel a sense of loss because I am not Aboriginal. I feel a sense of connection with smart, intelligent people whoever they are. If they have a legal system sufficiently similar to ours and could comfortably intermesh the two, why do we not do it? We have a condescending system of laws and land trusts created by a benevolent dictatorship as far as Aboriginal people are concerned. The cost of that benevolence means Aboriginal people - the owners of this land - are shackled in the chains of legal bondage because we are not prepared to allow people capable of making decisions on that land to do so without a bunch of hurdles being in place.

Madam Speaker, I want to honour the speech by the member for Arafura by saying I hear your justifiable and right claim that you should be allowed to speak for your land in accordance with your law because the law can accommodate it. I thank you for your contribution.

**Ms ANDERSON (Indigenous Advancement):** Madam Speaker, it was fantastic to hear members on both sides of the House asking determined

questions. That is the type of debate and interest we should have in this House when talking about such issues.

I thank the members for Nhulunbuy, Barkly and Nelson for receiving a briefing from my office and acknowledging it in their speeches this evening. I acknowledge and thank my colleagues on this side of the House for enlightening the debate and participating in where we go forward as a government, in all honesty, to provide real services for Indigenous people on homelands and outstations. As the member for Arafura said, it is about our culture, it is who we are; we are connected to outstations spiritually and physically.

Member for Port Darwin, I thank you for enlightening us on the legal side of the debate. You read the legalities of the Land Rights Act and the legal terminologies, and as you said, the two minds met when you picked up the dirt and connected us all the way back to Gough Whitlam and Vincent Lingiari. As you said, it was the coming together of two minds.

I will talk about issues certain members have raised and will start with the member for Nelson. The member for Nelson raised good points about ownership and the fact it is not just about a block of land, it is about being away from your family, about having something you own and someone cannot say, 'Can you get out of this house because you do not own it?' You and I have already discussed people who claim rights to houses built during ATSIC times.

That has happened with houses in my area as well. All of sudden, they have \$600 000 or \$800 000 houses - \$300 000 houses and say, 'Oh well, I do not want to live on an outstation now, I am going back. I am going somewhere I can buy Kentucky Fried Chicken, a cappuccino and drive on bitumen roads'. They forget the outstation but will still have control of it and do not allow other traditional owners to occupy it while they are absent. You quoted a newspaper article from my time as a Labor minister - some of the outstations were homes to lizards - and it is true today. Every speaker today knows that. Those outstations will not be funded. These people have to create economic opportunities and live on the outstations and cannot have two homes.

Member for Nelson, if you look at the chronology of events from the mini-budget to allowing people to know about the \$5200, it was misinterpreted by certain elements of the media and, as late as yesterday, misinterpreted by the Opposition Leader on MIX FM. I will quote from her interview:

*This is why we are seeing prices hiked up, so that they can fund unfunded election commitments in the bush. This is all about*

*the dangerous promises that were made all over the place in the election campaign to win those bush seats.*

To create this ugliness takes us back as human beings to something which happened 50 years ago. We do not want to be taken back to that ugliness where we divide Territorians based on what each is getting or what the government is doing for people.

You would agree, member for Nelson, that 50 years ago, even 40 years ago, we had these battles with each other. One of the journalists from the *Northern Territory News* has been on *Media Watch* twice now. He has been caught out fibbing about Ngukurr and continually writing a negative story. The Opposition Leader has lowered herself to the same standard by creating ugliness, taking us back, trying to divide us and put us in that ugly space of racism. We do not want to go there. Opposition Leader, we do not want to go down that path of dividing the Territory. We are Territorians - black and white we are Territorians. We are a multicultural society and our kids are married to each other, interlinked with each other, and our kids play sport together. That is the Territory we want.

As Australians we have done so much in society - marching across bridges and having reconciliation action plans in every corporate organisation. News Limited has one which was launched by Jenny Macklin, Aboriginal Affairs minister, along with Noel Pearson. I urge someone who did so much for Aboriginal affairs - a good man owns News Limited. I call on good people like Rupert Murdoch to return to the Northern Territory because, as a young journalist, he highlighted the disadvantage of Aboriginal people in Warburton, Western Australia.

I cannot believe a company with a reconciliation action plan has a tabloid paper in the Northern Territory trying to breed ugliness where two cultures clash - trying to use one culture to be dominant and ugly to another. That happened in the Christmas and New Year break when Territorians consume a lot of alcohol. The story was spread around at that time and my fear was - a true fear - all it needed was a person walking out of a club under the influence of alcohol or drugs seeing a couple of long-grassers and the *Northern Territory News* would say, 'These black buggers just got a \$5200 bonus from Terry Mills and his government and there is a dead person'.

We do not want, Opposition Leader, member for Karama, you to be involved with the pet rhino at the *Northern Territory News* and create ugliness in the Northern Territory. I am glad *Media Watch* has crowned Nigel Adlam 'the rhino' - the man

who fibs – a hide as thick as a rhinoceros. He will fib for anything. I call on the good man who went to Warburton all those years ago as a young journalist, Rupert Murdoch, to address the issues at the *Northern Territory News* because it is vital in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that we do not let this clash of cultures, this ugliness, breed in future generations of Territorians.

I thank the member for Nhulunbuy who contributed fairly to debate. I congratulate her for a positive debate on the homelands statement. She is passionate about homelands. I often talk to many of her constituents. I refer her to the article she referred to, the CLC director, David Ross' article several weeks after mine. She said people cannot afford it and we are looking at a \$600 000 house. This is because you and David Ross are not thinking outside the square. We are not talking about \$600 000 houses. The member for Nelson hit the nail on the head.

Aboriginal people might want a \$100 000 shed. We are recipients of royalties from mines in the Northern Territory. We might get a mortgage through that. ABA can help us. We have teacher assistants, police aides and health workers galore who get good money from the Northern Territory government who would participate in the economy.

It is not necessarily about the size of a SIHIP house. We are not looking at houses worth \$600 000 dollars. We might want a \$40 000 house from Bunnings on a \$10 000 slab with a few bedrooms and a big shed where we can bring our family to live. You are not thinking like Aboriginal people. You are thinking about the type of house you would like: a \$600 000, three-bedroom beautiful house. That is not the way we think.

We might want to go to Bunnings, buy a \$40 000 kit home, put down \$10 000 slab and a big shed on the side. There is a house for less than \$60 000. That is what we are looking for. We want to share in the wealth of the Northern Territory and participate in it as traditional owners – land rich, dirt poor. We only have the land mass to die on. We need to change that and ensure we go for jobs. We need to ensure - the member for Casuarina always says in horticultural debates - we farm the country. We have the land mass, let us farm the country.

You are not testing anything that has not been tested before. Missionaries did it when they first met Aboriginal people. We had three farms at Papunya, three farms at Hermannsburg, Ali Curung, Yuendumu, Wadeye - and I can keep naming them around the Northern Territory. When self-determination was given to Aboriginal people you did not measure the good elements of

the past policy - the good policies. All you said was, 'The Christians are no good; they did not look after Aboriginals properly'. Educated people resulted from those policies. We had farms and ate fresh carrots, cabbages and pumpkins. Our people built the houses. At Hermannsburg you can see the big houses they built. One little bedroom with a veranda at the front, but they worked on it. It was their sweat and tears and that is what we want to go back to.

When you ask how people can afford a \$600 000 house - that is your dream not ours.

Madam Speaker, I thank all speakers who had input into this statement. We will be looking after outstations but will scrutinise them. We will ensure children go to school and are economically involved in their homelands. People will not have two houses. The \$5200 will go to resourcing agencies.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

#### **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS Order of Business**

**Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Assembly from returning to Government Business, Orders of the Day commencing at Item 2.

Motion agreed to.

#### **MOTION Note Statement - Government Response to the Recommendations of the Board of Inquiry into Child Protection**

Continued from 28 November 2012.

**Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina):** Madam Speaker, I will comment on this very important statement.

As you are well aware, I served as Minister for Child Protection for a number of years and have said many times how the department could be described as a 'basket case' and how child protection was one of the most difficult portfolios I held in my career. It did not happen overnight. The situation with child protection occurred over 20 years. Listening to the member opposite speaking about child protection, to say I was disappointed would be an understatement; I was dismayed. The moment we started to go forward the minister put the brakes on the changes and we are going back to the bad old days of child protection.

To be fair, governments are not good parents and have made many mistakes in the past. Since self-government, even during the Commonwealth

government time, Territory child protection was one of the most difficult portfolios. Children in the bush were completely ignored, attention was focused mainly in the city and, in some cases in the Commonwealth days, children were taken simply because they were a different colour or had mixed parentage and were brought up in Darwin and other places.

Child protection is one of the most important portfolios. You can talk as much as you like about oil and gas or education, but if you cannot protect our children you are creating a ticking bomb for the future. Somewhere like the Northern Territory, where a significant number of children live in the bush, statistics show the issue is not predominately sexual assault. It occurs but not as much as neglect.

Kids are neglected by parents: not fed, not looked after, not sent to school, not taken to hospital and not treated for common ailments. We made some inroads slowly, steadily. We started to rebuild the system to protect our children and the biggest step forward was putting together the board of inquiry. The board of inquiry consisted of a number of experts who produced the 147 recommendations for government, and the previous government decided to implement all the recommendations. Would they be expensive? Yes. Did we need much money? Yes, we did but we had to do something; we could not do a little here, a little there. We had to ensure we changed the attitude, the culture and the situation in child protection.

I was extremely dismayed to hear the minister say the CLP government is not bound by the recommendations of the board of inquiry. To hear the member opposite, in the first few days of coming into government, completely dismiss the committee which oversaw the implementation of the recommendations was unbelievable. Not everything was done perfectly, but I read her statements where she admitted, since the release of the *Growing them strong, together* report, there had been some achievements which include:

- the focus on improving quality practice in the front line;
- significant cultural change based on high achievement;
- respect for carers as partners and professional practice standards;
- raising the profile of child protection issues;
- the creation of a regionalised structure;
- leadership in building relationships;

- the creation of practice leaders, practice advisors and cultural advisors in each region;
- support for staff;
- improved accountability and business improvements through practice audits;
- critical incident reviews;
- accredited and non-accredited training and professional development opportunities;
- improved staff career pathways;
- improved staff morale.

This has happened since the release of the *Growing them strong, together* report and are the minister's words. The minister acknowledged we had done something since the release of the report.

The minister was a social worker and is well aware of the situation regarding children in the regions. I recall when she questioned me in parliament on many things. I did not mind because I understood she was interested in protection. She questioned me about the department, the culture of the department and the backlog. I remember she tabled a policy saying if the CLP gained government the department of Child Protection would be separated from the Department of Health, money would be allocated, the Ombudsman would be put on the committee to oversee the implementation of the recommendations, and the Children's Commissioner would have own power investigations. What have we seen since then? The department of Child Protection has been amalgamated with the Education department.

She keeps telling us the government has put extra money into the department of Child Protection. We cannot verify it unless they table where the money went, where it came from, and how they allocated it. We will question that at estimates. There is no word about the Ombudsman being placed on any committee to oversee the implementation of the recommendations and no legislation to strengthen the Children's Commissioner's power as indicated previously.

I have a special interest in child protection not because I am a father - my children are old enough now - but as part of my culture. In my culture children are paramount. Greeks marry Greeks to have more little Greeks, and in our family it is important to work hard, educate your children and bring them up to be reliable and valuable people in society. Yes, there are child protection problems in my culture, but a concerted effort by the state in my

home country, and society, stamped out child protection issues which, unfortunately, are re-emerging due to the difficult economic situation. Again, it is mainly neglect.

I was disappointed to see the CLP government cut funding to Strong Aboriginal Families, Together. In the health sector we learnt we could not address Indigenous health problems through the mainstream health system. The then CLP government encouraged the creation of Indigenous community-controlled health services. I had the privilege to work in one, Danila Dilba, and got to know Miwatj and the Katherine board. I realised how well these organisations worked because they were community controlled and their services are targeting and addressing Indigenous people. They know the language, the culture, the people and how to do it.

In the Northern Territory, where 30% of our population is Indigenous, a significant number of people live in communities. We did not have a system in place to look after Indigenous people which addressed issues associated with living in communities. That is how it started. AMSANT provided funding to develop this peak organisation to look after Indigenous children and, unfortunately, the CLP government cut the funding.

The government has cut funding to SAF,T and to the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect - NAPCAN. That is not a smart move. That will come back to bite you and you will regret it. I do not know how they persuaded you to do it but this is one thing people will remember. You can do many things, but one thing people will remember is cutting funding to child protection non-government organisations.

Minister, I have already seen the negative publicity you receive in your home town. *Alice Springs News* had a very derogatory article saying you either do not know what happened in your department or you condone what has happened. It is not very complimentary. Forget about us being ministers and wanting to be remembered in glowing terms, your responsibility is not being minister, it is being minister for Child Protection. Your responsibility is to the children of the Territory and how to provide a safe environment for those children.

There were 147 recommendations. I understand some have been completed and others are halfway through being completed. Some are redundant because things have happened since then, or some could be done by other departments. For the CLP government and you, as a social worker so familiar with child protection, to say, 'We are not going to be bound by these recommendations, we are not going to have a

separate department, we will amalgamate with a super department', is one of the key problems with child protection. The Health department and the department of Child Protection are big brother and little brother. Every time the big brother needs money it will be sucked out of the little brother who could not scream loud enough.

We found we had vacancies, a difficult culture, and people were burning out in a year and disappearing. After having the board of inquiry and putting money in, we attracted more people. We managed to fill all the vacancies in Katherine. The first time I visited Katherine people were complaining they did not have workers. After we started recruiting, I visited Katherine and people were complaining they did not have space to put all the people and enough desks - music to my ears. There were more people working in child protection and on the front line.

You will recall the argument we had about the backlog - 1300, 900, 800, 135 and none. One of the biggest mistakes you made, minister - I know you choose who runs the department - is dismissing the CEO of the department, Clare Gardiner-Barnes. Clare had the second most difficult job in child protection after mine. However, this woman managed to change the culture and lay the law down. Many times people had their own view on how to do things and did not agree with the views of the government or what is the norm. We managed to change that. We put in place a structural system to address the deficiencies of the department and address issues in the community regarding children.

It is the most difficult portfolio. If you think it is bad being Treasurer, wait until something happens and you have a coronial on your desk. If one child dies on your watch it will be remembered. I was fortunate I did not have something like that happen on my watch; I did not have a coronial. It will happen one day. It is not if but when, especially if we do not have the right people to oversee the situation in some of the communities or urban centres.

Often we hear about gangs of 12-year-old girls and boys committing crimes, breaking and entering, smoking marijuana. These kids did not just turn 12 and become criminals and smoke marijuana; it started slowly from neglect at home - from people who do not care about their kids. Four-year-old kids were roaming free at night. I recall people telling me they saw a three-year-old kid being pulled along by his older brother at 2 am at Casuarina petrol station.

I urge you to think about what is happening and raise your voice in Cabinet. Even in the most difficult situation, you have to stand firm and address the issue of child protection. Minister, the board of inquiry laid the foundation for the child

protection system in the Territory for the future. Let us not return to the 1990s when child protection was non-existent. The child protection system of the government in those days was criticised for abandoning the children of the bush and not fulfilling its legal obligation. I am not shadow minister for Child Protection, but I draw your attention to the situation you are facing today and will face in the future. It is inevitable. Minister, things will go wrong and you will have to wear it for the rest of your political life.

**Mrs LAMBLEY (Children and Families):** Madam Speaker, I make some closing comments on the ministerial statement I presented on 28 November 2012 about the government's response to the report of the Board of Inquiry into the Child Protection System of the Northern Territory.

This has been a fascinating process for me, coming into parliament a little less than two-and-a-half years ago - October 2010 - two weeks before the board of inquiry *Growing them strong, together* report was handed down to parliament. As a new member of parliament, I was set on a quick course to learn what had been happening in child protection in the decade before under the former Labor government. I was given the hefty volumes of the *Growing them Strong, together* report to familiarise myself with it. Over the two years I was a member of the Country Liberals opposition team, I learnt the contents of the *Growing them strong, together* report fairly much inside out and back to front.

To be Minister for Children and Families and reflect on what has happened over the last 10 years in child protection in the Northern Territory, and to set a new course for child protection, is a fascinating experience and one I take very seriously. I listened to the former Minister for Child Protection, the member for Casuarina, and appreciate his words of wisdom. I heard what he said about this being a particularly difficult portfolio area and it will definitely be challenging for me at times when things go wrong to children in the care of the CE of the agency. I do not doubt other ministers who have preceded me have spent many an hour, week, or month anxious about how they move forward and get through those difficult patches in child protection; they are inevitable. I would not like to think people pointed the finger unnecessarily at anyone in cases where children have lost their lives under the care of the CE of the department.

It does happen and I have raised one or two cases in parliament to illustrate the fact child protection in the Northern Territory hit an all-time low several years ago. Around 2007, under the watch of the former Labor government, we saw child protection in the Northern Territory at its

lowest. It was unimaginable things could get any worse than they were.

In 2010, the board of inquiry report was released and outlined in great detail 147 recommendations as to how the Northern Territory government could move away from the low point with the 'tsunami of need' and the maladministration and malfunction of the child protection agency. At the time, those 147 recommendations – it was almost two-and-a-half years ago - were highly relevant. They were extremely well-researched and well-considered. They seemed to be the only way out of the mess that became child protection in the Northern Territory.

Things have changed. The new government will do things differently. We will not drop the report and ignore the important recommendations and have never said we will. We are using them to inform our practice and policy and the way we go about child protection every day as a new government. They are still critical information which informs how we do the business of child protection. Unlike the former government, we are not in a position to blindly comply with each and every recommendation. Two-and-a-half years in any government, any society, is a significant period of time and things have moved on. The point I made in the statement I delivered a few months back was we have decided which recommendations are still relevant and which ones we can afford to fund. That is a critical question we cannot ignore as we proceed.

Sadly, money dictates things in society in this day and age. If you do not have money you cannot achieve much and we are restricted by that. Some recommendations are no longer relevant or we cannot afford, but a majority are not completed and we intend to implement them. I outlined those in the statement. We have a regimen of work ahead of us for complying and implementing those recommendations we outlined. When the former government, now the opposition, said we have dumped the board of inquiry recommendations - for those listening in the child protection community - that is not true. We have not dumped the board of inquiry report.

We feel that the *Growing them strong, together* report is still a cornerstone to how we provide child protection services in the Northern Territory but the emphasis is different. We are not using it as a Bible. The former government had no choice; it allowed child protection to slip into a miserable state and the *Growing them strong, together* report became its way out. It had no choice and was embarrassed nationally by its mismanagement so used this report as a carbon copy of how to proceed and get out of the mire, and it did that. To some extent, I can understand why. In its shoes, I probably would have done the

same thing. There was no choice in the matter. It was either follow the 147 recommendations and at least look like it was committed to mending the situation or ignore them and give women, children and families in the Northern Territory a continuing miserable future in child protection.

As a new government, we do not have to blindly comply with the board of inquiry report. We do not have to use it as a Bible or implement every recommendation. We have strategically chosen the ones relevant to society in 2013 as opposed to the way things were in 2010.

I deny the allegation we have dumped the board of inquiry report. We have not done that. In my statement, I outlined in some detail how we are tracking. We use the recommendations regularly to measure - as the former government did - how we are tracking. That is not the only mechanism we use because we have changed the agenda.

I also need to put on the public record that we have not reduced funding to the Office of Children and Families. This is a complete fallacy. I cannot understand why opposition members cannot read the mini-budget papers. They refuse to acknowledge it in black and white. We have increased funding to the Office of Children and Families by \$10m in the 2012-13 financial year. It is a fact, it is indisputable, undeniable. The nonsense I have heard in this short period of time of being in government - six months - that we have reduced funding is absurd. It is more evidence the former Labor government is peddling mistruth and misinformation. It is to the detriment of Children and Families that you tell these porky pies, these big fibs that seem to resonate with people who vote for you. It is astounding you would want people to worry, fret and become incensed and emotional about the stories you are telling when they are absolute nonsense.

We have increased funding to the Office of Children and Families. For the public record, never before in the history of the Northern Territory has this level of funding been given to child protection. That is a fact.

Also for the public record, we have not walked away from the non-government sector providing alternative services. We have made some tough decisions recently about what services we fund. The priority for this government is providing direct services to children and families identified as being in trouble with the potential or real abuse or neglect of children.

We came to government with no money in the coffers. The money was spent over years and years of Labor frothing at the mouth and spending big on all types of things. There is no money. Our deficit has blown out to proportions beyond the

realms of sensible, and we also have a growing debt. We do not have the money to splash around in child protection or any area of government. No government agency had the level of cash and funds the former Labor government had at its disposal, particularly before the global financial crisis, and even after it they kept spending, which is why we are in a mess now.

In funding to the non-government sector, at this point we have to ensure it hits the target - money goes to the children and families with the most need. We had to make some difficult, unpopular decisions in some sectors to ensure it was not going to bureaucracies or empires which had money but to frontline services to ensure children get the best deal possible.

Unfortunately, for the organisations involved there has been pain. Individuals I have the utmost respect for connected with non-government organisations are, no doubt, feeling angry and confused by what we have done. However, if you care to listen to the story and understand why we made decisions in the best interest of children and families that have come to the attention of the Office of Children and Families, it makes sense. We cannot afford to fund things outside those boundaries; now is not the time. Thanks to Labor, we have no money. We do not have extra cash to throw around and, unfortunately, those difficult decisions will have to remain in place for some time.

Significant changes have occurred in the Office of Children and Families over the last six months. With an extra \$10m this year and \$5m ongoing, we are building a more professional and targeted agency. We are ensuring the Office of Children and Families' focus is on the front line, particularly child protection and out-of-home care - the critical areas. We are growing capacity within the child protection system to achieve better outcomes for families and their children.

One of the decisions I made in early October last year was to unify the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Families. This was a big decision, one the member for Casuarina made some critical comments about. Things have progressed since the board of inquiry and, two-and-a-half years on, the landscape has changed. One of the main reasons this decision was made had nothing to do with money or savings, it was trying to close the gaps kids, particularly in remote and regional areas, continue to fall through. The thinking and philosophy behind this decision was about connecting schools, child protection services, early childhood education centres, and all the support services together to ensure a seamless service is provided

to children from birth to the end of their school years.

This has to benefit children and families: tracking children, having a range of eyes on children throughout their childhood, helping parents, identifying parents' needs, identifying when things start to go wrong, being there to connect them to services and help them when the time comes. We are excited about this. It has taken a few months to work out how to do it.

I have heard criticism from the opposition that one of the reasons for several sad cases involving children recently is because we are putting all our resources into the failed unification of Education and Child Protection. That is not the case. It has taken some time to work out what to do. In all honesty, not much has changed.

We are about to trial this concept in a number of schools throughout the Northern Territory: Maningrida School, Papunya School, Sadadeen Primary School, Tennant Creek Primary School, Humpty Doo Primary School and Galiwinku. We will roll out this concept and put resources and energy into ensuring these become the models of excellence of how schools, child protection services and children and families' services can work together as one to assist children.

We have been refocusing and reprioritising NGO funding. Of course, the out-of-home care system is an important part of our new platform. We need to reform the out-of-home care system and much work needs to be done.

Madam Speaker, I thank all members who have contributed to this discussion. There is much more to talk about. We have much work to do, a long way to go, and I thank you all for being part of that.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

#### **MOTION**

#### **Note Statement - Gas to Gove**

Continued from 12 February 2013.

**Mr MILLS (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contribution to this important debate. In the present environment of the consequences of some of the difficult decisions we have had to make on power tariffs, this discussion will remain with us for some time because it will provide strength to our ongoing energy security concerns. It can, possibly, provide us with a much better path for energy supply by ensuring we have adequate exploration which results in production because we need to maintain domestic demand for gas.

This story does not appear to be a big one but will loom large for many reasons. This project is as big as the railway project. The amount of money spent on this project and the employment of people up and down the line - I will outline those in a moment - is significant, and that is just the pipeline between Katherine and Gove, which should not be underestimated. In relation to concerns about ongoing supplies of gas, since commencing this program we have identified other sources of gas that can come into this because now a real pipeline is being considered. I urge minister Ferguson to continue with the commitments made so we have underwriting of the pipeline. We have done our part. We have secured the supply and made it available. Now, it is the underwriting of the pipeline. There is then the ongoing due diligence which is the central business of the committee I now have working to go through every aspect of the negotiations with ENI and Pacific Aluminium in particular.

Broadening this out comes the other part of the story which is still gaining traction: the extension of a pipeline from Tennant Creek to Mount Isa. This is a real possibility. Some time ago people talked about building a railway from the north to the south; a big idea which took a long time to achieve. In an environment where the world is in need of energy - Australia needs to secure its energy supply and increase domestic supply - the Territory is well positioned to do so, providing national security. A 700 km pipeline is not a big ask.

With commercial interest already in such a proposal, this will have significant benefit to the Barkly because the construction of a pipeline between Katherine and Gove, and the increased certainty established around that, has created increased exploration and people moving in to be part of this by bringing their gas to surface - bring it to that pipeline. The same will happen with a pipeline constructed from Mount Isa to Tennant Creek.

Many stranded reserves can be brought into that pipeline. The beauty of this and the connection to the earlier debate on homelands is it will bring real economic activity into remote communities. That is what we want to see. This is a massive win/win. For the macro, the security of the Northern Territory and the provision of alternative markets; for the micro, real jobs and real economic activity for people in remote communities.

Before I thank those who have contributed, I will go through some of the details of the pipeline and all that comes from it. This is a very big project. This is a pipe, mainline valves, scraper stations, let down stations and compressor stations at King River. We are midway through the feasibility

study and the government will be more specific with details as the study work progresses. I have announced a specific task force working on this project. The capital cost to this project will be about \$500m:

- the pipeline will be 603 km in length;
- there will be nine river crossings and one rail crossing;
- 32 000 tonnes of lined piped steel will be needed;
- every watercourse crossing will need heavy wall and concrete coated pipe;
- five camps will be required during construction;
- about 700 people will be directly employed for bulk construction during next year. These employment opportunities will include roadworks, maintenance and laydown areas;
- water haulage will be required;
- wildlife management, which is work for rangers;
- temporary fencing works, which is work for small business operators;
- camping and accommodation.

Significant work has already been undertaken including environmental monitoring along the pipeline route and consultation within Indigenous groups. The pipeline project will bring many benefits as I outlined last week, not the least of which will be new exploration projects along the route. This pipeline could eventually be connected to a national energy grid and, through that, to the huge energy demands of the eastern seaboard.

Perhaps, as I indicated earlier, these initiatives will result in cheaper energy supplies for Territorians. That is not an impossible dream because we are watching what is happening in the US. Pipeline grids bring isolated resources of gas to market, increased supply of gas matches demand with downward pressure on prices - and we have seen that happen in the US. It only happens because you have pipelines. This is a big, bold, important plan.

It is part of the Country Liberals DNA to have plans that will create a better future for the Northern Territory. Our aim is to affect the marketplace by increasing supply of gas. We know what happens with basic economics; increased supply should ultimately result in

downward pressure on gas prices. This plan has been achieved through the work we were presented with as a new government - to work our way through this challenge. We have found a very good solution.

I can report to the Chamber a national pipeline grid is now on the COAG agenda and will be continued. We are turning our attention to both the Coalition and the federal government to ensure they fulfil their part of this obligation. The Country Liberals will continue fighting to ensure we secure the future of the Northern Territory, benefit the Territory, and secure energy supplies for the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contribution to this important debate. I note the member for Nhulunbuy said we should negotiate with the Commonwealth to ensure we get enough money and the member for Karama, the Opposition Leader, said I did not need to travel anywhere; I could have stayed at my desk, made a few phone calls and sorted this out. We are serious about this, it will remain with us and we will continue fighting for it. This is a legacy issue we are determined to leave for the benefit of the Territory.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

**MOTION**  
**Note Statement – Policing in the**  
**Northern Territory**

Continued from 13 February 2013.

**Mr McCARTHY (Barkly):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to speak about police in the Northern Territory and the statement the Chief Minister brought to the House.

We had some great news in Tennant Creek recently with the opening of the new police station. That was welcomed by police because, as people familiar with Tennant Creek would know, the police force has grown considerably. The old police station in Tennant Creek was very cramped, totally unsuitable, and we needed new infrastructure. It was great to work with the previous Labor government and the Chief Minister, who was minister for Police, to deliver more infrastructure into the regions, including the new police station for the police in Tennant Creek. It was a great opening and I thank the police for the invitation to attend. The Deputy Chief Minister attended on the Chief Minister's behalf and delivered a speech.

As I mentioned in the House, it was a little disappointing not to speak to the police, the visitors and the good folk of Tennant Creek about the really important elements you have from local

knowledge - from when you live and work in a place and put your heart and soul into it. Tennant Creek has amazing stories around police, and not only historical stories, but the way our police work in an interagency sense.

Tennant Creek had the first Night Patrol globally. It was a great initiative started by traditional owners and, from Day 1, worked with the police and gave police a new innovative program to support their work and remove people from harm. Those people, in the majority of cases, were affected by alcohol. That is a great Tennant story we celebrate. Night Patrol has moved on from being a volunteer organisation to a sophisticated operation which continues to work with police in Tennant Creek.

Another interagency story is the sobering-up shelter in Tennant Creek. It operated in the 1980s, the 1990s, and operates today. A new sobering-up shelter opened last year. That is more infrastructure in the regions and was also a great opening. Stories were told of how the sobering-up shelter provided an important place to divert alcohol-affected people out of incarceration and into an environment where they could be out of harm's way. They could sober up, be counselled in some respects, then could go home.

Of course, we can get into the debate around alcohol and the next step. We are waiting to hear from the government what the next step is. The minister brought a statement to the House. As we on this side said in debate, we are still interested in the next step. The next step means a legislative instrument introduced into this House so we can lock horns in debate and fine-tune the instrument to deliver the best outcomes.

Tennant Creek has great policing stories. Unfortunately, the Deputy Chief Minister did not tell any of those stories. She did not have that knowledge and it is quite obvious in this House - she still concentrates on the mantra, 'The member for Barkly was never in the Barkly'. That was used by the CLP during the election campaign. They tried their hardest. The member for Araluen is still trying it on; it is like a broken record. I won – you lost. The member for Brainting is sad about that as shown in his contribution to debate. It is good to be a local member, understand the history and be able to share that information.

Another good story of policing and community safety is the Barkly Work Camp. Unfortunately, the Deputy Chief Minister did not know anything about the camp. The story should have been told that day because it is the logical progression of the new era thinking in corrections about addressing offending behaviour. The police in Tennant Creek have been very complimentary

and supportive. Employment is even taking place where prisoners have the opportunity to work at the police station.

With the new police station and the increased capacity there will be even more opportunities to put prisoners to work in the police station. If that is not innovative, I do not know what is. That is a good link. It is another first for the Territory and Tennant Creek and a great story of the programs, outcomes, initiative, infrastructure, and the jobs. That is what a Labor government does. Those things cost, but there is a balance where investment will offset costs for the future. We then get into the debate around the social outcomes and it always ends with the bottom line being what value you put on human life.

It is a good story for Tennant Creek about our police. The other story in Tennant Creek is that many academy graduates come for two years. They are brand new coppers and that is where they start their career in the police service. We hear stories from people who complete their two years and say they want to come back; they learnt well in Tennant Creek, they like Tennant Creek and the Barkly, and it is a good catalyst to kick-start their career in policing.

I will never forget being at the old hotel in Braidwood visiting my sister when a big, old sergeant wandered in. I like to make friends and find out about people so I engaged the New South Wales sergeant of police in conversation. He asked where I came from and I said, 'Tennant Creek'. He said, 'Do you have coppers there?' I said, 'Yes, we do'. He said, 'How many coppers do you have in Tennant Creek?' At that time there were about 37. He was shocked at that and said, 'How many people in the town?' I said, '3500'. He was totally shocked. He said he policed Bungendore and Braidwood, an equivalent of 3500 people, and there were two coppers. We had an interesting discussion. When I elaborated some of the real needs in Tennant Creek, the challenges, and why it has such a big police presence he became very interested. He said he would visit one day.

The academy sends new coppers to Tennant Creek and they get a good kick-start to their career. That is a powerful thing because the police do an incredible job. They are on the front line, in life-threatening situations, and really keep our community safe.

An initiative I worked on with the previous Labor government was a community safe strategy. Much work went into designing new, innovative approaches to juvenile justice, youth crime, and community safety. I enjoyed being a member of the committee which worked on many of the initiatives put in place in Alice Springs after the

radical summers there. There were some serious issues to deal with.

I started to communicate some fairly off-the-wall ideas to Territory police and used Tennant Creek as an example. As a result of the Labor government's programs in Tennant Creek much new work was done to upgrade Jubilee Park, our sporting precinct in the middle of town. The previous Labor government put valuable investment into Jubilee Park. Over a number of years - under the previous member for Barkly, Elliot McAdam, and my first term as a member of government from 2008 to 2012 - one of the initiatives was, after many years, putting lights on the football oval at Purkiss Reserve. I researched several projects, particularly one running in Broome. It was about encouraging juveniles to gather in a well-lit, managed environment to try to address youth crime, property crime and antisocial behaviour in a regional town with the youth cohort.

I looked into this in other places. I also went to Nowra, southern New South Wales, to explore some new ideas. It became obvious this was worth trialling. The previous Labor government upgraded the infrastructure and we now have a great football oval.

However, we needed activities at night. I encouraged community members to find volunteers to run activities under lights on Friday and Saturday nights, particularly in the summer. I believed the youths would be like moths to the flame. They would come and, if the activities were good, they would engage in them and stay. It would get them into a managed environment and we could look at role models and mentors. I considered that a good community solution and one I continue to work on.

I took it to the police and said, 'I am off the wall. You may have to think about this for a while'. I speak about this in relation to my work with the juvenile diversion program and five years working with juvenile diversion clients. They like a chase. They create the opportunity to engage with the police and then encourage the good old car chase. Normally, the juveniles are on foot or pushbikes and the police are patrolling in vehicles. The juveniles have it all over the Toyota Hilux because they can duck in and out of drains, climb over fences and can go here, there and everywhere which can create real problems.

I said to the police, 'As an alternative, what about we take police out of the Toyota Hilux patrol and put them in shorts and a T-shirt on the football oval on Friday and Saturday nights but pay them as if they were on patrol?' Treat them as if they are on a patrol, but they will be engaging with juveniles in organised activities, under lights, particularly at high-risk times during the height of

summer when kids get on the street and roam around. There is always a ringleader to lead some of them into trouble.

The police officers I took the ideas to said there were issues with traditional policing, rosters and occupational health and safety, but they were willing to look at it. To this day, we are heading down that road. Some of the new community policing initiatives in Tennant Creek and what we are seeing in wider parts of the Territory may be breaking the ice in this area, particularly where we have police patrols on pushbikes, trail bikes, and horseback. I like the horses, as do many in the community.

If we keep pushing the boundaries and work through the management and occupational health and safety issues, as well as police association concerns, we could trial some of these initiatives where the traditional patrol would be immersed into youth groups in public places participating in organised activities. If it is 'think smarter', 'consider an alternative', 'try new ideas' and they work, we are in business.

We hope the minister will look at new ways of doing business and consider the concept of loading the resources on the prevention side of police work and involve police in that.

The member for Nelson often talks about the old Police Boys Club. From my time growing up, the Police Boys Club of western Sydney was a good initiative. I grew up with some hard boys in the western suburbs who were engaged - probably the only thing that engaged some of them - by the Police Boys Club. They were turned around and did not end up in Long Bay like others or Rookwood Cemetery, another place many of the cohort I grew up with ended up way too soon. It is about resourcing the front end and looking at prevention, new ideas and new models as opposed to fixing the broken pieces at the other end.

I thank the minister. When these statements come forward they give all members of the House an opportunity to communicate ideas and, hopefully, influence the operational aspects of departments and ministries. When we get down to the grassroots, that has an impact in our community and society.

I conclude my contribution with some politics linked to the preventative front-end investment. The Country Liberal Party promised some good concepts in election commitments in Tennant Creek which could be applied to any regional town or remote community across the Territory. However, for Tennant Creek it was very clear and published that a family crisis centre, a youth centre and a youth accommodation facility would

occur. The Chief Minister recently released some more media around the youth accommodation facility. They are good examples of projects for a regional town which will invest in solving problems before they escalate - an investment such as the family crisis centre. Similarly for a youth centre, it would be investment into prevention rather than trying to repair the damage. Of course, the youth accommodation facility would be welcome. We have a hostel in town run by Aboriginal Hostels Limited which has been important for many reasons over many years. A youth accommodation facility to support community safety, school attendance ...

**Mr WOOD:** Mr Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 77, I request an extension of time for the member to complete his remarks.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr McCARTHY:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I will wind up. The last part of my contribution to the statement is the election promises are good and we support them. I do not care who delivers them. I stand proud on delivering for the previous Labor government and will celebrate new developments because this is for the people of Barkly and for Territorians. The Barkly often features in debate and will continue to feature, particularly as the breadbasket of minerals in the Northern Territory and the major projects the Chief Minister talks about: a gas pipeline, railways and so forth. It is an important area of the Northern Territory. Tennant Creek is the identified service centre and we need to continue growing Tennant Creek. They are good promises and I will encourage the Country Liberal members, and all their friends. We support these concepts and would like to see them delivered.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, at the start of the day I did not realise we would reach these issues, but it is an opportunity for me to ask for some police assistance. I have written to the Chief Minister about quad bikes.

I have spoken about this on a number of occasions over many years. I was going through the *Parliamentary Record* recently when I must have had nothing else to do and ran across several speeches I had made in relation to this issue.

We all know quad bikes are a great recreation vehicle and certainly handy on the farm. I do not know if our Deputy Speaker has one to pick up mangoes every now and then. Used the right way, they are - the Deputy Speaker has three - a good vehicle but are also dangerous. The previous brigadier at Robertson Barracks told me the Army has removed all its ATVs and quad

bikes because they are dangerous and they only use motorbikes now.

Today, more farmers are killed by ATVs and quad bikes than tractors. There are more of them than tractors, but that is one of the problems. In Alice Springs, one of our pioneer pastoralists died last year while using a quad bike. There have also been several fatalities in my electorate - one at Gunn Point and one on the Gunn Point Road - and quite a number of people have become quadriplegics from accidents or badly injured through misuse of quad bikes.

I am not saying people should not use quad bikes, but there does not seem to be much control over them. Many people in the rural area do not have a problem with them but do not like them on their nature strip at 80 km/h or 90 km/h, or going down the road in the middle of the night knocking over someone's fence, as one of my constituents rang me about. They are happy if they go out bush and have fun, but believe there should be some control and rules.

There are cases of people driving with children on them without helmets, and people are using them within the road reserves so, technically, they are on the road. If you read the *Traffic Act* you will find the use of a quad bike on any public land requires that road rules be applied.

Early last year I spoke to someone who was booked for sitting on his quad bike on Gunn Point beach. He did not have any registration and was not wearing his helmet or something similar. I queried that and found that law applies.

The issue I raise tonight is a matter of policing. I do not want to come down hard on people with quad bikes. I put a proposal to the minister for Parks and Wildlife in the former government about setting aside land for off-road vehicles. It is done in other states. In Queensland, there are areas set aside where motorbikes and quad bikes can go in a well-defined area. You could call it a sacrificial area because these bikes can do a fair amount of damage to the environment. You set aside an area which could come under the control of a motor sport body and people can be in a relatively safe environment and enjoy the fun they get out of quad bikes and off-road bikes.

A quad bike association operates at Knuckey Lagoon. There have been several issues about it operating there but it does a great job. It is a great sport for families. They operate a very professional series of events throughout the year culminating in the Territory titles. I am not opposed to quad bikes but am concerned about misuse of them.

Chief Minister, we spend money on education campaigns on how to use roundabouts. We have education campaigns on where cyclists should ride their bike and other educational traffic campaigns. It would be good to have a campaign explaining who can use quad bikes and what the rules are. There is a belief that if you are not on bitumen you are not on the road. Not only do they cause damage to the road - if you look at Gunn Point Road you will see gravel missing from the edge of the road in some places because that is where they run down. There are rules about how many people you should carry on a quad bike, whether you should wear a helmet and whether the bike be registered. If you have an accident there are issues about insurance. I have always said to people, 'Put your quad bike on a trailer, take it out bush then bring it back that way'. Not everybody has a trailer so they travel up and down the road.

In my electorate, one of the areas I get many complaints about is people hooning along the road, roaring along making a lot of noise. In the Dry Season they make a lot of dust. There is nothing more annoying than paying money for the bitumen road then someone rides a quad bike along the dirt and you have the dust you were trying to avoid by having the road sealed to reduce dust in the first place.

My suggestion is the government look at an advertising or media program to explain the use of quad bikes and advise on the safety of driving quad bikes. If the government does that for a number of months it then needs to enforce it.

There may be other times it has happened, but one Saturday morning I was sitting near our Howard Springs Transfer Station with my mobile office when about six police went past on bikes. I gathered they borrowed them from the Tactical Response Group and were going up Gunn Point Road to check out people using quad bikes or off-road vehicles in an inappropriate way. That is about the only time I have seen any action.

An alternative may be, if there is constant misuse, to install CCTV cameras - not the ones that connect directly to Berrimah, but ones that record what is going on. They are already in the park and ride facilities at Humpty Doo and Coolalinga. They seem to work effectively because there have been no break-ins or vandalism at either of those facilities.

It has reached a point where I know from the e-mails I receive that people are becoming very frustrated. None have said they oppose quad bikes; they just say the use of them literally gives them the 'you know what'. They are tired of it and do not believe the police are acting in a manner

which would give them confidence anyone cares about what is happening.

I raised this issue a number of times with the previous government. Gunn Point Beach is used for off-road vehicles, especially quad bikes. There seems to be no control. The rangers only have a small portion of responsibility - Tree Point. The rest is LandCorp, which does not have money to do anything. I have asked for a ranger to be stationed there and the cost shared between Parks and Wildlife and LandCorp. Facilities could be available for someone to be stationed at the water tower because there is electricity and water.

I am concerned if there is no control over places like Gunn Point Bridge more people will be killed. The brigadier would not tell me the Army got rid of quad bikes because they are dangerous if he did not believe it.

There is the issue of whether quad bikes should have a safety bar at the back; some people are for it and the manufacturers against it. However, deaths have already occurred. There needs to be some policing, with education first. I do not expect the police to come in heavy-handed and arrest each person on a quad bike; that is the last thing I want. A sensible approach is to promote a program which shows people how quad bikes should be used and to explain the law. People think because they are not on the bitumen they are not on the road, or because they are on forestry land they are not required to wear a helmet or have the bike registered. Educational campaigns should be run before we come down hard on people.

This may also be something the government could look at. The former member for Goyder, Peter Maley, who loves his quad bikes, was looking at a different type of registration for quad bikes. That exists in some states. If it is too difficult to bring those bikes up to a normal standard of registration, perhaps there is an opportunity for a slightly different form of registration for off-road bikes.

I have raised the issue because it is ongoing in the rural area. I have my fair share of complaints about it but I am not against quad bikes. We need an off-road park where people can enjoy their vehicles in a safe manner without endangering lives or ruining the environment. I will raise it as a motion another time and see what the Minister for Parks and Wildlife or the Sport minister thinks.

I thank the Chief Minister for his statement about the fire brigade. It is clear that without the fire brigade our police would have been left in the lurch in the rural area because they would have to attend vehicle accidents and, if it was a serious

vehicle accident, would not be able to do much until the fire brigade turned up with its equipment. I was a bit sceptical about the minister's media release. I am unsure if the plans for the Humpty Doo Fire Station are set in concrete or are part of the review and, therefore, there may still be an option to disband the fire station. I read the media release but it is grey. If the minister would state clearly the Humpty Doo Fire Station is to continue, not only will the public in the rural area be extremely happy, police will be as well.

There was no clear indication in the media release that the four-wheel drive emergency vehicle would stay at Palmerston.

Minister, thank you for the statement. I appreciate the hard work police do and we sometimes forget that. We see cases where police have been shot. In the United States recently an ex-policeman who had killed some people - they tried to capture him and in the process another policeman was shot. We had the same problem recently in Sydney, when someone knocked on the door. When you count the numbers of police who die on duty you realise it is a dangerous job. More police probably die on duty than soldiers in Afghanistan. That is a fact when you look at the figures.

It is a dangerous occupation and we see police walking the street on the beat, pulling someone up for the breathalyser, giving a yellow ticket for going too fast, but there are other times when it is a much more serious situation and we should always remember to appreciate them. Sometimes we might say 'awww' because they have booked us, but they have a tough job and they never know what the day will bring. We should always be grateful we have a police force regardless of whether we run into the odd policeman who does not make us happy. The police are there to do a job, we should appreciate what they do, and I thank them for the work they do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope we can move in the area of safety for off-road vehicles, something we need to look at.

**Mr MILLS (Police, Fire and Emergency Services):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. I am more than happy, member or Nelson, to deal with your perceived ambiguity or uncertainty in the media release and response to the issue in Humpty Doo and Palmerston. I gave an interview on this earlier this morning and hope I covered off on this in my reply during Question Time. I assure you, in the first instance, the light vehicle remains at Palmerston. It needs to stay there. The two officers assigned as back-up to that vehicle stay so, effectively, there is no change.

As I indicated, it is an organisational review. It is not a review of practice and procedure but more organisational structure to ensure there are better lines of sight and flow of information. The move from tri-service to police is being considered, and then to Fire and Emergency Services, so there would be clarification of the two roles and structure of where and how they operate together, but how one operates in one space and one in the other and then how they work together. That is the area we are looking at.

Having a background on the land, I agree with you about quad bikes. We were always very wary of quads. We went from horses to motorbikes and quads were toyed with as an idea but, no, we had seen too much danger around their use. They were not something we made use of and, sadly, one of our staff members lost her husband due to one of those machines. They are particularly dangerous. You made some very good points about a sequence of events being clear communication of the rules surrounding their use prior to enforcement. I will take on board what you said, member for Nelson, and see what we can do.

Member for Barkly, I acknowledge you have particular and valuable insights. As I will be in Tennant Creek this weekend, I will take the opportunity to go to the police station. As you indicated earlier, you will be in Tennant Creek and I am happy to catch up and talk about local things from a policing perspective. I welcome that kind of exchange. It is not all political and backwards and forwards. A local member with local insights - appropriate policing is fine.

As a local member I enjoyed, in opposition, access to police officers in my electorate and town. I welcome and invite the member for Barkly to do the same. Please ensure we have that flow of information backwards and forwards. We really want to improve the lives of those in our communities.

I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Barkly and the specific Barkly point of view, which is important. I have a soft spot for the Barkly and Tennant Creek. As I have said on a number of occasions, I grew up in a town just like Tennant Creek.

I thank the Deputy Leader for standing in for me at short notice and officiating at the opening of the police station. It was through circumstances I could not plan and I did not want to change this again. The reason, quite clearly - I am sure the member for Barkly knew - was I had to deal with the gas to Gove issue which has a Barkly connection, hopefully a pipeline. That was the reason, so I thank the Deputy Leader for standing in and I hear she did a good job.

I note the member for Barkly is looking forward to moving from a response to a statement to locking horns in a debate over some legislative instruments - there were a couple foreshadowed in the statement - and I look forward to that.

The next phase of discussion on policing issues will be around the police review which is entering its final stages so stay tuned for that.

The central message is we focus on frontline policing first. I acknowledge the fight against crime and its reduction in our community is not a one dimensional contest. Many aspects feed into crime and its incidence in our community, but the first instance is the strength of law and order by having a focused and well-supported front line. Behind that are some legislative changes which have already been debated and passed in this Chamber. There will be more to come as already indicated in the statement.

The statement also highlighted a real concern which we see clearly needs a response: the high level of repeat offenders. If you have a correction system the system must correct. It is clearly not correcting if the majority of those churning through our system are repeat offenders. It is not correcting so there needs to be greater corrective measures. That is why the work of the Attorney-General, and his responsibility with Corrections, is an important part of this. The first part is to strengthen the front line and then the legislative instruments will follow. Then, of course, there is a whole raft of interconnected measures to help reduce the causes of crime, as the member for Barkly indicated.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members who have contributed to this. Stay tuned, this debate will continue for some time because the level of crime in the Northern Territory is a concern to all of us. It is a many-faceted problem and we are dealing with this, in this instance, by strengthened frontline policing.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

**MOTION**  
**Note Statement – Women’s Policy**

Continued from 19 February 2013.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a few independent ideas I would like to put forward.

We have an Office of Women’s Policy and the minister has delivered a statement on women’s rights etcetera. One of our members said in the debate earlier this week, ‘It is good to see so many women in parliament’. I could say that and

people would say, 'You are a bit patronising, aren't you?' I do not see it that way. It is great there are women in this parliament. I have said it about Aboriginals as well. However, it is has to be about merit. Those people are here on merit and they happen to be women. That is why we are all here and it is equality. I make that statement, because sometimes you can say things and it sounds like you are trying to sweeten up the ladies. That is not the case. The people I see are here on their merit and that is a great thing.

I have said on radio the appointment by the Prime Minister of Nova Peris as the candidate for the Senate seat in the Northern Territory is tokenism. I have nothing against Nova Peris; she is a great sportsperson and might make a wonderful Senator. However, in this case merit has gone out the door and tokenism has come in. This is unfortunate and I would prefer people to represent the Territory not based on a so-called 'captain's pick' but on the processes normally required to select people to represent the Northern Territory.

I also look at things which have been missed out. Rural women have been missed out of the statement. Many rural women in my area operate and run businesses, especially in horticulture, retail, and women who work in the pastoral areas are sometimes forgotten. I have been out to pastoral properties and, sometimes, the emphasis is not on people who live on pastoral properties, it is on remote communities. There is nothing wrong with that, but they feel the balance is not right. Lacking in the statement is something about the status of women who work on the land because they make a great contribution to our society.

The minister also spoke about women in senior positions. I cannot let that go without saying it is hard to see any sincerity there because of the sacking of Jennifer Prince. She would have been the only woman in the higher level of government. She would not have been there because she was a woman, she would have been there because she was an excellent, apolitical Under Treasurer. Unfortunately, she was sacked. That might be the political way of the world, but when I hear there is concern about the number of women in higher positions in government, that is a little hard to take. For someone who was Under Treasurer - who worked her way through the public service to where she was - to be sacked then re-employed as a consultant to the Health Department and win the Public Service Award on Australia Day, is very disappointing.

The minister spoke about Indigenous women, especially in relation to violence. I was told recently - the minister might not have been told - on fairly good authority that the government has withdrawn support for a therapeutic counsellor

at the Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter. They have lost someone who deals with women traumatised by their experiences and was able to help them. That goes against what this statement is all about. I ask the minister, who may not know anything about it, if she could follow that up because that is really sad. We only had one Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter for Indigenous people and for funding to be withdrawn halfway through the financial year is a shame.

The minister mentioned the amount of violence against Indigenous women. As much as I agree, some of the issues need more emphasis placed on them in other portfolios, for instance, the police and health portfolios. There is still a bias against males - not so much in this area - because two or three years ago at estimates I received the figures. The percentage of violence against Indigenous women is very high, but in the non-Indigenous population about 30% of males are affected by violence. I find this difficult because you should not emphasise one at the risk of alienating another group of people who also suffer badly. The figure for violence in the non-Aboriginal population, when broken down to male/female is about 30:70, even a little higher. We should acknowledge there is a problem.

I would like to see more emphasis on mothers when discussing families. I do not see much about the importance of mothers. I hate it when someone says to me, 'That is not an occupation'. Of course, it is. Mothering is a full-time occupation in many cases. That does not mean people cannot work, but it needs to be valued as part of families. When we are making a statement like this we should not leave that out. It is a very important part of our society and sometimes is put as a second level when it should be put at an equal level.

I would be happy to hear from the minister about an Indigenous issue which bugs me. I might be speaking out of turn so you can tell me off if you like, but the system of royalties on Aboriginal communities is biased. I understand royalties are given to people who have a connection with the patriarchal side of the land. That is difficult because, from experience, if your mother comes from that side you do not get anything. A traditional concept is being used for the disposal of a non-traditional factor, which is royalties. In that process, some people, especially females, often get nothing. You have the haves and have nots.

I am unsure if royalties were meant to be given out that way. There is a bias - probably also against males - whereby women sometimes miss out. I can give you my experience; it is good being cross-cultural. My wife's country is on the

other side of the Daly River. A company wants to do some heli-fishing so they gain permission. They said, 'We will pay you a royalty'. The only people who receive it are those who have an attachment through their father. My side of the family does not get anything. They are not crying about it and I am not particularly worried, but sometimes there is injustice in that.

I will also talk about men because, in this debate, we sometimes lose track of men. Several people mentioned women are in lower levels or certain ranges of employment. I am more concerned about men not being in some of those positions. There are seven schools in my area, some of which cross with the member for Goyder's schools. Practically all the teaching and administration positions in those schools are held by women. You could count the number of males who work in the school on one hand. There are more at Taminmin College because there have VET courses. However, generally speaking, they are nearly all women.

At a hospital, if a bloke nurse says hello, you say, 'Who are you?' You are so used to nurses being female.

One of my favourite occupations at estimates is looking at annual reports. A high percentage of the public service is women in quite high jobs, except for the top jobs such as Under Treasurer. Men are being left out in many cases. What concerns me more than ever is the concentration on women's issues, but I see a growing need for help for men.

Men's Sheds have sprung up in the last ten years because men have problems. The pub is next door to me and I go there for lunch or maybe to put \$2 on the last dog race at Warrigal. Lonely people go to the tavern for comfort because they do not have anyone else in their lives for whatever reason. There are probably complex reasons why. That is part of the reason Men's Sheds started although not everyone is involved in Men's Sheds.

Broken marriages – it has been said many times that family law is biased and some of our legislation is biased against men. I have had men at my desk crying because of the pain they are going through having to pay maintenance for a child. The marriage has broken up, they have had to split the house and the wife has gone south and is living with another bloke. They are living in a shed in an industrial area because everything is gone and they know their wife or partner is down south living with another bloke and they are paying maintenance. That is not just a one off. That has happened to me a number of times since being a member of parliament.

I wonder whether people realise men go through much pain. The emphasis tends to be on the woman and the child. I am not saying that should not be emphasised, but the balance of justice occasionally tips one way and you see that in people who are very close to suicide. They have lost everything - lost contact with their child, are flat broke and cannot afford to buy a house on their own. Someone on a single income has no hope of buying a house and is really struggling.

It is time we moved on from a Minister for Women's Policy. We should have a minister for social justice because we can encompass all the issues we are talking about and deal with them as they should be. Some of these issues are about justice. Whether it is discrimination, violence, low pay or whatever, we are trying to make things equitable and right and that is what justice is about.

When I see injustice for males in our society, why are we having a policy just for women? We can deal with all these issues under the umbrella of a minister for social justice. To some extent, we are putting up barriers by this being separate. There may have been good reason in years gone by, but the scales are starting to tip. I see the other side of the story and we would better as a parliament if we had a department which looked at these issues and social justice would cover that. It is about justice for all: families, men and women. That is fair and reasonable. There are issues where women will have cause to say, 'We want to fight for these rights'. That still could be done under the social justice umbrella. The very words 'social justice' mean fairness for all. When we talk about working together, black and white – the times I have heard those speeches - why do we separate when it comes to gender? Why not say if there is an injustice - male, female or families - we, as a parliament, look at it on its merits?

Yes, there are and will continue to be issues, but we need to bring the balance back because men are bashed, commit suicide and have difficulty getting jobs and that should be addressed because we are human beings. That is why the title 'social justice' would be a far better approach to what we are doing today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, that is my contribution. I put it forward as an idea for debate; you do not have to agree with me.

**Ms MANISON (Wanguri):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the government for bringing this important statement to the House and I thank members for their contributions.

There is no doubt women have made much progress in their efforts towards equality over the

years but there is more ground to make. I am looking forward to seeing the detail of the government's new women's policy on 8 March, a day we all come together to unite and celebrate International Women's Day.

Today, women have much more choice than previous generations. I am positive about what the future holds for young girls growing up today. However, there is more work to do and we need to keep our eye on the ball so we do not lose ground on what has been achieved.

It is great to see we have 10 strong females in the House all working towards advancing the needs of women and Territorians. It is abundantly clear the biggest issue challenging far too many Territory women is domestic violence, often heavily driven by the dreadful consequences of alcohol abuse. Domestic violence rates are devastating and too many women are suffering the pain and misery caused by this. There is no excuse for domestic violence and we in this House must do everything in our capacity to work towards stopping it. To do this, government has a role to play and must support programs to prevent domestic and family violence. It is also important to ensure we have strong support in place for victims.

I was pleased to see, a few years ago, completion of more accommodation for women and families escaping domestic and family violence. This included the new 12-bed custom designed Catherine Booth House in Darwin for women, and also a new eight-unit facility constructed in Darwin's northern suburbs operated by DAWS for families escaping violence, which is a step in the right direction to support people going through these dreadful times. These were great examples of how the Territory and Commonwealth governments worked together with the non-government sector to support women and children.

Tackling alcohol abuse is also critical to the protection and advancement of Territory women. The removal of the BDR has made it easier for problem drinkers to access alcohol. You only need to go for a run around the city at lunchtime and you will see drinkers out drinking. For me, it has been plain to see. I can see the litter of casks in our parks and streets again. We know alcohol abuse is the leading contributor to assaults and domestic violence, so for the protection of our women and children alcohol abuse must be addressed.

The removal of the BDR was done without anything to replace it. I urge the government to make tackling grog a top priority because each day as more grog flows more women suffer, and that is a fact.

We are all eagerly awaiting the government's efforts to tackle grog to help end the misery it causes so we can look forward to women living with a future of hope and without fear. We know government alone cannot resolve the issues around alcohol abuse but it does have a big role to play.

Government has more opportunity to drive initiatives to support the advancement of women in the new policy being delivered next month. As a major employer of Territory women, the government previously had some outstanding programs to help mentor and grow aspiring future leaders, and this type of support should be encompassed in the new policy.

The Territory public service is made up of 63% women. It is a leading employer of women, but women are still not on an equal footing in executive roles. Women make up 40% of executive contract positions, which are management and leadership positions in the public service. We know women are still not on an equal footing in management roles in the private sector and major industries as well, but that does not stop us from becoming the leaders in this change. At this time, not one chief executive of any department in the Territory is a woman. I, like the members for Drysdale and Nelson, believe in the merit principle. We do the cause for women no good if women are appointed into senior management roles based on their gender and not on merit. I struggle to see, out of around 32 government departments, that no woman has the merit to lead one of those agencies. Leadership roles in the public sector under the new government are all filled by men. Not one chief executive is a woman. Many people will be watching this to see how it progresses.

Over the years, the Territory government, through the Office of the Commissioner of Public Employment, has delivered some quality leadership programs for females in the public sector. This includes the Discovery Leadership Development for Women Program and the Lookrookin Indigenous Women's Leadership Program. It is good to see the Chief Minister's scholarships for women are continuing. It is important that government continues to offer these programs to assist future female leaders enhance their skills.

It was also positive to see, in 2011-12, the public sector continued to provide apprenticeships and traineeships for Territorians. Many of the people who filled these roles are young Territorians. I note that 83 of the 158 participants were females - about 60%. It is good to see them going through the program and building their training and skills for their future careers.

We know women in the workplace are often faced with the challenges of balancing family and career. Other speakers have commented on the women in this Chamber, many of whom have to balance the demands of a busy work life as well as a busy family life. The members for Nightcliff, Karama, Nhulunbuy, Arnhem and Araluen are leading by example and showing women can do it. It is fantastic to see. There is no doubt going forward we need to ensure workplaces are flexible so women have the opportunity to balance family and working life. Ultimately, there are no benefits from a workforce losing skilled and qualified workers, so it is important that workplaces look at ways in which they can provide mechanisms to assist staff with family.

The State of the Service Report 2011-12 shows that agencies have flexible work practices in place to assist staff. It is good to see the number of people with these arrangements in place is growing, which demonstrates our workplaces are trying to be more flexible to accommodate working women with children and people with family and other commitments. We are talking about arrangements such as job sharing, flexible work hours, part-time arrangements and home-based work to name a few. The next Territory public sector EBA is under way, providing more opportunities to look at these issues again to see what more we can do moving forward. I hope to see the public sector continue to provide opportunities for women in employment in the Territory, their training and development, as well as appropriate working conditions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, International Women's Day is on Friday, 8 March. It will be great to attend the Women's Network NT breakfast and the march on Saturday. I look forward to seeing the new policy and the work coming in the future to help Territory women.

**Ms ANDERSON (Women's Policy):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate all the speakers who have contributed to the debate on women's policy over the last days, and I especially congratulate the two men who have contributed to supporting women's policy: the members for Nelson and Port Darwin. It was fantastic to see in this debate. You hit the nail on the head, member for Nelson. It is not just talking about women, it is all of us having a journey in improving the lives of not only women but our families - our children, our men - and ensuring the family structure stays together.

What you said led me to the condolence motion from the member for Karama this afternoon. She said the thread of a marriage is really important. That thread goes towards people in the community as well, as it did with the person who passed away. It was not just the husband-and-wife thread; it was a family thread, a football

thread, and a community thread. We need to have interagency policies across all sectors of the public service where health, education and housing are responsible for women's policy. We need to integrate women's policy into other departments as well and we see that in the future.

I pick up on something from the member for Nightcliff about the policy of the Country Liberal Party. The policy to be launched on 8 March will encompass the policy of the Country Liberal Party. The member for Nightcliff does not understand that this is a direction from COAG. We need to look at it and ensure it is focused on aspects of COAG directives. The Country Liberal Party policy will encompass and embrace the three areas of the women's policy. We did not throw out the previous Madam Speaker's women's policy. We have used parts of the Country Liberal Party policy and the previous Madam Speaker knows that; I have spoken to her. It is very important not to spread misinformation.

The member for Stuart hit the nail on the head. It is about us as women working together and setting an example inside this House. It does not matter that we come from different sides of parliament. We will have our debates but, in this area and the area of child protection, we need to be careful that as leaders in this Chamber we set an example so women following in our footsteps or listening to us can say, 'These women are setting an example for future generations of Territory women'. Not only politicians and bureaucrats listen to our debate; ordinary mums and young ladies sitting at home might be interested and tune in.

I thank everybody who has contributed to this statement from the bottom of my heart. It is a real example. The member for Nhulunbuy and Madam Speaker will agree, it is fantastic to see the two young ladies, the members for Nightcliff and Wanguri, and our own young members for Drysdale and Arnhem, being so involved in this debate.

I congratulate every person who contributed to the debate. Through fair and honest debate in this parliament we can be on a journey of reconciliation with ourselves, setting a great example for all women across the Northern Territory, and ensuring we work together to develop the best policy to move women forward. I will guarantee and give you any opportunity to ensure, member for Nhulunbuy - to be on a journey we all travel to make the lives of women in the Northern Territory something we can look back on and say we were part of the journey. We put these stepping stones in place to ensure women would never be abused or bullied in the workplace. It is terrifying to hear young women

are still being murdered in town camps. We have to change focus.

We will put educational material out to ensure women understand their rights, not just in the workplace but in Aboriginal communities. We can use our Aboriginal media to put that message out. Let us as women, politicians and leaders in the Northern Territory all be part of growing Northern Territory women. It is like planting a tree to be focused on the future, ensuring the next two generations of our young women growing up in the Northern Territory are not exposed to any form of violence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, once again, I thank you all for contributing to this statement and a special thank you to the two men who contributed. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, members for Nelson and Port Darwin.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

#### ADJOURNMENT

**Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to briefly comment on the Northern Territory Geological Society and the good work the people who belong to that society do, and also the fun times they sometimes have on their off work schedule.

Recently, I hosted a reception at Parliament House on the Speaker's Green for the Northern Territory Geological Society which attended by about 60 people, mostly geologists, geophysicists, departmental people, government people and others who have an interest in the exploration side of the industry. It was a precursor to the annual dinner which was held at the Char Restaurant which was a delightful affair and well attended. I pay my compliments to some of the departmental people and others who are involved with the Geological Society, particularly Christine Edgoose who is the Chair of the geological group, Ian Scrimgeour, Dot Close and Jo Whelan who not only organised the dinner but are a very integral and active part of the Department of Mines and Energy Geological Survey division.

They are a funny lot, these geologists and geophysicists. They speak a different language which most normal people, like me, do not fully understand but I accept there is something there...

**Mr Westra van Holthe:** But they love their work.

**Ms PURICK:** I pick up on the minister's interjection. He finds them an interesting group of people also. I will give you a couple of examples. The copper gold potential of the Arrernte region links between magnetism technism, regional scale alteration and mineralisation...

**Mr Westra van Holthe:** Hear, hear. Got it!

**Ms PURICK:** Hear, hear! Members know exactly what I am talking about, and I know they have embraced it and everyone who knows their periodic table will know what Cu and Au stand for...

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am sure there is a standing order that says you are only allowed to use English in this House.

**Ms PURICK:** Not scientific expressions. We have the spectral reflectance characteristics of type example rocks. Or we have the geophysical targeting of potential uraniferous stratigraphy under cover. I know there is something in there but the words that I picked up that I understand are potential, characteristics, targeting and undercover.

In all seriousness, it was a good evening. The minister provided an apology as he had pressing engagements in regard to his portfolios. The shadow minister was there, as were the heads of the department. Alister Trier was there, which was good, and many industry people, some from many years ago who have made many contributions to the Northern Territory. I again thank them for the opportunity to continue my relationship with them, and I wish them well in their up-and-coming Annual Geological Exploration Seminar which the government organises every year. It is held in Alice Springs in mid-March, and is always well attended. The minister is attending and opening that seminar.

It is at this seminar the government employees of the geological survey present the work and the data they have undertaken in the past year regarding the geological potential of the Northern Territory. It is a very competitive and important program, and I know the Country Liberal government is very supportive of it and will continue to support it. Once again, well done to the organisers and all the best.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is one other comment I would like to make. I understand that you and your good wife, Rhonda, are approaching your 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. I wish you all the best. I am not sure why and how Rhonda has lasted so long, but you are very blessed to have a woman like Rhonda as your wife. You have been blessed with four great sons, all taller than you so they must take after their mother; they are wonderfully

good looking and intelligent, so they must also take after their mother. You are blessed with grandchildren and will have a lovely weekend together. I wish you all the best and know you have had a lovely life together. I wish you many more years together and lots more grandchildren, perhaps great-grandchildren. All the best, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** My contribution will be completely different, but I congratulate Mr Deputy Speaker and your wife, Rhonda. We have known you for a long time when you lived in the rural area. I am heading toward the same number of years of marriage, too. Marriage has been spoken about a lot today.

I will talk about a document which was released today. It is a case study of Berrimah Business Park storm water management planning issues. That might sound dull to most people, nearly as dull as the member for Goyder's speech on geology, but it is an important document and I hope the Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment will take it up and look at the recommendations in this document.

It is an issue raised by a constituent of mine who lives in Knuckey Lagoon. About two years ago, we had a cyclone where a huge amount of water flowed through Knuckey Lagoon. In fact, some houses were inches from being flooded. You could drive through Knuckey Lagoon and say that cannot be but, in fact, it can get very close to the floors of houses in that area. The concern was if you go past the old Coonawarra Defence base along the Stuart Highway, you will see a new Berrimah Business Park and, in its design, all the water leaving that park drain into Knuckey Lagoon, and Knuckey Lagoon is a conservation reserve.

Two issues arose. One, was the constituent's concern that all that extra water in a big Wet Season would mean his house would be flooded. I had a concern that no one had looked at the potential for polluting the Knuckey Lagoon area. You are coming off a business park, hard stand, and there did not seem to be any design in the approvals for that development to ensure Knuckey Lagoon was protected. I will not go into all the details - people can get those themselves - but out of that came a series of recommendations, and I hope the minister will seriously look at those recommendations.

The recommendations from the EPA went to the various departments, including what is now the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment. However, one problem is this particular document has crossed over between governments. This has taken nearly two years to come to fruition, so you have old departments and new departments. The

new departments have commented on the recommendations and, in most cases, they have either acknowledged the recommendations are good, or they have asked for changes to recommendations, which the EPA has done.

I will quickly run through, without too much of the history, just to let you know these were some of the issues raised in *A Case Study: Berrimah Business Park Stormwater Management & Planning Issues* under the heading, 'Systemic issues in the planning process with environmental implications'. Point 6.1, Regulation of storm water to protect the environment. The recommendation is that the Northern Territory government work with local government, developers and other key stakeholders to assess the potential costs and benefits of adopting a less fragmented approach to storm water management.

It seems many people have their fingers in the pie - or in the water - when it comes to who is responsible for storm water drainage. In some cases it is the council, in other cases it is the government because when you are dealing with waterways it is their responsibility as well. There needs to be some assessment of who is responsible so when it comes to storm water management it is not as fragmented as it is now.

Point 6.2, Improving regulation of planning activities impacting on waterways. This is an interesting area because in the debates last year in relation to the Pelly Road/Lorikeet Court blocks which were flooded, the department tried to claim that the lagoon which caused the flooding at Pelly Road/Lorikeet Court was not a waterway. To this day, I still say they are wrong, because the water flows out of that lagoon into the nearby lagoon, and that lagoon flows into another lagoon which goes into a creek. They claimed that because it did not have specific pathway to the next lagoon it was not a waterway.

The EPA has picked up on that and recommends the *Water Act* be amended to clarify what constitutes a waterway, what constitutes interference with a waterway, and what constitutes an act likely to obstruct the flow of water in a waterway. I hope the minister, when he sees that, will look at a review of the *Water Act* because it is definitely needed.

Point 6.3, Improving the quality of planning decisions. The recommendation is the DCA clarifies its expectations of government agencies in providing advice on planning applications and the relevant departments assess the adequacy of training and resources to meet the expectation. That is an important recommendation and applies to the flooding at Pelly Road/Lorikeet Court. But, it is saying the advice the department gives the DCA should be clear and that people should be

trained to ensure the provision of advice on planning applications is of high quality.

Point 6, Improving environmental outcomes of planning decisions. The recommendation is that the extent to which environmental implications of rezoning decisions are considered in the planning process is clarified. What appears to be happening is when ministers look at rezoning land there does not seem to be anything which says before you rezone it, rural into industrial might sound okay, but the implications for the environment might be that the run-off from that industrial area will affect the rural area and could affect the environment nearby. There is a recommendation there that when rezoning of land is considered we need to look at the environmental implications.

The last one is 6.5, Improving accountability and transparency in planning decisions. When planning decisions are not routine and involve high public interest, then the planning authority provide more detailed rationale for its decisions.

It happens there were two areas of opposition to this. I will read this:

*When the BBP development was first rezoned in 2008 it attracted strong opposition particularly from the Department of Defence and the Darwin International Airport. They raised concerns about community safety and the safety of aircraft passengers and crew, among other matters. They raised the same objections when the development application was exhibited for public submissions. The Planning Authority's reasons for not upholding the objections were not made clear. It is likely that the provision of more detailed rationale for decisions would help to build public confidence in the planning system.*

That certainly is a concern. You would have thought if the Department of Defence and the Darwin International Airport opposed that development then the DCA would have made sure there were very clear reasons as to why - and they have to be planning reasons, by the way - they did not accept the objections of those two groups. Otherwise, all you do is end up going back to appeal. As well as that, the public loses faith in the planning system because they cannot understand, for the life of them, why a planning decision was made. That is an important decision as well.

I can only say at this stage I need to do a bit more work on this document. I thank the EPAs, because this was started by the previous EPA. I was concerned it was not going to continue, but I

rang the new NT EPA and they said, 'Yes, this has gone far enough for this issue to be concluded'.

Madam Speaker, I thank them for the work they have done on it, and I simply ask the minister to take note of the recommendations. They are important recommendations, not just for the rural area, but for the Darwin area, especially as there is a great deal of talk about infill. Zones will be changed, development will increase, and this has an impact on the environment. So, it is important that the minister looks at this urgently.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale):** Madam Speaker, I continue my documentation of the life of Margot Cox, Palmerston Citizen of the Year for 2013.

When Margot Cox's daughter, Janelle, was four or five years old, a young mother whose husband worked with Fred sadly passed away during an asthma attack. The mother left behind a baby and a toddler. Being the generous and kind-spirited woman that she is, Margot approached the widowed father and offered to look after his children while he worked. The father gratefully accepted and Margot undertook the role of mother for the following three years. The oldest child called Margot 'mum', and she emphasises this was with the permission of the child's father. Margot's kindness will be forever remembered by those children who continue to keep in regular contact with her.

Margot's mother, with whom she started her Territory adventure, lived with Margot, Fred and the children until she passed away in 1970. On the passing of Margot's mother, Fred decided they should move to Alice Springs where two of their sons were living at the time. The boys missed their mother and father and welcomed the news of their move. Unfortunately, at that time, Fred was very unwell and Margot was Fred's full-time carer. She nursed him lovingly every day and without assistance until his passing in 1979.

Margot moved back to Darwin after Fred's passing and lived in a room under a police officer's house. The police officer's wife had left him along with their two children. Margot, the charitable woman that she is, again assumed the responsibility of raising these children for the next three years.

Twenty-five years ago, Margot moved into a very modest Housing Commission ground level unit in Gray. She remains there today in an immaculately decorated unit, full of family photos, Indigenous art and all things coloured soft pink.

Margot did not waste any time in keeping herself busy and, in 1989, she took up ballroom dancing at the old Furlanos in Fannie Bay. Many other

mature-aged ladies joined her in this adventure and together they had a great deal of fun.

There is no question that Margot has contributed to the Northern Territory community in more ways than one. She cannot resist but get involved in community activities and continues to generously contribute her time and efforts to the Palmerston community.

Margot sews lovely wine glass coasters that are secured to the base of a wine glass by layers of fabric. She also makes scissor holders and other things that are donated to primary schools for their Mother's Day stalls, and to the Country Women's Association stalls.

Margot also pioneered the meat tray raffle at Palmerston Shopping Centre, an initiative she started with John Wilson some 18 years ago. Mrs La Pira is a huge supporter of the raffle and has been a dear friend to Margot for many years. Mrs La Pira even had the Palmerston Shopping Centre community wheel made. Margot sits at Palmerston Shopping Centre every Saturday morning, from 7.30 am until 11 am. Sadly, John no longer accompanies Margot, as he became ill and passed away, but she now has many helpers who volunteer their time to sell tickets.

Margot tells me that she has a number of regular players and, on days when they cannot be there, she saves their favourite numbers for them. The funds raised from the meat raffle go to a large variety of initiatives in Palmerston and the rural area. Importantly, the money raised goes to initiatives that can demonstrate they are trying to raise their own money.

Some of the initiatives include: sending school children to the Paralympics; purchasing compost bins, garden equipment and cooking utensils; purchasing the honour board at the City of Palmerston; donating money to the Men's Shed, Breathe Easy, and Parkinson's Association; purchasing the leaflets stamp for Arthritis and Osteoporosis; and personally made-up Christmas hampers for Alzheimer's NT and the elderly.

Apart from being a fabulous ballroom dancer and boot scooter, Margot can sing. She sings with the highly-esteemed Palmerston Senior Songsters, who were awarded Palmerston City's 2013 Community Event of the Year. Margot sings with other wonderful Palmerston residents such as Marg Lee - who I have known since I was seven years old - Marg Moore, Lenny and Jim, Rod and his wife, Chris, Betty, Lucy, Aylett, Jan and others who sing the songs of yesteryear. They volunteer their time every Wednesday and sing at our nursing homes and palliative care right across the Darwin region, including Tracy Care, Pearl, Tiwi and Terrace Gardens. The Senior Songsters are

aged between 60 and 85 years and they do a fantastic job of bringing joy and happiness to those who have made a significant contribution to our Territory.

I briefly mentioned that Margot can boot scoot. She is a Groovy Gran. In fact, she was a founding member of the Palmerston Senior Scooters. Unfortunately, Margot decided to give up this beloved pastime at the age of 80 due to her osteoarthritis. Margot will be remembered by Boot Scooting NT, and a photo of her cutting her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday cake features as the banner photo on its website.

Margot is proud of all her children who have achieved so much and brought so much joy to her family, particularly, Eric, who received an Order of Australia Medal for his contribution to the buffalo industry in the Territory. Eric has two children, Scott and Aaron; Janelle has a son, James, and Cyril has two children, Katie and Ryan. Katie, Margot's granddaughter, also has a son, Margot's great-grandson, Henry.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table a couple of documents that Tasma McCall, the member for Blain's former Electorate Officer, helped Margot create. They have some lovely photos of Margot and Fred's time building the road to Bulman and Mainorou and some of their story.

Leave granted.

**Ms FINOCCHIARO:** Thank you. On behalf of the Chief Minister, the member for Brennan, Tasma McCall, Marlise Lasevicios, Angie Walker and Fiona Lynch and all Palmerston residents, I wholeheartedly thank you for your contribution to the Territory, particularly at Palmerston. It has been an absolute pleasure getting to know you, and I look forward to working with you over the coming year in your role as Palmerston Citizen of the Year.

In closing, I welcome Liz and Ken Frohloff to Darwin. They are my Electorate Officer, Angie's, parents and they have travelled from a small town that I can never remember the name of in Queensland, but I know that it is between Ipswich and Toowoomba. They inform me that I never need to remember it because no one ever does! So I do not feel so guilty.

I was really pleased Angie picked them up from the airport and brought them straight here to Parliament House because Ken is very interested in politics and he was able to meet the Chief Minister and a few colleagues in passing, and we were able to give them a wonderful tour of Parliament House. They certainly enjoyed the view from the fifth floor. I was very pleased to meet Ken. Liz, I have met you before, and it was

great to see you. Thank you for letting me abduct your daughter and use her to her full extent; she is an absolute machine. I have talked about her in adjournment before. I could not achieve half the things I do without her, and you should be very proud of the things she does. You have a very beautiful granddaughter, Kayla, who very much enjoys chewing up crayons and rubbing them into the carpet of the electorate office, and putting her little paws everywhere. We often find little surprises after her visits, but it is always enjoyable and challenging at the same time. Welcome back to Darwin, it is great to see you. I hope you enjoy your stay, and you are certainly welcome here anytime.

**Ms FYLES (Nightcliff):** Madam Speaker, I totally understand little surprise visits. We are in week four of term one of the school year, so it is well and truly under way. The schools in my electorate have had a very busy start to the year undertaking a number of activities including participating in the Bombing of Darwin Commemoration Day. I was pleased to see students from the schools in my electorate participate in activities around this day and attend events. It is such an important part of the Territory's history. I remember growing up in Alawa where the streets around where my parents still live are named after a number of the victims. This often reminds me of the loss of lives and the tragic events in our city, even now when I go to visit.

Nightcliff Primary School has announced Bryn Jarvis and Grace Hendry as the School Captains and Jack Haritos and Francheska Jocson as the Vice Captains. I congratulate Taylor Prew as the Australia Day Citizen from Nightcliff Primary School.

I congratulate the following St Paul's Primary School students - Jacob Johns, Matisse Gabbert, Bailey Sullivan, Michael Mullany, Lara Penney, Dom Coburn, James Toohey and Olivia Hatzimalis - who are the 2013 House Captains. I congratulate Olivia Burgess who received the Australia Day Citizen Award for St Paul's Primary School.

Nightcliff Middle School does not have school captains, but they have SRC Leaders who go through a similar selection process to win the position and have similar responsibilities. Two teachers, Melissa Davy and Sian Howard work with the students, and the SRC students for Nightcliff Middle School for 2013 are: Maria Sounios, Kailah Dunser, Rachel Channells, Dannika Walsh, Christine Dyer, Jordan Wilkins, Jamie Macdougall, Manoli Giannikouris, Kartik Singh, Kaile Hook, Harrison Puddey, Brandon Lazaro, Kelsie Curnow, Nikky Kalitsis, and Emerald Tiedeman. The Australia Day Student

Citizen of the Year Award winner for Nightcliff Middle School was Summer Maguire.

The Essington School, another great school in my electorate, is currently finalising their student leadership positions, so I hope to mention them in parliament in coming weeks, maybe during the next sittings. I congratulate Mickaylee Nobbs-Carcuro, who was the Australia Day Student Citizen. I also congratulate Davis Gale who recently represented the Northern Territory in athletics in Hobart. Congratulations also to three swimmers, Jesse Staples, Saskia Smid and Amy Messenger who competed at the National Open Water Swimming Championships, something I would have loved to have competed in when I was at high school. Also, congratulations to Aaaran Jakimczuk who competed in the golf in America recently, a pretty amazing achievement for a school student from Darwin. Well done to those students.

I take time to mention the Greek School which is well under way. They have had around 100 more enrolments this year than last year. That is wonderful, and I look forward to catching up with all the students there soon.

Another issue I would like to speak about is not about schools but something very dear to the residents of Nightcliff: the funding for the feasibility study of Nightcliff Sports Club. The Nightcliff Sports Club and precinct is a wonderful sporting and community asset in the heart of the electorate of Nightcliff. It services Nightcliff, Rapid Creek and Coconut Grove. During the 2012 NT general election, both the Labor Party and Country Liberals committed funding to undertake a feasibility study of the oval precinct with the aim of developing a master plan.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the Nightcliff Sports Club newsletter from August 2012.

Leave granted.

**Ms FYLES:** As I mentioned, this document shows that both parties committed funding. The Chief Minister previously stated in the House he would honour all election commitments. That was on 1 November 2012 in Question Time when I spoke to him about the Nightcliff Police Beat. I quote his answer:

*Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Nightcliff for her question. Perhaps it is hard to believe, but we will honour our commitments. Wait for the mini-budget!*

A number of residents and members of the sports club have raised this with me. We have contacted and written, but we would really like to see this

commitment honoured sooner rather than later. With the government granting \$100 000 to Tracy Village Social and Sports Club in the lead-up to the Wanguri by-election, the community has become anxious awaiting news on delivery of this commitment. I raise that tonight in the House. Those funds would go a long way to having a master plan for the area, and it would be great to see that commitment honoured.

**Ms LEE (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, tonight I want to speak briefly on what can only be described as a joyous and momentous occasion. I speak of a remarkable person named Major James Taylor who turned the ripe old age of 102 last week. Remarkable seems to be a bit of an understatement when you consider very few people in Australia make this milestone, let alone an Indigenous person. As Michael Bird, CEO of the Roper Gulf Shire had to say:

*Mr Taylor had written history. You know what the survival rates are for Indigenous people but he made it through what was probably the most challenging century.*

How right is that? I thank an astute aged care coordinator who works for Wugularr Aged Care, Beswick, Vicki Ngu. Vicki went out of her way last year and made it her mission to track down Major's age and get hold of his birth certificate. As reported in the *Katherine Times*, Miss Ngu stated she could not believe it when she found out Major was already 101 years old at that time. Major was reportedly born at Elliott, although there were other reports he was born at Montejinni Station out VRD way.

A media release by the Roper Gulf Shire stated that a Beswick local man is celebrating his 102nd birthday. Major James Taylor has lived through many of the great and catastrophic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and he has also seen the impact of European settlement in the Northern Territory from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He has seen many changes, good and bad. He was born on 1 January 1911 near Elliott in the Northern Territory, then part of South Australia. In January 2013, he turned 102, a rare age for an Australian, and even rarer for an Indigenous Australian.

Major Taylor, a retired stockman, has lived in and around Beswick most of his adult life and currently lives with his granddaughter and family in the community with the help of caring staff at Wugularr Aged Care for the past three years.

He knew he was old, but not quite that old. At the time of his birth, records were poorly kept or non-existent, especially for Indigenous births. In 2012, with the help of staff of the Wugularr Aged Care Centre he finally received his birth certificate. He was 101 years old.

To celebrate his 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday, the Mayor of the Roper Gulf Shire, Mr Tony Jack, arranged for a birthday celebration on 14 February 2013 at 11 am at the aged care centre in Beswick. At the celebration, Mayor Jack will present Mr Taylor with letters of congratulations from the Queen, the Governor-General and the Prime Minister. Those formal congratulations, obviously significant in life, and normally a straightforward event for many Australians who reach 100 years of age, took a lot more effort and application to achieve in Major Taylor's case, and involved the support and lobbying of many people, including Territory and Commonwealth politicians.

The Wugularr Beswick community see this event as a very important celebration and recognition of one of their elders, and an elder Australian. Mr Taylor, who is blind and has reduced hearing, still has a strong and vital mind and is happy to talk about his life.

I had the pleasure of attending Major's birthday celebration in Beswick last week, and it was a fantastic atmosphere. Many family members and friends were in attendance, including his granddaughters, Theresa and Eunice Anderson and their five children, all his extended family and friends, and many community members who had the privilege to be part of a momentous milestone by this old fella. Others who attended and wished Major all the best included the Mayor of Roper Gulf Shire, Tony Jack, the CEO Michael Berto, the Roper Gulf Shire staff, Beswick Clinic staff, and Sunrise Health Deputy CEO, Dale Campbell, and many more I cannot name here, but there were hundreds.

I was very happy and proud to see this old man receive letters of congratulations, and I hope I witness a few more of this old man's birthday parties in the future.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table the newspaper articles.

Leave granted.

**Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy):** Madam Speaker, I have a number of good news stories I wish to place on the record this evening in relation to the achievements of the good people of Nhulunbuy.

First, Nhulunbuy's only high school - my congratulations to Hailey Williams, who scored the highest ATAR score at Nhulunbuy High School for 2012 with what I thought was an impressive score of 89. Hailey has accepted a place to study at the University of Queensland in 2013.

In keeping with the tradition established by former member, Syd Stirling, I was pleased to present Hailey with a cheque recognising her as the Dux

of Nhulunbuy High School. I hope the funds go some way to helping her with the many costs associated with studying and, of course, living some distance from home.

I know Hailey has been working hard during the vacation period with a position at the Nhulunbuy Community Childcare Centre, saving as much as she could, and good on her for doing that. Parents, Vicky and Greg, must be enormously proud of Hailey and her older sister, Cassie, who was also dux of the school a couple of years before Hailey.

I also congratulate the graduating class of Nhulunbuy High School for 2012 and wish them all the very best in their future endeavours: Sally Naughton; Ainslea Barnes; Courtney Hodgson; Kate White; Maddison Reid; Erica Hoani; Carlene Tawhi; Lakota Johnson; Hailey Williams; Matt Tutini; Rhys Regan; Christopher Hunter; Salle Frumenzi; Bradley Price; Luke Veltman; and Jason Henning.

I very much enjoyed the end-of-year celebrations of the Class of 2012 last November at their formal at the Arnhem Club. They are truly a delightful, talented and terrific bunch of young people, and, I must say, they all scrubbed up beautifully - young women in some stunning gowns and dangerously high heels, and some very dapper and handsome young men. What a shame, of all the Territory senior schools that were part of the *NT News* special lift out of Year 12 photos from their formal nights, Nhulunbuy High School somehow missed out. Thankfully, the *Arafura Times* and good old Facebook captured Nhulunbuy's Year 12 class of 2012. I certainly wish them all the very best in their future endeavours.

Still on the subject of Nhulunbuy High School where I was, many years ago, an English teacher, I was also pleased to present Nhulunbuy High School students Jasmine Body and Bintang Daly with the Lynne Walker MLA Citizenship Awards for 2012. Congratulations to Bintang and Jasmine on their many achievements, both at school and in the wider community. They are both outstanding role models for their peers.

I also sponsor these awards for citizenship for Nhulunbuy Primary School. Well done to Year 6 students, Benjamin Jones, and Ella Staude who were the recipients of this award. These students contribute to their school and community and are held in high esteem as young leaders and active members of the school and the community. I know Ben to be very involved in Scouts and I am sure many other things, and Ella Staude is earning recognition as a very talented young writer. I enjoy listening to her on Gove FM when she does a show on Saturday afternoons with her mum.

My contribution to the end-of-year presentation night awards at Nhulunbuy Christian College is to sponsor the Creative Arts Awards. Unfortunately, their presentation night last year fell within the parliamentary sittings period, so I was unable to be there to personally present awards to Hannah Maag, Klara Holland and Talor Morgan. Nhulunbuy Christian College has a great creative arts program under the direction of the very talented Kylie Farnsworth, who has worked on some fantastic projects with students over the years. The mosaic project a couple of years ago, which resulted in a collage on one of the school's exterior walls, is an exquisite piece of public art which enhances the school grounds and is a wonderful and lasting tribute to the students who made it.

I now turn to Australia Day in Nhulunbuy. I congratulate Jackie McGrath on being named Nhulunbuy Citizen of the Year as part of the Australia Day celebrations. Jackie is an incredibly worthy recipient of this recognition. She works tirelessly and unselfishly within our community. I am amazed at how she manages to squeeze in all the volunteer hours on top of full-time work and family commitments. Jackie has been involved with countless clubs and organisations in administrative and fundraising roles on committees: swimming, surf lifesaving, junior Rugby League, as well as the Year 6 Canberra trip for the primary school, to name just a few. She is a very humble individual who is always thinking of and doing for others; she has a great sense of humour and nothing is ever too much trouble.

Never far from Jackie is her husband, Rowdy. Whenever I see him, I say 'Hey Rowdy, shouldn't you be behind a barbecue somewhere?' He is one top bloke and I know he is a very proud bloke who provides fantastic support to Jackie and puts in many volunteer hours. Wherever Jackie and Rowdy are, kids, Gabby and Tom, are never too far away. What great role models they have.

Jackie's name popped up again along with long-term local, Fiona Pearce, to receive the award for staging the best community event for the Australia Day Awards. They took it on themselves to organise the G-Spot Challenge. This was literally a labour of love to raise significant funds to support a local family going through incredibly tough times. It highlighted for me that our community will always pull together when we see a family going through hard times, but this will only happen where there are people such as Jackie and Fiona to step up to the mark and take the lead. The G-Spot Challenge was based on the reality television show, *The Amazing Race*. Community support for the event was overwhelming. Thirty teams, dressed in costumes and with decorated vehicles, competed in the

event which raised \$14 000 on one Saturday afternoon.

Fiona Pearce, like Jackie, is another selfless and tireless volunteer in Nhulunbuy who also juggles work, family and being involved in endless sporting and other organisations. I know I am not doing her volunteer résumé justice here, but she has been involved in Arafura Dance, the Annual Nhulunbuy Primary School Canberra trip for Year 6s, soccer, rugby, and the local surf lifesaving club. She has also coordinated at least two Relay for Life events which have had huge support and raised tens of thousands of dollars for the Cancer Council. If anyone has ever seen or participated in a Relay for Life event, you will understand the magnitude of coordination involved.

For Fiona, too, I need to acknowledge the support she gets from her husband, Tree, and teenagers, Tom and Sarah.

In my second last mention of Australia Day in Nhulunbuy, I congratulate Yirrkala community elder and senior Traditional Owner, Mr Wali Wunungmurra, who was nominated for the Citizen of the Year Award. Mr Wunungmurra, a respected elder of his clan and Chairman of the Northern Land Council, is also the last survivor of the delegation which presented the famous Bark Petition to the federal parliament 50 years ago this year, objecting to the establishment of mining operations at Gove. It was a landmark case which precipitated land rights.

Mr Wunungmurra was nominated for his lifelong dedication to improving health and education throughout the region, but I also place on the record his tireless efforts in working towards better relationships between Indigenous and other Australians, and, most recently, his strong and very public support for 'gas to Gove' which involved the publication of an open letter to the Chief Minister in the *Northern Territory News* pleading with him to make 'gas to Gove' a reality.

It was not until I saw the full page in the *Northern Territory News* on Australia Day that I spotted the Australia Day Council of the NT Student Citizen Awards. For the record, recipients receiving this honour were Pia Lynch, Chanti Venter and Aidan Piper, all very deserving of the recognition for going above and beyond and making contributions to their school and their community.

Congratulations to the East Arnhem Rugby Union Women's team which made it to the semifinal of the recent Hottest 7s World Tournament held in Darwin over the Australia Day weekend. Members of the East Arnhem Rugby Union squad, men and women, included Jacelyn Honson, Erica Hoani, Ruan Smith, Sean O'Connor better known as Oka who was the women's coach, Joanne

Barthern, Stef Murdock, Jye Snowden, Olivia Lynch, Emily Osbourne, Wayne Raymond, Layna Busch, Rhys Mulholland, Billy Guyton, and Hayden Richard, Eddie Mulholland and Stephen Torres-Carne – these last three gentlemen are coaches.

Rhys Mullholland was also chosen for the NT Country Team that took on the NT City team in Darwin on 1 February.

Well done to the East Arnhem Rugby Union men's team who won the Barra Division, making it through the tournament undefeated. I cannot recall the exact prize, but I believe it involved a rather lucrative cash prize which will, no doubt, assist towards the team's future bids to compete at other tournaments. I am very proud to be a sponsor of East Arnhem Rugby Union, and was very happy to help out when Donna Mulholland approached me for some extra financial help to get the first ever women's team over to the tournament. Well done to East Arnhem Rugby Union and, particularly, the women's team.

Madam Speaker, during the last adjournment I farewelled my former Electorate Officer, Karen Cislowski, and now I wish to acknowledge and welcome my new Electorate Officer, Suzanne Hunter, who is doing a fabulous job in assisting me in the office. Thank you, Suzanne, for preparing that long list of notes for adjournment tonight; I did not manage to get through them all, but we will make sure during the next sittings that we capture the achievements of other Nhulunbuy people.

**Mr McCARTHY (Barkly):** Madam Speaker, my adjournment tonight is a plea to the CLP government's Budget Cabinet. Because Budget Cabinet will soon lock down, you have an opportunity to turn around some of your decisions that are hurting Territory families.

The Wanguri by-election was a temperature test for the Country Liberal Party government with a resounding win to the Labor candidate. The Darwin constituency voiced their concerns about CLP broken promises in the 2012 general election, delivering a 12% swing to Labor and sending a clear message to government about listening, not lecturing.

The Darwin suburbs delivered the message to government that broken promises will not be tolerated, price hikes must be in measured increments, and a political agenda for sacking public servants with jobs for the boys will not be tolerated.

Returning the seat to Labor strengthens the opposition with thousands of voices declaring that CLP policies for massive increases to the cost of

living hurting hard-working families, reducing consumer confidence, and damage to small business are not supported.

Prior to the by-election I travelled in the Barkly listening to the cost of living debate from a regional perspective which included staff and budget cuts to remote schools, power price hikes, escalating prices for food, and how people on fixed incomes were most vulnerable to increases in the cost of living.

The CLP bush members are silent on their government's policies; however, I encourage them to speak out in their Caucus and Cabinet rooms on behalf of Territorians in the regions who are feeling the financial pain through sharp price increases for power, water, transport and food.

The CLP Treasurer lectures Territorians on previous lower taxes and charges in the Northern Territory as a thing of the past, while the federal guru of Liberal doctrine, Tony Abbott, delivers his policy for providing tax incentives to attract and retain workers in regional and remote parts of Northern Australia.

I remind the CLP government that a Labor fiscal stimulus strategy off the back of eight surplus budgets was designed to save Territory jobs and deliver important public infrastructure during the global financial crisis. The logical conclusion to a fiscal stimulus strategy is a step-out plan for returning the budget to surplus over forward years, designed by the previous Labor government, recorded by the Treasury and presented to the public before the 2012 election.

The incoming CLP government, having campaigned on lowering the cost of living, sacked the Under Treasurer, formed a hand-picked board of financial managers, and embarked on the economic wrecking ball approach for reducing the public sector, hiking the cost of power, water and sewerage, and increasing government charges.

Territorians understand budgets need balance and are telling the NT government that the changes require a staged approach, and should not destroy consumer confidence which, in turn, hurts small business.

The public service underpins the economy of regional and remote areas providing jobs and delivering services, so radical cuts to travel, departmental budgets and jobs create a compound effect where people reduce their spending in the local economy, families leave town, and government service delivery is reduced. This is all at a time when towns like Tennant Creek and the Barkly region sit on the edge of another minerals boom.

Madam Speaker, short-sighted, economic rationalist policy will have a disastrous effect on towns like Tennant Creek and the future of the Barkly region while the Country Liberal Party is scrambling with a dash for cash to pay for unfunded election promises in the bush. The question is: which bush electorates will be favoured? .

Motion agreed; the Assembly adjourned.