

Madam Speaker Purick took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of Year 5/6 Girraween Primary School students accompanied by Miss Mel Hood, Miss Donna Dickinson, Mr Scott Dawson and Mr Jamie Cutler. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to our visitors and I hope you enjoy your time at Parliament House. Girraween is an exceptionally good school with very bright students.

Members: Hear, hear!

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR Mr Neville Perkins

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of Hon Neville Perkins, a previous member of the Legislative Assembly. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

TABLED PAPER Freedom of Information, Privacy Protection and Public Interest Disclosures in the Northern Territory, Annual Report 2011-12

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I table the *Freedom of Information, Privacy Protection and Public Interest Disclosures in the Northern Territory, Annual Report 2011-12* by the Commissioner for Public Interest Disclosure.

I table this report because it raises several very important questions and casts a very dark shadow over the administration of procurement in the Northern Territory.

I will quote from several pages in the report in my tabling statement. The period under review is the period 2011-12, the period of the former government. Amongst other things, Alan Borg said on page 1:

Procurement, an essential function across the whole of government, has been identified in jurisdictions across the world as the process most likely to engender corrupt conduct. The Northern Territory is no exception and investigations have revealed that in some public bodies a clan mentality exists within certain small work groups where improper conduct is tolerated and supported with a 'get the job done regardless' attitude and where the giving

and receiving of gifts and benefits is a common practice.

If that does not send a shiver up the spine of many people in the Northern Territory, I am not sure what will.

On page 16 of the report, Mr Borg reveals:

OCPID investigated an allegation that a public officer had released confidential information including pricing and specifications in relation to a tender for the provision of services to a potential tenderer prior to the release of tender documents. It was further alleged that the public officer had accepted gifts and hospitality from competing firms over a number of years.

The investigation revealed that the officer had been the project manager and contact officer on a number of high value government projects and over time had become friends with many contractors and suppliers within the industry. This friendship included receiving hospitality, such as dinners and accommodation, and gifts such as entertainment and donations.

The investigation further revealed that the officer did release confidential information regarding an upcoming tender, and this information enabled the tenderer to win the contract. This behaviour has been reported to the Police Commissioner as contrary to the Criminal Code Act, and is currently the subject of a police investigation.

On page 18 in Matter 7, Mr Borg observed:

OCPID investigated an allegation that two public officers sought and accepted gifts of general electrical appliances from a period contract holder to help furnish a new office.

The investigation revealed that the improper conduct had in fact occurred, with the officers requesting, and a contractor supplying, goods valued at over \$1000 without submitting an invoice for the payment. Both officers have tendered their resignations during the investigation process.

This is a matter of the gravest concern. The procurement process in the Northern Territory needs to be, like Caesar's wife, not only beyond reproach but seen to be beyond reproach. Unfortunately, something has gone fundamentally wrong with the procurement system when gifts and kickbacks are being received.

I signal a word of caution at this time: these matters have been made out under the freedom of information, privacy and protection, and public interest disclosure process. However, these are still the subject of criminal investigations. When I became aware of these matters I made certain these things would be proceeded criminally.

The procurement process in the Northern Territory has always been surrounded by controversy, but this stark revelation worries me and all members of government. The procurement process, as a result of this, stands compromised.

The point I make is the evidence collected by the commissioner is not evidence that can be used in a court. Therefore, the police investigation must find its own evidence and proceed accordingly, and these investigations are not yet complete. If it were in my power, I would not have dropped this report during these sittings to enable that investigation to occur. However, I am legislatively obliged to table this report. Consequently, the police have been advised that this will be tabled today, and I will not be making any further comment about these issues specifically until the police investigation is over.

However, having made that comment, more generally, if this government discovers any evidence of corruption - albeit within the procurement process or more generally throughout government - we will make certain that corruption will not just be dealt with by way of mere resignation, but we will pursue criminal investigation and criminal processes. Should a court, as a result of any matter being brought before it in relation to corruption in the Northern Territory, have to deal with that issue, I would expect all of the processes of justice to be extended to any person so charged. However, if that person is found guilty, I would expect and hope the courts understand the importance of a sentence which reflected the gravity of the crime.

Madam Speaker, I table this for the information of all members. I urge members to read this report; it makes for very grim reading. This matter is something I take very seriously indeed.

MOTION

Print Paper - Freedom of Information, Privacy Protection and Public Interest Disclosures in the Northern Territory, Annual Report 2011-12

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Paper - Freedom of Information, Privacy Protection and Public Interest Disclosures in the Northern Territory, Annual Report 2011-12

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report, and that I have leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (VIOLENT ACT CAUSING DEATH) BILL (Serial 3)

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 creates the new offence of a violent act causing death. In 2011, as the shadow Attorney-General, I introduced the Criminal Code (Unlawful Assault Causing Death) Amendment Bill 2011. That bill sought to introduce an offence of unlawful assault causing death where the death was not willed or foreseen. That offence, like the present bill, was intended to fill a gap in the criminal law where manslaughter cannot be proven. The former government rejected that bill and it was defeated.

Committed to ensuring the offence of unlawful assault causing death was introduced, in March 2012 I introduced the Criminal Code (One Punch Homicide) Amendment Bill 2012, which sought to introduce the same offence. That bill was not debated and lapsed upon prorogation of this Assembly on 6 August 2012.

It was a Country Liberal Party election commitment to introduce an offence that would ensure no gap existed in our criminal law. This bill gives effect to that election commitment and bridges that gap. This government makes no apologies for taking the action that many members of the Northern Territory community have called for. The offence this bill introduces, of course, is worded differently to the previous two bills. I have had the benefit of the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice's expert advice and that of Mr Russell Goldflam, the principal lawyer of the Alice Springs Office of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, as to how such an offence would best fit into the *Criminal Code* and how the offence would operate most effectively. I have heeded that advice and I thank my department and Mr Goldflam for their assistance.

This bill introduces an offence which is drafted according to the criminal responsibility provisions of Part IIAA of the *Criminal Code* and will be inserted as section 161A in Part VI, Division 3 of the *Criminal Code* alongside murder, manslaughter and other homicide offences.

This offence does not replace manslaughter in the *Criminal Code*. It is also not an alternative verdict to manslaughter. This means that where the Director of Public Prosecutions is satisfied there is a reasonable prospect of conviction for manslaughter, that charge only will be prosecuted. I want to make it clear that manslaughter is to be the preferred charge in appropriate circumstances. There have been a number of findings of guilt in manslaughter trials for one punch homicides in recent times, and this will continue to be the case. The tragic case involving Sergeant Brett Meredith highlights the fact that manslaughter is to be the preferred charge in the majority of one punch homicide matters. In that case, Sergeant Meredith's assailant was successfully convicted of manslaughter.

Nevertheless, there is a space for this new offence in our *Criminal Code* to cover unique cases where a violent act causes death, and the Director of Public Prosecutions does not consider there is a reasonable prospect of a conviction of murder or manslaughter. Currently, if there is no such reasonable prospect of a conviction in a one punch situation, only assault charges are available. When a death has resulted from violent conduct, assault charges do not hold the offender to account for the full consequences of his or her actions, and do not allow a court to sentence an offender accordingly.

A gap in the law such as this has led to community concerns about, and may result in, unjust outcomes. It is incumbent upon this government to remedy the situation. This bill introduces an offence of violent act causing death for which the fact a death was unintended or unwilled is not relevant.

The particulars of the bill are as follows:

First, the new offence of violent act causing death will be a form of homicide and inserted into Part VI Division 3 of the *Criminal Code*. Homicides are of varying degrees of culpability, ranging from the most serious, murder, to offences such as driving a motor vehicle causing death which requires proof of driving a motor vehicle dangerously, and that the conduct caused the death of another person. Driving a motor vehicle causing death is an offence to which strict liability applies, meaning the prosecution does not need to prove the offender intended the death, or was reckless or negligent as to the death of the person.

The variations in culpability and gravity in homicide offences are recognised by the variation in the maximum penalties which may be imposed. In the Northern Territory, the maximum penalty for murder is life imprisonment. The maximum penalty for the offence of a violent act causing death will be 16 years imprisonment. This penalty reflects the fact that the death was unintended, and the crime attributing responsibility for killing can occur where sentences as severe as those applicable to murder are not justified.

Nonetheless, the bill makes it clear that this offence is intended to be interpreted and sentenced upon the basis that it is a homicide and not an assault with an unwilled result.

His Honour Justice Heenan of the Western Australian Supreme Court in the case of *The State of Western Australia v JWRL* in relation to the Western Australian offence of unlawful assault causing death, stated:

[t]his offence ... is the least culpable variety of the different crimes of homicide ...

And that:

[t]his categorisation of homicide and graduation of seriousness of penalties has been carefully chosen and accepted by parliament.

Similarly, the Northern Territory government has carefully chosen each and every element of the offence of violent act causing death and its placement among other things in the *Criminal Code*.

Second, for the offence of violent act causing death to be proven, the offender must have intentionally engaged in the conduct of a violent act. A person will not be held liable for accidental or involuntary conduct.

Third, the term 'conduct involving a violent act' is defined in the bill as conduct involving the direct application of force of a violent nature to another person. This conduct may include a blow, hit, kick, punch, or strike. The conduct involving a violent act may include the use of an offensive weapon. An offensive weapon adopts the existing definition in section 1 of the *Criminal Code* and may be any object or implement if it is intended to be used as a weapon, and could include a firearm. This definition of conduct involving a violent act is intended to make it very clear that the offence applies only to a deliberate violent act and not a verbal threat or mere touching.

Fourth, the conduct involving a violent act must cause the death of the victim. Causation between the violent act and the death of that person or any

other person must be proved beyond reasonable doubt. The bill also stipulates that the death can be of a person against whom the offender directed the violent act or the death of any other person. This means that an offender will be guilty of this offence if they engage in a violent act against one person but cause the death of another. For example, during an altercation at a pub or a club, the offender may throw a punch intended for one person, miss and instead strike a different person who dies as a result. It would be an omission not to make the offence applicable in this type of situation, and this policy is consistent with existing offences of murder and manslaughter.

Fifth, the offence states that strict liability will apply in relation to causing the death. Strict liability means that there is no fault element in relation to the physical element of causing the death. Therefore, an offender will be held liable for the death regardless of the fact that they did not intend to cause death or serious harm or were not reckless or negligent in relation to the death.

Sixth, the bill also makes it clear that consent to the conduct involving a violent act is not a defence to this offence. Ordinarily, the prosecution must negate consent in the prosecution of an assault. However, altercations in and around a pub or a club should, in certain circumstances, be deemed to be a consensual fight, and it is important for the application of this offence that the defence of consent not be available for those situations. An example of this situation is where two persons decide to take a fight outside and mutually decide to engage in an altercation.

Seventh, the bill importantly makes it clear that a person will not be held criminally responsible for conduct involving a violent act if he or she was engaged in a socially acceptable purpose, function or activity, and the conduct was reasonable given the purpose, function or activity being undertaken. The prosecution bears the burden of disproving this fact if it is raised in the facts of the case. Deaths on sporting fields, at martial arts tournaments, boxing or kickboxing tournaments, and during a number of other socially acceptable activities are rare but, unfortunately, they do occur.

The bill makes it clear that these deaths, where conduct is reasonable and the rules of the sport are not contravened, are not included in this offence. Equally, the bill makes it clear that a person will not be criminally responsible for this offence if the conduct involving a violent act was engaged in for the benefit of the other person and was reasonable in the circumstances. Again, the prosecution bears the burden of disproving this fact. The bill, therefore, ensures that conduct engaged in by people such as good Samaritans, people administering first aid, and Emergency

Services personnel who unintentionally cause a death, are not captured by this offence. The defendant will also be able to rely on all criminal defences concerning the conduct involving a violent act, such as accident, involuntariness, duress, self-defence, sudden and extraordinary emergency, lawful authority, and mental impairment.

Finally, the offence will be prescribed as a violent offence in Schedule 2 of the *Sentencing Act* so that section 78BA of the *Sentencing Act* applies. This means that an actual term of imprisonment must be imposed if this offence is the offender's second or subsequent finding of guilt for a violent offence.

Thoughtlessness, irresponsible consumption of alcohol, drunken or behavioural bravado, and misplaced aggression claims the lives of Territorians, and the community has told the government they are concerned about the increasing level of violence. This bill will ensure that on the rare occasions where the Director of Public Prosecutions does not believe there is a reasonable prospect of conviction for manslaughter, offenders will be held to account for their conduct that causes the death of another. This offence also reinforces community expectations that violent attacks, such as those that occur in and around licensed premises, are not socially acceptable activities or behaviour and will ensure that, where appropriate, offenders are held accountable for the full consequences of their conduct.

As I stated on 28 March 2012 in this Assembly, a death should not fall through a gap in our legal system. It is good governance and the good management of the people of the Northern Territory to ensure that any gap, however small, is closed.

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

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS Pass Bill through all Stages

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Criminal Code Amendment (Violent Act Causing Death) Bill 2012 (Serial 3) passing through all stages in the first week of the November/December parliamentary sittings period.

The opposition has been advised of the requirement for this motion because of the

anomalous situation we currently have that the bill will only be heard within 28 days, rather than the usual 30 which would see normal passage. During the second week of the November/December sittings, I imagine the opposition would prefer to have time to scrutinise the mini-budget which has been announced as coming down at that period. This motion enables this business to be brought forward by a few days to allow this business to be attended to in the first week of those sittings. Under any other circumstances, this bill would have passed through the second week of those sittings. However, as I understand it, we have the support and understanding of members opposite.

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, as discussed previously with the Leader of Government Business, we consider this to be a technical urgency and are happy to support this, allowing debate in the first week of the next sittings. We thank the Leader of Government Business for his prior notification and discussion of the issue. We are happy to support this urgency motion.

Motion agreed to.

ANIMAL WELFARE AMENDMENT BILL (NO 2) (Serial 9)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr GILES (Local Government): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This is the identical bill introduced by the previous government but which lapsed due to the election. The introduction of this bill shows this government is determined to act and make improvements as soon as possible. This government will be proud to improve the animal welfare legislation. This bill is only the very start; we intend to thoroughly review the whole *Animal Welfare Act*.

One of the first decisions of this government was to separate the administration of the *Animal Welfare Act* from that of swimming pool safety. Previously, the Director of Animal Welfare was, at the same time, the Director of Pool Safety and staff of the unit worked across both pool safety and animal welfare. I am pleased that now the Animal Welfare Unit is concentrated on animal welfare, and water safety is where it belongs, with the Department of Sport and Recreation.

The bill has new provisions regarding the Animal Welfare Authority and strengthens the scheme of the act by rationalising the roles, functions and powers of the authority. The authority must be provided with sufficient resources to perform its functions, which are to ensure compliance,

prosecute offences, appoint authorised persons, and administer the licensing scheme for premises used for teaching or research involving animals.

The bill ensures the authority will be supported by authorised officers who may either be inspectors or veterinary officers. The authority may not appoint a person to be an authorised person unless satisfied that the person has appropriate skills, qualifications, training and experience. Authorised officers will act under the direction of the authority, and their functions include assessing compliance with the act and seeking evidence of suspected offences. Authorised officers have a duty to report possible offences and have powers of entry, powers to alleviate suffering, and powers of seizure in appropriate circumstances. The authority will have powers to require provision of information when it is investigating these matters.

The bill introduces the concept of a minimum level of care that must be provided for an animal. Any person in charge of an animal has a duty of care to provide for the animal. There are three levels of offences. First, it is an offence to breach the duty of care. Second, it is an offence for anyone to be cruel to an animal, particularly if unnecessary suffering is caused. Third, the most serious offence of aggravated cruelty is where anyone causes death or serious harm to an animal.

Where prosecution is brought for one of these offences, the court may find the person not guilty of the prosecuted offence, but guilty of an alternate offence. For the prosecuted offence of aggravated cruelty, the alternate offences are cruelty and breach of duty of care. For the prosecuted offence of cruelty, the alternate offence is breach of duty of care. The time limit for commencing proceedings under the act is extended from 12 months to two years.

An animal may be seized in connection with an offence or to alleviate suffering. Where an animal is seized, the authority must ensure it is properly cared for. It may be placed in the care of another person. The bill makes provisions which cover the recovery of costs of the seizure and care. An order for recovery of seizure and care costs is recoverable under the *Fines and Penalties (Recovery) Act*.

In relation to teaching and research involving animals, the Animal Welfare Authority may issue licences under section 29 of the act. Currently, the regulations provide reference in relation to an animal ethics committee, to powers and functions specified in a 1997 code which is now outdated. The bill provides that the regulations may adopt a code or standard of practice as enforced from time

to time so that references to codes or standards will not become out of date.

This bill will make it clear that the involvement and direction of an ethics committee is a licensed condition. Persons engaged by a licensee must hold a permit issued by an ethics committee. Licensees must provide annual reports on their activities, the activities of the ethics committee, and activities of permit holders engaged by the licensee.

As mentioned at the outset, this government intends to review the *Animal Welfare Act* in full, and this is simply the start.

Madam Speaker, I commend this bill to members, and table the explanatory statement which accompanies the bill.

Debate adjourned.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Alcohol and Crime

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):

Madam Speaker, this new Twelfth Assembly of this parliament has already spent a substantial amount of time discussing and debating alcohol and the problems that it causes in the Northern Territory community, particularly, but not exclusively, amongst its Aboriginal citizens - and we are only in Day 5 of these sittings.

Unfortunately, these debates have centred on the differences between us and the use of emotional and strident language. In some cases, apportioning blame has created simplistic political divisions. This is a complex problem which has widespread agreement in all sectors of the community and in this House. I hope this debate allows us to articulate those areas where we are in accord, as well as outlining our practical and philosophical differences.

The challenges that liquor presents are not new; alcohol pre-dates recorded history. It has been worshiped and deified by proxy in Rome in the form of worship of Dionysus and Bacchus, if I am not mistaken; vilified by England's puritans as a crass sin against the Lord; and cast as a vile villain or solid common man's friend by Hogarth, depending if his lithographs were depicting gin or beer.

Thomas Tetcher died in 1764 and the only thing that he was remembered for is etched into his headstone which reads:

*Here sleeps in peace a Hampshire
Grenadier
Who caught his death by drinking cold
small beer.*

*Soldiers, be wise from his untimely fall
And when ye're hot drink strong or not at
all.*

*An honest soldier ne'er is forgot,
Whether he die by musket or by pot.*

The United States' attempted banning of alcohol simply created organised crime. It is a pernicious and constant presence that accompanies humanity and, once discovered, it stays. If longevity is the yardstick, alcohol is the most addictive drug that has ever existed. It is often accompanied by its travelling companion, violence.

The reason I suspect it is so persistent is, for most - no, the vast majority of us - its use and consumption is fun. For others - and I include myself amongst them - it is a black and excruciating curse. The contributions last week by the new Aboriginal members of this House, and of our most experienced Cabinet minister, Ms Anderson, the Minister for Indigenous Advancement, were among the better analyses of this vexed issue I have heard, at least in recent years.

It is illustrative of my earlier comments that these contributions were prompted by an attack on the member for Arafura by the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Arafura has the potential to bring new and innovative approaches to our policies and practices to address alcohol abuse in our society. Make no mistake, his involvement, and that of his colleagues from Arnhem, Namatjira, and Stuart at this level, have the potential to save lives.

The discussion last week had trauma, the fracturing of relationships, suicide, and the multitude of other health and social ramifications of grog abuse as the major themes. The raw and grief stricken accounts of members who have firsthand experience is an educative lesson for this parliament. I have reread the *Hansard* and continue to be moved by these frank, personal and proximate accounts. It is refreshing to have parliamentarians in this House who can both walk the walk and talk and talk, as we have often been stuck with other members whose sole skill is the latter.

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition again raised the issue of liquor in our community. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition, in particular, learned a lesson about playing this card for trite political purposes. I was embarrassed on her behalf to hear her claim an intimate knowledge of what was happening on the Tiwi Island following 'one of her recent trips accompanied by her colleagues, the members for Barkly and Nhulunbuy'.

She was also able to rely on learned reports from the Liquor Commission, the Coroner, and the Children's Commissioner, along with their thoughts about the research and data on the Tiwi Islands. These nameless statistics in health research are the fathers, mothers, children, and friends of the member for Arafura's constituency. He has a much better knowledge of the Tiwi Island and its people than acquired by the members for Karama, Barkly, and Nhulunbuy on their recent trip. His views are derived over a lifetime as a respected senior Tiwi ceremonial man and leader, father, grandfather, and exemplar.

As the member for Namatjira eloquently pointed out:

We do not tell you that you cannot drink inside your house in Karama, Opposition Leader. We do not expect you to tell us what we should be doing in remote Aboriginal communities.

There is, however, some truth in the Leader of the Opposition's comments. It is perhaps from this point that we should commence this debate.

There can be very little doubt - dare I say, no doubt - that there is a direct nexus between alcohol consumption in the general Territory population and a whole range of social problems. These problems are manifest in violence, presentations at our hospitals, police watch houses and courts, and in neglect of children.

Alcohol is the most widely abused drug in the Northern Territory. Aboriginal Territorians are over-represented in much of the alcohol-related data in our hospitals, courts, prisons and policing. Generic and imported solutions are not suited to addressing this over-representation, and they have a sad history of failure. While there are many who advocate abstinence or special measures for Aboriginal people, there are many Aboriginal people able to live with alcohol and who, quite rightly, expect to be treated like any other Territorian or any other Australian. Equally, there are many Aboriginal people who wish to have a strong, potent capability to deal with grog problems on their communities. This also holds true for other legal drugs such as kava and inhalants, as well as illicit drugs such as the growing abuse of marijuana.

Interestingly, access to alcohol by Aboriginal people has played a prominent part in a number of quests for equal rights, but dissatisfaction with dog tags - which were once a means to show that the right to drink had been conferred by high authority on an Aboriginal person - and the freedom rides by Charles Perkins in the 1960s remonstrated against the inability of Aboriginal people to be

served in hotels. This theme was echoed in the recent film *Australia* where the main actor was reduced to using the four-letter expletive as he sought to have his Aboriginal colleague served a beer in a pub in Darwin, circa 1942. The use of this coarse language is one of the high-impact elements of the film and conveys the director's emphasis on this theme: equality translates to the ability to have a beer with your mates. In truth, the barman in that scene broke the law by serving.

On the other hand, there have also been a number of calls for Aboriginal people to be banned from purchasing alcohol. I can recall a South Australian politician calling for the closure of Curtin Springs. Indeed, the final settlement of that dispute was an agreement from the local people from Mutitjulu that Curtin Springs was not to serve alcohol. More recently, there have been a number of sharp criticisms of the Chief Minister for daring to suggest that this is predominantly a matter for Aboriginal people to determine.

Our forward thinking founding fathers crafted a *Liquor Act* which enabled local communities to determine whether they could have dry or restricted status. Many who chose restricted status developed clubs which were well run and were at least as secure and convivial as liquor outlets in town. Some dry communities experienced the pain of people migrating into town and living rough so they could ensure their access to grog. This is a continuing phenomenon today.

The women of Hermannsburg marched through the streets of Alice Springs over 20 years ago to lobby the Chief Minister of the day, Marshall Perron, to prohibit the availability of alcohol to their people, not just at Hermannsburg but also Alice Springs. Chief Minister Perron was responsible for the largest and most innovative programs to address alcohol consumption and abuse in the Northern Territory. Using tax on heavy beer, some millions were raised to form the Living with Alcohol program which put the Northern Territory at the forefront of government programs to tackle alcohol abuse in the nation. What a shame that a latter decision by the High Court effectively killed that program by declaring such levies as taxes.

Given the amount of funding associated with these initiatives, there was a rare capability to build into some of these initiatives. Risks were taken, innovation given a chance, and homemade programs were promoted. Of course, many did not flourish to the extent where they made a significant difference, despite the goodwill.

Evidence-based practice and clear analysis of the outcome allowed for a rigorous assessment and many programs were stopped on these criteria. It would have been good for the then government,

now opposition, to take a leaf from this book. Some of you with children in high school can read their science books and see how this is done. If the outcomes you desire for an experiment are not achieved, either modify your approach, your expectations, or abandon the experiment. To keep doing the same thing, getting the same results, and expecting something to change is blind hope devoid of any science. This is called the Dusty Springfield approach, 'wishing and hoping, and thinking, and praying'.

Labor has successfully convinced sections of the media and a number of Territorians that the Banned Drinker Register somehow kept habitual drunks abstinent and off the streets. They claim that the scrapping of this initiative has seen everything from hordes of drunks returning from wherever they were kept by Labor, along with the oft used catchcry of 'the rivers of grog', which had also been dammed up somewhere.

Let us look at the figures and see if the Banned Drinker Register can stand up to the scientific rigour we expect from our first year high school students. Of course, this is much easier to do now we have released crime figures that had also been kept out of sight along with the banned drinkers. These 15 months of figures make it a must to look at the nexus between crime and alcohol during the critical period the Banned Drinker Register was being lauded as an outstanding success. On the eve of the last Territory election, 14 August, the then Chief Minister told voters that:

In the 12 months of its operation, the BDR stopped 7050 banned drinkers from buying alcohol right across the Northern Territory. It has also prevented 9440 from purchasing alcohol.

Wow! He also claimed that:

The reforms have been guided by research.

With the benefit of the previously embargoed crime statistics, all members of this House can now do their own research. For instance, 20 355 drunks were taken into protective custody in the year prior to the introduction of the BDR; 19 988 drunks were taken into protective custody during the operation of the BDR. During the BDR the average drunk was taken into custody 2.5 times every year. However, 69 people were taken into protective custody more than 20 times in that year. During the operation of the BDR, we had the same drunks being taken into custody every six days, every five days, some every four days, and one serious problem drinker every three days. That is 117 protective custodies in one year for one drinker.

The statistics debunk every assertion that the BDR stopped banned drinkers from buying alcohol. It simply did not. Under the BDR, one drunk received a banning notice every three days and during its operation received 114 banning notices and, yet, was as drunk as ever on the streets and in our parks.

In Alice Springs, the last government simply lost control. Reliance on a failure of a program saw drunks proliferate in unprecedented numbers. In the 12 months that the BDR operated in Alice Springs, the number of drunks on the streets taken into protective custody by police increased by 57.48%. That is a staggering 1782 more drunks on the street. It is little wonder that 68% of all assaults in Alice Springs last year involved alcohol, a figure increased by 47% over the last five years.

There has been a Territory-wide increase in assaults of 4% over the last 12 months, a total of 6867 assaults. That is almost 19 people assaulted in the Northern Territory every single day of the year, a 44% increase on five years ago. Last year, 4051 assaults in the Northern Territory involved alcohol, some 59%; that is, 11 alcohol-fuelled assaults for every single day of the year. Alcohol-fuelled domestic violence increased by 8% Territory-wide in the last 12 months. Even more alarmingly, non-alcohol-related domestic violence increased by 20% for the same period.

The member for Nelson asked whether the BDR was working in Nhulunbuy. Despite the supportive words of the member for Nhulunbuy, these figures simply show it was not. There was an increase of alcohol-fuelled violence in Nhulunbuy during the operation of the BDR of 20.3% and, on any reasoning, that is a failure.

In Tennant Creek there is the same story – a 7% increase in alcohol-fuelled violence during the BDR, and a staggering 77% of all assaults involved alcohol. The former government's alcohol policy cost \$18m and was set to total \$75m. For that expense it achieved a nett reduction in drunks on the streets of 366. That is one less drunk per day at the cost of \$50 000 per drunk apprehension.

Prior to the policy, 55 drunks, on average, were taken into custody every single day. After the policy and \$18m, 54 drunks, on average, were taken into custody every single day. These are on top of the drunks perpetrating assaults each day. If they are combined, you have 65 alcohol-related custodies, on average, every single day of the BDR.

These are drunks and violent drunks. These are people whose access to grog was unhindered by the former government's \$18m failure. People

were placed into custody a total of 24 039 times for being drunk and violent drunks during the BDR - a failure, however you look at it.

It is clear the initiatives around the Banned Drinker Register were extravagant in the amount of resources thrown at trying to address the problems of alcohol abuse.

At first blush, I applaud the generous use of government money as it indicates it was a priority for the former government. This is, perhaps, something where we are in accord. I cannot, however, condone the shameful total censorship of government data which empirically demonstrates the failure of the program.

The crime statistics are graphic in putting to bed the mythology this program was based on. These statistics should have provided a flashing warning sign that the money was not gaining any advancement on this issue. To be frank, by the end of 12 months, the data was akin to big red signs when you drive on the freeway the wrong way. The Cabinet briefs should have been saying, 'Wrong way, go back'.

We now know this because the crime statistics are in the public realm. On pretty much every indicator, it was a failure on a grand scale. This is why the Banned Drinker Register was ceased as soon as possible - to stop the haemorrhaging money. God knows, and shortly every Territorian will also know, we need every cent we can to resuscitate our finances.

It is, therefore, disingenuous for Labor to run a case for a nostalgic return to a failed program. This is not a matter of comparing two theoretical positions; it is a simple case of comparing Labor's record before the Banned Drinker Register and after the introduction of the Banned Drinker Register. This should have been easy because the then Chief Minister told us the program was based on research.

Nor can I support the misguided calls that this expensive, failed policy should have continued until our policies had become operational. Under normal circumstances such a transition may well have been considered, but these are not normal circumstances. We have a budget which has been vandalised by the previous government, a pressing and urgent need to restore our finances by concentrating on core business and abandoning wasteful, extravagant, or ill-conceived programs, a burgeoning and unabated program with the abuse of alcohol, and stakeholder groups pleading for us to get it right and take our time to do this.

We have done a substantial amount of work to deliver on our election promise to take habitual

drunks out of the violent, lawless, informal drinking environment in public places in our towns and to compel rehabilitation programs. I have referred to this initiative previously and can advise we are in a position to make a more fulsome statement to this House in the near future.

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

Mr GUNNER (Fannie Bay): Madam Speaker, we welcome the alcohol policy statement from the Attorney-General. While we may disagree with many of the details, we agree with many of the sentiments. It is a debate that creates much passion in this House, mainly from personal experiences. Many in this House would either, personally or through our professions, know or see as a part of an ordinary day the problems Territorians grapple with when it comes to alcohol which, obviously, the member for Port Darwin has shared in the past. He has touched upon, again in this statement, his personal experiences with alcohol. That is a lot of what drives the passion of this debate.

As parliamentarians, we all want a better Territory, and there is no doubt that to achieve that we will have to find some solutions to the problems we have with alcohol. It is something every government has grappled with. It is going to take a suite of solutions - there is no one solution - and many different efforts.

However, we thank the member for Port Darwin for his statement. One of his earlier comments in it was that:

... these debates have centred on differences between us and the use of emotional and strident language. In some cases, apportioning blame has created simplistic political divisions. This is a complex problem which has widespread agreement in all sectors of the community and in this House.

and he has captured, in many ways, the mood of the debate.

While we, in this Chamber, often disagree on the detail and some of the tools we employ, we all agree on the problem. Sometimes, in order to find a solution, you have to first find those things you agree on. This is something we agree on: alcohol is a problem in the Territory, more of a problem here than anywhere else in Australia, and we have to find solutions - in some ways extraordinary measures - to deal with it.

Those are some of the things we have done in the past, and it sounds as if the CLP is going to take some rather extraordinary measures going

forward. That is some of the detail we want to see. That is probably the real debate - the one that is coming, when we actually see the details. We know some elements of the general policy direction the CLP wants to go in and some of the outline of that, but the how is really important. That is the detail we are waiting for.

The Attorney-General delivered the alcohol policy statement. The question we asked last week was what the Alcohol Policy minister does. It was a genuine question, so we want to know. What does the Alcohol Policy minister do, because the Attorney-General is responsible for the habitual drunks legislation, the Chief Minister scrapped the Banned Drinker Register, the Treasurer is negotiating alcohol reforms in Alice, and the Business Minister does licensing. We would like to know what the Alcohol Policy minister does.

Last week, when we asked that question, the member for Fong Lim contributed to the debate and, as he always does, gave an eloquent 20-minute political rant. He came up with another catchy but controversial line, which is something he does very well. Sometimes, what the member for Fong Lim does – and I do not think it is deliberate – is go a bit further than anyone else would in saying things, and makes his other colleagues seem reasonable in comparison. I do not believe the member for Fong Lim wakes up in the morning and thinks, ‘How can I make the member for Blain look good today?’ However, in some respects, by doing what he does with his political rants and his catchy but controversial lines, he makes his other colleagues, when they say things that are a little out there, seem quite reasonable in comparison.

We want to know how the CLP is going to criminalise drunkenness. We want to see that detail. That is not in this statement; that is coming, apparently. It is the policy they went to the election on; it is the policy they are in the process of drafting and shaping. We want to know how they are going to criminalise drunkenness. That is probably where the heart of this debate will be in the months and years to come, and that is what we really need to talk about.

The debate today is almost one of sentiment around whether we all agree that alcohol is a problem. Yes, we all agree alcohol is a problem. The Leader of the Opposition, who the Attorney-General referenced in his statement, agrees that alcohol is a problem. She is very passionate about trying to tackle the alcohol problems we have in the Territory, and has done much work with various sectors of different industries to try to find solutions to alcohol - talking to people like Amity, the police, people in the justice system, the hospitals, the health sector, a whole range of

people in communities, people on the ground. There is a whole body of work that happened when we were in government to try to find a range of solutions to the alcohol problem. She has a very strong passion for alcohol reforms.

We recognise this is a critical challenge for all Territorians and, if we want to make the Territory a better place, we have to find some answers to the curse of alcohol in the Territory.

At the heart of the dispute between the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the Opposition is statistics. Essentially, we have some and you have some, and everyone is a little confused. What seemed to motivate the member for Port Darwin in his statement today, and seems to be driving much of his angst, is summed up on page 7 where he expresses some concern that:

Labor has successfully convinced sections of the media and a number of Territorians that the Banned Drinker Register somehow kept habitual drunks abstinent and off the streets.

You can tell there is some genuine frustration from the CLP that they have their statistics and we have ours, but people do not necessarily believe theirs. What happens when there are so many statistics in the debate, as there are now, people refer to the phrase popularised by Mark Twain and apparently wrongly attributed to Disraeli, ‘Lies, damn lies and statistics’.

When people become confused by statistics - and people nowadays do not seem to believe statistics - then what they rely on are their eyes and their life experiences. What we have are people like Manuel Kotis and Tim Copping from the Fannie Bay shops, traders with several decades of experience at the Fannie Bay shops who are saying, ‘When we had the Banned Drinker Register in place these shops were about the best they had ever been, and as soon as it was scrapped, they are the worst they have ever been’. That is their personal experience, and that is why you cannot convince them, because they see it with their own eyes; they are living it. You give them your statistics and they say they do not believe them because that is not their personal experience.

The member for Port Darwin cannot criticise people’s personal experiences when they make decisions like this because, apparently, the entire CLP policy around criminalising drunkenness is based on the member for Port Darwin’s personal experiences as a general duties police officer. When asked on the *7:30 Report NT* if there was any industry or scientific evidence that supported the CLP policy he said: ‘No, it is essentially something we are doing from the ground up’.

They made it up. It is based on the personal experiences of the member for Port Darwin as a general duties police officer. I do not disregard his personal experiences, but he is saying that it is being done without scientific or industry evidence. So, he had a bit of a crack in his statement today which is a little like leading with the chin because he is already on the record answering questions saying their policy is not based on scientific or industry evidence but on his personal experiences as a general duties police officer 20 years ago or so. That is where their policy is coming from.

We have this general debate at the moment: do we all agree that alcohol is a problem? Yes, we do. How are we fixing it? We argue that our policy was based on evidence. The CLP rejects our evidence base. We know the CLP does not have an evidence base because they have told us that. They have said there is no evidence base to their policy, it is coming from the personal experiences of the member for Port Darwin. As I said before, there is nothing wrong with personal experiences, but it is a bit odd to say we should have based our policy on some evidence when they have not based theirs on any. That is an interesting point from the member for Port Darwin.

However, the most important part of this debate is the last two paragraphs of the Attorney-General's statement. Essentially, the other 11-and-a-half pages are redundant because, at the end of the day, you won the election and we lost. We are here to look at your policy details and debate your policy. The last two paragraphs are a bit like a magic act - they call it 'the prestige', the big reveal. You build up to it, you are waiting for it, you have read the whole statement, you are really keen to see what is going to happen and you get there, right to the end of the statement and it says:

We have done a substantial amount of work to deliver on our election promise to take habitual drunks out of the violent, lawless, informal drinking environment in public places in our towns and to compel rehabilitation programs. I referred to this initiative previously and can advise we are in a position to make a more fulsome statement ... in the near future.

So - nothing; you are left wanting. It is a big teaser; you want to know more. You had this whole statement, you get right to the very end, and you are told, 'We are almost but not quite ready, but almost ready to maybe tell you about what we are going to do' and see the details. They went to the election with this policy. We are now several months past that election date and we are still not able to see the detail of how the CLP will criminalise drunkenness. That is the real debate.

Essentially, what we are having today is not a phoney debate because it is important to all to record our sentiments. We all agree alcohol is a problem. However, that is the real debate, and it almost got there in the last two paragraphs of the statement but does not quite get there. We would like to have a real debate around the CLP's details. You are in government; let us look at what you are going to do, and how you will do it. We want to see that. Maybe the Minister for Alcohol Policy can contribute and tell us how. That is what we really want to hear. We want to hear how they are going to criminalise drunkenness.

In this debate, we got to the point where, for 11-and-a-half pages, we were led up to the big conclusion, the big wrap, and were told not yet, maybe later, sometime soon. Our side is a little disappointed we cannot look at the detail yet. We are very intrigued to see the detail. I am sure the member for Port Darwin is proof-checking it at the moment. We would love to see that come into this Chamber. Maybe the Minister for Alcohol Policy can share a little information on it later.

We all agree in this House with the sentiment that alcohol is a problem. The Leader of the Opposition is very passionate on this subject. However, we would love to start talking, not just about sentiment, but about the real details of the CLP's policy to criminalise drunkenness.

Maybe later in this debate the Minister for Alcohol Policy, the member for Fong Lim, could join us and share the details of what the CLP is doing and what the Alcohol Policy Minister in the CLP actually does. I suspect, as the Minister for Health, the member for Fong Lim might have more to do with alcohol policy than he does as the Minister for Alcohol Policy. I would love to have him contribute to this debate. I look forward to listening to his comments. I am sure, again, there will be a lot of politics in it, he will say something a bit catchy and a bit controversial, and he will make everyone else look reasonable in comparison. However, somewhere in there I would like to hear him talk about the how and the what.

Madam Speaker, we look forward to that after the luncheon break.

Debate suspended.

PETITION **Closure of Chambers and Finke Bays to** **Commercial Fishing**

Mr WOOD (Nelson)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I present a petition not conforming with standing orders from 2094 petitioners relating to the proposed closure of Chambers and Finke Bays to

commercial fishing. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory

This petition of concerned citizens draws to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the proposed closure of Chambers and Finke Bays. The proposal to close this area to commercial fishing has failed to include genuine consultation, and has failed to acknowledge the highly sustainable stock status of the barramundi fishery as highlighted in the latest Fishery Status report 2012.

We ask the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to halt the current process of establishing closures to the commercial fishing industry in Chambers and Finke Bays and to ensure that any future closure boundaries are:

- *based on science, and that science is made available to all stakeholders,*
- *accompanied by socioeconomic research to show impacts on commercial fisheries, fishing tour operators, recreational anglers and associated communities and industries, including tourism, and*
- *considerate of consumers who buy and enjoy eating fresh local wild caught barramundi.*

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Tabling of Papers

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I would like to make a statement about the tabling of papers. Since my election as Speaker, I have had two occasions when members have sought to table papers during the adjournment debate without leave. To make the rules clear for members, I will outline the standing orders on tabling papers and documents and the established precedent of the Assembly I plan to apply.

Standing Order 253 provides that papers may be presented by the Speaker, or pursuant to statute, or by command of the Administrator, or by leave of the Assembly. This only provides the Speaker with the right to table any document without leave. Ministers have a right to table, without leave, papers pursuant to statute or by command of the Administrator. This typically includes annual and other reports required to be tabled by law.

Standing Order 280 also provides for the presentation of committee reports.

Standing Order 92 provides for the time when papers may be presented, which is any time when other business is not before the Assembly.

There has been also a convention in the Assembly, not provided for in standing orders, that ministers acting on behalf of the government may table papers not required by statute or command. This is clearly convenient, as it avoids the need for procedural motions that serve little purpose, particularly when the government commands a majority in the Assembly.

I intend to follow the convention allowing ministers acting on behalf of the government to present documents without leave when there is no business before the Assembly, or when the member has the call in a debate.

Contributions made during the adjournment debate are always made in a private capacity, even if the member speaking is a minister, so the convention allowing ministers to table without leave does not apply.

There have been other precedents on occasions, such as allowing the Leader of the Opposition to present papers without leave during the adjournment debate. As these precedents are not provided for by the standing orders, have not been consistently applied and, in my view, are not compelling, I do not intend to follow them.

MOTION

Note Statement - Alcohol and Crime

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr KURRUPUWU (Arafura): Madam Speaker, as the Attorney-General said before lunch, everywhere in the world where there is grog there are problems. Before white people came here, there was no grog on the Tiwi Islands. We are pretty lucky with that. When grog came it was clear straightaway that these things came with problems.

Many governments – Commonwealth, and CLP and Labor - have introduced programs to try to fix the problem. Some have helped, but many have not. First, on Thursdays no Aboriginal people could drink, and that did not work. Then they said some people could drink, and that did not work either. Then they said we could have a club so there were rules for people to drink and a limit of four cans a day. We know that works a bit on the Tiwi Islands and in other places. Then we had the Banned Drinker Register. This policy the Labor mob talk about did not work at all. You would have to be blind not to notice all the drunk people

hanging around Darwin. It is not hard to work out that they could still get grog from their countrymen.

We are still trying to work out how to deal with all the problems that come from grog. It is interesting for me to hear this is something that every race in the world has had to do, even people living in London and Sydney. We do not mind people who want to help us with this, but we do not need to bring a mob of people who have not fixed up their own places, coming up here and waving their fingers at us.

One thing is very clear to me: the first thing is for people to take control of their own lives. Do not expect some new whitefella government's law to fix it. The reason I know this so well is because I did it. I know the way I took control over grog in my life was through my own strength and the strength of my ceremony. We also need support from our family, council and the government. This is the Aboriginal way, it is working.

This issue is too important to ignore, it is too destructive to avoid. We know there are big issues in the communities with grog. We know that the old ideas did not work. Too many people are being hurt; too many families are being broken; too many brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, fathers and mothers are dying because of grog.

We, as the Country Liberal government, are ready to confront the issue of grog ahead. I am saddened and ashamed when I see people who have lost control with the grog. I am saddened when I see my people drunk in the parks of Darwin.

Under the old system communities were told the answer. Well, no more. Now, communities will be the answer. Too many people are leaving the community to drink. They are away from family, culture, and support. They become outcast, they fall into trouble, groups filled with violence and pain.

Our communities are set up already to control grog from within. Most have good social clubs. I want to see the social clubs strengthen; I want to see the grog money spent for the benefit of my community. Our club sells mid-strength beer, but we have a permit system for people to buy full strength. The problem is that the full-strength grog for the permit holders comes in on the barge. It is all bought in Darwin. The money for that grog does not help the community; it stays in Darwin. This means all the money is going outside the community rather than staying in the community and helping the community.

The club at Nguui is a good club. Many of its security staff are locally trained Tiwi. The profit it makes go towards community football and cricket, and the club supports the school fete costs. The club works closely with the police and council to protect our people and make sure the grog profit will benefit the community. Working on the issue of grog through the community will achieve better results. Small things will go a long way to help. The club should have more snacks and food available during drinking hours so people do not drink so quickly or so much.

Madam Speaker, it is my family and friends who are hurt and dying when a grog policy fails. I want to see this problem fixed and so does the community. The community is ready to control, take on grog. Stand behind us and I believe we will. Labor has not listened to people at the grassroots level. I am a good listener, and I will continue to listen to my people who want to change.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, it is refreshing for a change to pick up a ministerial statement which has been shoved under my door and to read it and realise that in all likelihood it has actually been written by the minister or member putting his name to it, other than a staffer. Unlike the fairly lame and poorly crafted, hollow, thin-on-detail, big-on-rhetoric-and-promises statements I have read in the short space of these first sittings of the Twelfth Assembly, this one exudes a little more passion and personality. It certainly exudes a certain tone, a holier-than-thou rhetoric, a lofty dogma, a strong view and opinion, and a very superior one at that. It has the member for Port Darwin, our Attorney-General, written all over it. Member for Port Darwin, we love the way you pontificate; you are nothing less than the Laurence Olivier of this parliament.

The other telltale signs around that statement – and I see he is taking a bow there, so I take it the Attorney-General has prepared that statement, and good on him – is the somewhat patronising nature of the oratory. His desire to ingratiate himself to the new members on his side with plenty of praise – and I have no doubt they have earned it – his pedantic detail and tendency to want to deliver a history lesson – there is nothing wrong with that either. I delivered a history lesson during the debate on alcohol last week when I was talking about the relatively short history of alcohol and its fairly devastating effects on Nhulunbuy. However, it is also that very strong 'I am right and you are wrong' attitude which comes through loud and clear.

As the member for Fannie Bay said before lunch, obviously, both sides of the House will continue to beg to differ on this particular, but very important

issue. Attorney-General, we actually believe you have it wrong in your analysis, and it is both reckless and wrong to have commenced the dismantling of Labor's alcohol reforms starting with the axing of the Banned Drinker Register. All of this is based not so much on evidence but, as you admitted during a recent interview on the ABC, on your years of experience during policing.

That said, there is something more eloquent in the delivery of the member opposite. For the life of me, I cannot understand why he does not have sole carriage of the alcohol policy, rather than have it spread across several ministerial portfolios which serves only to provide confusion for everyone, and that includes members on both sides of the House. He is far better able to articulate a policy than the Health minister, who is, in fact, Minister for Alcohol Policy who, time and time again, blusters his way through interviews, avoids answering questions, and whose contribution to this debate so far has been an out-of-sight, out-of-mind approach to managing the issue of problem drunks by hoping they will leave:

... that they will leave that area and go and hide in the scrub.

Surely, Attorney-General, the Health minister's approach to managing problem drunks is straight out of the Dusty Springfield approach of 'wishing and hoping, and thinking, and praying'.

There are two distinct elements to this statement. The first is the actions of the member for Arafura in promising the return of heavy beer to the social club at Wurrumiyanga. The second is the dogged determination of the Attorney-General and the CLP to dismantle Labor's alcohol reforms, including the Banned Drinker Register which, contrary to the views of members opposite, was working and making a difference.

The common theme linking the two elements of this statement is the CLP's desire to take us all back some 10 or 15 years to the bad old days and to let grog flow freely back into the Territory because, to do anything else - God forbid! - would make us a nanny state. This bizarre platform of the CLP and its view of the world which says, basically, people should be able to drive as fast as they want, swim in a back yard pool unencumbered by a pool fence, go wherever they want and when they want in the Territory without any regard or respect for Aboriginal land and, most importantly, the belief that Territorians should be able to drink as much as they want, which then follows that they can hurt as many people as they want, and add untold burden to taxpayers and government services such as health, police, justice and so on.

This statement from the member for Port Darwin is nothing more than a vain attempt to shore up the member for Arafura, who has gone out on a policy limb with an election commitment no less, completely on his own - one the CLP will prop him up on every step of the way to keep the member for Arafura in his seat, which happens to be the one with the narrowest of margins.

Let us be real here; the member for Arafura made a deal with a certain element of voters on the Tiwi Islands in relation to the social club at Nguiu, or Wurrumiyanga as it is now known. We heard it when the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Barkly, and I went on a recent three-day visit to the Tiwis. There was no shortage of people telling us the story about polling on 15 August, and the promise that if people were to vote for the member for Arafura he would bring heavy beer back to the social club. He would bring heavy beer to a community which had embraced liquor restrictions years ago - which meant the strongest beer you could get was mid-strength, as it currently is, with no more than six cans, as well as restricted opening hours.

This restriction was imposed by the Liquor Commission because of the high level of dysfunction within that community due to alcohol abuse. It is a dysfunction not unlike that in other parts of the Territory where alcohol is a problem. I am not just talking about our remote communities, I am talking about our main towns, and Darwin, and the fact that this is an issue for Indigenous as well as non-Indigenous Territorians.

If we go back to the promise made - was it made or was it not made? - it was very clearly news to the Chief Minister when asked about it soon after the election on the Channel 9 News I was watching one evening. Obviously, he had won the election. As Chief Minister, he was asked about the promise made, and he looked quite surprised at the question. He obviously did not know anything about it. He said words to the effect of, 'Well, he cannot do that'.

The member for Arafura most certainly did, and this has been confirmed in the interview recorded by the *NT News*. The question was put very clearly to the member for Arafura about whether or not he had promised heavy beer. Simple enough question. The answer provided was very clear and, for certainty and clarity, the question was repeated by the journalist. Again, it was answered by the member for Arafura. He is an honest man, 'Yes', he said he had promised heavy beer; he clearly thought that was an okay thing to do.

To suggest he did not understand the question is an insult to the intelligence of the member for Arafura. I know, from having listened to him in

this House, he is an intelligent individual and clearly understood what he was being asked.

Unfortunately, this debate has now shifted away from what was at the core - promises from the member for Arafura to secure votes - to become a matter now about an individual's right to drink regardless of the colour of their skin or where they live. All this is driven by a somewhat noble Chief Minister wanting to champion human rights and have the conversation, as he calls it. This is all a rather elaborate charade and very carefully orchestrated strategy to take the spotlight off one renegade CLP member who said he would provide heavy beer at his community social club if people voted for him - and they did. Let us not fool ourselves; that is really what this is all about.

I have listened with interest to the member for Arafura. We get more and more detail each time this issue of alcohol comes up in this House - yes, more understanding about what he was really doing around the promise to introduce heavy beer. It is very curious that is coming post-election and was not a conversation had with voters upfront and openly prior to the election.

I am all for respecting the rights and wishes of people but an inducement to vote, like the return of heavy alcohol, is a dangerous one. It is simply wrong, as are the consequences of what that promise has delivered.

There is no doubt the message during my visit to the Tiwis came from very strong women - teachers, health workers, and other people who worked in the community in a variety of jobs. From many of these people - but especially the health workers with decades of experience of patching up broken bodies in the aftermath of too much alcohol - this message about the devastating effect of alcohol was something we heard during the three days we were there.

I also give credit to the former, retired member for Arafura, Marion Scrymgour, who stood in this House many times during her 11 years representing her people and highlighting grog was a killer ...

Ms Anderson: They were in government. Marion should have fixed that Tiwi problem.

Mr Kurrupuwu: It has been a problem for 11 years.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms WALKER: The former member for Arafura ...

Ms Anderson: Eleven years in this House and done nothing.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Namatjira!

Ms Lee: Keep talking. Think you know everything.

Ms WALKER: Marion Scrymgour's experiences with the Tiwi people, coupled with her extensive experience in Indigenous health saw her lead from the front to bring about reforms and tackle the devastation of alcohol abuse in what was then her electorate. She, too, is one of those people and, indeed, was one of those parliamentarians who can both walk the walk and talk the talk. The new member for Arafura has a wonderful and dedicated role model to emulate and very big shoes to fill ...

Mr Tollner: He is the role model. He won, she lost!

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order! Member for Fong Lim!

Ms WALKER: Thanks, Madam Speaker. To echo the words of the member for Namatjira, who has been on a politically difficult road during her years as an elected member, which has seen her crisscross the ...

Ms Anderson: A 29% swing from me to me!

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order! Member for Namatjira.

Ms WALKER: ... which has seen her crisscross this Chamber as she settles upon a political ideology which best suits her and her ambitions. Regardless of where she has physically sat, and shifting beliefs that have accompanied those moves, in her own words ...

Ms Anderson: I have found my home in this political party.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms WALKER: You will get your turn in a moment, member for Namatjira.

In her own words, there is no black way, no white way, just the right way. I have listened to the member for Namatjira during many debates in this House and have always admired her capacity to speak up and offer her view, even when it conflicted with the policy of her team or her party. I genuinely think her better suited to the life of an Independent politician where she is not tied to anyone's policy and can freely speak her mind, particularly when it is in conflict with the policy platform of her party - even last year in her strident support of Labor's reforms when, at that time, she sat as an Independent on the

crossbenches and gave her full support to the bill in the House on 5 May 2011. At that time, this is what the member had to say:

... I support the government's bill because I believe it is trying to do something. I want to put it in very simple terms; alcoholics are sick people, and alcohol is the biggest troublemaker we have. When you look at kids not going to school, domestic violence, child abuse, it is all related to one thing, and we say alcohol is the troublemaker in Aboriginal communities.

I was sitting in the Chair during this debate and the member made a comment directed to me and said:

You, Madam Deputy Speaker, would know that coming from a remote Aboriginal community, as will many members on the opposite side. There are days and days, if not weeks and weeks, we live in our community in harmony. Then, one day - normally it is pay day, Thursday, Friday, Saturday - there is an increase of alcohol consumption and alcohol coming into the community through grog runners and, all of a sudden, we have this huge problem. It is the biggest contributor to many things in our society ... This bill is taking steps to improve how society operates, and how Indigenous people operate within the realms of coming into hub towns like Darwin, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Alice Springs.

She went on:

What I see, not just in Alice Springs but in other places like Darwin, tells me it is not just a black issue. It is an issue across our Territory population, amongst all Territorians. It is up to us, as people who have been duly elected to this House, to be sensible in the way we legislate, and this comparison of how we encourage business to operate in the Territory - and that is all our pubs - but, at the same time, bringing in something that looks after our Territorians who are consuming alcohol.

I commend the member for her comments at that time, because she recognised what was at the heart of the problem and how it needed to be dealt with. At that time, she supported the strong reforms that were brought in for the benefit of all people in the Territory.

I am one for doing things the right way. Right now, I see the CLP going the wrong way - going backwards as they head on a destructive path. Even their federal colleague, Senator Nigel

Scullion, who gave much support to the campaign and who is clearly a mentor to many members on that side, voiced very publicly his opposition and alarm at the CLP's proposal to reintroduce alcohol to communities. He is on the record making it clear he does not support the irresponsible, dangerous, and backwards move of the CLP. I will quote extracts from *The Australian* of 31 October ...

Mr GILES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The member said Nigel is on the record saying that. I wonder if you could table that quote where he said that.

Ms WALKER: I am about to quote him and I am very happy to table this article from *The Australian* on 8 October ...

Mr GILES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! You should table the quote you already read from when you said he is on the record for saying something. I want to see the quote tabled.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nhulunbuy, you have the call. Please continue.

Ms WALKER: Nigel Scullion had said ...

Mr Giles: You are misleading the House. You are naming Nigel Scullion.

Ms WALKER: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I ask you to ask him to withdraw.

Mr Giles: You are saying one thing about Nigel Scullion. He never said it.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Braitling, please withdraw that comment about misleading the House.

Mr GILES: Oh, I will withdraw the comment about misleading the House. But, you are saying that Nigel said something he never said. That is what you have just done. You can dish it out but you cannot take it, glass jaw.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Braitling!

Ms WALKER: Madam Speaker, if I could get through this without frivolous interruptions from the member for Braitling ...

Mr Giles: Well, do not mislead the House. You are saying Nigel said something when he never said it.

Ms WALKER: In this article by Patricia Karvelas, in which she paraphrases the Senator when ...

Mr Giles: You are talking about the CLP; you have nothing to say.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Braitling!

Ms WALKER: She paraphrased by saying:

... he warned that the dominant pro-grog voices in communities might drown out those trying to bring peace and order. Senator Scullion's comments are at odds with the views of the Queensland Premier, Campbell Newman, and Northern Territory Country Liberal Party Chief Minister, Terry Mills, who have agreed in favour of communities being given the right to bring back grog.

He is then quoted:

'The reason I'm nervous is that alcohol in Aboriginal communities has never been a good thing. Never', he told The Australian.

I go to one further quote, the journalist wrote:

Senator Scullion thought prioritising this over other pressing issues in Indigenous affairs, namely housing, health and education, was off the mark.

Senator Scullion is quoted as saying:

One would think this isn't a first order issue. I would have thought this is a small sideline issue, the provision of a bar should be well down on the list of services communities really need. I'm disappointed they are giving this priority. This isn't a priority, services like education and health are priorities.

Well said, Senator Scullion. It appears your party colleagues opposite are not necessarily on that same page.

What is especially concerning about the possible reintroduction of alcohol is the Chief Minister proposes to do so on the strength of a vote. Can he be serious? Did children get a vote in this - younger people, teens, women? We already know about some of the tactics that go on in booths where there is pressure on women to cast their vote in a particular way. I just cannot understand ...

Ms Anderson: Please! As if you have gone out there doing consultations ...

Ms WALKER: ... how, on the strength of a vote, it is going to solve this ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Ms WALKER: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. As if we have not been around in circles long enough on this anyway, the member for Namatjira stated in this House last week that if it did go to a vote, she believed 99% of people would vote no anyway. I am absolutely sure she is right, knowing what I know from the area I represent in northeast Arnhem Land. This mob over here talk about listening to the bush and talking with people, engaging, so I trust they have taken away that very strong message that came from the leaders of the Yolngu Nations Assembly who met with the people opposite - although I am not sure who was there - at a meeting at Maningrida recently. I know the issue of grog was raised because I spoke with a couple of people who were representing the Yolngu nations. I told them they needed to make sure they asked that question of the Chief Minister about what the CLP's approach was on alcohol and consideration of reintroducing it into communities.

It really is a no-brainer, but I am pleased to have seen earlier this week that the Aboriginal peak organisations are organising a conference where people can have that voice to discuss these issues in a collective. That is important, rather than leaving people out in isolation. I applaud that move, and I look forward to hearing what the outcomes are from those strong people.

I maintain that limiting alcohol supply does, over a period of time, deliver a positive outcome. The evidence to support this is through the successful alcohol management plans which are, effectively, a tougher version of the Banned Drinker Register. I am sure the member for Arnhem is very familiar with it because he represents those people in Groote Eylandt where the initial stance on strong alcohol reforms were implemented many years ago. On the basis of that success, northeast Arnhem Land, Nhulunbuy region, and Yirrkala and homelands people followed that model and embraced it. Most definitely, it has been successful in reducing the misery and the harm associated with alcohol abuse, and reducing the needless time and misery we see through police, hospitals, clinics and so on.

I commend to the minister the Menzies School of Health report into the Nhulunbuy plan which was published in March 2011, and gives a very comprehensive overview of the success of the implementation of the alcohol management plan which has been in place there since March 2008, and is, as I said, effectively a tougher version of the BDR.

What I find disappointing with the move to axe the BDR is there has been no comprehensive review. Just on the strength of his many years of policing,

the Attorney-General seems to think it is not worth any formal review; we are just going to stop it *carte blanche*. As a consequence, we see and hear stories from everywhere around Darwin and other parts of the Territory about problem drinkers who are back on the streets.

They are sick people; they have an addiction. In axing the BDR, there is nothing in its place other than the prospect and the promise of a mandatory three-month gaol sentence. Senior Yolngu women who I have spoken to from my electorate are incredibly alarmed at this prospect. As if Indigenous people are not already over-represented in our prison system, it is about to increase even further. Taking people in for a three-month period to dry them out and rehabilitate them is fine, in one strange sense, but what sorts of lives will people be returning to?

This goes back to the heart of what the CLP members have offered; that they are going to fix the bush in the next four years. I wish them luck. We will be watching with great interest as to how these things progress. As you said, Attorney-General, we are only five days into the parliament and still debating alcohol. I suspect this debate will continue throughout the four years.

Madam Speaker, I thank the Attorney-General for his statement.

Ms LEE (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, we can stand here all day long debating Aboriginal communities and alcohol reforms and whatever, coming from both sides of the House. At the end of the day, the people in the remote areas have lost their voice, their integrity, and their rights to speak up. We have our own leaders, as does anyone else. People are in here because the people voted you in to represent your electorate. At the end of the day, we are in here because we have been out there campaigning, listening to these people and to what their thoughts were in regard to whatever. There are many things that come up if you get out there and listen to them.

In the past, Labor has gone out to the communities to consult - not the members particularly; other people were doing it. I was part of that during that time; I sat there. The member for Nhulunbuy said men are dominating the females in the communities. I know that is incorrect because I was part of those debates at that time. Men are not dominating females. You had non-drinking males, drinking males, working men, non-working men, working women, non-working women, everyone. Our grandmothers and grandfathers were all part of these consultations and they only did it three or four times - that was it. At the end of the day nothing happened, and that was because of the Labor government.

The people in community want proper representation. They want their voices back. We have our own leaders to make decisions in each area. Listen to the people! Let them decide! That is what we are saying. We are not saying we are going to open up the whole community, give alcohol back and let it be a wet community. You have not lived through the struggle of these people - no one has ...

Ms Walker: I am not suggesting that.

Ms LEE: You cannot tell me I have not grown up with alcohol, or have not seen violence in my own home, or have not been part of violence fuelled by alcohol. You cannot tell me that, I am part of that ...

Ms Walker: I did not say you have not. I would not presume to know what ...

Ms LEE: I still live in my community and if I want to listen to you, I will listen to you ...

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Nhulunbuy.

Ms LEE: For now, I am talking. I had to listen to you, so zip it!

I speak on behalf of my people who put me here in the first place. You talk about Anindilyakwa Land Council, Groote Eylandt, about the alcohol. The traditional owners, the elders, are the ones who actually said, 'Do not sell alcohol to the community', because there was a problem. They recognised it and they solved their own problem ...

A member interjecting.

Ms LEE: Exactly! You know why I know? Because I stayed there and talked to these people - I am related to them ...

Ms Walker: You are a good local member.

Ms LEE: Better than the former one.

Anyway, alcohol was not part of our tradition; it never was. We grew up with it, seeing our people drink - our fathers, our grandfathers - but we still had our cultural law in place. People still, physically, got involved in cultural law. In the past 10 years, five years, our traditional leaders, these old men you represent as Yolngu leaders, have lost their voice. The minute they tried to stand up and speak - here we go, put a big rock on top of them and shut them up. They do not have a voice; they are not represented. That is the whole reason you are in this House, to represent the people on the ground. Let them decide what they want for a change; give them the right to decide.

As you said, the majority of them are probably going to say no to alcohol. Well, that is a free choice for the people - let the people decide, not us. We are here to represent them. We cannot just keep putting policies in place that are affecting the people on the ground. We have seen how the policies affect the people on the ground; we lived through it. That is the whole reason I am here today, because I have lived through the policies that restricted our people from doing a great deal of stuff.

I was there during the time when there were social clubs. You want to talk about social clubs? With the social clubs, we can put restrictions regarding education. If a kid does not go to school, parents cannot drink. There can be things in place if the community chooses to have these social clubs. We are not saying we are going to open the thing up and people can just drive in no matter what amount of grog they want, beat everyone up in the streets. We do not want to go back to that. How do you think that affected us growing up? Exactly! You do not have an idea. You are not even Aboriginal, yet you believe you can talk on my behalf telling me what the people want. What they want is their voice back; that is all they are asking for. People want their voice back, that is all they want. If you listen to them more, that is all they want. They are trying to give you the key to that, but no one is listening.

This mob - yes, us mob - we can talk about Aboriginal people and what they want and need; we are part of them. But, we are not here to tell you what we think is best for them because we know the policies will affect the people on the ground. We know; we see day to day the effect of the policies. Alcohol – everyone is overrated about alcohol being a big issue in the communities. There is petrol sniffing and kids are dying with mental illness and everything else, yet we sit in here debating alcohol. There is petrol sniffing and marijuana - the biggest causes. Have you been out to these communities and seen how many people are in mental institutions because of marijuana and petrol sniffing? Have you seriously seen the effects on the community? Yet, we still hear debate about the alcohol policy.

Let the people decide. Let the people make the decision. Each community is unique and different with their own perspectives. They know what they want and know how to fix their problems. Let them decide! Let them solve their problems!

I have been listening to politicians all my life and now I am one of them, but it is not in my heart. What is in my heart is my people, and that is exactly why I am here, to speak for my people ...

Ms Walker: And to find the answers.

Ms LEE: To find the answers, all right. I do not know. What is that going to be, in la la land? I am not talking about letting alcohol – dysfunctional communities. Of course, the communities were dysfunctional no doubt, in the past, but taking everything away from them was the biggest mistake the former government has ever made in the Northern Territory. Taking away the voice, the authority of the people was a mistake, obviously. It is in this House today, otherwise you would not be in opposition.

Alcohol is a troublemaker, everyone knows that. It is the same as marijuana and petrol sniffing. Do you want to see the ages of kids who are petrol sniffing out in a community? I have a photo to show you, if you like, of kids putting tins of petrol to their noses - this is from five-year-olds to 25-year-olds. You think that alcohol is killing them. What do you think petrol is doing? If anyone in their right mind has done health in their past life before you became a politician, you would know what petrol sniffing does to you. Yet, we are still debating alcohol.

Where is the policy on petrol sniffing? Where is the policy on reduction of marijuana and everything else - kava? But, no, everybody wants to have a big debate about alcohol. Let the people ...

Ms Walker: What about Labor's VSA legislation?

Ms LEE: No one is talking to you, member for Nhulunbuy. If I want to talk to you, you can meet me outside and we will talk then. For now, let me talk.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms LEE: It hurts! Honestly it hurts. Madam Speaker, it hurts to see the people who have lost their voice from the former government, sitting there high and mighty; they know the world, they speak up for Aboriginal people. Well, the people you had on the opposition were not grassroots Aboriginal people, I can tell you that for a fact. If you go out there and ask them who is more genuine, they will show you.

It hurts to see my people on the streets lost, without the voice, without a vision anymore. The shires drove them out of the communities; the policies of the former government drove them out of the communities. You put them there. Now, we are going to have to try to help fix that up and put them back.

The mortality of these people is lost - their integrity, they have lost it. And you are sitting there saying, 'Oh, it is okay, we know what is best for Aboriginal people'. Well, you do not. We are

Aboriginal people and the rest of them out there do not even get to have a say in here ...

Ms Walker: You are their voice.

Ms LEE: Exactly, and it should be you as well. Let the people decide, not put a rock over them and tell them, 'This is how it is going to be because that is the policy we all agreed to'. Let the people decide, let the people have their say.

Anyone in their right mind - I thought the whole of the world was a democracy. Where is the people's right in here? Everyone goes silent! There are not any people's rights. Exactly! There are no rights anymore for the people on the ground. That is the reason why we are here: to give them that voice back. I am passionate about that. That is one thing you can hold against me: I am passionate. I am here to represent my people, not only the people of Arnhem, but every Indigenous person in the Northern Territory. They all have a right.

One of the elders from my electorate was on a board. He got up to speak because he wanted to be represented. We do not need bureaucracy - people from another state telling us how we should solve our problems in the Territory. We do not need that; we have our own leaders in our communities who know what is best in these regions and know how to make the change. Let them do it. One of the leaders in my community electorate got up and tried to stand and fight for that. What did they do? They shut him down - like a pack of wolves, attacked him and shut him down. That was wrong.

All he had was a vision for his people - a vision and the right his people gave him, and I respect it because he is my elder. Because I am a traditional woman, I will respect that to my dying day. No one can tell me otherwise. I am not more superior than anyone out there; I am not bigger than them; I am not smaller than them; we are all the same. In my face, we are all the same. That is the same as my colleagues in here; that is all we want. We are not saying we are going to go out there, open these communities up with alcohol.

All we are saying is give the people their choice, let them have their choice. That is all they want. They want to be consulted on a grassroots level. They want to know they are part of decision-making. That is all it is. The opposition, the former government, has lost that. I have not once seen any of you out there, especially in my community, only during the Barunga Festival. Whoopee do da! Barunga Festival is a big thing, hey? All festivals are.

When consultations were in progress, I have not seen one member out there, sitting there asking the people what they wanted. I was part of that because they came to my community too, and the next one, and the next one. I have not seen one member come out there - or minister at that time - to talk to these people. That really hurts. That hurt the people here and really drove them to what we are seeing today.

You do not understand how these policies affect grassroots people. To understand it, you have to live it. If you have not lived it, you do not know it, and you never will.

You can be in town, you can live in Katherine, for example. Katherine is here, and the community is out there. If you have not lived there, but you drive there from day-to-day, do you think you know those people? You are never going to know those people. You think they are going to tell you what you want to hear? Of course, they are going to tell you what you want to hear. Of course, because you are not part of that, you never will be a part of that whole big grassroots connection - traditional thing. First of all, because you do not speak their language, you can never understand them as well as they understand each other, when they speak to each other.

How many times have the Yolngu First Nation mob run committees and big forums out there? Even before, and during my campaign, I attended. Did I see the former member there? Did I see any other member there? Did I see the Labor Senator there? No, I did not. He did not speak to the people. What has he built? Schools and everything else. Where are the roads? Where is the voice for the people? We have basically been shut out from the whole world. When the Wet comes, which is coming now, where is the food and everything to get out there in a timely manner for the people?

The communities are still being treated like Third World people. Where is the respect for the people? Yet, you stand here and think you represent the people. Where is the respect for the people out on the ground? How many of my elders - my father and my brother both died from alcohol consumption. You think I do not know about the pain of alcohol, what it does to people and their families? It happened in my family. That is the whole reason I do not drink, because it was me who told me not to drink. I had to have the willpower to say, 'No, that was enough'.

I had the willpower to stand and campaign in Arnhem, and the people chose me because I was strong enough to stand here and put their voice to the table. That is all they want: a choice. They are people just like every one of us. We are no more superior than anyone else out this door. We

are all the same. It does not matter what colour you are - black, white, or brindle - as long as we are all being treated fairly, and as long as our voices are all heard.

Look at the towns. You talk about the communities. The kids are in smaller towns, not like Alice Springs, Katherine, Darwin. Do you think the school attendance in the big towns is any better than out bush? Have you thought about that? There is a majority of Aboriginal people who live in town now who have moved out so they can have the freedom to do whatever they want. They ran away from the Basics Card system so they can have the freedom to spend their money the way they want.

There are problems in towns too, not only communities. Stop targeting Aboriginal people. This whole big debate is about Aboriginal people. There are problems even in non-Aboriginal families, but this big debate is about Aboriginal people. We have a diverse cultural background in Australia; one of the greatest number of different races in Australia I can imagine. I have been to school with most of them. I did not stay out in my community and go to school. Well, I did, from zero to Year 7. After that, I left. I got an education just like everyone else.

At the end of the day, all the people want is to be heard. If you do not get that then you do not know what the people want. Community people are unique. They are not like any other, they are traditional people. I am limited to say only so much when I am in this House. I am not going to tell you about my cultural background, or about everything else. That is not for me to say. I can only say so much because I know my culture. How many of you in this House know the background of your culture inside out - whether you are Irish, German, Dutch, Italian, or Greek. We have ours. We would like the same democracy as everyone else in Australia; to have our say. Our culture is unique and we would like to keep it unique and strong. There is freedom of speech for everyone; that is all the elders are asking for. It is not only in my electorate, it is in Stuart, Arafura, Namatjira, Barkly, and Nhulunbuy. All Indigenous people want is to be heard and to go through the consultation process like anyone else would. Even if they are going to say no, they do not care as long as you sat there, listened to them and had a talk to them; that is all they want. How many times am I going to have to say that?

Ms Walker: Schools, jobs, health clinics, that is what they want and need.

Ms LEE: Exactly. I was an Aboriginal health worker for 10 years; I know the effects of alcohol and what it does to community people. I am part of that. I had to see road accidents where my own

people were passing away on the road. You do not think that affected me - but it makes you more superior to tell the people you cannot drink because this is what will happen? It is living through the effects that is countless. Yet, we still debate the whole thing.

If you want to go against the people, member for Nhulunbuy, that is your problem. If you want to stand against the people on what they want out there, having their voices heard, that is you. I am not here for that because I respect my elders. I will let them go through the consultation process of anyone else, and let them have their say. Even if they say no, at least I know they had a voice and they have been heard.

You were in power for 11 years. You suffocated yourself in there. There are times when we wanted to engage with you guys and try to help out and talk to you guys about this and that and whatever. You suffocated yourselves. That is how we felt for the past 10 years. Today, I am telling you because I have been through this; it is no lie. Aboriginal people want real jobs, they want the integrity to live their lives to the fullest just as anyone else. Regardless of whether it is in education, tourism - opening up social clubs, would there not be job opportunities for locals? You can have your own bar attendant. People in the community can do that ...

Mr STYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Ms LEE: Madam Speaker, at the end of the day, all the people want is to be heard. I am not going to give you a big cry about Aboriginal people because most people, especially the former government, think they are superior to Aboriginal people in putting laws into place. You think you are more educated and whatever not. You can think that; that is true, because our people have been lost in a mist during that time. That is why we are in here in power with the CLP because the CLP are free thinkers. They give us the right to do what we want and that is what we want. We are a democracy, we will start playing the game right and let the people have their say.

Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina): Madam Speaker, I had no intention of speaking in this debate but a number of issues have been raised and I feel obliged to contribute. I have to say I admire the member for Arnhem because it is one of the few times we have heard someone speaking from the heart.

Like her, I share a culture that goes back thousands of years and I respect my culture. It

does not matter if I am in Australia or in the Australian parliament, I still carry my culture. They say you might take the Greeks out of Greece but you will never take Greece out of the Greeks. Irrespective of what happens, I will always be a Greek. When I go to Greece, I am an Australian, but that is beside the point.

Our culture is as strong as your culture; it is probably one of the few cultures in the world that can read stories written 5000 years ago in their original writing and letters. I have always felt very proud to teach my son, who is Australian-born and has an Australian mother, some of my Greek culture and history. I was very proud to see my son, who is 24 years old and living in Perth, make an entry on Facebook for the Greek National Day - the day the Greeks resisted Italian invasion in the first battle the allied forces won.

We were the people who put in place what came to be called democracy, which is a Greek word meaning the power of the people – *démōs* and *kratos*. They were the first ones to form this system which was then taken over by western countries. Our civilisation, our language, our letters were taken by western countries and what we see today, what we call western civilisation, has its basis in the Greek civilisation.

We were also the first people to recognise the benefits and problems with wine. I will tell you a small myth I heard at school. We had a special god of wine named Bacchus. Bacchus was walking to visit one of his friends - a king - and as he was walking he was thinking it would be very embarrassing to visit his friend without a gift, as is the Greek tradition. As he walked down the road he saw a beautiful little plant growing on the side of the road. He put it in his hands to give to the king as a gift.

Unfortunately, the plant was fed from the god's power and started growing bigger and bigger. The god realised if it continued like that it would dry out. He looked around and found the skull of a bird. He put the plant in the skull of the bird and continued to walk. The plant kept feeding from the god's power and became bigger. Bacchus was worried about it and looked around and found the skull of a lion. He put the plant in the skull of the lion and kept walking. As he walked, the plant kept growing. He looked around and found the skull of a donkey - an ass. He put all of them together and arrived at the king's palace and gave him that beautiful plant which had grown into a big vine.

The king planted the vine and, in a year's time, grapes came out of this beautiful vine. When the king made the first wine, because of the way it was processed, when you drank a few glasses you sang like a bird. When you drank a bit more

you were brave like a lion. If you drank too much you behaved like an ass.

Wine and Greeks have a long history. We know the benefits of wine, and many doctors now admit it has benefits. However, we also know of the detrimental effects of wine consumption.

I grew up in Greece and wine was part of my culture. I remember the first time my father gave me wine, I was 10 years old, and it was at Sunday lunchtime. It was just a little in the glass and for me, when I turned 18, wine consumption was not a big event. I did not go down the pub to get drunk. We did not have pubs; we had taverns and wine was served with food. The culture was different.

A few years ago I returned to Greece and found too many bars, too many pubs. The problem with alcoholism and binge drinking amongst the young people was more frequent, more common.

Everyone has equal rights in Australia. Territorians do not because we are a Territory, and everyone in Australia should have the same rights. That is one of my biggest criticisms of the intervention in the Northern Territory; that a selected group of people were chosen by the federal government to have special conditions put upon them under the pretext – I say pretext because it was never established that Indigenous people spend all their money on alcohol, gambling and pornography, and were abusing their children. That was never proven; it is not true. It does not only happen in Aboriginal communities; it happens everywhere in Australia.

I find it objectionable if your name is John Smith and you live in the Tiwis and receive welfare, you have the Basics Card and the Commonwealth controls where you spend your money. However, if your name is John Smith and you live in Kings Cross, Sydney, and you spend all your money on crack or heroin, the federal government would not put the same conditions on you - would not control how you spend your money ...

A member interjecting.

Mr VATSKALIS: Yes, they tried. I well remember the reaction of people; the reaction of welfare organisations and organised bodies opposing it strongly.

The issue with wine is not the freedom to drink wine; you can drink wine as much as you like. It is the way you drink wine and the result if you drink too much. Yes, there are clubs in some Aboriginal communities, but people from these Aboriginal communities come to the big cities because when the clubs operate in the communities they have special conditions. Also, it is always more difficult

to drink in a small environment where very close family members are around you. It is much easier to come to the big city, the big smoke where you can access alcohol with no limitations, you can drink as long as you like, and you can make an ass of yourself. We have seen that many times in our parks and in other cities.

Do not get me wrong; it is not only Indigenous people who come here to get drunk. There are quite a few people who come from down south. Some of them have blonde hair and blue eyes, some of them they have dark hair and dark eyes, and they are not Indigenous people. Of course, in society people tend to focus on the more visible group and, in our case, that visible group is Indigenous.

I do not have any problem at all with communities deciding if they will have a club or not. I have a problem for the reason behind it, because I can see the reasoning behind the CLP. It is an old story. I saw it before when Shane Stone was the Chief Minister. If Aboriginal people can drink wine in the communities, they will stop coming to Darwin. If they stop coming to Darwin, or Alice Springs or Katherine, then the people do not complain that they drink in the parks. That is not a good reason to allow wine or alcohol in the communities because, when you put alcohol in the communities again, you have to be prepared to put in the same place the clinics, the nurses, the policeman, the families of both people, and the child protection officers. Unfortunately, drinking excessive alcohol will create the problems: the sick people, the abused wives, the abused children, and disturbances.

As some of the members said before - and the member for Namatjira said in a previous debate in this House, 'We live peacefully for weeks and weeks and weeks and, then, one afternoon, especially after pension day, hell erupts - when some people get drunk and the whole community descends into hell'. That is the problem I have.

The other problem I have is that already communities in the Northern Territory have made a decision not to have alcohol. Why do you want to go back and scratch the old wounds again, and start a debate when a decision has been made?

The third problem is the CLP campaigned for bringing alcohol back into the communities. What they failed to tell the communities was to allow alcohol in the Indigenous communities is not up to the Territory government; they have to have the agreement of the federal minister. The federal minister has made it clear she will never agree to the introduction of alcohol in these communities. Like it or not, we still have an intervention in place, and we are only a Territory and the federal government can overrule any legislation we put in

this parliament, as they have done in the past. As indications are, they will do it again with the Muckaty uranium repository.

The issue is whether we are prepared to bring the communities back to a situation they were in many years ago. Yes, I know there are other addictive substances in the communities such as petrol. This parliament passed legislation to stop the sale of petrol in certain communities to protect the young people and the people in the communities. We restricted the freedom of people to buy petrol, or to have petrol available, because we knew the consequences and the detrimental effect of sniffing petrol in the communities. We do the same with cannabis or a number of substances. Alcohol is no different to this.

The rights of the community overrule the rights of the individual any time, even in a democracy. I have no problem having a debate in communities about having alcohol or not, but the communities which have already decided they do not want alcohol should be out of the equation.

We remind the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children and Families of the struggle with the effects of alcohol in the community. We have the largest number of people with renal disease - mainly Indigenous people - in the Territory, and much of it has its roots in alcohol consumption, or excessive alcohol consumption.

There are things we can do. One of the things we have to start talking about is changing the culture of drinking. This is one of the things we have to do. If we are going to change things, we have to start from the root of the problem. It does not only refer to the Indigenous people, it refers to every Territorian. You do not have to go to Yuendumu to see people drinking excessively; go down to Mitchell Street Friday afternoon and see young men and women coming from the northern suburbs of Darwin getting sloshed - blind drunk. I have seen photographs, and I have felt embarrassed to see young women vomiting in the gutter, young men passed out, and the violence that follows this excessive consumption of alcohol - people throwing plant pots at each other, jumping on each other, and punching each other. I know very well the emergency department, every Saturday and Sunday, has to deal with a significant number of people who are there because they got drunk, or someone else got drunk and they smashed a glass in their face or king-hit them in Mitchell Street or somewhere in Central Darwin.

The question of alcohol is a big question. I believe not only the Territory but the whole of Australia is struggling with it. We have seen the same problems in Melbourne, Sydney, and Perth. There is a problem with alcohol all around

Australia. It might be the way alcohol is advertised, it might be how trendy it is to have colourful alcoholic drinks, or the way alcoholic drinks are mixed, so when people drink them they do not realise how much alcohol they consume.

We cannot just point at the green can or some of the mixes, we have to see the issue of alcohol as a cultural issue. We have to change the way we use alcohol. I said before, the first time I tasted alcohol was when I was 10 years old, but alcohol in my culture was always something you drank in a celebration or associated with food. You did not go to the pub, sit there, drink, and get sloshed. As a matter of fact, you can buy alcohol in a grocery store in Greece without having to show a licence. You can buy alcohol even if you are not 18 years old, because we do not see 14-year-old kids drinking in the streets, going to a pub, or going to a party like the other day in Alice Springs when the party transformed into a riot.

For the member for Arnhem, democracy is a two-way avenue. It is not about, 'why didn't you come down to talk to us?', it is about you talking to the people you are supposed to represent. One thing I have to say to the member for Arnhem is that when there were some problems with the Mount Todd mine, your late father picked up the phone and talked to me and I met him on-site to discuss the issue. We both exist because of each other; the people elect representatives and the representatives have to be with the people. You cannot expect every member of parliament to come and talk to every single person all the time. The single person out there has the right and the obligation, and can pick up the phone, e-mail, write, or face the person and talk to him or her, 'You are my representative, I have this problem'.

It does not have to be in a community in the Tiwi Islands, it can be in the Nightcliff store. I bet you that as most of you come from small electorates; you face this reality every day. I know very well when the member for Sanderson goes shopping at Northlakes Shopping Centre, many people stop him to talk about problems and how he can help them. I do not expect the member for Sanderson to go to every single neighbourhood every single day to find out if there is a problem. In a democracy there are those who are elected to represent the people, but also the people can take their elected members to account. It has to be a continuous communication between us, otherwise it is a blame game, 'You did not come to talk to me so you do not know what I am talking about'. The reality is you can come and talk to me so you can tell me what I need to know. I invite every person to do that, and they do it in my electorate.

The question of alcohol is a question that has tortured the Territory for many years. I have lived in north Australia for nearly 25 years and when I

left Perth and went to live in Port Hedland, it really hit me in the face when I saw Indigenous people in the South Hedland pub who came from the desert and prostituted themselves to get money to drink alcohol. I walked next morning and saw people lying drunk in the gutter. I had never seen people drink so much in my life. When I came to Darwin the situation was very similar.

However, at the same time, I have seen places that give me some hope. Halls Creek is one I know very well; my friends work there. When they stopped allowing people to buy full-strength takeaway beer, the number of people going to the emergency department at the hospital dropped significantly. When they started selling full-strength takeaway beer in unlimited volumes, despite the reaction of the operator at the time, the situation in Halls Creek changed significantly.

Western Australia has now recognised that controlling supply is one part of the equation if you are going to address the issue of alcohol. I have been advised recently that is the reason why, in the Kimberley, the industry wants to acquire all the equipment that has become defunct by the banning of the BDR to implement their own system with regard to the Banned Drinker Register in the area. If the industry from another jurisdiction recognises the value of the Banned Drinker Register, our haste to get rid of it without having a proper evaluation after a reasonable period of time in operation was a mistake.

It was a mistake and we will regret it, because people will continue to drink and make idiots of themselves. If someone wants to make an idiot of themselves, I do not care. It is the women who will be bashed, the children who will be neglected, the kids who will be left without food, the violence between people, and the people who will die in 20 years time from renal disease that concern me.

It is not the money; it is the cost to the whole community. It is the fact that young people die and leave behind orphans who the grandmothers and grandfathers will have to raise. We see that already happening in some Aboriginal communities when young people are wasted from petrol sniffing, smoking marijuana, or excessive use of alcohol, abandoning their children and walking away. Grandmothers and aunties are left behind with the small resources they have to look after one, two, three, or four children.

Madam Speaker, I hope we find the solution with alcohol. We can put as many laws in place as we like, but unless we seriously look into our own communities and try to change the culture of alcohol, nothing will be achieved.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Casuarina for his valuable

contribution to this debate. I should say to members, especially new people, this debate has been going on ever since I came to parliament; and debates about kava, marijuana and petrol sniffing have been going on and on. There have been some achievements. Kava is now prohibited, and petrol sniffing, whilst not completely taken off the scene, has been reduced – much of which was to do with BP. I was on the substance abuse committee at that time. At one of the meetings we were notified that BP was having a meeting of their board to announce the introduction of Opal fuel. There have been some moves in the right direction, but there is a long way to go.

The other thing that concerns me - and I mentioned this the other night - is this debate raises some tensions which are not helpful. This statement is titled Alcohol and Crime. It is not us mob versus you mob. A person over here does not necessarily represent a person over here. Because you are Aboriginal does not necessarily mean you represent another Aboriginal. If someone wants to represent my wife, I would like to go over there and ask them, 'Do they?' Much as I do not represent the member for Sanderson, unless he wants me to represent him.

That does not help the debate because this is about human beings. One of the things you do not have to be qualified or have a different skin for is children. What does it matter? I can identify a child with malnutrition as being mistreated. I do not have to be black, white, Chinese, or Greek; I know that person is not being looked after and, as a human being, it is my responsibility to say something. That issue is being missed in this debate.

This debate about alcohol in the Northern Territory has been going on for an awful long time. I am not sure we have the solution, so I do not think we should be up there with the blame game; that this mob did not do something, and now we will do it. I will believe it when I see it, because the CLP was in power for 20 years and alcohol was a big problem then. The ALP was in for 11 years, the CLP is back in again. Has it really made a difference?

It is a difficult problem. As the member for Casuarina said, it is an Australia-wide problem. We should not be thinking the Territory is any different. One of the reasons we still forget is the alcohol industry is extremely powerful. The member for Arafura said he would like to have a club there - which they have had - so they can have employment and get football teams going. Believe it or not, that is exactly what the alcohol industry is about. That is why 'VB' is on a cricket shirt. Why do they have these huge competitions in sport? Where do they get the money from?

They get it from being associated with an alcohol industry – XXXX and VB. It is a very powerful industry and, when you threaten it, you will come up with some real efforts to turn your debate around so it is not threatened. That is one of the interesting parts of this debate that is missing.

I visited Newcastle last year. I was asked to go by a gentleman who had much to do with changing closing hours in pubs in Newcastle. I visited the New South Wales Police Association, then I met with a couple of hotel owners in Newcastle. I met with this gentleman, whose name escapes me at the moment, who was the main push behind this. This took an enormous effort from doctors in the Newcastle hospital, nurses, paramedics and the police - to have a change in the way hotels operated within the Newcastle CBD.

Where did the main opposition come from? It came from government, the hotels association and the liquor industry. They tried to stop it. What were these people trying to do? They were trying to reduce the amount of violence occurring in the CBD when the pubs closed down. I believe I am right in saying in Newcastle the pubs closed at 3.30 am or 4 am on a Saturday night. You could go from one pub to the other on a late night pub crawl. They thought they had a method to reduce the amount of violence: you could stay in a pub until 1.30 am but, once you moved outside that pub, you could not go to another pub. Pubs stayed open to 3.30 am, but if you step outside the pub after 1.30 am, that is it. That reduced, remarkably, the amount of violence in the Newcastle CBD. They were able to prove that because they compared another section of the Newcastle region which did not change. The proof was in the pudding.

In fact, another city has been looking at doing the same thing and has run into opposition. Where do you think it is from? Government and the hotel and liquor industries. You are up against people who are not really concerned about the welfare of the people they serve; they are only concerned about profits. They will tell the member for Arafura and the Australian Cricket Board they have a wonderful product which will bring great success to the football team or the cricket team. You will be astounded and think, 'It is great, this is the only way we are ever going to have a great football team'. You will accept that sponsorship and nobody worries about the future ramifications, 'Have we sold our soul to one of these big companies?', when the reality is alcohol is a major contributor to people in hospital, to deaths, suicides, malnutrition, mistreatment, and domestic violence.

The minister was talking today about statistics. I would like to talk to this later, but he has pulled off the stats for 'Annual assault offences by alcohol

involvement and domestic violence association, Northern Territory'. It says last year, percentages associated with domestic violence - 56.8%. I will get these figures right, they are not the easiest ones to work out. Alcohol involved with domestic violence in the Northern Territory for 2011 was 2347 cases, and last year there were 2534 cases, a rise of 8% of domestic violence where alcohol was involved.

We have a product most governments are too scared to take on. We were happy to take on tobacco, but we are not happy to take on alcohol, which has more far-reaching effects, from society's point of view, than tobacco ever had.

We have been talking about culture as the member for Casuarina did. I have said before that one of the problems is we accept drunkenness is okay. We took public drunkenness out as an offence, but how many of us brush off the fact many people get drunk? It is not good for your health, you lose control, you might have a child you did not want, and you might crash the car. However, it does not seem that is the problem. The problem is you should not have got into the car drunk. No one looks at whether it is proper to be losing control, and drunkenness is basically losing control and leads to things, unfortunately, which, if we were sober, we would prefer did not happen.

We do not smoke in buildings now; we are used to not smoking in buildings, it is part of the culture. However, drunkenness is fine. Many parents sometimes even promote it. They let their kids have a party and the fridge is full of spirits and beer, 'Well, there you are, have a good time'. So, society as a whole sometimes needs to step back and say, 'Where are we heading?' The alcohol industry will not go crook because it sees increasing profits. You see it by the amount of advertising on TV.

When we talk about whether this is an Indigenous issue or not, it relates to the whole of society. Unfortunately, to some extent, it affects Indigenous communities more because much of the advertising - which some of us might think is funny - can be insidious. People can think that is the norm, when it is not really the norm.

I remember way back - Francis Xavier might remember; I mentioned it the other day - we had some advertisements on television for which we got some money from Ian Tuxworth at the time. The VB ad was, 'You have to be a man amongst the men'. I remember Tiwis looking at that advertisement, and they had their can of VB in their hand and they were men amongst the men. That is what got me going, not because they are Indigenous, but because I saw them being targeted by subtle advertising from the alcohol

industry that was destroying their community, which those people could not see. They just thought it was great - got to be a man amongst the men. Yes, well, that is all right, and you just keep drinking and drinking, and making more money for them and more pain for the community.

This is not an easy problem to fix. The issue of what you can do is something that needs more debate. I know we have debated this *ad infinitum*, but the issue of the floor price is important to add into this debate. I have some of the debate from the Stronger Futures (Northern Territory) Bill 2011. We all know the Alice Springs Alcohol Action Coalition has been a firm promoter of a floor price. That is at least a good thing to talk about. There is an argument that if the floor price for alcohol is higher, fewer people will drink.

I find it difficult to understand why alcohol is taxed differently. Why is the alcohol in a bottle of wine taxed differently than alcohol in a bottle of beer or spirits? Was it that the wine industry was associated with more powerful groups that were able to tell the government not to tax their product too highly? Whereas the beer, which is generally the working-class substance, happened to be taxed pretty highly? Why do we have a system which taxes alcohol differently?

How much of the money the government makes - the alcohol industry always argues they pay their taxes through excise - goes directly back to trying to deal with some of these issues we are dealing with today? Where do you see programs funded by that taxation from the large amounts of money spent buying grog? Where is an equivalent amount of money spent on programs that tell people about the dangers? It seems we do not have that early intervention we should have.

Another part of the debate we should look at is whether the drinking age is too low. The AMA said recently it should be 25, I think it was. When I was young, I was told to stay off the grog until 21. I am probably fortunate, I kept staying off it. The reason for trying to stay off drinking until 21 was the hope you would be mature enough to make a sensible decision about whether you wanted to drink alcohol. We know many young people, as the member for Casuarina said, have problems with alcohol, especially with binge drinking.

Another side of advertising is the brightly coloured vodka drinks. No one drank vodka in my day; they drank beer, and a bit of whisky or something, but they did not drink vodka. What did we do? We introduced lots of sweet flavoured vodka drinks in nice bottles, lovely colours with purple fridges. People might ask whether I have been around. I have been down Mitchell Street at night; I took a tour with the AHA. There is a place there

called the Vodka Bar; it is at the back of Ducks Nuts. It has this boom, boom, boom music and flashing purple, and all the vodka shines there beautifully for you to drink at 1 am at night. Do you think that is accidental? It is not; the people who make it do it to get you drinking their product.

That is one of the major problems we have in our society; there is so much emphasis on drinking. I find it hard when I go to a function somewhere, I ask if they have a soft drink and you feel like you are a pariah when they say, 'Yes, we have some somewhere'. When you do have soft drink, usually all the drinkers drink it first so they have time to drink something else later at night. The point is we have a society where alcohol is very much part of everything we do - and there is nothing wrong with that. However, I believe you have to be careful it does not take over. We criticise Indigenous people for being drunk in public places. Well, from my perspective, we need to look at Mitchell Street, and at our own behaviour.

In this debate, one of the problems is about the rehabilitation centres. I am not against people having permanent rehabilitation, except that it should not be a criminal offence, it should be similar to the secure care centres, so there are proper safeguards. I thank the member for Port Darwin; at least he is looking at that as an alternative.

However, in reality, who will we put in there? When did you last see non-Aboriginal drunks lying around the park in Darwin? They would be Aboriginal people. Who are the people who are more likely to be picked up? Those people. What are we going to do about the non-Aboriginal people who go home and bash their missus up, who have a grog problem? How do we get them to compulsory rehabilitation? It is much harder. If we leave this for the people we see in the street, then we are leaving ourselves open to people saying we are just doing it for that group of people.

Alcohol affects our whole society; there is no doubt about that. You just have to look at the number of drink-driving offences – there are a great many drink-driving offences – of people who are continually drink-driving. I do not want to get into this debate about the BDR too much, but if there was a good thing about the BDR it was that you could tell someone who had a number of drink-driving offences that they were banned. We can get into an argument whether it worked or not, but it was a little extra added to someone's penalty for continually drink-driving.

I say, yes, to the member for Arnhem, there are many other issues. This debate is about alcohol. We could debate the other issues. I am not for

legalising marijuana, although the AMA may think it is a good idea. There are two reasons from my point of view: I believe it is time we said that we have enough legal drugs, why do we want to introduce more? We should be encouraging people to take control of themselves without having to use substances and lose control.

The other reason is - and I am sure the member for Arafura will know this - the reality is many Indigenous suicides are to do with the abuse of marijuana and, probably, alcohol. Unfortunately, on the Tiwi Islands we had the highest youth suicide rate for males for some period. I do not want to be part of a system that says, 'Make it legal', while we have those types of deaths around because of that product.

We could debate those areas, but this debate tonight is about alcohol. Also, do not forget the Liquor Commission does play a part, even though we have the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Bill which has the power to say yea or nay in this. I would have liked more debate about the current alcohol management programs. I have heard about them in parliament, but it would be interesting to see where they are up to. It is certainly something the government talks about - that is, the Commonwealth government - but I am interested to see exactly where we are at the moment with those alcohol management plans. If they are going to introduce alcohol management plans, will the community have a say? Will there be a free and unfettered referendum on whether people want alcohol, regardless of whether there are alcohol management plans put in place?

Just quickly, so people do not look at this as a black/white issue, the Liquor Commission is there for everyone; it is the Liquor Commission that gives you a licence. What the Liquor Commission has to look at when it regards the objects of the act in determining a licence - and I will cut this short. It says:

... the criteria are the following:

- (a) harm or ill-health caused to people, or a group of people, by the consumption of liquor is to be minimised;*
- (b) liquor is to be sold, or sold and consumed, on licensed premises in a responsible manner;*
- (c) public order and safety must not be jeopardised, particularly where circumstances or events are expected to attract large numbers of persons to licensed premises or an area adjacent to those premises;*

- (d) *the safety, health and welfare of persons who use licensed premises must not be put at risk;*
- (e) *noise emanations from licensed premises must not be excessive;*
- (f) *business conducted at a licensed premises must not cause undue offence, annoyance, disturbance ...*

Etcetera. What I am saying is the Liquor Commission has to make a decision as to whether a licence in a community would not cause those issues with public order and safety. It is not as simple as saying, 'We want a pub'. There are people other than you and me who are required under the law because, as someone said, alcohol ...

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr WOOD: ... because the Liquor Commission is the neutral body which decides whether you can have the licence or not. It does not matter where it is in the Territory, it is the body that says you can or cannot - notwithstanding the Stronger Futures legislation also has a say.

Much of the discussion we have had about whether people have the right to have alcohol has a couple of other laws as obstacles of that happening. That does not mean you cannot have a debate and a vote but, in the end someone else will decide - not me; there are other people there for good reason.

The member for Port Darwin has brought up a very interesting point about alcohol and the crime statistics. I have no problem with that and it is good he has brought out the statistics. The only problem is I could not check them all.

As I have said before, I was not a great fan of the Banned Drinker Register because of the problems with secondary and tertiary supply, but it should have gone a little longer - maybe one year - because short-term statistics can be a real problem. I noticed that if you look at the statistics under the Department of Justice - I will show you what small figures can do; I think there were five murders in Darwin last year compared to one the year before, so there was an 800% increase in murders. I can put a headline up and say there was an 800% increase in murders in Darwin since last year. You have to be very careful with statistics.

I could not find all the statistics the member for Port Darwin had pulled together and, if I did, I did not arrive at the same figures he did. I am not saying he did anything wrong; it is just that I had difficulty last night trying to put it together.

I found the figures for 'Annual assault offences by alcohol involvement and domestic violence in Australia. Northern Territory'. On the bottom it has the total which says the percentage of the total associated with alcohol - which is what we are about. In 2011, it was 60.8%. In 2012, it was 59.1%, so it had reduced a little, by 1.7%.

In Darwin, the percentage associated with alcohol in 2011 was 58.7%, while in 2012 it was 57.2%. According to this it has gone down 1.5%. In Palmerston, it was 54.3% in 2011 and 51.2% in 2012. In Alice Springs, it was 67.8% in 2011 and 67.9% in 2012, an increase of 0.1%. In Katherine, it was 77% in 2011 and 80.1% in 2012. In Tennant Creek, it was 76.1% in 2011 and 77.3% in 2012. In Nhulunbuy, it was 69.6% in 2011 and 74.8% in 2012, bearing in mind again that in a case like Nhulunbuy the figures are small. The Northern Territory balance, which I presume are all those places outside of those communities, was 45.6% in 2011 and 42.3% in 2012. My reading of that is we have had a small - 1.7% - decrease in annual assault offences associated with alcohol.

I cannot prove in any way the BDR had any effect on that, which is one of the problems with this. I thought the way we needed to check on the BDR - and the Attorney-General has more access to these figures than I have - was to get a random sample of a number of people on the BDR, and see what had happened to them over the period of the BDR. Had they turned up at rehabilitation? Had they given up the grog? These figures do not mean much. It could be repeats; it could be new people. Statistics need far more analysis than, 'Well, there was this much last year, and this much this year'. That worried me; statistics can be used any way - what is the old saying ...

Mr Elferink: Lies, damned lies and statistics - Benjamin Disraeli.

Mr WOOD: That is right. I am not trying to put down what you said in your discussion. I felt, after reading those figures, I could say, 'There, look, the BDR has reduced assault offences through alcohol by 1.7% in the last year over the Northern Territory'.

I understand the government made a political decision to get rid of it, and says it was costing too much money. Talking to people - I live right next to the pub - people were not happy when it was first introduced. However, after 12 months, most people could not care less. The only people I

really had a grumble from was our takeaway, which has a fridge where you can pick up one bottle of beer. You are just about next to the car and, of course, they had to pull out their licence. People did not like that; however, they became used to it. The surprising thing is after being told how unpopular it was, the number of people who said, 'Why did the government pull that?' They thought it was all right, and they thought the wisest thing would have been to let it go a bit longer so we could have analysed it properly.

I appreciate the member for Port Darwin bringing forward this debate. I sincerely hope, listening to the tone of some of this debate, we do not put this debate into the race basket because it is not about that. We should all be entitled, as members of this parliament, to talk about these issues and not be told we do not know what we are talking about.

As one who lived on Aboriginal communities for 14 years, and having seen half of the 30 boys I had in the dormitory die from alcohol, I find it difficult for someone to say to me that I do not know what I am talking about. When you are married to a woman from the Wadjigan tribe, whose two brothers have died from the effects of alcohol through diabetes - which we forget is another issue - please do not tell me I do not know what I am talking about. It is a human issue, not a racial issue, because grog is not a traditional issue.

Grog is found throughout the world. You would have seen the recent article in the paper about native Americans. We are not immune from the issues of alcohol. It is worldwide, but we need our parliament to look for our solutions.

I am not here to say I know better than the person next door. I am contributing to this debate by saying if we are serious about fixing it we really need to tackle it in a serious manner, and we need some major cultural change within society as a whole if we are to turn it around. Otherwise, we will pay the cost from a health perspective, a lack of employment, the loss of working hours in our community, the social dysfunction because of domestic violence and marriage break-ups, and the children raised in those conditions will have poor education because they will not attend school and, if they attend school, they will be falling asleep because mum and dad were on the grog during the night.

Madam Speaker, it is a big issue. It should not be a party political issue, it should be a political issue. We should be asking some of the experts, especially some of the people in CAAPS, who may have fallen out of this discussion, especially when it comes to rehabilitation. We must ensure those groups that have been working in alcohol rehabilitation are brought into this debate - the

same as Amity House. I am not an expert; I am contributing some ideas. I do not make myself an expert, but we have to work together if we are ever to do something about the problems alcohol has brought to the Northern Territory.

Mr HIGGINS (Daly): Madam Speaker, I have listened with interest to the minister's statement today on alcohol and crime and to everything everyone else has said. It is my turn to put the view of my constituents into the debate.

I cannot represent those constituents west of the Daly in the same way my other colleagues here can. In my maiden speech, I made reference to the people west of the Daly, and thank them for their insights, as they give me a lot of information.

While I have lived at the Daly, and west of the river for that matter, for over 14 years - and I did not realise I had lived there for just as long as Gerry had - I do not profess to know, as many in opposition seem to think they do, what the silver bullet is. I have not lived in the community as such, nor have I directly experienced the problems associated with alcohol in these communities. I was, however, elected to listen, not for what I said or promised constituents, but for what I always allow my constituents to say - and I am here to put what they say forward.

Permits for alcohol are allowed in communities west of the Daly. While I know the police do a difficult job, the locals just cannot understand how they, ultimately, decide who will and will not have a permit. These issues have constantly been raised with me over the past few years. Aboriginal people who visit my place cannot see why I can buy alcohol, need no police permission, nor am I asked for a copy of that permit if I buy any takeaway alcohol at the Daly River Inn, which they own.

The Peppimenarti Social Club has been running for many years and is a great source of employment and income for the local people. The member for Arnhem mentioned employment. I believe the club employs six or seven people. Up until the intervention, even with that alcohol available in that community, there was no need for any permanent police presence. From my own observations, there is still very little need for a permanent presence as the result of the availability of that alcohol. The club serves mid-strength beer for a restricted number of hours on four nights a week. I have attended this club many times and have yet to witness any problems. The rules which are implemented by this community are strict. Drinkers can be banned, sober drivers must be present, and they must be licensed and driving registered cars - if we could only implement some of these rules outside of our communities.

The member for Nhulunbuy mentioned the Tiwi promise of full-strength beer. The same mention of that was made in regard to me promising that at the Peppi club. I was not at the Peppimenarti polling booth on voting day. Full-strength beer has never been discussed with me. The member for Casuarina also mentioned wine - the first one to mention it.

Wadeye had a club which has since closed. When I sat down with many of the families around Wadeye and discussed with them what they felt about alcohol in their community, I was surprised that most of them automatically said, no, they did not want alcohol. While I had a good idea that support for the club was not present, I was somewhat taken aback at the number who did not support alcohol in the community. As many people in Wadeye go to Peppimenarti for drinks as a regular occurrence, I asked why this was acceptable. The answer was by the time they drive the two hours back to Wadeye, the alcohol has gone from their bodies. This is Aboriginal people solving their own problem.

The issue of more importance to local people is why white people get permits and not Aboriginal people. I have had many discussions with Aboriginal friends from the Daly and west - Bulgul, Woolianna and Belyuen. None of them can understand why they are not able to have a say in the rules that are applied to their communities. We gave them land rights but not their day-to-day living rights. It is about time the opposition saw the basis of our stand on behalf of these people; that is, they are part of this country and are entitled to just as big a say in how it is run as we have.

This debate is not about alcohol but about choice. These people made their choice at the last election, yet the opposition still will not listen. The Country Liberals do and will continue to listen. This government will look for new solutions. The expensive failed option of the BDR has not worked. It has cost us good hard cash that could have been used on roads and bridges, and it needs to be replaced with a scheme acceptable and supported by all Territorians irrespective of their race.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I am honoured to stand, once again, in the alcohol debate. I thank the member for Port Darwin, the Attorney-General, for bringing this statement to the House. To quote the first paragraph of his statement:

... this new Twelfth Assembly of this parliament has already spent a substantial amount of time discussing and debating alcohol and the problems that it causes in the Northern Territory community,

particularly, but not exclusively, amongst its Aboriginal citizens - and we are only in Day 5 of these sittings.

I especially like getting up to speak in this House after the member for Nelson, who takes the politics out of the debate. He levels the playing field and provides this House with a rational approach. It was interesting to see the member for Daly jump to his feet and contribute to the debate, and good on him. He put the politics straight back in it.

However, from the opposition's perspective, the debate started about the Banned Drinker Register, one of the suite of tough alcohol reforms introduced by a Labor government, called Enough is Enough. That suite of initiatives started the debate. There was debate about scrapping an initiative with no real policy in its place. That is a fair debate and that is what it is about. The debate then moved to the issue around reintroducing full-strength alcohol to the Tiwi Islands - and that is what the debate is about.

I must say, as a government member for four years, it was a wonderful experience delivering for the Territory across every electorate in the Northern Territory, as a member of a Labor government. When you think about the new suburbs in Darwin and Palmerston, concepts like the Marine Supply Base, then as you go down the track, the Katherine Cultural Precinct - one would have to stop and think about that as an initiative for that town and that regional community. We could turn to Alice Springs and talk about the infrastructure developments, the land release programs, the seniors housing. Then, we could start going through the bush and talk about that incredible program during my very brief time in government.

If you aggregate my four years in government to the 10 years of the Labor government, then everyone really would have great trouble in trying to discredit that period of Territory history. In the last four years, with the global financial crisis, the infrastructure spend, that fiscal stimulus strategy, that counter-cyclical infrastructure strategy to kick in at the end of that four-year period, the partnerships with the Australian government, and managing a debt that represents 8% of the Territory's income, all those things provide one with good feelings about doing things for the Territory and all Territorians.

Now I am adjusting to being in opposition because it is a different world. Those members opposite who have just entered the realm of government would be enjoying their new experience; likewise I am enjoying mine but it is a very different role. In this debate, like any debate, we are challenging policy. However, we are making the point here in

the alcohol debate that there is no policy from the other side. That is a bit of a risky area for me as a Territorian, and that is what I will be telling the electorate that I represent.

We will contribute to the debate and, in the debate on the reintroduction of full-strength alcohol into the Tiwi Islands, we are providing a warning. We are not knocking anyone's rights. We are challenging that issue which was raised by the Country Liberal Party; it was an issue of starting a conversation, listening to the people. No one is disputing that. We are putting out the warning. We are debating policy and we will continue because that is our job in making sure the best legislative instruments, the best outcomes for Territorians, come from the work that is done in parliament - and that represents government and opposition.

One thing I will say in opposition is I have had a very defining moment in this very short debate about alcohol in the Northern Territory. That was during Question Time today, when the Minister for Children and Families talked about foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. She read from a prepared statement. I would really like her to reference that statement because I would like to read from the material she read in the House today. I am sure there will be a reference because it was rather high-level medical information. If she could reference that for the House, I would like to get my hands on it, take it home, and study it.

It came as a dorothy dixer and did not hit the mark because it was an attempt to weave its relationship around alcohol into an education policy statement. I commend the Country Liberal Party because they have finally hit the mark. However, the question is: what are they going to do about it? That is the real question. Will we see it in the mini-budget in December?

We are struggling in the Barkly to continue the resources for the wonderful education and awareness project run out of Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation about foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The Commonwealth has kicked back in to keep it going, and it has been my job to try to search out funding as well. The Country Liberal Party has entered this arena today with a very mediocre approach in a dorothy dixer, attempting to get it on the public record. Well, good on you, because now you put your money where your mouth is and we start to seriously look at resourcing it.

My lobby to my Caucus colleagues for a number of years now has been what we will be facing in the Northern Territory within the next five to seven years, which is an explosion of five-year-olds who will hit our education system. There is one phenomena that is happening in the Northern

Territory that we are all aware of; that is, we are a young place, we have many young families and many children are being produced. Just go to a remote community. Go to a football match in Tennant Creek on a Saturday and watch the kids run on at quarter time and half time to play their football. Start to do a head count, then talk about the resources and infrastructure in Tennant Creek and how we will accommodate that explosion of five-year-olds around 2016, 2017 and 2018. They will be all fronting up with supportive families to go to school.

Do you know what the scary part of that is? They represent a cohort that will have high support needs. One of those needs will be behavioural and emotional high support which can be managed. However, if this is fuelled by foetal alcohol spectrum disorder then we are in a whole new realm of responsibility. It is very important to start to plan for what will come our way.

What does it have to do with this debate? It is related to the consumption of alcohol. It is the consumption of alcohol by young parents who do not understand the relationship between consuming alcohol and the growth of a foetus, and the detrimental effect it will have on the cognitive and physical development of that growing child, in utero. There is a very serious lack of education and awareness. I hope anyone putting together alcohol policy, going into the remotes and the regions talking about the big conversation of rights - the right to consume alcohol - factors that into their thinking and planning. It is one side of the debate to talk about rights, but the other side of the debate is to talk about responsibility - individual responsibility. Most of the good decision-making around individual responsibility comes with education and awareness.

I am also interested in the comments of the Attorney-General about the plan to lock up drunks. He agreed, yes, we will lock up drunks. Our concern is the criminalisation of alcoholism. Is that something we want to see in our society or is it better managed in a different realm? The member for Nelson has already said he has had conversations with the Attorney-General, and there is already an interest to look at that policy position, to look at rehabilitation as the essence of what you are trying to achieve, because getting locked up for three months is way over-simplistic.

The other aspect of that policy to look at incarceration, remove the problem, and deal with it in isolation, is exactly what has been talked about in this House - when you return that person. If you look at the new era in corrections and the direction the previous government was heading, for all types of reasons, it was to not lock up people - not lock up the recidivist offender under 12 months.

The member for Port Darwin spoke the other day about trying to put some fear into the community. The classic approach government has taken in this sittings is to try to discredit a fiscal policy; that is, there will be so many people locked up by the time the new multiclassification Doug Owston Correctional Centre will be open, they will have to keep Berrimah open. That is rubbish, because if the Country Liberal Party government continues down the right way - not the black way, not the white way, but the right way - it will be putting time, energy and resources that were allocated into the community corrections pathway to keep the low-level recidivist out of gaol. As the Attorney-General would know, when a person is sentenced under 12 months in the traditional Correctional Services environment, it is very difficult to gain any real outcomes.

There are a host of other parts of this debate I will not go into because it is not a debate about corrections; it is a debate about getting the best outcomes.

Talking of Northern Territory Correctional Service facilities, I make no secret of the fact I spent a great deal of time visiting them and was recognised by many prisoners, some of them my ex-students. I was ridiculed in this House by members in the then opposition who tried to make a joke about that on a number of occasions - read the *Hansard*. I talked at length to these people and they told me the same thing. With the Barkly work camp, I talked at length to families about what we were doing and the direction we are heading.

With 82% of prisoners in the Northern Territory being Indigenous, over 60% will tell you their offending behaviour directly related to alcohol. When you hear stories from family members, prisoners, and ex-prisoners about the work camp concept, that regional concept, and the new thinking in corrections is making a difference, I hope we continue down that road. However, that is a custodial pathway.

The other pathway I seriously hope we continue is the community corrections pathway, where you do not lock up everyone. By keeping them in the community you can demonstrate real rehabilitation, and real and meaningful self-esteem building exercises. However, you will need to really put your thinking caps on and decide, as a Caucus, whether you will scrap that and go against all the thinking from the judicial system around what the Indigenous community told us, as a government, and what the general community in the Northern Territory wanted to see. However, that is up to you guys.

This debate is a good debate. When we talk about consultation, not only have we visited the

Tiwi Islands but we will be visiting every electorate in the Northern Territory. We will be visiting every electorate in the Northern Territory over four years and consulting with many people. That journey has just begun.

It is difficult when members on the other side talk about having a far greater knowledge than other MLAs. The member for Nelson has talked about that. I will stay off that because a far greater knowledge is counterproductive to any real outcomes when you want to use that in a debate. I happen to be a father, a grandfather, and have lost family members as well. I grew up in the heroin-ravaged western suburbs of Sydney and I could tell you some stories that would curl your hair.

I will share a quick story about my work with the Aboriginal community. For the first 10 years of my life I played with two kids up the street and I did not realise they were Aboriginal. My mother had a very good relationship with the hosting family, and I realised much later in my life that they were foster kids. They were from Redfern, and we shared much together. That was an amazing part of my life. Then, I went on to work with the Indigenous communities in regional and remote areas for more than half of my life.

However, I do not think the far greater knowledge concept serves any good purpose in the debate. Let us keep it as the member for Nelson says regarding that human element. Let us talk about knowledge. I remember a very passionate contribution to debate from the member for Port Darwin, who brought this statement to the House and is guiding your policy development as a very experienced police officer, a learned person in the field of law and, now, as the Northern Territory's Attorney-General.

He talked about when he had the problem; when he used to turn up drunk to work as a police officer; when he was found in an air-conditioning duct with no real understanding of where he was. It was a passionate debate and I will never forget it. It was a very important debate because he talked about having a problem, and what he did to get through it. He got through it because he, obviously, had a very good support network, a great intellect, and he made the decision to get through it.

The best rehabilitation strategy I ever saw for heroin addicts in western Sydney was 'We help ourselves'. However, around that mantra of 'We help ourselves' - which was a cliché of a number of rehabilitation centres in the western Sydney area - was that intricate set of services and service delivery. We are saying, once again in the debate, when you go out there to change the world then remember that is one element of it. Do

not have a simple debate about one element of community life without the other services that are needed should anything go wrong. That is common sense and something we bring to the table. We do so in good faith.

The member for Nhulunbuy talked about the then member for Macdonnell, the member for Namatjira, and I remember well that mantra, 'Not a black way, not a white way, it is the right way'. They are wise words and I have already quoted the member for Namatjira in another part of the debate where she said, 'If you go into Indigenous communities talk to the grannies'.

We are not arguing about freedom of speech or this ideology that has been put our way, what we are saying is, when you have your conversation and debate, then the next step is you are going to find some type of democratic way to make a decision. We are suggesting, from our side, that decision-making will be very important ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move an extension of time, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, honourable members.

That decision-making process will come; it will be the reality of where we go. When you think about Aboriginal communities and the really powerful kinship relationships they have, and try to overlay a European style of governance, you have a fusion, and a clash. Therefore, you will need to consider very carefully the democratic process you want to put in to get the right information out.

The Country Liberal Party is very lucky in government because it has strong Indigenous members in its line up. I urge those members to do the interpreting work. Go and brief your non-Indigenous Caucus members around the democratic processes so you get the accurate information. All the Labor opposition has made clear is that we want to see it done right. We want to see the right way and the right outcome because what comes with rights is responsibility. This will be a very important part you will get to.

The Chief Minister has not put a time frame on it. He has pulled back the political rhetoric and says it is all about a conversation and it will take place and, 'We are the people to do it because the Labor Party has lost that ability to communicate'. Well, that is rubbish! However, you guys are now in the driver's seat, you are leading the charge. We will continue to monitor what you do, tell the story about what you do, and debate with you where we feel it is necessary.

Let us talk about that element in the alcohol debate of the Banned Drinker Register, and the statistical analysis from the Attorney-General in the statement, to get back to some ground that he feels really confident in; that is, the massaging of numbers. Once again, the member for Nelson made some good points, and speakers on our side have made good points.

I will say, in addition, that the Attorney-General is lacking in his interpretation of numbers in this debate, in this House. He has no ethical base to launch off because his figures are pulled out of a minimal trial period of a new initiative. He does not outline for the House the differences and inferences that go into making up these statistics.

I will qualify that by talking about Tennant Creek. I know specialist police; I talk to police and I value what they do. They tell me, 'We are going to have a really big campaign on domestic violence; we are going to work hard to try to get some results in reducing violence against women'. When those statistics are added into the assault statistics package, and the Attorney-General takes that and massages it into the story of Tennant Creek, he denies an ethical base there. He is not providing any real empirical evidence. He is using numbers to foster his debate.

We, on this side of the House, have said the Banned Drinker Register ran over 12 months. The figures being used are pulled from here, there, and everywhere. You really could do a correct statistical analysis. You do not operate off an ethical base in good research and, therefore, you are turning it into a political stunt. The bottom line, when you get to the end of it is, it is all about saving money.

Members on this side have argued it should have been given more time, and we have pointed out the benefits in that strategy as one of the elements of the Enough is Enough package. It is reassuring to hear, though, the Attorney-General refer to the BDR regarding the concept of a register. What happened on the ground was that the register was created. We know, in 12 months, that 2500 Territorians have a problem with alcohol abuse. The Attorney-General alluded, subtly, that the CLP government will not scrap that; they will hold that and start to look at it in their policy development. That makes me feel much more comfortable because that is very important information.

However, those people are back with a free rein to buy alcohol with no humbug and no restrictions - good humbug. You could not go into a bottle shop in Tennant Creek without ID and being organised to purchase your alcohol. But, now you can; we are back to the good old days. We had a policy that was growing, that was rolling out.

As I said the other night in my debate, I was looking forward so much to the day when problem drinkers I know came into my office and bellow and roar because when they went to the auto teller they found there was only \$60 cash in their account, and I had to sit them down and explain that because this policy rolled through, because we got to the stage of the tribunal and the SMART Court, and because they were delivered with a manifest of programs they have to jump through, hoops, they have had 80% of their income, their welfare benefits, quarantined'.

We did not get to that. I hope we can because one thing that will certainly pull the problem drinker up is not only having a register and a management regime around that abuse, but also not having access to cash to purchase the drug of their choice, which is alcohol. However, we did not get there; it was scrapped. We have continually said in this debate that is your choice; that is the road you are taking the Territory down but, unfortunately, at this stage, there are no CLP alternatives. To me, that is poor decision-making in the absence of policy and of alternatives.

One can only suggest the rationale behind that decision was a political rationale. You do not leave me with any other choice but to think that was politically massaged because I watched that sentiment roll out in the community. I watched and listened to that pitch in the Barkly electorate, people saying, 'We will pull this, we are no nanny state, we will return it to anything goes'. Unfortunately, in all of that, the Banned Drinker Register was caught up and scrapped almost on Day 1 of the new government's regime. I will never forget how fast that reverberation went through the bush; how fast that story was told - it is gone, you do not need ID anymore, the register has been scrapped, and it is back to the good old days.

I will leave the House with one abstract thought at the end. Another of my disappointments around the Banned Drinker Register was when I went on the road into the regional and remote areas and started workshopping with communities the Enough is Enough alcohol reform package which was being rolled out by the Territory Labor government. We talked about the BDR. I alluded to the fact that you could self-impose a ban, and I was going to put myself on the BDR. I discussed it with my family. The reason I wanted to go on the BDR was so when I was humbugged - I get a lot of humbug and it is not just Indigenous mob; I have a big family - I could say, finally, very clearly and decisively, 'I cannot buy alcohol because I am banned'.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I do not have that choice now. However, there are many senior women who have picked up on my crazy rhetoric

and asked me how to do it because they were interested in another tool to address alcohol abuse, a scourge in their lives.

Mrs PRICE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, earlier we heard from the member for Port Darwin on his alcohol and crime statement. Yes, we do walk the walk and we talk the talk, and the challenges alcohol presents are not new.

We can talk about alcohol as much as we want. However, people affected by it do not have a chance like us to really talk about the problems alcohol brings, which they do not understand. We can sit here day after day and throw abuse at each other, but what really counts is that these people will never have a chance to hear us speak on behalf of them.

Yes, we need responsible drinking; we all want to see that. I have argued that with my family time and time again in my own lounge room. I have had to repeat myself to a close relative - a 49-year-old grandfather, father, uncle, nephew, brother - who just does not get the message. I have seen him cry in front of me because he is so desperate for his alcohol for the day. I am forever telling my close family members that alcohol is not good for them. I have come across some of my relatives who were on the Banned Drinker Register who were still drunk.

You talk about how the CLP is reintroducing alcohol into the communities. We are not about that; we want to give the communities the chance to decide. There are communities, like Kalkaridji, which have clubs and know how to control them. Yuendumu has always been a dry community. It was set up that way by the old women who were sick and tired of picking up their families who had injured themselves while under the influence of alcohol.

They are the people who need the support. Whilst we are trying to give them the support, why are we not asking them at the same time what they are going to do about it as a group of human beings? We all say we are human beings. As human beings, why do we not ask that simple question, 'What are you going to do about it? What is your plan?'

We visit so many communities and listen to everything they say to us, but we walk away and do not ask that simple question, 'What are you, as an individual responsible for yourself, going to do to stop this flow of alcohol and the deaths in your community?' We attend 10 funerals a month, and these are family members who have drunk, day in, day out. Every day they got up that was their daily job, to get drunk. That is rife in the communities. Out in the streets wherever there is alcohol-related abuse, people tend to ignore it because

what is happening out there is just Aboriginal people attacking one another, 'It does not matter because it is Aboriginal people attacking each other; that has nothing to do with us'.

We should make it our business as well. We should be out there talking to people, explaining to them the consequences of alcohol, and what it does to their bodies. For 11 years Labor has been in government, and I have never had the opportunity to sit down, in that time, to talk about alcohol-related problems in the community, which disappointed me.

Who is affected by it? Women and children. Yes, Jenny Macklin realised that women and children come first. We all realise that as well, because they are our future. As the member for Barkly said, we are all human beings, we all have responsibilities. To reduce it, we all need to work together.

Madam Speaker, other members should not have a go at our member for Arafura because he has lived there and he knows what his people are doing to themselves. We need to work towards helping the Tiwi - the Waramungu, Warlpiri, Luritja, Pintubi, the Yolngu all need to work together with these people in the remote or regional centres, or even in the streets of Darwin or Alice Springs, and make them feel as if they are human beings, and talk to them and help them get over the alcoholism that is so deep within our society.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Attorney-General's statement in the Chamber today. The Attorney-General touched on a number of very important and salient concepts and points in his statement, and I will touch on those a little later. I have been listening to a fair bit of the debate on the statement made by the Attorney-General.

A few things have been said which have touched home with me for different reasons. Some of the contributions from this side of the House, particularly the stirring speech from the member for Stuart, and some of the things the member for Arnhem said earlier today, add a new depth, in my view, to debates on these types of issues in this parliament.

A few of the contributions - and I will be accused of saying everything we say is right and everything they say is wrong - from members opposite have disturbed me a little. I just heard the member for Barkly talk about how he wanted to put himself on the Banned Drinker Register. I had to think about that for a minute. My thoughts are still coalescing in my head; they are still gelling there. What struck me immediately about that was the

complete abrogation of personal responsibility that statement implied.

The member for Barkly, who was a minister in the former government and is now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, said to this parliament and to the Northern Territory that he did not, or does not, have the ticker to stand up to people who humbug him, family members and the like, to purchase alcohol and tell them 'no'. I am astounded that a former minister of this government, someone who is, or was, presumably, a leader in the Northern Territory - he is one of a select group of 25 elected to represent the people of the Northern Territory - stood in this House and said he had to hide behind legislation because he lacked the courage, the ticker, the leadership, and the ability to give his own friends and family the right direction.

The right direction, from a person in that position, would be as follows. Let us say the member for Sanderson wanted me to buy his grog because he was on the Banned Drinker Register. My response to him would be, 'No, sorry, I cannot do that. No'. It is a two letter word, no, it is not that hard to say.

I would not have to put myself, subject to the Banned Drinker Register, in a position to hide from having to say the word 'no'. My goodness me! The member for Barkly, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, must have been a piece of jelly at school when it came to peer group pressure. How did he perform then? I do not get it; how can he, as a former minister in this place - but I guess that is the difference between those on this side and those on that side of the House. Maybe it is just a philosophical difference. Maybe I am being too hard on the member for Barkly. Maybe it is just a philosophical difference that Labor members would rather stand behind legislation, a law or a regulation, and hide behind it so they could abrogate their responsibility to make the right personal choices and decisions.

That probably goes to the heart of this debate and the differences between their policy and ours. Their policy worked around the idea of having people stuck in legislation that affected everyone and which took away their choice. They could hide behind that, effectively, and not have any choice. Whereas, on this side of the House, we encourage people to take personal responsibility for their behaviour.

I have said in this House many times before that alcohol is not the problem, it is the overuse or abuse of alcohol that is a problem. You get to make choices about that. If you have an illness we will call alcoholism - and I have never been an alcoholic so maybe it is very hard to choose not to take alcohol - and find yourself in that position that you can no longer choose, not because you

do not want to choose, not because you are abrogating your responsibility; you cannot choose anymore because you are sick - then we will have laws and policy in place that will take you and force you to be dealt with in a way that achieves two things.

First of all, it forces you into a rehabilitation centre, a place where you will receive the treatment you must have. It will remove you from the public arena, so the manifestations of your alcoholism, or your overuse or abuse of alcohol, will no longer be a part of society. We all know what I am talking about; that is, the antisocial behaviour we see on the streets every day - the assaults we see occurring right across the Territory that have been increasing under the previous government's policy of the Banned Drinker Register.

The member for Barkly's attitude about this is something to behold. I have never seen a person in a position of leadership as he is, notwithstanding that he is now in opposition, unable to show the leadership that is required of him in the community. Absolutely staggering!

I will talk a little about the contribution by the member for Fannie Bay during his portion of the debate. It is shocking to me that the member for Fannie Bay still continues to support the view that the Banned Drinker Register worked - a view he now bases not on the alcohol-related crime statistics, but on one anecdotal account.

Mrs Lambley: The local shop.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: Yes, his local shop. I wonder why the member for Fannie Bay chooses not to accept the crime statistics ...

Members interjecting.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: Yes, that is correct; they would not bring out the crime statistics. Someone was mentioning 'inconvenient truth'. I think it might have been the Leader of the Opposition many times. There is plenty of 'inconvenient truth' in the statistics on crime in the Northern Territory and the Banned Drinker Register which, of course, they do not want to talk about on that side of the House.

I wonder why the member for Fannie Bay chooses not to accept those crime statistics. Is it because he does not believe in the accuracy of police records? Is it because the crime statistics conflict with his agenda? That might be getting closer to the mark. Is it the same reasons his government hid the crime statistics in the first place? By crikey, we are getting warm now. Or is it simply that the statistics, which he denies, proved the Banned Drinker Register did not work?

I have heard some good debate today. The member for Nelson has also made some significant, sensible contributions. But the member for Fannie Bay has taken a very pig-headed approach to this entire alcohol policy debate. The former government members are so swept up in their self-righteousness, even in opposition, that they simply refuse to accept that their policy did not work. They sit on their high horse and, when the statistics come out to prove them wrong, their arrogance sees fit to deny everything.

In response to the single anecdote the member for Fannie Bay raised to defend the taking away of the Banned Drinker Register - and that was the store owner, which I do not refute - I say this: the Banned Drinker Register may have helped the shopkeeper refuse service to people on the list - that is fair enough - but it did not stop banned drinkers from obtaining alcohol. They could still get it. They got it; they were alcoholics. We saw them on the streets of Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, even right here in front of Parliament House. The former policy did not fix the problem.

The simplistic view is, and I said this before, that one can blame alcohol as the problem. However, as the Attorney-General pointed out, alcohol has been around since before recorded history. It has been used for thousands of years and, no doubt, abused for thousands of years as well.

Beyond that, Labor's approach failed to address the long-term strategy around overuse of alcohol. There was no rehabilitation; there was no resolve to the issue - not one that was enforceable anyway. I wonder what they expected. Did they expect problem alcoholics, when they received their Banned Drinker Register banning and treatment notice, would say, 'Well, I have been banned. I better become an upstanding member of society now'? Was that the expectation? That expectation did not play out very well either. The previous government spent a huge sum of money to prove bans on alcohol will not stop problem alcoholics access alcohol. I reiterate the Attorney-General's reference to the United States' attempt at prohibition. Just for the record, that did not work.

In the year prior to the Banned Drinker Register, 20 354 drunks were taken into protective custody. In the subsequent year, when the BDR was in place, 19 988 drunks were taken into protective custody. They are the facts. When the Banned Drinker Register was in force, the average drunk was taken into custody 2.5 times a year. However, 69 people were taken into protective custody more than 20 times. Tell me how the Banned Drinker Register was helping them.

I thank the Attorney-General for bringing to the attention of the House that one person on the BDR was taken into protective custody for being drunk 117 times. How did the BDR help that person? The answer is, it did not. That works out to be roughly every three days he was picked up by the police for being drunk and was already on the BDR ...

Mrs Lambley: She.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: She, sorry. If your policy worked, why was this person not prohibited from alcohol? Why were they still able to access alcohol?

That was always going to be the failing of your policy. We discussed this; we talked about this when the legislation was introduced into this parliament. When we were in opposition we said it would not work for a bunch of reasons. First, there were no punitive measures attached to the breaching of a banning notice and subsequent orders issued by the SMART Court. If you do not want to call them punitive, call them enforceable, because if you got an order from the SMART Court it was not enforceable. If you breached the order under the BDR legislation under the Enough is Enough alcohol reforms, what happened to you? You stayed on the Banned Drinker Register and you could still access alcohol. Where on earth was the efficacy of that? How was that supposed to work?

I am glad the member for Barkly raised the Enough is Enough reforms in his speech. Even the reports on the Enough is Enough reforms published by the then government, the current opposition, during its administration showed the Banned Drinker Register was not working. I remember previously raising this in debates on alcohol in parliament. I turn to the July 2011 to December 2011 report. Across the Territory, 808 were on the first BAT notice, 287 were on their second BAT notice, and 470 on the third.

I turn to the July 2011 to March 2012 report, which is an additional three months on the previous figures, across the Territory there were 626 on the first BAT notice, 310 on their second, and a whopping 744 on their third BAT notice. These figures saw a drop of 182 people on their first BAT notice. You might say that is all right, but the problem is there were subsequent increases of 23 and 274 people on their second and third BAT notices respectively.

For those who dropped off the first BAT notice, they were just elevated, or promoted, to the second or third BAT notice. If my maths is right, that is an addition of close enough to 300 people on the Banned Drinker Register who still continued to gain access to alcohol because they

were picked up again by the police for protective custody or some other alcohol-related matter, and given their second and third BAT notices.

How did the BDR help those 300 people deal with their alcohol problems? The answer is, it did not. That tells me that BAT notices did not stop people from getting grog.

People reported to me on many occasions of taxis pulling up in drive-through takeaway outlets with five people in the car, four of whom were on banned notices so they could not buy anything. However, there was one sitting in the car who was not on the Banned Drinker Register and he would just do all the buying. There would be \$300 or \$400 worth of grog bought and thrown in the boot of the taxi, and off they went.

We warned you about this. When this legislation was first being debated in parliament, we warned you that would happen, because at that time – there are three ex-policemen now, but there were four at the time and between us we have about 80 or so years of policing experience, just enough to tell us ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move the member be granted an extension of time, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: Thank you, Treasurer.

We warned the then government that these measures would not work because, when you work at the coalface as a police officer, you get to see how policy plays out at ground level. I tell you, you can pick a lemon for miles; you can see it coming. You think, 'Oh, my God! How are we going to deal with this?' That is why we were so passionate about standing in this House trying to direct the then government not to do this, because we knew it would not work. At the end of the day, it was a very expensive mistake.

I have talked about these banning and treatment notices. The statistics get worse. In the next report, which ends June 2012, on the Enough is Enough reforms, all we see is increases in the first banning notices, the second banning notice, and the third banning notice.. You had 550 on their first BAT, 305 on their second, and a whopping 880 people on their third BAT notice.

What I am trying to point out - and I tried to point this out many times before - is that people were still getting access to alcohol. How many times do I have to say that? This was not working. You can stand up here all you like and defend the indefensible but, at the end of the day, this was a

policy that was never going to work, and has proven itself not to.

I covered SMART Court orders a little before. You get an order from the SMART Court, but it is not enforceable. You are told to go and have some treatment. In the case of Katherine, you are ordered to go to Venndale or somewhere like that. What happens if you go there for two days and do not turn up again after that? The only punitive measure is you get to stay on the Banned Drinker Register. Unless one of the super heroes on the other side of the House can tell me how that was enforceable, perhaps I have missed something. Anyway, I have not been able to see it.

People with an addiction will go to great lengths to satisfy their addiction and only rehabilitation and support can help end that addiction. I am not going to go into too many statistics, the Attorney-General covered them. We all know alcohol is related to crime and assaults and everything else. Just in the first half of this year, Katherine saw 272 instances of alcohol involved in assaults and, of those, 185 were associated with domestic violence. It pains me to speak of these statistics in the House. Despite the former government's well-intended BDR, this kind of activity still takes place in a small community like Katherine. Other statistics have been rolled out today that I will not regurgitate.

The Country Liberals stood on some very strong election platforms prior to the August 2012 election. In the way the electorate across the Northern Territory responded, the blatant failure of the former Labor government to deal with this issue was echoed when Territorians put Labor on the banned politicians register. That is where they are now. They are in opposition but they are also on the banned politicians register. The failures of their policy are so profound we should all be very careful in considering any of the contributions they make to the way the Northern Territory runs and operates. They were - and we all saw it - the worst government in the history of the Northern Territory, were they not? Thank goodness the greater Northern Territory electorate also saw that and dealt with it decisively on 25 August.

The circumstances the Northern Territory government now finds itself in are unique and dire. We all have a problem. We can agree on that much; we all have a problem we want solved, without a doubt. There is an intrinsic link between alcohol consumption and antisocial behaviour. Our government was elected with a plan to address this issue. It fills me with pride to stand on this side of the Chamber with some truly remarkable Territorians who are committed to resolving the issues around alcohol.

The Minister for Indigenous Advancement's comments were powerful and true. Here is a person who really understands what is going on in the Territory. I was chatting earlier with the member for Arnhem on the back of her comments today. I know the member for Nelson made mention of this in his portion of the debate about this not being a black or white issue, and alcohol not being a part of the culture.

However, there is a feeling that alcohol abuse has become a part of Indigenous culture. It is sad, but it is true. You see generational welfare, unemployment and alcohol abuse. It is high time we stopped fiddling around the edges on alcohol policy. That is what has been happening. I go to meetings where we talk about alcohol issues. Everyone sits in those rooms and it drives me mad because they all want to sit around and go, 'Oh no, we have to study this and we have to learn more about that. Gently, gently, softly, softly'. Gently, gently, softly, softly has not worked; it has not worked over so many years. You tell me - perhaps, everyone in this House, every person in the Northern Territory can write me an e-mail and tell me if they really think the lot of Aboriginal people has improved in the last 20, 30, or 40 years. They are still in the same dire circumstances with, now, generational alcohol abuse, generational welfare, and generational unemployment. It is not good enough.

This government is prepared to make difficult, tough decisions which will be unpopular in some quarters. We have to do it; it is for the best of the people of the Northern Territory. That is why I support the alcohol policy this government will be bringing to the Northern Territory. It is about personal responsibility. It is not like the member for Barkly hiding behind a regulation, unable to show leadership in his own community, for goodness sake. It is about people stepping up and taking some responsibility for themselves. If they can, good on them, but if they cannot then the Northern Territory government will have to step in and deal with those issues for two reasons: for their own benefit and to get the antisocial behaviour off our streets because we know it affects the quality of life for Territorians and people who visit here - I have not even touched on that.

However, there is a third reason: \$642m, I believe, was the last figure quoted ...

Mr Styles: \$672m.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: Thank you. That was \$672m from the member for Sanderson - do I hear a raise on that? Alcohol costs the Northern Territory government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, do you believe we can spend that money better, and get these people off this alcohol roundabout? I believe we can. This government will not use a dollar figure to define how well we are going; we want to see results and outcomes.

Ms ANDERSON (Indigenous Advancement):

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the statement made by the Attorney-General. I start off by saying that unlike anyone else in this House, when we talk about alcoholism or children with foetal alcohol syndrome, kids petrol sniffing, ganja, prisoners, Indigenous people are emotionally tied to the debate because we have so many of our people in prisons. We have those children on the community with foetal alcohol syndrome and we know that alcoholism is killing our people.

It has been misinterpreted by the opposition; that is why they are sitting on the other side. People became sick and tired of their rhetoric. You heard the member for Stuart saying last week in another debate on alcoholism that she was the Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Group to the government when Enough Is Enough was presented. They did not even present it to the Indigenous Advisory Group; she was not even involved in it as the Chair of that committee. How appalling is that? That you install an advisory group to give you advice on Indigenous issues, and in the major issue of alcoholism amongst Indigenous people, they do not consult with their advisory group.

That is why the former Chief Minister is sitting there as the mentor; mentoring them on the failures of the Labor Party. That is why the Opposition Leader, the triple D, is sitting there. She has brought so many problems to the Northern Territory; she was held accountable on 25 August by regional and remote Territorians. The Labor Party was punished by remote and regional Northern Territory for not listening. That is why they are sitting on the other side. They will sit there for a long, long time, and I hope they sit there forever.

This party is about fixing the problems. We will fix the problems. We know we have problem drinkers and our colleagues, unlike the other side, talk to Indigenous members, whether it is in their office upstairs or inside the lobby. They ask for advice. The member for Barkly brought that up, and he can be assured, unlike his government, my colleagues on this side talk to Indigenous people to see whether they are going down the right path, and to ensure we are included in decision making.

Question Time was a theme with the opposite side asking, especially our Deputy Chief Minister, about foetal alcohol syndrome and whether she cares about children. 'Who will vote for the children' was the theme they used today. It was a

funny theme. It is like our Deputy Chief Minister is not a mother. It is saying our Deputy Chief Minister does not talk or mingle with black people in Alice Springs or Aboriginal people in the Top End.

I can assure you, and anyone else on the other side, she is a social worker. She used to work in the Paediatric Ward at Alice Springs Hospital dealing with undernourished kids, kids with problems when they come in from remote Aboriginal communities, and not just around Alice Springs but the Wgaantjarra lands to Pitjantjatjara lands, to Pintubi-Luritja, Eastern and Western and Central Arrernte, Warlpiri - she dealt with it and worked with Aboriginal people. She had Aboriginal interpreters working with her so she is really experienced in understanding it is important to have our children clear of alcohol with a good quality education, and healthy. She knows, being a mother of two, they are the future generation. They are the future generation of the Northern Territory and that is what this government is about.

Earlier this week in Question Time, when the Chief Minister was making his statement, the Leader of the Opposition - triple D - said there is only one line on Indigenous people. He was talking about regional Northern Territory. It is not about separatism. At no stage was he trying to split up or separate Indigenous people from non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.

We are going forward to take the Territory as a whole with good quality education, health, not consuming alcohol or being responsible drinkers with alcohol. We know we have a major task ahead in all these areas. They have the best advice. They have Aboriginal people on this side who can give them the best advice, people who were born and bred on communities and lived with all these problems. Unlike anyone else, we are emotionally tied to these issues - not just alcoholism, but the kids in the care of FACS, and that our population and our kids are not being educated.

It is really worrying to see the opposition trying to condemn us on this side when they did not consult with their own advisory group before going out with the major policy, Enough is Enough. That is an absolute disgrace, and I am glad the member for Stuart walked out on you and came over to the side of the light and the best party.

As I said earlier in heckling, as Aboriginal people we have found a good home in the Country Liberal Party. This party does not separate based on colour. We are here to put the thread of Aboriginality through all our agencies - into education, family and community services, justice and health. They are getting the best advice and

we will consult. We will sit down and talk with people. The Chief Minister went out very early after the election and spoke with Aboriginal people. We went out as a subcommittee of Cabinet and spoke to Aboriginal people. It was an overwhelming response that not just the subcommittee received but also the Chief Minister.

Have you ever seen a Chief Minister walk into a community, pick up a guitar and play *Amazing Grace*? I do not think Hendo would be able to do that in a hurry. Also, a Chief Minister who waits to be given the floor, whether it is the dirt or concrete at the basketball court; who does not overpower people with authority, but is very compassionate and humble? He has been put there as the Chief Minister, and I can tell you Aboriginal people are really pleased. You can have this confirmed by bureaucrats from my department who travel with me to places. Things have been said, such as when they heard the Chief Minister say he will give them their voice back - they trembled with hope that their voice will be heard, instead of being trodden on like they have been for the last 11 years. It is an absolute disgrace; I am glad I walked out of the Labor Party. As I said, this is the most beautiful home I have ever found.

You are not the defenders of Aboriginal people. You do not defend us; we want to be able to defend ourselves. This is our life, this is our kid's future, and this is our future. We need to take responsibility for our actions. We want to be given the choices, but we also know with choice comes responsibility.

We know in the 21st century things move very quickly. You have the technology, and the way parliament operates on this side with policy, it moves very quickly. Our Aboriginal culture is static; it stays there. To protect this, on your left - which is your identity, law and culture and your Aboriginality, your foundation of who you are - you need to ensure that, equally, you are educated so you can protect this one on your left.

That is something you never gave to Aboriginal people. You always boasted about how you got graduates out of Year 12. Well, where are they? Where are they employed? Did they graduate as Year 12 students, as your students would have graduated out of Casuarina High School? Can we say that? Where are these people employed?

This government will do things properly; this government will sit there and listen to people. I will go back to the phrase of mine everyone used - and I take great offence at the members for Nhulunbuy and Barkly taking up so much time reading the good things I have said while I was on your side - there is not a black way or a white way to do things, but the right way. That is exactly

what this government is doing. There is not a black way, there is not a white way, but the right way to health, education, having good housing, and for people who have problems with alcohol to take responsibility. If they cannot take responsibility, then they will be treated. These are sick people.

Last week, I received a letter from a nephew of mine who is in Yatala prison. That is why I keep saying we are emotionally linked and tied to these problems of our children. They are in gaols; we know that. It is our grandchildren who are in the care of family and community services. It is about an education strategy - telling mums. If we want to stop or lower the rates of foetal alcohol syndrome, we have to have a massive education strategy to tell mothers, or mothers-to-be, never to consume alcohol because there will be no money in any kind of federal or Northern Territory coffers that will be able to fix that problem. However, we will fix the problem if we have an education strategy of talking to people, telling them not to drink, and making sure if we do have some children with foetal alcohol syndrome in the communities - which we do - there are wraparound services for these children so they are cared for, looked after, not just by their grannies, but by the entire community. We have to ensure there are special classes for these children. Those are the kind of things we need to do and this government will do them.

You have thought for 11 years that you are the defenders of black rights and black people. Let me tell you, as black people, we voted you out and sent you across to the other side because we do not want you to defend us anymore. We are sick and tired of you defending us. You have not defended us in the right way. You have not defended us and given us a good quality education. You have not defended us and given us any good housing or health. And all you have done is create more and more problems.

I go back to talk about the Banned Drinker Register. I had an aunt who was put on the Banned Drinker Register 100 times. How did she get the grog? She got everyone else to go and buy it for her. You continued to hide the figures because you were happy pretending to Territorians that things were working. Well, we are not about to pretend to Territorians. We are telling Territorians the truth; that these things did not work. We took them away on the very first day. The Chief Minister said, 'I promise to you, as Territorians, I will take that away on the very first day'. What did he do? He took it away on the very first day.

People in remote Aboriginal communities were happy. People in towns like Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, and Darwin were

happy because they knew that system did not work. It was the most laughable system of prohibition the Labor government ever introduced in the Northern Territory. You all know, from research internationally and nationally, that prohibition has never worked. People are entitled to choices. There is responsibility and there are choices. With choices comes hard responsibility.

We will do the education strategies for all these people; we will make sure we put stuff out in language to the media. You have four language-speaking Indigenous people sitting on this side of the House in the Country Liberal Party and I do not see any on the other side. We will make sure we encourage parents to take their children to school every day, five days a week. We will make sure we put all the alcohol stuff out in language telling mums and mums-to-be not to drink while they are pregnant or if they want to have children in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we will make sure we talk to the whole community about community engagement, about encouraging the whole community to participate in education; not just taking their children to the school gate or the school door and dropping them off, but being involved actively, helping teachers, making sure their children are happy and being a part of the education system. You will start to see results. Those are the things we will do in the Country Liberals, unlike what you have done in 11 years. That is the only reason you are sitting on the opposite side.

Ms LAMBLEY (Deputy Chief Minister):
Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed listening to the debate today on this very important issue. There is one thing I agree with the opposition about; that is, that we will continue to talk about alcohol throughout the next four years of this term of government.

Today I am feeling really excited about the fact that we have a real change or shift in how we conduct these sorts of debates in parliament in the Northern Territory, thanks to the wonderful new members of the Country Liberal government, but also the wonderful mix of people we have on this side of the room.

When I first came to parliament two years ago, I immediately engaged in this emotional debate about alcohol. One of the themes I talked about at every opportunity is that, from the point of view of living in Alice Springs, we have, and had, all these alcohol restrictions and reforms imposed on us by the Labor Darwin-centric government. At every opportunity, I would stand in parliament, as did my colleagues, the members for Greatorex, Brainting and Macdonnell - now Namatjira - and complain about how disempowering it was that the

people in Darwin were making decisions about when we could buy alcohol, how much we could buy, what products we could buy, and who could buy it. At one stage, we were telling the retailers where we would drink it. It was bordering on the ridiculous. Some of those things were rolled back by the former government.

The feeling in Alice Springs over the last six years since these reforms started has been that these things were imposed upon the average person, the bulk of the population in Alice Springs - and it includes the Barkly and Tennant Creek - with little or no consultation. No one canvassed the views of the average mum and dad, Joe Bloggs, the resident of a town camp, Gillen or Eastside. Wherever you lived the government did not give a hoot about what you thought. We were used as the guinea pigs of the Northern Territory. That is a term I have used many times in parliament.

In Alice Springs - and I will talk for my own community - most people did not like it. We objected to the imposition, the fact that we had no say in how these things were rolled out and managed. People objected quite strongly, but to no avail; the government did not listen to us. They proceeded with what they thought they knew was the best way forward for our community in Alice Springs. Over the years, very little has had any effect on alcohol consumption. We know that because of alcohol-related crime and social problems. Nothing has really improved.

Recently we heard the former government say some statistics indicated there were improvements in crime - different types of crime, specific types of crime - although they did not give us the quarterly crime statistics. We were led to believe things had improved. Anecdotally, and from most people's perception in Alice Springs, nothing really improved or changed apart from the variety of alcohol reforms and restrictions which were put in place by the government.

When I listen to my new colleagues, the members for Arnhem, Arafura, Stuart, and the member for Namatjira, who has been around much longer than most of us, it is refreshing to hear people from other parts of the Northern Territory describe how the alcohol restrictions and reforms put in place by the former government have affected them. As you can probably hear from where I am going with this speech, the similarities are stark and real.

Whether they live in Yuendumu, the Tiwis, Alice Springs, or the Barkly, people feel they are not being listened to. People know these things have been imposed on them. The former government felt they were the best people to make these decisions - a boilermaker, an ex-journalist and an ex-this, that and the other, a teacher. They

thought they were well-equipped to make these decisions for the people in remote and regional areas of the Northern Territory. They were very wrong. The message coming from this side of the room, from all parts of the Northern Territory, including people who represent electorates in Darwin, is very representative of the Northern Territory and very clear; that these reforms have not really made any difference.

One thing I have always maintained throughout the recent debate on alcohol reform is that if the Banned Drinker Register worked we would not have withdrawn it. We are looking for an answer. In Alice Springs, we have been looking for answers for years. Had the Banned Drinker Register worked I, for one, would have stood up to anyone who intended to drop it or scrap it saying, 'Hold on a minute, this is working, leave it in place'. However, it did not work and that is the genuine and honest appraisal of most people who have really thought about it and tried to analyse its effectiveness. It has not been measured. The member for Port Darwin has given us sufficient statistics on crime and antisocial behaviour to suggest the Banned Drinker Register did not work.

We need to put this whole thing to bed and look to the future of how we will manage the great problem of alcohol in the Northern Territory - how it affects us socially, mentally, and psychologically, as a group of people and as a Territory. Its influence is powerful; I will not labour that point. Most of us who have engaged in this debate know only too well just how powerful and insidious the problem of alcohol is within our community.

The way we move forward as a government will be very different to the way the former government responded to the problem of alcohol. I love to give credit where credit is due - we have learnt from its mistakes. We have learnt from the many mistakes the former government has made over the last 11 years when it comes to alcohol reform in the Northern Territory.

We are the experts. I am an expert living in Alice Springs. We have an expert living in Katherine, several others from Alice Springs and, of course, dotted around the remote areas of the Northern Territory. We have a crew of experts who can contribute to the debate on the alcohol policy that will be formulated in the future.

However, we will not just look to ourselves; we will not just talk amongst ourselves and try to make these big decisions on our own. One of the main points we have learnt from the previous government is that you need to talk to people. You need to talk to all different groups of people. One thing the former government did - which was something I have learnt from and was definitely a

mistake - is consult the same people every time. Every time there was an alcohol reform, a new initiative for Alice Springs, it would go to the same people. It tried to disguise that. It might use different representatives from the same group but, essentially, the former government spoke to the same people each and every time it carried out what it called a consultation process. Guess what? It got the same answers which agreed with their philosophy and policy, reaffirming they were all on the same page and, effectively, getting it wrong time and time again as we have found out. History, hindsight, is a wonderful thing.

This government will consult widely across the Northern Territory because there are so many different, peculiar features of each community. There are so many different needs; there are so many different manifestations of alcohol problems in the community. You cannot devise one plan or one solution and think it is going to fit each and every community, town, or group within the Northern Territory. It has to be tailored to the needs of each of those groups. We are all different.

Even amongst us there are personal views which differ on what to do in alcohol policy. There are slight differences, but what holds us together is this shared belief and conviction that we will move forward as a group talking to people about their need. We will truly consult and we will recognise that Aboriginal people are part of that process. They need to be a part of the decision-making process, particularly within their communities, within their regions. They are not, as my colleagues have already stated, people who should be ignored; they are people who deserve to be listened to. I feel very sad to even have to say that in the Northern Territory parliament; that Aboriginal people deserve a voice just as much as non-Aboriginal people, because it is harking back to a bygone era. Sadly, Aboriginal people have not been consulted, they have been left to the mercy of the former government which has imposed its views on those people.

The future for the Northern Territory looks a bit brighter, in that people will have a say. It is called democracy. We are moving into a stage of democracy in the Northern Territory government when it comes to how we couch, frame, and develop our alcohol policy. It is about people having a say and a choice about what suits them and their communities. It is an exciting time.

One thing I will mention in this debate is a meeting I held in Alice Springs. I chaired a meeting on 5 October with alcohol stakeholders. It came about as a result of a coronial inquest into the death of a man in Alice Springs under very sad and tragic circumstances. One of the recommendations of the coronial report was to call

a meeting of alcohol stakeholders to discuss the supply of alcohol and strategies for tailoring or amending the supply of alcohol in Alice Springs to address this terrible problem of alcohol in our community.

Within a couple of weeks of those recommendations being made public, my colleagues, the members for Greatorrex, Namatjira and Stuart, and I met with the different stakeholders in Alice Springs, as we were instructed by the coroner. It was a fantastic meeting. I am sure the members who were present at that meeting would agree it was quite illuminating. It gave me much insight into how a very broad range of people think about the one topic. The sense and feedback I received is that these sorts of meetings were held very infrequently, if at all, in Alice Springs with all the stakeholders present.

There were about 22 different stakeholders represented, and they talked about what they thought was the best way to tackle alcohol in Alice Springs, and their philosophies, views, and beliefs about how we should move forward as a community. Many of them spoke about supply strategies, which is what the former government pushed in their policy. They put all their eggs in one basket and all their strategies were about curtailing the supply of alcohol. Some of them were in favour of reducing demand for alcohol, which is what we have come into government with as a main part of our platform in alcohol rehabilitation. Overall, there was a wonderful cross-section of views.

I came away from the meeting thinking that you have to look at a whole range of strategies, not just based on a supply strategy, but a balanced approach. My views regarding a future alcohol strategy for Alice Springs are that it will be about a balance; it will be looking at supply reduction and trying to reduce the demand for alcohol in the community. That was reinforced by my colleagues. We all took a step back after hearing some of the wonderful insights of the people present. We felt you cannot direct all your energies into trying to curtail or limit supply; you really have to look at it from both angles and look at trying to reduce demand.

Some of the more interesting comments that were made were, for example, when an ambulance officer turned up. He spoke about how, over the last five years, the number of callouts the local St John Ambulance service received has increased by 5000 per year. That is 25 000 extra callouts over the last five years. This is staggering. He did not mention the wonderful impact of the Banned Drinker Register on the need for their service over the last 12 months.

We had the Alcohol Coalition people there, Donna Ah Chee and John Boffa. They were very diplomatic and provided us with their insights. Richard O'Sullivan from the Liquor Commission talked about the real challenges they face, from a Liquor Commission perspective, in trying to develop strategies and mechanisms which meet the needs of the retailers of alcohol, the consumers of alcohol, and the community at large.

One of the most memorable parts of the meeting for me was a contribution made by a man from Lhere Artepe. He was an Aboriginal man who spoke from his heart about how we need to connect with the elders of the communities if we really want to address the problem of alcohol in our community. That was one of the key messages I took away with me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in response to the statement given by the member for Port Darwin ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr Elferink: You only have two minutes.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Two minutes is great.

It has been an illuminating and fruitful discussion. What I have taken away from it is that I feel incredibly proud of this new government, because we represent such a broad cross-section of the Northern Territory community. We can stand in this Northern Territory parliament and talk about the need for alcohol reform from such a broad perspective, unlike the opposition, which is still very narrow in its perspective.

Mr Deputy Speaker, they are trying to be the opposition, trying to be critical, trying to be damning of what we do and, to some extent, that is their role. However, we have the numbers and the insight, and we have the people on the ground - traditional owners, true members of the community from all over the Territory. We really know what we are talking about. We are the experts.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It now being close enough to 5.30 pm, in accordance with Standing Order 93, debate is suspended and General Business will have precedence over Government Business until 9 pm.

Debate suspended.

MOTION
My New Home Scheme

Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that this House calls on the government to end the confusion caused by the My New Home Scheme being put on hold, and calls on the government to immediately reintroduce the scheme to allow thousands of Territorians to get off the rental roundabout. Any delay to the scheme's introduction will continue to dampen residential construction, which is critical in this economic boom.

The Northern Territory has always been a place of opportunity. It has been the promise of opportunity that has continued to be the dream so many people have followed on their journey in life that eventually has led to them calling the Territory home. We are now living in a time where there are many more opportunities in the Territory.

I was incredibly proud to be part of a Labor government that positioned the Territory to be the envy of the nation, with a strong economy full of promise and one of the best lifestyles on offer. The experts can see it too. Last week, the CommSec state and territory performance report confirmed the Territory is the second strongest economy in the nation. The report says Territory construction work has the strongest momentum, up 91.9% in one year, and we were the only state or territory with positive annual growth. Retail trade was second strongest in the nation and unemployment remains low. While the big states down south still struggle to gain momentum and nations overseas are still trying to find their feet, the Territory is economically strong and can look ahead to the good times, but only if the economy is managed well.

We all know that in order for the Territory to enjoy the fruits of a strong economy and to prosper it is vital to have the workers to fill the jobs. Those workers need to know that when they move to the Territory they will have a roof over their head and appropriate housing to meet the needs of their family. This cannot be to the detriment of Territorians who are already here. However, we need to be realistic. The Territory is growing rapidly; we need more housing and we need to ensure as many people as possible have the opportunity to become homeowners.

Home ownership helps to secure the financial future of a family. It has long been said it is part of the Australian dream to own a home, and Labor has always strived to provide that opportunity to as many as possible. For a long time, we have done the responsible thing in offering low- to middle-income earners the opportunity to enter the housing market through the HOMESTART scheme. This has helped over 1500 applicants

across the Territory since 2004 get a foot in the door of ownership in the property market. This has set the singles, couples and families up for life with a home and the opportunity to upgrade as they gain more equity and their life circumstances improve. The low- to middle-income group were always at the forefront of our thinking in this area. As our economy continued to grow, there was a growing group of those Territorians we also had to focus upon.

The Territory is not unlike other capital cities in Australia which face challenges in the housing sector, particularly in helping people realise the dream of becoming homeowners. With strong wages and growing rents, it was clear that too many Territorians were becoming hamstrung by the rental roundabout; that is, they did not have the capacity to save for a deposit to access finance to purchase a home given their ongoing rental payments. Due to their income, they were unable to access low-deposit housing schemes. The impacts were not limited to the renters unable to realise the dream of home ownership; the consequence of these people unable to leave the rental market was the tightening of the availability of rental properties in the market.

There is no doubt that the lending practices of banks have contributed to a tightening of the Territory housing market. We made it clear to the major lenders that the Territory economy was strong, our housing market was healthy, and they needed to take this into account with Territorians applying for housing finance. We consistently called on the banks to acknowledge the strength in our economy and the opportunities. The ability for Territorians to go to their bank and gain finance to purchase a home is vital to the construction sector, housing sector, and our economy. We, on this side, have strongly encouraged the big banks to take the strong economic attributes of the Territory and the strong forecast into account and ensure our people can access finance.

It was clear that, in order to truly harness the economic opportunities and the construction required to meet the needs of a growing population, we needed to take action. As a government, we did the responsible thing and looked at this issue to find a way through it. We did not sit on our hands; we did not dither. We sought an innovative, yet practical and sensible approach to opening up the opportunity for Territorians to get off the rental roundabout and into home ownership in the market.

One of our approaches was the My New Home initiative. It was a program designed specifically to get people off the rental roundabout, delivering a no-deposit scheme to help people unable to save a deposit due to ongoing rental payments

but who would be capable of repaying the mortgage, to get access to a home loan. This would free up more rental properties and, as one of the criteria was a new home or unit, it is stimulating housing construction. We were enabling Territorians to become homeowners by delivering the My New Home scheme with a no-deposit scheme, no mortgage insurance, giving them access to loans of up to \$750 000 depending on their financial capacity to pay, and giving them access to building a brand new home or purchasing a brand new unit. This would all be done through the normal commercial lending practices and criteria of the Territory Insurance Office which has a financially sound book; it manages its mortgage books extremely well.

This was innovative, yet the CLP government scaremongered to say this would put people at risk, put the Territory budget at risk, and it would be free-for-all access to housing finances people would not be able to repay. This simply was not the case. To access the My New Home scheme people still needed to prove they had the capacity to service home loan repayments just as any of us going with a traditional home loan would need to. Before the scheme was scrapped by the CLP, TIO approval rates for My New Home were running at about one in three; that is, one in three applicants met the strict lending criteria to prove they could manage the mortgage repayments.

This was putting in place a major mechanism to overcoming the financial hurdle to purchasing a new home, giving people a breakthrough in that vicious cycle of trying to save for a deposit on a mortgage at the same time as they were paying significant rents.

The response of Territorians to the My New Home scheme was overwhelming when it was announced. We announced the combination of the My New Home program and changes to HOMESTART to make it HOMESTART Extra. There was an incredible, overwhelming response. The phones immediately rang off the hook at TIO, with inquiries right through the Housing department. At the Darwin show, the Housing department's display was inundated with Territorians seeking information, and staff had to come in over the weekend to deal with the backlog of calls. Hundreds of people applied for My New Home, hundreds again applied for HOMESTART Extra.

The member for Blain, the leader of the CLP and now the Chief Minister, was always hell-bent to tear down the My New Home scheme. In his election campaign he promised to scrap it, and has succeeded, to the detriment of Territorians wanting to get off the rental roundabout and into home ownership. He has stood in this House with pride talking about stopping the program, despite

hundreds of Territorians lining up to access it. We know, over the two-year period, this would have driven the construction of thousands of new properties.

I have urged the CLP to engage with the construction sector, to listen to the Master Builders who have said there is not an issue with land supply - there are seven suburbs under release across Darwin and Palmerston. There is no longer an issue with land supply; the issue is with financing. I have urged the CLP to listen to the Urban Developers Institute of Australia (Northern Territory) which is wholeheartedly supporting the My New Home scheme, and said it is exactly what their members needed to get the unit block developments out of the ground because the banks have changed their finance lending criteria, ramping it up to 100% presale requirement.

I have urged the CLP to engage with the Property Council of Australia, also supporters, and with the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory, also supporters. I heard nothing from the CLP about the feedback it has had from these key industry organisations which understand, at the coalface, what is required to stimulate housing construction - both house and unit developments.

There is silence about what the CLP has done to engage with these key stakeholders, and what the key stakeholders' views are. They stood up publicly and were loyal to the scheme as being exactly the right product at the right time in the right market. Residential builders came to us saying the calls and new contracts have dried up since the CLP scrapped the My New Home scheme.

What is alarming is the CLP government continues to talk about the housing crisis but has no product in the market today. It is talking about 2000 rentals in the never-never, no time frame on it, no location for it, no detail on it, yet in the marketplace today we would have residential contracts, housing contracts, being signed had the government not scrapped the My New Home scheme.

We are in a time of immense growth driven off the back of a major project. This requires the workers to fill the jobs and many will need to move to the Territory to fill these jobs. These people need housing, and it should not be to the detriment of Territorians, which is why the My New Home and the HOMESTART Extra schemes were so popular.

Workers' accommodation was identified as a critical issue for business, which is why, in government, Labor identified the Batten Road site - 9.5 ha - put it out to expression of interest

and had a contract signed with Ausco Modular to build the key workers' short-stay accommodation village. There are 250 units in the first stage, with a capacity to yield up to 600 units. Again, silence from the CLP as to how that is proceeding, and no mention of that in the housing statement the CLP government brought to parliament last week. Yet, we have key accommodation identified and contracts signed. Silence from the CLP regarding the opportunities that key workers' short-stay accommodation would provide.

We have 2000 rentals as the CLP's commitment to the housing problem. It is in the never-never with, as I said, no details on timing or who it is being delivered by. Yet, we have the CLP Housing Minister lauding the opening of Village at Parap - which was a Labor initiative, a redevelopment of a run-down, tired old public housing estate called Worrina. That is now a mixture of private, social, affordable and seniors' public housing in Parap. It has been a clear example of how you can get your densities in place, improve the amenity of a neighbourhood, and deliver first-class, quality product through the local business and the great work done by Sitzler and their subcontractors.

We know the actions taken by the CLP have been to scrap the My New Home scheme. They have flagged that they are looking at scrapping HOMESTART Extra, but we have not heard that confirmed. It was certainly flagged by the Minister for Housing in debate last week. There is now no pathway in a policy setting the CLP has for people to enter home ownership. Their only policy is 2000 rentals. The CLP members are burying their heads in the sand and do not understand the aspirations of Territorians. People want home ownership; they do not want to be stuck on the rental roundabout.

You have scrapped the home ownership My New Home Scheme and you have not confirmed yet whether or not you are scrapping HOMESTART Extra, which is for the low- to middle-income earners. You have a vague housing policy on your 2000 rentals, yet no details. This government has no credible or identified plans into home ownership - no plans to deliver more housing at a time when housing is critical to the growth and the boom in the Territory. This government appears to have thrown out plans for land release, public housing, affordable housing, and home ownership.

There is silence on the Greater Darwin Strategic Land Use Plan. Has the CLP government signed it off? Is the CLP government gazetting it? That provides, after years of consultation, certainty to all of the people in the residential property market and general light industry, where the next growth corridors will be in residential and industry.

Silence from the CLP regarding the Greater Darwin Strategic Land Use Plan.

We hear they have plans for land release – not one mention of where. They ignore the fact that there are seven suburbs under development across Darwin and Palmerston, because it simply is an inconvenient truth for them. They ignore the fact that the Master Builders Association said there is not a problem with land supply across Darwin and Palmerston; the problem is with housing finance. What will you do in releasing information to the public about where your future land release is? Whilst we know the Labor land release program across Palmerston East will cater for the next couple of years, clearly, there is need for an announcement from the incoming government of the next stage land release. Yet, we have silence. We have promises we will hear something, but no detail, no plans, just silence.

The new government needs to cast aside its petty politics, pick up the My New Home scheme - rebadge it, rename it if you like. Take on the challenge of making it a 5% deposit requirement, but understand housing financing is critical to the housing stimulus residential construction sector in the Territory.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice):

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the honourable member for her contribution and respond to some of the comments she made today. I will go from the general to the specific. I stand as the acting minister for this portfolio area, so forgive me if my knowledge of the portfolio area is not as intimate as that of my actual portfolios areas. I will soldier on and see how I manage.

I listened with interest, specifically to the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition who said this program is required to encourage the construction of homes in the Northern Territory. I am particularly surprised by that comment because, if I travel around in my own electorate of Port Darwin, I note that work has recommenced on the Catalina Apartments. The name escapes me but for the apartments at the corner of Smith and Daly Streets, the concrete footings have just gone in and the ground floor pillars have just been poured. I noticed that in Parap the new development of the old car park area opposite Parap Fine Foods is now on the first storey. I watched the concrete pour occurring last Saturday morning with all of the attendant workers' expletives that goes with a concrete pour. I went to Salonika Crossing and looked at the work being done on the Osborne's new development. During the election campaign, I looked into the very deep hole they created and I noticed that the concrete is rising out of the ground there. Those are residential apartments. On the corner of Edmund and Cavenagh Streets there is a deep hole being

dug by the Tomazos Group to construct The KUBE which is also a residential building with some retail on the ground floor. On Wood Street the latest Gwelo project is under way, which will stand even taller and broader than the project by the Milatos Group which was completed recently.

All of these things are being constructed because presale conditions, I presume, have been met. Which then begs the question as to how the Leader of the Opposition can make the assertion that the construction industry requires further government-based stimulation to the tune of \$750 000 per unit when, clearly, the investors are securing finance and are, presumably, making the presale requirements because they are all soldiering ahead with these developments. These programs, as described by the Leader of the Opposition, are about stimulating the construction sector. I believe, from just looking around my own electorate, that the construction sector is well and truly stimulated already.

Therefore, the premise upon which the member pursues this argument is not watertight. The truth is, there is a demand for residential units which is being met by the private sector. I appreciate what the member also talked about; providing affordable homes for people who want to have homes rather than being caught on the rental roundabout. I note that rents are a major challenge.

There are two competing arguments here: (1) is we need to stimulate growth, and (2) is we need to make that growth affordable. I am not entirely sure the two can be reconciled as easily as the Leader of the Opposition would have us believe, because what we would be doing if we were now stimulating a marketplace which is developing these units, is inviting a policy which would underwrite and support the demand side of this equation. That means you would have more and more people entering the purchasing marketplace in an environment where units are now becoming increasingly available, and will be increasingly available in the next couple of years, with the support of expenditure of up to \$750 000. Yes, I understand the affordability components of this, but the effect of that is driving up the prices of those units coming onto the marketplace because more people would be competing to get into those units. Attacking the demand side - I understand the principle behind this - in that fashion without restraining the program to a more clearly defined group of potential purchases would have the effect of driving those prices up.

At the moment, if I look at some of the prices on the signs outside of these places, they are generally from \$450 000 or \$500 000 up. If we suddenly have a whole bunch of extra people entering the marketplace, competing for those

units with a source of government-supplied money without having the requisite insurances in place, I suspect there would be an increasing number of people competing for the units that will be released.

I heard what she had to say about the construction industry being very happy about this sort of support; why would they not be? If I was constructing a block of units and knew that, as a result of a government program, the prices of my units would go up and that I carried no ongoing liability as the person constructing and selling the units, of course I would be standing there putting my arm around the Chief Minister of the day or whoever it is, saying, 'Absolutely, I love that idea'. Of course, the Housing Industry Association would be putting their arm around government, saying, 'Wonderful plan, wonderful plan; this will get people into houses'. It probably would, but more expensive houses and flats. Of course, there would be people from all sorts of areas, such as the real estate industry, saying it is wonderful because they would be the beneficiaries of higher commissions, amongst other things, and you would see fluidity in the marketplace. All of these people would champion it because none of them carry the risk. They all carry some benefit from this sort of program.

However, as government, we cannot exclusively rely on our desire to support the developers, the construction industry, etcetera, as justification for taking on the risk. In the case of shared equity we, as a government, would take on the risk. There is room for risk in these sorts of policies, but there is a question of how you manage that risk and what contingent liabilities we are prepared to carry into the future.

TIO has to then go through the process of being the financier behind this. What surprised me, at the time, was how many other organisations were not prepared to sign up. Subsequent to that time, there may or may not have been other people expressing interest - I do not know about it, it is not my portfolio area. The fact is the only financier which was signed up at the time was TIO.

That is all good but this policy was not well thought out. Clearly, from the PEFO - the pre-election financial outlook report - issued during the election campaign, Treasury was blithely unaware of this policy. That was clear because Treasury made some comments about that in the PEFO. So, without having run that through Treasury, one could be forgiven for thinking that the source of the policy was someone on the fifth floor.

The other component of the policy which concerned me somewhat was that Treasury pointed out one important flaw in this policy

position which was that this enabled people to sign up for a construction phase. Because it was 100% loan and no requirement for a deposit at all, the potential existed for a situation, if the person who had signed up for the loan then shot through because of changed circumstances or whatever, of who would carry the liability owed to the person who was constructing the premises. That question remained unanswered and I suspect was part of the by-product of the haste in which this policy was rolled out.

Government is not saying, at any stage that it will absolutely reject housing assistance. It is not necessarily what we are about. The Country Liberals government did it way back in the 1990s and 1980s - shared equity loans and those types of things were around. However, they did it primarily for the first homeowners market and with a view to getting young families into homes. It was a fairly tight group of people who could take advantage of government assistance. The new Labor government took many of those things on - changed a few of them, changed the parameters over time, but took many of those principles on. Certainly, for a long period of time, even under Labor, it was about first home ownership and those things and, finally, it morphed into this, which became less and less restricted in the conditions which applied. Under this proposal, the only condition that really mattered was a capacity to repay.

One of the challenges you face, as a government, when you go into this type of environment is you take on such a large slice of the risk. Even if you argue that TIO was carrying the risk, as a government-owned entity, the ultimate contingent liability must reside with government. The whole thing is predicated on a single assumption which is that property prices will continue to grow. They may, but they may not. That was the experience in the United States. A different set of circumstances, but the argument that property prices will grow is not as certain as it used to be.

I also note the International Monetary Fund and the Reserve Bank of Australia made critical comments about 100% loan schemes. I am not saying a government should accept that on face value, but there needs to be greater restrictions, caps, and those types of things in place before a government should flirt with these schemes. Government is duty bound to lower the exposure to itself as well as lowering the exposure to other people who become involved in these schemes.

That is a description of what happens on the demand side. The other issue is the supply side. I heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about the supply side saying there is a supply available going out through the next few years. Suddenly, miraculously, the predictions used by her former

Treasury seem to have morphed into, 'We have heaps of supply'. Really?

The paperwork and advertisements taken in 2009 outlining how much supply there was going to be also outlined some targets going out to 2012-13. None of those targets have been met. In April 2007, the then Treasurer, now Leader of the Opposition, said there was only a requirement - it was on the *7.30 Report* - I do not remember the exact figure, but about 300 blocks to be released in the Top End was all that was required.

By the time they realised they had a problem with the supply side, they were way behind. Within a year of that comment being made, her Treasury was saying there was a requirement for something in the order of 2300 dwellings to be created on an annual basis. What the Treasurer did, at that time, was substantially understate the requirement for demand. By the time it was realised the demand was going to be there, government was already way behind the eight ball and started to release land at a pace slower than its own Treasury recommended, and did not meet its own benchmarks advertised in 2009.

To now hear the former Treasurer, the Leader of the Opposition, say there is heaps of supply cannot be correct. She missed the target she set for herself by a country mile. She was way off target. Now, all of a sudden, from the position of opposition, unshackled by the burdens of truth, she is happy to indicate that all is well; that there is heaps of supply. I do not believe there is heaps of supply. If you want a demonstration as to why there is not a supply commensurate with demand, look at the house prices.

Government then suggested and postulated they had the answer to deal with the supply side by increasing demand, 'We will just give people \$750 000 and there will be less restrictions and the government will use TIO to finance this thing and, miraculously, all will be sweetness and light'. In fact what will occur is the prices will be pushed up as a result of such a broad program.

I reiterate, through the process of this review, the current Northern Territory government may come in well with a modified program - well within the bounds of possibilities. We will target the people who actually need it, not just try to stimulate an economy which is already showing all the signs of being hot. If you doubt that, then go and have a look at the amount of construction that is occurring. I will give you an example as to why I, and we on this side of the House, are concerned about this - and, I understand, members on that side of the House are concerned.

The current average rental for a property in Darwin, which I think is about a three-bedroom

unit, is somewhere in the order of about \$560 to \$570. The current asking price for a lease is in the order of \$700 per week. That means the leasing request is much more than the average of the current leased premises. As these leases turn over in time, the higher prices being demanded will be met, which means the price being paid by people in leasing arrangements for the next 12 months to 24 months, will start to very quickly chase the asking price. The only reason the asking price would be there is because people are prepared to pay.

I am very grateful that the building industry in this town is now seeing an opportunity to build all of the units I have described at the beginning of my comments today, because I hope and expect that a large number of units will start to suppress the growth in those unit prices. If they are picked up by renters or people to purchase and move into their own homes, I hope they remain competitive. I do not hope that the price of units crashes through the floor. I would not comfortably or happily argue that prices should go up exponentially, because that would be in the nature of a bubble.

The Leader of the Opposition has, on a number of occasions, as I understand it, put some information out or suggested - and we have heard the same sort of arguments today - that we have, in some way, abandoned their former programs at the cost of all. That is not correct. We did appreciate, during the election campaign, that people had made applications under the program they described. At 19 September 2012, there were 105 applications in progress, and 64 had been approved in principle, with 10 pending settlement. For those people who have commenced the process, all will be honoured by this government.

It is a complex, challenging issue for any government. I can say part of the process of planning - and one of the reasons I expect that the Chief Minister wants to pursue a planning commission - is you can anticipate growth and plan for it. It was the lack of anticipation of the former government that led to them having to engage in a dalliance with this sort of program without even telling Treasury about their intentions. It was also the lack of good preparation which led to an increasingly serious problem which was not recognised by the government until it was too late.

So, it is now up to this government to undo that which has been done and we have to do so carefully and be mindful of the fact we have a responsibility, not only for the building industry of the Northern Territory, but the housing industry and the real estate industry. We also have a duty to the taxpayer and the average Territorian who

wants to buy into an affordable home. Some people will have the capacity to pay back a house loan worth \$750 000 but many people will not.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as the Treasurer herself described, only one in three people were approved. Those one in three people would have had the effect of pushing up the house price, leaving two out of three even further from their capacity to buy their own homes. That is an intriguing defence from a government which seems to think its duty was to put people before profit.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me pride to support the Leader of the Opposition's motion, as I come from an original town in the Territory that produced more gross state product than Darwin during the 1960s and 1970s. I am talking about Tennant Creek, the powerhouse of the Northern Territory.

In my 33-year association with Darwin as a regular visitor, I saw Darwin grow from what I love as the history of the frontier town to an emerging economy and, to now, the fastest growing area and what the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory described as the capital of northern Australia in the millennium of northern Australia. We need to keep that in focus because Darwin, as the capital city, is not going away; it is going places.

It needed some innovation, as the Leader of the Opposition highlighted in her speech, to keep providing the opportunities for growth, representing what we defined as a can-do government. There were no backward steps; it was can-do. It was looking at innovation and it was managing what comes with a frontier town that stretches its wings and starts to emerge as a major economic player. It needs a strategy to cater and provide for cyclical growth.

This motion calls for the new government to stop dithering and get on with it. That is very important in this motion. It calls for the government to end confusion about what is the My New Home scheme. I am relieved to hear the Attorney-General, once again, provide that balance in the rhetoric, 'We have not totally scrapped things, we are looking at it and we are going to honour our commitments'. That is good to hear because that is where you guys need to get a move on.

The Leader of the Opposition gave you some great advice in 'consult with the stakeholders' because these innovations providing for Territory growth and, in particular, growth in the capital, were designed in conjunction and consultation with industry, stakeholders and Treasury. Government, as the new Treasurer will understand, does not do anything without its real

experts - and the real experts are in the public sector.

I sat in this House for four years - most of that time as a minister - and I remember the rhetoric of the opposition with their 'holier than thou' minister. I know the member for Katherine really wears that silky suit; he believes that rhetoric. The 'holier than thou' minister - you hear it in his tone, in his vocabulary. He will learn the hard way because the real experts are in the public sector. Work with the public sector in partnership or you will end up in a world of pain ...

Mr Westra van Holthe: You want to hide behind the legislation, hide behind the public sector. You lot are pretty good at doing that.

Mr McCARTHY: Your ego will be your downfall. The member for Katherine cannot deal with his own ego.

The new Treasurer, in a previous debate in this House, alluded to the CLP as the experts. If you believe that, you go for it! Let me tell you, though, you want to work with the public sector - and that means Treasury. I thank the Northern Territory Treasury because they have some of the smartest brains in the country. Every time I had the opportunity to work with those people, our public sector people, I learnt from them - and I like people I learn things from. That translated across all of the public sector departments.

The comment about the CLP being the experts, the 'holier than thou' ministers, translates to their contribution to debate. They honestly believe that stuff.

This innovation complements a suite of innovations to address growth. When I talked about Tennant Creek as the powerhouse of the Northern Territory and my visits over 33 years to Darwin, I remember one of the cyclical spikes very clearly which was when the first elements of the oil and gas sector came to the shores of the Northern Territory in a big way - that was ConocoPhillips. I had all sorts of reasons to visit Darwin and I used to take great anecdotes home to the bush and tell people about the skyline covered in cranes. It was cyclical growth; it was a very defined period in Darwin's growth that really defined Darwin for the new millennia, for what was coming.

The government, at the time, had to deal with a spike in growth. They started to put in that strategic planning parallel with delivering the fundamentals around land use and planning for opening up new areas and providing land for housing - the basis for developing the new communities. That cyclical spike was a classic in the frontier development of the capital city

because it started to slow down. So, there are checks and balances. As the CLP will find out, you do not put \$20m of taxpayers' money into headworks in Palmerston East to watch lots of land grow weeds. You cyclically invest to ensure supply continues and people are constructing homes and moving in to stimulate the economy.

The major players in the financial sector of this country came to the Territory and talked about a stimulus fiscal strategy. When I was fortunate enough and honoured to be given the job as the minister for Lands, Planning and Construction, I got to work with the experts and met with the stakeholders. They made it very clear that if you want to feed every element of your community then the construction sector is the way to do it. Therefore, we started to really crank up land release. As the Leader of the Opposition demonstrated to this House, after four years of idle rhetoric, one liners, and that attack dogma with no real substance from the then CLP opposition, we can now show - and you can see and you can kick the dirt - the emerging suburbs, not only in Darwin but in Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs.

However, let us get back to Darwin and the construction industry. As the land supply started to match the demand, the elements of the global financial crisis took us to another level. It was the level where people did not have the capital to get into the market because there was the requirement for deposits. As the member for Port Darwin mentioned in relation to the high rise market, the multiple dwelling market, they could not achieve the presales. There was a period in the cyclical development of the greater Darwin area where banks changed their lending practices and developments stalled.

I remember my meetings with peak industry bodies and stakeholders when I first had the portfolio and they wanted me to define who I was and what I came to the portfolio with. I gave them the mantra that I grew up in Sydney, Australia and my ambition for Darwin was to see cranes on the skyline. They liked that; they liked that mantra. So, together we started to work through the delivery of that.

At that time, in 2009 and 2010, we knew over 2000 units had been through the planning processes and were ready to roll out, but the banks were not lending capital. We knew our land release program, based on the Territory Labor government's important investment of providing head services to develop lots of land, to keep the prices down, was rolling out. These two programs were complementing each other. The common denominator was banks were changing their lending practices. It put heat on the market, there is no doubt about that.

What does a good government do? What does a can-do government do? It starts to look at more innovation. The HOMESTART scheme was innovation for the low- to middle-income earner. You need to complement all areas of the market.

When the previous Labor government went to the new innovation of My New Home, it pragmatically looked at the gap in the delivery; which was land release was rolling out, the units were ready to step out of the ground, it needed the stimulus of getting that family into the market. Not only did it look at a new innovative way of home lending in regard to finance, but it looked at another element of stimulating the construction sector, which was welcomed by the construction sector.

The Leader of the Opposition advises the new government to talk to the industry stakeholders. They celebrated the Labor government's fiscal strategy, the stimulus nature of that fiscal strategy, and said, 'In relation to the counter-cyclical plan, pull back when the private sector kicks in and takes over - do not be too hasty'. They told government they need to continue that stimulus period to ensure we get over that hurdle. The previous Labor government listened to that and looked at new innovative ways. One of those ways was the My New Home scheme.

The Attorney-General put on the public record the number of people who locked in. When we say locked in, they went through the traditional home loan scrutiny. There is no free lunch in this business. The clients who went to TIO were scrutinised financially, just like anyone else. Security has to be at a premium because there are global examples of what happens if it is not.

We had an innovation in the next stage of stimulating the construction sector. The other thing that is ignored in the debate so far from the government is the number of inquiries and the people lining up to prepare themselves for the opportunity.

There are a couple of outcomes with this as well; that is, it cuts both sides. It gets people into their first home and stimulates the construction sector, which feeds every element of the community which, holistically, starts to deliver Territory-own source revenue. That is what this government will see. You will see the spoils of the Labor government's work. You will feel that element of Territory growth. We will share that with you on the journey, because that is what is happening in the capital of northern Australia.

The second major element of the oil and gas sector to arrive, delivered by the Territory Labor government, is INPEX. It is not all eggs in one basket. As the senior executive of JKC said, 'Darwin now is on the global map for the oil and

gas sector' - the global map. What I know, from my background growing up in Sydney near the famous Botany Bay with the petrochemical industry there, the nature of these industries is that they aggregate around each other. The greater Darwin plan that was produced by this government - and I hope comes out of the department under the new government - started to plan for Middle Arm Peninsula and the opportunities for other oil and gas projects to come onshore - and they will!

Complementing that was the Marine Supply Base to capture the opportunities of the offshore development. The CLP government certainly has some jewels in the new crown it inherited. It needs to listen to the stakeholders and the industry groups to ensure it can continue the pathway forward, with no backward steps. As the Leader of the Opposition said, no dithering! It is not a time to dither. The industry has given advice to keep the pressure on, keep the fiscal stimulus going and, then, the private sector will take up the next round. That is what we call the new millennia because, let us face it, this area in northern Australia is not going backwards.

There was another element of the debate where the Attorney-General showed great reserve and real concerns about TIO. From my perspective, think of TIO and the building of that financial institution as it moved and grew with a Darwin that is growing at a rate of knots. Think of how TIO kept pace with that and developed into a major financial player in northern Australia. They were ready for it, they were up for it, and they took it on. The new government has pulled back, put the brakes on, and is concerned.

The Attorney-General made one of his usual derogatory comments suggesting that this was all created by someone on the fifth floor. What a lot of rot! This innovation was created with government departments, with the experts you have the privilege of working with. This innovation was created in partnership, and it was the next logical stage of the development of this great capital city.

I urge members opposite to take note of this motion because it is good advice. It is measured advice, but it is advice that is based on what government was doing in partnership with industry and stakeholders. It needs to be moved forward. There is a real risk in stalling because it is not only the fiscal stimulus strategy, it is the psychology of confidence. If industry in Darwin starts to lose confidence, then the new government will be in another area of great concern.

One of the real jobs in government is leadership, and I will mention the member for Katherine again for his tirade and slant on accusing me of a lack of

leadership. The leadership I saw in conjunction with the public sector in the Northern Territory was phenomenal. That provided that important psychology with moving industry forward and taking them into what will be the capital of Northern Australia for many years to come. Do not underestimate the confidence the industry needs; they need to meet with government, have dialogue with government, and plan with government.

The last thing I will say is that the Leader of the Opposition has challenged the new government to 'put it on the record'. What is your plan for land release? What is your plan to deliver homes for Territorians? Do you want to start to fool around with what was there, what was in place? Do you want to put the brakes on, do you want to risk confidence? I reckon I know where the plan for land release will be. That will be in the rural area.

The previous Labor government did an incredible body of work with the Greater Darwin Strategic Land Use Plan, and in parallel, a great body of work with the Rural Villages Plan. That is the opportunity for Darwin to complement the traditional peninsula and what we see with Palmerston. As you start moving down that road with private developers - and many of them are your mates - you will have your new planning commission and your new EPA. What you will still need is stimulus for construction.

This motion gives you, very clearly and very rationally, a measured way to continue. As the Treasurer alluded to the members opposite, the members of the government, say, 'We have the numbers, and we will do whatever we want to do. We are the experts'. Well, the Chief Minister needs to rein that in quick smart, because that is the talk of inexperienced, ill-informed and arrogant members.

Madam Speaker, I hope this comes to a rational debate and we continue to grow the Territory and this great capital city.

Mr MILLS (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, with reference to something you said in closing, member for Barkly, in the 'we are the experts' jibe. That was in relation to a previous debate on the experience of people who live in the Centre and are living with the problems that have been described and fixed, apparently, by the former government. It is not in relation to this. It is referring to that out of context.

I will comment on a couple of issues before addressing the substance of this motion. You make the assertion, member for Barkly, with your narrow focus, that the great and wonderful era we have just passed from - that being the time the Labor Party was in power for 10 years - was such

a glorious era, and Labor was solely responsible for the oil and gas industry, in your wise and insightful consideration of the effect that INPEX will have. You spoke of the phenomenon called aggregation where, basically, out of nothing, something comes. You have 'something comes' called INPEX, then all these other things will happen around it. It creates a false impression because it is the impression that before INPEX, there was nothing. Do you notice ConocoPhillips is over there?

Mr McCarthy: I talked about ConocoPhillips.

Mr MILLS: Yes, but talking of INPEX and the aggregation, there was something else there before. One thing leads to another; it is part of a continuum. It is not about the Labor Party being in government, nor the Country Liberals being in government. It is about having an open view and assessment of what is going on. It is a continuum.

You also talked about the Marine Supply Base and what a wonderful thing that is. The Marine Supply Base, yes, fine, is a logical extension, but it is attached to the East Arm Wharf at the port, which was developed as a part of a continuum. It is also connected to a railway which came into existence from a time previous, outside the frame of reference you have so neatly described to try to elevate the status of the former administration. You had your part to play. Some things you have done might have been okay, but it is a part of a continuum.

You talked about the psychological aspects of having a scheme in place that people should be able to access because it will give them confidence because it exists, and we remove confidence by removing it. You are presuming it causes confidence because of its existence. Confidence actually arises from something being built on something real. There was your suggestion that all these smart people in different departments all worked on this innovative scheme. I have since discovered that Treasury was not actively and centrally involved in the essential component of the viability of this scheme and what effect it would have economically ...

Ms Lawrie interjecting.

Mr MILLS: You can chime that in, but you were the Treasurer. If you do not have the central advice - I suppose it was chosen not to take that advice - you end up with a foundation that would not provide you with the adequate confidence. It might give you confidence running into an election, but it would not be sustained because it would not be real, because it would crumble. You have to build stuff on rock, not on sand.

I am pleased the member for Karama initiated this debate on what was, plainly - very difficult to see for the members opposite - a disaster area for the previous Labor administration. It is almost beyond belief that the Opposition Leader and the opposition would want to talk about housing; an area that even the previous Chief Minister reluctantly admitted was a failure for Labor. Across the Territory, house prices soared under Labor on the back of slow land release and the unresolved dithering by Labor. Accuse us of dithering? Nine weeks and a few days; you had 11 years.

It is a compliment that you are passing that judgment on us that we are delaying or dithering. You are subliminally assuming we could fix in 10 weeks this problem that took you 11 years to create. I take that as a compliment. We can turn this around because we have a better grasp of the marketplace. We are putting in measures that are real and will result in real change.

The example we used when we were in opposition was the opening of the Bellamack estate. You issued media release after media release - I believe the final number was 13 - before a single home was built and a family moved in. There was a lot of talk, a lot of hype, glossy brochures, all sorts of movement in the marketplace except an actual house being built - a lot of money spent, way behind schedule, expectations raised, and families disappointed.

Under Labor's watch, the Northern Territory became the house rental capital of the nation. In the last few weeks after a decade of Labor failure, Australian property monitors reported that Darwin's median house rent was \$700 a week for the September quarter, which is \$150 a week more than the same time last year. Housing ownership in the Territory has gone down from 47.6% in 2006 to 46.2% in 2011. If you are talking about aggregation and all the great things that will happen, clearly, you lost the plot. If you are going to create the capacity for people to be here and to avail themselves of the great opportunity which is, obviously, rising up around us and you have found your home ownership dropping from 47.6% in 2006 to 46.2% in 2011, you have failed ...

Ms Lawrie: You are offering more rentals.

Mr MILLS: The policies of the previous government resulted in more pressure on housing prices, not less ...

Ms Lawrie: You are offering ...

Mr MILLS: Madam Speaker! The honourable member has been in the Chamber for a fair while and used to find this a bit of an annoyance when speaking, as do I - the inane interjections.

The policies resulted in more pressure on housing prices not less, putting the purchase of a new home out of a reach of low- to middle-income workers - that is a fact. This is the mess Labor has left for Territorians, and they have the audacity, the gall, to run a motion. This is the mess the Country Liberal Party has been left to clean up, and we will.

Minister Elferink spoke earlier of the previous government's home purchase assistance schemes in the context of increasing access and affordability in home ownership to low- to middle-income families, as outlined by minister Chandler last week.

However, while providing for choice of tenure, the schemes in most places have adverse impacts on affordability. Look past your rhetoric and prodigious self-belief and see what happened in the marketplace, particularly at the lower end of the market. This is because they increased the pool and purchasing capacity of prospective homebuyers, leading to upward pressure on house prices. If you put more money into the market and do not increase stock, you increase demand which pushes prices up. Your schemes were directed at increasing the capacity for the purchasers rather than being directed at increasing the provision of supply.

You might have thrown a few lollies out there, you might have provided some incentive, but the result was it kept prices rising. That costs money, so you had to pour more money in as the prices increase because you were feeding demand, not increasing supply. That was the effect of your housing schemes.

Notwithstanding that, the Country Liberals are open to initiatives that help Territorians get into their own homes as long as they do not increase risk for buyers and taxpayers. For instance, the HOMESTART shared equity scheme was a construct of the Country Liberals to help Territorians enter the housing market. This scheme persists, albeit in a modified form, today. Labor tinkered and tampered with HOMESTART over 11 years, but the glacial pace of land release which is related to supply, the souring price of land and skyrocketing house prices, meant it was increasingly difficult for young Territory families to qualify for loans. We know that is a fact.

As it tried to push against the tide, Labor developed BuildBonus a couple of years ago, a scheme intended to help finance approximately 300 new homes over a period of six months, and it still failed to realise that target 18 months later. Then, after 11 years of failure and little more than a month out of an election, not consulting Treasury, the government released My New Home.

When schemes such as My New Home are rushed through just prior to an election without proper consideration, there are often unintended consequences. These can be heightened risks for the people who take out the loans in the event their circumstances change due to increased financial exposure to taxpayers if the market downturns.

The Leader of the Opposition has launched a macabre vigil surrounding My New Home. It is a pitiful spectacle and one that shows the Leader of the Opposition and her team are well and truly in denial about the outcome of the August election.

Throughout the election, I raised serious concerns, as did my colleagues, about My New Home and committed to reviewing the scheme as a part of a broader review of government spending which has resulted in massive debt levels and something close to a \$1bn deficit. We were honest about this going into the election. Others raised criticism and concern about the scheme - do not be in denial of it. There was a problem with the scheme constructed on the eve of the election campaign. Heaven knows what would have happened if you had won. What would you have done with this?

The Opposition Leader has now been putting out there that our decision to review the My New Home scheme was causing uncertainty in the industry and the broader community. The only uncertainty, member for Karama, is coming from you and the rabble on the opposition benches with your inability to acknowledge you lost the election and no longer have the power to irresponsibly spend taxpayers' money.

My government ensured there was certainty surrounding My New Home by committing to honour the 25 in-principle approvals, and the approximately 125 applications received up to the close of business on 28 August. That is how many. You have an idea there were thousands and thousands of people.

The former Chief Minister gave these inflated reports prior to the election. I went in as the new Chief Minister and received a report - there are not that many. They were honoured, nonetheless, in good faith. The previous government rushed through the My New Home scheme against the advice of senior public servants and without due consideration of its impact on the government's budget. It was more an eye on the Territory election. It was rushed through, requiring no security associated with off-the-plan sales, allowing for gaming by property speculators. It was rushed through and placed increased demand, further pushing up prices on existing properties and new developments.

The housing policies of the previous government did not increase housing supply, nor were they framed for a planned approach to improving housing affordability for Territorians. In addition to ignoring the advice of senior public servants and Treasury, the previous government also ignored concern raised by the Reserve Bank which warned - just days out from the election - that 'interest only' housing loans and loans of 100% of the property value inflate property booms and busts. That was our problem. The IMF also raised similar concerns. These warnings meant nothing to the fiscally irresponsible Labor government which mocked these warnings. Their fix was only on the election; that is what it was crafted for. The previous Chief Minister said he made no apology for stepping in when a market had failed. He should be apologising for letting the price of rents go through the roof.

I move to the Country Liberals' government plan to make housing more affordable. Minister Chandler has previously spoken about the impact of the shared equity schemes and the fact that 93% of buyers use these schemes to buy existing, rather than new, properties. In addition, some of the government's previous programs are also having a material effect on the budget bottom line. As home prices went up under the pressure and increased purchasing power the schemes generated, the government was required to increase the subsidised scheme parameters that subsequently increased government's nett debt. While I generally support shared equity schemes such as HOMESTART Extra, they have focused almost exclusively on churn of lower-priced existing stock. Only very limited new supply has resulted from the schemes. That is the problem: increase supply, not feed demand.

There will be strong focus by this government on increasing new home supply and new construction. This government's comprehensive plans which will be introduced in coming weeks will cater for affordable owner/occupied housing and encourage investors and developers to deliver new affordable housing. The plan will enable the construction of more properties in the affordable housing range - increase supply not feed demand. The plan will provide a vehicle for low- to medium-income earners to achieve home ownership and, in recognition of high rents in the Territory, allow renters to enter into home ownership. The fact is this government can assist those in need, help people to enter the market, and do so in a way that will see new housing introduced in a financially responsible manner. The plan which will be introduced in the coming weeks will result in the removal of the pressure that was placed on the market by previous policies.

By Treasury's own estimates, the Top End requires the construction of about 1700 new dwellings every year to meet the increasing demands of a growing population. By the same token, average housing figures over the past year show a shortfall of about 500 homes a year on those residential housing targets. Our plan to construct approximately 500 rental properties a year during our term of government will help meet that demand shortfall and free up housing with the added impact of stabilising prices.

The bottom line is we will increase the supply of new affordable homes to stop the population drain of Territorians who cannot afford to live here. Those people number in the thousands, with more than 4000 people migrating interstate than moving here over the past couple of years. That population drain is hurting the Northern Territory economy, businesses, and families more than the previous government is prepared to admit. Our rental affordability scheme will deliver new homes for key workers such as electricians, fitter sheet metal workers, teachers, and nurses.

Madam Speaker, I do not support the motion.

Ms LAWRIE (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it is no surprise the government does not support it. In all the comments I have heard from the opposition, what I have not heard from the CLP government is that they recognise the aspirations of the families and the people who put their hands up, who wanted to enter into home ownership. It is so strange how quickly, in just two months, the Chief Minister has gone from being focused on the battler, on the people who really want that leg-up up into home ownership, on the people who want to get into home ownership.

The idea is, it is just rentals. You have this idea and plan of rentals and you will keep people in a rental trap.

There are a many Territorians who are saddened and deeply disappointed that the government is simply not listening. They have the wrong priorities. They are already showing a leader of broken promises over the so-called contract they signed with Territorians that has already been torn up. All of these decisions rest with the Chief Minister. He could not articulate one place for additional or new land release. He could not articulate any new infill developments and a whole lot of questions are left hanging in this debate.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 6

Noes 14

Ms Fyles
Ms Lawrie
Mr McCarthy

Ms Anderson
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink

Mr Vatskalis
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker

Ms Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mr Kurrupuwu
Mrs Lambley
Ms Lee
Mr Mills
Mrs Price
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Motion negated.

MOTION

Child Protection Funding Levels

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Madam Speaker, I move that the House calls on the government to commit to the full implementation of the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection, and furthermore that the government guarantees it commits to maintaining the same level of funding for the Office of Children and Families with the Department of Education and Children's Services.

The board of inquiry was the most comprehensive inquiry into child protection in the Northern Territory's history. It was expert advice and held nothing back. A total of 156 submissions were received from a range of organisations, individuals and government departments. The board of inquiry also incorporated the recommendations from other reports including the high-risk audit and the Tolhurst review into intake services. The board of inquiry took nearly 12 months to complete and was the most thorough investigation we had seen into child protection. It comprised 147 recommendations made by three experts, Howard Bath, Rob Roseby and Muriel Bamblett. All provided independent and expert advice.

It was not a political piece of work; it was independently authored, aimed solely at supporting Territory families and ensuring the safety of our children. All the recommendations were being implemented. These recommendations must be followed through and the increased funding to this sector must not be cut.

The Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee was a unique blend of local and interstate experts working in the area of child protection, able to pass on specialised knowledge as well as being able to share other strategies that were working well in child protection across other parts of Australia. It was you, minister - and I quote from the *Parliamentary Record* - who said:

The Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee is a highly-

esteemed, highly-professional, experienced group of individuals.

Yet, as a government, you have scrapped this committee. As an incoming minister, you stated that the committee achieved very little and was largely made up of interstate members. It was not mainly made up of interstate members; a number of these members were locals. These were experts on this committee who gave up their time to help the Northern Territory grow its expertise in child protection and meet the recommendations from this independent board of inquiry.

Supporting Territory families and children is everyone's business. It is the role of governments, NGOs and all Territorians. We all have a role to play, yet here we are in the early days of this new government and child protection has been thrown into a state of chaos.

Two weeks ago marked two years since the board of inquiry handed down its recommendations. As a government, you did not even acknowledge this date. This date marked when the final phase of recommendations was due to be commenced. We saw no update, no advice on where these recommendations are at. This was the most comprehensive report into child protection in the Territory's history. It brought together a number of pieces of research and recommendations yet from you, as a government, we saw nothing.

Minister, I remind you it was you who called on the then government to release reports. I quote from your media release from earlier this year:

Shadow minister for Child Protection, Robyn Lambley, has called on the Henderson Labor government to release the latest progress report into child protection.

Yet, two weeks ago, we saw nothing. As an opposition, you provided a submission. In it, your No 1 point said if you were placed in government you would establish a separate department of child protection; the calls on the accountability of the child protection system being critical to public confidence that children in care are looked after properly.

This report was compiled by three experts in child protection. Minister, when you were in opposition, you constantly talked about how credible these experts were, particularly the Children's Commissioner, even calling for him to be given own motion powers, yet, as a government you have turned your back on his expert advice.

The board of inquiry provided time frames in which it thought each recommendation should be met. Previously, we have seen each of these time

frames acknowledged and advice provided to the parliament on the status of each recommendation. This was open and accountable, yet two weeks ago we saw nothing. You, as a new government, claim to be accountable, yet one of the key oversights is now missing.

When in government we fully committed to this independent report. We put in place this independent oversight committee and provided significant increased funding to ensure the recommendations could be met. You have now sacked the committee and abolished the Department of Children and Families. It was you, member for Araluen, who called on the then government - and I quote again from the *Parliamentary Record* earlier this year:

The people of the Northern Territory need to know about the progress of this government ...

in relation to these recommendations.

As a minister in government, do you still have these same standards? As an opposition, we are carefully watching, ensuring this body of work is not lost and, with it, the children of the Northern Territory let down by your government.

You, the CLP, have said you want to improve service delivery, looking at smaller departments which are better able to focus their efforts on delivering the services. Merging the department of Children and Families with the department of Education contradicts this statement. The reason the Office of Children and Families was separated from the Department of Health was to improve service delivery to our most needy - to support Territory families.

There are 147 recommendations and, as a government, we supported them. We identified an additional funding envelope of \$130m over five years, recognising the need to put resources into supporting the introduction of the recommendations provided by the *Growing them strong, together* report.

Your CLP child protection policy of February 2010 stated that the CLP believed the Office of Children and Families should be a separate department - another contradiction of recent times.

One of the key recommendations of the board of inquiry and the theme of the report was the dual pathway model involving NGOs to support families. We have recently heard that you, as a government, have flagged funding cuts for the NGO sector indicating to us we all need to play our part.

Minister, child protection and supporting Territory families are not like Austar; not an additional extra. One of the main recommendations of the *Growing them strong, together* report was to fund and develop the establishment of an ongoing peak NGO on child and family safety. These organisations provide support and represent workers and organisations on the ground, providing valuable services to our most vulnerable. I ask you to commit to ensure their funding remains untouched.

As a government, you are yet to commit to the Northern Territory share of the Fair Work Australia decision to boost wages for low-paid community workers, many of whom are working in the area of child protection.

Is scrapping family group conferencing a sign of commitment? Is that a sign of returning to the old CLP days where child abuse and protection were ignored, which the *State of Denial* report highlighted? You previously claimed the Country Liberals would undertake to implement a far more transparent system when it comes to child protection. Furthermore, you said you would come with a clean slate.

Sacking the independent and expert monitoring committee is not transparent. Is downgrading the Department of Children and Families to an office not only a backward step, but an opportunity to blur the lines and cover up levels of funding?

Madam Speaker, I ask the minister and this new government to commit to the full implementation of the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection and to maintaining the same level of funding for the Office of Children and Families within the Department of Education and Children's Services.

Mrs LAMBLEY (Children and Families): Madam Speaker, I thank the shadow minister for Children and Families. That was quite a revelation from the new member who, obviously, has not done her homework. She can be forgiven, having only been a shadow minister for 10 weeks. Having said that, I have been a minister for 10 weeks and feel I am much further advanced in understanding my portfolio areas than she is.

It is fascinating to hear the former government talk about the lack of oversight, the lack of attention to, and the downgrading of child and family services. We have been in office for less than 10 weeks; you were in office for 11 years. We had the tsunami of need recognised in the board of inquiry report. We had a very damning analysis of child protection in the Northern Territory - compliments of the former government, now opposition - very clearly outlined in the board of inquiry report. It is

amazing how history drops off the radar conveniently, and this is a classic example.

This new government is committed to child protection and will do it in a very transparent way. We have to start by cleaning up a few messes left by the previous government, even in child protection. We have had to do it in all areas. Children and family services is yet another example of where we had to clear up the mess and set a new agenda.

One of the messes left by the Labor government was that it did not implement each and every one of the board of inquiry recommendations. That is false and you need to do your homework. A couple of weeks after the report was released in October 2010, the then Chief Minister said in parliament he would implement each one of those 147 recommendations and, within a couple of weeks he changed his mind. He did not implement Recommendation 136 pertaining to the Children's Commissioner. You need to do your homework, member for Nightcliff. I am sure you must feel very embarrassed as I speak because that recommendation outlined the Children's Commissioner taking over responsibility for overseeing, measuring, and analysing the board of inquiry recommendations of any inquiry pertaining to child protection in the Northern Territory.

The former government's Chief Minister did a backflip and decided the Children's Commissioner would not take that responsibility. He marginalised the Children's Commissioner. He implemented the other sections of Recommendation 136 but he did not implement that last bit, the fifth point in that recommendation.

He then went on to create what you have already referred to as the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee. This was not a recommendation of the board of inquiry report, member for Nightcliff, it was a creation of the former government which sidestepped the issue of having a credible, powerful, and truly independent watchdog in place to oversee the implementation of all the recommendations.

The Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee, yes, was a group of very highly-esteemed, well-educated, well-positioned, well-experienced individuals from across the country. When it started, most of them were from interstate, and I stand by the comments I made then. Then, the minister did a quick reshuffle after Charlie King and Donna Ah Chee resigned. He made sure the balance was more equitable; that they were local people. It balanced out in the end to satisfy that criticism.

That committee was never given any teeth. Right to the last day after which I decided to disband that committee it never had a tool or instrument in place to properly manage, measure, or assess exactly how the recommendations were implemented. There was a sense of using anecdotal evidence to qualify what may or may not be happening. There was general comment, a little research done in looking into the academic books that might pertain to child protection, but there was no measurement of how the former government implemented the recommendations of the board of inquiry report.

The member for Nightcliff maintained that we have done a backflip in 10 weeks, and we have not done this, that, and the other. It is nonsense. That is a classic example; the failure of the former government to implement the full range of recommendations in Recommendation 136 was the start of where the government could not stomach the thought of having someone overlooking its performance when it came to child protection. After 11 years of failing the people of the Northern Territory, they could not stomach the Children's Commissioner being placed in that position because the Children's Commissioner, more than anyone else in the Northern Territory, knew exactly how those recommendations should be implemented, and the context and history of the government. It was too threatening and too close to home in what would be exposed if the commissioner was put in that position.

The external monitoring and reporting committee - a group of great individuals - did not do a particularly good job because of the government. The government did not equip them with the power or ability to carry out the task at hand. I know this because the Children's Commissioner was measuring the implementation of the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report, which he did in his annual report every year. If you look at those reports, you can see how he very scientifically looked at each and every recommendation that he was measuring and he was able to appraise, analyse and give a very succinct overall impression of how the government was travelling.

I made the point numerous times in parliament that we should have the Children's Commissioner in that role because he did a fine job with the *Little Children Are Sacred* report and he would have done a fine job with the board of inquiry report. The former government was unable to go there because of its own embarrassment of its track record in child protection.

The member for Nightcliff also said I did not note or make mention of the fact that the second anniversary of the release of the board of inquiry report was celebrated on 21 October. The reason

why is because - if you have read the report and the member for Nightcliff has not read the report because if she had she would know - the recommendations were classified into three groups: urgent recommendations which had to be implemented within six months; semi-urgent recommendations that had to commence implementation within 18 months; and non-urgent recommendations which had to commence implementation within three years. So, there was no need to celebrate the second anniversary of the release of the report.

What we saw from the former government was glossy brochures and extensive reporting on every recommendation which was inconsistent with what we knew about the department and how it functioned at that point in time. It was a reflection of its total obsession with reporting and making it look like things were on track when I and members of the community knew things never operated particularly well under that government when it came to child protection.

In bailing me up for not celebrating the second anniversary - it would have been inconsistent with the board of inquiry report for me to do so, because there was nothing to celebrate in the noting of implementation of the recommendations.

The member for Nightcliff also said I have spoken in the past about the then Department of Children and Families being a stand-alone, separate department. That was, indeed, my opinion. Two years have passed and a lot of water has passed under the bridge. One of the reasons I decided to integrate the Department of Education with the Department of Children and Families is because I could clearly see - and I knew from my consultations with different people in the industry - that the former government was still not getting to children in the bush; still not getting to the people who count the most. It was still not getting to the people the board of inquiry report identified as the most vulnerable, in the most need, and as being the most difficult to access.

I felt it was time to take the reform of the child protection system to a different level and, by combining it into Education, integrating the two departments, there are some incredible synergies, efficiencies, and benefits that children will be a part of in the very near future. I am very excited about this new model; so is Education and Children and Families.

Unlike everything else I have talked about over the last 10 weeks in parliament, it has nothing to do with money; it is about better outcomes for children. If we save money, well and good - I have my Treasurer's hat on - that would be wonderful. However, the reason these departments have integrated is purely looking at

the needs of children, particularly in remote and rural areas where they do not have access to services as they do, for example, in Darwin.

We have a model in which every child who goes to school – and, hopefully, we will get them to school; it will enhance school attendance - will be identified not just by the Education system - the teachers, the support staff, the principal - but also a range of other support people such as Child Protection Officers, if need be. The number of eyes and ears focused on every child throughout the Northern Territory has been doubled by this new system we have put in place; the integration of Education and Children and Families into the Department of Education and Children's Services.

Although the opposition might see this as a back step, I see it as a step forward, a step in the right direction. I know it will enhance the lives of children and families in the bush particularly, but also in urban areas. Children going to Ludmilla school or Brainting school will have much more attention paid to their wellbeing through this new system. It is a win-win across the board and I am delighted the office and the department have embraced these changes.

Regarding non-government funding, the member for Nightcliff has been very busy working overboard talking to people involved in the non-government sector. It is a very important part of the equation. I had some meetings, not last week but the week before - two meetings - and it seems that what I have discussed in one of those meetings has been broadcast around the place. In one of those meetings, I spoke about Fair Work Australia. I have nothing to hide.

I was very explicit and open with Wendy Morton from NTCOSS, who you obviously had a discussion with because that is the only person from the non-government sector I did talk to about Fair Work Australia. She asked me about my government's commitment to the recommendations of the substantial pay increases under the Fair Work Australia initiatives. My response was - contrary to the media releases which are absolute nonsense coming from the member for Nightcliff - that we would honour the \$1m promised by the former government going towards the pay increases for these workers, and I will be looking into how we can further support the needs of this sector. What the member for Nightcliff has said about my commitment to the Fair Work Australia salary wage award case is nonsense. I refute it. If she has not spoken to the representative from the NTCOSS, who is the only person I have had a discussion with about that, then she has invented the whole story, which is even more curious.

The other issue the member for Nightcliff raised was family group conferencing which has ceased in Alice Spring. It ceased at the end of June – 30 June, I think. We were elected to parliament on the 25 August. I did not hear any commitment of funding from the former government as to its intentions to continue funding for family group conferencing. The member for Nightcliff might like to inform the parliament of her party's intention to continue funding during that six- or seven-week period it held government, in between when funding ceased and when it lost government.

This was a Commonwealth initiative; it was Commonwealth funded. It was not funded by the Northern Territory government. Like all Commonwealth-funded programs, there is a beginning and there is an end. The former government knew when that end was. They knew probably better than the present government when that agreement ended, and they chose to do nothing. So, for the member for Nightcliff to say we are not committed to family group conferencing - it is quite the reverse, you were not interested in family group conferencing. The program ended and, by the time we reached government, there was no program at all.

Having said that, we have not found the money for family group conferencing. It was an expensive initiative. It is a very time-consuming process. As a trained mediator I know family group conferencing does work, it can work. It is very expensive, very resource-intensive and the wins are few and far between. It is heralded as a model which can work in certain circumstances and I do not intend to run it down. However, from my perspective as the new Treasurer, the new Minister for Children and Families, we are under very serious financial constraints thanks to the former government. These very expensive programs with limited outcomes are probably not something we can make a priority at this stage, compliments of the former government.

We, unlike the former government, consider our spending. We are responsible and disciplined in how we carry out the business of government. The former government, I have discovered in the last 10 weeks, had no discipline at all when it came to each and every agency of government, including Children and Families. I will talk about that in a few minutes.

Many allegations have been made by the member for Nightcliff about how tardy we have been in the last 10 weeks when it comes to child protection which, if it was not so ridiculous, I would probably take offence to. When you look at the 11-year track record of the former government in child protection, you would have to think about the allegations you are making when it comes to this very serious topic. What has happened in the

past 11 years under the watch of the Labor government is children have suffered considerably. If I have anything to do with it, they will not be suffering under my watch.

There will be some belt-tightening; there is no doubt about that. We have to do that because of the substantial fiscal imbalance we have inherited - the debt we have inherited. Each and every jurisdiction in Australia has to tighten its belt and it goes right across the board.

Child protection: we came to office 10 weeks ago and one of the first conversations I had with the CE of my department, now the Office of Children and Families, was that the budget was looking seriously out of plumb; that the former government had allowed expenditure well beyond budget, and we were looking at a very serious budget blowout of many millions of dollars. The message given to her was, 'Just keep spending and do not worry about how that money will come to fruition, it just will. Go ahead'.

We discovered, very soon after coming to government that the former government had authorised the employment of 90 additional frontline workers with not a cent to pay for them. Unbelievable! You could spend every cent of the entire Northern Territory budget on child protection, there is no doubt about it. For those of us who have hearts it is very tempting. It is unlimited; it is like health, like housing. Those critical needs in the community are infinite in their size. However, a responsible government draws some limits around expenditure. It looks at the big picture, it divvies up the money and says, 'Child protection gets X amount. You do not get X amount which has an infinity sign at the end of it'.

We found the child protection workers were doing great things working in the front line - 90 unfunded positions. When the member for Nightcliff asked about cutbacks within the sector, the money saved will pay for those frontline workers your government employed without any money to pay for them.

If you could communicate that to your friends in the non-government sector, member for Nightcliff, that would be honest and good practice. It would be very responsible for you, as a new member of parliament, to explain to those people and the people of the Northern Territory that you play a part in what is happening here in cutbacks to all parts of child protection, excluding frontline workers. We are committed to ensuring the services provided to children and families on the front line stay as they are and, hopefully, expand as the demand expands. We are not in the practice of paying for services that do not have the direct impact when we know we have to make cutbacks. The priority is the frontline workers.

There is much to be said for the former government's performance. It is almost unbelievable that we have been accused of all these things within the first 10 weeks when we are still assessing the damage and working out exactly what those cutbacks will be and where the savings will be made. The whole department is working overtime to try to work out a new system that maintains that level of care and service to children and families, but makes savings, trims back. The behind-the-scenes parts of Children and Families will suffer, and some of the pain will have to be worn by the non-government sector. I have made no secret of that.

If the member for Nightcliff wants to rant and rave about it and make it a political issue, she can also mention to the public that it is her fault, as a member of the party which was the former government. We would not be doing this if we were not landed with such a diabolical financial situation. One of the main points I make tonight is that we are not enjoying any part of this. This is painful for us and it is painful for the people of the Northern Territory. It is very unpleasant to have to cut back on these types of services.

I am a mother, I have children. I have people on this side of the House who are mothers, grandfathers, fathers, uncles, aunties. We all feel very strongly about child protection in the Northern Territory. To be landed in a situation immediately, as a new government, whereby we have to make these savings and changes and put these austerity measures in place is awful.

You, as the former government, should take responsibility. I doubt if I will ever hear of you taking responsibility because Labor governments are good at one thing and one thing only: spending. It is not about responsible financial management, it is not about looking at the books and making sure things are running smoothly and correctly; it is all about the spending with no responsibility whatsoever. That is exactly what I am hearing from the member of Nightcliff. She is taking no responsibility at all for the fact that things are tough in child protection; they have been tough for over a decade. That is why the six independent reports into child protection over the last 11 years have been tabled in this Northern Territory parliament - six during the reign of the former Labor government.

Next time you present anything about child protection to this parliament, member for Nightcliff, you need to keep in mind that your party, your former government, had the worst track record in the whole of the country. It was a national disgrace. Over the last two years, you have been able to rein it in to some extent but, in the scheme of things, we have just started to reform. You had just started to turn things around. To start

throwing stones at us after 10 weeks is extremely hypocritical, it is extremely off - there is no other word for it.

There are some other issues I will raise tonight about the recommendations of the inquiry. There are 147 recommendations, as the member for Nightcliff informed us and, as of 22 October this year, 46 recommendations were completed and work against all of the remaining 101 recommendations had commenced. Of those 101 recommended recommendations, 27 are nearing completion and will either be implemented by December of this year or will be prioritised for implementation in early 2013, 42 are intended for completion later in 2013 and beyond, 25 recommendations explicitly require legislative amendment and will be implemented through reform of the *Care and Protection of Children Act*, and seven are being led by another agency.

As a new government we will be tackling the business of child protection very differently than the former government - differently because we do not have that awful legacy the former government had. We will take what is called a sensible approach. The former government was landed with the board of inquiry report, the *Growing them strong, together* report two years ago. As I said earlier, the Chief Minister was totally embarrassed and he made a sweeping statement, 'We will implement each and every one of those recommendations', without really considering what they were, the implications, or the suitability of some of them considering their policy or their orientation to child protection at that point in time.

We want to take a sensible approach; we want to take some time to think about what our policy is in child protection, what we value, what we prioritise. Yes, we will be using the board of inquiry report as a bible, as a framework ...

Mr STYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mrs LAMBLEY: Thank you. The former government used the board of inquiry report as the driver of their child protection agency. They lived and breathed the board of inquiry report; they lived and breathed each recommendation. I know that because when I first started 10 weeks ago as the Minister for Children and Families, I was stunned that the whole agency had been constructed around this report. The agency - and I have said this in parliament before - is, effectively, the agency of the *Growing them strong, together* report. There was nothing of the government in there; it was about how they could cover off on every recommendation of the report.

It was like nothing I have ever seen before. I have run businesses before, I know how the ledgers should look, how the books should look; but how this agency was running was just a reflection of the board of inquiry report.

Some might say it is a great thing that they have had a shake up, have been frightened into submission and have set up this agency to drive the board of inquiry report.

We come to government without that legacy. We have nothing to hide and we feel we can set our own agenda. We will take on board the recommendation of the board of inquiry report. We will be working on implementing those recommendations without question. Will the agency be driven, shaped, and framed purely by this report? No, it will not; we do not have to do that.

Regarding a new watchdog for the Office of Children and Families, I dismissed the external monitoring and reporting committee and am looking into alternatives. I have made that public also. I have nothing to hide. The other thing that happened in the past - the member for Nightcliff might be interested in this - in the board of inquiry report there were a few paragraphs on the important role of the Ombudsman as a watchdog for the department, for Child Protection. It was not a part of any recommendation, but in there was a discussion about how the role of the Children's Commissioner, as a watchdog, was complemented by the Ombudsman's role as a watchdog in child protection.

However, what did the former government do? It got rid of the Ombudsman. So, when you talk about if and how we will follow the recommendations of the *Growing them strong, together* report you need to reflect on the failures of the former government to do that.

This is a very hypocritical motion. It really reinforces what we have known all along; which is that the former government never accepted responsibility for the tragic state of child protection and where it took it over the last 10 years. They never really accepted their part in failing to reach out and care for children and families in the Northern Territory. They have dodged the bullets, hidden away, deflected, and accused other people of all sorts of things. They have tried to marginalise the Children's Commissioner, then the Ombudsman. They have hidden behind all sorts of things, but now they are in opposition, I really do not know if they can hide any longer. I suppose by standing in parliament and accusing the new government of failing, that is more of the same, really, isn't it? It is more projection and defensive behaviour.

I put to the opposition that this motion is not to my satisfaction; it is not to the satisfaction of the government. The Country Liberal government takes the issue of child protection very seriously, and is committed to improving services for children and families in the Territory. Given that the implementation of all 147 recommendations has already commenced, as I have just noted, and this government will take a sensible approach to child protection reform based on an assessment of what is needed, appropriate, and affordable in 2012, I will be moving an amendment that will enable the government to support the substantive motion, and I hope the opposition will support the amendment.

The amendment replaces the words, 'commit to the full implementation of' with 'supports', adds the words, 'in appreciation of the work of the board of inquiry', and replaces the words around funding with words about service delivery. We will not commit to the current level of funding; we might decide to fund Children and Families more.

As a government committed to transparency, this adds a requirement for me to make a statement on the implementation of the recommendations at the next sittings. I put in the motion that I will do that. I believe, in a couple of weeks time, perhaps a month's time, the next sittings, I will be able to address all the recommendations of the inquiry and all those that have not been implemented, and explain in full how we intend to do that.

Madam Speaker, I move the following amendment:

Omit all words after 'that' and insert the following instead:

the House:

- *supports the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection;*
- *notes its appreciation for the board of inquiry's attempt to address the very real and significant issues in child protection in the Northern Territory through its recommendations,*
- *calls on government to commit to improving service delivery from the Office of Children and Families within the Department of Education and Children's Services, and*
- *calls on the minister to provide a ministerial statement on the implementation of the recommendation of the board of inquiry's report to the House at the next sittings.*

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I will read the amendment:

the House:

- *supports the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection;*
- *notes its appreciation for the board of inquiry's attempt to address the very real and significant issues in child protection in the Northern Territory through its recommendations,*
- *calls on government to commit to improving service delivery from the Office of Children and Families within the Department of Education and Children's Services, and*
- *calls on the minister to provide a ministerial statement on the implementation of the recommendation of the board of inquiry's report to the House at the next sittings*

This is a motherhood statement, fine. I do not have a problem with that, but I came here because there are some issues which need debating. Perhaps I should go back a little in history. The *Growing them strong, together* report came from two pressure points. One was from your predecessor, the member for Araluen, who was calling for this inquiry. She, as we all know, did a huge amount of work in promoting the safety and wellbeing of children in the Northern Territory.

The other person who was the key to this getting off the ground was Lesley Taylor from NAPCAN. I was involved at that time - I am not praising myself, but when Lesley spoke to me of her concerns about the original inquiry the government was going to do, she was so concerned that it was inadequate that I spoke to the then minister. After listening to Lesley Taylor from NAPCAN, the minister decided that report was not good enough and a full scale report was undertaken. That is where it came from; pre-Christmas 2009 is where this started.

The reason I raise the matter from Lesley's point of view is that I am not an expert on child protection. Of course, like everyone else, we are all concerned that children are protected. My contribution today is in relation to conversations I had with Lesley Taylor who has been with NAPCAN - I nearly said for time immemorial. She has been an outstanding Territorian who has worked continuously for the protection of children in the Northern Territory. When she speaks, no matter which side of politics you are on, you should at least give her some consideration.

I am putting forward tonight my support for what she is saying. She said she is very apprehensive and worried - and I will get to the reasons why - because of the funding cuts. They are concerned the NGOs are accountable, but some government departments are not. Her big concern, in this case, is in relation to Recommendation 146 of the board of inquiry. This is on page 545 of the *Growing them strong, together* report. I need to read it so people will understand what it is about.

In the body of this report there have been only a few references to organisational communication strategies. The development of such a strategy will need to be an early task of the new implementation unit and an integral part of its strategic plans. There are two main strands to such a strategy which needs to include a focus on both communications with the broader public around child abuse prevention and treatment, as well as a strategy that seeks to communicate with the public around the reform process.

Under the heading 'Community Education':

A particularly important aspect of the overall communication strategy is community education around the issues of child abuse and neglect and mandatory reporting.

Pat Anderson and Rex Wild, the authors of the Little Children are Sacred report, concluded:

All information gathered leads us to the conclusion that education is the key to solving (or at least, ameliorating) the incidence of child sexual assault in Aboriginal communities. By education, we mean not only that which occurs in schools, but that which occurs in its wider context.

The Board of this Inquiry strongly concurs and would broaden the scope of the community education to include key aspects of child wellbeing including the capacity to keep children safe.

Then it went on:

A number of NGOs - for example, the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) ...

That is Lesley Taylor's group.

... - and statutory agencies/services (including DHF, NTFC, and the Department of Education and Training ...

Etcetera:

... have been involved in the delivery and funding of community education initiatives around the prevention of abuse and neglect, including the innovative Men's Forum chaired by Mr Charlie King. However, collectively these initiatives fall a long way short of the Northern Territory government commitment in response to Recommendations 94 and 95 of the Little Children are Sacred report. The Northern Territory government commitment was to:

a widespread and sustained education campaign across the Northern Territory using radio, television, print and discussion forums.

It went on:

A widespread and sustained campaign around the prevention of harm to children must be a central priority of the Northern Territory government and the implementation unit set up to guide the reforms. The education strategies that are developed should include a focus on the key drivers of abuse and neglect in different areas of the Northern Territory and should incorporate longer-term community development goals. The campaign should use a range of modalities including direct training programs, videos/DVDs, discussion forums, radios and TV.

The key to my contribution tonight is about Recommendation 14.1:

That the Northern Territory government develops and implements a comprehensive community education strategy to highlight key messages about child protection and child wellbeing and to accompany the service delivery enhancements contained in this report. The strategy should:

- have at least a five-year life span,*
- must be a multi-modal (involving radio, TV, printed materials, training programs and discussion forums),*
- use materials translated into local languages, and*
- address a range of issues relating to child safety and wellbeing.*

The strategy should include a review of the various child wellbeing/protection education programs currently in place with a view to preventing fragmentation and duplication. The strategy should include an ongoing impact evaluation component.

Urgency: Immediate to less than 6 months.

I believe it is categorised as Urgency 1.

It appears as though the government has reneged on that recommendation, and it is a concern. I have a copy of an e-mail which came from the Office of Children and Families and says it is seeking to significantly reduce the scope of contract etcetera, design, develop and implement of a social marketing community education campaign to meet the changing priorities of OCF and the Northern Territory government:

The e-mail says, 'to this end, we are requesting a proposal from you detailing the likely cost and implementations for two different scenarios as detailed below. Scenario one: near immediate within 30 days, cessation of work and termination of the remainder of the contract. Two, continuation of the contract to logical hold points in the project, such as the project could be recommenced at a future date, before the contract is terminated.'

There is no real guarantee that it will continue.

That is very concerning for NAPCAN. They have been working for over 12 months, going through the Territory talking to hundreds of people, working in remote communities on messages and contents of this campaign, and now it has been cut. The minister might talk about cuts, but I thought when it came to cuts, you need to be careful which cuts you take. This is a high priority, and that is stated clearly in this report, yet, the government has decided to cut it.

We have this recommendation that the House supports the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection. The question I ask the minister then is, 'Why is Recommendation 146 being cut?' It is clearly, as has been said by both the authors of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report and of the *Growing them strong, together* report, an urgent priority. There has been much work already done. Many people have been involved in the early development of this material and many of those people will wonder now why the government has cut it.

There is a lot of discussion here about the budget and the government cutting things, but what worries me a little is - and I probably would not mind debating this at another time as it is important it comes up. No one is saying the

government does not have a deficit, but the new government has said it is trying to get back to surplus in four years. In 10-and-a-half weeks, do we have to get back to surplus? Is there not a more considerate approach to reducing the deficit? Are we in such dire straits that a program given priority in the *Little Children Are Sacred* report has now been cut? Has it been cut because of the deficit? Has it been cut because the government does not see it as a priority anymore? I am not sure. However, I am concerned about the economic rationalists who come in, want to make an impact, make a statement, and look impressive. They say things are crook and, in 10-and-a-half weeks, they slash and burn.

There may be good reason. If the government wants to reduce its deficit, get in and reduce wastage and duplication. However, I wonder whether we now have this mentality that we will reduce the deficit at all costs, as fast as possible, and the human cost of doing that is totally irrelevant. I have heard of two long-serving public servants who just received letters which said, 'You have one month, that is it'. I do not know whether they got a thank you for their 30-plus years of service to the community. If that is the way we are going, then I am extremely disappointed. If that is the excuse for cutting this out, then the government needs to take a cold shower and look at the reality.

By all means, if they think we are in deficit and a part of our policy is to bring that back to surplus, that is fine. We do still have income ...

Mrs Lambley: Showing your true colours, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: No, no.

If I say something then I show my true colours. What are those true colours? Is it like the signs that were put up in Robinson Barracks and Kormilda College which said 'If you vote Gerry, you vote Labor'? They are straight out lies.

I sat on this side for many years with your members of parliament and supported many of the things they did. You were not in this parliament when that happened. At least I have some knowledge about working with the CLP in opposition, especially when they had four members of parliament and there were two Independents. We had 50% of what they had, and we worked cooperatively with those members of parliament because, at that time, the government needed a reasonably sized opposition; otherwise, it was very difficult for those existing members in the CLP.

However, I digress. If the only defence for what I am saying is 'you are showing your true colours' then that debate is shallow. I am putting to you a

scenario about where the government is going financially. I am asking if this cut is part of that and, if it is, why can it not be done with a more measured approach? Does that show some colours? No, it shows some independent thinking.

I am sorry if some people on that side of parliament cannot get out of their heads that I happen to sit in the crossbench. I have the right to say what I like as an Independent. I tell you now I will not agree with everything the Labor Party is putting forward, but I will do my best to debate issues that are really important for the Territory.

The reality is that Lesley Taylor - not me - who runs NAPCAN and has done so for many years, is devastated that the government would cut Recommendation 146 from the board of inquiry recommendations. I believe she has a good reason to be worried about where the government is going. I am told there are a few other things such as SAF,T, the peak body of Aboriginal families which has been scrapped as far as I know.

Mr Vatskalis: Not funded.

Mr WOOD: That does the same thing, of course; if you do not fund it, it will not happen.

There is also talk about the directors' network. These are key people from all departments. There is no discussion, it is just gone. Is there an explanation as to why? The family group conferencing was a result of Menzies' research being cancelled. I will give you the words of Lesley, 'Absolutely stupid'. Menzies showed this family group conferencing has positive outcomes; it allows an independent facilitator and it was working. We had something that Menzies knows was working - the family group conferencing - and it is gone; it has been cancelled.

The other issues Lesley raised – there has not been enough debate; it is simply a decision by the government - is the collocating with Education. She said when it was colocated with Health, nothing much happened, and she is concerned that is exactly what will happen when you collocate it with Education. One of the interesting questions that needs to be answered is: will teachers now become frontline child protection workers? Will this be a way of saving money? Have teachers been informed of their role when it comes to child protection? I do not know what the debate within the teaching fraternity is - not the department of Education, but the question within the teaching fraternity is what will be their role now? Again, the debate has not been out in the open; it is just a decision by the government saying, 'This is a good idea. Education deals with children; therefore, we should join these two

departments together'. Health deals with children; that is why it was probably joined there. There needs to be, at least, some clarification as to why it has gone with Education. Have the teachers - they are front line - been asked about their opinion? Do they need training if they are to become pseudo frontline child protection workers? Those things have not been addressed.

As I have noted, with the numbers of programs that look like they are now not being funded such as SAF,T, the director's network, the family group conferencing, are there any other recommendations that have been put on hold? That is the question I ask. Has anything else fallen off the table for the time being?

It is difficult to support this motion if I believe the government is saying this on one hand and doing something else on the other hand. The amendment says the House supports the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection. That is easy enough, but is the government being honest when it writes this up?

Lesley Taylor from NAPCAN has been in this business longer than anyone in the parliament, including the minister, and I take her word for what she is saying. She has said that Recommendation 146 has been cut. I ask the government, if that is the case, are you fair dinkum when you put up this amendment? I can support the amendment, but I wonder whether the government is saying this to look good when, in reality, on the ground there have been changes.

I do not know whether the government has publically announced these changes. Has it just made them? Do I have to wait and find out by other means whether these bodies have disappeared? That is what has happened in this case. I would not have known SAF,T, the director's network, the family group conferencing and Recommendation 146 had been scrapped, but I do now. I appreciate there are people who are not just telling me these things to upset the government, they are telling me because they are concerned about the carrying out of all the recommendations in these volumes of *Growing them strong, together*. They are concerned about the welfare of children as much as anyone else. The minister is concerned about children; I do not question that. However, someone who has so much experience has told me and said the government has cut one of the major recommendations of this inquiry.

I say to the government, it is such a motherhood statement in the sense it is easy to agree with. It does not have much oomph in it. I probably would have supported the original motion, but that will not happen.

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

Motion agreed to.

Mr WOOD: Thank you, member for Barkly.

In summing up, the government is a bit cute when it puts this amendment forward when it knows it has cut out SAF,T, director's network, and cancelled the family group conferencing. Yes, I will support this; I would be silly if I did not. However, I do it with a smile on my face to some extent knowing the government is not really fair dinkum about the amendment.

Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not be a kind as the member for Nelson about this amendment. This amendment is not a motherhood statement; it is a clear attempt by the government to walk away from a commitment to implement all of the recommendations of the board of inquiry, and from any funding to improve child protection in the Northern Territory. It is very cleverly drafted. It is weasel words, 'We support the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection'. Yes, but do you commit to implement them? No word on that.

The member for Nelson highlighted Recommendation 146 - the government walked away very quietly. I will point out Recommendation 136. The Minister for Children and Families pointed out that the previous government did not implement point five. There are not five points, there are only four. You have been in government now for 10 weeks; why did you not walk into this House with a commitment to make the Children's Commissioner, as drafted in Recommendation 136? We did not put the Children's Commission on the committee to overview the implementation of the recommendations because we recognised there were some legal problems. You said before ...

Mrs Lambley: Oh, rubbish! Absolute rubbish!

Mr VATSKALIS: You stood here before and said there were none. You had an opportunity in 10 weeks to walk into this House with an amendment and name the Children's Commissioner's committee. Instead, you said to the people the reason you got rid of the committee was because the people on the committee were not locals.

Let us look at who was on the committee. The Chair was Professor Graham Vimpani – yes, from New South Wales; and Frank Hytten, not local. There was also Terry Murphy who was the Director General of the Department of Child

Protection Western Australia. We had the opportunity to get him with the blessing of the Liberal Minister for Child Protection in Western Australia. Then there was Teresa Neihus, the President of Foster Care NT, who is local; Jacqui Reed, Chief Executive Officer of CREATE Foundation, who is local; Professor Sven Silburn, Director, Development of Health and Education of Menzies School of Health Research, who is also local; Danny Munkara, member of the Nguju Community Management Board and Tiwi Land Council, who is local - member for Arafura, I believe you agree with that; he lives on the Tiwis, is a Territorian, a Tiwi man; and Joyce Taylor, Regional Manager Indigenous Education, Barkly Region. Out of eight people, five of them are local. The other three are well-recognised experts in their field.

The reason the government did not want this committee is because they knew very well they were going to walk away from the board of inquiry recommendations, and did not want this committee to be on their back and to highlight their failure to support the board of inquiry recommendations, or to implement them.

The member before said so many recommendations had been implemented, and so many have been done by October. On 1 and 2 March 2012, 12 out of 34 urgent recommendations had been implemented when the Labor government was in power. Of the remaining, 22 urgent recommendations were under way. Thirteen of the remaining 108 semi-urgent recommendations had been implemented, and work on the remaining 95 semi-urgent recommendations had commenced. These had commenced under the Labor administration.

I also point out to the member for Araluen, the Minister for Children and Families, there were not six reports produced since Labor was in power; there were seven. The seventh one, *State of Denial*, was the report which highlighted the failure of the CLP government to protect children - in particular, Indigenous children in the bush. It was the report that highlighted that the CLP had walked away from its legal obligation to protect Aboriginal children in the bush, the people who needed the most protection. That was highlighted - it was in black and white. I tabled on many occasions that report *States of Neglect*, because I was sick and tired of members opposite blaming everything about the child protection system on the Labor administration.

The child protection system was broken beyond repair when we came to government. It took 10 years to bring the system to what it is now – yes, and six reviews that highlighted the shortcomings, which put in place mechanisms to repair it. We adopted and welcomed these recommendations.

I find it extremely surprising that the member opposite, the Minister for Children and Families, would accuse the previous government of making and structuring the department around these recommendations. Of course, we structured the department around these recommendations. These recommendations were the board of inquiry recommendations. The board of inquiry, I remind you, consisted of Professor Miriam Bamblett, Dr Howard Bath, and Dr Rob Roseby, three experts in their areas. These recommendations were the steps we had to take to start doing something in child protection.

We have heard a lot from the member opposite. She has a very short memory. She said that history, dropping off the radar - and I agree with her. She wants to remember what does not show here. She will come here and make allegations and neglect some of the initiatives our government took at the time. Let me remind her that the child protection commissioner was put in place by the Labor administration. The arrangement for any professional to compulsorily report any child abuse was put in place by the Labor administration.

She talked about difficulties to recruit because there were not enough houses. Well, how is that? We managed to recruit 14 extra people in Katherine with no problems - and no problem with housing. Now, all of a sudden in 10 weeks, the CLP government finds there is a big problem with recruitment because there are not enough houses.

She asked me to believe that somehow there were 90 frontline workers, but there was not any money to pay them. Well, I beg your pardon, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I do not believe the member for Araluen because she made allegations in the past that were proven either unreliable or inaccurate. I remind the House of her allegation about childhood prostitution in Alice Springs. She never brought any evidence to the House or the police to that effect. I do not believe, member for Araluen, your statement that we have 90 frontline workers without any funding unless you provide evidence to this House to that effect. I know very well, we had committed \$145m over the next four years and, in some cases, we could not spend money because we could not recruit people.

So, on one hand we had a surplus of money because we could not spend it by recruiting people. On the other hand you come to us and say we had hired 90 extra people but did not have money to pay. Bring us the proof, table it in the House, and only then will I believe you.

The amendment moved by the member for Araluen on the original motion is unacceptable. It

is unacceptable because it is clearly a way for the government to avoid any commitment to implement fully, the board of inquiry recommendations. It is an attempt by the government to walk away from the failed commitment to provide the financial means for the department to be able to address the very significant problem in child protection.

One of the things that worries me very much is that child protection, for many reasons, had lost focus, especially in the remote communities and for Indigenous children. We have four Indigenous members opposite who can provide firsthand evidence of the situation in remote communities regarding child neglect - in some cases child abuse. These are the most vulnerable children in society. These are the ones who require the protection of our government and the department. We will not address this issue unless we meet their needs and provide frontline workers who come from their own communities. There was a big attempt by the department, following the advice and the recommendation of the board of inquiry, to recruit and upskill as many Indigenous workers as possible to the department of child protection.

Our government made a commitment at the time that we would implement all 147 recommendations, and we were working towards that. In order for a third party to prove that this was happening, I appointed the Child Protection External Monitoring and Reporting Committee. I made a commitment at the time that the report provided to me by the committee would be tabled in parliament so every Territorian would know if the then government implemented or acted upon the recommendations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am unable to accept the amendment. I will not vote for the amendment because, once again, I make the allegation that these amendments are weasel words by the current government to avoid implementing the recommendations and to avoid financing the department for child protection.

Ms ANDERSON (Indigenous Advancement):

Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak to this motion and put on public record how disappointing it is to see the opposition talk about the failures of this government after just nine weeks, when you have had 11 years to do things and you have not done them - 90 jobs with no money.

Do not forget your former Chief Minister sat on the *Little Children Are Sacred* report for six weeks. Now, she is some kind of professor - professor of what? Tell us. She should have done all the work when she was the Chief Minister, and now she is denying it. She is saying that she should have

done much more. I want to quote a media release Senator Nigel Scullion released:

Martin failed Indigenous children.

Shadow Indigenous Affairs minister, Senator Nigel Scullion, called on former Northern Territory Labor Chief Minister Clare Martin to apologise for failing to protect Indigenous children under her watch.

She has the audacity to say she should have done better in her new book in which she writes about previous Chief Ministers and herself. It is a disgrace and a shame for the Northern Territory that a former Chief Minister failed to protect children of the Northern Territory - children who were our future. I continue to quote from the media release by Senator Nigel Scullion:

'Clare Martin is attempting to rewrite history by saying she should have fought harder against the Intervention', Senator Scullion said of media reports today quoting Martin.

'In fact the Martin Labor government inaction caused the NT Intervention.

'In her latest comments it seems she is still denying there was a problem at all.

'The reason for the Intervention was that she and her government failed to protect Indigenous children.

'Of course she won't admit that.
And nor will you.

'She should apologise to those children that were abused and neglected under Labor's watch.

'Not only did Martin and her government fail to do anything but they denied there was a problem.

'In 2006 former Alice Springs crown prosecutor Nanette Rogers raised this issue publicly leading to a national outcry.

All Clare Martin did was commission a report.

Shame on the so-called 'professor'!

The Martin government sat on Little Children Are Sacred for six months.

The government, under Clare Martin's watch, like the former minister for Child Protection, knew that. You all sat on it for six months and hid it away. That is what caused the intervention. You

cowards across there had the audacity to say the intervention was caused by Mal Brough and John Howard. It was caused, as we all know, by the previous Chief Minister ...

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I would like a ruling on a member opposite calling out, 'You cowards over there'.

Mr Deputy SPEAKER: I cannot recall that.

Ms ANDERSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw the word, 'coward'.

Mr McCARTHY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker!

Ms Lambley: She has withdrawn it.

Mr Deputy SPEAKER: She has withdrawn it.

Mr McCARTHY: I asked for a ruling on a member from the other side who called out, 'You cowards over there'.

Mr Elferink: If I may assist, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no ruling required at this stage. She has withdrawn it.

Ms ANDERSON: Absolutely! Maybe I need to bring some cotton buds to the Chamber.

The Martin government sat on Little Children Are Sacred for six months.

Shame! Shame on you!

Then they did nothing.

It was not bad enough that they sat on it for six months, but then they did nothing.

No wonder the Howard government had to intervene, Clare Martin gave us no choice ...

That is the media release. I table the document.

This is all about the board of inquiry. Yes, the board of inquiry was filled with people from other states. They had a job to do. They were professional people but they did not do the job very well, all they did was travel around. What did they do in their travels? What did they see in their travels? Who did they speak to in their travels? Did they implement anything after they spoke to all these people? These are the questions you need to ask. It is okay to travel around on Territory taxpayers' money and talk to people, but when you travel around and talk to people they expect you to come back and do something.

People expect you to come back and implement something. People expect you to be harder because, at the heart of all this we are talking about children, the most vulnerable children of the Northern Territory.

It is up to every single one of us inside this House to be aware of the things that are going on. This government will do more. We have a Deputy Chief Minister who is a former social worker and has worked with Aboriginal children in Alice Springs Hospital. She is qualified, she has seen these little Aboriginal kids, she has worked with Aboriginal people in Alice Springs Hospital. She is a mother, she is concerned about issues to do with children in the Northern Territory, and about Indigenous children. She worked for years in Alice Springs Hospital and saw all that. She worked with Aboriginal people, she spoke to Aboriginal people, and today she has Aboriginal friends in Alice Springs who talk to her about these problems. She will continue to look after the Northern Territory in her role as minister.

The Deputy Chief Minister, and this government, amalgamated child protection with Education and it is a fantastic way to go. We have schools in major communities and on homelands. Teachers have six-and-a-half hours with the children every day. The focus we have of amalgamating child protection with education is the best way to protect children. The two will interact closely and well together.

We have RAFCW and Families as First Teachers programs under the Commonwealth on these communities. We will work as the government to get the best result for Indigenous kids in remote Aboriginal communities. This issue is at the heart of all of us, especially me because my niece's kids are in care. It is about an education strategy, it is about telling our kids they cannot bring kids into this world if they take no responsibility for these children. They have to take responsibility.

I have spoken to the Deputy Chief Minister and the minister responsible for this area about an education strategy. We will issue an education strategy to ensure we talk to all the mums and dads about getting the kids to school, about child protection, about how kids are safe at home and how kids are safe at school. Under this reform we will start to see results. We will not achieve results overnight. You did not achieve results in 11 years. Amalgamation of the two agencies will start to see some positive results. Child protection should be at the forefront of our minds.

I want to tell you a story about an incident - I will not name the community - where a 10-year-old boy was abused physically. That little boy happened to be the member for Stuart's grandson, but lives in my electorate. We are

emotionally attached to these issues. As I said, my niece's children are in care. My niece's daughter, who is cared for by a non-Indigenous carer - really lovely people I see at church all the time. I have contact with her when I go to church; also during the Masters Games because the carer had the child there. We have firsthand experience. We are emotionally connected to these children and we want to see the best possible outcomes for these children in the Northern Territory because they are the future generation of the Northern Territory.

We need to ensure we protect them, look after them, nurture them and give them a good quality education, talk about safety, educate their parents to love them, care for them, take them to school, take them to childcare, ensure the mums are caring for these children, and the children are being fed and going to school. It is all about an education strategy. It is about talking to these people.

I talk to my niece all the time. She has two kids in care with FACS and has had another one. We talk to her as immediate family and tell her she should not be doing this. Those kids do not ask to be brought into the world. Two people, a male and a female, decide whether they will have children. We have to be talking honestly and openly to these parents about taking responsibility for their children because I, as a grandmother and as an aunt to my niece's children, feel terrible that my niece's kids are in care. It is about continuously talking to her. I get my brother to talk to her. She lives on the outstation but we need to continually talk to her and her mother, who is my cousin.

How do we allow these people to get their children back as well? That is the other thing we will be talking to the minister about. If you have a look at child abuse and neglect, we have a huge number of kids who are neglected in the care of Family and Community Services. What we have to do is, somehow, encourage the parents to reconnect with their children and take responsibility back for their children and take them home.

We are looking at all those avenues. We continually talk to the Deputy Chief Minister, not just upstairs but inside the lobby. We give her all the ideas and we know she takes all that on board. As I said, she has firsthand experience; she is a social worker. She worked at the Alice Springs Hospital. She is a mother who has worked with many undernourished kids who have come into the Alice Springs Hospital. She has spoken to Aboriginal parents. She spoke to Aboriginal people about trying to formulate strategies, back then, of how children should be safe in communities and parents can take responsibility, trying to encourage Aboriginal

people within the sector she worked in to talk to their parents because they have the language skills and were connected to the culture outside of the industry in which she worked. Her workers were asking parents to take much more responsibility for their children, care for their children a lot better than they did and ensure the children were fed.

What we have to do is ensure we do not encourage gambling in the communities. We all know all our people sit around and gamble, and kids sit on the side of the card ring. We all know that, and they are all the things we have to stop. Child protection does not just engage with alcohol; it is with ganja, petrol sniffing, and glue. When petrol sniffing started to fade away, all we did was move the substance of choice over. They went from petrol sniffing to ganja.

We just had a huge debate in this House about alcohol. We have not had a debate in this House about marijuana. When we decide to have that debate in this House about marijuana, it will be too late because the mental kids we have now from overuse of marijuana is huge in our Aboriginal communities. All we have to do is start talking to doctors and nurses about the impact marijuana is having on our young folk. It is not the generation after me, it is two generations after me. There has to be a really sad case when we start seeing that, as debaters, as politicians in this House, one sector of our population is slipping and going a different way. How do we pull that back? We need to pull it back.

Through the strategies we have, and a minister who was a social worker and has worked in that area, we will start to see change. We will try harder and ensure we start getting the runs on the board. As I said, we are not going to do this overnight; these things will change over time. However, we will make sure it changes over time. We have to pull these people back; they have slipped off the world map. There are some who are in their own little world of not engaging with society, not going to school, not socially active anywhere, neglecting their children, and abusing themselves with alcohol. It is a hopelessness, and we see that hopelessness everywhere in the community. That hopelessness began when the shire reforms come in and their voices were taken away. All these things built up like a mountain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, what we need to do is ensure we give the strength, the positive things, back to parents and the communities so they can decide for themselves, and they have choices to grow their families in a healthy non-violent area, feed their children, and make sure their children are going to school. These are the really important factors of us interacting as a society in the Northern Territory, with 36% of our population

being the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory. I reiterate that our Deputy Chief Minister knows her job.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak to the motion and to the amendments that have been put. I congratulate the member for Nightcliff, as a new member of parliament who has brought to this House the important issue; the issue that goes to the heart of families, communities and, obviously, listening to speakers here, to the heart of members of parliament; that is, our children.

This motion has been raised in the General Business section of our democracy by an opposition member, a new member of parliament, a young mother, a Territorian. What the member for Nightcliff brings is the important issue around protection of Territory children. I congratulate her, commend her, and look forward to her work as an MLA and as a shadow minister who will follow the direction of the government actions and inactions in this incredibly important area of the protection of children.

What the member for Nightcliff's motion brought to this House was the question of priorities. I encourage the Minister for Children and Families to drop the defensive politics and embrace the essence of what is a challenge of priorities. We will continue to debate economic rationalism. It has been debated in Victoria, New South Wales and by the famous Campbell Newman of Queensland and, now, it has come to the Territory and we will continue to debate that. But, when we enter the debate around deficits and the importance of bringing the budget back to surplus, and all the allegations around the fiscal balance we are working within, it comes down to priorities. Where are the priorities?

In this debate I am supporting the member for Nightcliff's motion. The minister has laid on the table amendments that have provided a summary of a proposed plan. The member for Nelson calls it a motherhood statement. He summed it up for me. I needed to conceptualise it and that conceptualised it quite rationally and without offence and, once again, with that level playing field.

I have two documents in front of me, we have a debate taking place in the House and, now, I have to depend on what the Minister for Children and Families delivered. Let me talk about what she delivered. First of all the amendment, dot point 1:

... supports the board of inquiry recommendations into child protection.

That does not seem to be too complicated. However:

... notes its appreciation for the board of inquiry's attempt to address a very real ...

Once again, this general statement calls on the government to commit to increase service delivery with this fusion with the department of Education and:

... calls on the minister to provide a ministerial statement on the implementation.

One would hope the member for Greatorex brings his manners to the House when we discuss the ministerial statement because he is on a record running down and criticising ministerial statements.

That is a pretty bland offering, so let us add a bit to the amendments. Let us add the concepts of, at dot point 1: 'supports the affordable board of inquiry recommendations into child protection'. 'Affordable' was offered to me in this debate by the Minister for Children and Families, as a father, a sports coach, a principal, a previously registered foster carer and, now, a member for parliament representing the Barkly. The minister brought to me in this debate that she is prepared to look at recommendations into child protection that are affordable.

This is what the original motion questions; it talks about priorities. The minister talked about funding commitments and scrapping a board, but the minister did not give me any alternatives. There was no strategy, there was no alternative thinking or alternative plans. The minister clearly said her job is about cleaning up the mess and setting a new agenda. That is another political distraction and the venom that comes with that - it saddens me to think the Minister for Children and Families is so defensive and so hung up on running down the opposition and driving that stake into the opposition's heart with all the rhetoric about how bad it was and what a terrible job the previous government did.

It saddens me to think that would get in the way of the simple essence of protecting children in the Northern Territory. However, she is only protecting children in the Northern Territory with affordable recommendations. This is very disturbing when we talk about priorities. We will stay off the debate about economic rationalism; we will continue to question priorities. The minister said she is cleaning up a mess. I do not like to hear that language in a debate about protecting Territory children. Let us stick to the plan. Sticking to the protection of Territory children, we all would agree, is the essence of this debate and this motion.

The minister said she disbanded the committee as it had no tools for measurement of the implementations or the recommendations. That is a fair comment. The new minister has decided that this committee had some drawbacks; it had some disadvantages. I wanted to hear in the debate what the new minister suggests will make that better but, no, the strategy was to disband the committee. That is the minister's call because the minister is making the decisions.

I was a little upset though, as a Territorian and as a previously registered foster carer, that the minister said she had nothing to celebrate. That is a bit sad when we are talking about a department, a non-government sector, volunteers and the battlers, those families that are trying to address issues the member for Namatjira talked about - those families who are battlers and are struggling. Nothing to celebrate? I do not think so. I find the minister, in her venom to attack, loses the plot. Maybe if she drops that defensive attitude, concentrates on protecting children in the Northern Territory, we will not see this derogatory rhetoric; we will see new initiatives backed with resources that will protect Territory children.

The minister talked about a new initiative, and I celebrate that in the debate. I celebrate new initiatives. Let us see if they work. The new initiative is about the fusion of the Department of Children and Families into another mega-department with the department of Education and Training. I know a little about that department because I was an employee for 29 or 30 years. That department grew from our humble beginnings as the Commonwealth Teaching Service into a mega-department. The new minister made the decision to fuse Children and Families into a mega-department - out of Health into another mega-department. We will see how that rolls out.

I took note when the minister spoke about the benefits in remote communities. In service with the Department of Education and Training, I spent over 20 years in the real remote communities, the one-teacher school communities. I know a little about life in remote communities. By the way, some of those schools I started have grown now into five and six teachers. You should go to Robinson River School, Epenarra School and Borrooloola these days.

We can talk about schools and child protection because now the minister has made this fusion where they will be working together. The minister talked about synergies. I am very interested to see this strategy, this new initiative, because the minister told me, as a member of this parliament and a Territorian, that every child will be at school - they are going to work on that - and that means the child protection initiatives will work in the

remote schools and will deliver the outcomes the government, and all Territorians, are looking for. If you want to play with semantics like the other side do so well, I will throw in, what about the kids who are not at school? What do we do about the kids who are not at school? That goes back to the minister, who is also the Education minister. What will happen when the Minister for Education is ensuring she gets all those kids to school, and the school and the fusion of child protection services will ensure all those children are protected and the system will work?

I am looking forward to the ministerial statements the minister says she will be bringing to this House with the statistics, the empirical evidence to back up all those ministerial statements ...

Mrs Lambley: Ten weeks Gerry, 10 weeks. You had 10 years and you failed miserably.

Mr Vatskalis: It is the mess you left behind.

Mr McCARTHY: I have been in this game for 33 years. Do not underestimate my contribution!

Mrs Lambley: What did you do? You are useless.

Mr McCARTHY: Thirty-three years,

Mrs Lambley: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Whilst I understand the member's passion, I ask that you caution him that his conduct does not boarder on bullying.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I will continue to talk about my knowledge of education in the Territory and of remote schools, and continue to challenge the minister on the amendment she brings forward telling us she will provide the feedback through ministerial statements and reports to the House. Let us see where that goes, what that achieves. I wish her the best of luck. Drop the defensive rhetoric and get on with the job.

I will give the Minister for Children and Families a bit of advice, and this is ...

Mrs Lambley: Do not bother.

Mr McCARTHY: This is for all the members on the opposite side because the member for Namatjira summed it up. We have a Deputy Chief Minister who is the Treasurer and the Minister for Children and Families. That is the perfect combination. The way it works, members opposite, particularly the new ones, is to start asking about your Cabinet processes, asking for

briefings on what is going on in that Cabinet room. The member for Araluen, the Deputy Chief Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Children and Families, has the perfect opportunity as a Territorian, a mother, and a person passionate about child protection, to go into that Cabinet and fight for priorities for children and families. They do not need cuts; this is one area that does not get cut. This can be delivered leaving a brilliant political legacy regarding the protection of our children.

Members opposite, there is one advantage to being the Treasurer, you get to work with the experts. You can tell the experts - the real experts - that you want to prioritise this area. The member for Braiiling wants to build roads and bridges. I support that too as a former minister for Construction. He is right; infrastructure in the bush can deliver community development, there is no doubt about it. However, you might have to give up the bridge and do some culverts because the cash is going into protecting children. If we are talking about growing the Territory, we are talking about growing our children. Growing our children strong is the mantra we need to keep in mind.

As the Deputy Chief Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Children and Families, this minister holds all the cards. The member for Namatjira talked about gambling. This minister has three of a kind. She has a winning hand in the Cabinet process, and can deliver for every disadvantaged and vulnerable child in the Northern Territory. That is where she should be focusing her attention.

The amendments whitewash it; they just go over the top with lovely semantics. I give the person who wrote that a six out of 10, because that is well-written whitewash of an issue the member for Nightcliff brought to this House, which really is nuts and bolts - it is reality on the table, if the Minister for Children and Families chooses to fight, on the basis of a priority, for Territory children. I do not think there would be a Cabinet minister in the room who could put up a fight. Anyway, the members opposite should ask, 'How did the fight go, minister? How did we go? How did the priorities go? Who is prepared to give up some roads funding? Who is prepared to back Territory children?'

The Minister for Children and Families has outlined to this House how bad it is. 'It is a shocker', said the Minister for Children and Families. She laid 10 years of blame on me. The minister has three of a kind; she has the perfect hand. I really hope you take on your Cabinet colleagues and you fight. Not only will you be fighting for the Country Liberal Party, you will be fighting for the Labor Party, the Independent, and

for every Territory child and family that needs your support.

I do not have access to a Cabinet room anymore, but we may have access to that Cabinet room again. It may come our way if the Territory decides, because the people are right.

I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, with advice to the Deputy Chief Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Children and Families. I cannot agree with the amendments because they whitewash what is a very direct and poignant motion that looks at priorities of the government.

I can tell a quick story as well. As a citizen, a father, a sports coach, a teacher, a principal, and a former registered foster carer, I have dealt with children who have been abused. I have had to work with those issues in our society. However, never have I been challenged as much as when I worked in a learning support unit in the Borough of Southwark in London. There was a reading room, and it had ...

Mrs LAMBLEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move that the member be granted an extension.

Motion agreed to.

Mr McCARTHY: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I thank honourable members.

I had the experience of discovering a reading room. In the reading room were the files of high support need students I was working with. They had a red dot on the file. The file was not to be taken out of the reading room. I spent much time researching those students over that 12-month period. Some of those students went back into supported units, some did not make it and went to secure units, behavioural units, and units that dealt with kids with mental health issues, and some of those students continued on their journey in the learning support unit I worked in. I was truly shocked and I thought, with all my experience over the years, going to a place like that I would have been prepared. However, I saw the most frightening elements of child abuse I had ever encountered. To this day, I have really never gotten over it, and still tell the stories of those guys and girls and the time I was fortunate enough to work with them in London.

I came home to Australia and influenced the Department of Education and Training considerably, and we started an alternative education program in Tennant Creek. I was able to influence government. I felt good about that. I was just a small fish in a big pond; I was a bottom feeder. I was just a battler trying my best, and we changed the way the system did business and we

tailored that into the real needs. It was that experience in London that really gave me the passion to do it.

I ask the Deputy Chief Minister, the Treasurer, and the Minister for Children and Families to fight in that Cabinet room; to go in with the plan of priorities; to argue, to debate, and to challenge every member in that Cabinet room so that, whatever happens in there - the economic rationalism, the cuts, the rhetoric, whatever happens - let us not devalue our children and our families. Let us take a stand and say this area is sacred. Our little children are sacred. We cannot afford to play economic rationalist games with our sacred children.

Good luck, minister, because I think you are up for the job. You get a great reference from the member for Namatjira. You have a good understanding of the department and the sector, being a social worker. Now you are an emerging politician in a government with three of a kind in your hand. Do not be shy. If anything forms a legacy in this game, it would be to go away knowing that you fought for the most sacred in our society; that is, our little children.

Mrs PRICE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Nightcliff brought up the family group conferencing. I was part of that as well. I had to listen to families decide what was best for their child. I had to listen to total strangers who knew nothing about these families decide what was best for a child.

Child protection is embedded within all of us because we know of a child who needs our support as government. We, as government, will make sure our minister does have the proper advice. We will ensure we, as government, give her the right advice that will mean protection for our children.

Not like the previous government. Clare Martin sat on it. For six months she sat on a report that was supposed to have been the proper advice to look after our children, to do something about them, to talk to families, to pull in the resources, to listen to people with the advice. Did they do it? No, they pretended it did not exist. These children needed this help, needed this support back then - not today, not tomorrow, back then.

We can sit here and talk about safety, security, wellbeing, education - everything that has to do with a child who is growing up in a community like Yuendumu. I do not know if you have been out in a community at night. The member for Barkly would know that; he has lived in Tennant Creek and in Borroloola, and he has been in those little communities with two teachers ...

Mr McCarthy: One teacher.

Mrs PRICE: One-teacher schools. You know and I know that these kids have no boundaries. They spend their night life just hanging out because there is no direction or people to help them, such as counsellors, in these communities.

Clare Martin's government could have helped with this, in the meantime, while the report was sitting on the backbench for six months. Someone could have been out there and done something for these children who have now reached the stage where they have been abused time and time again. Yet, no one wants to acknowledge that is what is happening; no one wants to acknowledge that these children need this protection right now. It should have been done when Clare Martin was the Chief Minister. It has blown up because it was not tended to then.

We, as government, will make sure our minister does her best because she will get the best advice from us. We will make sure we are there to give her advice every day. The member for Barkly can say, 'You new members had better make sure your government is doing the right thing'.

The reason we were elected is because we want to do that exactly that; because we have trusted everyone else to look after our children and they have never done the right job. They have employed people from elsewhere who know nothing about the situation on the ground or the cultural values. Instead, they employ people from New Zealand, interstate, and put all their trust in these people they have recruited without trusting our people who have their hands up and want to work with family group conferencing. No, they are not told about how long the funding is to last.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I sat in on these family group conferences and I have tried to do my best to help these little ones who are my grandchildren. They take the funding away from under their feet and do not recognise that it is really important to have that ongoing funding. We can sit here and yell abuse at each other but at the end of the day these children miss out on everything.

Ms FYLES (Nightcliff): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank everyone for their passionate words. We all have a unique story to tell. What makes our parliament truly democratic is bringing our stories.

I thank the minister for acknowledging things had started to turn around under the previous government. We speak of legacy and we blame people; however, we need to focus on this. If we do not, people who follow us in these seats will still be having these conversations.

The minister raised the Fair Work decision, and I am pleased to see you will honour the commitment of the previous government. The NGO sector, in particular, works hard. They are some of our most underpaid in the community yet they put in the hardest work. This Fair Work Australia decision is aimed particularly at people who work in the child protection area. However, anyone who works with children plays such a vital and important role and we need to acknowledge that. I look forward to hearing how the NT government plans to honour the commitment for the federal government legislation passed in the last sittings.

I welcome the minister's offer to address all the recommendations; however, I will not support this amendment. We have passed the point of noting appreciation of the board of inquiry's attempt to address the issues. It is not time for motherhood statements. The previous government committed to these recommendations and was working to meet them. We had a clear pathway. Yes, the department was based around the board of inquiry, but that was what the objective set out to be.

As my colleague, the member for Barkly, said, you are in a very unique position being Treasurer, Deputy Chief Minister, and Minister for Education and Children Services. If you can take this forward, highlighting the important work of the board of inquiry, the children of the NT will benefit. That is why we are all here.

I am a mother and have not been rudely ducking in and out of the Chamber tonight. I have been feeding bub out the back.

I raise this motion so parliament can have the debate on the need to implement these recommendations. This was the most thorough and comprehensive report into child protection we have seen. It encompassed all those other reports we have spoken of tonight.

I do not want to focus on the past because I cannot change that history. I am in this parliament now and look forward to many more robust debates on this issue. You, as Treasurer and Deputy Chief Minister hold that strong card in the Cabinet room ensuring our children get what they deserve.

As an opposition, we will be watching and ensuring this body of work is not lost and, with it, the children of the Territory. As someone who is in touch with children from all walks of life - whether they are my teacher friends talking about the students they are working with from all walks of life, not just suburban Darwin schools, or whether it is the people I work with as a childcare community representative - children are our

future. We need to hold that with us as we go forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all of my colleagues for our robust debate tonight. I apologise for the technicalities of ups and downs but, as an opposition, we will not support these amendments. I do not feel the words are strong enough words, but I look forward to this debate continuing.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question now is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 15

Noes 8

Ms Anderson
Mr Conlan
Mr Elferink
Ms Finocchiaro
Mr Giles
Mr Higgins
Mr Kurrupuwu
Mrs Lambley
Ms Lee
Mr Mills
Mrs Price
Ms Purick
Mr Styles
Mr Tollner
Mr Westra van Holthe

Ms Fyles
Mr Gunner
Mr Henderson
Ms Lawrie
Mr McCarthy
Mr Vatskalis
Mr Vowles
Ms Walker

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

TABLED PAPER

Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2011-12

Mrs LAMBLEY (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, in accordance with section 9 of the *Financial Management Act*, I table the 2011-12 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report. The statement forms part of the 2011-12 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and presents the former government's fiscal performance for the year. The report also satisfies the requirements of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act*.

The financial outcome for the Territory 2011-12 has been influenced by low revenue growth, predominantly GST revenue, combined with the previous government's policy of high infrastructure spending. This has resulted in a cash deficit of \$561m and a fiscal balance deficit of \$662m in the non-financial public sector. A summary of the other key fiscal aggregates for the 2011-12 outcome for the non-financial public sector include an operating surplus of \$122m, a ratio of nett debt to revenue of 49%, and a ratio of nett financial liabilities to revenue of 133%.

The operating surplus of \$122m is largely driven by Commonwealth revenue that will be used for capital purposes. The improvement in the operating surplus since the May 2011-12 budget is largely the result of the timing of tied Commonwealth funding and expenditure between years, predominantly for capital purposes. The improvement has, however, been offset by a reduction in GST revenue when compared to previous estimates due to almost no growth in national GST collection during 2011-12.

Despite the operating surplus, the cash and fiscal balance outcomes are both in a significant deficit position. This reflects the operating balance surplus not being sufficient to support the high levels of infrastructure spending, including spending by the Power and Water Corporation.

I now turn to the Territory's balance sheet. For the non-financial public sector, nett debt for 2011-12 is \$2664m, \$567m higher than the 2010-11 outcome, and is a direct result of increased borrowings due to the 2011-12 cash deficit. When measured as a ratio to revenue nett debt at 30 June 2012, it has increased to 49%, up from 39% in 2010-11. Nett financial liabilities, which incorporate the Territory's unfunded superannuation liability, has also increased significantly from the 2010-11 outcome to \$7.2bn, an increase of \$1.7bn. This is predominantly due to the flow-on effect of the increase in nett debt, and the significant downward movement in the 10-year bond rate used in valuing the Territory's superannuation liability as required by accounting standards.

The 10-year bond rate fell from 5.3% at 30 June 2011 to 3.1% at 30 June 2012 as a result of fluctuations in financial markets. When measured as a ratio to revenue, nett financial liabilities at 30 June 2012 have increased to 133%, up from 104% in 2010-11.

The 2011-12 Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement has been issued with a qualified opinion by the Auditor-General. This qualification is of a technical nature and results from the uncertainty over the carrying value of construction works in progress relating to the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program called SIHIP managed by the former Department of Housing, Local Government, and Regional Services. It is important to note the technical nature of this qualification does not mean the carrying amount recorded in government's balance sheet is wrong. Rather, it means that, based on the evidence available, it is uncertain whether some elements should have been expensed, or whether other elements should have been depreciated during that year. It is, however, envisaged, as packages of work in communities

are finalised, this issue will be resolved in 2012-13.

Madam Speaker, I table the 2011-12 Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and commend it to the House.

MOTION

Print Paper – Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2011-12

Mrs LAMBLEY (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Paper - Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2011-12

Mrs LAMBLEY (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be noted and leave be granted to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

NOTICE

Appointment of Ombudsman

Mr ELFERINK (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I give notice that on the next sitting day I shall move that this Assembly, pursuant to section 132 of the Ombudsman Northern Territory Act recommend to Her Honour the Administrator that she appoint Mr Peter Shoyer to hold the office of the Ombudsman of the Northern Territory.

MOTION

Note Statement - Alcohol and Crime

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr STYLES (Sanderson): Madam Speaker, I support the statement made by the Attorney-General today.

It was with great interest that I listened to other speakers in the debate, in particular, members from the opposition who used to form part of the previous government. It is very interesting because, again, we should reiterate we have been in and they have been out about nine weeks, yet it would appear we are responsible for all the ills we have been left with as a legacy from the previous Labor government in the Northern Territory.

I could not help but make a few notes. First, I comment on something the member for Nelson raised when he said the ALP was in for 11 years, the CLP was in before that, and the CLP is back in again now. What is the difference? I do not have time tonight to go through the differences, but I

encapsulate it in something I say when doorknocking in my electorate, on Saturday mornings at the shops, and at barbecues, when people ask about the difference.

It is quite simple. I tell people the ALP members do a great job and they work hard because they want to get into power and they say that is good. Then I tell them the difference is the Country Liberals want to get into government. There is a fundamental difference between getting into power and getting into government. That difference has been articulated by the members on our side of the House who come from the bush; that is, you have to listen to people.

Being in power gives you the ability to dictate to people; the previous government used to say, 'We have a deal for you. You just sit back, stay there and we will look after you. We will do everything'. It is very patronising. Whereas the CLP, as has been demonstrated by Terry Mills and a few other ministers going out immediately after the election - the member for Namatjira today spoke about the Chief Minister sitting down and listening to people; sitting there with them and respecting the fact they want to be heard. They voted accordingly so they can have their representatives in this parliament and have their voice heard.

There is a very fundamental difference. The ALP, the opposition, wants to be in power so they can say what is good for people. We want to ask people what is good for them. We want to ask them how we can facilitate them better in this environment; create an environment where they, as people, can flourish, the business people can flourish, so the organisation we know as the Northern Territory government can prosper and we will have an increase in economic activity. If people are flourishing then we have good economic activity. However, if you do not listen to people and if people do not feel good about what they are doing each day, then you will have a downturn in enthusiasm and the entrepreneurship that really needs to come from the good people of the Territory to ensure we increase our economic activity in the Territory.

I move on to various things the member for Fannie Bay said. He spoke about the member for Port Darwin, the Attorney-General, having an historic view; that it was many years ago when the Attorney-General had a very active police career. I can say that ...

Mr Gunner: I said it was a good thing.

Mr STYLES: He did some fantastic things!

What the opposition does not realise is when you have been in the police force, as three of us on this side of politics have, when you serve with

people there is a certain camaraderie. I spent 27 years in the Northern Territory Police Force. My colleague, the member for Katherine, spent 21 years, and the member for Port Darwin spent 10 ...

Mr Elferink: Fifteen.

Mr STYLES: Sorry, 15, I stand corrected. My apologies, member for Port Darwin.

There are quite a few years of experience there. More importantly, those relationships of trust you build with fellow police officers carry through. It does not stop just because you leave the police force; those relationships and that trust continues.

That is what we have been hearing from the trusted comrades out there; we are all in it together. They have been telling us the Banned Drinker Register was not working. They will talk to you about the Alcohol Management Plan in Alice Springs, for instance. It was brought in, in 2008. If you go there today, the same police officers who were telling us in 2008 about the drunks they were locking up then, tell us now they are still locking them up. They have alcohol management plans, ID and the Banned Drinker Register. They said it was not working.

I can assure the member for Fannie Bay that the information we provide in this House is not from 10 or 15 years ago; it is from hours ago - some of it is that recent. It is very good to have those people who will give you an overall picture of what is happening in your community. It is called being connected to your community. We, on this side, did a very good job. We are very connected to our community, which is why we are here and you are over there, as was put very aptly by the member for Namatjira earlier.

The member for Nhulunbuy also spoke about the member for Port Darwin's lack of understanding of what is happening and that it is all historical. Well, the facts speak for themselves. Of course, when the opposition says how terrible it is, you have to make an assumption - and it is their assumption - that the Banned Drinker Register was working. I do not know whether we need to send snail mail, an e-mail, or put it on a piece of paper and hand it to them to let them know it was not working.

I will get to some of the statistics the Attorney-General gave earlier. I was quite astounded and would like to repeat them in the House, because people now home from work might be listening. Perhaps they missed the earlier production of the facts and we would like to reiterate it for them.

There was a great article in the *Northern Territory News* on 3 August in relation to domestic violence and conflict between banned drinkers and their

partners. This is not us saying this; this is people from Dawn House, a women's refuge centre, stating that the Banned Drinker Register might be causing conflict between banned drinkers and their partners. From anecdotal evidence, that is the case - domestic violence is up 7.8%.

Look at the costs of alcohol issues in the Northern Territory per annum - \$672m - when you have the Banned Drinker Register which is not working and patronising policies where people do not have a say. The Treasurer put it quite aptly earlier; there are so many people who would probably say no to having alcohol in the communities. However, they would have a say. Most of us want to have a say. I want a say. I want to stand up in parliament and have a say. I do not want someone from the other side of the room telling me to sit down; that I cannot have a say. I will have a say. We all need to have a say and that is all these people are asking for.

In relation to this argument on alcohol we are hearing bush members and the Aboriginal members in this parliament very strongly and clearly articulating what their supporters, the people who voted them in, say. I commend the members from the bush for bringing in that voice and proudly and strongly giving it straight back to the opposition on the patronising stuff coming our way. Well done to those members.

The Treasurer spoke in Question Time yesterday saying those who do not want it will not get it. The problem is the opposition does not get it; it does not seem to understand. It is a little like having a gambling addiction or some other addiction - they just keep coming back to the same old situation; they just cannot seem to let it go. Sadly, they will continue down that road. The figures the Attorney-General gave today speak for themselves. They are facts, and the figures they tried to hide from us for nearly a year prior to the election. Shame on the opposition for that.

The member for Casuarina spoke about policies the Western Australian government is looking at in communities in the Kimberley. The report by Sarah Hanson on alcohol in communities about two years ago came up with an idea that if you were in communities of less than 100 people it probably works. The type of programs the previous government implemented do not work in big communities. It will not work in Darwin, Katherine, Alice Springs, or Nhulunbuy - it is just not working. However, if you were in a little outstation, maybe it will work. The issue of the Kimberley, member for Casuarina, you can put on the backburner because that does not work.

The good member for Barkly said the member for Nelson takes the politics out of the debate. Then he said we put it straight back in. Well, you said

you had tough alcohol reforms, yet they were not working. Everything you are saying these days, and said prior to the election, is based on the assumption the Banned Drinker Register was working.

I remember the former Treasurer, the member for Karama, when in government saying in this House it was a great thing; the Banned Drinker Register would take 186 different forms of identification. When you talk to businesses and tourists, they had all sorts of driver's licences. I believe the example she used was a Serbian driver's licence. When I was the shadow minister for Alcohol Policy I most of the people I know in the business and they said the only thing that really worked was a driver's licence and sometimes that did not work. Passports are the only things they accept. They do not have time to spend five or 10 minutes trying to scan a Serbian driver's licence. The other problem is they pull out the box of driver's licences - with about 250 in it - from underneath the counter and say, 'This is how many people leave their driver's licences'. Maybe it was a fundraising exercise by the previous government when people had to get replacement driver's licences. There must have been thousands of them sitting underneath the counter at various liquor outlets.

The other thing I cannot understand is the previous government is still using the term 'on and off tap'. To this day, I have never been in a takeaway outlet and seen a tap in a keg. If they can show me one, I will stand corrected. I am very happy to stand up in the House, apologise and say, 'There you go, I did not know this takeaway outlet had a keg and you could get a bucket of beer, or a handle, or a glass, and walk out of the takeaway'. I do not know whether it is the correct terminology to use but it was not the truth; you could still go into the bar and drink. I did not understand when they said 2500 people were going to be turned back onto the streets. They were never off the streets. This is a smoke-and-mirrors charade of the real situation.

I move on. They said we do not have a decent policy and asked what if the reintroduction of full-strength beer on the Tiwis does not work. The member for Arafura made statements about full-strength beer. However, what if you do a survey and the community says, 'Thanks very much for that because we now have a choice. But we do not want it.' Guess what will happen? They will not get it. It is as simple as that. This is not rocket science.

I listened to the debate and the opposition still does not seem to understand the real situation. That is a bit sad for them but that is the situation they find themselves in.

The other thing the member for Barkly said, yesterday in debate, or recently, was we have to give this time to work. I wonder if that was an admission his government's policies were not working. He used those words, 'You have to give it time to work', from which one could draw the inference that it was not working with 2500 people on the Banned Drinker Register.

I go to the statement my learned colleague, the Attorney-General, made this morning. In part, he said alcohol is the most widely-abused drug in the Northern Territory, and it is. However, when you look at the Tiwis, because they restricted alcohol we have a shift to smoking dope. We have all sorts of drugs of choice. Again, that adds to the \$672m this was costing us under Labor's policy.

There are people of all walks of life and all races and colours in the northern suburbs where I live. The previous government would have you say we want to tell people what they can and cannot do. I see numerous Aboriginal people - in fact, I was at a small restaurant in my electorate last week and one of my constituents, an Aboriginal person I know quite well was there with his wife enjoying a lovely bottle of red wine and having a great time. He would not appreciate me saying he should not be drinking that; it is probably a bit heavy for him, or a bit light. We go back to the principle that alcohol is not the problem, irresponsible consumption of it is. Numerous people from different races and walks of life responsibly consume alcohol. I am sure many members in this House - not all because some abstain from alcohol for a range of different reasons - consume alcohol responsibly. I am assuming they all consume alcohol responsibly.

We do not make any apology for tackling the problem, as opposed to penalising the whole community because the figures back it all up. If people on communities want a club or licensed premises, if the majority of the people want it, we should look at the merit of allowing that and make sure it is run responsibly; that there are rules. There is a raft of things we can put in place to help people.

I will quote from a piece written by Peter Michael in *The Courier Mail* on 11 October 2012 at 12 am. It is about the mayor of a little town - a settlement. It is probably the biggest Aboriginal settlement in Australia with a population of 4500, at Yarrabah:

Yarrabah, home to idyllic beach views and 80% unemployment in the former Anglican mission 50 km outside Cairns, is behind a move to lift strict alcohol restrictions.

They are saying it is not working. Their young people are moving out of the community, and this is what I saw when I went around the Northern

Territory. I listened to people who told me they are losing their young people from the communities. They do not have the ability to have licensed premises there - and I am not talking about a tin shed with a fridge in it; we are talking about proper licensed premises which are constructed to a set of plans and have all sorts of things in place; where young children can be fed and looked after, with a playground attached to it, where people can socialise. If people want to drink they will, but we can give the community the ability to control it. When you join that with the habitual drunk legislation that is coming you will be able to remove those people ...

Mr ELFERINK: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I move an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Mr STYLES: I thank you, Madam Speaker, and the member for Port Darwin. I will again quote from the article:

... Mayor Errol Neal believes most of the Indigenous township's 4500-strong population support opening a licensed bistro and social club.

Down a couple of paragraphs in the article:

Like alcohol, it is part of a huge black market in most Indigenous communities, and we need to bring it out into the open.

So, you either encourage the black market or people get in cars, drive a long way, and come back.

I spoke to a person whose sister has lost three of her four sons and I almost had a tear in my eye. I was not talking to the mother, I was talking to the person who knew her. These people had all been killed on the road; had been run over. They lived in the community, but they had been run over by trucks or cars. That is sad. This poor woman has lost three of her four children. She is one of the people advocating for licensed premises to come back into the communities. The message was passed that it was a bit late for her - she had one left; she wanted to keep that one. It is not right; we are not supposed to bury our children, especially not as a result of young people wanting to go to town to drink because we cannot seem to manage the situation on communities.

If you combine the habitual drunk legislation where you can take these people out of communities and give them the help they need, we will be a long way further than we are now. You must have the ability to do that. This government is working on building those facilities

so we can work with the communities and fix the things my colleagues from the bush have articulated so well today.

I listened to the previous government when they occupied this side of the House. They said scrapping this initiative would see drunks returning to the streets and the rivers of grog flowing. Sadly, not much has changed. We talked about people being on the Banned Drinker Register. There are some figures here I was looking at with great interest. The member for Nelson spoke about statistics and percentages. He said we are all quoting statistic -what is it? - lies, damn lies and statistics, I believe is the saying. People are asking about statistics.

I will talk about statistics later. Let us talk about the figures; the facts from the reports the ALP did not want you to see when it was in government. They stopped the Quarterly Crime Statistics and brought in Yearly Crime Statistics because they did not want you to understand this. In the year prior to the introduction of the Banned Drinker Register, 20 354 drunks were taken into protective custody. That is a few. In the year after the Banned Drinker Register was introduced, 19 988 drunks were taken into protective custody during the operation. When you do the mathematics, it is 356 fewer drunks. During the Banned Drinker Register in that year, the average drunk was taken into custody 2.5 times a year; however, 69 people were taken into protective custody more than 20 times in a year.

The government said they would give them a piece of paper. As an ex-police officer, I would have loved to give someone a piece of paper and say they were not allowed to commit crime, speed, smoke dope, use heroin or drink alcohol anymore. I did not see too many scurrying people; I used to give out Traffic Infringement Notices and say, 'There you go. You are not allowed to speed anymore, you have a ticket'. Yet, the next week, you gave them another ticket. The same thing happened with the Banned Drinker Register. People were still drunk.

I used to go to some of my shops on Saturday mornings and would see people heading to the shops. I knew they were on the Banned Drinker Register because they told me they were. They were still, somehow, getting alcohol. How is that? Secondary supply.

I recall when we had the debates in the last session of this parliament on secondary supply, I was laughed at because I raised this issue. I remember the former Treasurer, the member for Karama, laughing at me and saying - well, there were a few interjections which I will not repeat. All the things that we raised in this House, the cautions we gave them, seemed to come true. I

am not going to say, 'I told you so', because that would not be proper. However, we did warn them and they did not listen.

The people who have been at the coalface and have used these things before have an understanding of what is working and what is not. The people who were there yesterday, a month ago, and in the last year or so, know what is working out there. The police officers at the coalface know what is working. The anecdotal evidence we had then was the same as we are getting in the statistics now. It is very interesting that we were laughed at by the previous government, yet when the figures come out they reinforce what we were saying. Who is having the last laugh? However, this is not a laughing matter, it is a serious matter.

The previous government failed to realise or understand the problem, and to listen to the advice given to it. The *Sunday Territorian* of 23 January 2011 says:

NT government rates worst in nation.

On 24 August this year, the only thing which would have changed with this article would be the date; it was still the worst government in the nation. Sadly, we have been left with a legacy of almost \$1bn. In fact, the Treasurer has indicated it could go over \$1bn; we are still finding hidden debt. It has gone from \$750m towards \$1bn.

This is a tragedy for the Northern Territory. Not only is it a tragedy for the poor people afflicted with this terrible addiction who have been put through so much, but for the business people, the tourists, the average person - the inconvenience to everyone of something that has not worked. It cost millions of dollars to implement and was not working.

The member for Barkly said we need to give it time to work. Sadly, it was not working and was costing a fortune. Figures indicated every drunk off the street cost \$50 000. That is a disgraceful amount of money to spend getting someone off the street - one a day. It is a real shame. Assaults were up.

Time limits prevent me from going through many of these figures. The member for Nelson agreed we had a slight decrease here and there. Yet when you look at - take this one for instance. It is little wonder 68% of all assaults in Alice Springs last year involved alcohol, a figure that has increased by 45% over the last five years. It might be nice to note that figure over the last five years is the same time the alcohol management plan has been in place in Alice Springs. One has to ask whether it was working or not. There are numerous figures the Attorney-General quoted

earlier which support what we were trying to tell the previous government for a long time.

The member for Nhulunbuy said everything was great there; the BDR was great. Yet, there was an increase in alcohol-fuelled violence in Nhulunbuy during the operation of the BDR of 20.3%. All these things add up to what, sadly, is a terrible policy which has not worked and has left us with a huge debt, not only Territory-wide for this failed policy, but generally with so many failed policies.

It is sad the former government - I feel a bit sorry for them because they must sit there, shake their heads and say, 'That did not work'. They have left the Territory with a huge debt and so many failed policies. The other side of this House is a sad place to be.

Madam Speaker, we make no apology for tackling the problem as opposed to penalising the entire community. Alcohol is not the problem, irresponsible consumption is. We, on this side, will do something about it.

Ms FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, I have listened to the debate instigated by the Attorney-General's statement this morning. Amongst other things, I am concerned and confused as to why the opposition is criticising us so severely for having a fresh and innovative approach to a problem that is endemic across the Territory - in our urban, rural, and remote areas. It is endemic, systemic, and spiralling out of control.

We have heard these sittings from many of my colleagues who have a deep personal connection and family link to the tragedy of alcohol abuse. It is not just our bush members who have that connection with this problem. Our aim and purpose is to listen, and learn from the fundamental mistakes of the previous government. We are here to listen to those who live in our communities, and we want to engage with our communities to find local solutions that can be owned by the people. For any solutions to work, the communities need to own it and be a part of that process.

I did a lot of doorknocking during the 2012 general election campaign, and I was very sad to hear many reports coming from constituents of public drunkenness affecting our parks, our public spaces, particularly around the areas of Gray shops, under the Palmerston Water Tower, and in Reg Hillier Park, which is a memorial park which honours the only Territory man killed in Vietnam. During the campaign, one young mother told me she was walking her son through Reg Hillier Park in broad daylight and a person who had, obviously, lost all sense of decency and control pulled their pants down in front of my constituent

and her four-year-old son, defecated in front of them, and then cleaned themselves along the grass. I reiterate this was in broad daylight. That is just one of a number of instances of constituents speaking to me about the problem of public drunkenness.

One evening, I was sitting at Gray shops where I had set up my card table, meeting people after work. One lovely Indigenous man was lying on the concrete at the front of the shops next to me. We were having a chat and he was telling me about his family and his wife, and things like that. He came from Maningrida. It was really sad because he was totally disconnected from his community, and he was driven into the city to feed his addiction for alcohol. I add, this was all during the operation of the BDR the opposition so vehemently defends. If only their energy and passion could be redirected to help achieve real results for Territorians.

Today, while I was sitting in the Chamber, I received an e-mail from by electorate office about a constituent. I will just read parts of it. It is about Megan who lives next to a laneway:

She is fed up with the ongoing antisocial behaviour that takes place: drunks use it as a sleeping arrangement, it is used as a toilet, lots of rubbish and broken glass, fighting, foul language and she has even witnessed people having sex there. Megan has had bottles and rocks thrown on her roof, the plastic that she put up to try and block the laneway out has been burnt and her dos has been kicked and hit constantly. Megan and her family are constantly abused and sworn at - she has two young daughters and does not want them subjected to this sort of behaviour.

Megan has called the police numerous times and, on most occasions, they attend but it just continues.

She, like many others, is at her wits end over this issue.

Madam Speaker, we, unlike the opposition, are here to lead the Territory because we have a mandate to do so. We will take strong, bold and necessary steps to fight this fight - the fight for decency and respect, for people to have their say, and to help those who can no longer help themselves. If the opposition will not meaningfully participate in this journey and continue to cling to the BDR which is in the past, then so be it. We will not stop fighting for the right decisions for Territorians.

Mr TOLLNER (Fong Lim): Madam Speaker, I say thank you very much to the member for Port Darwin, the Attorney-General, for bringing this

statement to the House. I was very impressed to listen to the member for Port Darwin. There were some real insights in his statement, and it is a great pleasure for me to comment on what he said.

There is a clear difference between the current government and the previous government in relation to alcohol - like so many things. They seem to be obsessed by the political struggle rather than trying to find practical outcomes. They are obsessed by political spin - trying to be seen to be putting themselves in a good light on all occasions. It is the old political axiom they live by; that is, perception is reality, but the truth does not matter. It is something I have heard said quite often over the years in my political life and the former Labor government used it as their motto: perception is reality and the truth does not matter.

There is probably no better example of that than in the area of alcohol laws; the ways they tried to address alcohol abuse in our community. When their Banned Drinker Register was not seen to be working they changed or tried to maintain perceptions that it was by hiding the crime statistics and politicising the police - trot the Police Commissioner out, verbal him, make sure he was saying he thought the Banned Drinker Register was working when all of the hidden statistics, all of the feedback he was getting from his troops on the ground indicated it was not. He was put into that unenviable position where he had to comment on government policy. To suggest, somehow or other, that the BDR was a great tool flew in the face of the facts.

As I said, the fact is the previous government lived by the law that perception is reality and the truth does not really matter. Eventually the truth catches up with you, and it caught up no better than when the member for Port Darwin made his statement to the House today. Some of the things the member for Port Darwin came out with I find astonishing.

Last year, there were 4051 assaults in the Northern Territory that involved alcohol - 51%; 11 alcohol-fuelled assaults every single day of the year. Alcohol-fuelled domestic violence increased by 8% Territory-wide in the last 12 months and, even more alarmingly, non-alcohol-related domestic violence increased as well. The fact is just those two figures alone show the BDR was not working.

The member for Port Darwin also mentioned that government had spent \$18m on alcohol policy and was set to spend up to \$75m - some rather large numbers. You realise that after that policy and \$18m, 54 drunks on average were taken into custody every single day, which is on top of the drunks who were perpetrating the assaults every

day. If they are combined, there were 65 alcohol-related custodies on average every single day the Banned Drinker Register operated. It makes a joke of the whole policy - very sad to see.

However, as I said, the former government operated with the view that perception is reality and the truth does not matter. The main thing to do is get out there saying the same thing over and over again, 'We are turning drunks off tap; we are stopping drunks', irrespective of the fact that every time you walk out your front door you see drunks on the streets, in the parks, causing all sorts of social problems. The perception, as far as Labor was concerned, was you just keep selling that same message over and over again, 'We are fixing things. We are investing in the Territory. We have the harshest alcohol laws in Australia'.

Well, they certainly were the harshest alcohol laws in Australia. They were probably the least effective alcohol laws I have ever seen anywhere, but they were certainly the harshest because they penalised every single person who turned up to a bottle shop by demanding that people hand over their driver's licence. Territorians were treated like criminals every time they fronted the bottle shop. Tourists and visitors to the Northern Territory were given a similar experience.

If you talk to the Tourism minister, he would tell you the feedback from the tourism industry was that people visiting the Northern Territory felt like they were being treated as criminals because they wanted to purchase alcohol from a bottle shop. That is a bad perception to be leaving in the minds of people who visit the Northern Territory. The last thing we want is people feeling they are sinister in the eyes of the government of the Northern Territory for turning up at a bottle shop.

That was the view of the previous government; it was all about perception, the truth did not matter. Providing practical solutions for a very real problem did not seem to matter whatsoever to the previous government.

I often scratch my head and wonder where we have gone wrong in this nation in relation to alcohol. It is certainly part of the Australian culture. Having a few drinks here and there is something the vast majority of Australians like to engage in - sometimes having a few more drinks than we probably should - but it is part of the Australian psyche to have a few drinks on a Friday night around the barbecue. It is not a bad thing for the vast majority of Australians and Northern Territorians.

It is interesting listening to debates about alcohol in Australia, particularly in the Northern Territory, because so much of our focus is on the supply of alcohol and looking at ways to limit, reduce, and

stop the supply of alcohol, as if that is magic panacea to all our problems.

I took a trip to Germany last Christmas with my two boys and we toured around Europe. I was most surprised in Germany because there are hardly any alcohol laws there at all. There is no such thing as a floor price. There are no such things as licensed places to sell alcohol; you can buy alcohol anywhere, at any supermarket, petrol station, or corner store - practically everywhere. As for floor prices, you might be interested to know that I bought a one litre bottle of Russian vodka, 60% alcohol, for 50¢. It was not bad vodka either. It carried a bit of a punch with it, but it was not necessarily that bad. You had to have plenty of orange juice with it ...

Mr Elferink: And he managed to get to Belgium on it.

Mr TOLLNER: Yes. A litre of 60% alcohol for 50¢!

Getting around Germany we did not notice any drunks in streets anywhere - nowhere near the level of homelessness you saw in Paris or other parts of Europe. Germany had very few - it was unnoticeable - drinking problems. The legal age to drink and buy alcohol - and often people drink illegally at a much younger age - in Germany is 16. You can buy beer and wine as a 16-year-old. If you want to buy hard liquor as they call it - spirits as we would call it - you have to wait until you are 18. Pretty well all Germans live with alcohol every day of their lives, do not abuse alcohol, and tend to have very few social problems emanating from alcohol.

The few social problems they do have, oddly enough - I was visiting a cousin in Munich and he said, 'Just do not tell anyone around here that you are Australian. I asked why and he said, 'People in Munich do not like Australians, they do not like the Irish either', because every October the place fills up with Australians and Irish who only turn up for one reason and that is to get seriously drunk, and it looks disgusting. The locals do not like the fact people come to their city with one purpose in mind; that is, to get violently drunk'.

I find it interesting in the Northern Territory, a completely different culture, we are looking at all means and measures to reduce the supply of alcohol as a panacea to drinking problems. I do not necessarily believe it is. At times it flies contrary to all those things we try to promote in the Northern Territory - the laid back casual lifestyle, a place of freedom where you can do things you cannot do in any other part of Australia; the lifestyle we so value.

Tourists should be able to get a drink and enjoy the nightlife of Mitchell Street without the fear of being accosted by violent drunks or people on drugs. We should value things in the Northern Territory and encourage responsible drinking. People should be encouraged to live responsibly with alcohol rather than trying to ban alcohol itself.

That takes me to the views and policies of the Country Liberals and this government in relation to alcohol. These things have shaped my view about how we need to deal with alcohol. The former government was obsessed with perception over reality. We need to live in a free society where people can make decisions and take responsibility for themselves. That is why our government is focusing on the problem.

The problem, in this case, is not alcohol, it is the alcoholic - the drunk; the person who is so far gone they have lost all sense of reality, responsibility, and of their role in our community. Those people are suffering from a serious illness and we need to treat them as such. We have laws in the Northern Territory to deal with petrol sniffers. We have laws in the Northern Territory to deal with mentally ill patients who are violent. We treat them as human beings, as people who need help not punishment.

The view of this government is we have a whole swag of people on our streets and in our communities who need help. They are a problem in our community. I do not know of too many Territorians who welcome the sight of drunks in our streets, in our parks, on our beaches and in the other public places. Most Territorians, whether they are Indigenous, were born here and have lived here all their lives, or have turned up in the last couple of months to do some part-time or temporary job and then want to leave, do not like seeing drunks on our street.

It is our view to embark on a wide-ranging rehabilitation program across the Northern Territory, from sobering-up shelters, to voluntary rehabilitation centres, to mandatory rehabilitation for those people who have lost complete control, and drying out and withdrawal services for those people who are so far gone they need doctors and clinicians to assist in their withdrawal from alcohol. We also need social workers and others who will assist people's transition back into the community once they have been through rehabilitation, which is a crucial part of the whole proposal. No matter how much time and effort we go to as a government, or how much time and effort an alcoholic puts into dealing with their addiction, they will need help. They will need enormous help to transition back into the community after coming through a rehabilitation program. People need to reconnect with their families, they need jobs, they need a meaningful

life to lead, and that transition back into the community is so incredibly important.

The other thing I am heartened by is that we have a vibrant NGO sector in the Northern Territory which deals with alcohol addiction. Some work better than others, some are much more comprehensive than others, some provide limited services, but the fact is, we have an enormous range of NGOs in the Northern Territory which are in the rehabilitation space, providing services assisting drunks. This government, and I, as Alcohol Policy minister, are very excited there are people who are keen to help with this work of assisting and getting drunks off the grog and back into a normal, decent life in our community.

Madam Speaker, again, I say thank you to the member for Port Darwin for bringing forward this very important statement. It is important that members understand the correlation between alcohol and crime, and the effects crime is having on the community. I am thrilled with the detailed work the member for Port Darwin has done in digging up some of these statistics and the costs involved in putting this proposal together.

Mr ELFERINK (Attorney-General and Justice): Goodness gracious, Madam Speaker, I am grateful for one thing; that this statement has caused so many to get to their feet in this House. Clearly, it represents the truth of this matter which is, this is the most pressing issue we have faced for a long time.

I do not intend to engage in a bashing up session of the members opposite because, quite frankly, for the most part, they genuinely care about this too. That was what the Banned Drinker Register was about etcetera. I just do not believe the Banned Drinker Register passed muster. I heard what the member for Nelson had to say about giving it a go, and that it had to last a bit longer. No, not at the cost at which it was running.

However, it did expose a couple of differences here. I pick up, particularly, the member for Casuarina's comments, where he said - and I am close to quoting, 'The rights of the community exceed the rights of the individual'. That is a statement of left wing politics because on this side of the House we believe the rights of the individual should, as far as possible, be protected by our system. There are philosophical tracts built on this issue. Marx and Engels have touched on it. Jean-Jacques Rousseau touched on it at length in *The Social Contract*.

This is about the social contract we have. The state should protect the rights of the people who live under the care and protection of that state but only to the extent where the intrusion on those individual freedoms are as limited as they possibly

could be. The idea of the social contract is that every individual in a community gives away a certain amount of their freedom for the good order of that state. The more the state demands in providing care, protection - whatever you want to call it - the more freedom is given away by every individual who lives under the management of that state. I do not believe that the *carte blanche*, utilitarian assertion that the rights of the many outweigh the rights of the few is an acceptable way of approach. I am not a great fan of Peter Singer's world view nor of utilitarianism as a general principal; it has its various problems. However, I will go into abstract political philosophy for the sake of this debate.

The issue I want to touch on is the suggestion by members opposite that, somehow, we are withdrawing everything to do with any form of restraint on alcohol. Nonsense. We are not preparing to repeal the *Liquor Act*, proposing vending machines for cheap Russian vodka in our Aboriginal communities; or an axing or removal of all alcohol restrictions so it is sold in canteens at primary schools. That is just errant nonsense. Of course, there will be restrictions in place; that is what the *Liquor Act* does. That is what licensing does etcetera. The fact is, though, that is an attempt to deal with the supply side of liquor.

The demand side of liquor, of course, is what the Banned Drinker Register was about. That was about trying to prevent people purchasing liquor. The problem was the demand controls which were placed in force by the former government were so feeble as to be tissue thin, which meant even a drunken moron could find a way to sidestep the government's laws and gain more liquor to get even drunker still - and that is precisely what was happening. Mr 117 times, the captain of the chairman's lounge at the frequent flyer club, was a point in case. He managed to sidestep the government's rules, as far as we know, 114 times after becoming a banned drinker.

Therefore, the rules for their value and their imposition were negligible; also in how much money we spent on it - \$50 000 for every saved apprehension. Do you know what? That is just not good value; let us do something else with the money. If you are going to do this stuff, do it right.

We also want to deal with the demand side of the equation which is why I have already said publicly and to the media, there are certain elements of the government's former legislation that I would not mind retaining. The member for Barkly mentioned it. He talked about income management as a result of the tribunal and those sorts of things. The reason they passed with a tick from me is because that component of the legislation deals with the conduct of the individual who is misbehaving. That component of the

legislation says, 'You are a problem, Sunshine; we will intervene in the way you behave'. I want to look at keeping that because it might well be part of a useful tool we can take into the future. The Banned Drinker Register? Nonsense, it just did not work.

However, I want to touch on what is at the core of some of the criticisms opposite, and explain the philosophy behind the habitual drunks policy so members of this House can understand why the issue of criminalisation is within our contemplation. If someone gets so drunk so often they are arrested by the police regularly, then I suggest you have a person who is such a sick puppy the process by which they end up in mandatory rehabilitation will not make a great deal of difference to them, whether it is criminalised or otherwise.

The process which had been described was a policy I wrote in about 2005, which is the process of them coming before a tribunal; the tribunal makes an order; they then go out and they breach the order; the offence is then created for breaching the order; then they are dealt with through the normal criminal justice system. The reason I wrote that policy all those years ago - I believe I wrote it for Denis Burke originally - in that fashion was because I was conscious of the idea of trying to apprehend people and take them into custody without any form of judicial review. I was trying to look after the rights of what a civilised western society would find acceptable.

By creating an offence it went to a court, so there was someone outside the executive arm of government reviewing what was happening. I presumed, under the principles of *habeas corpus*, when the state went around arresting people and removing their liberty, there should be some form of judicial review and oversight of that process. Hence, the creation of the offence. I would have been unhappy with myself if I had crafted the policy which had sought to simply apprehend people and take them into custody without any form of oversight.

I have had cause to visit these principles again in more recent times. The criminalisation of drunks is not at the heart of my concerns; it was merely a vehicle to get people off the streets and into some form of health intervention. Therefore, I created a system of steps in which there was judicial oversight and involvement. When the person went through the process and was finally convicted, they were placed into custody and, then, mandatory rehabilitation.

However, this generates a couple of threshold questions. The first threshold question in my policy, and the policy that was originally designed, was the person was sentenced as a part of the

mandatory sentence to a term of imprisonment in a mandatory rehabilitation environment - that was the original idea. In more recent times, I revisited that idea and it occurred to me it was quite possible to bond these people, as a result of their conviction, to reside in a mandatory rehabilitation environment and to obey all of the lawful and reasonable directions of the person in charge of that. That would have changed the policy only in a small way because under the original system they would have been prisoners, which means if they played up it was just an administrative solution.

The second process I was thinking about is bonding these people out of the court and, if they did not comply with the bond, they ended up back in the court and the court could deal with them. That was a threshold issue I was prepared to look at in how this worked, because all I and the Country Liberals wanted to do was get these people out of circulation and into some form of restraint so the health outcome could be brought to bear upon them.

In more recent times, I have had a chance to revisit my original concerns about judicial oversight. The preliminary advice I have received is there may be a process available to the government by which you sidestep the court system altogether because you are dealing with this as a health outcome from the outset. That would mean we do not have to go down the criminal justice system, and that suits me. I would not mind if we did not have to go through the criminal justice system, but I am very concerned there is some third party oversight of the policy - preferably judicial.

If that can be structured as a health issue from the outset, with a form of judicial oversight as exists in other forms of legislation - particularly mental health legislation - then that would have the potential to save millions of dollars and still achieve the two outcomes which I would have expected to occur from the outset. These are the two outcomes: (1) that these people are removed from our parks, gardens and community places because they are generally unpleasant but, occasionally, a danger to the community at large as well as to themselves; and (2) they are a danger to themselves and need, as the Minister for Health described, a medical outcome. That is what I have always argued for: use the judicial system; medical outcome. If a medical process can be achieved to take it from point A to point B, I would be happy.

If the advice confirms what I now suspect is possible and still has some third party oversight, there might be a much smoother system available to government to achieve that outcome without criminalisation. The member for Nelson touched

on it last week when he talked about one of the legislative instruments. If that can be achieved so much the better because it is not about demonising these people, it is about a medical outcome and getting these people out of circulation in the community. If that can be achieved, the policy would be adjusted and there would be no criminalisation of the process.

However, I am not afraid to go down the path of criminalisation if that is what it takes to achieve these outcomes. Criminalisation, for me, is nothing more than a means to an end; it is not an end in its own right. If the means to an end can be achieved by another way, so much the better. I place that on the record.

I will keep this House up to date as to the results of that legal research. If it can be done, it would be appropriate that government goes down that path. As long as I am comfortable, and members of government can be reassured there will be a sufficient third party oversighting body to protect the human rights of the people we are talking about, which was the original intent of going through the criminal justice system, then members on this side of the House, I suspect, would be satisfied.

I thank all honourable members for their statements. I particularly thank the member for Nhulunbuy for reading the statement and suggesting I might have been the author. I have a small confession to make. I wrote about half of it, but much of it was provided by other people. I would never walk into this House and claim any words I utter to be anyone else's but my own. I have an influence over my own statements because this is about having an opinion, and we are the lucky few who are paid to have an opinion.

I also pick up on the point from the member for Nhulunbuy. I believe she was trying to barb me with, 'He thinks he is right all the time'. I do not want to sound condescending - it will probably come out that way - but everyone in this room thinks they are right. We would not pursue our belief systems if we did not think they were right. I am not afraid to say I think I am right. It is not much of a policy approach to walk into parliament and say, 'Madam Speaker, I pursue this policy but I am not sure if I am right about it; I could be wrong'. It is not very convincing. I am not afraid to stand up and say I believe I am right about these things. I will continue to do that and to pursue the things I believe to be right.

I thank all honourable members for this debate. Everyone who has contributed to this debate has done so with an intention to impress upon the government their particular views. It is listened to. If the opposition's major objection to this policy is criminalisation, there may be a solution to that. I

would love to walk out of this parliament at some point in the near future and have the support of members opposite who say criminalisation is the issue which is out of the way, and I hope we can achieve that and get support. If not strident opposition, at least the opposition is in a position where it can say it understands what we are trying to do.

When I see these people in our parks and gardens, these are sick people; they are a danger to themselves and the community. They continue to be there in ever-increasing numbers, and the concentration at the extreme end of this problem is profound. If we remove just 70 individuals from the Northern Territory we will reduce the number of apprehensions by nearly 15% - 70 individuals and we will drop 2300 apprehensions from the 20 000 annual apprehensions. It is a rough figure; it is about a 10% to 15% fall in apprehensions. That is worth doing!

If we are able to accommodate a few hundred of these people we may go so far as to halve the number of those apprehensions. Where would you expect to find the drop in numbers? You would expect to find it in presentations at the hospital. The drawdown on emergency services, including ongoing hospital treatment, would substantially reduce. There would be a substantial contraction in the number of serious assaults in our community, because these drunks are often the people who stab each other, bludgeon each other over the head with blunt instruments, and hurt each other in their drunken madness. I would expect to find results in positive declines in the area of violent assaults.

The other place I would expect to see a serious decline is in the number of homicides. I am not talking about murders, I am talking about homicides; essentially, manslaughters. These are the stabbings we invariably see, particularly in Alice Springs. If we have the core of the Alice Springs hardcore drinkers out of circulation and in some sort of treatment, you will be removing the core of the people stabbing each other, particularly the stabbings in the legs which invariably hit the femoral artery and people bleed to death ...

Mr STYLES: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Pursuant to Standing Order 77, I move an extension of time for the member.

Motion agreed to.

Mr ELFERINK: I thank honourable members.

I would expect to see changes, even if we take a few hundred of these people out of circulation. Imagine if we could lessen the number of doctors and nurses we have in A&E in Alice Springs for

want of work. Imagine if we could lessen the work of public prosecutions in Alice Springs because fewer people stabbed each other.

We are targeting the people who demand liquor to pursue their madness. We are not talking about the people who buy a bottle of wine or a carton of beer and go home and get absolutely s-faced in front of the football, and then go to sleep. We are talking about the drunks who turn up in our parks and gardens and who are an offence to us, as well as, and more particularly, an offence to themselves. That is why we are targeting those individuals who continue to present. We are talking about taking them out of circulation. Couple that with a change to federal government policy in the way welfare is paid to individuals like this, and you might get somewhere because you are then focusing entirely on the individuals involved.

I look forward to a day - this is my dream - when there can be a vending machine for alcohol in the middle of the Alice Springs Todd Mall because it does not get kicked to pieces and, occasionally, someone goes and buys some alcohol out of the vending machine because alcohol is no longer a massive problem in our community. You find them in Tokyo subways. You can buy a beer in a Tokyo subway from a vending machine. I would like alcohol to become that benign in our community. That is what I would like.

I am not so naive as to say that will happen; of course it will not happen. But, at least if we can attack demand where it is most destructive, and focus the \$18m government has dedicated to this cause on those individuals, then add the other \$75m on the other end of it and say we are going to spend that not on policing the whole community, but just you, you, and you because of the way you conduct yourselves, that would be a much more targeted use of resources than scattering \$18m around the traps and hope some of it lands on the people you want it to.

That is the difference between the previous government's policy and our policy. If the opposition's problem is criminalisation, there may be a solution to that. I am happy to work with members opposite because I do not want to make this some massive political brawl between the CLP and the ALP. I want to make this a system which intervenes where it has to intervene, and that is where the changes are made.

If we take these people out of commission for three months at a time and release them after three months, some of them will go straight back to their desired addictions. They will find, when the pressure on them becomes so great, they will be sick and tired of being harassed, if you like, by the state to sober up. I do not mind the idea, quite

frankly, of people getting sick and tired of being sick and tired, which is the result of their behaviour. When they get to the point when they are sick and tired of being sick and tired, that is when you can bring about changes.

Therefore, I am optimistic about this policy. I did not come into this place wanting to start a fight; I do not believe I have. The purpose of this statement was to outline the problem I saw. The purpose of this statement was to outline the reason I did not believe the Banned Drinker Register was working. The prime purpose of this statement was to leave a comma rather than a full stop at the end of the statement.

Madam Speaker, this statement does not offer a solution at this stage. Our policy offers a substantially greater solution than anything which has been offered before. This statement finishes with the idea of 'watch this space'. Watch this space, see what we can do with this policy and, at the other end of it, if we save lives and make people's lives better, then this will be a policy worth pursuing. The reason there is a comma at the end of it is there is more to come.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Ms ANDERSON (Namatjira): Madam Speaker, tonight I pass on my condolences to people in my electorate of Kintore, Mt Liebig, Papunya, Haasts Bluff and Hermannsburg at their sad losses. We had lots of old people pass away recently. I send my condolences to Martha and the McDonald family for the loss of Old Snowy; to Roderick for the loss of Terry and Heather; and to Papunya and my family for the loss of my uncle, Willy Nakambala. I will talk about the great work these people have done in their lives.

I grew up watching these people working in the cattle industry. They were really great examples to young Aboriginal people growing up in remote Aboriginal communities. People like Old Snowy and Terry worked on stations at Derwent, Narwietooma, Mt Wedge, and Haasts Bluff before Haasts Bluff became a settlement. They really took advantage of the employment opportunities they had seen. The ability of these old people to communicate in English and with non-Indigenous people came from the campfires around the station they worked in with non-Indigenous stockmen. That is the great strength these old people had.

I will quickly say something about my old uncle. He was a patrol officer who used to work in the old welfare days carting mail from Alice Springs to Papunya. Often, when I was going to school in Alice Springs I would get inside that patrol car when he was doing the mail run to Papunya to run away and go back home because I was homesick. He would take me, and the next day, they would be there picking me up again. He was one hell of a bloke. He really showed people like me that you can have enjoyment and real employment. He lived at Amoonguna but worked in the Western Desert area before the Eastern Plenty was made, because there were more stations at that time. He travelled around places such as Papunya, Haasts Bluff, and Yuendumu.

It is very sad to lose great people, but they had their life and they brought many good things to remote Aboriginal communities. These are the people I looked up to, just like my sister from Mt Liebig, Heather Nampajimpa McDonald. She used to work at the clinic, the bakers and, as kids going into the kitchen, we used to see her preparing the breakfast. They were really great role models for us growing up in remote Aboriginal communities. They were concerned about our security but, at the same time, they enforced responsibility for us as children to go to school. They showed leadership through having employment and participating in the opportunities which were given to them in remote communities.

Madam Speaker, I want the family to remember these good people for the good things they have done. Most of them were in their 60s, 70s and, as they say in cricket, they had a good innings. It is really lovely to have known these people and to have had a relationship with them.

Ms LEE (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I make an announcement about one of the communities in my electorate for its achievements. This is from Aminjarrinja Enterprises Aboriginal Corporation arm of GEMCO which is owned and operated by the traditional owners of Umbakumba, Groote Eylandt.

What an achievement they have reached in the past 12 months, together with the Indigenous trainees in programs they have completed within the budget. During the period of SIHIP, Aminjarrinja Enterprises also provided job opportunities for the local people: site clearing, footings, slabs, plumbing, and painting for new houses, together with patching and pouring concrete. In their spare time, they said they built four-bedroom houses at 4 Mile Outstation; upgraded facilities; provided the traffic controller on Umbakumba Road; worked on the guide posts; rehabilitated the gravel pits; and utilised the unwanted fill to rehabilitate the old Umbakumba rubbish dump.

Nothing like this has ever been done in any other communities in the Northern Territory. They have a skilled work team ready to tackle any tasks. Aminjarrinja Enterprises is owned by the people of Umbakumba. It is the largest employer of Indigenous people in Umbakumba, offering opportunities to those who wish to work. It is proactive in establishing a future for its people to ensure there will be opportunities after mining.

It has some exciting projects under way and completed, and the future for many years ahead will be secure. It is the current contractor for the Northern Territory government in carpentry, plumbing, electrical, refrigeration, and does work in Umbakumba, Angurugu, Milyakburra, Alyangula, and Numbulwar. It also does the Territory Housing maintenance in Umbakumba, Angurugu, Milyakburra through Regency. It is also the contractor for the East Arnhem Shire and Roper Gulf Shire Councils. It owns and operates the Starbourside Café in Alyangula; manages the Groote Eylandt Car Rentals for Arrenkya Aboriginal Corporation; operates the mechanical workshop in Angurugu; manages the dry tip for GEMCO; does the rubbish collection for GEMCO in Alyangula and for East Arnhem Shire Council in Angurugu; and has a current contract to batch and pour the concrete for the D2 expansion project. Also, the trepang project in Umbakumba has been completed and will now have an additional 10 women working full-time. They have construction camps in Umbakumba and Milyakburra for their employees. They also have a number of houses on Groote Eylandt for the staff.

Aminjarrinja was the second Indigenous organisation in the Northern Territory to achieve the Commonwealth Occupational Health Certificate, and also has Northern Territory CAL accreditation, and is a GEMCO contracting partner. These are exciting times for Umbakumba, and the directors of Aminjarrinja Enterprises can be proud of the achievements to date, with even more to come. Not bad for an association which started with very little and built businesses it can afford today. That information was from the Executive Director, Desmond Bara who is one of the locals.

In regard to the trepang, there are eight ladies. Two men have commenced training in Certificate II in Food Processing being delivered by the (inaudible) in Darwin. Grant Roebuck is delivering the training over a two week period together with Les Clarke, fishing coordinator.

The first day involved theory and occupational health and safety. Grant is well known to Groote Eylandt and Umbakumba. The last two days saw the commencement of their first trepang harvest serviced by Tasmanian Seafood. The second week was learning how to process fish, which included filleting, skinning and preparing the

products for market. Les, Archie, Elvis and Grant went netting and caught over 350 kg of mullet to use in this process. The remaining days saw trepang being harvested and prepared for market.

Madam Speaker, once training has been completed, the ladies will commence full-time employment. Training funds were provided by DB, Job Shop and Aminjarrinja. These are exciting times for the people of Umbakumba as business ventures such as this will ensure continued long-term employment for their people on Groote Eylandt. I thank the whole lot of them, the staff, the executive directors and the people involved in this project

Mr VOWLES (Johnston): Madam Speaker, tonight I wish to speak on the decision of the government to defer the 2013 Arafura Games. The iconic Arafura Games, formed in 1991 and originally known as the Arafura Sports Festival, has grown into one of the biggest sporting events in the Asia-Pacific region and the sporting calendar. Not only is it a world-class sporting event, it is a sharing of cultures and of knowledge for our developing sporting neighbours. It is showcased in the world-class facilities that have been invested in, such as the \$4.2m upgrade to the Marrara athletics track to international Olympic standard by the former Labor government. It is an opportunity for our aspiring local athletes to compete against national and international standard competition in their own back yard.

Everyone enjoys attending the games. The proof is the nightly packed Marrara indoor stadium to watch sepak takraw, the highly-skilled and enjoyable Malaysia versus Thailand doubles final, or trying to find a spot every night to watch the world-class boxing on show. It was so popular. Where else do you get to sit on the grass watching world-class boxing for free? Nowhere. That is one of the beauties of the Arafura Games.

Our new Chief Minister said the Arafura Games is a joke. Tell that to the 11 000 or more volunteers who have always worked hard to make our games a premier event, or to thousands of families and children looking forward to the games and the hard-working staff of the Department of Sport and Recreation. What about the tourism industry which looks forward to the business the games bring to the Territory?

It was only last night the Minister for Tourism stood in front of 100 tourism operators stating he will work with them to entice more business for them. A day later and his decision will directly impact on them taking over 2100 people out of the market. The tourism industry has already stated the decision will seriously impact on the industry. We will hear more about that.

The Department of Sport and Recreation staff work tirelessly to provide a well-organised, professional, successful and admired event attended by countries from all over the world. The 2011 games were recognised as the best games ever, with over 2100 athletes from 39 countries. What an achievement by everyone involved.

This decision to scrap the Arafura Games is very embarrassing for the Northern Territory, especially on the back of the Chief Minister yesterday talking up his plans for engagement with our Asian neighbours - our Arafura Games friends across the Arafura Sea and beyond in countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Chinese Taipei, South Korea, North Korea, Japan, and the Philippines just to name a few who participate in the games. I have already received many e-mails from some of those country delegates, extremely disappointed with the decision and asking me to fight for the decision to be reversed.

The Australian Paralympic Committee will also be very disappointed with this decision. The committee uses the games as a qualifying tournament for the Australian Paralympics team, as do other countries sending athletes from as far away as France.

The Chief Minister said the Arafura Games is a joke. I say this decision is a joke which adds to the already growing list of bungles by the Sport and Tourism minister and this new CLP government. One of the Chief Minister's excuses is the previous Labor government mismanaged the games, which is completely untrue. There is no evidence to back these claims and, if you left it to the experts, the people who know and who run the games, the 2013 Arafura Games would have been another successful and memorable games.

The Minister for Sport and Recreation has stated the games cost around \$3.5m to run. I question that figure, but the benefits to the Territory, and to local business in particular, is in excess of \$5m into the NT economy. The previous Labor government strongly supported the Arafura Games and recognised the widespread benefits the games have for Territory athletes, volunteers, our relationship with Asia, and the huge boost to the local economy over the week-long event.

Many Territorians and athletes all over the world have been training hard for next year's games and will be completely shattered by today's cutthroat decision by the CLP. I mentioned the huge volunteer workforce for the games - over 1100 Territorians donating their time and efforts to assist in making the games a great experience for everyone. Many people have contacted me today absolutely disgusted with this decision. I will read out, in part, one of the many e-mails I have been

sent today by a couple who volunteer for the games:

We were stunned to hear of Terry Mills' announcement. What basis does he have to make that statement? Will you be asking for evidence of this? I think he needs to explain himself further, don't you? We have volunteered for several games and we never saw evidence of this 'joke of a games'. All of us involved need to know why he has made this statement. A lot of people will be feeling shattered as so much time and effort goes into the event, and to be told we're a joke is very demoralising.

Chief Minister and Minister for Sport and Recreation, there is a response to your decision.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to this government answering to the people, the sporting organisations, the participating countries, all the volunteers, and the local tourism industry, justifying why it cancelled the iconic Arafura Games. It is a sad day for all Territorians, and I urge you, on behalf of all Territorians, to change your decision.

Ms LAWRIE (Karama): Madam Speaker, I draw the House's attention to a collection of five statements tabled yesterday by the Attorney-General about the conduct and language of the member for Daly at the Palumpa polling booth on 24 August this year. These statements were all produced by the member for Daly's campaign workers, two of whom are family.

Upon examination of these statements two things are clear. The first is the statements are contradictory of one another. In one statement made by the member for Daly's son, it is claimed that on the morning of 24 August the member for Daly arrived at Palumpa and promptly left for Wadeye before the polling booth had opened. This would seemingly contradict the victim's account of what happened. However, two of the other statements - sworn statutory declarations - clearly put the member for Daly at the polling booth after it had opened at 10 am, putting the member for Daly well within the vicinity of the victim. These statements both say the member for Daly was involved in an exchange with the victim within the vicinity of the booth after it had opened. One statement even says there were voters within earshot.

I also point out another factual error; the Palumpa booth did not open at 10 am, but at 8.30 am. One simply needs to consult the NTEC's polling schedule to discover this.

All five men making these statements claim to have been in close proximity and apparently were

watching every move of the member for Daly. How could they get all of this so wrong?

The statements are also contradictory in relation to what the member for Daly allegedly said. One statement claimed that the member for Daly said to the victim, 'yeah, yeah, and yeah right', and no more was spoken between Higgins and the victim. In stark contrast, another of these statements reports the member for Daly saying, 'You are talking shit'. The witness is sure of this because, 'I was looking directly at Gary at this time'. Both statements claim what they heard was all the member for Daly said, yet they claimed to have heard two entirely different things. These inconsistencies are essential to this matter.

Whether or not the member for Daly was in the polling booth during voting is a critical factor. His campaign team cannot even agree on his whereabouts, nor can they agree on what he said. I also note the author of one of these statements claims to have been verbally abused by the victim at Daly River booth. I have two issues with this.

First, given the massive inconsistencies between these statements - and they are massive - it is difficult for me to find any credibility within them. Second, even if this accusation against the victim is true - and I do not think it is - why is it relevant? Is the author saying the member for Daly was provoked into saying what he said at Palumpa? Nothing can excuse the disgusting and vile language used by the member for Daly at Palumpa.

The issue I have is it is apparent from these statements that they stand as a calculated attempt by the member for Daly's campaign team and family to bully the victim to the point that she is too scared to pursue the case against the member for Daly.

The Attorney-General has participated in this by tabling these statements in parliament. The inconsistencies between the statements, as well as their accusatory nature, suggest they are not based on fact or accurate recollections, but are an attempt to discredit the victim. It suggests they are predicated on the basis of aggression towards the victim. They recount inconsistent and irrelevant recollections which put the victim on trial.

How can five statements, supposedly designed to defend the member for Daly, be so inconsistent? How can we be expected to take them seriously? Why is what the victim said at Daly River polling booth relevant to the accusations made against the member for Daly at Palumpa even remotely relevant? She is not on trial, is accused of nothing, and is not a member of parliament.

The member for Daly is a member of this House and, therefore, such disgusting and vile behaviour is not acceptable. The Chief Minister nominated the member for Daly to hold high office in this House, the important office of Deputy Speaker. His nomination was supported by the Chief Minister, despite the member for Blain having read the vile and grossly offensive comments. This matter will not rest. The member for Daly will be brought to account for his vile and grossly offensive comments, and the Chief Minister needs to explain to Territorians why he continues to support the member for Daly.

This is also about the way we are seen by others in the Territory and throughout our nation. Is this a House of parliament where normal standards do not apply? The Chief Minister needs to give some thought and comment to how this reflects on him, his government, and this parliament.

Madam Speaker, the member for Port Darwin has shown he is happy to support the member for Daly and went so far as to table inconsistent statutory declarations from the Higgins team. Why?

Ms FINOCCHIARO (Drysdale): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I inform the House of the abundance of programs and activities for senior Territorians in Palmerston. I first stumbled upon the hidden gem that is Palmerston seniors during the 2012 general election campaign. I refer to the Palmerston seniors as the hidden gem, as they have a robust and healthy network full of fun and laughter, which those of us who have not yet achieved the third age are often unaware of. I must say an enormous thank you to Palmerston seniors who have welcomed me to their clubs, groups, associations and gatherings with open arms, and allow me to share in their games and activities they so often enjoy. A special thank you goes to the University of the Third Age in Palmerston, which gave me the great honour of being their patron. Two weeks ago, while at the Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club it occurred to me the hard work of a few is enjoyed by so many in our community, and the work those few do could not be replicated by governments or councils.

I ask that you indulge me in reading one week's worth of activities in Palmerston for senior Territorians, bearing in mind I may have missed something. On Mondays, we have a choice of Busy Bees 5¢ Bingo, seniors' yoga, early morning walks, Heart Foundation walks and digital literacy classes. On Tuesday, there is any range of activities including the Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club, the Joy Anderson art group, Weight Watchers, Men's Shed, early morning walks, University of the Third Age, Heart Foundation walks, seniors' Tai Chi, morning tea at Cazalys for seniors, morning tea at Oasis Donut King for seniors, digital literacy classes and, of course, it is

seniors discount day at CMAX Cinema. On Wednesday, we have Groovy Grans, senior scooters, Senior Songsters, Men's Shed, indoor puk croquet in the Wet Season, early morning walks, digital literacy and bingo. On Thursday, we have carpet bowls, seniors Tai Chi, Simply Crafts, bridge, Heart Foundation walks, digital literacy classes and, again, it is seniors discount day at CMAX Cinema. On Friday, we have carpet bowls - and that is about it for Fridays because it is a rest. On Saturday, there is Memorabilia Mosaics and, again, it is \$8 tickets at CMAX Cinema. Sunday has general art followed by more cinema.

This list is by no means exhaustive, although if I were to undertake even half of those activities in a week I would certainly be exhausted. In recent weeks, Palmerston seniors have also been involved in the creation of a Palmerston Seniors Computer Club, distinct from that of the Darwin Seniors Computer Club which was brought about by seniors for seniors.

I also attended a meeting of Palmerston seniors where the Palmerston Combined PROBUS Club was created, and 25 members signed up for the PCBC that day. The creation of both of these organisations shows the insatiable appetite of our seniors, the desire to stay connected post-retirement, and their continuing valuable contribution to our community.

You are, no doubt, aware last week was Veterans Health Week. On Tuesday, 23 October, the Palmerston 50+ Tuesday Club arranged, in conjunction with the Department of Veterans Affairs, a morning tea and lunch with entertainment at the Gray Community Hall, which was attended by 57 people. The purpose of this event was to make contact with any veterans and senior citizens in our area who would like to take part in activities which will enhance their health and wellbeing. It incorporated the schools, the Groovy Grans line dancing, an organ player, a quiz, and games.

Palmerston and Rural Area Seniors Week was held between 12 and 19 August this year. The opening ceremony was at Woodroffe Primary School and the theme was Territorian Australiana. It was a tremendous success and I was very pleased to have helped the community clear the tables and assist with the dessert delivery and other bits and pieces.

Some of the activities held that week included morning tea at the Palmerston golf club, a movie at CMAX Cinema, a guided tour of Robertson Barracks, a trip to the Adelaide River War Memorial and Railway Museum, a tour of HMAS *Coonawarra*, topped off with a motorbike ride around Marlow's Lagoon thanks to the Ulysses Motorcycle Club.

I am very much looking forward to the Melbourne Cup this year because I have been invited to attend nothing other than a Palmerston seniors' hermit crab race. Yes, it is true. A lovely woman I will not name is tasked each year with heading out to Casuarina Beach to collect a few hermit crabs after which they are painted, numbered and prepped ready for the big race. I am very excited about this event and can only imagine how much fun it will be.

I congratulate the wonderful volunteers we have in Palmerston who help put all of these activities together. Well done and keep up the extraordinary contribution you make to our community and the lives to all of our seniors.

I also acknowledge the dedication of Drysdale resident, Narelle Stewart, whose bubbly personality, persistence and compassion made the 2012 Palmerston Markets a great success. Narelle Stewart is a Christian woman who came to our great Territory because her husband was on rotation to Darwin as a pastor at the Hope City Church, Palmerston. Narelle has a wonderful gaggle of four children, three girls and one very cute little boy, all of whom are respectful, helpful and a pleasure to be around.

I first met Narelle when I was the Country Liberal candidate for Drysdale in the 2012 general election manning the Country Liberals' stand at the Palmerston Markets. At that time, Narelle was a Palmerston Markets committee member and I felt an immediate connection with her. It was Narelle who got me more involved with the Palmerston Markets, and for that I am very grateful. I had the absolute pleasure of being master of ceremonies for many of the Palmerston talent quests heats and finals held over the course of the Dry Season, and was the master of ceremonies at last week's Friday night grand finale.

This year the Palmerston Market Committee faced some difficult times with the turnover of committee members and other restrictions. Despite these difficulties, Narelle rose to the challenge and took on a strong leadership role on that committee. She is now the Acting Market Coordinator. Narelle has made a tremendous contribution to the culture of the Palmerston Markets and the involvement of the broader Palmerston community, particularly children, in market festivities.

Narelle understands the importance of family and is a model citizen and community representative. She organised an amazing final night at the markets which had continuous acts for children and families from about 5.30 pm right through to 9 pm. There was a clown, an acrobat, Dora and Diego, Hector the Cat, the Palmerston Library mascot, The KAT, a dress up competition and

dancing, amongst other things. The lawns in Goyder Square were full of buzzing children and happy families for the entire night. That is a tribute to her commitment to delivering quality entertainment and community engagement in Palmerston.

Madam Speaker, I am deeply saddened that Palmerston will lose Narelle in the coming weeks as her family is relocating to Katherine where her husband will be pastor of the new church in that region. Narelle, your contribution is noted by all and your energy is inspiring. I wish you and your lovely family the best of luck with the future and your new endeavour. I am sure my colleague, the member for Katherine, will bump into you very soon. I hope you inject as much love into your new community as you did ours. You will be sorely missed.

Ms WALKER (Nhulunbuy): Madam Speaker, I place on the record my appreciation of the Territory's teachers and school support staff, and the amazing work they do in our schools to support our kids to educate and grow the next generation of our Territorians.

With World Teachers' Day last Friday, I was pleased to acknowledge the efforts of schools in my electorate and did a run around to the four Nhulunbuy schools - Nhulunbuy primary, Nhulunbuy high, Nhulunbuy preschool, Nhulunbuy Christian College, as well as Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School to deliver celebratory cakes to each staff room in time for morning tea. I thank Estelle Carter from Peninsula Bakery who prepared the cake - top job on a big order. Well done, Estelle. Only the daughter of Henry Gray, as Estelle is, could understand how important these cakes were.

I was delighted to arrive at Yirrkala Homelands School in time for the morning tea break and catch up with staff there. I pay particular tribute to our teachers who work on homelands, including the homeland learning centres they travel to each week away from their own families, camping out at schools. Thankfully, this is changing for some of the Laynha and Marthakal homelands with the building of teacher accommodation. However, many still camp in their swags and have limited access to amenities. Facilities for teachers at all homelands and outstation schools around the Territory are so important. I trust the new government takes this important need for infrastructure on board.

I also organised cakes to be delivered to the 80 staff at Shepherdson College, Galiwinku on Elcho Island. In the absence of a bakery there, I thank the Arnhem Land Progress Association store for delivering those cakes for me. The fact they accidentally delivered them a week early was not

a problem thanks to the realisation at the school's reception desk that World Teachers' Day was a week away, and promptly popped them in the freezer. All I can say is thank goodness for front office staff who always know what is going on. I applaud front office ladies, no matter which school they are in. They are the first point of contact and are, invariably, a certain breed of efficiency, knowledge and resourcefulness.

My drop in to Nhulunbuy High School last Friday was in the midst of the traditional Year 12 muck up day. I was impressed by some of their humorous and clever pranks, including a tribute to their English teacher over the years and author George Orwell with the set up of a real, live animal farm in the English block. Teachers were greeted by a pig, a turkey and a few chickens for good measure in a neatly constructed pen on a solid covering of plastic on the carpet - one of the more unusual pranks I have seen or heard of over the years.

I attended the celebration of World Teachers' Day at Gove Golf Club that afternoon along with 80 or so school staff. I was pleased to meet Marion Guppy, who was there representing the minister in the Arnhem region. Frank Greene, Principal of Nhulunbuy High School was MC for the evening and announced the finalist from the region as well as the winners at Territory level.

I place on the records those finalists. Finalists in the region for Primary Teacher of the Year were Melia Daw, from Angurugu School, Natalie Ferguson from Nhulunbuy Primary School, and Jessica McCaul from Nhulunbuy Primary. The NT Secondary Teacher of the Year nominations for the region included Cassandra Duykers from Nhulunbuy High School and Jackie Fatnowna from Gapuwiyak School. The Early Childhood Teacher of the Year from the Arnhem Region nominations were Kate Carr from Umbakamba School, Leah Chytnowet from Milyakburra School Emma Curry from Yirrkala School, and Alison Thomas from Nhulunbuy Primary.

NT Primary Principal of the Year nominations were Haidee Dentiith from Yirrkala Homelands School, Kirsten Morey from Milyakburra School, and Matt Watson from Nhulunbuy Primary School.

NT Secondary Principal of the Year nomination for the region was Bryan Hughes from Shepherdson College.

NT Award for the Excellence in Teaching or Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education for the region were Tara Canobie from Nhulunbuy High School, Wendy Ellis from Baniyala Garrangali School, Bryan Hughes again from Shepherdson College, Kristina Lloyd from Angurugu School, Kirsten Morey from Milyakburra

School, Christopher O'Neill from Gapuwiyak School and Claire Rafferty from Yirrkala Homelands School.

In the final category, NT Support Staff Member of the Year, nominations for the region included Louisa Amagula from Angurugu School, Len Britton from Nhulunbuy High School, and Sonia Munyarryu from Yirrkala Homelands School.

Regarding the nominees, I know simply the fact they have been nominated is recognition - and very public recognition - in itself for their dedication and professionalism, whether the nomination comes from their peers or parents and families of students. I know so many outstanding teachers and school support staff who are worthy of nomination and recognition but for want of nominators putting their pen to paper or fingers to the keyboard. I pay tribute to all those people who, day in, day out, work so hard in ever-challenging environments for our kids - and that includes my kids. Several of the nominees for the Arnhem region have taught and/or supported my boys throughout their years at school.

Out of the Arnhem region's finalists, Bryan Hughes was named as the Territory's Secondary Principal of the Year. Bryan, who has been the Principal at Shepherdson College at Galiwinku since 2009, is currently transitioning to the role of Director, Schools Performance Arnhem Region, based in Nhulunbuy. He will be greatly missed by the staff, students, TOs, families and wider community at Galiwinku, but he will be a huge asset at a regional level, supporting schools and students to strive for improvements and better outcomes for all kids, especially those in our remote Indigenous schools where engagement and pathways are so important.

Madam Speaker, again, I thank and acknowledge all the schools and staff in the Arnhem region for the sterling work they do.

Mr ELFERINK (Port Darwin): Madam Speaker, I hope to keep this short. I did not catch all of what the Leader of the Opposition had to say, but it is the usual diatribe relating to the member for Higgins ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly.

Mr ELFERINK: Oh, member for Daly. My apologies. A new seat in the Northern Territory parliament.

It needs to be responded to. The allegations are denied because the incident did not occur. Whilst the Leader of the Opposition is prepared to pursue, on behalf of a person who is still anonymous, supported by two so-called witnesses who are unknown to us, a case against the member for Daly which is unsubstantiated and

based on nothing more than, 'I said, I heard' or some assertion being made to the Leader of the Opposition.

We, on the other hand, produced the names of four witnesses, five documents. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition try to chop her way through those documents. At least we provided documents with names attached but, apparently in the Northern Territory at the moment, it only has to be this Stalinist, 'I accuse', and off to the gulag you go. Well, we have provided names. Guess what? This incident simply did not occur.

I did not bother to follow this up today because I did not think this tawdry little allegation would be pursued by the Leader of the Opposition, who has yet to leave and make the same allegation outside this place - because she does not have the courage to do so, because she knows the size of the law suit that will be heading in her direction the moment she utters those words outside this place. However, she continues to pursue it because she thinks she can grind along, treading on the reputation of a person based on a wafer-thin allegation unsupported by any evidence other than the say so of the Leader of the Opposition.

It is an allegation which has been laid at the feet of the Anti-Discrimination Commission in the Northern Territory. The Anti-Discrimination Commission is obliged to tell a person to whom that investigation pertains if they are going to conduct an investigation. I spoke to the member for Daly earlier. He has received no notification from the Anti-Discrimination Commission whatsoever. So, I suggest the Anti-Discrimination Commission of the Northern Territory has not decided to pursue the matter. Why? Because (1) it is one that is not in its bailiwick and (2) possibly it is not interested. In any instance, unless he is advised, ain't no investigation happening!

The next thing I will touch base on is that it is still not the right place to make the allegation. Go to the police, lay a complaint, get the accuser to stand up in court, deal with it as objectionable words under the *Summary Offences Act*. That is how you deal with these things. You do not have to go to the Anti-Discrimination Commission.

However, all that as an aside, I got this from my wife this morning. My wife is a friend of a former Labor staffer who worked on the fifth floor and worked on the Daly campaign. My wife received the following text, which she passed on to me:

Hey Dee, could you pass on to John - and no agenda here in case you are worried - I never saw or heard of Gary Higgins abusing anyone at any polling booth, and I was on the entire campaign. Cheers Wilt.

Wilt, I presume is Mark Wilton, former advisor to the former Attorney-General and member for Daly, Mr Rob Knight. He, at least, has the courtesy and the decency to understand there are parameters in relation to what is permissible and what is not permissible. However, when a former Labor staffer - and I presume Wilt is the same Mark Wilton who worked on the fifth floor and worked on the Daly campaign - said he did not hear the member for Daly abusing anybody, then it should be over. This is not true. This allegation is a fabrication and it should be over.

Madam Speaker, when former Labor staffers start outing themselves in the defence of what is just right and proper then, surely, the Leader of the Opposition should not only discontinue the pursuit of this dishonest campaign but, moreover, should have the courtesy, decency, and honesty to apologise to the member for Daly for her disgusting and disgraceful conduct.

Mr McCARTHY (Barkly): Madam Speaker, I will elaborate on a concept I used in debate today about a voluntary Banned Drinker Register. The member for Katherine used the opportunity to seize on the semantics and jumped to his feet to carry out the usual vindictive diatribe we are used to from him, and demonstrated, once again, his poor creative intellect. I thought I would elaborate on it for him and, hopefully, give him a little more information around the concept.

The concept relates to when I was travelling in the electorate extensively, and conducting workshops with regional and remote communities around the Enough is Enough alcohol reforms that were coming together under the previous government. The senior people I worked with, talked with, listened to, and I debated - particularly the senior women - were very conscious of needing more tools to deal with alcohol abuse.

They deal with the pressure of family asking for money, demanding money, standing over them for money, and of ravenous drunks coming into their homes and eating all the food out of the fridge, denying the children their breakfast the following morning. If you are like me, you have to deal with many residents of the electorate at the door, at home, on any day of the week and at any time of the day, with the effects of their alcohol abuse. They are trying to come to terms with how to stay safe, how to conserve their monetary resources. They whisper that they think the Basics Card is okay, they like the Basics Card because, for once in their life they have this protection where the pressure points cannot be used to extract the financial resources. This is mainly the language coming from senior residents, elderly people, vulnerable people.

Therefore, I started to share the concept that they could ban themselves. They can use it as a tool to protect themselves and their family in a cultural way because they are telling the truth.

Another experience I have had a number of times is where I have gone to bottle shops and been seen going into the bottle shops, and people who have problems with alcohol have offered me their cash to purchase on their behalf. This is what members on the other side, the government of the Northern Territory, have banged on about for the last 12 months and beyond - secondary supply.

Rather than go through the dialogue and deal with the humbug and have to repeat these situations time and time again, I felt I would be a little creative. I am a non-drinker. I do not really have to worry about purchasing alcohol. I have responsible family members who can purchase alcohol if it is needed. Therefore, I could set an example for the electorate and put myself on the Banned Drinker Register so when the secondary supply issues came up I could have the serious dialogue - whether it be Sunday night at the front door or Monday at lunchtime or wherever, it would continue that dialogue, Enough is enough and we all mean business. That was the road we were going down.

However, the member for Katherine wanted to play politics and semantics. Another piece of advice for the member for Katherine is to lose the divisive rhetoric. You are now in government; you are now a minister. Territorians are looking at you very closely - not so much the silver suit, but the delivery. That is the job of the opposition. We will continue to hold you to account, to challenge your priorities, and to ensure Territorians get the best deal.

I will be more reserved in my creative input into debate but, at the same time, I should not be. I should tell the story. It has been wonderful to hear the new members in this first sitting of the Twelfth Assembly talk about the sharing of Territory stories; how we learn from each other and how we can apply those stories. We will continue to do that in a positive sense, and I will continue to walk a little outside the square into the abstract and share initiatives I feel are important markers in education and awareness.

For those old ladies who were very interested and wanted more information on how you do that, how you get yourself banned, and for the vulnerable people and the people of the Territory who want to relieve the pressure points and use an honest explanation, an honest tool in the toolkit, an honest excuse as to why they cannot continue to provide financial resources for the purchase of alcohol, I am terribly sorry the CLP scrapped the Banned Drinker Register. They took that opportunity away.

They will still continue to whisper the advantages of the Basics Card and how it allows them a little sanity and a little support where they can continue to invest in their children and their families and try to hold off the pressure of people who stand over them. Unfortunately, the creative story of a self-imposed Banned Drinker Register has gone. It has been taken by the Country Liberal Party in the Northern Territory in 2012, 12 months after its introduction, before we started to see problem drunks processed through the tribunal.

This is exactly what the Attorney-General of the new Northern Territory government is talking about - his own tribunal, his own thinking of what he will do with these problem drunks. What is he going to do with these people? He has to create some legislative instrument to deal with them. That is exactly where we were heading with the BDR.

I remind members opposite the Attorney-General said in his debate they are not scrapping everything. They will be revisiting some of the elements of that suite of Enough is Enough alcohol reform, one of the toughest alcohol reforms we have seen in the Territory. I thank him for that because when he starts to go down the road of the classic CLP rhetoric he will find there will be challenges from justice agencies, Territorians, families, and problem drinkers.

However, let us stay on track. Let us solve the problem of alcohol abuse in the Northern Territory. Let us be real about it and, hopefully, the member for Katherine will try to extend that creative intellect before he jumps foolishly into debate with the sole agenda of ridicule, put down and sarcasm and gets on with the job of who he is now, a minister of the Crown. From what I have heard in the last four years when those guys were opposite, he is a holier-than-thou minister of the Crown, an expert. I wish him luck.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.