

Madam Speaker Aagaard took the Chair at 10 am.

MOTION

Routine of Business – Budget 2006-07

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the routine of business of the Assembly be rearranged or suspended if a question or debate is before the Chair so as to permit a response to the Budget 2006-07 by the Leader of the Opposition at 11 am this day.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the Gallery of Year 3 and Year 4 students from Driver Primary School, accompanied by Mr Art Libien. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to our visitors.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL REPORTS

Northern Territory Business and Skilled Migration Strategy

Mr HENDERSON (Business and Economic Development): Madam Speaker, as the Northern Territory economy continues to strengthen, many Territory businesses looking to grow are finding it difficult to get qualified staff. The Martin government is building the Territory's future by supporting the commencement of 10 000 trainees and apprenticeships over four years including an expected 2600 commencements in Budget 2006-07. We know for many Territory businesses there is an immediate skills need that cannot be met locally and we are backing businesses to meet their skills needs in the short-term through business and skilled migration.

The Northern Territory Business and Skilled Migration Strategy, launched by the Chief Minister in March 2005, sets out a road map of activity to build the Territory's skills base and grow our population by increasing the number of migrants who choose the Northern Territory as the place to live, work and do business.

The Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development is tackling the strategy on two fronts: working with Territory businesses to highlight how skilled migration could help their business and promoting the Northern Territory overseas. Last year, DBERD in conjunction with the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and the Northern Territory Chamber of Commerce held open information sessions in Alice

Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and Darwin covering topics such as skilled migration schemes and regional migration, and including presentations by local employers who had benefited from skilled migration. DBERD officers also undertook visits to businesses in Katherine, Jabiru, Adelaide River, Batchelor and Tennant Creek. The sessions were very successful and well attended and are being continued throughout 2006.

A series of skilled migration seminars were also incorporated as a topic in October Business Month for the first time in 2005, and another series is planned for this year. Further, information sessions were held for industry associations including the Australian Hotels Association, the NT Horticultural Association, the Territory Construction Association, the ICT industry, the NT Business Council, the pastoral industry, the Central Australian Tourism Industry Association, and the Motor Trades Association.

The Northern Territory is not only competing with the rest of Australia for skilled migrants, we are also competing with the rest of the world. Participation in overseas migration expos is essential. Last year, DBERD officers promoted the opportunities available in the Northern Territory of migration fairs in England, Ireland, China and India. In the lead-up to each event, DBERD worked closely with industry associations and businesses encouraging them to participate; gaining input into the Territory's display and receiving information on specific skills shortages. To make sure these activities best meet the needs of Territory business, the government consulted with industry to map out DBERD's international promotion activities for the remainder of this year and beyond. Officers depart on Thursday with a number of business people for a migration expo in China.

It has been just over a year since the launch of the Business and Skilled Migration Strategy and we are already seeing positive outcomes for Territory business. DBERD has received an estimated 5000 migration-related inquiries from NT employers, the business community, other community sectors, and intending migrants over the last 12 months. In the last 10 months, DBERD has assisted Territory businesses to sponsor 234 skilled workers, up from 196 in 2004-05 and up from 84 in 2003-04 - a huge effort. Certifications for regional temporary residence nominations have also increased, climbing from 98 in 2004-05 to 178 in the first nine months of this financial year.

I pay tribute and thank our hard-working public servants in DBERD who are running this particular scheme; they are certainly making a magnificent effort. The feedback that I get from the Territory business community which actually interfaces and

deals with DBERD officers running this program is very positive. This is a major plank of the government's push to increase the population of the Northern Territory, to see more skills available for Territory businesses so they can expand their businesses in the expanding Territory economy. A significant effort is going to go into this scheme once again this year.

Madam Speaker, skilled migration is helping Territory business meet their skills needs in the short-term, and the government will continue to work to attract more migrants to build our skills base and to grow the Territory's population.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, if this is such an important area, as it is, I would like to know exactly what incentives are offered by the Northern Territory government to those who are considering moving to the Northern Territory. I understand that South Australia puts out a similar call; everyone needs skilled migration. South Australia, unlike other states and the Territory which has the greatest need, offers practical, genuine incentives to get people to come to their state. Everyone all around the world wants skilled migration. What practical assistance in incentives is provided by the Northern Territory government? How much money is contributed to this scheme by the federal government? What role do they play in this? I would like to know exactly what role you are playing, and what contribution you are actually making to a very serious issue.

We need to go deeper with the revaluing of education, particularly in reference to trade and technical skills, so that we, as a community understand that we value trade and technical skills, and ensure that we have an alternative education stream that is as valued as the academic stream. Further to that, the technical studies rooms in our schools and in our communities need to be refurbished and revamped and made the centre of the learning in our community - as equal to those who have their eyes set on going to university. Once we start talking about that in a genuine way, we are going to then make some real changes.

What we are talking about here is some business facilitation, some workshops and talk about something that is profoundly important to every business right across the country. We need a little more detail. What incentives are offered? How many are actually coming? Where are the areas of greatest need?

Mr HENDERSON (Business and Economic Development): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Blain for his comments. I cannot address all the issues in detail but would offer the member a detailed briefing on how this scheme works. In terms of practical incentives, one of the

great incentives people have to live in the Northern Territory is access to the HomeNorth scheme, which provides the most affordable housing in Australia for first home buyer's assistance.

Another incentive is the availability of jobs, and well paying jobs. We have achieved significant success. As I have said, we have gone from 84 skilled workers and their families attracted in 2003-04 to 234 this financial year. This scheme is working. We are working hard to make it even better. I can say it is working. It is well supported by Territory businesses. I offer the member for Blain a detailed briefing on how we work with businesses in relation to this scheme.

Indigenous Housing

Mr McADAM (Housing): Madam Speaker, I speak today of progress on improving the longevity of housing stock by increasing focus and effort on repairs and maintenance on dwellings managed by Indigenous Community Housing Organisations.

I recently presented to the House a comprehensive review of the state of indigenous housing in the Northern Territory including the vast shortage of dwellings. A consequence of this is severe overcrowding which, in turn, imposes heavy wear and tear on dwellings and reduces the life span of those houses. To illustrate this point, results of the last Indigenous Community Housing Survey revealed that, in some cases, up to at least 80 repairs and maintenance items are necessary in some houses such as windows, doors and a whole host of other repairs.

The Northern Territory is committed to achieving maximum outcomes with regard to the Northern Territory Indigenous Housing Program. To this end, I am strategically balancing available resources to both invest in new stock and maintain the existing housing assets. This approach is entirely consistent with the principles of the Indigenous Housing Infrastructure Agreement and the work that Housing ministers are advancing at a national level, which is focusing on improved sustainable housing outcomes for indigenous people.

At its first meeting, the new IHANT board recommended to me that I consider giving a greater priority to upgrades and maintenance of existing community housing assets. I agreed to accept their advice and have increased the allocation for repairs and maintenance for community housing assets under the maintenance program from \$1700 to \$2500 per annum, depending on the required calculations per dwelling. This increase is comparable with the current average repairs and maintenance expenditure for government employee housing,

which is \$2908, and that relates to maintaining those dwellings in remote communities.

A maintenance grant of \$1700 per house has been provided to ICHO since 1988 as a contribution to the Indigenous Community Housing Organisations' income through rent and other sources, when the former IHANT decided to assist ICHOs in sustaining their housing stock. It has become obvious that \$1700 is only addressing urgent and essential repairs and needed to be increased, and an internal review of that program recommended that a contribution including a 'remoteness factor' be added. This will result in an increase of almost \$5m each year invested in the maintenance of existing assets or stock.

Given the high levels of overcrowding and the huge shortage of housing in remote communities, it is imperative that we make the most effective use of the existing housing asset base in remote communities. In addition, this initiative should also have a positive impact on increasing job opportunities at a community level for local people, and also for those regional building teams. This is just another example of the Martin Labor government putting in place assurances that we will continue to build the Territory in a very sustainable way, including those communities out bush.

Dr LIM (Greatorex): Madam Speaker, I welcome the minister's report advising of the program that will help improve repairs and maintenance of housing in the bush. Obviously, there is a need for that, particularly in view of the fact that many of the houses out bush get destroyed quite quickly for all sorts of reasons, one of them being the inability to care for homes. As the minister has said in previous times, the life span of a house in the bush is something like seven years, whereas in urban areas amongst people who understand housekeeping it could easily last 50 years.

Repairs and maintenance is, again, a bandaid solution. This government has continually looked at bandaid solutions for everything that is happening in the Territory these last five years. You have to teach people how to maintain homes, and to teach them the basics of minor repairs they can do themselves without having to engage the costly services of tradespeople. You have to teach people how to maintain hygiene at home. You hear of people living in camps in Soweto who have clay floors that are absolutely clean; that should happen in our indigenous homes as well. Those programs, if taught in the bush, would ensure the housing stock lasts a lot longer, rather than putting bandaids - \$2000 or whatever amount of money put into it - because you will spend that sort of money just about every year if home

maintenance is not provided by the tenant or house occupier.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I understand why the minister is trying to fix up some of the houses in remote communities which we know are badly in need of repairs. I suggest to him he also needs better management of houses on communities so they do not get into the state they have; that there is intervention before they get trashed.

I also suggest you start trying to recover some of the monies for the repairs, as you do with public housing in towns. I realise people are not being debited for rent in some of these communities but, let us face it, if they are responsible tenants they should also be responsible for the repairs they cause. So within your scheme not only should you be giving money for repairs, but also looking at better management, recovery of some of the money it actually costs you, and making sure you get the rent.

The minister should also consider, rather than building new homes on communities, putting some of that money towards repairs. There are many homes, for instance, in Papunya that could be fixed. The shell of the home is still there. It is quite a good solid home and it needs some repairs to it so it could be liveable again. Therefore, rather than spend \$350 000 on a new house at Papunya, put that money towards upgrading those 20-odd homes which are empty at the moment but still strong stock.

You will solve many of your problems for housing if you actually address that, rather than keep spending the huge amount of money we do. We all know it is expensive to build homes on communities. Let us be a little bit wiser and start putting the money where it can be used more effectively.

Minister, I also want to ask you how many assets are you going to sell this year from your stock? I am trying to work out in the budget how much it is.

Mr McADAM (Housing): Madam Speaker, I thank members opposite for their contribution. It is important for the member for Greatorex to get it right. He welcomes the idea of the increase from \$1700 to \$2500, and then describes it as a bandaid response – fair enough. The point I have to make here very clearly is that I issued an invitation to community organisations to help with Life Skills programs, and I am very committed to working with those communities to supplement the R&M program with additional life skill-type programs.

In regards to the member for Braiting, quite apart from this allocation of up to \$2500, there is also separate dollars set aside for upgrades. Those dollars are quite significant given the existing construction costs. In regards to the sale of housing assets, I am prepared to get back to you during the course of these sittings.

Northern Territory Workplace Advocate – Creation of Position

Dr BURNS (Public Employment): Madam Speaker, I report on the Northern Territory government's decision to create the position of Workplace Advocate in response to the federal government's Work Choices legislation.

As members would recall, I have moved motions in this House, reported to the House and answered questions without notice concerning the deleterious effect that the so-called Work Choices legislation will have on the workforce. Work Choices means the removal of unfair dismissal rights for employees of business of fewer than 100 employees; the stripping of powers from the independent umpire, which is the Australian Industrial Relations Commission; placing obstacles in the way of workers collectively bargaining; freezing wages and stripping award conditions; forcing AWAs on unwilling workers; and removing the safety net for agreement-making. It is for these reasons that the Northern Territory government opposes the ideologically-driven Work Choices legislation.

Members opposite might also take note that the majority of Australians are also opposed to this legislation. Our opposition to Work Choices is driven by our concern for the effects of this legislation on working Territorians and their families. In response to Work Choices, the Territory government has looked at a range of options.

On May Day, I was pleased to announce the government's intention to create the position of the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate. I have also asked the Commissioner for Public Employment to prepare advice on Work Choices for all Territorians. This advice will be delivered to homes of all Territorians. I thank the Commissioner for Public Employment and his staff for their efforts. The advice describes how to contact the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate, either by telephone or on the website. I will table the advice for the information of members.

In what the federal government has billed as a simplification, Work Choices legislation contains a staggering 1611 pages and was the biggest single piece of amending legislation in the Commonwealth's history. Needless to say,

confusion will undoubtedly be caused by this Work Choices legislation. Workers, and employers for that matter, will not have the resources to wade through this amount of legislation or the means to pay a lawyer to do so. The Northern Territory Workplace Advocate will enable Territory employees and employers to seek independent advice with respect to the new legislation.

It is intended that the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate will be able to assist workers or employers with situations that arise out of the new legislation. One example of assistance the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate can provide is to a worker who has been presented with an Australian Workplace Agreement, or AWA. Under the previous legislation, an AWA would have to pass a no-disadvantage test, meaning that the worker was no worse off by comparison to the award. However, under Work Choices legislation, the no-disadvantage test has been abolished, meaning the worker presented with an AWA is left to determine for themselves whether they will be disadvantaged by the agreement. We have already seen a number of examples where workers have been sacked, pushed off their jobs and told they have to sign an AWA at considerably less in conditions and awards.

Ms Carney interjecting.

Dr BURNS: Why do you support it, member for Araluen? Let us hear what you have to say.

The Northern Territory Workplace Advocate will be able to provide free, independent advice to the worker, who will then be able to make an informed decision as to whether to sign the agreement.

Initially, it was proposed to appoint the Commissioner for Public Employment as the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate. The advice given by the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate will also be available to employers in the private sector.

Madam Speaker, the employment of this position sees the Northern Territory government fill the void that has been left by the federal government's forgoing its responsibilities to working Territorians. I am pleased to announce this important initiative and will provide further reports to the House as the Northern Territory Workplace Advocate is able to provide me with a clear picture of the effect of the Work Choices legislation on working Territorians and their families.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, in an attempt to fill the void that has been left by the poor performance of the federal Leader of the Opposition, it appears that the members opposite

are endeavouring to beef up this issue which has not gained much traction federally.

The fact is, this federal legislation has within it an Office of Employment Advocate which works both with employers and employees. What you are endeavouring to do here is ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MILLS: Just calm down over there. I know you have particular issue with this, but this is largely a political stunt to pander to your core interest groups. If you had an interest in working collaboratively on this model, you would find a way of working with this model in a more constructive way.

This is going to cost Territorians money to establish an office, simply to deliver a political point that you are endeavouring to score. I ask you to think a little more sensibly about this, and let us work together so that we can make some progress on it, rather than spend your time on political stunts.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to hear the government has introduced this initiative. Let us face it, out there in the workplace there are many employers who do the right thing by their employees. Many of them already pay them over award wages. Many of them say that they do it to keep them on the job, as we all know we are short of skilled workers. There is a culture of employers who have valued employees, and look after them well. They are not the ones I am concerned about.

The ones I am concerned about are the very young people who, in a way, do not have the experience or the knowledge to stand up for themselves.

We had a case in Alice Springs of a young apprentice who was sacked. I do not know the full details, even though I have met the young lad who is a hairdressing apprentice in his third year, and is very creative. He was quickly snapped up by another hairdresser because he has quite of a lot of skill. However, in his case, he suddenly found himself in the situation where he really did not know his rights and what he could do. If he had someone like this advocate, with whom he could have discussed his situation perhaps he would not have been as hurt as he was by the way he was treated. I am pleased to say the end result has been satisfactory for him.

It is the young people I worry about, particularly those who are unskilled as well those who do not have that voice for them.

At the moment, it is far too early for us to be judging the new IR laws. It will be a case of time will see whether they are good or bad. The first incidences we have had seem to reflect that there is something wrong with them. I will be looking with interest to make sure that people who are concerned about their jobs and have families, in fact, do get the right deal.

Dr BURNS (Public Employment): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Braitling for her thoughtful offering on this particular issue, in stark contrast to the member for Blain. The member for Blain talked about political stunts and wasting money. What about the tens of millions - \$50m comes to mind - that the federal government sank into advertising campaigns to try to sell their pup, the Work Choices legislation. They still have not sold it; the Australian public are having none of it.

This is a government that is concerned about protecting workers. I looked carefully at whether this step we are taking would be duplication. It is not because it is offering proactive advice to employees, rather than what is on the federal books which is just ticking the boxes to push out more and more AWAs to make the figures look good to keep their system going.

Madam Speaker, this is a very positive step by this government and it has been welcomed by workers. We will continue to look at the federal Work Choices legislation. We have tried to work cooperatively with the federal government, but minister Andrews ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Dr BURNS: ... continues not to want to meet with us or be cooperative himself ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister! Your time has expired!

Cattle Producers - Survey

Mr VATSKALIS (Primary Industry and Fisheries): Madam Speaker, this morning I report on the outcomes of the most significant survey of the Northern Territory cattle producers undertaken by the Pastoral Production Division of the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines.

The Territory's pastoral sector is valued at more than \$300m and directly employs more than 1600 people throughout our regions. Until the mid-1960s, the cattle industry was the backbone of the Northern Territory economy, although mining and tourism have since surpassed it. However, advances in pastoral production and increasing veterinary and animal health knowledge are all

positive signs that this industry will continue to grow and be a key component of the Northern Territory.

The pastoral industry survey is the first of its kind to be undertaken in the Northern Territory for more than 20 years. Similar surveys were previously undertaken in the Victoria River District in 1982 and the Barkly and Alice Springs region in 1980. There have been no previous surveys of this type for the Top End region.

I commend my staff for the considerable commitment in completing such a task in partnership with the industry.

DPIFM staff travelled hundreds of thousands of kilometres across the Territory in late 2004 and early 2005 to conduct 151 face-to-face interviews with pastoralists who run an enterprise of more than 300 head of cattle. This had the added benefit of improving the relationship between my department and producers.

Consultation with the Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association, Animal Health and the Pastoral Division of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts ensured a range of aspects of pastoral production issues where canvassed.

Survey questions were all piloted and endorsed by the relevant regional producer research advisory committees in ensuring that they encapsulated data on the industry to ultimately assist both industry and government to make well informed decisions. The survey focused on production practice and performance, constraints to production, and attitudes and concerns of the industry as a snapshot of the industry in time.

Four regional reports have been produced, with a fifth report being a Northern Territory overview, summarising key data from each region. Results show marked improvements in production performance and confidence in the continued development of the industry. Concerns and issues raised by producers, as revealed through the survey, will form the basis for future directions in research and development.

The key findings include:

- a huge growth is anticipated in the carrying capacities of pastoral properties, estimated at almost 30% over the next three years, and 54% by 2014. Most of this will be in the Top End;
- the biggest animal health concern for producers is botulism;

- native trees or shrub build-up has a significant effect on pasture growth and mustering. Controlled burning is used by 50% of producers;
- pastoralists spent an average of \$19 568 a property to control weeds in 2004.
- two out of three pastoralists say cattle production is their only source of income. Hay production is an additional source for some, while 9% open their gates to tourists;
- recruitment and retention of staff is the biggest hurdle, although Alice Springs producers say the seasonal conditions are a bigger problem; and
- a total of 535 000 cattle are turned off in the Northern Territory. The Alice Springs region tends to supply the domestic market to the south, while the Barkly mostly sends store crossbred cattle to Queensland.

Madam Speaker, this survey provides an invaluable contribution to our understanding and knowledge of the pastoral industry. We have a definite guide to the methods, problems, attitudes, successes and issues faced by Territory pastoralists. The findings will ensure that investment in research and development will be targeted, provide for better extension information to producers, and to provide industry with an up-to-date picture of management practices.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I welcome the report on the health of the cattle industry. I am rather new to this shadow portfolio. However, with some prior experience in the industry, it strikes me that when we do an analysis of the Territory economy, and the way that the money is divided up and apportioned to each of the sectors, the social sector is receiving far more than the primary industry sector. When we look at the different allocations, it appears that primary industry, in particular, has been one of the under-spenders; it has not had the significant allocations to it which the GST has afforded to health, education, law and order, and police.

In terms of long-term growth, we need to ensure that we can afford the programs we are offering. Therefore, I want to focus more attention on the primary industry sector, and particularly the cattle industry and horticulture, but in this case we are talking about the cattle industry. They do not demand much from government other than proper transport links. However, there is an opportunity for innovation and leadership from government: areas such as feedlots, providing better research,

providing that pathway to extending the industry to feedlots, and talking properly and with some leadership about the need for abattoirs in the Northern Territory.

I will be doing an analysis of the budget with a particular interest in the long-term sustainability of the Territory economy, knowing that it is the primary industry sector that I believe is being neglected and needs to be refocused on if we have an eye on the future, beyond parliamentary terms. The Territory's primary industry sector has great potential for wealth creation.

Reports noted.

JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 49)

Continued from 29 March 2006.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the bill is supported, as I indicated to the Attorney-General yesterday. As he said in his second reading speech on 29 March 2005:

From time to time, amendments to acts within the Justice portfolio are necessary or convenient to ensure the ongoing smooth administration of the justice system. These amendments are primarily administrative in nature and relatively minor in scope.

Indeed they are and, of course, this is not the first time and nor will it be the last that legislation of this nature comes before us.

I alerted the Attorney-General yesterday to an issue I was concerned about, mainly in my capacity as a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee. I refer the Attorney-General to the change the government proposes to bring about to the *Interpretation Act*. The Attorney-General says in his second reading speech:

The term 'subordinate legislation' will be used in place of 'regulations' which can be misleading as the term currently covers rules or by-laws as well as regulations.

It goes on. My question to the Attorney-General, and I am hopeful he will address it in his reply is, why was the Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee not consulted about this? I am not necessarily saying there was an obligation for the committee to have been consulted; I simply suggest it as a matter of courtesy. I cannot recall that it has come to the attention of the committee, but I ask that in the event something of this nature happens again, that the committee be notified of it.

There are two other points. Is it intended that the term 'subordinate legislation' be used in common parlance to replace the word 'regulations'? If so, might that be cumbersome for those who deal with regulations, particularly public servants? Regulations are commonly referred to as 'regs', including by lawyers who practise in the Supreme and local courts. Is it your intention to replace what is a commonly understood word with two less commonly understood words which is 'subordinate legislation'? If so, why? In other words, can you add something to what you said in your second reading speech? Following on from that, if it is intended Territorians no longer use the word 'regulations' and use the two words 'subordinate legislation', does the government intend for there to be any education programs? I am not for a moment suggesting it needs to be intensive or anything like that, but I am sure the Attorney-General understands that given a change of this nature will proceed, then particularly public servants, should know about it and should be versed in their future terminology. A minor point on the face of it but potentially an interesting one nevertheless.

However, the most important point was made as a member of the Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee. Madam Speaker, with those comments I will conclude and the bill is supported.

Mr BURKE (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I support the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill introduced during the last sittings. At the outset, I should say I am the chair of the Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee of which the Leader of the Opposition is a member. However, I will leave it for the minister to answer those concerns she has raised in relation to that committee rather than addressing them myself as a member of the Assembly rather than chair of that committee.

I want to say at the outset that the Territory is well served by its present Attorney-General and Justice minister. No one can realistically question his commitment, dedication and attention to detail; attributes which are essential to do the job. Let us not forget that it was during this Attorney-General's watch in this government's first term of office that the Northern Territory got its first freedom of information legislation in the form of the *Information Act*. Former governments of a different political persuasion refused to even contemplate this type of legislation. For many years we remained the only Australian jurisdiction without such legislation and it took the election of the Labor government in 2001 to instigate a major change of direction in legal policy.

To my mind, this Attorney-General has been the best the Territory has had in its service. I say

this not simply because he is a Labor Attorney-General, although I will admit for me on a political level it puts him well ahead in standing compared to previous Attorneys-General.

This bill is another piece in the Territory's legislative framework. General amendment bills such as this are vehicles for effecting what may be seen as minor amendments across a variety of acts. However, this is not quite an accurate picture. They are as much a part of our legal tradition as the doctrine of precedent. Let me use this analogy, and I know especially that Mr Michael Cook will appreciate this, and I trust Madam Speaker and other members of the Assembly will appreciate the bringing to life of what is, let us face it, dry legislation. Who knows, it may even catch the eye of some university lecturer or legal studies teacher as an aid to instilling further interest in their wards. However, I think it may be trying to push it too far to match the late and great Mr Bill Herd, one of the lecturers at the Charles Darwin University and before that in its various guises, a man who anyone who had the privilege of meeting or being taught by would agree was a great Northern Territory educator.

However, on with the analogy. Everyone is impressed by the V8 Supercars, with the huge following of Territorians who watch the season on television and follow the exploits of their heroes and their favourite teams. A great many will once again make the pilgrimage to Hidden Valley this year to witness the Darwin round - a round made possible by the continued support of the government.

Ms CARNEY: Point of order, Madam Speaker! The question relates to relevance. I do not have my Standing Orders with me but I am sure there is something regarding relevance. What on earth this has to do with this somewhat innocuous bill I have no idea. You pulled a member up about that, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Brennan, perhaps you could come to the point.

Mr BURKE: It is an analogy regarding the workings, and I will come to it in no small order because ...

Mr Mills: I know. The Attorney-General drives a car, fast.

Mr BURKE: I will not respond to the banal comments of the member for Blain.

Each Supercar is the result of great dedication by a team of professionals. People who work tirelessly tweaking the engines and analysing performance, listening to feedback from their drivers and test drivers, and then making further

modification and minor adjustments until the whole thing purrs perfectly to work with maximum performance.

Just like the law. Most of us do not understand the detailed work that these mechanics and engineers do. We just enjoy the ultimate expression of that on race day.

The law is no different. It is the engine, perhaps quieter than the Supercar, that powers so much of our every day lives: how we drive our own cars; how we buy and sell property; or whether we can donate blood, to give but three examples. Like those Supercar engines, the law as well needs to be constantly tweaked to ensure maximum performance and responsiveness. The Attorney-General, as chief engineer, stands at the head of a team of dedicated professionals whilst working to ensure that, as much as possible, that engine remains operating at its best.

This bill evidences an Attorney-General and government that continue to closely supervise their responsibilities. It shows a government not content to rest on its laurels but continually looking to improve the focus and administration of the laws of the Northern Territory. A government that is responsive to the feedback it receives. In areas as diverse as agents licensing, through to sentencing and land title, this bill will make it easier for people to live and work in the Territory.

I understand that many of the amendments incorporated in this bill came out of industry bodies, community and professional groups, and other bodies that approached government. They advised government on the matters they thought needed addressing to ensure the better application and administration of the areas of law that affected them. I note from the Attorney-General's speech that amendments to the *Interpretation Act* were requested by Parliamentary Counsel.

This bill shows that this government continues to deliver on one of its key commitments, a commitment that continues to differentiate it from the opposition - a commitment to listen to the concerns of Territorians and to act on those concerns.

I turn now to the effects of some of the particular amendments that this bill makes. The *Land Title Act* is amended. This act is very important to many Territorians though they may not know it. The object of that act is set out in section 3 and includes - and this is important for the amendments:

- (a) *to simplify the title to land and facilitate dealings with land;*

(b) to define the rights of persons with an interest in registered land;

(c) to continue and improve the system for registering title to and transferring interests in land;

...

(e) to facilitate access to information about administrative interests and other information in respect of land;

...

The suburbs of Farrar, Bakewell and Gunn in my electorate of Brennan have seen significant and sustained growth over the last few years, and will into the future. Many people are building their homes and they have, no doubt, engaged lawyers or conveyancers to do their conveyancing for them.

One area where my constituents may notice a difference is section 10. This bill introduces section 10(1A). It enables a solicitor or other agent of the mortgagee to execute the mortgage. Some financial institutions require officers in branches located other than in the Territory to execute the mortgage. I know of one institution that engages solicitors in South Australia to handle the legal requirements, and then those solicitors engage an agent here in the Territory to handle specific aspects of that transfer. This means that, initially, there is posting of documents to and fro. If corrections to the documentation are required this results in more posting back and forth to either end of the country. This amendment may not lead to institutions changing their practice but at least it gives them the option to do so. I hope that it will see a change and make the process speedier for those engaged in buying or building their own home, and seeking to borrow funds to enable them to do so. Any step such as this that makes the conveyancing process easier for purchasers and sellers, as well as the financial institutions, legal practitioners and conveyancers, is greatly appreciated.

In his second reading speech, the minister made reference to the term '*profits à prendre*'. I confess that I made it through my legal studies and legal career without ever having to investigate this term. I can inform the Assembly that a *profit à prendre* is a right to take something off another person's land, or take something out of the soil. That definition comes from Butterworth's *Concise Australian Legal Dictionary*. An example is the right to grow and then harvest pine trees; it creates an interest in the land. It is not merely an agreement to sell something off the land. Using the pine trees example still, an agreement to

simply sell the pine trees is just a sale of goods. It does not create an interest in the land itself.

An alternative explanation for the term I saw recently was that it is an 'incorporeal hereditament that can be either gross or appurtenant to land'. Meaning no disrespect to the person who brought that to my attention, it sounded more like something Sir Humphrey Appleby from *Yes, Minister* might say.

This amendment makes it clear that the consent of a mortgagee of the land burdened by a *profit à prendre* is required in order to register a change in the instrument creating the *profit à prendre*. The amendment resolves an inconsistency in the act where sometimes the consent of a mortgagee was required and sometimes it was not.

On the subject of real estate, as members would know, the purchase of the family home is generally the biggest financial decision most people will make in their lives. It is both a scary and intimidating process, particularly for first home buyers. This is why I support the amendment to the *Agents Licensing Act* to allow the minister to make grants from the agents' fidelity fund to industry bodies such as the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory and the Australian Institute of Conveyancers, to improve the quality of services provided by their members.

The higher the standards that are set in the industry, the better it is for consumers. Educational, regulatory and developmental roles undertaken by these organisations will, hopefully, make buying a home an even more rewarding experience for Territorians. I already know that this measure will be appreciated by those involved in the conveyancing industry. I recently had a discussion with a very well respected member of the conveyancing profession. We were talking about what a specialised area of law conveyancing has become. There are many pitfalls for the unwary. There are many conveyances that seem relatively straightforward; they make it seem like almost anyone can do it, but conveyancing is not always all that it appears and a well trained professional will help you avoid some of the hidden dangers that can lay lurking, waiting for you to stumble into them. Believe me, I have heard some horror stories about the conveyancing process.

I am a big supporter of continued professional development. We need to ensure that practitioners in any area of enterprise stay abreast of developments in their profession. We also need to ensure that they have access to refresher courses for areas that may not always come up in their everyday practice. The amendments incorporated into this bill that are made to the

Agents Licensing Act which allow the minister to make grants for these purposes are a large step toward making it easier for industry bodies to meet these educational, regulatory and developmental roles that are increasingly expected of them.

The *Interpretation Act* is not something many people get excited about. Most, even practitioners, will dismiss it as the preserve of Parliamentary Counsel, and perhaps some very eager first year law students. But to stereotype the act in that way does it a disservice. It is, as the name suggests, a fundamental starting point for the interpretation of law in the Northern Territory. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition's question today shows just how important it is as an act.

By simplifying and consolidating certain groupings, and bringing the language into accord with modern drafting style, these amendments will make it easier for Territorians, lawyers, law students, and even perhaps members of this Assembly, to understand the laws that regulate our society. I applaud any effort to bring the law to the people. It should not be some mysterious construction that people back away from in fear or boredom.

The *Interpretation Act* may never have the flowing language evident in some more well known pieces of legislation in Australia and around the world, but it does its job well and these changes incorporated in the Justice Legislation Amendment Bill will keep it in touch with the jurisdiction it serves, and hopefully save some practitioners problems with interpretation, and law students some sleepless nights.

I conclude by congratulating the Attorney-General on the introduction of this legislation and the changes it makes, and his performance as Attorney-General. I look forward to further reform of the legal system in the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Year 3 and Year 4 students from Driver Primary School accompanied by Mrs Wayan Larue. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I make a quick comment to the member for Brennan. I realise politics plays a great part in this House. It is a political forum. However, when the member

infers that members on this side of the House do not listen nor act, that is a bit rough. One of the reasons I am a politician, hopefully, is to listen and to act. I know this is a political statement, but I do not accept that it is a fair statement.

I want to raise a couple of points in relation to this bill. One is in relation to the new Lands Planning and Mining Tribunal. Perhaps the Minister for Planning and Lands can one day tell me why the name 'Lands and Planning' was changed to 'Planning and Lands', and now we have the Lands and Planning tribunal? I do not know what the logic behind this was, but if one day you would explain it, minister, I would appreciate it.

Minister, I would have thought this was an opportunity to say whether we need to expand the tribunal. Here we are allowing a continuation of a process which is not good from a planning aspect. That is, we have one magistrate who is the tribunal. Planning matters can be very serious and matters that not necessarily magistrates have a great deal of knowledge about. They may have knowledge about criminal law and all those sorts of things, but as the Minister for Planning and Lands would know, planning is a very complicated matter. I think the tribunal should be expanded to allow at least one professional, whether it is architectural or town planning, and one member for the local government because in many cases planning involves local government.

This would have been a good opportunity not to just have a tribunal based purely on a person being a legal practitioner. There is an opportunity missed. Perhaps it is something which can come up again when the government reviews the NT Planning Scheme, but it is an area which certainly needs reviewing because the system at the moment is not really fair.

On another note, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned that the name 'regulations' has been changed in some cases to 'subordinate legislation'. I did not know whether there were any practical implications to this. Generally, legislation comes before parliament. Does subordinate legislation come before parliament? Regulations do not normally come before us to debate. Does it mean that now you renamed regulations to subordinate legislation, that subordinate legislation would not be debated in parliament?

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I thank members for their support for the bill expressed in the debate. The subordinate legislation committee is referenced to examine instruments made, granted or issued under the power conferred by an act, not the acts themselves. The debate of the legislation itself quite rightly belongs before the full parliament.

Subordinate legislation is simply a drafting instrument within the legislation to make it less cumbersome and also to remove any confusion between the use of regulations to mean regulations, by-laws or other laws. This makes it very clear that regulations, by-laws and other laws are collectively known as subordinate legislation for the point of drafting legislation not for common use out in the community. Public servants will be able to still talk quite openly about making and applying regulations and by-laws and the other existing terms.

I just want to make it clear to members that I did not pay the member for Brennan any money to make the comments - or at least not much money. In relation to the racing analogy, I am much better at breaking vehicles than tuning them. I thank the member for his contribution to the debate. It is good to see members actually engaging the content of the legislation. Thank you again for your support and we will try to move this through quickly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney General)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2006-07 (Serial 50)

Continued from 2 May 2006.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, this budget could have been better. The government could have done better, the Treasurer could have done better and most importantly, Territorians could have been better off.

We know and Territorians know, along with the Australian Nursing Federation NT Branch, the Territory Construction Association, the NT Cattlemen's Association, the Australian Education Union NT Branch and the NT Police Association know, that so many things could have been done better.

My reply to the Treasurer's budget identifies just some examples of how some things could have been done better. I well know that we are about three years away from an election but I want Territorians to see the Country Liberal Party, not just as a party holding government to account but also as a party that is willing to say this is how we should do it and this is how we are different. I believe that Territorians should see this now and not just in the last few weeks before an election.

Accordingly, this budget reply has within it a number of new announcements that the CLP would have introduced if we were in government. They are costed and accounted for and they represent just some of the things that the CLP would introduce for our fellow Territorians.

Yesterday, the Treasurer delivered one of the most unremarkable budgets in the Territory's history and it has done so at a time when this government has more money than any previous CLP governments could have dreamed of, thanks to a GST that Labor strongly opposed when it was in opposition.

This government has received over \$500m in its coffers this financial year than it expected in 2002. This really is a budget of missed opportunities and it is the mums and dads of the Territory who will miss out on those opportunities. Mums and dads who are shelling out their hard earned monies to support bloated executive public servant contracts which are now costing an additional \$30m per year and even more next year as the Chief Minister and her colleagues continue to employ more fat cats. The CLP will review and reduce executive positions to more realistic levels and we would expect those people on their six figure salaries to effectively manage the Territory's public service.

In this budget there was a real opportunity to regain control of our streets, or to demonstrate an intention to do so: to address the lack of a presence of police on our streets and to give the police the additional powers they need to apprehend criminals, and also to give the police the respect that they need to get on with their jobs. Instead, what we have seen is yet another Martin Labor government special; that is, just throw more money at the problem and hope it goes away. Well, it will not.

Today, I announce that a CLP government will increase the number of police cars per sector in operation in the Territory. To this end, we would commit a further \$8m per year. Further, we would change the law so that the police have the tools to get drunks off our streets and curb antisocial behaviour.

I am also announcing that the CLP will introduce legislation to protect police and show offenders that our police are to be respected. The philosophy of the CLP in respect of law and order is one of visibility, action and respect. I will elaborate on that later.

In the mess we have with Education, I note the motion of no confidence the education union passed only a few days ago in the Territory's Education minister who is also the Territory's Treasurer. This government yesterday had an

opportunity to invest heavily in curriculum improvement, professional development for teachers, and put in place the necessary infrastructure. However, the Treasurer failed to do so. In contrast, I announce today that the CLP would immediately allocate \$10m and start work on the Palmerston Senior College. We would also allocate monies to begin work on planning for a senior secondary college in Darwin.

I also announce that a CLP government would establish an internal audit unit within the Department of Education to ensure that we have the rights standards and that standards are being met.

As education is a lifelong learning process, I announce that a future CLP government would install a lifelong learning program. I announce \$1m for lifelong learning. The first component is the reading for life program for children aged one and four years of age. The second component will be the Chief Minister's reward challenge for children in Years 1, 3, 5 and 7. Supporting our children in learning must be our primary objective. When many other states and a territory are producing similar initiatives, it is curious that this government has not introduced such initiatives.

Nowhere has this government failed more than in the area of health. There are many issues that need to be addressed, and the shortage of doctors and nurses is just one problem that was not practically addressed in yesterday's budget. In reply, I announce that a CLP government would move immediately to introduce HIPS; that is, the HECS incentive payment scheme, which would pay the HECS costs for nurses and doctors who either stay or come to the Territory. It is just one way that the many and systemic problems in health can be addressed but, I will turn to those areas later.

I now turn to this government's fiscal strategy. Talking about this budget in isolation without looking at the last five years of Labor management - or rather mismanagement - does not paint a fair picture of where this Treasurer has and, more importantly, has not taken us in those five years. Yesterday's budget is the product of opportunities lost. This government has received an additional \$750m in GST revenue over and above what they expected. This is an incredible amount of money, and unprecedented in the Northern Territory's history. However, additional revenue does not end there; own source revenue is \$80m more than expected. GST revenue this year alone is \$63m more than expected. The sale of liquid assets raised an extra \$40m, and this Labor government garnished a further \$36m from other fees and charges.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that under the GST arrangements, the Territory government was supposed to eliminate many state taxes. Despite this obligation, and other revenue that Labor has received, the tax that this Labor government levies on Territorians has risen to \$378m compared with \$216m, which was what the last CLP government taxed Territorians – a significant increase by any measure. This Labor government is taxing Territorians more than ever before, whilst service delivery in a range of areas does not, and has not, improved. The elective surgery waiting list is just one such example.

Members, and Territorians, will recall that, early in Labor's first term, they committed to a medium term fiscal strategy. In Budget 2002-03, the Treasurer told us that the fiscal strategy for government was, and I quote from page 26 of Budget Paper No 2 of that budget:

The government has committed itself to a fiscal strategy based on three key principles:

- *sustainable government services;*
- *a competitive tax environment; and*
- *prudent management of liabilities.*

On page 25 of that document, the Treasurer said that the government had framed its medium term fiscal strategy based on three objectives. Firstly, curbing the growth in nett debt and unfunded liabilities, while continuing to provide adequate levels of service to the community; secondly, a commitment to, and continuation of, a deficit reduction strategy; and, thirdly, a resultant decline in nett debt and total liabilities.

All of this was going to be achieved with a much lower income than they did actually receive. Back then, Labor said that the income from the government was going to be \$2.47bn for the year 2005-06, that is, the current financial year. The final estimate for the current financial year is actually \$2.97bn. Hence, this government has received \$500m more for the current financial year than it predicted and projected four years ago - \$500m more than they thought. This means that had Labor stuck to its spending targets and to its expenditure policies, Labor would have had \$500m left over in the financial year that we are presently in. They were going to return a surplus budget, curb growth in debt and reduce liabilities, and they were going to do all of that with much less money.

Every year, however, this government has received more money than it expected. The question needs to be asked: how has Labor managed these significant and unexpected

revenue windfalls? The answer is, in a nutshell, this government has struggled to manage in several areas of service delivery. For example, despite the increased police numbers, page 157 of the 2005 police annual report tells us that the number of drunks that the police have had to cope with has doubled to 22 000 apprehensions in the past few years. A walk in any public place or in our suburbs will quickly inform the uninformed that the problem is getting much worse.

Further, waiting lists for elective surgery have also become much longer, a fact confirmed by hospital board annual reports. Recently, Territorians would remember that the AMA revealed that a death at the Royal Darwin Hospital was contributed to by a bed shortage. This was initially denied but later accepted by this Labor government. The problem was, and still is, that extra hospital beds are being kept in mothballs because we are not close enough to the next election. Shame on this Labor government. And, where is the oncology unit that Labor promised all those years ago? We have heard weasel words in the last couple of years, but Territorians remember the promise; it was rock solid.

The Territory tax take has almost doubled to over \$378m per year since Labor came to office, and this increased income, of course, does not include Power and Water bills. In 2001-02, it was \$216m under the CLP. So, despite hundreds of millions of dollars in GST revenue that the government would not have received under the old tax system, more revenue should mean a lower tax take and it has not. Taxes and charges should also have been reduced and they have not.

When Labor came to office, the nett debt plus unfunded liabilities position was approaching \$3.2bn. Labor hired Professor Percy Allan, who announced in 2002 that such a position was 'unsustainable'. The Treasurer, in this year's mid-year report, confessed that the current position is \$3.8bn and was projected to become \$4bn by 2008-09. That equates to \$20 000 of government debt for every person who lives in the Northern Territory. Interestingly, the Australian average is about half that. This is not something that this Treasurer should be proud of. The budget deficit for this year is \$47m, a result which was rescued from being significantly worse because of the unbudgeted sale of \$40m of assets for liquidity purposes. In fact, had the government not received the extra \$217m it did in unexpected revenue, this Treasurer would have presided over a budget deficit of more than \$264m.

At the same time the Treasurer has been forced to confess the waterfront project will cost more than the original \$100m the government said it would. The situation will soon be \$800m more debt than Labor's own expert, Professor

Percy Allan, said was unsustainable a few years ago. No wonder we have not heard from Professor Percy Allan for a long time.

The fact is, Labor is no where near the targets it set only four years ago. Nett debt and unfunded liabilities are through the roof. The deficit reduction strategy has now seen this government committed to continuing deficits. What, we ask, has been the Treasurer's answer? To move the fiscal management goalposts.

There is nothing in this budget which will give Territorians any hope things are set to improve. Nearly all departments are set to blow their budgets this year. The 136 extra executive level public servants are continuing to soak up so much of the increased income and what we have is a budget described, amongst other things, as dull and boring when this government is half a billion dollars better funded than they dared dream a few years ago.

This budget reflects a history of squandered opportunities and wasted chances. Had the government stuck to its guns a few years ago, this could have been a budget of scoops instead of scraps. Treasury, and this is an important point, has sounded an ominous warning to this government for its future revenue. It has said in Budget Paper No 2: 'One of the largest risks to the Territory's forward estimates is variations in GST revenue'.

The current projections are predicated on assumptions in population and national consumer confidence. This government should be saving, making hay while the sun shines, now. A small shift in consumer confidence caused by something like high petrol prices, or changes in interest rates such as the one announced this morning, will see GST revenue drop. This government does not and has not planned for such possibilities, and it is irresponsible and reckless in the extreme for every Territorian.

I now turn to an issue in the budget that is uppermost in the minds of many of Territorians: their safety and the safety of their families. Law and order are top of the mind issues in this community. Go to any barbecue, party or function and it is not long before the conversation drifts to the subjects of itinerants, drunks and disorder in our streets. Last week, somewhat predictably, in my view and others, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services issued a media release saying: 'Funding will be boosted to \$212m in next week's budget'. Based on last year's budget of \$189m, it does appear to be an increase of \$23m. However, the estimate for the department for this year is \$202m. That means it expects to spend \$13m more than it had in its budget this year. This is called a blowout and the new figure of \$212m

represents nothing more than a blowout being repeated because the extra expenditure is recurrent spending.

This is but one example of political spin, but there are countless others. The minister's media release that the government is working toward an extra 200 police borders on being tiring and underwhelming. The minister said and I quote: '200 police on the beat' by the end of the year. That is the repeated government line. We ask, and our fellow Territorians ask: where are they? Darwin is divided into four patrol sectors each with two dedicated patrols per sector. That was the numbers that existed in 2001 when Labor came to office. The minister's ears must still be ringing from the officers in Tennant Creek who told him recently that they are 40% under gazetted strength and struggling. Alice Springs has two dedicated patrols per shift with extra patrols during some of the busier times. These situations are the same as or worse than they were in 2001.

The minister boasts of 17 000 more hours of dedicated patrols this year. We say do the sums for a 24 hour roster. There are 8760 hours in a year, thus 17 000 extra hours actually means eight operational police. So what the minister has actually promised is that there will be one more operational patrol somewhere in the Northern Territory and that is it. We ask: where are the 200 extra police officers? If they are there, if they do exist, then they are not 'on the beat' as the minister and his colleagues would have us believe. Where are the extra 200 police officers?

In June 2002, there were 512 constables. By June 2005, there were 592 constables. In those four years the government was able to add 20 constables per year to the police force's strength despite a very aggressive advertising and recruiting campaign. The reason that this had occurred is that the police force sheds staff as fast as the force can recruit staff. For example, in June 2004, there were 574 constables with 47 recruits at the police college. In spite of this, by June 2005, there were only 592 constables employed, an increase of only 18 after recruiting 47. The government has not put extra police on the beat. Patrol numbers have not substantially increased. What has increased, however, are ACPO numbers and police squirreled away in specialist sections. They are not on the beat, not 200 of them.

There is very little money in this budget at all for operational tasks and we note that \$630 000 has been committed for social order patrols. Territorians will find, I am sure, the government's language very hard to understand. They will be entitled to ask: if the police have not been attending to social order, and the minister has suddenly realised that it deserves some money, what have they been doing? The CLP will make

certain that there are real increases on the beat and it is necessary because of the Territory's very high crime rates. It is necessary under the Labor government.

As I said earlier, the CLP believes in a visible police force. We will make certain that there is an extra patrol car operating in each sector in Darwin and an extra patrol in Alice Springs. The CLP will also make certain that Tennant Creek and Katherine will have sufficient numbers to do their jobs and that they will remain at, or close to, their gazetted strengths, not 40% under like they are in Tennant Creek.

The CLP understands that throwing money at departments like Labor does will not necessarily improve service delivery, morale or indeed retention rates. We do not only believe in proper resources but we do believe particularly in empowering police and letting them know that we trust them and expect them to do their job. The CLP recognises that police, as well as other employees and emergency workers, need to be respected by the community. As politicians we hear regular accounts of how our police officers are not.

Many police officers give up because the morale of the force is low. We are losing police officers at alarmingly high rates and it is costing us a fortune. They are going to greener pastures in other services. The Territory needs to stop this drain. The CLP in government will take action. In addition to our safe streets policy announced a couple of months ago, which gives the police the tools they want, deserve and need in order to do their work, we will introduce minimum mandatory sentences for anyone who assaults a police officer in the Northern Territory. We will make sure that if a person assaults a police officer, they will go to gaol for at least six months. We will also make sure that if an assault causes bodily harm, then an offender will serve at least two years in prison. If that assault causes grievous bodily harm, then the offender will serve at least five years in prison.

The CLP's message on this point is unequivocal: if you do not respect our police and other front line employees, we will teach you some respect - a call that comes from the community on a daily basis. It also comes from the police on a daily basis. It will also demonstrate some much-needed leadership from government. This government is very good at producing media releases, spin, hype and repackaging, but does not actually provide anything in the way of significant leadership.

I now turn to education. The CLP knows that it is imperative that the emphasis of education service delivery to the families of the Territory concentrates on areas of curriculum, teaching and

learning outcomes. This Labor government, through its failure to invest in the Territory school system, is putting undue pressure on its teachers, and now compromises the very educational outcomes that it claims to be delivering. Why else would the NT Branch of the Australian Education Union issue a vote of no confidence in this Education minister who is also the Territory's Treasurer?

This government and, in particular, the Education minister and Treasurer must slow down in their haste to install middle schools Territory-wide next year. The fact is that we do not need to create middle schools to engage in a middle-school approach. The Country Liberal Party supports strengthening the delivery of education to our middle schools; however, we believe that it must be undertaken through an inclusive approach to education. All Territorians know that the government has allocated \$10m to invest in middle schools. Clearly, money is not allocated unless there is a plan as to what initiatives that money will be spent on.

Education is firstly about curriculum and those who teach it. The real challenge that needs to be met by curriculum is in preparing students to shape their future. Accordingly, the Country Liberal Party calls for a far greater investment in curriculum development to support teachers and school communities to engage in middle schooling approaches essential to effectively meet unique student needs. There can be no more valuable investment than in education and the introduction of appropriate programs and practices designed to optimise student opportunities and impart them with the skills to engage in a changing world and a challenging future.

Teachers in the Northern Territory are deeply committed - we know they are deeply committed - to making a positive difference in the educational lives of the students with whom they work. However, in order to build successful schools with cultures of high expectations and success for students, educators require sufficient resources and, just as importantly, a sound policy framework to guide educational improvement. If the minister does not know that, he should step down.

It is in the context of constant change to meet growing educational expectations that teaching staff, particularly those with a passion to teach 11- to 14-year-old students, need to be equipped professionally to provide quality educational experiences for the students in their care. One of the key factors in ensuring the quality of education provision is the maintenance of a highly-skilled teaching force. The Country Liberal Party believes that pre-service and in-service training for teachers is a cornerstone of innovation in Northern Territory

schools. This government must place significant budgetary and policy importance on the provision of high-quality training and professional development to actively ensure a successful culture to support and strengthen the Territory's teaching profession in an ongoing way.

It is vitally important that Years 11 and 12 are retained as senior secondary levels of education. The CLP would invest in senior secondary education by building the senior secondary facility in Palmerston, and another in due course in Darwin city, and further support of Alice Springs.

We believe that Year 7s should be amalgamated into junior high schools. However, unlike this government's rush to push middle schools onto Territory families, the CLP promotes the conversion of Year 7 to middle schooling over the next four years, not at the beginning of the school year next year. We say that this practical time frame enables the development of the infrastructure and professional support required to ensure a smooth transition, when the educational needs of our children are not disrupted at the cost of government intrusion and mismanagement.

The quality and accountability of education in the Northern Territory needs to be guaranteed. The Country Liberal Party supports the rights of Territorians to scrutinise the education process in which they are active and, in some cases, very active participants. Accordingly, we would establish an independent unit within the Education Department, responsible to the minister, to advise the government on all aspects of quality in education and monitoring the service delivery of the Education Department to its clients so that deficiencies can be identified and addressed adequately, and in a timely manner, to warrant less disruption to the education process.

Everyone knows that literacy is fundamental to a child's future. The CLP is committed to ensuring all Territory children achieve high standards of literacy, and that they acquire essential reading skills to ensure that they are able to fully participate in both the school and wider community for their entire lives. The CLP in government would implement the lifelong learning program to encourage reading as a way of life. Giving children greater access to books, and promoting the enjoyment and rewards of reading to young Territorians through the lifelong learning program, is vitally important.

The first part of the CLP's proposed lifelong learning policy is Reading for Life, which seeks to instil a real passion for reading. Under the Reading for Life program, when a child in the Territory is immunised at 12 months of age, as an ongoing component of the National Immunisation program, the parents of that child will have a

choice of three books from an available book list of 10 to take home and read to their child. When a child reaches his or her fourth birthday, and is sent for the final round of immunisation under the National Immunisation program, the child's parents will again have a choice of three books from an available checklist of 10 to take home and share with their child. We understand that books alone do not work by themselves, and that parents are partners in their child's education. By involving the parents in this process of learning and taking books home and reading to their children at a very early age, it encourages children to value books and learning, and to develop a culture of reading and of lifelong learning.

Further, we would establish the Chief Minister's Reading Rewards Challenge, which is part two of the CLP's lifelong learning policy. It would be open to all students in Years 1, 3, 5 and 7 enrolled in government and independent schools and it would include home schooled students. The challenge would begin at the start of the school year and officially end by September of the same year. Students who accept the challenge will need to read 10 books during this period. Students who successfully complete the challenge will receive a certificate signed by the Chief Minister and book vouchers to the value of \$30.

Children who have access to books and who improve their reading are better students, and they are better human beings. In short, reading is a fundamental skill of life. Lifelong learning provides the best start that a child can have, and this type of initiative exists in other states in this country and it should do so here in the Northern Territory.

I now turn to health. How much of the budget has actually represented either new programs or mechanisms to deal with the actual problems that Territorians expect this government to address? It is not a long answer. It should have been clear to this government that its philosophy of pelting money at problems will not solve the systemic problems that exist in our health system. The budgetary allocations have grown every year, and they have grown significantly, but Territorians are not seeing better outcomes.

Territorians will recall that the Australian Labor Party promised to reduce waiting lists prior to 2001. Instead, elective surgery waiting lists have doubled, to be over 3000. What we have seen, for example, in October 2004 is a reduction in the number of operational beds. At the 2005 election this government promised to increase the number of beds in the Territory by 48. However, a closer examination of the fine print shows us those beds will not be available until 2009; coincidentally just in time for the next election. It might suit Labor's political agenda, but Territorians want such important services delivered now and Labor did

not tell them prior to the election they would have to wait until 2009.

Between the nurses' federation and the AMA, this government has been given a very poor report card on its capacity to address the Territory's health needs. There is example after example of failings: the lack of available beds; the shortfall of trained staff; doctors doing over and above recommended shifts; nurses being assaulted in casualty by patients who do not have respect for those delivering services; morale in our hospitals and in the department is at an all-time low; and paramedics are undertaking nursing roles – the list goes on and on. And yesterday, the Treasurer announced more money, but again, no plan to re-prioritise the health system's money and meet the demands and expectations, let alone deliver what it promised prior to the election.

It costs thousands of dollars to engage new staff into our health system, then we lose them, and every time we do we have to spend the money again. Today, I announced the CLP in government would move immediately to introduce an incentive scheme to not only get doctors and nurses to the Territory, but to keep them here, and that is the HECS incentive payment scheme, referred to as HIPS. In government we would immediately move to introduce HIPS. Under HIPS for every year a nurse or a doctor works in the Territory, we will pay one year of their HECS bill. If a nurse spends three years in the Territory following graduation, he or she will have their entire HECS bill paid. For doctors, if they spend five years in the Territory, their entire HECS bill will be paid. Not only do we want to retain those nursing graduates from CDU, but we want to encourage more people to take up nursing studies at CDU, and nursing and doctor graduates from other states to come and work in the Territory.

Real solutions need to be brought forward and implemented as the traditional offerings of wages through work hire companies are simply not enough nor sustainable. This scheme represents the first of a number of announcements the Country Liberal Party will articulate before the next election. However, like the other announcements I have made today, this is one that the government can and should adopt now and we will not mind, and Territorians will not mind, if you pinch some of these ideas.

It is important for us to propose real solutions because Territorians everywhere expect answers to these problems. If the government is unwilling or unable, I suspect it is a combination of both, to come up with ideas then the CLP will. While we have identified but a few, we demonstrate the point that instead of a budget of scraps, this budget could have been a budget to deliver a feast of solutions to the major problems facing

Territorians. It could have, and should have been, a budget to deliver all of the 48 new hospital beds promised, and one that certainly should have delivered the five-year-old promise of an oncology unit. But it did not and therefore it failed.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2006-07 is a budget of lost opportunity, wasted opportunity, and lost promises. The Territory has received more money than it has ever had before. The Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party, this Labor government, is the highest taxing government the Territory has ever had. Australia's economic climate is probably as good as it gets. Despite this incredibly significant factor, this government is taking us to unprecedented debt. At the same time, departmental budgets continue to blowout, and public service wages get larger, particularly for fat cat executives.

While all of this is happening, high quality service delivery is not being achieved. The mums and dads of the Territory want to see those services being delivered, they want to see better outcomes in law and order, health and education. Those services are the ones that all governments, any politician, should know and well understand. They are health, education and law and order. Sadly however, those areas seem only to come within Labor's collective consciousness at election time. Shame on this government. Labor may have forgotten how critical these areas are, but we and other Territorians have not.

Madam Speaker, I said at the outset that this government should have done better and that this Treasurer should have done better. Indeed, they should have. This budget stands condemned as the budget of lost opportunities.

Debate adjourned.

**VICTIMS OF CRIME
RIGHTS AND SERVICES BILL
(Serial 44)
VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE BILL
(Serial 45)**

Continued from 29 March 2006.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the bill is not supported nor should it be.

I would like to spend a moment dealing with some history under this government in relation to this important area. Labor changed the *Crimes (Victims Assistance) Act* in 2002. We had a lengthy debate, and at times very robust debate, and I was concerned that ultimately the government was going to go down this track. In fact, the Attorney-General indicated that he was always going to take us to the position we now have before us.

The problem however is that at the time the original amendments were made, the Attorney-General made much of the improvements. He talked about judicial registrars being appointed to deal with these matters, yet a judicial registrar has only recently been appointed in Alice Springs. He talked about how the amendments were designed to: 'streamline court procedures, improve efficiencies and better address the needs of victims'.

Clearly, by bringing in this bill, there is a concession that he has failed. The changes back then did not achieve what he wanted them to achieve. So I ask: what makes the Attorney-General think that the changes in this bill will be good for victims?

Here we are again and we have the Attorney-General saying this bill will be good for victims of crime in much the same way that he described in the bill in 2002. This bill will not - I do not know how to make this point more strongly - be good for victims of crime. In the course of my reply to this bill I plan to outline why this bill will sell victims of crime short.

I am sure the Attorney-General will not comment in his reply but I feel compelled to put on the *Parliamentary Record* that my take on this is that this is not an agenda driven by the Attorney-General himself. This is an agenda driven by others - a few of us know who they are. This is an agenda driven by public servants who, from 2002 and perhaps even earlier, were hell-bent on changing this scheme. If ever there was a case of a minister being captured by his public service, it is the Attorney-General - a man who, for the most part, I like and respect. However, on this important issue, he has been sold a pup. It is very unfortunate that he does not even know why.

There are a number of components that I would like to deal with in this reply. The Attorney-General has represented that there was consultation about this bill. No, there was not! The Law Society Northern Territory and the Northern Territory Police Association have said in very clear terms they were not consulted. If they were not, why were they not? Who was consulted? The public servants were the ones who were consulted. The people in the minister's office and in the department appear to be the only ones. It is irresponsible in the extreme to bring this legislation into this parliament and not consult with two major stakeholders - the Law Society and the Police Association.

The day before the Attorney-General introduced this bill during the last sittings, when I saw his media release and other documentation, I issued a media release and touched upon just a

couple of problems with this bill. Since then, I have had time to carefully study the bill as well as consult with others. It is, and should be, abundantly clear to the Attorney-General that it does not have - and nor should it - widespread support. I will go through in detail why this bill should not be supported.

It would be churlish and unconscionable of me if I did not point out one - and there is just one - positive aspect of this bill. It is important that I sleep well at night, and I am very happy to give the Attorney-General and his offsiders praise for this. I am sure it will interest some members in the Chamber today. The proposal that sexual assault victims will no longer need to prove a specific injury is worthy of support. When I practised as a lawyer, I did a lot of work for victims of sexual assault under the existing scheme, the one before that and probably the one before that. Therefore, I can speak with a degree of confidence about these changes and, in particular, how they will affect victims of crime, and sexual assault victims in particular.

I am very pleased that victims of sexual assault will no longer be forced to prove an injury. There are very few things, in my experience as a lawyer, more upsetting than acting for a victim of sustained child sexual abuse, or a rape victim, and telling them that they are required to prove to the satisfaction of the court that they have suffered an injury. Women do not understand why that should be the case. It is distressing for them to be sent to a psychologist or a psychiatrist so that we, as lawyers, can obtain evidence to show that they suffered a mental injury. It should go without saying. I am very pleased that this is acknowledged in the bill, albeit according to the second reading speech that it is to be contained in a yet unseen table to appear in yet unseen regulations. In any event, I note the intent and am very pleased to see it. For some of us, we have waited a long time.

Sadly, there are some aspects of the bill that show no understanding at all of some forms of sexual assault, particularly for victims of sustained child sexual abuse and victims of multiple rapes. I will deal with those very important matters later.

Before dealing with a range of matters, I wish to make it clear that the government has represented that this scheme is a generous one. No, it is not! It is, and will be, the meanest in this country. The maximum is the lowest in the country. In other states and territories, the maximums vary from \$50 000 to \$75 000 with one jurisdiction offering \$100 000. This is the meanest compensation scheme going.

I now turn to some issues that I raised in a media release issued the day before the

Attorney-General introduced this bill. I said in my release of 27 March 2006:

It creates a new layer of bureaucracy, and puts public servants in charge of awarding claims for compensation. This may lead to victims questioning whether there are competing interests: paying out government money, or trying to save it. The unit that will administer the scheme has no judicial oversight.

I and others say that is a cause for concern.

I now turn to the minimum threshold provision and also quote - although I will add to it - from my media release dated 27 March 2006:

Another change is that there is a minimum amount a victim can claim for an injury. Victims cannot recover any payment for an injury worth less than \$7500. If you cop a broken beer glass in the face, you have to make sure it is worth \$7500. If it is deemed not to be worth that amount, you cannot claim. Under Labor, this minimum means that victims of crime have to meet a 'tariff' imposed by government. It is offensive.

It is absolutely offensive that a minimum threshold of \$7500 applies. I note in the Attorney-General's second reading speech that he justified his position by referring to the fact that it occurs in a couple of other jurisdictions. Put simply, those other jurisdictions do not have the same per capita rates of assaults that we have in the Northern Territory. In any event, there is nothing in his speech that could be regarded as remotely persuasive about the need to have a minimum threshold. In this regard, I note that the Law Society has had a bit to say on the issue, and somewhat refreshingly, according to some in the Territory's legal profession, some other parts of the bill.

Further, I note that the Police Association has expressed outrage at the Attorney-General's proposal. It is appropriate that I refer to what those organisations have had to say. The Law Society, in its media release dated 9 April 2006 said: 'If the proposed changes to crimes victims assistance goes ahead many victims will be worse off'. It goes on: 'Many worthy recipients will receive less money or nothing at all'. The Law Society also provided an example in a question and answer sheet that accompanied its media release. This is a good way to illustrate the point. Example three:

Victim F receives a sprained back as a result of a criminal act. He suffers disability from it for several months. Under the new scheme, victim F's injury is unlikely to reach

the \$7500 threshold. He will be compensated for loss of earnings and medical expenses, but this is capped to \$10 000. This type of injury may involve extensive time off work and expensive medical bills which could exceed the \$10 000 limit.

The Law Society also provided a table of injuries which would not be compensated under this new scheme, and it includes things like:

1. Head:

- *burns (other than face) minor;*
- *burns (face minor)*
- *scaring (face) minor disfigurement;*
- *scarring (other than face) significant disfigurement;*
- *simple skull fracture (no operation);*

It lists injuries for ears, eyes, facial, nose, teeth and tongue, lower limbs, neck, torso, and upper limbs. Let us have a look at the lower limbs:

one fractured ankle (full recovery);

sprain of both ankles (disabling for at least 6 to 13 weeks);

burns (minor);

fractured thigh bone (full recovery);

fractured fibula (full recovery)

fracture of one foot (full recovery);

knee injury requiring arthroscopy, no fracture ...

It goes on. These are the sorts of injuries that will not be compensated in the Northern Territory as a result of an assault or a violent act under the Australian Labor Party. I am very happy to table this list. The comments in my media release were to the effect that, if you are in a brawl and you are hit in the face with a broken beer glass, you better make sure that you add to your injuries somehow if you are to have any chance of claiming under this government because, unless a bureaucrat deems, under a table, and we have not seen the table yet, a particular injury meets the \$7500 threshold, Territorians will not get compensated. That is not fair, nor is it just. It is completely at odds with the concept of compensation under this scheme as it existed, - the first one existed probably in the early 1980s - and it is at odds with

the thinking behind schemes all around this country, and it is a crying shame.

I will quote from the Police Association's media release dated 10 April 2006:

The new legislation will effectively exclude the vast majority of our members from access to crimes compensation for pain and suffering.

It goes on and says:

The Justice minister and his bureaucrats have determined that a broken nose, burns and cuts are 'minor' injuries that require no compensation for pain and suffering.

It is the case, based on advice given to the Police Association that things like concussions, dislocated fingers and shoulders, smashed teeth, sprains, serious bruising, black eyes, bloody nose, cuts and abrasions, and burns will no longer be eligible for compensation for physical injuries under this legislation. It is even likely that moderate psychiatric disorders and relatively significant mental distress will also cease to be compensated.

This is an extraordinary piece of legislation. Thank God the Law Society and the Police Association care enough about it to issue media releases. They have been lobbying the Attorney-General and I will come to an area that I know in particular they were lobbying, and which I understand will be changed. I have a copy of the Law Society's submission to the Attorney-General. I do not propose to go through it any more. I assume he has read it, or at least his staffers have read it. Most of the difficulties I have with this bill are echoed by the Territory's Law Society.

Now, you guys wheel out the Law Society whenever it suits you. On an issue like this, you did not say in your media releases or anywhere else that the Law Society thinks it is rubbish. You did not say that Police Association also thinks its rubbish. There is hypocrisy and double standards at work here. That is politics under the Northern Territory branch of the Australian Labor Party, but it is not fair, and it is not just to victims of crime and members of the Law Society and the Police Association expected much better. Some of them even voted for you. In fact, a great many of them voted for you. Yet you are delivering the most draconian, absurd and offensive piece of legislation which has to be in the top five of ridiculous bills I have dealt with since I have been a politician.

I now turn to work health. One of the reasons the Police Association is unhappy with the changes is that police officers who are injured in

the course of their employment will not be able to claim for pain and suffering because the *Work Health Act* does not provide for this. This aspect of the legislation contained in clause 18 is not just a concern for police officers. The fact is that under Labor it will be the case that any person who is injured in the course of their employment will not have a claim for pain and suffering - this was their intention. They might amend it but I have not seen any amendments yet; I have not been given the usual courtesy.

I am glad the member for Johnston is here because these Labor government changes, sport, mean that nurses, teachers, prison officers, ambulance workers and so on are precluded from claiming. This is from the party, from the very man who says Labor is the party for the workers. Where is the workers party? You go to your May Day celebrations and stroll down the street putting your arm around all of your so-called worker mates, and you are delivering them this garbage. I do not even know whether the Attorney-General is going to follow through and amend it. How dare you. How can you sleep at night? You come in here and provide this rubbish and have the audacity to say you and your party represents Australian workers. They do not represent Territory workers. You can bet your bottom dollar that I will tell the workers of the Northern Territory, in particular the ones I have referred to, that under your legislation you are washing your hands of them. This is unspeakably offensive legislation.

Madam Speaker, I note the time, but I do have quite a bit more to get through.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition at 12 pm there is a committee meeting. Perhaps you may want to continue on after Question Time?

Ms CARNEY: I will keep going until you stop me, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you.

Ms CARNEY: How Labor deals with its hypocrisy is a matter for their rank and file members, many of whom I know. You can bet your bottom dollar that I will tell them, and I bet you, ministers of government and backbenchers, that you have not even told your constituency about these changes. You probably slipped it through saying these are going to be good changes for workers with your usual spin. Well, you can spin on us and your fellow Territorians, but if you even spin on your own membership then you deserve to be voted out at the next election. We will do everything we can to ensure that that is possible.

I now turn to the difficulties with the rates for injuries to be prescribed in a yet unseen table to

be contained in yet unseen regulations. The Law Society prepared a table of proposed rates based on what happens in New South Wales. In other words, in a very simple sense it is a list of tables and it has 'severed arm' and it gives a dollar figure, and it might have somewhere else 'split head, broken ribs and a dozen bruises', and it will give you another figure. That will be the financial list that the government bureaucrat will need to stick to when victims of crime see him and say: 'Can I have some compensation, please?' The table that the Law Society circulated was, as I understand it, prepared by the well known and respected law firm, Morgan Buckley.

Over and above the objections outlined about the injuries listed on that table not being compensable, the fact is that this parliament and therefore the people of the Northern Territory have no idea what the rates for injuries will be. We are being asked to support a bill we simply do not know enough about. I feel certain the Attorney-General does not even know what the rates are going to be. That is, you are not able to claim for an injury worth less than \$7500, but from \$7500 up, no one knows. All we can go on is some tables from New South Wales. We do not even know whether they are going to apply in the Territory. It is going to be administered by a bureaucrat. All of this is highly questionable.

I know this legislation will pass by dint of the numbers, but I ask members of Labor's backbench to ask whether they, as elected members of this Assembly, think it is reasonable to vote in support of a bill that seeks to prescribe rates for compensation for injuries without knowing what those rates will be. Is that fair and reasonable? If Labor members do not believe me then I invite them to look at clause 7 of the bill which states very clearly that the rate of injuries will be prescribed by regulation. Talk about a wing and a prayer. I do not know whether the Attorney-General has even worded up his backbenchers to give them an indication as to how much various serious injuries are worth. I bet they do not know and, judging from past performances, I bet they do not care. It is a group over there that will ensure that this legislation passes. Half of them, I am sure - probably most of them, do not even know what the rates for injuries are going to be. Talk about going into something with your eyes closed.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, are you willing to continue your remarks after Question Time?

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Debate suspended until after Question Time.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of visitors who are part of the Parliament House public tour program. On behalf of honourable members I extend a very warm welcome to our visitors.

Members: Hear, hear!

VICTIMS OF CRIME RIGHTS AND SERVICES BILL (Serial 44) VICTIMS OF CRIME ASSISTANCE BILL (Serial 45)

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, for the benefit of members of the gallery who were not here earlier, I was opposing the changes to the existing crime victims' assistance legislation. The Labor government of the Northern Territory proposes some outrageous reforms which amounts to a complete demolition of the system that we have had in the Northern Territory for many years by which victims of crime can claim amounts of compensation for pain and suffering in respect of injuries received from a violent act.

Before the luncheon adjournment I made many comments but I will recap them as follows. There was no consultation with the Police Association or the Law Society in relation to these changes. Not my words, theirs. I believe that it is extraordinary that there was no consultation, and I gather that they share my view. One of the concerns expressed by me the day before the minister for Justice introduced this bill last month was that the new scheme creates a layer of bureaucracy, and it puts public servants in charge of awarding claims for compensation. I suggested that victims may then question whether there are competing interests ; paying out government money on the one hand or, on the other, trying to save it. That is a genuine concern expressed to me since my media release of 27 March 2006.

In that media release, I also referred to the minimum threshold of \$7500 under this new proposed scheme. It is the case that, today in the Northern Territory, if you suffer an injury from a violent act or an assault or such like, you have a right to claim compensation. There is no minimum threshold. The Law Society Northern Territory published a table of injuries and they suggested a person who sustained these injuries would not be eligible if they were assaulted under the new scheme. They included, and it is a two page list, things like a dislocated jaw, fractured cheek bones, fractured jaw bones, a fractured ankle, sprain of both ankles, burns, and fractured thigh

bone, it went on, and even referred to a skull fracture, and for the burns to the neck. If your neck is strained by reason of one of these assaults and you are disabled for more than 13 weeks, according to the Law Society's table, their concern is that you would not be eligible for compensation in the Northern Territory. It is, in fact, a very extensive list.

The Police Association was concerned that many of their members would no longer be able to claim compensation, similarly, in the event that their injuries did not get up to the \$7500 threshold. The Police Association, in its media release dated 10 April, said:

The new legislation will effectively exclude the vast majority of our members from access to crimes compensation for pain and suffering.

They went on to say:

The Justice minister and his bureaucrats have determined that a broken nose, burns and cuts are 'minor' injuries that require no compensation for pain and suffering.

The Law Society said in its media release of 9 April:

If the proposed changes to crimes victims assistance go ahead many victims will be worse off.

They went on to say that many worthy recipients will receive less money or nothing at all under the new system.

Prior to lunch, I also referred to the outrageous situation - although in fairness I understand that it is to be amended by the Attorney-General today as a result of a last ditch and desperate effort of the Law Society Northern Territory and the Police Association.

However, the intentions of this government when it comes to the work health implications were significant, and I doubted whether members of the Labor Caucus even knew anything about it. I noted the hypocrisy of everyone on that side of the House, in particular the member for Johnston, who came in here today and waxed lyrical about the rights of workers and so on. I suggested to him that for Labor - being the great party of the workers according to the member for Johnston - to even contemplate, let alone introduce as they did a month ago, legislation into this House that can affect the ability of nurses, teachers, prison officers, ambulance officers, and so on, to claim compensation is as outrageous as it is hypocritical. It is hypocritical. You are hypocrites! That is coming from the party that claims to be the party

for the workers. I raised my concern that members of Caucus did not know about this and, if they did, one wonders how many of them would have rocked up to the May Day marches earlier this week.

I propose to have a great deal to say about these proposed changes as time goes on. They may well seek to amend those parts of the bill that were introduced a month or so ago, but the fact that they were even contemplated is, in my view, outrageous. That was where I got up to prior to lunch.

I now go on to some other matters that explain why this bill is outrageous and offensive. In particular, I and others are deeply troubled by the part of the bill, clause 5, which defines a violent act. It is clear that victims of sustained child abuse and multiple rapes will only have one claim - one claim - for pain and suffering. This is a retrograde step and one that is worthy of condemnation from all and sundry. Put simply, if a violent act is committed over a period of time by the same person, under this new scheme only one claim can be made. One claim for pain and suffering for victims of years of sustained child abuse or multiple rapes committed over hours or days means they can only get a maximum amount of compensation of \$40 000. Under the existing scheme, such victims can have multiple claims or applications.

I cannot help but think that this is a cost-cutting exercise, because I know - and anyone who practices or practiced in the area knows - that these types of claims are the ones that cost a lot of money. I used to practice in the area. I have had claims for multiple rape victims, or child abuse victims, where there might have been seven, 10, or 14 counts and you make a claim for each one. Not anymore in the Northern Territory under this scheme. Victims can only claim once. Admittedly, they get a bit more; it increases from \$25 000 to \$40 000. However, they used to have the ability to make a number of claims. Awards of, say, between \$100 000 to \$200 000 were not uncommon in these types of claims. These days, they will only have the ability to make one application for \$40 000. If that does not disadvantage women and children who are the victims of sexual assault and crimes of sexual violence, I do not know what does. I am genuinely appalled and stunned about this part in particular of this package.

I ask: why should not these victims be entitled to more than one claim? The offenders will be charged with more than one offence. So, we have a situation where, under the criminal justice system, an offender might be charged of, say, 10 counts of rape or sexual assault, and the victim, if it proceeds to trial, will be required to go through

the horrific details of each and every one of the offences, and the Crown will need to establish to the satisfaction of the jury and beyond reasonable doubt that each offence was committed. However, under this scheme, a victim will not be entitled to claim for each offence. It is as offensive as it is bizarre.

Other than state my very strong objections, I doubt that I can do more. However, I do note that the Law Society is concerned about this issue. It referred to it in its question and answer document which accompanied its media release a few weeks ago. I should also make the point that Labor members of this House, particularly the women, should ask themselves whether they are comfortable with this aspect of the bill. By voting in support of it, I and others can only assume that they are supportive of it. I did think that a couple of them, given their stated concerns about women victims of sexual assaults, should act courageously and oppose this bill. I make mention in particular of the members for Macdonnell, Arafura and Karama. They should not support these changes. They no doubt will, and I suppose, ultimately, that is a matter for their constituents, their credibility and, most importantly, their conscience.

I now turn to another aspect of this bill which should not be supported. Over and above the objections to which I have just referred, there is another reason why this bill discriminates against victims of sexual assault who have suffered repeated offences. Under the existing scheme, victims can lodge multiple claims. If, say, there are 10 incidences of rape, then currently a victim lodges 10 claims and they will receive an award for each one. It is not uncommon for them to receive something in the vicinity of \$15 000 to \$25 000 for each one. Although the maximum now under this proposal is \$40 000, only one application can be filed, hence there can be no doubt that, under this new scheme, victims will receive less. It is simple arithmetic.

I ask: is that the purpose of this bill? Does that give the Attorney-General cause for pride? Is that a great achievement? I think not. I am very critical of this aspect of the bill, but would like to propose a way around it, even though I doubt the government will act on it.

I would prefer it if the ability to make multiple applications still existed. However, given that government has been hell-bent on peeling back this scheme for the better part of three years, I note their determination. I propose, and I hope the Attorney-General and his staffers are listening, that there should be a special case provision so that victims of multiple sexual assaults should be given an award which is greater than \$40 000. I note with interest that the Law Society has

proposed a similar solution, such as giving the director discretion to allow more than one application where the number of offences exceeds a specific period. The Attorney-General should introduce these amendments or something very similar to them at the next sittings.

Another serious concern and reservation I have about this bill, and it is a troubling one, is the counselling the government has proposed. The Attorney-General said in his second reading speech: 'victims' services in the Territory are currently inefficient and uncoordinated'. He said this bill will change that. No it will not. I ask the Attorney-General to explain how and why he thinks this bill will improve it.

The Attorney-General said tenders were going to be called to provide a counselling service. This raises several issues such as where is, and what is, the funding allocation for this purpose? Exactly how much is government prepared to pay? Does the Attorney-General support an outsourcing of services to the private sector? What, if any, role will be played by government? That is an important question which I will come back to.

Can the Attorney-General be sure that agencies who tender - who of course do so for the purposes of making profits - will be up to the task with which they have been charged; what types of organisations might do it; and what sort of training will the counsellors be required to have? They are important and, to date unanswered, issues and questions. I also ask what mechanisms will exist to ensure that victims in remote communities will be adequately catered for by the private sector? That is a question I would have thought some of Labor's indigenous women members might have raised with the Attorney-General, or it might even prompt them to oppose this bill.

Another question: is it culturally appropriate, for instance, for a white man who may be employed by such a successful tender to be counselling an Aboriginal woman who has been raped? What if that service only has white men? I ask whether the Attorney-General is remotely worried about this? I also ask the question in relation to domestic violence, which we all know is at alarmingly high proportions.

I ask further, who will tender? In Alice Springs, for instance, I can only think of one person who would be well qualified to do this work, particularly counselling of sexual assault victims. That is Michael Tyrrell, whom, I am sure, the Attorney-General knows. I am not aware of anyone else with his level of expertise - which is the level of expertise that is required. If anyone thinks otherwise, then they are kidding themselves and they show no insight into some of these issues. I am not aware of anyone else in Alice Springs, in

the private sector, with Michael Tyrrell's expertise. I ask the Attorney-General in his reply: who is going to service Alice Springs and Central Australia, and who does he think is going to service the remote communities?

I ask: will there be a role for government in terms of the counselling that it proposes? Members will recall that for the most part counselling is designed to replace what could be considered financial compensation under the present scheme. Will there be a role for those in the government sector? Will government allocate resources for specialist counsellors employed by, for instance, the Department of Health and Community Services? That is a very serious question and I would be personally grateful if the Attorney-General would answer it. I also ask: will government consider attaching counsellors and/or social workers to each of the main hospitals so at least government has some responsibility to do something in this very serious area? This is a positive proposal and in the event you come back to it, Attorney-General, you might look at it in the future.

They are just some of the questions and issues the Attorney-General did not deal with in his second reading speech. Nor has he dealt with them since introducing the legislation.

It seems the government will have no obligation to victims of crime under this bill. Government seems to be washing its hands of any responsibility. I do not know what the budgetary allocation is but even if it is \$400 000, that is not going to get you very many specialist counsellors around the Northern Territory. That is beer money when it comes to this stuff. I look forward to hearing from the Attorney-General as to budgetary allocations.

Another issue that arises is the personnel of the unit charged with responsibility of administering this scheme. At present, to my knowledge, there are two law firms in Alice Springs which consistently do this sort of work, and about six in Darwin. As I understand it, and I am happy to be corrected if I am mistaken, the new unit is going to have about four to six people. The number of applicants will not decrease given the high rates of crime. So my question is: how does the government propose to address the shortfall in personnel? I cannot see that government has even turned its mind to that issue. So if you have a lot of people working in the area now assisting victims of crime, and you are only going to have four to six, surely that is a problem.

Another troubling aspect of this bill is the one relating to appeals. There is an appeal provision. However, the question needs to be asked as to how hard will it be for a victim to obtain the

services of a lawyer. Obviously a successful party can recover costs but I fear that there will be reluctance on the part of private lawyers to act unless clients deposit significant sums into lawyers' trust accounts. Most lawyers, as we know, require this. My question is: what effect will this have on victims who do not have an ability to do so? Is it the intention of government to discourage and make it as hard as possible for victims of crime to pursue their legal rights? This is not a good outcome and one that is not fair for victims.

Another issue of concern I have is in relation to the commencement of the legislation. In the second reading speech, the Attorney-General said:

The scheme will apply to all applications made after the act commences, even if the offence occurred prior to that date.

I agree that there should be a clear cut-off date, but this, with respect, is not the way to do it. Questions have to be asked about victims who are halfway through getting their cases worked up. If a victim of multiple rapes is working with her lawyer on multiple applications for a series of rapes that occurred six months ago, will she only have one claim? From what the Attorney-General said in his second reading speech, the answer is she will only have one claim – that is not fair.

Another example - what if a victim has been working on his case with a lawyer and under the new scheme the injury does not meet the minimum threshold? Does he have a claim? No, apparently not. And what is he going to do about his legal fees?

Finally, if a client does not meet the threshold, there are legal cost implications that have been incurred to date because the new scheme makes no provision for legal representation and associated costs. My question is: does the person, not only under this new regime, under the commencement provisions, no longer have a claim, but are they also lumped with the legal bill? Is that fair? Is that reasonable? No. Is it good for victims? No. It is plainly unjust.

I now move on to moneys owed by offenders. One of the concerns expressed by government that is used to justify these changes is that the recovery from offenders is low and legal costs are high; that is the mantra peddled by the minister's staffers since 2002. This is, on the face of it, a cost cutting exercise. This is designed to reduce costs; government has been obsessed about. The government only recovered 6% of money from offenders last year according to the Auditor-General's most recent report. There is \$11.5m from offenders outstanding. My question is: what

has government done about that? Nothing. They have let the offenders off the hook and in return penalised victims of crime. This is a disgrace.

The Attorney-General was concerned in 2002 when he started his assault on this scheme. He said when introducing amendments to the act on 22 August 2002: 'The cost of the scheme in the previous financial year was over \$5.5m ...'. He was concerned about that but not in the slightest way concerned about recovery from offenders. It is hypocrisy to say the least.

Turning now to the part of the bill that deals with the review, the Attorney-General has made it very clear that he will review the scheme in three years. My view, and presumably the Attorney-General will not take it on board but I am imploring him to do so, is that three years is too long for such a significant and, in my view, detrimental bundle of changes. A review does need to occur in 18 months; three years is simply too long.

For the most part, with the exception of the positive aspect I referred to at the beginning, this is not good for victims. The government's spin, suggesting to the people of the Northern Territory that this is good for victims, is just profoundly dishonest.

I have seen you blokes operate for nearly five years now, and I have seen you get up to all sorts of things, but this! How in conscience can you do this? How in conscience can the Labor women members of this Assembly and, in particular, the indigenous Labor members of this Assembly, sit back and do nothing? I doubt that they will have the courage to say anything in the course of this debate. I am disappointed but not surprised.

The minimum threshold as outlined by the Law Society, the Police Association and others is not on. If you want to have a minimum threshold, pick \$1000, do not make it \$7500, otherwise people in brawls all over the place will have to ensure, as someone said to me recently, that they will need to get a bloody good kicking rather than just a half-good kicking. This is unfair; it is not good for victims. It is an 'access to justice' issue. I have heard Labor politicians talking over the years about access to justice – a pretty groovy concept in the mind of some Labor members of parliament. Well, you have to follow through. There are a number of victims of crime in the Northern Territory who simply will not benefit from this scheme, and it is alarming.

Madam Speaker, I am not suggesting for a moment that the existing scheme did not need some amendments and improvements here and there. However, these wholesale changes are disgusting. What you have done for women victims and the victims of child abuse is dreadful. I

know the Attorney-General thinks he is a man of conscience - on occasions, so do I - but this will have to be on your conscience for years to come. I undertake right now to repeal this legislation if and when the CLP wins government at the next election.

Mr HENDERSON (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Madam Speaker, I support this legislation. The Leader of the Opposition does a great line in feigned indignation. She gets up on her high horse, carries on and hypothesises, and is condescending to other members of this parliament who have taken the time to get across this legislation and understand where it came from. The terms of reference went out to many groups in our communities and they have helped us in bringing this legislation to this parliament. However, all we hear from the Leader of the Opposition is feigned indignation and condescending references to other members of this House and their capacity to understand this legislation.

If the Leader of the Opposition was so appalled by this major legislation, as she claims, then she has a responsibility to at least test some of the assertions that she has made in this parliament today in a full and open briefing with legal officers of the Department of Justice who have put this legislation together. No, she deliberately does not do that. She does not actually test her banal assertions against people who could actually take her through the legislation, the scheme, and how it would work because then it would be very hard for her to run her political lines with any credibility knowing that she had been told the truth about how this legislation and scheme would work, and the assertions she wants to make about it are so patently wrong.

We now have a real behavioural attribute evolving from the Leader of the Opposition when she is the main spokesperson on legislation in this parliament. Very rarely, if ever, does she seek to get briefed on the legislation that is coming before the House. I find that very sad in regards to a decent public policy debate on important legislation. The Leader of the Opposition just wants to play politics with hyperbole, as opposed to actually understanding the legislation, the need for it, and where it has come from.

I am sure my colleague, the Justice minister, in wrapping up his comments, will speak at length on some of the banal assertions the Leader of the Opposition has made in the parliament today.

This change to the *Crimes (Victims Assistance) Act* has really been borne from reviews that have been going on for many years. I do not know if the Leader of the Opposition is aware of a body titled the Crime Victims Advisory Committee and who is

on that body. Essentially, that committee played a large part in framing the legislation that we have before us today. If the Leader of the Opposition had bothered to actually avail herself of a briefing, she would have been advised of this. The composition of the Crime Victims Advisory Committee includes a legal practitioner from outside government; a medical practitioner from outside government; two members from victims support organisations; a chairman, who is a current magistrate; a Department of Justice representative; a Corrections representative; police representatives; health representatives; and the head of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre.

The Opposition Leader tries to pull the heartstrings and the feigned indignation that we are abandoning women and kids and people who are victims of sexual assault. She does it over and over again. We have had the head of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre contributing to this, two general ministerial appointments and five non-government representatives. There is a comprehensive group of professional people who are advising the Department of Justice and the minister in the overhaul and reform of this particular scheme. A direct quote from the 1997 report - so this goes back to the previous government's term of office - says:

Above all, the committee was of the mind that there should be a move away from financial assistance to provision of services to achieve rehabilitation.

We have a policy debate here, a significant policy argument, where the Leader of the Opposition wants to run the line that the only relief available to victims of crime should be cash payments: give somebody a bucket of money and that will make everything better. That is what the Leader of the Opposition wants to assert in here today.

This august body, the Crime Victims Advisory Committee, has determined that, to benefit victims, there should be a move away from financial assistance to provision of services to achieve rehabilitation. The CVAC also recommended in a report that came down in 1997 to increase the level of financial assistance to \$25 000, and the CLP refused to move on it. So much for crying wolf about raising of the maximum eligible amount that is mandated in this bill. One of the problems CVAC mentioned with the current scheme is that lawyers still see the scheme as being compensation rather than focusing on assistance. It was never meant to be a compensation scheme. It was never meant to be access to a bucket of money, as exists under the *Work Health Act* or tort law. Instead, CVA is an acknowledgement of injury, an attempt to assist the victim to recover.

The Leader of the Opposition, in her blanket refusal to take responsibility and actually understand the basis for legislative change, is allowed to run banal lines in here and to be unaccountable for the lines that she runs. I say to the Leader of the Opposition that the tirade of abuse against our hard-working public servants, such as 'fat cats', and 'layers of bureaucracy' - we had the member for Blain on radio this afternoon saying that there would be forced redundancies under the CLP - continues in debate on this bill where, condescendingly, the Leader of the Opposition talks about a layer of bureaucracy that is going to be implemented into the scheme.

Well, I tell you what, Leader of the Opposition, I would rather have a layer of bureaucracy than a layer of legal argument of costs which exists under the existing scheme. My advice is that \$1.88m of the scheme went on legal costs last year - nearly 40% of the cost of the running of this scheme. So, the Leader of the Opposition champions a layer of legal argument and costs, as opposed to an administrative scheme which is fairly clear and simple to administer. More importantly, in regard to victims, under the current scheme with legal arguments embedded in it - the lawyers do very well out of it, no wonder they are bleating - people can wait up to three years for any compensation at all. If the Leader of the Opposition believes that somehow that is in the best interests of victims, then she has a different definition of best interests.

The Leader of the Opposition is looking after the best interests of her loyal mates and their capacity to do very well out of this scheme - \$1.88m worth of legal costs coming out of the scheme, 40% of the scheme, as opposed to putting in an administratively-based scheme in place.

When she talks about this current legislation being outrageous, offensive, bizarre and disgusting - just some of the adjectives that she used - you could almost argue that people waiting for three years and 40% of the costs of the scheme going in legal argument is pretty outrageous and bizarre and had to be reined in.

She mentioned that many victims are going to be worse off. If you are increasing the amount of money which can be claimed from \$25 000 to \$40 000, and with other elements of the scheme including immediate up-front payments of up to \$5000 for economic loss, out-of-pocket expenses such as medical relocation and loss of earnings, I do not see how you can run that argument. The responsibility when debating legislation is to actually get informed as to how the scheme works rather than make comments that many people are actually going to be worse off. I will tell you the people who are going to be worse off out of this,

and that is the lawyers. It is not going to be many victims.

The Leader of the Opposition, with her bleeding heart, asserts that there will be many police who will not be able to claim given the new threshold, and also says that the government is walking away from supporting police officers who put themselves in harm's way. Nothing could be further from the truth. For the Leader of the Opposition, fact is stranger than fiction. She wants to live in a fictitious land where everything that is current is hunky dory.. The facts are that our police officers are very well looked after and so they should be in regards to injuries that they may sustain in the course of their employment.

Police officers are covered by the provisions of the *Work Health Act* for an injury that has arisen out of, or in the course of, his or her employment. Under this act, injury is defined to include physical or mental injury arising out of, or in the course of, the worker's employment. In brief, these provisions include costs incurred as a result of hospital, medical, surgical and rehabilitation treatment. The provisions extend to home cleaning, gardening assistance, and travel and accommodation costs associated with any rehabilitation or medical treatment. I can say arrangements are in place within our police force outside of the 26 weeks where 100% of normal weekly earnings are paid as a result of a work health claim. If a police officer is significantly and genuinely injured in the course of their duties, arrangements are in place to ensure those police officers are not out-of-pocket financially, neither are their families, and ongoing salary maintenance is provided.

Assistance is also provided to employees suffering from a personal injury or illness through services provided by its welfare unit and chaplain. The police also have a restricted duty and return to work policy that provides a framework which ensures consistent and appropriate management of members returning to work in either a full-time or partial capacity as a result of a medical condition that restricted their ability to perform normal duties.

The police also provide a *Keeping in Touch* program for employees who are absent from the workplace to maintain a strong link to their employer and assist in their transition back to work by remaining informed of organisational activities and initiatives, maintaining technical and professional knowledge with access to information regarding training opportunities and other material, and maintaining social contact with the local workplace. On top of that there is a welfare unit and chaplaincy support which is now being extended to Alice Springs.

I can confidently say, as police minister, that in the event a police officer does sustain a significant injury, or any injury in the course of their employment, they are very well looked after, and so they should be.

The Police Association issued a release on 27 April 2006 in regards to an attack on an off duty police officer in Alice Springs which occurred recently. It was a pretty outrageous and cowardly attack with a police officer hospitalised as a result. The Police Association President, Vince Kelly, has been corrected, but he said in his release:

The other appalling aspect of this attack is that under the government's proposed new victims compensation regimen our member would in all likelihood be excluded from any financial compensation.

Nothing could be further from the truth because he was off duty at the time and he can claim. But this is some of the misinformation that is being put about and amplified by the Leader of the Opposition. The reason that she is able to amplify the misinformation is because she has not accepted responsibility on her part as the shadow Justice spokesperson to get a briefing on the legislation and understand how it works. Then she can talk from a position of knowledge as opposed to a position of feigned indignation and condescending abuse that she tends to hurl around this Chamber. She would be doing her job far better and better serving the people of the Northern Territory by being informed about changes to legislation as opposed to hypothesising, speculating and amplifying assertions that are patently not true.

I can think of a number of examples where officers who are injured either in the course of their duties or on holidays, where the police do take extraordinary steps to ensure that their officers are looked after. They will continue to do so because we expect them to step into areas that most of us would step away from.

In regards to assertions that large numbers of police officers will lose access to financial compensation and there is going to be a significant detriment to a large body of people, I can say that with over 1000 members in our police force at the moment over the last two years we have seen less than 1% claim; that is between only eight to 10 claims a year. So, to run the line that there is significant detriment to a large number of people is patently not borne out by the facts as to how the current scheme operates.

I will attest there is no significant detriment to any police officer in regards to the amendments proposed by this scheme. The facts as to the current scheme as opposed to the new scheme

and the support that police as an organisation put behind injured officers do not line up with what has historically occurred and is occurring now.

If the Leader of the Opposition took the time, and took seriously her responsibilities as the Leader of the Opposition and shadow spokesperson for Justice, she would get a briefing on these issues. So when she comes in here and runs those lines that she runs in total opposite to what she has been briefed on then at least she knows she is running a political line. I suppose she knows that anyway.

In closing, I support my colleague, the Justice minister, in bringing this legislation before the House. It is a better deal for the victims of crime. It comes on top of very significant reform over the first term of government: an additional \$70 000 a year to Victims of Crime NT to expand their services; increasing the victims of crime scheme by 16%; introducing witness intimidation laws; and giving victims a say in sentencing at the parole board and through victim offender conferencing. This legislation also provides for free counselling.

As a local member I have spoken to a few constituents who are concerned that if they are a victim of a significant and serious assault that they want to know what happens to that person as they pass through the legal system, and through the courts if a custodial sentence is imposed, so they know where that person is in the system. A register is going to be put in place so that victims will be able to track where people are in the system.

This has been a very significant body of work. It has been ongoing in its development over many years. The previous government started the ball rolling back in 1997 and was advised at the time to move away from financial assistance to provision of services to achieve rehabilitation. That is what all of us in this House want to see. We want to see people being rehabilitated, getting their lives back in order, so that they, as a victim of crime, can participate in our broader society and community without fear or anxiety as a full member of the community again. This is what the scheme will provide, as opposed to a lucky dip which currently exists that depends on how good your lawyer is, how long it takes to get through the court system, and how much you get – but, by the way, 40% of the cost of the scheme is going to go back to the lawyers.

Madam Speaker, I fully support my colleague, the minister for Justice, in bringing this bill to the House today. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I will talk briefly on these two bills. Unfortunately, I have had insufficient time to get a briefing. Originally,

we were under the impression that this might have been going to the next sittings of parliament. It has come forward to these sittings, so I have had to do my own research on this. I have some issues I would like the minister to give a response to in his summing up.

In relation to the actual setting up of the CVSU, I read it a couple of times and tried to get in my mind what it actually does. It is a unit that has a range of responsibilities. It oversees the CVAC, the Crime Victims Advisory Committee, which also has a series of functions. Then you have non-government organisations such as the Victims of Crime NT. I wonder whether the government ever considered trying to simplify the whole thing. You may say this is probably off the planet, but, for instance, could not a group like Victims of Crime NT, an NGO, become the prime deliverer of some of these services - instead of a government body which then has the advisory committee underneath them? Victims of Crime NT deal with many of those issues that the CVSU will be dealing with.

I know you are trying to set up a body which can deal with many of the issues which were not being dealt with before in a formal process.. Could it have been done more simply? Even though we have a high number of violent crimes in the Northern Territory the number of victims as a percentage might be reasonably high but, from a numbers point of view, may in fact not be that great. You are not dealing with an enormous number of people. I looked at it from that point of view. I spoke to Victims of Crime NT and they would be very happy if someone said: 'We will give you a lot of money and you will develop as the lead body'. However, that is not the way it has been set up.

I saw an overlap when I looked at the objectives of the advisory committee. For instance, some of the functions seem to overlap with the Crime Victims Services Unit. One of the functions of the CVSU is to 'educate the community about the rights of victims'. A function of the advisory committee is to 'disseminate information relating to matters affecting the interests or rights of victims'. The CVSU will assist victims to exercise their rights including helping them to access information. The advisory committee will assist in the coordination of organisations involved in initiatives for the provision of services to victims, including services provided by the Northern Territory. I wonder whether it is going to be clear which functions one body will have as and which functions the other one will have. Does the minister think there will be some confusion in the actual running of those two organisations?

I support the idea of having a register and a bill of rights. They are very important. That will make it clear as to what guidelines victims should be treated under. Having a charter of victims' rights to establish the principles governing the way in which victims are to be treated in the justice system is an excellent idea, and is one of those areas that the Victims of Crime NT certainly supports.

Moving on to the other part of the act, I had some issues regarding where the money will come from that will pay for compensation. I have a note here that the Leader of the Opposition said only about 6% of monies were recovered by offenders last year with an outstanding debt of \$11.5m. The question is: if that is the case, where does the rest of the money come from? Basically, is the money required to fund the victims' levy coming from the taxpayer? It would be impossible to raise that amount of money from offenders.

I have a question which was also raised by the Leader of the Opposition. I have not been able to get from the second reading speech a reason as to why \$7500 is the minimum amount that can be claimed. The Leader of the Opposition highlighted a number of injuries which could be less than \$7500, and I would be interested to know what happens if that is the case. Are those people out-of-pocket, or is there some other way they can claim compensation for those, you might say, lesser injuries? Those injuries can put people into financial disadvantage if they cannot get to work.

I note one thing towards the end of the act where it talks about legal representation. In section 43, under the heading, 'When financial assistance must not be awarded', the first thing it says is: 'The assessor is satisfied the applicant is not entitled to an award'. It sounds like a fairly bleeding obvious reason why you would not give an award. I do not know why that is in the act. I do not know whether people reading that would have to be told that, but that seemed a strange note.

In section 54, 'Legal representation and costs', it says: 'A legal practitioner is not entitled to recover from the person any costs except the legal practitioner's reasonable disbursements incurred in representing the person'. I thought if it is only to cover the costs of the photocopying and stamps and that, can you imagine that a lawyer would do that job? I know it is in there, but to some extent, if you are going to have that clause which allows legal representation, and then you say to the lawyer you can only get what are reasonable disbursements, aren't you really saying: 'We have it in there but in practice it is not going to happen'. Unless it is a very charitable lawyer, they are probably not going to take up that option.

There are a number of areas I would be interesting hearing about. The Leader of the Opposition did raise some fairly strong issues. I did not notice the issue in section 5 about violent acts being more than one act. The long title of the bill says: to establish schemes to provide victims of violent acts with counselling and with financial assistance for financial loss and compensable injuries, and for related matters'. I would be interested in hearing from the minister what the reasoning behind section 5 is where a violent act can be a series of related criminal acts. Under section 5(3), it says:

- (3) *A series of related criminal acts occurs if:*
- (a) *2 or more acts are committed against the same person: and*
 - (b) *2 or more of those acts:*
 - (i) *occur at approximately the same time; or*
 - (ii) *occur over a period of time and are committed by the same person or group of persons; or*
 - (iii) *share another common factor.*

It seems a very broad definition which could be used to remove the possibility of having a number of acts being regarded as separate acts and, as the Leader of the Opposition said, avoid paying a multiple claim because of that. I would be interested in hearing what the minister has to say about that area. I look forward to his response.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to know from the minister whether there are amendments to this act?

Dr Toyne: No.

Mrs BRAHAM: No. It was mentioned earlier but we have never received a copy of them. I wanted to clarify that.

Dr Toyne: I would not do that to you.

Mrs BRAHAM: There is not, okay. I realise through the feedback we get that the current scheme is considered quite intimidating for some victims and also often quite slow, particularly when they need financial assistance first up.

I find this legislation very complex and I wondered whether there was not a need to defer it so members can get a better understanding of what it is all about, and some of the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition can be addressed

and we can find out exactly what she was on about, whether her concerns are realistic and, if so, how those concerns can be addressed.

We have had instances where compensation cases seem to drag on and on. If this system you are introducing means it is a better, more efficient and takes into consideration the welfare of the person, then that is good.

However, I am not convinced at the moment from the comments I have heard. As far as I am aware the Law Society has said they felt most victims would be worse off. They also said they thought this was a bit of a mean and tricky scheme because the minimum claim of \$7500 means many people may not be eligible for compensation. You need to clarify this.

Imagine someone who is attacked and has their leg or arm broken and cannot work for some time because of the injury, and a broken leg is perhaps not worth \$7500 in this particular system. Does it mean they will still get that \$7500, or does it mean they will not because it is only a minor injury they have sustained? Will they then have to try to justify some sort of psychological harm to bring it up to that amount? Putting that figure has confused people. The minister could clarify for me that people with minor injuries after an assault will not be disadvantaged in that way. Any injury that you sustain from an assault such as we are talking about, in many cases you deserve to be assisted. Quite often the compensation is for nothing else other than to get your life back into order and to sustain you while you are out of work, or to meet your medical expenses. You could clarify that for me.

I would also like to know whether you think this particular system will be quicker than the current one. At the moment we are hearing that the current system is slow. Would this particular system be quicker than the current litigation-based system? I would like to hear about that.

The president of the Law Society claims she was not consulted; the NT Police Association says it was deliberately left in the dark. I hope that is not so. I hope you have consulted and that you can provide us with that evidence. The nursing federation said they were not shown the bill. You could clarify those comments from these organisations.

I hope it is not a cost-cutting exercise, as has been pointed out in many cases. The last thing you want to do is disadvantage people who deserve to be assisted at the time when they most need it. In saying that, we all get representation made to us as members of parliament, and I know the frustration victims feel. You feel inadequate in being unable to help them. I believe many people

are not in a position to get a lawyer. I understand the victims of crime organisation believes not having legal representation may assist victims to get through it more easily. Then again, you do not want to think that they are being disadvantaged by not having legal representation.

The legislation you are proposing is a huge move. I am still unclear on what it is all about, even though I have read it and have had quite a detailed discussion on it. It is a pity that when we get bills like this we do not always get the regulations as well. If we had the regulations attached to it then we would know a little bit more about some of the implications and what would happen. There are no regulations attached to this. The Administrator may make regulations but they will come later.

Minister, confused as I may sound, it is because I am a bit confused, and you can clarify in your summing up the answers to the reflections you have heard from this side of the House.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General):
Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members for their contributions and express my disappointment at the opposition's decision not to support the bill, and I suppose also a degree of disappointment that, given that this is such important legislation which has been on the table since the last sittings, there were no approaches to share information through briefings. Members well know that I actively encourage and support members getting briefings, and certainly take on board any concerns that arise out of the sessions that we offer. That is the best process for passing legislation through this House.

I have always very clearly said that legislation is for the whole parliament. It is not just a government process. The point of input for non-government members is through the briefing process so that we can become aware of concerns and hopefully deal with them constructively and responsibly. On many occasions, both with members and stakeholders, we have gone back to the proposed legislation and said, yes, that is an issue and it is one that we need to deal with to the benefit of the legislation.

Given the position that members have expressed, which I believe is founded mainly on a misunderstanding of our starting point in bringing in this legislation, who we took advice from, and the policy basis of this legislation, let me quickly go back over the history of the scheme, and the reason for the first set of reforms we brought forward a couple of years ago, and the current reforms, so that everyone is clear on why we brought this forward and the basis for the bill.

We inherited a scheme where over half of the money paid out was going to the process - in other words, payment for legal fees of the lawyers who were engaged by the victims seeking compensation, and our own costs for the Solicitor for the Northern Territory representing the government in these types of cases. That was a complete deformity of the public process, where the process itself absorbs more money - and quite significantly greater amounts of money - than the amount delivered to the victims which, of course, was the policy intent of the scheme.

That caused us to go back and work on curtailing the legal expenses that were accompanying the scheme, to the point where we brought it back from something between 50% and 60% that we inherited down to the current 40%, and increased the actual amounts going to victims. In fact, from about the years 2001 onwards, an annual payment went up 16%, from \$3m up to \$3.5m, going directly to victims as a result of compensation decisions. We got more money through to the victims and took a lot of the inherent costs out of the process.

We knew, and I certainly foreshadowed it at the time, that this would not fix the scheme; it just simply dealt with some of the more extreme dysfunctions in the way the scheme was operating. We then came back to examine the current scheme and its deficiencies, and sought advice from the Crime Victims Advisory Committee, which is a standing group referred to by the Police minister. I will not go over the membership; he has already done that. We asked what was wrong with the outcomes of the current scheme, and the best way to support victims in their attempts to get rehabilitation, and to move on in their lives beyond suffering the effects of a crime.

There are still many things wrong with the current scheme. The current scheme still costs \$1.88m, as the Police minister said. It delivers \$3.25m to the victims. That compensation - the actual money paid out to victims - will sometimes appear years after the crime. There were very strong representations, through this committee and directly through Victims of Crime NT, that victims were looking for a package of things; they wanted a support package. Not compensation as such, but a support package.

What were the key elements that were brought to us? First of all, they want to have immediate financial support to deal with the immediate effects of the crime. If you had your glasses broken, they need to be replaced, or if your teeth have been broken, you need dental work, or if you have suffered some economic loss that was putting your family or you under financial pressure as a result of being incapacitated by the results of the crime.

Those were very important issues brought to us through the committee and the Victims of Crime NT as an advocacy group.

For the crimes the Leader of the Opposition highlighted in her contribution, the serious serial abuses of children or women, the key thing that they expressed a need for in their rehabilitation process was adequate counselling support. There is no doubt there is a need to make sure that that is available to victims in an uncapped scheme. To put any price on that support element within a victim's package would simply abrogate the importance of it to the victims.

That was overwhelming advice that people were traumatised by the court-based process. We heard time and time again that it was the process to deliver the compensation that was adding another level of victimisation on the victim, because women had to go to court and prove injuries, say, from sexual attacks, as the Leader of the Opposition referred in her speech; and we know how hard it is for a child victim to go through a court process. All of those things led us towards the structure that is now before you in this bill.

The important distinction between the mind-set that I am hearing from the contribution of the opposition and the Independent members and the basis of policy in this bill is that this bill is about victim support. It is not about victim compensation as the sole and key focal point. Compensation is important, and certainly the victims said that was an important element of getting through the effects of a crime for them. We are not saying that compensation should not or would not go to victims. What we are saying is that that alone is not a particularly good way to get closure for victims and to assist them in the rehabilitation. It is an element only within a support package.

Of course, the other element is that it is very important for a victim often to see the offender properly convicted and punished. That is also an element that we dealt with through other legislation to try to facilitate better court outcomes in cases of crime and victimisation within the Northern Territory. We have done a whole raft of legislation regarding the Criminal Code, regarding the processes in our courts, regarding the processes within other parts of our Justice department, which does make it more expedient to get the offender before the courts and to have them successfully dealt with under the law.

On many occasions, this House is all about differences of opinion about policy. If the opposition agreed with us on every policy position we take, there would be no need for debate. We would all just countersign the bills and away we would go. The point is, under the system that we work to, we often do have differences of opinion

about policy. Our strongly held opinion in the case of crime victim compensation is that it should be a support package for victims based on the best available advice brought to us by an expert community-based committee and from other sources, such as community advocacy groups.

Before I go into some of the issues regarding the bill itself, there have been many assertions in the debate about issues such as, have we gone out there and consulted, have we spoken to the Police Association, have we spoken to the Law Society, have we spoken to the unions, have we spoken to the nurses? The answer to all of that is yes, and repeatedly. On repeated occasions, we have worked through the issues that those bodies see with these changes. In fact, I will be talking about the way in which we will move on now to settle the detail of the regulations that will underpin this legislation. It is still work in progress.

We are dealing with boundary issues. For example, the intent of this bill, under policy, is to have citizens of the Northern Territory access one or another of the various schemes that might cover the situation of their impairment, whether that be MACA for road accidents, Work Health for work-related injury, or the Crime Victims Assistance Scheme in the case of a victim of a crime. We do not believe it is good policy to have people shopping around and double dipping between schemes. We want to make it as clear as possible that that person is to be dealt with under only one of those three particular schemes. Virtually every contingency would be covered across those three schemes: whether the person is at work or not at work; whether it was a motor accident; whether it was a crime, wherever the crime occurred within the community. However, it is not fair to the taxpayer and it is not good policy to have people shopping around the different schemes to try to assemble a series of compensatory responses.

We believe, and it is reflected in the section of the act, that we need to be as clear as possible about which scheme deals with the person's situation. We will keep working on those boundary issues with the unions, with the Police Association, with those bodies which are quite rightly saying that they want to make sure that their members are not caught in a gap between the different types of compensation. We believe we can find an adequate resolution of those issues. We do not believe that it needs to be done through amendment to the legislation. We believe it can be looked at as part of the development of the regulations. My staff have personally spoken with all of those bodies repeatedly. The process is one of working through these issues.

I will now go to the actual issues to do with the content in the bill. I welcome the one bit of support

I received from the Leader of the Opposition; that is, we have abolished the need to prove injury. That is very much for the reasons she brought forward. It is a very traumatic process for victims, on top of being victimised by an offence, to then have to somehow prove that they are not telling fibs, or that the injury that they suffered was real and not just a figment of their imagination. Just the business of being examined in a public court regarding what are very sensitive, personal and often embarrassing matters, is not what you want to do to help victims rehabilitate. It is going in the opposite direction. We are very pleased to put that into the legislation.

With the move to a higher maximum payment but to restrict multiple claims, that really goes back to the point I have been making about the policy intent of this bill: we do not believe that the size of the compensation is the critical factor in rehabilitating particularly serious and serially victimised people in our community. I will follow the advice we received during the consultation process that we believe the provision of very strong counselling, and ongoing counselling services, is a more critical factor in those cases for rehabilitation than the actual size of the compensation payment. I believe that if it can be proved, and I say on the record of the last three to four years of outcomes of this scheme, if there are cases where there is some aspect of victimisation that is not being picked up by the process and its outcomes, we will look at it. However, I am satisfied on having a look in very great detail at the cases that have gone through the Crime Victims Assistance Scheme over the last three to four years that we can provide a superior package of support to, if not all, the vast majority of the victims of that type who have gone through the current scheme.

I have no doubt that the provision of instant recompense for economic loss up to \$5000, or beyond if there is a factor that can be argued for the economic impact of the crime on the person, will mean a huge amount to a victim coming into this scheme.

The Leader of the Opposition asked a number of questions about how victims will access this scheme. The Crime Victims Support Unit will have a close association with the Witness Assistance Service, which is present at most of our courts including circuit courts. We would expect that WAS, as a matter of course, will refer victims to the Crime Victims Support Unit and on to the scheme so that their claims can be put into the process. In my view, that would be more likely to capture a high proportion of remote claimants than the current scheme has managed to do.

There were many matters brought forward and I want to be thorough in covering them. The

Leader of the Opposition claims that the scheme is the meanest in Australia. Well, I do not know what the current scheme would be because we have significantly increased the maximum payment if we are talking about the compensation component in the overall support package. Not only will all victims have access to that immediate recompense for immediate economic impacts of the crime, but the maximum payment has gone from \$25 000 up to \$40 000, which is a significant increase.

It brings us into the lower end of those maximum compensations elsewhere: New South Wales, \$50 000; Victoria, \$60 000; Western Australia, \$75 000; Australian Capital Territory, \$50 000; Tasmania, \$30 000, and with the capacity to go up to \$50 000 for more than one offence; South Australia has a \$50 000 cap; and Queensland, \$75 000. The difference, though, is that our scheme is set up to be a support package as distinct from purely a compensation scheme. The compensation in our scheme is meant to stand alongside the immediate payment for economic loss, the ongoing access to counselling which is an uncapped ability to access that, and also a much more streamlined and straightforward process in gaining the compensation.

All of that puts our scheme in parallel with the rates of other states and jurisdictions. I might add all jurisdictions restrict multiple claims, with one exception which is Tasmania where they have a much lower maximum payment for single offence but do have a provision to go to more than one offence. We will stand or fall on the outcomes for victims in support and rehabilitation rather than the actual dollar values that might come out of these claims.

The Leader of the Opposition mentioned the need to consider strongly recovery from offenders and the member for Nelson also referred to that. In 2004-05, the total recovery from offenders was something in the order of \$100 000, ridiculously below the sort of money we are talking about for payments to victims under the current scheme and the intended payments under the new version of the scheme. We expect that we will be paying several millions of dollars to compensate victims and \$100 000 is not significant in that. You would pursue offenders for other reasons to do with the need for them to show some responsibility back to the victim if that can be done as part of response to their offences, but as a way of funding the bulk of the payments to victims in the scheme, it just simply will not do the job.

Members would appreciate that many of the offenders we are talking about will end up in gaol where they have no ability to earn money to contribute to the victim's payment; claim that they were broke in the first place; or they have left the

Northern Territory. All of that makes it quite difficult to get significant amounts of money back from offenders. We will try, and we want to see reparation to the victim as being one of the key elements of the rehabilitation of the offender. However, in financial terms, it is simply not going to get the job done.

Regarding minimum thresholds, taking the policy intent of this scheme embodied in this bill today, we want to see the maximum effort put to the highest levels of victimisation. Going back over the history of compensation payments coming out of the current scheme, while the Leader of the Opposition might do hypotheticals on someone with a broken leg and ask why they did not get payments, what the person with the broken leg will get is immediate coverage of their economic loss and any other damage that has been done to them and to their property as a result of the crime. They will get counselling to help them through the psychological effects of the crime. However, it is the victims further up the scale that we are particularly worried about. We want to see that payment is afforded to higher levels of victimisation through a streamlined process to a higher maximum total payment. It is very clear that we are only at equity between levels of victimisation. In other words, the more victimisation, the more the financial element of the support will be forthcoming.

There are a number of operational issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition such as whether we are going to tender; who we are going to tender to; how are we going to cover cultural issues; and whether Mike Tyrrell is going to give us a service in Alice Springs. All of those are fair and valid questions regarding the implementation of the scheme; they are not really questions regarding the legislation.

We all know the seriousness of misleading this House, but what I will say in an unqualified way is there will be adequate counselling which will not be capped; it will be demand driven. If there is more counselling capacity needed, we will find more counselling capacity. We will make use of the best available private sector NGO capacity. We will make sure that cultural issues are taken into account with regard to the nature of the counselling: we will not have whitefellas counselling Aboriginal women who have suffered rape. If it is inappropriate, it will not happen. Those are operational and implementation issues that lie before us.

I will finish with the question of regulations. I agree that regulations, ideally, should come through with the legislation so that everyone is absolutely clear, not only about the intent of the bill and the subsequent act, but also the detail of how it is going to be put into place. One issue the

Leader of the Opposition raised was what the final scale of compensable injuries was going to be. We have said - I believe in the second reading speech, but I might stand corrected - that the starting point for the development of that schedule for the Northern Territory will be the New South Wales schedule. However, we believe that the New South Wales schedule is somewhat narrow in both the injuries that it covers and the flexibility for an assessor to cumulate the injuries into a final level of disability. The New South Wales scheme works on 100% payment on the schedule for the first identifiable and most serious injury, and then 10% and then 5% and then 0%. That gives a somewhat inflexible way of dealing with what may be a range of injuries that a victim received as a result of a crime. We will work through that process.

I have already indicated that we will also want to encompass some of the issues that were brought to us by the unions and the Police Association in regard to eligibility of the different schemes that we are trying to coordinate the support through, namely MACA, Work Health and the Crime Victims Assistance Scheme.

This is work in progress. I promise to report to the Chamber, and as we get to a point where these things are being written down and finalised, I would again offer members a briefing at that level of detail, just to make sure that we have the detail right. I can assure members that the policy intent of the legislation before us will be fully reflected in the regulations which are going to accompany it. Come and see for yourselves when we are at a point to be able to brief you on it.

Madam Speaker, I thank those members who contributed to the debate. I am disappointed that we have to use our numbers to pass this legislation today. As we always do with laws put through this House, we all have to answer to the community as to what impact it has and, in particular, the minister who has carriage of the legislation. I believe it is good legislation and I stand here with a clear heart.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

In committee:

Victims of Crime Rights and Services Bill 2006 (Serial 44):

Clauses 1 to 5, by leave, taken together.

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask some questions about the commencement date, given that the Attorney-General did not address them in reply. In the second reading speech, the Attorney-General said that the scheme will apply to all applications made after the act commences

even if the offence occurred prior to that date. My question is: what if a victim has been working on a case with his or her lawyer and, under the new scheme, the injury does not meet the minimum threshold, does that person have a claim and are they entitled to recover legal costs for work undertaken to date?

Dr TOYNE: Mr Chairman, there is no retrospective effect. Everything is on foot before the commencement of this act which will be handled under the existing provisions.

Ms CARNEY: That answers the question in relation to that. I now have some questions in relation to clause 5, not surprisingly. That is the clause dealing with violent acts. Attorney-General, have you read the Law Society's submission to you in relation to this bill?

Dr TOYNE: I have not personally read it, however, I have had my staff and department deal with the issues in there and I get briefed on the outcome of that analysis.

Ms CARNEY: You may not be aware then, and for your assistance I will quote from page 4 of the Law Society's submission. This is what they had to say regarding clause 5, that is the violent act provision:

This provision has very real potential to impact adversely on victims of a lengthy chain of criminal activity such as child victims of serial sexual abuse, or victims of repeated instances of domestic violence.

I will be brief but it goes on to say:

This provision has the potential to disadvantage some of the most vulnerable victims of crime who can currently legitimately make multiple applications for compensation, each related to separate instances of abuse.

The Law Society submits that consideration should be given to ameliorating the harsh effect of this definition on victims of long term repeat abuse or offences.

And it provides a solution. Attorney-General, in light of those comments from the Northern Territory Law Society will you reconsider your position in relation to clause 5 of this bill?

Dr TOYNE: I would have to go back to the policy debate we were having today. I have been assured that the Law Society issues have been fully considered. From my point of view, looking at what they are asserting, we have taken the view that the support for victims and their rehabilitation is not particularly enhanced by having multiple

court-based processes going through each of the offences they have gone through. We have taken the view, on the advice we have been given by what I believe to be expert people in the field, that counselling of those people is the critical element; that a streamlined non-court based process to get some compensation up to the maximum we have put in place, \$40 000; and the ability to immediately recompense their economic losses at the point they come into this scheme, is a better support package than the sort of outcomes here.

The Law Society, like you, has focused entirely on the financial outcome not on the actual impact of the compensation process on the victim. We believe, on good advice and good evidence, that in many cases what we have done through the processes of multiple cases and claims is to actually add to the level victimisation.

Ms CARNEY: You said, Attorney-General, that the Law Society has concentrated on the payment of compensation, yet they have used very strong words which go to the effects of this on victims of crime. Are you suggesting the Law Society does not know what they are talking about when they use words like: 'this provision has the potential to disadvantage some of the most vulnerable victims of crime'?

Dr TOYNE: You better listen carefully to what I am saying. This is a policy debate and the Law Society has taken the view that the degree of rehabilitation of the victim is in some way strongly linked to the level of the compensation outcome. We do not take that view, and that is not the advice that we have been given. So we choose to differ from the basis of the Law Society's argument. We are not saying that they do not know what they are talking about.

Ms CARNEY: Mr Chairman, do I take it, Attorney-General, that you do not regard the Law Society as 'a bunch of bleeding hearts expressing feigned indignation and are looking after their mates' in relation to the submission they have made to you about this issue?

Dr TOYNE: Do not put those words in my mouth. I do not operate that way. You know that.

Ms CARNEY: No, one of your mates does though.

Dr TOYNE: I do not take that view. I am ...

Ms CARNEY: I am delighted to hear it.

Dr TOYNE: I am the first law officer and I have to set an example to the legal community, and I do.

Ms CARNEY: And you do, Attorney-General. It is a pity that your colleague, the minister for Police, consistently does not.

In any event, you would accept that victims of sustained child abuse or multiple rape victims under the existing scheme tend to receive significant amounts of compensation for multiple offences that range generally between \$75 000 and up to maybe \$200 000. Under your proposal they will only ever receive a maximum of \$40 000. How can that not be considered unfair to those victims?

Dr TOYNE: They will not just receive \$40 000 maximum. They will receive a package of support. That is the difference between your interpretation of it and the policy basis for this legislation. I would have thought that the most important thing for a child victim is to have some financial support at the end of any process of compensating them for the crime that they have gone through, but far more important than that is an effective counselling and rehabilitation support.

Ms CARNEY: Attorney-General, are you aware that under the existing scheme applicants can avail themselves of counselling and, in particular, they are able to access services such as the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, known as SARC. If your answer is yes, as I am sure it will be, my question is: notwithstanding the tender process, under this new scheme, will victims, having made a claim, still be able to avail themselves of SARC services at government expense?

Dr TOYNE: We are saying that there will be counselling for the level of demand. Under this scheme it is an absolute right of victims to expect that the government will provide that for them.

Mr CHAIRMAN: The question is that clauses 1 to 5 stand as printed.

The committee divided:

Ayes 18	Noes 5
Ms Anderson	Mrs Braham
Mr Bonson	Ms Carney
Mr Burke	Dr Lim
Dr Burns	Mr Mills
Mr Henderson	Mr Wood
Mr Kiely	
Mr Knight	
Ms Lawrie	
Ms Martin	
Mr McAdam	
Ms McCarthy	
Mr Natt	
Ms Sacilotto	
Ms Scrymgour	

Mr Stirling
Dr Toyne
Mr Vatskalis
Mr Warren

Motion agreed to.

Clauses 1 to 5 agreed to.

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

Bill to be reported without amendment.

Victims of Crimes Assistance Bill (Serial 45):

Bill, by leave, taken as a whole and agreed to.

Bill to be reported without amendment.

Bills reported; report adopted.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2006-07 (Serial 50)

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, the 2006-07 budget will keep the Territory moving ahead and on a path of strong economic growth, job creation and the best lifestyle in Australia. My own portfolios have a great story to tell on how we are delivering to Territorians. I turn first to the important activities being undertaken by my department.

In Asian Relations and Trade, the crucial task of strengthening our trade links in Asia, as well as with other nations around the world, will be underpinned in 2006-07 with a budget allocation of \$5.6m for the Trade and Major Projects Division. Members will recall that the Asian Relations function, with a budget allocation of \$1.4m, was transferred from the former Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development and merged with my department's Major Projects and Trade Functions to form the Trade and Major Projects Division.

Since I took on this portfolio responsibility, I have travelled to Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, China and Brunei to strengthen our links with our neighbours, help promote the AustralAsia Trade Route, and assist with investment attraction efforts. A good example of this work was our trade and tourism mission to China last month. One of

the highlights of the visit was speaking to the second China Summit Freight Conference in Shanghai. It was an excellent opportunity to join Northern Territory government representatives in promoting investment and trade opportunities in the Territory. With senior representatives from international shipping and global logistics firms present, it was also the perfect setting to promote the AustralAsia Trade Route as an alternative trade connection between China and Australia. I will talk more about the trade route shortly.

Later this month, I will host the BIMP-EAGA Darwin Dialogue, which will give us the chance to discuss opportunities for trade and relations with the BIMP-EAGA nations: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, in the East ASEAN Growth Area. There is enormous potential for Territory traders, exporters and service providers in this region, after all, it covers 1 600 000 km², has a population of 57 million people, and a regional gross domestic product of about AU \$43bn. I will also be attending the next BIMP-EAGA ministers meeting in September in Kuala Lumpur.

We are developing our relationships throughout the region in many different ways. We will continue to support the operations of our representative offices in Dili, Jakarta and Manila. These offices help strengthen the Territory's political, economic and cultural relationships with the national and regional governments of those countries. My commitment to further strengthening our ties in the region can also be seen through the work of the Chief Executive Group that I established. The group is focused on developing links between international education, tourism and investment attraction to help grow the Territory, and the new air link provided by Tiger Airways will provide great opportunities for success within this initiative.

The Territory also recently hosted a major Indonesian mining forum in Darwin. Key procurement and management personnel from a number of major mines in eastern Indonesia came here to talk about new supply and service opportunities. The forum was a great opportunity for Territory businesses to learn about these mines and their needs, and friendships were formed during the week that will, hopefully, strengthen in the years to come. My department is planning further trade delegations to Balikpapan in June and Sabah in August.

In 2006-07, we will continue to implement our strategy, *Growing Our Trade Route*, to develop the Territory's international trade opportunities.. We will also continue to operate Australia's only Indonesian customs pre-inspection service, a unique service for exporters using East Arm Port for goods bound for eastern Indonesia.

The positive impact of gas onshore in the Territory economy is continuing. The Wickham Point LNG plant has been commissioned, with the first consignment of gas sailing for Japan in February 2006. During the construction phase, the workforce peaked at about 2350, with nearly half of the tradespeople being Territorians. During the life of the construction, more than 8900 purchases were made from over 430 Territory vendors, and 25 major subcontracts awarded to Territory companies. At full production the plant will generate in the order of \$1bn in LNG gross revenue.

A \$33m helium plant, the first in the southern hemisphere, has been proposed to extract this valuable gas from the LNG vent gas stream. Construction is expected to start in mid-2007 and production a year later. The annual helium production is estimated at 896 tonnes a year, which is worth about \$25m.

In further good news, ConocoPhillips and Santos announced in September the discovery of a significant new gas resource at Caldita, 260 km north of Darwin. The companies are keen to appraise the field and drill adjacent prospects, which is great for future LNG and downstream gas industry expansion. Prospects for the development of the Sunrise field also improved greatly with the signing of the development agreement with Timor-Leste which is awaiting ratification. The Power and Water Corporation has signed a heads of agreement with ENI Australia to develop the Blacktip field for Territory power generation.

Darwin Clean Fuels has announced a proposal for a \$450m condensate processing plant, and has lodged its notice of intent with the government. The plant will produce 40 000 to 60 000 barrels a day of high-quality transport fuels from the Timor Sea and North West Shelf condensate. Most of this year will be spent undertaking engineering, design and feasibility studies, as well as moving through the environmental and planning assessment process.

We will continue our efforts on a number of fronts. We want to secure interest and expansion of the LNG plant; establish other gas industries; supply gas to general industry including mining and mineral processing operations; and explore for more oil and gas. A key priority in the supply of gas to general industry is encouraging investment in downstream gas-based manufacturing. We will engage with the Australian government on a national energy policy and our aim is to remove impediments to investment in the value-adding gas manufacturing industry.

Additionally, a consultant, Nexant, with international expertise in the gas manufacturing

industry has just been appointed to work with us. Their brief is to identify and overcome, if possible, impediments to such an industry being established in Darwin.

Work is also continuing on the development of the expansion of the Alcan alumina plant in Gove. This \$2bn construction project is expected to be completed late this year increasing production capacity to 3.8 million tonnes per annum and increasing Territory exports by \$450m per annum.

Investment attraction is a key priority for my department and our focus is on positioning the Territory in the national and international marketplace for investment. This work is underpinned by research into emerging opportunities in areas such as energy, defence, trade, and the trade route. It also includes key marketing campaigns such as the Skilled Worker campaign, which I will speak more about shortly, the development of promotional material, advertising sponsorship and, importantly, inbound delegations.

The AustralAsia Trade Route continues to grow and create business and trade opportunities. For example, around 650 000 tonnes of manganese from the Bootu Creek Mine near Tennant Creek will be transported by train via East Arm Port to China each year. The first full train of manganese from Bootu Creek to the port is expected in the next week and follows six trial deliveries during April. The first ship load to China is due to depart at the end of this month or early next month. All up there will be four bulk trains a week from Bootu Creek to the port with ships leaving fortnightly.

The Territory will be producing 6% of the world's manganese which is used to improve the qualities of steel and other alloys. Bootu Creek's manager, Paul Chapman, is on record as saying that it was the building of the AustralAsia Railway that made the mine profitable. To make the Bootu Creek exports possible, the government spent \$20m on bulk loading facilities with interim ship loading arrangements. The permanent radial stacker ship loader is expected to be commissioned in December this year.

Territory Iron is proposing to reopen the Frances Creek Mine near Pine Creek and potentially transport 1.5 million tonnes of iron ore each year to East Arm Port for export to China.

The Australian Defence Force has increased its use of the AustralAsia Trade Route for the movement of heavy machinery and equipment with major exercises in February and March this year and another planned for July. Last January marked the beginning of a regular monthly shipping service between Shanghai and Darwin, with the single largest shipment of cargo ever

delivered here. Our investments in the railway and bulk loading facilities are certainly paying off and will continue to create new opportunities for Territorians in the future.

In terms of overall freight, FreightLink recorded a 6.4% increase in tonnage movements in 2005, bringing the total to 557 400 tonnes. In July 2005, a regular Melbourne rail link to and from Adelaide was started. It runs six times a week and hooks up with the existing five weekly trains to and from Darwin. The Darwin Business Park next to the East Arm Port continues to attract clients. These include Toll Holdings which has opened a state-of-the-art consolidation and distribution facility, Vopak's \$55m Darwin fuel industry plant terminal while Natural Fuels Australia's new \$75m biodiesel plant is due for completion later this year.

Katherine will benefit from a FreightLink joint venture proposal to develop the Katherine Freight Centre in 2006. A cluster of major freight forwarders and transport operators and new cold and general cargo stores at the rail terminal will directly support the growth of agricultural industries in the Katherine, Douglas-Daly and West Australia's Ord River Regions.

The Global Freight Connect Conference was held in October last year. It directly promoted the Territory's growing trade and transport capabilities to key senior executives of major international companies and political counterparts in the AustralAsia region. The conference was a moveable feast with delegates travelling from Darwin to Adelaide on the Ghan and having the chance to network on the train. Plenary sessions were held in the regional centres of Katherine and Alice Springs. This novel format proved very successful and I can report that the planning for the next Global Freight Connect Conference in 2007 has already started.

Indigenous issues continue to be a priority for this government. The release of the Agenda for Action is the first time a Territory government has articulated an overall vision for indigenous affairs. It sets out our priorities and provides a framework for coordinated government action across all portfolios during our current term of office. The agenda was developed through the NT Chief Executives Task Force on Indigenous Affairs and builds on the significant efforts already made in the indigenous health, education and economic and cultural wellbeing since 2001. The Agenda for Action reflects our conviction that a positive, coherent indigenous affairs agenda strengthens our economy and creates jobs and enhances the wellbeing of all Territorians.

In 2005, I signed an historic Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs with the Prime Minister, the first of its kind in the country and one

which has now been followed by similar agreements in New South Wales and Queensland. This was a major achievement for the Territory. One year on, the signs are encouraging. While there is still a long way to go, improvements are being made in the way we work with the Australian government to deliver services to indigenous communities. This is crucial to getting better outcomes on the ground. The first three schedules developed under this agreement were on sustainable housing, establishing strong local government, and strengthening the indigenous art sector. An additional schedule on boosting indigenous employment and economic development was recently agreed to by the Prime Minister. Further schedules being developed include education, safer communities, indigenous land and sea rangers, and sport.

Last December, the Minister for Housing announced a new three year agreement with the Australian government worth \$254m under the housing schedule. This agreement will, for the first time, see Northern Territory and Australian government indigenous housing resources combined to better coordinate the delivery of homes for indigenous families across the Territory. From 1 July 2006, the Territory will manage this pooled funding.

The new IHANT Board has been meeting to discuss how it can provide strategic policy to the NT government under these new arrangements. We are also looking to work with the private sector to boost housing construction in remote communities. Government funding alone cannot meet the backlog of need. The regional authority schedule focuses on partnering with indigenous communities to strengthen local government structures. Funding of \$1.6m has been secured under this schedule to recruit joint Territory and Australian government development coordinators. These coordinators will be located remotely and work with indigenous communities on local government representative structures, governance and service delivery issues. They are currently undergoing induction training and will start in their positions this month.

Under the art schedule, Australian and Territory government agencies are developing an approach to support indigenous art centres.

The Australian government is reforming the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) program and, in this context, the Australian and Territory governments have recently agreed to add a new schedule to the overarching agreement on boosting indigenous employment and economic development. This schedule seeks to engage the Australian government in a collaborative approach to its reforms. It states that the roll-out of CDEP reforms

in the Territory must be matched with the identification of real employment opportunities in each of our regions and the provision of training, education and other services linked to people's circumstances.

These changes are complex and far-reaching, and it is vital we are prudent in our approach to make sure we get it right. Under the schedule, both governments will also work together to boost indigenous employment. This includes strategies aimed at local jobs for local people, and the appointment of five economic development officers to assist people in identifying economic development opportunities and access to business development assistance.

I would like now briefly to mention some of the other activities undertaken by my department before I turn to our work in building the Territory's tourism industry. Major events like the V8 Supercars and our *BassintheGrass* and *BassintheDust* concerts are a big part of our great Territory lifestyle and provide a major boost to local business and the Territory economy. The Hidden Valley round of the V8 Supercars championship is set to remain on Darwin's major event calendar until 2012, with the extension of the sanction agreement with the Australian Vee Eight Supercar Company. The event is strongly backed by the private sector and is now known as the SKYCITY V8 Supercar Triple Crown. Eight additional pit garages have now been built at Hidden Valley, a \$900 000 investment. These improvements will benefit all motor sport enthusiasts who use Hidden Valley throughout the year.

BassintheGrass in Darwin and *BassintheDust* in Alice Springs are gearing up again this year. These events clearly show our commitment to give young people and the young at heart an exciting contemporary music festival. Some of Australia's best artists will be showcased in a fun and safe environment. The ticket, which includes a hat, remains at \$45 pre-sale, and includes free water all day.

We have also been on the front foot when it comes to addressing skills shortages in the Territory. In February last year, we launched our Skilled Worker Attraction Campaign to attract skilled workers and professionals to the Territory. These workers included people with skills in fields such as the metal trades, construction, electrical, hairdressing, automotive, hospitality, as well as engineers, doctors, dentists, nurses, specialist teachers and community workers. Advertising in newspapers, magazines and on radio produced a strong response with inquiries from almost 4300 people - and they are still coming in at a rate of 20 to 30 a week. We continue to work with recruitment agencies and private businesses to

match potential employees with interested employers, and to provide more information about specific work shortages and opportunities.

On 8 April, a national skilled worker advertisement was placed in the *Daily Telegraph's* Mining and Exploration feature. Around 180 responses were received from a range of professionals and tradespeople. The next stage of the campaign will start next month and will feature national advertising and an increased presence on job seeker and industry-specific websites such as seek.com and bluecollar.com.

As part of our commitment to open and accountable government, we have held Community Cabinets in communities across the Territory. In the second half of last year, we visited Palmerston, the Tiwi Islands, Larrakeyah, Alice Springs, Marrara, and the Ti Tree and Ampilatwatja communities.

Women's forums are an important aspect of Community Cabinet visits. They provide an opportunity for women from a wide variety of backgrounds to workshop issues and discuss these with me, the Minister for Women's Policy, and the Minister for Family and Community Services. So far this year, we visited Palmerston and were scheduled to visit Katherine last month but the floods intervened. There will be around seven or eight visits this year, including a visit to Katherine this month. All up, Cabinet members have met with well in excess of 2000 Territorians through the Community Cabinet program. This contact helps us keep in touch with people and the issues affecting them. We are strongly committed to continuing this valuable program.

I would now like to talk about the great strides our tourism industry has taken over the past 12 months, and the work we are doing to ensure that growth continues into the future. Tourism generates wealth and jobs, promotes environmental and cultural sustainability, and makes a significant contribution to regional and indigenous development.

In 2005, tourism directly employed more than 8000 Territorians, making it the second highest contributor to our gross state product. In addition, tourism has a significant ripple effect on business activity and jobs across the Territory. In 2003, we injected an extra \$27.5m over three years into tourism marketing and development and, this year I am pleased to announce that, through this budget, we have made this \$10m annual increase ongoing. With \$27.6m directed to tourism marketing next year, and an overall budget of \$38.3m, we can be assured that tourism in the Territory is properly resourced and will remain competitive and grow into the future.

The benefit of increased funding for our tourism industry is demonstrated by the fact that we were one of only three states and territories to increase its overall holiday market share, with more than 780 000 visitors holidaying here last year. Our commitment to continuing Tourism NT's increased budget will enable us to maintain our focus on tourism marketing and tourism development. It clearly demonstrates our confidence in the tourism industry and provides opportunities for further development and reinvigoration of tourism products.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am also pleased to announce that a further \$2.8m has been allocated for attracting investment in and developing tourism infrastructure, for example:

- a utility service scheme will support the supply of electricity, water and sewerage services at remote locations and help make these areas more attractive to tourism developers and investors;
- a tourism development fund is being continued, particularly in support of the drive market;
- we will contribute to the completion of Alice Spring's Railway Discovery Walkway, which will link the rail passenger terminal to the town centre; and
- two shelter facilities will be provided on the Larapinta Trail at Finke Camp and Jay Creek to improve nature-based walking experiences for our visitors.

A critical issue for tourism in the Territory is international air access. In this budget, we have allocated \$1m to maximise opportunities presented by the arrival of low cost airline carrier services in the Territory, particularly those linking us to the Asian market, and undertake cooperative marketing activities in international markets with our aviation partners. The greatest percentage of our tourism budget is allocated to marketing the Territory as Australia's leading nature and cultural tourism destination, both domestically and internationally.

On my recent trip to China, I officially announced the engagement of a tourism trade representative based in Shanghai, Joseph Sze. Australia currently attracts around 300 000 Chinese tourists each year and only 1000 of those visit the Territory. Joseph's experience and knowledge of the Chinese market will allow us to tap into this growing number of Chinese tourists. From China, I travelled to Singapore to meet with representatives of the travel industry and held

talks with a number of regional airlines, including Qantas and Tiger Airways.

In this budget, we have allocated \$16.5m to grow the international and domestic tourism market. Initiatives will include:

- increasing Tourism NT's representation in Europe to work with the travel trade;
- direct-to-consumer activities that specifically target the unstructured traveller in the UK, Europe and potentially Canada;
- a comprehensive familiarisation program that brings important travel trade representatives from our major markets to the Territory;
- developing Tourism NT e-marketing capacity. This includes completely translating our award winning travelnt.com site into the languages of each of the Territory's key international markets; and
- introducing online itinerary planning tours.

Within Australia, the additional funding will enable Tourism NT to continue its innovative and successful approach to destination marketing. This marketing program promotes six specific destinations throughout the year, which complements the overarching Destination NT campaign.

A total of \$2.25m will be spent in the coming financial year on destination campaigns that will unveil the unique character of each of our regions. The first will be Destination Darwin in August and September, followed by Alice Springs, Uluru, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Kakadu. \$1m has also been allocated to promote the Territory's business tourism assets and capabilities, particularly given the purpose-built Alice Springs Convention Centre, and the soon to be completed Darwin Convention Centre.

We will continue to fund regional tourism associations and other bodies, with \$2m available for intra-Territory marketing and the provision of visitor information services.

As part of developing the tourism sector in the Territory, \$800 000 will be allocated to foster regional development through indigenous tourism opportunities, such as the Wagaman women to develop cross cultural exchange programs and tours in the Douglas Hot Springs area, and tourism workshops with communities and businesses along Central Australia's Red Centre Way to help

them make the most of the expected increase in the number of visitors when the road is sealed.

Work will continue in a number of Aboriginal communities and subregions as we roll out the tourism Stepping Stones program. This program assists Aboriginal people to build enterprises with a good balance of looking after country, family, and community concerns.

The \$1.1bn Darwin City Waterfront project will give our tourism industry a major boost. I am pleased to advise members that the waterfront project is on track to provide this new face for Darwin. We are bringing forward the establishment of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation to early next financial year. The Corporation will develop and manage the waterfront precinct, promote and market the precinct, assume the Territory's obligation in managing the convention centre, and manage and deliver municipal services. We are, therefore, committing \$5.5m over the next four years to the corporation to ensure this project is managed successfully and delivers additional jobs and increased tourism numbers, and an enhanced lifestyle for Territorians.

I also advise members that the initial interest in purchasing apartments at the waterfront has been very strong and a large number of potential buyers have registered their interest in the response to the recent advertising campaign. Apartments will be released for sale in the near future, and work has already started on the pad for finger wharf where the first apartments will be built. Stage 1 construction, including the convention and exhibition centre, hotel, apartments and community infrastructure with a value of over \$300m, is well under way and is scheduled for completion by 2008.

I am pleased to inform members that so far the Sitzler Barclay Mowlem Joint Venture has awarded local companies more than \$20m worth of contracts. This includes a multimillion dollar contract won by local company M&J Welding at Berrimah, to supply 1100 tonnes of structural steel for the convention centre. Apart from the jobs and investments it is creating, the waterfront project is also helping to focus national and international attention on the way we get things done in the Territory. The project was recently named the 'Infrastructure Deal of the Year' at the AustralAsian Law Awards, a prestigious award that recognises the complex legal work which goes into major infrastructure projects like this. It has also been announced as a finalist in the Public Private Finance Awards in the UK in the category Best Global Project to Reach Financial Close. These awards are designed to reward projects that demonstrate best practice in Public Private Partnership internationally. The winners will be

announced at the awards ceremony to be held in London later this month.

The 2006-07 Budget will ensure more jobs and opportunities for Territorians. It is a fiscally responsible budget, which will see the Territory's economy strengthen and continue to develop and grow. Its focus is set firmly on supporting business, improving educational outcomes for our young people, and building a healthier and safer Territory. Most importantly, this budget will keep the Territory moving ahead and hopefully turbocharged into the next decade, while maintaining our Territory lifestyle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Treasurer on a strong, responsible and growth-focused budget.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General):
Mr Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to support the budget for 2006-07 and congratulate the Treasurer on his work. Budget 2006-07 builds on this government's long-term plan to build a safe and healthier Territory.

Turning firstly to health, when the Labor government came to power the health system was suffering from years of neglect and under resourcing. Over the five years, this government's sound sustainable financial management has given us the means to address those years of neglect. Since 2001, we have greatly increased funding for the health system.

One of the greatest challenges in all health systems in the developed world is facing the increasing demand for health services. The extra resources we are putting into our health system is allowing us to meet that challenge and to ensure that we deal with increasing presentations to our hospitals and clinics. The extra money means more health staff working to deliver more health services for Territorians. It also means significantly better wages and conditions for our staff, and improved health system infrastructure.

Major service growth has occurred in renal services, palliative care, critical care and maternal and child health services. Now is the time to take stock, to celebrate our achievements, and focus on getting the maximum value from our core services.

Today, I am happy to announce a further increase in the health budget for 2006-07, building on the consistent growth year-by-year since we came to government. The budget for Health and Community Services for 2006-07 from all sources will be \$788.6m. This represents a 64% increase in annual funding from this government since 2001-02. Sustained increases on this level are unprecedented in the Territory's history and are

built upon the sound economic management of this government.

There are some significant challenges and areas for action that these resources will be used to address. We have to face the reality of a seriously disadvantaged Aboriginal population whose health and social outcomes are not improving in the way all Territorians would like to see. In particular, an improved primary health care service delivered by both the government and community controlled sectors is unlocking demand for health services that remained unaddressed for so long. At the same time, there are continuing gaps in services that fall outside the responsibility of the Territory government to address, for example, the low numbers of general practitioners in the community and lack of residential care places for the elderly. These factors exacerbate the demand falling upon our acute care sector. This changing world means we must remain open to doing things differently. In adopting new technology, better role delineation, and ensuring we embrace best practice we can deliver great gains for the Territory especially in our major hospitals, community care centres and remote health centres.

It is critical that we remain open and flexible to examining our systems and mix of services to monitoring our staff numbers, expenditure, activity levels and outcomes to maximise benefit for Territorians from the dollars allocated. We will continue our commitment to *Building Healthier Communities* which I and the then minister for Family and Community Services, the member for Arafura, launched in February 2004. In the next few months, at the halfway point of this five year framework we will issue a report card on our progress and outline how we intend to see it through to completion. We also recognise that the Australian government has a significant role to play in providing better health services for Territorians. We will continue to work in partnership with them to enhance Territorians access to national schemes such as Medicare Benefits and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme as well as in specific regional initiatives such as through the COAG initiative at Wadeye.

I turn now to some of the specifics of the Health budget. This government has consistently increased health funding above the normal indexation levels recognising that health costs are increasing across the country at a greater rate than normal inflation. In recognition of the increased demand pressures on core services across the Health and Community Services portfolios, the government will add an extra \$20m to base funding for the department in 2006-07. The overall departmental budget was previously predicted to increase by \$28m next year and will now increase by \$48m. In particular, we recognise

the need for further growth in hospital funding to address the increased demand on our hospitals. For example, admitted and Emergency Department attendances have increased by over 10% in the year to date across the hospital network. We have already increased nursing numbers in the acute care division by over 11%, medical staff by 16%, and professional and technical staff by 6%. Of the additional \$20m that government has committed for 2006-07, \$14.1m will be provided to improve our hospitals' capacity to deal with Emergency Department presentations, admitted patients and elective surgery.

At the same time we will ensure that patient flow through our hospitals is maximised. We need to ensure that beds are not being occupied by those who do not need to be in them. The extra allocation to the hospitals will allow them to achieve both improved service capacity as well as improve efficiency.

Royal Darwin Hospital will receive funding support to meet increasing demand that they have been experiencing during the previous financial year. In 2006-07, the Royal Darwin Hospital budget will be increased to \$196m, representing a 75% increase in funding over the last five years. This extra funding is particularly targeted at addressing the critical issue of bed-block, enabling the hospital to provide better care to patients while reducing waiting times in the Emergency Department. I will be asking the hospital to continue its work to ensure that the patient flow is maximised and that, in particular, Darwin Private Hospital is used wherever appropriate for patients in order to take the load off the public system.

As part of this government's contribution we will fund an extra six beds in Royal Darwin Hospital towards the government's commitment to increase beds by 24 over this term. We will also allocate \$7.8m for a Rapid Assessment and Planning Unit to care for patients and meet future demand on the hospital. This unit will ensure that patients undergo rapid and rigorous assessment and initial treatment with the purpose of establishing their need for admission to, or discharge from, hospital. This is a significant development which will position Royal Darwin Hospital with a number of other leading hospitals in Australia which have implemented similar units as a way of delivering better health services to the community. This initiative has strong support of senior clinicians. I will be asking them to begin working immediately with the department and hospital management to develop a detailed implementation plan for the unit, which I want presented to me by June. This will consider the one-off and recurrent funding needs.

Over the coming year, we will also see the Royal Darwin Hospital take shape as the National

Critical Care and Trauma Centre. This will mean the appointment of two chairs, one in trauma medicine and one in disaster response and preparedness, as well as staff training facilities, improved burns facilities, and theatre upgrades and other equipment. \$13m in revenue will be received from the Australian government in 2006-07, and an additional \$5.5m will be spent on purchasing equipment to enable RDH to better respond to potential trauma injuries.

In addition, Royal Darwin Hospital will benefit from the introduction of a genetic testing service, neonatal child year health screening, an extra Registrar based in the hospital in palliative care, and an extra staff for rehabilitation services.

Alice Springs Hospital has also been challenged by increased demand for its services. In particular, increased demand on the emergency department has meant interruptions to elective surgery. Alice Springs Hospital is also confronted with the added complexity of delivering essential services while having to cope with the building rectification needed to correct the failings of the previous government. We will immediately provide extra funding to meet the acknowledged increased demand for our services. Accordingly, the budget for Alice Springs Hospital will rise to \$97m for this coming financial year - a 79% increase in base funding since the first Labor government came to power. The increased funding will enable the hospital to better cope with further surges and demands as they arise.

Work necessary to establish extra beds in Alice Springs Hospital will get under way immediately and, in the second half of 2006-07, the capacity for an additional 15 beds in Alice Springs will be completed as a result of the redevelopment of Ward 4. Initially, these 15 beds will be used for decanting of other wards during the rectification process. However, as soon as those works allow, these beds will be available for operational funding and immediate use as part of this government's election commitment of 24 extra beds for Alice Springs Hospital over the course of this term of government.

A number of other steps will be taken to improve hospital capacity and provide better health services to Centralians. The recently trialled discharge lounge will be made permanent, and the hospital will also develop and trial the promised Hospital in the Home service in Alice Springs, following its success in Darwin. There will also be an increase in medical hours for palliative care services, improvements in rehabilitation services with the employment of two extra allied health positions, and the implementation of this government's commitment to provide free neonatal hearing tests to all newborn babies.

Alice Springs Hospital will also benefit from the development of new picture archiving radiology technology across all hospitals. The previous hospital redevelopment did not include the Emergency Department which, for many patients, is the front door to the hospital. I previously expressed my strong commitment to having this situation rectified. I will be asking the hospital staff, with technical support, to plan, design and scope appropriate improvements to the Emergency Department so that it can be considered as a high priority as soon as progress with other capital works at the hospital allows.

In addition, \$6.5m will be spent in 2006-07 on rectification work for Alice Springs Hospital, including critical fire safety improvements. Lastly, the staff accommodation at Alice Springs Hospital for professional offices will be upgraded with additional funding of \$0.3m to bring the total project funding to \$0.55m.

Our hospitals in Katherine, Gove and Tennant Creek have not been forgotten in this budget. These three hospitals provide important services to the local communities and are an integral part of our hospital network in the Northern Territory. In this budget, an additional \$3.5m, or 7.6%, will be provided to these three hospitals to enable them to maintain services and cope with demand. Fire safety upgrades at Tennant Creek Hospital will start early in 2006-07 at an estimated cost of \$7.5m, and \$0.4m will be provided for the replacement of the hospital emergency generator at Gove Hospital.

We are also allocating an additional \$0.23m recurrently from 2006-07 to meet our election commitment of setting up universal hearing tests for all newborn babies in the Northern Territory. An additional \$0.8m will be used to expand services for renal patients across the Northern Territory, including the provision of eight haemodialysis stations at Alice Springs Hospital and additional ports in Katherine. \$1m of capital works will also be spent on upgrading renal facilities at Flynn Drive in Alice Springs.

Palliative care will be further supported with an additional \$300 000 to fund a range of initiatives put forward by the Palliative Care Clinical Reference Group, including a part-time bereavement worker in Central Australia, and increased medical hours in both the Centre and the Top End.

An additional \$400 000 will be provided to progress initiatives in the Rehabilitation Strategy launched in February 2006 and developed by the Rehabilitation Clinical Reference Group.

Primary Health Care Services are integral to the Northern Territory health system. The

Northern Territory government is a major provider of these services, and provides core funding, but they are essentially a joint enterprise with the Australian government. These services are particularly important to deliver this government's commitment to better child and maternal health services for all Territorians. My department has been working closely with the Commonwealth in this area, and we welcome the federal government's recent announcement that antenatal checks for pregnant woman will now be covered by Medicare. We look forward to further announcements from the federal government, as a result of our ongoing work with them, on expanding primary health care services across the Territory. Australian government funding for 2006-07 will be in the order of \$1.6m for primary health care services at Wadeye, and \$680 000 for Borroloola.

I am also pleased to announce that new clinics at Daly River, Milikapiti, Yuendumu and Minjilang will continue to come on stream this year at a cost of \$10m. \$2.9m has been provided in 2006-07 for a new clinic at Kalkarindji, and \$0.5m for an upgrade of Yirrkala clinic. In Central Australia, and in association with the Commonwealth, four clinics at Ti Tree, Tara, Haasts Bluff and Yuelamu received upgrade works costing \$0.84m in 2005-06, with \$0.68m revoted to complete the program at Umbakumba, Ramingining, Bonya, Aitijere and Lake Nash in 2006-07.

There is an apparent reduction in the funding of the Disease Control Services in the public health output group. This is largely a result of the cessation of Commonwealth-funded projects such as rheumatic heart disease; mosquito eradication at Tennant Creek, which was a wonderful success story; and the National Indigenous Pneumococcal and Influenza Project. We are also confident that, as happens every year, revenue additional to that in the budget papers will be become available for new programs within the Health Services Division. For example, screening of illegal fishers is challenging the division's public health resources, particularly in Gove. However, after intensive negotiations, Australian Customs has agreed to provide \$1m in funding for both 2005-06 and 2006-07, based on an anticipated throughput of 1300 fishers per annum. The division continues to perform commendably in its core services area, and in planning for new threats such as the pandemic influenza.

Though not specifically mentioned as an output in the budget papers, I also want to emphasise that, as part of the new Northern Territory government telecommunications contract, the department's Wide Area Network facilities have been significantly upgraded in urban and remote facilities. All the DHCS-staffed remote clinics will be online to the government Wide Area Network

by October 2007. The new communications infrastructure will enable secure e-mail messaging, clinical referrals, and transfer of digital images from remote health centres to acute care specialists to improve clinical service delivery and continuity of care.

In conjunction with the telecommunications infrastructure implementation, DHCS has allocated \$900 000 to provide basic ICT local network and computer infrastructure in 55 remote clinics. The upgrades of the network between all hospitals will enable the interaction of Territory-wide digital radiology imaging and storage facilities, and high-end telemedicine specialist services such as telephysiatry services. These services should result in more efficient and improved clinical services, for example, avoiding medical evacuation, patient and staff travel.

In closing, I thank the staff within my department for their hard work in the last year in responding to the growth in demand for services, as well as their work in dealing with out of the ordinary events such as the Katherine flooding and Cyclone Monica. I pledge my continued support for them in their work for the help of Territorians.

I will now move to the Safer Community initiatives under the Department of Justice in the 2006-07 budget. To help build a better system, additional funding of \$1.13m will be provided from 2006-07 to increase the capacity of the Solicitor for the Northern Territory to provide legal services to government agencies. This will ensure the government receives high-quality, consistent legal service from suitably qualified and supervised lawyers, and a substantial reduction in the costs of outsourced legal work. This government is building a better court system in recognition of the rising costs of increased court activity. \$450 000 will be provided from the 2006-07 budget to Court Support Services to enable the efficient running of the courts. The Fine Recovery Unit will receive an additional \$170 000 to enable it to expand the recovery action it takes on behalf of government and external agencies. The unit will be able to maximise the use of sanctions in a timely manner which will result in significant inroads into the fines that currently go uncollected.

Budget 2006-07 will also give Territorians greater access to justice than ever before. This year's budget papers will for the first time include the Community Justice Centre as a permanent part of the NT's justice system. \$324 000 is being allocated for 2006-07 to continue providing quick and easy access to mediation and dispute resolution outside the traditional court structures. Territorians have been using the centre to assist with resolution of tenancy disputes, neighbourhood disputes, small claims and motor vehicle collisions,

and civil and family disputes. Access to effective dispute resolution has never been easier.

To improve access to legal representation for Territorians, there will be a further boost to the Legal Aid Commission of \$120 000 in 2006-07. This is in addition to the extra \$720 000 provided in 2005-06. The increase is part of our four-year agreement between the Territory and Australian governments for the provision of legal aid services. Budget 2006-07 advances this government's proud record of supporting victims of crime by including extra funding for new initiatives. As part of the recently introduced reforms to the Victims of Crime Assistance Scheme, \$120 000 of new funding has been allocated to establish the Crime Victims Support Unit.

The reforms substitute an administrative assessment regime for the current litigation-based scheme which requires victims to attend a court in order to receive financial assistance. This means victims will no longer require legal representation to obtain such assistance. The assessment processes will be easier, quicker and less intimidating for victims. The Crime Victims Support Unit will be available to assist victims with their applications, refer victims to free counselling services, and to provide, where necessary, immediate up-front financial assistance. In addition, the unit will establish a victims' register which will allow victims to be kept apprised of the changes in the custodial arrangements of prisoners.

This government has been tough on crime and on the causes of crime. Crime across the Territory has fallen and property crime has been reduced by over 40%. We established the Office of Crime Prevention to develop a whole-of-government crime prevention policy and work in partnership with police and the community on crime reduction strategies.

There is an apparent reduction in the funding for the Office of Crime Prevention in this year's Budget Papers. This is largely as a result of the reversal of one-off funding from the Commonwealth for the Community Youth Development Units. The Commonwealth government requested the Department of Justice to manage the funding pending a report from the NT Police regarding distribution of that funding. The money was transferred to NT Police in October 2005. The Office of Crime Prevention will have a budget of \$3.5m and continues to perform commendably in its core service areas and in planning for new initiatives to reduce crime. To encourage community participation in preventing crime, \$750 000 is available in Budget 2006-07 for crime prevention grants. Of that, \$400 000 will be provided to community-based organisations for one-off projects in 2006-07.

Examples of projects that were funded in 2005-06 are \$10 000 to Julalikari Council in support of a campaign to raise awareness of the link between alcohol, violence and antisocial behaviour. The funds will be used to erect dry area signage in key areas in Tennant Creek. There is \$38 000 for the Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services to offer short-term affordable accommodation and support for offenders who have been recently released to assist them reintegrate into the community. \$15 000 is allocated to the Mt Theo-Yuendumu night school initiative which caters for 15-25 year-olds three nights per week with an Internet café operating four hours per day.

Since the Office of Crime Prevention was established under this government, 10 regional and indigenous crime prevention councils have been established around the Territory to work at the local level in leading targeted crime prevention and community safety strategies. The balance of the \$350 000 will be made available to regional crime prevention councils to fund or further develop their community safety plans, helping to devise local solutions to crime. This government has a proud record of attacking the causes of crime and this year's budget for the Justice portfolio includes funding for further initiatives to fight substance abuse as a cause of crime. The Department of Justice will have an increased capacity to advise the court on the suitability and effectiveness of rehabilitation and treatment programs for alleged offenders and those who abuse volatile substances.

\$200 000 is being provided for the alcohol court, a key component of the government's election commitment to introduce antisocial behaviour legislation. The alcohol court will allow for specialist assessment and treatment of offenders with alcohol abuse problems. The court will use as an operational model the well-established drug court or CREDIT NT. In addition, \$180 000 is allocated for the assessment of abusers of volatile substances for entry into appropriate treatment programs in 2006-07. This money is part of the implementation of the *Volatile Substance Abuse Prevention Act* which commenced in 2006. The assessment process will contribute to a reduction in volatile substance abuse, including petrol sniffing, by allowing another mechanism for sniffers to engage in treatment.

This budget recognises that investment in Consumer and Business Affairs is necessary for building the Territory's future. Consumer and Business Affairs will receive an extra \$72 000 from 2006-07 for a user-friendly streamlined business licensing and compliance register which will enhance the quality and accuracy of data and eliminate bureaucratic red tape for businesses.

Fees to register and renew a business name will be re-introduced in the Territory from 1 July. The lack of fees meant that the Territory had become a haven for anti-competitive practices. The Territory is the only Australian jurisdiction that does not impose fees or charges for registering or renewing a business name. This has resulted in unscrupulous operators registering thousands of businesses and domain names to sell on at a high price to genuine Territory businesses. The new charges will be \$60 for registering a new name and \$50 over three years for renewals. Stopping operators who squat on general business names will ensure more security and integrity in the system.

A strong correctional system is critical to building a safer community. Preventing re-offending is a key feature of reforms in our prisons. Budget 2006-07 will support recruitment of additional prison officers. Government has provided an additional \$1.68m in order to meet costs associated with an increase in Territory prison capacity from 721 to 800. Implementation of the recommendation of the review of adult custodial services, 'A Pathway to Good Corrections', will continue in 2006-07 building on the significant progress to date. The Integrated Offender Management System, or IOMS, an integral component of the review, will support the effective case management of prisoners and offenders on community corrections orders. IOMS is expected to become fully-operational in 2006-07.

A further recommendation to be fully implemented is the commencement of a sex offender program at Darwin Correctional Centre. This program commenced in Alice Springs Correctional Centre in 2005. Correctional Services management structure will be strengthened in line with the review recommendation, with recruitment to new senior management positions to be finalised in 2006-07. The construction of living units will follow, based in the low security areas of our two prisons.

In closing, Budget 2006-07 is building the Territory's future by supporting safer communities. It will extend the availability of free community legal services and specialist services for victims of crime; assist in tackling substance abuse as a cause of crime; support Territory businesses and consumers; strengthen crime prevention activities, particularly community-based crime prevention; improve our court system; make the Community Justice Centre an ongoing part of our justice framework, giving Territorians easy access to dispute resolution; and deliver more staff and extra capacity to our gaols. This budget creates jobs, grows the Territory economy, and builds on this government's policy of strong social development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend this budget to the Assembly and to the people of the Northern Territory.

Dr BURNS (Planning and Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Budget 2006-07 highlights the Martin government's commitment to building the Territory, creating jobs and economic growth, improving services, cutting taxes and boosting the skills of our workforce. It does this through sound and sustainable fiscal parameters; three surplus budgets in a row; and a five-year track record of building a stronger Territory. This year's budget again emphasises the Martin government's commitment to maintaining and developing infrastructure across all regions and sectors of the Territory with a cash allocation of \$482m. This means that, since coming to office in 2001, the Martin government will have spent \$2.7bn in cash on infrastructure projects - an unprecedented level of expenditure.

Infrastructure spending for the total Northern Territory public sector includes capital works, expenditure on projects for budget sector agencies, capital grants provided by those agencies, and capital expenditure of the Power and Water Corporation which is a government-owned corporation. In addition, infrastructure spending includes repairs and maintenance expenditure, as well as infrastructure-related expenditure such as the very popular urban enhancement program. The relevant lead government agency is the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, which provides a coordinated approach to infrastructure provision, transport services and development planning.

Budget 2006-07 continues with last year's significant infrastructure initiatives which will keep the Northern Territory economy moving ahead, providing opportunities for the business and industry sectors across all regions, while continuing to enhance our great Territory lifestyle.

Budget highlights for new infrastructure include \$10m to further prepare the site of the innovative Darwin City Waterfront development. This year's funding includes further site decontamination works, the upgrade of McMinn Street, and significant power feed into the precinct. The waterfront development, a joint government and private commercial venture, will provide outstanding convention, exhibition, dining, residential and parkland amenities which will bring many thousands of extra visitors to Darwin each year.

Other investments in strategic infrastructure include: \$8.6m for the Desert Peoples Centre in Alice Springs; \$1m for upgrading Fisherman's

Wharf; and \$1m for the container crane upgrade at East Arm Port.

The Martin government maintains its commitment to investing in community infrastructure, an area sadly neglected under the previous government. For instance, we have allocated \$20m for school repairs and maintenance, \$9.3m for Palmerston High School, \$2.5m to rebuild Wugularr School, \$800 000 for new classrooms upgrading the special needs annexe at Humpty Doo Primary School, and \$1m for renal facilities in Alice Springs and considerable ongoing works at the Alice Springs Hospital.

Power and Water will invest in a major increase in power generation capacity including: \$25m for a new generation unit at the Channel Island Power Station; \$7.5m for more generation in Alice Springs; and \$5m for a new Archer Zone Substation in Palmerston.

Funding previously allocated in 2006-07 and 2007-08 to improve infrastructure for the undergrounding of power lines in Darwin has been brought forward to the current year to facilitate more effective contracting arrangements with the Power and Water Corporation. Other infrastructure expenditure includes a commitment of \$1.5m to provide roads and drainage, together with water supply, power and sewerage reticulation to six new blocks along Batten Road in Darwin. These blocks will be used by community organisations. A trunk water main is to be installed which will service the new blocks, as well as future blocks on the southern side of Batten Road, and will provide improved water pressure to the existing lots on the northern side of Batten Road. In addition, a commitment of \$1.3m has been made to provide stage one headworks for Mt John Valley in Alice Springs. These include road access and drainage, together with water supply, sewerage and power reticulation to service a new residential subdivision.

The minor new works programs are crucially important to medium and small size contractors in the Territory. Last year, we raised the minor new works threshold to \$300 000 from \$150 000, a change which is welcomed by small business in the Territory. Some of the items included in DPI's minor new works program are: \$300 000 for the upgrading of pilot activated emergency lighting systems at six aerodromes; \$300 000 for upgrading of the Papunya airstrip; \$170 000 for new and replacement bus shelters in the Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield areas; \$30 000 for the provision of security lighting at bus shelters; \$300 000 to provide road access and services to Aboriginal community living areas; \$125 000 to realign the road at King Ash Bay fishing club at Borroloola; \$180 000 to upgrade Yarrowonga

Road; \$150 000 to upgrade the school bus interchange at Cox Peninsula Road; \$250 000 for the landscaping of medians and verges along the Stuart Highway and Stuart Park; and \$200 000 for lighting at the Wishart/Tivendale Road intersection.

The extensive and broad ranging operational areas covered by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure will also benefit significantly from this year's budget. Key areas for attention include highways and urban and rural roads, public transport, land development and administration aspects that will streamline the department's commercial and consumer services.

Budget 2006-07 again emphasises the critical need to build, upgrade and maintain the Northern Territory's vast road network, which encompasses everything from major national highways and tourist routes to the unsealed access roads to remote communities and cattle stations. A large proportion of DPI's budget funding will again be spent on roads this year. Budget capital funding for the Northern Territory under the Commonwealth-funded AusLink program, including new and continuing works, this year totals \$44.5m. This includes total capital funding of \$29m to upgrade the flood immunity of the Victoria Highway where it crosses the Victoria River floodplain; \$6.1m for strengthening and widening of the selected sections on the Stuart, Barkly and Victoria Highways; \$2m under the Strategic Regional Roads Program on the Outback Way Project for the upgrading of selected pavement sections on the Plenty Highway in the vicinity of the Plenty and Marshall Rivers in the Alice Springs region; and \$700 000 under the AusLink Black Spot Program for projects to improve the safety of targeted Northern Territory government and local government roads. Under the AusLink program, a total of \$15.9m has been allocated for maintenance of the AusLink network corridors.

Budget 2006-07 allocates capital funding for ongoing upgrading of Territory government-managed roads. Among the highlights, including new and continuing works, are the following: the continuation of the \$13.9m allocation for the West MacDonnell Range tourist loop road to promote tourism and regional development. The work will include reconstruction and sealing of selected sections of Namatjira Drive between Glen Helen and Larapinta Drive. In the last financial year, \$8m was expended on this project. We will be continuing with the \$4.5m allocation for Litchfield Park road to further seal the loop road from Cox Peninsula Road to the park boundary. \$1.3m will be spent on upgrading the Maryvale Road stage one. This is a strategic Territory beef road which will contribute to economic development of the

pastoral industry and provide safe and reliable access to remote communities.

\$800 000 is allocated under the Rural Arterial Road Program to address pavement reconstruction of poor sections of road. This will include selected sections on the Arnhem and Buntine Highways. \$750 000 is allocated under the Urban Arterial Road Program to address pavement reconstruction of sections of the urban arterial network which have reached the end of their economic life. These sections will include Stott Terrace in Alice Springs, McMillans Road, and urban sections of the Stuart Highway in Darwin.

\$500 000 is allocated to upgrade sections of the Barkly Region Sandover Highway, including re-sheeting and drainage upgrades. Budget 2006-07 provides \$36m for the repairs and maintenance of the Territory government-managed roads infrastructure across the Territory. The allocation includes an increase in maintenance funding of \$3.6m, a significant commitment by the Territory government to preserve our road network.

Capital grants are provided to fund the construction or upgrade of significant assets which are owned by entities outside the budget sector. Works may either be managed by the grant recipient to which the grant is provided directly, or by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in which case grant funds are held by the agency that is providing the grant, and the asset is handed over to the grant recipient on the completion of construction.

The government has contributed \$898 000 for the planning, design and construction of power lines at Dundee Beach, a project which is jointly funded by the Northern Territory government, and the Power and Water Corporation. DPI, through the Indigenous Infrastructure Unit, will be providing more than \$10.5m in capital grants to the Power and Water Corporation for new products under the indigenous essential services. These include \$1.3m to replace the power station at Canteen Creek; \$410,000 to drill and equip new bores; \$535 000 to upgrade the Robinson River Power Station fuel storage and bunding; and more than \$6m in minor new works including new bores and bore pumps, new water tanks, replacement and new sewer mains, new fuel tanks, fuel tank bunding and extensions and repairs to power stations.

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is responsible for managing the Northern Territory Indigenous Housing Construction Program. For this function, the department acts as an agent for the Department of Local Government, Housing

and Sport which has overall responsibility for indigenous housing programs.

The provision of training, and housing construction and maintenance through the Indigenous Housing Construction Program is a high priority government objective. In recent years positions have been developed for trainees in a number of Central Australian communities, and at Wadeye. Trainees work with a builder-trainer and are able to acquire Certificate II or Certificate III competencies.

In 2006-07, it is planned to roll this training program out into additional communities and broaden its geographical spread. In partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, it is planned in 2006-07 to provide training placements for approximately 40 trainees. It is planned through this training program to develop pathways to paid employment in local building and maintenance crews. The Housing Construction Training Program provides a means for increasing the capacity of local work crews, the contract for works related to the government's capital works, and general repairs and maintenance programs. Increasing the volume of government works that is contracted to capable local construction crews is a key priority for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Recent examples of government contracts which have been awarded to capable local work crews include: major subdivision works worth \$2.4m at Wadeye; general repairs and maintenance and school extensions at Groote Island, Bickerton Island, Numbulwar and Gunbalanya; gravel supply for roadworks on the West MacDonnell's tourism loop roads; and indigenous housing construction projects.

I will now mention some of the other budget highlights within my portfolios. In line with improving bus access, continued funding of \$144 000 is included in the budget to maintain and introduce new bus services for tenants of public housing senior villages in Darwin and Palmerston. Security for bus drivers and patrons will be increased this year with a commitment of \$330 000 to provide a dedicated security unit.

Budget allocations have been provided this year for the express purpose of streamlining government services to the business sector and the general public. The Motor Vehicle Registry's electronic service delivery options for commercial customers and the community will be better enhanced and promoted. The introduction of the quick pay service which allows customers to pay for MVR services over the Internet has been

extremely successful. Further e-government initiatives are being explored.

This government is committed to improving road safety. Budget 2006-07 provides DPI with total funding of \$1.56m to support government road safety programs and initiatives. Additional funding of \$650 000 has been allocated this year to continue to implement the changes to the *Planning Act* and the *Building Act*. This will provide for improved advertising of planning applications, enhance appeal processes and implementation of construction industry reform initiatives including strengthening, building and certification processes. Government is also committed to the ongoing planning to accommodate gas-based manufacturing at the proposed Glyde Point industrial estate with one-off funding being provided for consultancies including an environmental impact statement.

The Martin government continues to provide support for the relocation of the Stuart Park fuel terminals to East Arm Port with \$3.7m allocated across the 2005-06 and 2006-07 budgets. The very popular Urban Enhancement Program provides suburban shopping centre access, provides lighting in parks, signage and landscaping. There will be ongoing funding of \$2m to deliver the Urban Enhancement Program supporting the strategy, *Our Heritage Our Future*.

This program will see the Northern Territory government strengthen its relationships with local councils throughout the Territory to upgrade infrastructure which is owned and managed by a local government council under a partnership agreement between the relevant council and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure is responsible for two government business divisions, the Construction Division and the Darwin Bus Service. The Construction Division is responsible for the design, procurement and supervision of construction and maintenance of built assets for the government client agencies. The division has no construction workforce of its own instead arranging private contractors for all the construction work on behalf of its clients. The division's key responsibilities are to deliver the government's infrastructure program comprising capital works, minor new works and repairs and maintenance.

The Construction Division will form part of a long-term plan to address the following strategic issues facing the division in 2006-07. Firstly, development of the Road Map initiative to map processes, streamline actions, identify best practices, risk management and increase uniformity; development and implementation of contract training focusing on procedures and concepts to support existing and new contract

conditions; further progressing an efficiency focus for the delivery of the infrastructure program including the defining of roles and responsibilities; and conducting business in a commercial manner as a Government Business Division.

Road Projects is initiating a new wave of managing the repairs and maintenance of roads using an alliance with local contractors. The alliance model will be trialled in the Katherine region and is expected to improve efficiencies in the use of contractors, Construction Division staff and the effectiveness of maintenance works on the network.

Protection of sacred sites in the environment is being enhanced with a new Environmental Management Unit which is now fully operational. Environmental processes are being improved with the AAPA and the EPA. A major projects unit has been established in Road Projects to deliver the Mereenie Loop, Litchfield Loop and Victoria River Highway Victoria River projects. The Construction Division has a total general government capital works program of \$233m, and a repairs and maintenance program of \$104.5m.

The division will play an integral role in the following activities during the 2006-07 financial year: firstly, delivery of major projects such as the Victoria River bridge; middle school facilities; works at the Desert Knowledge precinct; continued upgrading of the Mereenie and Litchfield loops; facilitation and delivery of complementary infrastructure for East Arm Port, including bulk material handling facilities; construction of the Palmerston Recreation Centre and the Darwin Football Stadium at Marrara; and the construction of the Marrara Fire Station.

The primary function of the Darwin Bus Service is to provide an efficient, safe and reliable urban public bus service to meet the needs of Darwin and Palmerston communities, in line with the service level agreement with the Public Transport Branch of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. Bus services are also provided for special events such as the Arafura Games and school travel in Darwin and Palmerston. Darwin Bus Service will continue to improve customer service and safety; continue to improve accessibility for all members of the public by acquiring low-floor easy-access vehicles; increased passenger comfort levels by ensuring all new buses have features such as airconditioning, Euro 3 compliant motors and contemporary passenger transport ergonomics; and enhanced passenger and driver safety by using emergency surveillance technology inside buses.

Budget 2006-07 places the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in a position to enhance the services it provides to Territorians

across the board, and to undertake the strategic issues highlighted in order to build the Territory's future.

I turn now to the Darwin Port Corporation. The DPC's budget for 2006-07 illustrates the ongoing business progress of the organisation as it continues to establish commercial operations at East Arm Port. The Darwin Port Corporation estimates a loss of approximately \$4.2m. This includes a \$6.5m depreciation expense which, when excluded from the operating result, gives a profit of \$2.3m. The cash position of the corporation at 30 June 2007 is expected to be \$4.431m. The corporation's employee costs are expected to increase due to a combination of enterprise bargaining increases and additional resourcing for a duty officer, pilot boat master, environmental maintenance engineer, mechanic, electrician and invoicing clerk. A number of these positions are directly associated with the growth of the port and, in particular, the new bulk loading system requirements. Revenue is expected to increase by more than 25%, and this is due to increased CSO funding for maintenance as well as for remedial works at Fisherman's Wharf, and increased cargo and shipping revenue primarily from the LNG industry and the new bulk loading system.

The budget does not allow for the inclusion of forecast revenues to be derived from the Territory Iron project, which is currently under negotiation. When concluded, this project will reflect positively on government's decision to establish bulk material handling infrastructure at the port, and will assist in further developing the Territory's mining resource sector.

The following capital projects are planned for the coming year, making the new infrastructure available to the port for operating purposes: container crane electrical control upgrade; Fisherman's Wharf remedial works; completion of oil pipeline project connecting the bulk liquids berth and the Darwin industrial fuel terminal; completion of the bulk materials handling facilities for the Bootu Creek manganese ore export project; new interim incinerator to meet the quarantine disposal requirements; and further port security infrastructure.

The Darwin Port Corporation continues to strive for a strong commercial environment in which to operate and make greater commercial returns to the Northern Territory government. There are a number of areas which the DPC is working with government to be able to increase the returns to the Northern Territory government and, thus, improve the operating efficiency of the Darwin Port Corporation. These include: cost recovery on Darwin Port Corporation fees and charges; a playing field similar to the port's local

and interstate competitors with limited government regulation; and a suitable mechanism to ensure community service obligation activities are not subsidised by commercial activities. These matters have been addressed interstate and have allowed ports in southern states to operate in a far more commercial environment and thus, in turn, provide an opportunity to maximise efficiency for the interests of the port, government and the general public.

Overall, the 2006-07 Darwin Port Corporation budget delivers a series of strong messages. Cost constraints are crucial during 2006-07. Opportunities to increase profitable trade development to the port must be seized. Unprofitable activities need to be commercially aligned or not delivered by the Darwin Port Corporation, and continued efforts are required to improve the commerciality and efficiency of the port to position itself as a major stakeholder in the economic community of the Northern Territory.

I turn now to the Department of Corporate and Information Services. Building on last year's letting of a new five year contract to Telstra, which is now delivering increased telecommunications services to metropolitan, regional and remote centres, a new four year contract commencing on 29 June 2006 with Fujitsu Australia Ltd will deliver desktop and helpdesk services at significantly higher service levels. In particular, it will deliver unprecedented services to regional and remote centres. Significantly, from a budget perspective, the tender process undertaken by DCIS over the past 12 months has resulted in a projected 15% annual nett reduction on current costs for these services for the next four years.

The culmination of improved telecommunication services and the introduction of appropriate and greatly improved support for desktop services in regional and remote centres will reduce the inequity of information and technology services that exist between the towns and the bush centres. The government's five year contract with Fujitsu for their support of 11 major business systems for six agencies expires this year. A panel contract used by agencies to procure other ICT services, including consulting applications, development, maintenance and enhancements will also expire. DCIS is currently developing strategies to replace these contracts, and is working closely with agencies and industry to develop the most effective means to procure these services in the future.

To this end, it is not possible to predict what the cost will be at this particular stage, nor whether any nett reductions over existing costs can be achieved. The new contract with Fujitsu for desktop and helpdesk services includes an industry development program which will deliver a

range of new initiatives and programs over the contract term, sustaining and slightly increasing the current employment levels and boosting the Territory's information and communications technology skills base. Program initiatives include the establishment of a web solution centre and a refurbishment centre in Darwin, and three initiatives aimed at enhancing ICT education from preschool to graduate levels. The government has submitted to the federal government a bid for \$265m to fund improvements to telecommunications services throughout the Territory.

The focus is now on developing a more detailed proposal for the Australian government in three key areas. Firstly, a competitive optic fibre connection interstate at \$70m; an improved network infrastructure and capacity to 60 remote communities throughout the Territory at \$68m; and, supported technology centres in remote communities, providing access to the Internet and government services at \$30m. The department is working with the private sector and local organisations to put appropriate proposals to the Australian government.

During 2005-06, a review of the Northern Territory government's policy for the acquisition of leased property was completed. The review found that the existing property aligns with government's procurement principles that further improvements would result from a whole-of-government approach to accommodation planning, together with improved and streamlined processes. Approximately 80 property owners and 21 NTPS senior executives were consulted in the review through surveys, workshop discussion and comment on a new draft policy. The review has resulted in government implementing a new policy, accommodation standards and establishing a government office accommodation committee for the planning, approval and monitoring of the more significant leasing strategies. Agency chief executive officers have also been made more accountable for their accommodation strategies. The changes will result in a more streamlined system that provides greater transparency and efficiency. The benefits of these changes to property owners, the Department of Corporate and Information Services and agencies will become more apparent during 2006-07.

There has been a large increase in the number of employment opportunities for apprenticeships within the Northern Territory public sector. These opportunities are offered through the new apprenticeship program, and the structured training employment program which is specifically designed for indigenous job seekers. DCIS will continue its commitment for these programs with a \$1.38m budget allocation for 2006-07.

In 2005-06, DCIS undertook to streamline the recruitment process for base grade – that is AO1 and AO2 - entry into the Northern Territory public sector. The Entry Level Recruitment Service is now in place throughout the Territory with more than 3000 people registered. In 2006-07, government will benefit from the efficient recruitment of employees through this service.

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the minister be granted an extension of time pursuant to Standing Order 77.

Motion agreed to.

Dr BURNS: I thank my colleagues for allowing me to complete my remarks. As you can tell, this portfolio is certainly an economic and service provision powerhouse of government, and it is important to get this on the record.

The e-government program has been in progress for approximately three years. During this time a significant number of government services have been placed online, making it more convenient for members of the public, as well as business, to deal with government.

In March this year, the revamped NT government website, www.nt.gov.au, was launched with the new NT government branding and enhanced discoverability of government services. A consultancy to the next phase is currently in progress with a report due to Cabinet in the near future. This consultancy will look at how the application of emerging information communication technology could lead to cost and service efficiencies across the Northern Territory government. I know that is an issue dear to the heart of the former Business minister.

During 2006-07, the Northern Territory government will increase the use of credit cards as the preferred method of payment, especially for purchases up to \$500. This will allow for more timely payment to suppliers and a more efficient payment system. It is expected that almost 20% of payments to suppliers will be made by credit cards by the end of 2006-07.

DCIS has recently implemented a major upgrade of the Government Accounting System which is used by some 2500 Northern Territory public sector staff. The upgrade has delivered a web-enabled accounting system which has enhanced usability, and will allow the implementation of online requisitioning during the 2006-07 financial year. This latter feature will expedite the government purchasing function across the Territory and will be available to all agencies.

During 2006-07, DCIS will continue to roll out four administrative systems which are web-enabled and will allow greater transfer of electronic information and reporting. These systems are:

- myHR: DCIS is continuing to deliver effective corporate services to government through efficient systems and process. In 2006-07, DCIS will work cooperatively with agencies to move from a paper-based transaction system to full electronic processing for common payroll transactions such as requests for leave, claims for overtime and temporary transfers. This will be achieved through improved use of the Intranet-based employee self-service facility, myHR;
- the second system is APROS, the Agency Purchase Requisition Order System. APROS allows the transfer of electronic information between the agencies and DCIS for tenders over \$10 000. The system will be developed further during the year to add functionality;
- the third system is the Travel Requisition and Information Payment System, appropriately known as TRIPS. TRIPS allows for online approval for business travel, while at the same time automatically calculating all payments due. This system, which interfaces with Government Accounting System has been successfully piloted in DCIS and will be rolled out to other agencies during 2006-07; and
- the fourth and final system is known as CARS. No guesses for guessing what this is. This is a Client Access and Reporting System. NT Fleet will enhance CARS by developing a web-enabling several key processes including agency pool vehicle booking system, fleet detail screens and online quarterly reporting.

During 2006-07, Data Centre Services will continue to enhance its infrastructure to meet increasing demand. The Data Centre currently hosts many of the government's important IT systems including our centralised human resources and accounting systems. At the same time it provides server management for many business applications on behalf of agencies. The enhancements during 2006-07 will include expanded enterprise storage, additional virtual service and an upgrade to the data network.

Finally, I turn to the Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment. Budget 2006-07 highlights include \$1m to fund the Remote Workforce Development Strategy. This aims to provide employees in remote areas with access to workforce and professional development opportunities thus increasing recruitment and retention rates in remote areas particularly in hard to fill occupations such as teachers and nurses. The strategy has been in place for a number of years now and has recently undergone external evaluation to ensure that it satisfies its objectives and continues to provide benefits to employees in remote areas. \$550 000 has been allocated over three years in Budget 2006-07 for the program Strengthening the Public Sector, the centrepiece of which is the development of a career mapping tool which will identify career pathways within the Northern Territory public sector.

A further \$30 000 has been allocated in 2006-07 for the development of a formal mentoring program within the Northern Territory public sector. Approximately \$360 000 will be allocated to fund the Office of the Workplace Advocate, an advisory service that has been set up by this government to assist Territory employees and employers deal with the implementation of the federal Work Choices legislation.

Since the Martin Labor government took office in 2001 the representation of indigenous employees in the Northern Territory public sector has increased by 55%. We believe we can do much better. \$250 000 has been allocated to further enhance employment and career development opportunities for indigenous employees in the Northern Territory public sector.

The Northern Territory public sector is the single biggest employer in the Northern Territory and its employees continue to do some great and innovative work across a broad range of areas. It is fitting that we recognise the contribution that the NTPS employees make to the community and, to this end, \$50 000 has been allocated in 2006-07 to host the inaugural Chief Minister's Awards for Excellence in the Public Sector, Service Delivery, and Administration. Approximately \$900 000 will be spent providing executive and leadership development program to ensure that our future managers and leaders are equipped with the necessary skills to confront the economic and global challenges that lay ahead.

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment will continue to work closely with the Charles Darwin University in delivering these programs to enhance their overall capacity and ensure as much of this work as possible stays within the Territory. A further \$100 000 in grant funding will also be provided to CDU in 2006-07 to support the ongoing employment of the Chair in

Governance and a new position of Professor in Human Resources to further strengthen the capacity in this area.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I am sure the Treasurer would rather manage a turbocharged economy rather than the stagnant one we all saw in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, there are still challenges to be met. I congratulate the Treasurer on his budget and on his choice of suits. I thought it was fantastic. I thought this year's budget is fantastic. It is contributing to economic growth across all sectors in the Territory, across all regions in the Territory. It is great to be part of a government, 19 members here who are taking an active interest in all their electorates. It is great to have a budget ...

Mrs Braham: Do not brag too much, minister.

Dr BURNS: ... that looks at the whole of the Territory including Alice Springs ...

Mrs Braham: Pride comes before a fall.

Dr BURNS: ... and Braitling. I commend the Treasurer's and this government's budget to the House.

Mr HENDERSON (Police, Fire and Emergency Services): Madam Speaker, I too commend the 2006 budget by the Treasurer. For honourable members who probably have not heard the late breaking news - and I am sure everybody is interested - the AFL has awarded the game to Fremantle, if people had not been appraised of that yet. As a St Kilda supporter, I think that is pretty crook. So we do not play to the umpire any more. That is the result of the AFL's deliberations today.

Back to the business of the House, which is the 2006-07 Budget.

Mrs Braham: Glad you have your priorities right, minister.

Mr HENDERSON: Member for Braitling, I have been waiting on this all afternoon. My colleague behind me has been keeping an eye on the AFL site and it has just come through. Back to other important issues, as well as football.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2006-07 does build the Territory's future, and I congratulate the Treasurer for bringing this budget to the House. It delivers jobs, growth and a stronger Territory. It focuses on the government's priorities of supporting and growing business; improving educational outcomes which is vital for the future of the Territory; building a healthier Territory, very important given the health profiles that we have and have had for many years in the Territory;

providing a safer community for all Territorians - every Territorian deserves to live in a safe community; and importantly, enhancing our great lifestyle. We cannot take that lifestyle for granted; we have to continue to enhance that wherever we can. The budget does do so within sound and sustainable fiscal parameters.

To achieve these priorities, Budget 2006-07 builds on the successful policy approach adopted by the Martin government over the past five years. The approach has been to reduce taxes, provide high levels of infrastructure spending, invest in strategic economic drivers, and to implement a strong social development program. Talking about the budget impacts on the agencies I am responsible for, I will start with the Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Budget 2006-07 delivers another record year of funding for the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services as the government continues to build a new era in Territory policing. Funding for Police, Fire and Emergency Services has been boosted to \$212m, a 55% increase since the Martin government came to office in 2001. That really is a very significant increase to our Police, Fire and Emergency Services. When we came to government in August 2001, we really did inherit a police force that was very badly rundown, and had suffered from inadequate resources for many years. It is a police force that is still recovering from a total recruitment freeze in the early 1990s that ran for four years when the previous administrations failed to recruit one additional police officer for four years whilst police were leaving the force, putting enormous stresses on our police force. Police officers had to buy out leave rather than take leave. They could not take leave, given the severe stresses that that organisation was under.

We have committed, over the last three years, to rebuilding our police force. We have seen an additional 137 officers recruited. This funding allows us to reach our target of an additional 200 police by the end of 2006. I can see as I get around police stations across the Northern Territory, the very real impact that those new officers are having on the force. Comments were made by the Leader of the Opposition in her budget speech today. She seeks to attack police at every opportunity saying that morale was terrible; there were record rates of people leaving the force; and we had not really recruited all of these officers. I do not know what series of numbers she was bandying about the Chamber today but, she talked about maybe there were 20 additional officers. I can say that there are 137 more police officers in the force than when we came to government, and this funding will take it up to 200.

To assert that those police officers have made no impact out there in the community, and that crime is worse than it was when the CLP were in government, is an attack on the professionalism of our police force and the job that we ask them to do. To not recognise that there has been significant investment; that there has been significant improvements, particularly in property crime reductions across the Northern Territory; to not recognise the sustained work going on, particularly in the area of domestic violence and confronting domestic violence and targeting repeat offenders and better support for victims; and failing to recognise the work currently being undertaken by police officers is insulting to them. I hope we can see the day, within this term of parliament, when we will have bipartisan support for those people whom we ask, on behalf of the Territory, to protect and serve our community.

The majority of the increase is going to fund extra police on the beat across the Territory in the final year of the government's \$75m *Building our Police Force* plan. \$32m is going to be allocated to continuing to build the new era in Territory policing, as we work towards an extra 200 police on the beat by the end of this year.

Very importantly – and it is in the budget papers, they are police figures – police expect to deliver an extra 17 000 hours in general patrols in 2006-07 thanks to the increase in officer numbers. More patrols mean safer communities and higher visibility. Goodness knows what sort of dysfunctional algorithms the Leader of the Opposition contorted today to say that that additional funding, \$32m to finish the O'Sullivan reforms, an extra 17 000 hours of police patrols, is only two extra police officers across the Northern Territory. Goodness knows how she comes to that conclusion, but that is something for the Leader of the Opposition to explain.

Other features of *Building our Police Force* plan in Budget 2006-07 include establishing dedicated traffic branches in Alice Springs and Darwin. That is rebuilding the police presence in our major centres, Alice Springs and Darwin; a presence on our roads that was disbanded by the previous CLP administrations; and providing increased capacity to develop, implement and promote educational road safety programs aimed at reducing the incidence of trauma on our roads. Importantly, a new 7.4 metre coastal vessel will also be purchased for the Ngukurr Police Station from this funding. This is the last boat to be delivered by the government's \$1m coastal vessel replacement program. We inherited a Marine and Fisheries Branch of the Police Force that did not have the boats to get out on the water, and they had not had any for some years. The \$1m program has seen five new vessels being built and

deployed across the coastline of the Northern Territory.

As part of the 2005 enterprise bargaining agreements with police, government has allocated an extra \$12.2m in funding towards the agreement, improving pay and working conditions for our police officers. This follows an allocation of \$9.3m in 2005-06. The Leader of the Opposition has been railing against the government for funding EBA increases and, in her budget reply today, was challenging and alleging a blowout in the police budget from \$189m to \$202m. The vast majority of that increased appropriation was to fund the EBA outcome with an additional \$9.5m in 2005-06. The Leader of the Opposition is asserting by her comments that police should not have received that pay increase. I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to tell our police officers across the Northern Territory that she does not believe they were worth that increase.

\$630 000 has been allocated to the new Social Order Patrols, introduced as part of the government's package of measures to break the cycle of alcohol abuse, violence and antisocial behaviour. Funding of \$440 000 has been allocated to Stage 2 of an initiative to provide Aboriginal Community Police Officers working in remote communities with police-owned vehicles to carry out their duties - not only a great benefit to those Aboriginal Community Police Officers, or ACPOs as they are fondly known, but a real boost to local government community councils who do not have to fund those vehicle any more.

Budget 2006-07 continues government's emphasis on counter terrorism initiatives to ensure the Territory maintains its capacity to respond to incidents effectively and efficiently. Funding in 2006-07 includes \$760 000 for the purchase, maintenance and replacement of equipment, and the provision of training to develop an urban search and rescue capacity.

The budget also includes \$110 000 in Neighbourhood Watch grants to assist community-based crime prevention programs aimed at the protection of property and personal safety. I know all honourable members support the work Neighbourhood Watch does across the Northern Territory. \$1.76m in juvenile diversion program grant funding is ongoing.

There is \$500 000 to continue the implementation of the Fire Service Review recommendations to address management and workplace issues, including industrial relations, human resource management, and staff development in the Fire and Rescue Service. This is an area of that organisation which was significantly demoralised and run down when we came to office. I can now say proudly that the Fire

Service is a different organisation to the one which we inherited. Morale is really high and the people in that agency are doing a great job.

There is extra funding of \$560 000 for the upgrade of the NT Fire Alarm System Transmission, and the provision of extra technical support. Police will also continue to implement targeted strategies to reduce the rate of personal and domestic violence in the Territory and to target, very importantly, drug related crime. I commend those officers in the Remote Community Drug Desk, the new Drug Dog Squad, and the Drug Squad for great results they are achieving across the Territory.

Budget 2006-07 is building the Territory's future and the government is pleased to again deliver record levels of funding to support safer communities.

Another agency, DBERD, the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development, has a total budget of almost \$23m. This is down slightly; just \$19 000 from last year, largely due to one-off funding for specific projects in 2005-06. DBERD is a small department in the scheme of things, but the reality is we had to look at the economic outlook to determine where the economy is now; where it is heading; and what the issues are, and DBERD as an agency is poised to assist the business community across the Northern Territory take advantage of the opportunities that are coming our way as a result of increased private sector investment in our economy.

The outlook for the Territory in 2006-07, and I urge members to read the budget paper which looks at the state of the economy and forecasts, will feature gross states product growth estimated to reach 5.8% - down slightly this year, but still very strong growth rates. Jobs growth is 2.3%; the highest in the last five years. Population growth of 1.5% I think is the third highest in Australia, and there is private consumption growth of 4.3%. As I said in Question Time today, the great benefit of delivering tax cuts and denying some \$74m worth of revenue to government coffers is that that money is available on the consumption side of the economy. That consumption growth is 4.3%, and retail growth of 4.5%.

In addition, there is strong outlook for the mining industry with world demand remaining high. Local jobs are going to be stimulated by the continued development of the Darwin waterfront and convention centre; high levels of infrastructure expenditure; and very positive outlooks for tourism, retail, trade and residential development. Within that climate, DBERD seeks to maximise our business capacity to take advantage of that growth. Highlights in the budget this year include

funding of \$500 000 to continue to assist with regional economic developments throughout the Territory, including support for regional economic committees and project grants under the Regional Economic Development Fund. Very importantly, the Chief Minister's challenge to government, and me as Regional Development minister, is to ensure that that growth is developed across the regions of the Northern Territory; not just here in Darwin.

There is \$590 000 funding to continue delivery of business services and implementation of economic development initiatives to foster long-term economic growth and prosperity for indigenous Territorians. It is a very significant task facing the Northern Territory. Our government is getting investment and job outcomes in the remote parts of the Territory and for indigenous Territorians and we are working very hard to make significant inroads towards that aspiration.

There is \$300 000 in grant funding to assist start up of new indigenous business enterprises; funding of \$470 000 to continue delivery of business information and licensing services through the Territory business centres; and \$650 000 to continue delivery of business management and capability programs including upskills workshops, business coaching services, the business growth program, and practical events during October Business Month.

I can say that the upskills workshops, capability programs and coaching services were an election commitment in 2001, and have been running for four years now. They are very positively received by the businesses which take part in these programs. This is not cash grants for business. This is assisting businesses develop better business plans, better focuses and business strategies, and enabling them to better position their business to take advantage of a growing economy.

There is \$1.15m to peak Territory industry associations for specific industry development services, including extra funding of \$60 000 to provide a training officer with the Australian Hotels Association and Clubs NT. That was an election commitment given that we have a number of sporting clubs and associations across the Territory which have struggled. Historically, we can all name some of them, and really the only practical assistance government can provide for these sporting clubs and groups is to assist them develop a proper business plan, proper business practices and business management in running their clubs and associations. That is what that funding is for and work is progressing already on that initiative.

There is \$200 000 for targeted industry development initiatives including support to grow emerging industry sectors, and grants for specific projects. There is \$680 000 in grants to Desert Knowledge Australia, and \$190 000 in grants to support research and innovation.

Government is continuing to support business and help them grow into the future. As well as crucial business support provided through DBERD, government is doing this with Budget 2006-07 by providing further tax cuts, strategic investment, a strong infrastructure program, and targeted support. Budget 2006-07 makes the Territory the lowest taxing jurisdiction in Australia for businesses with fewer than 100 staff. That really is a very significant achievement by this government over the last term, and into this term, and that is very real practical assistance.

I remember when we embarked on our first major round of payroll tax cuts - I defer a bit to the Treasurer - but I think the first step we took was going from \$600 000 to \$800 000 as the threshold.

Mr Stirling: Yes.

Mr HENDERSON: I remember going to the V8s that year at Hidden Valley, and a businessperson who was in that bracket - I think they must have been around a payroll of \$750 000-odd that they were paying payroll tax on - said to me that it was the best move we had made because with the payroll tax savings he had accrued he would now put on an extra employee. What drove us to make those changes, and to continue to make them, is that most businesses will reinvest those savings into putting on more employees and providing Territorians with jobs. The steps we have taken with payroll tax have been very well received across the Territory.

If you look at the payroll tax comparison table in the budget books, for staff numbers of 50, the tax bill will be some \$77 500 in the Territory. Compare that to New South Wales at \$114 000; Queensland, \$104 000; South Australia, \$109 000; and Victoria, \$102 000. It is a very significant competitive advantage for Territory businesses. Take that up to 100 staff: \$232 000 in the Northern Territory, \$264 000 in New South Wales; and \$243 000 in Tasmania. Again, a very significant advantage. I am very pleased as Business minister to see those measures continue to roll out and the budget this year lifts our payroll tax threshold from \$1m to \$1.25m.

Budget 2006-07 brings to \$74m the total tax reduction provided by the Martin government to Territorians. A further \$134m will be provided over the next few years. The opposition runs the line that, somehow, we are the biggest taxing government in the Territory's history. Tell that to

the 187 businesses which were paying payroll tax under the previous CLP administrations which are no longer paying payroll tax under this government. Try to explain to one of those businesses that, somehow, we are collecting more tax from them than ever in the history in the Northern Territory. It just will not fly, and I am surprised that the opposition keeps running that line. The reason that revenue has increased is as a result of increased economic activity, increased private sector investments, and a strong economy. For the life of me, I believe the Leader of the Opposition needs to do Economics 101 - it is all pretty basic stuff but she just does not get it. The Martin government is the most tax reforming government in Territory's history!

My colleague, the Infrastructure minister, talked about infrastructure spending. If you look at the break-up of the Territory's economy, particularly in the Darwin/Palmerston region, many people are employed in the construction sector and, traditionally, have relied on the government capital works budget. I am very pleased to see, as Business minister, that our economy is opening up, and our private sector investment is at record highs. Anybody who is trying to get a tradesman to do work around their home can see how busy it is at the moment. There is a \$482m spend on infrastructure, taking the total government spending to \$2.7b since 2001 - a huge investment.

Tourism is one of our biggest employers; it is a crucial sector for our economy and small business. We all saw after the Ansett collapse the huge impact on our economy, not just in the tourism sector. Every tourist who comes to the Territory spends money on accommodation and retail, and every sector that you could possibly think of. We have made big strides in working with our tourism industry to rebuild. Over the past three years, government has significantly boosted its investment in tourism - \$27.5m extra over three years. We are seeing those numbers grow again, and this government is committing an extra \$10m ongoing to support marketing of our great Northern Territory, both nationally and internationally.

Very importantly, business looks to government to ensure that, through our education, tertiary and TAFE system, skilled Territorians are leaving our education and training system and entering the workforce. \$84m is being deployed this year for employment and training. It supports business by continuing government's efforts to skill a home-grown workforce. The economy is growing, and the Martin government wants to ensure that local business reaps the benefit of that growth.

It is very important to pay tribute this evening to our Charles Darwin University and the trade school. I took it upon myself to visit the trade school there - it must have been some six or eight

months ago - to see firsthand the facility. I met the lecturers and talked to some of the students, and saw the quality of the equipment. Congratulations to the Motor Trades' Association which has invested significantly in the trade school at the university. They are doing a fabulous job. We are increasing funding to the university this year. We are well on track to our target for an additional 10 000 apprentices and trainees over the next four years, with 2600 already in the workforce. We will continue that support for Territorians, to give them the best skills that they can have to take advantages of the strong economy.

I move now to another area of my responsibility, which is on the operations side of the Power and Water Corporation. Government is also investing in strong infrastructure spending to provide power and water services to Territorians. In 2006-07, the Power and Water Corporation will invest \$87.1m in capital works, and \$39.8m in repairs and maintenance. That is a significant amount of money and is very much on the high side of Power and Water's capital investment over the years.

Key projects include:

- Darwin generation augmentation - work will commence on the supply and installation of a new generation unit for Darwin; increased generating capacity is needed to meet demand of growth. The 2006-07 estimated expenditure for the project is \$25m, with completion in 2007-08. Another signal of a growing economy is that electricity demand is increasing and Power and Water has to meet that projected demand with new generating capacity;
- generation augmentation in Alice Springs - work will commence on the supply and installation of a new generating unit in Alice Springs. The increase in generating capacity is required to meet demand growth. The estimated 2006-07 expenditure for the project is \$7.5m, with completion in 2007-08;
- in Darwin, construction of the new \$12.5m Frances Bay zone substation is expected to be completed in 2006-07, and will provide increased reliability and security of supply for the Darwin CBD. It is bad enough at home when the power goes out and you are trying to put the family meal on the table, or go sleep at night, but for the business community to have power go down during the day means significant disruption not only to their business but also cash flow.

Increasing the reliability is very important for the business community;

- in Palmerston, construction will commence on the \$5m Archer zone substation. For the residents of Palmerston, this will improve reliability in the area and is expected to be completed in 2007-08;
- in Alice Springs, the water re-use project, which commenced in 2003-04, is expected to be completed in 2006-07. It is estimated that \$3.4m will be expended in 2006-07. The project will see treated effluent pumped from the waste stabilisation ponds to the Arid Zone Research Institute for storage and irrigation of pasture, or possible horticulture ventures. The current discharge licence is valid to 31 December 2006, and infrastructure will be completed during the first half of 2006-07. It is expected the final testing will be able to be completed by the end of 2006-07;
- in Katherine, there will be an upgrade to the Katherine effluent disposal system undertaken at an estimated cost of \$2.5m with completion in 2006-07;
- approximately \$2.2m will be spent in 2006-07 on relining sewers throughout the Territory. It is anticipated that this is going to be an ongoing requirement;
- the undergrounding power project. I am sure the member for Nightcliff will be interested in this. She knows that this project has been near and dear to my heart over the years as well. To date, contracts to the value of over \$9m have been awarded to local Territory businesses for labour and materials for the project. Capital grants have been consolidated and brought forward to further accelerate progress on the project. Total allocation for the Territory government in 2005-06 is \$9m, with Power and Water Corporation contributing an extra \$3.6m. We are bringing outward years expenditure forward to enable us to actually bulk up the contract in going to tender so we can get better bang for our buck and get the project completed sooner, a good result for the good residents of Nightcliff; and
- in Dundee Beach, for the member for Daly, the main 22kV line is now energised through to Dundee Lodge. An additional Territory government

contribution of \$2.1m is included in the budget to complete reticulation to approximately 1000 lots by late 2006. Power and Water Corporation has allocated an additional \$7.15m to the project. It is a real commitment to the people of the Dundee region, in spite of some of the residents there continuing to have a crack. A major regional development opportunity will be realised with an additional 1000 lots going online to mains power and the opportunity to establish new businesses.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate my colleague, the Treasurer, on bringing down his fourth budget, a very responsible and exciting budget. I do not agree with Wicking that it is dull and boring. It is a very exciting budget and I look forward to having carriage of my agencies as we continue to roll out a safer Territory, a stronger Territory economy, and better reliability and outcomes from Power and Water.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Power and Water Corporation –
Statement of Corporate Intent 2006-07

Mr STIRLING (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I table the 2006-07 Statement of Corporate Intent, or SCI, for the Power and Water Corporation.

As members are aware, the Power and Water Corporation became the Territory's first Government Owned Corporation, or GOC, on 1 July 2002. This is the corporation's fifth SCI as a GOC. The SCI contains the annual performance agreement between the GOC and the shareholding minister on behalf of Territorians as owners of the corporation. As required under section 39(7)(a) of the *Government Owned Corporations Act*, as shareholding minister for the Corporation, I now table a copy of the corporation's SCI in the Legislative Assembly.

In accordance with 39(8) of the *Government Owned Corporations Act*, and consistent with previous years, information of a commercially-sensitive nature has been removed from the SCI being tabled today. As I have indicated in previous years, the primary reason for this is it would be unreasonable to disadvantage the corporation by disclosing commercially-sensitive information that no private sector business would be expected to release. This remains relevant, even though at this time the corporation has no direct competitor for most of its business activities.

The SCI forecasts a nett profit after tax of \$33m in 2006-07. This is approximately \$9m more than the revised nett profit after tax projected for

2005-06. The forecast higher profitability is primarily due to lower operating costs expected in 2006-07 following abnormally high energy costs experienced in 2005-06.

As members are aware, the government has a uniform tariff policy for most customers, including small business and households. This means that these Territorians pay the same for electricity, water and sewerage irrespective of how much it costs to provide these services in different locations and conditions. The 2006-07 SCI includes a 2.6% increase in electricity, water and sewerage tariffs commencing 1 July 2006. Notwithstanding the increased tariffs, there is still a shortfall between what Territorians pay and what it costs the corporation to deliver the services.

This gap is made up by government providing community service obligation, or CSO, funding and also government accepting a lower rate of return for its investment in the corporation. The government also contributes CSO funding for medium-size contestable electricity customers Tranche 4 users to cover the shortfall between cost-reflective tariffs and regulated maximum prices. Larger contestable customers pay cost-reflective prices as set by the corporation, noting that the Utilities Commission reviews the reasonableness of prices charged for generation and use of the corporation's networks. The corporation's projected \$33m profit for 2006-07 includes government CSO funding of approximately \$56m, and financial and in-kind contributions of electricity, water and sewerage assets of \$8m.

As in previous years, 50% of the corporation's profit will be paid to the Territory in the form of a dividend. The \$17m dividend expected to be paid by the corporation for 2006-07 is the return Territorians as shareholders receive on their investment in the corporation and will be used by government to provide other services to Territorians such as health, education and safety.

The corporation will also continue to make company tax payments in 2006-07. Tax payments made by the corporation are received by the Territory under the National Tax Equivalence regime. The regime is administered by the Australian Taxation Office on behalf of all states and territories. The corporation retains 50% of its after tax profits to re-invest in new assets and maintain existing assets so that it continues to provide a quality service.

As the 2006-07 SCI will be considered by the GOC Scrutiny Committee, I will not go into any more detail here.

MOTION

Referral of Statement of Corporate Intent to Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee

Mr STIRLING (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the Power and Water Corporation Statement of Corporate Intent 2006-07 be referred for consideration by the Government Owned Corporations Scrutiny Committee to be established to examine the 2006-07 operations of the Power and Water Corporation.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

Expunction of Contents of a Document quoted from by the Member for Greateorex

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, earlier today I had drawn to my attention the content of a document quoted from by the member for Greateorex in his speech on the motion for adjournment of the Assembly last night.

I have considered the contents of the document quoted from and considered the words used by the member were highly disorderly.

Accordingly, I have ordered that the words used by the member in quoting from that document be expunged from the *Parliamentary Record* pursuant to Standing Order 62(2).

Honourable members, while I acknowledge the right of any member to exercise freedom of speech by raising any matters of concern, it must be raised by way of substantive motion pursuant to Standing Order 62(3).

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Dr BURNS (Johnston): Madam Speaker, in March I was asked to present medals at the NT Open Age and States Swimming Titles run by Swimming NT. The vision of Swimming NT is that swimming will be recognised as a leading family sport in the Northern Territory. Going by the participation in all events held during the open and age championships that vision is attainable and sustainable. Each age group from 10-year-olds to 25 years and over raced during the carnival and medals were awarded to the top three swimmers in each race. These championships were held from Thursday, 9 March finishing on Sunday, 12 March at the Casuarina swimming pool. Finals were held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings and each night finished off with a presentation of medals for the night's events.

I had the honour of presenting medals to the winners of the Friday final sessions; and these included Miranda Cowley and Stevie Nibbs of the Top End Storm Swimming Club who were first and second in the women's 10-year-old 200 m freestyle with Zoe Williams of the Nightcliff Swimming Club in third place. I also presented Miranda and Stevie first and second medals again for 100 m butterfly with Vayda Menmuir of the Katherine Amateur Swimming Club third. Looking at the overall results for the 10-year-old girls, I see that Miranda came first in all her races in every stroke. It will be interesting to watch Miranda in the years ahead.

In the 11-year-old section, I presented medals to Gemma Dalby of Alice Springs, Kiah Hazel and Darcy Moffat of the Top End Storm in 200 m freestyle, and Lily Burrow of the Darwin Amateur Swimming Club, Kiah Hazel and Gemma Dalby in the 100 metre butterfly. These three girls featured strongly in all their races over each stroke and the individual medley. I presented Frances Walker of the Darwin Amateur Swimming Club the first place medal in the women's 12-year-old 100 m butterfly with Jessica Jones and Georgia McQueen of the Top End Storm second and third. These three girls mixed it up in their races with Frances also winning the individual medley whilst Jessica won the 100 m freestyle, backstroke and the breaststroke. Lauren Burrow, Sarah Butler and Megan Gallagher of the Darwin Amateur Club came first, second and third in the 13-year-old 200 m freestyle. Again all girls received medals in the other strokes.

The 14-year-old 200 m freestyle events went to Elyshia Sheldon of Palmerston and Rural Swimming, Kirby Bolton of Darwin Amateur and Jessica McCasker of Top End Storm with the butterfly medals to Kirby, Hannah Reedy, also of Darwin Amateur, and Karina Glasby of Top End Storm. Elyshia went on to take first place in the freestyle, backstroke and breaststroke and individual medley.

In the 15-year-olds, Kia King, Rachael McLean and Tanya Bower of Casuarina Swimming Club came in, in the three top spots with Kia taking out the 100 m butterfly from Katie Quinney of Alice Springs. Lisa Eadie of Casuarina, Samantha Carmichael of Darwin Amateur and Rebecca McCasker of the Top End Storm were awarded medals in the 16-year-old 200 m freestyle whilst Nellie McLean of the Casuarina Club came first in the 17- to 24-year-old 200 m freestyle and Hannah Rochford of Litchfield Jacana Swimming Club came second. Hannah also won the 17- to 24-year-old 100 m butterfly. Tahnee Afuhaamango came second swimming with the Casuarina Swimming Club. It is great to see Tahnee back in action. She is a real champ in the making.

In the open women's events, Tanya Bower of Casuarina won the 800 m freestyle, Sarah Butler of Darwin Amateur the 50 m backstroke, with Lauren Burrow of Darwin Amateur winning the 50 m butterfly. Congratulations to all these great women swimmers. All the best to them for the future.

I now move on to the men's section. In the 10-year-olds section, Benjamin Fuller from Alice Springs featured strongly in all his races and I presented his medal for first place in both breaststroke and individual medley. In both these races, Jack Ryan of Top End Storm and Mitchell Ward of Darwin Amateur came second and third.

Sam West of Top End Storm won the 11-year-old breaststroke and medley, whilst Mitchell Ward of Darwin Amateur came second in both, with Jacob Netherway of Litchfield Club coming third in the breaststroke, and Sean Nieuwenhoven of the Top End Storm third in the individual medley.

Moving on to the 12-year-olds, the numbers in these races were a bit lower than other fields. However, Jack McEwin of Nightcliff won the breaststroke and came second in the medley, while Sam Butler of Alice took second in the breaststroke and first in the medley. Michael Collins of Palmerston and Rural took out third in both races.

Zac Dalby won the 13-year-old breaststroke and medley for the Alice Springs Club, with Drew Irwin and Aaron Halliwell both of Top End coming second in those respective races and Patrick Dalziel of Palmerston third in both races.

The 14-year-old breaststroke and medley were both won by Cameron Ward of the Darwin Amateur, with Conner Laughton of Top End coming second.

In the 13-year-old races, both Zac Dalby and Cameron Ward raced superbly, winning all their age events.

Sampson Leung of Nightcliff Swimming Club won both the 15-year-old breaststroke and medley, with Michael Hofer of Darwin and Hayden Meyers of Nightcliff vying for second and third places in both races.

The 16-year-old medley was won by Daniel Pezet of Alice Springs, followed by Edward Bagley of Nightcliff and Blair Castelli of Nhulunbuy. Blair won the breaststroke from Daniel, with Dale Frew of Darwin Amateur in third.

Amongst the last medals awarded on Friday night was first to Daniel Pezet and second to Zac Dalby, both of Alice Springs, in the men's

400 m freestyle, with Michael McEwin of Casuarina coming in third. Daniel and Zac also took first and second place in the men's 200 m backstroke, with Adam Parry of Nightcliff Swimming Club coming in third.

To finish up, I presented medals to Adam Parry, Sampson Leung, Edward Bagley and Hayden Meyers of the Nightcliff Swimming Club for their win in the men's 400 m relay.

I greatly enjoyed the night at Casuarina pool and commend the athletes on their individual and club performances. These young swimmers train hard and it is inspirations like Danni Miatke, winner of the Qantas NT Sportsperson of the Year announced at the NT Sports Awards 2006, who provide a great role model to these young swimmers. Of course, not forgetting Tahnee Afuhaamango, who also lives in the electorate. She has followed her dreams; she is looking to go to the Olympics and beyond. She trains hard and has a great potential.

Working hard and being recognised is the reason I choose to make Quiet Achiever Award available at the primary schools in my electorate. At the end of Term 1, I was pleased to recognise Michelle Lu and Justin Rowe of Jingili Primary School; Kynara Konatic, Gunalini Packiakumar, Ryan Fountain and Shari Prasad of Moil Primary School; and Vernon Francisco and Natalie Roe of Wagaman Primary School. These students are seen to be quiet achievers by their teachers. They are all great students. There is a lot of competition for those awards; the kids like it, and there is a book presentation. As has been discussed in the House here today, it is a great way to encourage kids to read and broaden their horizons.

Tonight I would like to talk about Mr John Gronow, who recently retired. John is a very special person. John and Di live in the Johnston electorate. I was present during some of the farewells to John, when he was leaving a few weeks ago. However, I thought it was fitting tonight to pay tribute and put on the *Parliamentary Record* my personal appreciation of John Gronow's efforts over the past 19 years within the Northern Territory public service, and also to acknowledge John and his efforts, and to thank him on behalf of successive governments within the Northern Territory, and the people of the Northern Territory, for his efforts over many years.

John came to the Northern Territory some 19 years ago in 1986 as a manager of the urban planning team and the Planning Branch. John came from Victoria to take up the position. He then progressed to the position of Deputy Secretary and Executive Director of Planning and Building with the department. John has made significant contributions in the management,

administration and professionalism of Lands and Planning, and building areas in the department, and beyond in the Territory. In fact, John has really been at the ground floor of many developments, and many exciting things that have happened in the Territory. As minister, I certainly appreciated John's input in bringing in the building licensing regime and the home warranty insurance. It is a very complex issue, and John is someone who understands the complexities of this area. The planning area is very complex, it is laden with all sorts of jargon for outsiders. John was very patient with me and explained each and every term, and the history of various issues.

John is a fantastic person. He is a very honest man. I know he has strong Christian beliefs and they guide him. I certainly know that everyone respects John's integrity, and, as a minister, I could always rely on John to give straight and fearless advice. John is absolutely fearless in his advice, and he gives comprehensive advice, sometimes too comprehensive. Sometimes I would have to ask John to repeat what he had to say to me two or three times before I got across the detail of what he was saying.

He and Di are entering into retirement. They have a large family; some of their children and grandchildren are in Western Australia and they have already visited them. They have also been to Elcho Island. John sent me an e-mail with some of the pictures when he and Di went there and, basically, not only saw the grandkids, but also enjoyed the fellowship of the people on Elcho Island. I know he and Di would be very welcome there.

John, on behalf of your colleagues in the department, on behalf of the parliament and the people of the Northern Territory, I would like to thank you for your efforts over the last 19 or so years. I believe you will also be spending some time on the New South Wales north coast. I wish you well in retirement; you have certainly worked hard and deserved it.

I would like to table two letters. One is from me as minister, to John, thanking him for all his work over the last 19 years, and the other one is from the CEO of the department, Sarah Butterworth, thanking him on behalf of the department.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to table these two letters.

Leave granted.

Dr BURNS: It was my pleasure to attend a breakfast function for John. It was great to see all his peers, past and present. There was some real knowledge of Planning and Lands, and building around the table as we enjoyed breakfast, and

there was a great convivial spirit as we farewelled John. Unfortunately, I was not able to get to his departmental farewell, but I did send a best wishes note and John sent me a note in reply saying it was very well received.

In closing, it is great to recognise achievements. I have recognised tonight achievements on the sporting field of young Territorians. I have mentioned achievements of primary schoolchildren and students achieving academically within my electorate and it is great also to recognise someone like John Gronow who has not achieved only professionally, but also given a lot back.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the time to place these comments before the House tonight.

Mr KNIGHT (Daly): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I want to recognise a gentleman who passed away not long ago who was a traditional owner for the Timber Creek area. I have permission from his family to use his name and it is appropriate people hear about this person's life and his stature within the Timber Creek area.

His name was Joe Lewis. Joe was born on 1 January, 1945. By that date, I suspect they did not actually know when he was born and just used 1 January. Joe passed away on 16 March this year. It was a sudden death, through heart disease, in Kununurra.

Joe's traditional country is around the Timber Creek area with the Ngarinman people, and the Ngaliwurru people. He was the son of Joe Jabaparta and Daisy Quinyimi, who are both deceased. He was the husband of Maryanne Bitting from Kununurra; the brother of Josie Jones, Ralph Lewis, Clinton and Delwyn Lewis; and the uncle of Steven, Susan, Jerry Junior, Debra, Lorraine, Daniel and Christopher Jones and step-father of Patrick and Joseph.

I attended the funeral which was fairly sad, and it was very well attended by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Joe was probably one of the most senior elders at the time with the passing of another old man from Kununurra and he left a fairly big hole in the community.

Joe was born on Coolibah Station and grew up around that area where he worked with Peter Murray and his family. He married his first wife Violet Byledie, there. I know Violet and believe she is in Katherine now. They moved to Fitzroy Station to work for Mr Mick O'Neil in 1965. From Fitzroy Station, Joe moved to Bradshaw Station where he met his second wife, Judy, and worked around that area and Western Australia as a horse breaker and stockman. He worked for a great many station managers around that area.

Joe was a very kind person who loved all of his nephews and nieces, and he had many. He spent a great deal of time with them passing on knowledge and his wisdom. He was a very polite man who taught many young men how to break in horses and a variety of cattle skills on the stations around the Timber Creek area, and also Auvergne Station over towards the west. Later on in life he married a third time; he and Maryanne Bitting had a son, Patrick. Patrick is a fine man and also lives in Kununurra.

Joe worked for a great deal of time with Rod McColm at Auvergne and Argyle Station. Rod had a lot to say about Joe at the funeral. It was very impressive what he said about Joe's hard work, his commitment and loyalty to the work there. More recently, and later in Joe's life, he was active on the Bradshaw Liaison Committee at Bradshaw Station which the Army had acquired. He did a great deal of work with other members of his family identifying sites and negotiating rights on that station.

Joe was a ceremonial leader and traditional owner of the Yuntodi area, which is well recognised by other elders in the area. He was also an artist. Many of his paintings were of the Timber Creek area and he also used baobab nuts as an art form as well. At the funeral there were a number of acknowledgements to him. We had some eulogies from some of his family and within the ceremony there was a great deal of country and western music, which Joe loved.

There were a number of stories which I would like to recount. This is from his brother-in-law who is a good old fella and a friend of mine, Jerry Jones senior. I will just recount that story and it is from Jerry: 'I remember one time in 1968 at Fitzroy Station, I was working with my brother-in-law, Joe Lewis. We were at a stock camp called Bardy Yard. We were catching with two other old fellas – our two fathers; Joe senior and Jerry Jones' dad, George'. He said, 'Me and Joe were mustering, teasing a bull trying to get it out of a creek bed and get him into flat country. At the time we only had an old bled end tractor and a couple of horses. I jumped on my horse and tried to knock the bull down but the bull rolled up around and knees me in the rib. Lucky my brother-in-law was there and he sought to help me and the bull turned around and chased him. All my years knowing him and married to his other sister, Josephine, made me a proud brother-in-law and uncle to my sons'.

Joe was a very respected man around that area. It was a very, very sad funeral. Certainly, a hole has been left in that community. I hope his family get some relief from these words and the other comments made at the funeral.

As a final part of my speech tonight, the Timber Creek community has always been fairly sporting. I would like to acknowledge Jonas Johnson, who is the Sport and Recreation Officer of the Ngaliwurru-Wuli Association. He has a very difficult job working with a number of outstations. This year he has coordinated the football team which has entered the Kimberly League instead of the Katherine League. He did that essentially because they guaranteed him six home games in Timber Creek.

This is a great outcome for the Timber Creek community whereby the local community get to see their own local players playing on a local field. The first game was last Saturday. Unfortunately because the Victoria River flooded and cut off the Victoria Highway, I was unable to attend. I was quite looking forward to it. I will be attending other home games.

It is a great result and it is great to see that sport is getting back out into the regions. It will inspire many young people to get involved as well.

Mr KIELY (Sanderson): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I talk about a great trip undertaken in February 2006 by four young Territorians who have great family links with the very heart of our community. These four players, along with about 19 other young indigenous footballers, travelled on the first indigenous youth tour of South Africa. It was a great tour and was based around the idea of exposing our young players to a foreign culture and sharing knowledge learnt from their AFL Kickstart experience in Australia and with fellow footballers in South Africa.

You might not be aware, but the AFL is really making inroads across the world. There is no better time in South Africa, where they are hopeful of having a junior competition by about 2008 and a national competition and, by the end of the decade, some senior international competition - a round robin of Australian Rules not international rules, as I understand it.

The players were drawn predominantly from Western Australia, which had 13 players selected. Four players were from the NT. These players were: Joseph Anderson at the time a 16-year-old from Katherine, a Buffs player, and I know a number of his family. I know Uncle Jimmy Anderson reasonably well and he would have been as proud as punch to see his grandson selected. He is proud of all his kids and grandkids. They are a great football family.

Cameron Stokes from Darwin. His father, Steve, is a bit of legend in the footy fraternity and is also well-known to us in the House. Steve and the Stokes family are known far and wide

throughout the Top End. Steve's greatest claim to fame is the historic win that he, as president, got for Buffs this year. It is quite interesting when you think about it, but I am not too sure that Cameron would have been born the last time the Buffs won. That is quite a treat, isn't it? The year that he gets to be an international player is the year that his side also gets up. That is quite a double for that fellow. I know that the Stokes family would have been rapt about Cameron being selected. All these players, I would suggest, have huge careers ahead of them, but Cameron especially.

There is Charlie Sharples, who plays for Darwin and Austin Wonaeamirri from the Tiwi Islands who ran with St Mary's. These four young men, playing A Grade footy here in the Territory, have great futures ahead of them.

We look at the effort, the time, and the hours put into football in the Territory and it really does pay dividends because we are raising international competitors. The only other real sport that we have international competitors in is hockey. Now we are starting to see it in the AFL. I am not too sure that we have many in football or in Rugby Union or League who have represented at the international level, but we are starting to see it come through in the Australian Rules football. That is fantastic.

Also attending the trip was Michael Long who led the team. He was the Australian Football League ambassador and acted as mentor and chaperone to these lads. He did a wonderful job. There was also a fellow by the name of Gerard Neesham who is a coach near Fremantle. Gerard is involved in the Clontarf Foundation which is a foundation developed for Australian Rules Football to assist indigenous Australians and encourage them to pursue careers in sport and prevent them from a life of crime. The Clontarf Foundation is coming to the Territory and all the players and clubs are right behind it. I welcome their input into our local area; it is going to be great for the team, the code and the individuals who get involved in it.

In closing, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, Australian Rules Football is a great way to excel for many of our young men. They are great role models for the rest of the community. We like our sport passionately here in the Territory, no better epitomised than in these four young men who are coming through and who are real ambassadors for the Territory, their families and their code. My hat is off to these four. I congratulate them. I congratulate their families on doing such a great job with these lads. I look forward in the future to hearing about their skills, their wins, their trials and tribulations as elite sportsmen as they go through their careers.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I advise the House tonight of Athol Wark and the great work he is doing as a chef in spreading the word about Centralian and Territory native wild foods around, not just the Centre, but around the world. Athol has had a lot of experience. He trained in some of the great restaurants in France. He was also on the *QE II* liner as a chef and has done a lot of work in Australia. He ended up at the Convention Centre in Alice Springs. I guess that is where most of us met Athol.

After a time at Lasseters, he went to the CDU in Alice Springs and deservedly, was awarded an International Specialist Skills Institute Overseas Fellowship in 2004, which meant he could travel to America. That is the first time in the Northern Territory that any chef received that award. The fellowship is an ongoing life fellowship working with other cultures and traditions in America and sharing their findings.

Athol went to the Japanese World Expo where he worked with the Australian Tourist Commission and presented the wild foods. This particular association brought about many contacts and exchanges, particularly with Richard Doyle from the NT Tourist Commission, Manager in the Asia Pacific Region. As well as that, Athol has also worked with John Kelly of Paspaley Pearls. Paspaley are very excited to, hopefully, have him opening stores and marketing the products and showcasing Territory products, incorporating many of the wild foods components.

What he is actually doing is taking these wild foods to the world. In October last year, he went to Hawaii and cooked for two weeks at the International Food and Wine Film Festival, working with the Hilton Hotels, Austrade and the Consul-General.

The end of 2005 saw him working with William Angliss College in Melbourne. He gave a presentation with a motivational speech to the 2005 International Specialist Skills Institute winners and he is able to pass on those particular skills to a culinary industry that has such fine chefs.

In Alice Springs, and the Northern Territory generally, there has been an increase in the shortage of skills in the catering industry. We need to make sure we foster the talent we have, and the hospitality industry needs to make sure they take on the talents they have. This year, Athol has taken up the position of Corporate Chef Adviser to the Island Resort in Fiji for four months of the year. He returns four times a year to train, for a month at a time. It is unique that we have a chef from Central Australia doing that. He will return to Hawaii this year, and will also go to

Seattle and Las Vegas where the wild food and native food flavours will be presented at the Austrade. Athol has really established himself as an ambassador for Central Australian wild foods.

Short-term, the local company, Kungas Can Cook, and many of you will know Kungas Can Cook, with the help of Warkabout, which is the name of Athol Wark's consultancy firm, have been doing some work at Santa Teresa to help develop their kitchens in the community. The work will entail teaching kitchen skills - things like knife skills, health and hygiene; the nutritional values of their meals; and to get some remote community stores to see value in opening up their grocery lines to a way of thinking about healthy foods rather than the fast foods that so many of the stores do provide.

Recently Charles Darwin University Business Development Department contacted Athol as they were keen to pursue the wild, native foods short courses for the schedule of courses this year. Athol is hopeful that that will go ahead because it gives other people in the Territory an opportunity to experience some of these courses he runs.

He is a quiet guy and an exceptionally talented cook. He first became involved when the Minister for Business and Economic Development had the Food Group. We are lucky in the Territory that we have such talented chefs including Jimmy Shu from the Hanuman, and Beat Keller from Keller's Restaurant. They are exceptional.

Athol has always been grateful to the Northern Territory government for the start they gave him in helping him with sponsorship to go overseas. He is repaying the Territory for all that assistance and is doing it in such a positive way.

We hear so many negative things about Alice Springs, but it is great just to be able to say: 'This is a good story. It is the promotion of our wild foods and is something which will benefit many people in the Territory'. Congratulations to Athol Wark for all he is doing.

Mary Meldrum, the Centralian of the Year in 2005, asked members of the Memorial Bowling Club to help raise funds for the families and children in need after Cyclone Larry flattened Innisfail. Her daughter lives in far north Queensland. She had already spoken to some of the victims who said their little town had been devastated. About 85% of the town had been wiped out and the people had no food or clothing; just everyday basics. She arranged a fundraiser and with the help of local businesses raised \$7000 through the bowls club, which was great.

Instead of sending the money to the little township of Bartle Frere, a local businessman paid

for her airfare to go over. She did not give the money to the government or to a charity but distributed the money to families of the small school who were in greatest need. She said the response from these families was quite amazing. This demonstrates that we can do little things which have huge impacts on people. These families would probably never have been remembered. Their homes and plantations of crops such as macadamia trees had gone and the people were basically standing there without anything.

Mary Meldrum is one of those people who shows that the generosity of people in Alice Springs is not just for Alice Springs people; it is for other people in Australia as well. I commend Mary for her wonderful effort in helping these people. The Principal of Bartle Frere School was amazed that someone could come from so far away with cash for his families. He was most impressed with what she did. Well done to Mary Meldrum, the bowls club of Alice Springs, and all the businesses which supported her.

Finally, I want to pay homage to Ian Wagner who was granted life membership of the Lions Club this year for his services to club and community for 42 years. Ian joined the Alice Springs Lions Club in July 1973 and has had 33 years of active membership. He has held many portfolios: President; Zone Chairman; Youth Projects; District Governor; membership coordinator; the Youth Exchange Program, and so on. He has not just been a member of the Lions Club. He has been an active member and it is quite an achievement for him to do that.

Ian and his wife, Loretta, are two of our retired seniors and they feel very much that Alice Springs is their home town. Ian came originally from Adelaide and was educated at Adelaide Boys High School, but the fact he has spent 33 years in the Lions Club in Alice Springs shows his commitment to the community

Before retiring, he was employed as the Manager of the Northern Territory Industry Research and Opportunities Office in Alice Springs for three years, and was also the Adelaide Brighton Cement Manager for 20 years. He was the Operational Manager for the 2000 Honda Masters Games with the Department of Sport and Recreation. He has had lots of involvement in the community. He has two lovely daughters who are both career girls. Ian says his interests now as he has retired are travel, sport, health and fitness, good food and good wine, and, of course, information technology.

As a family, Ian and Loretta have made a huge contribution to Alice Springs. It is great to have people like that there. Ian has always been active

in the barbeque they put on for the Old Timers at Easter; the Camel Cup, which been going since 1971; and the Youth Exchange.

I congratulate Ian Wagner on being awarded the life membership of the Lions Club International. It is certainly something he deserves. The other members of the Lions Club in Alice Springs were very proud to forward this particular information to me about Ian, as they realise the value he has added to their club, and the responsibility he has taken on many times.

Mr WARREN (Goyder): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, one of the most vivid recollections I have of doorknocking in my electorate of Goyder as a somewhat green candidate prior to the last election, was meeting the devoted, yet frustrated parents, guardians and relatives of high-level disabled children. Despite my strong feelings of empathy, many of these people made me feel somewhat helpless and inadequate, to say the least. How could I really understand how difficult it is for them? Even with their despair, I could clearly see the positive emotions of pride and love every parent feels for their children.

These people deserve our compassion and help. What is at issue is that we as a caring and compassionate society must do what we can to try to make sure those amongst us with a disability enjoy the same rights as other Territorians. Some of these people told me about the inadequately serviced special education annexe at Humpty Doo Primary School and how it had apparently been overlooked by previous governments. They told me how the very dedicated special education staff were trying to educate these disabled/special needs kids under appalling conditions.

Shortly after my election, the Humpty Doo School Council invited me to inspect the existing facility and see firsthand what the special education staff had to put up with, and what very difficult conditions they have to work under. Seeing these very cheerful kids trying to learn under such inadequate conditions really did tug at my heartstrings. As I drove back to my electorate office I made a promise to myself: I would do all I could to ensure this desperately needed facility would be delivered as soon as possible.

I am pleased to tell the House that last Tuesday the Treasurer handed down Budget 2006-07. In his speech, he announced that the Northern Territory government will provide \$800 000 worth of funding for a special education annexe for the Humpty Doo Primary School. This will replace the existing classrooms which are far too small, quite inappropriate, and in very poor condition. The new special needs classroom and buildings for the disabled and special needs students will provide modern high support

education facilities, and a level of education never before provided for these students, closer to home in the rural area.

It will be the centrepiece for proper education services for disabled and special needs children, spread right across the rural area. The minister has said the government had a fundamental commitment to special needs children and their families, and delivery of the new Humpty Doo annexe is part of that commitment. The upgrades are quite extensive and will match those currently provided at Namarluk for the Darwin special needs kids. It is important we make education available to all students, and I am very pleased with this great win for my rural community, centred around the Humpty Doo community.

The local community and school community have lobbied strongly for this facility. They impressed me and the minister with their efforts, and now they will have what they want, and more importantly, they will now have what the rural area desperately needs. This is an exciting project and I thank a compassionate NT Cabinet from the bottom of my heart. This is the kind of thing I entered politics to fight for, and I am proud I did it. I am proud I have joined a government that, when push comes to shove, acts with compassion and decency on social issues.

The upgrade will include three classroom spaces, ablution facilities, an office, and a storeroom. The annexe will be a purpose built, light weight facility specifically designed to cope with students with disabilities and special needs.

When I visited the Humpty Doo Primary School on Thursday, 20 April, to announce this impending Budget 2006-07 commitment, I was greeted by a very excited school community. They told me the school started its original high support annexe in 1995 with an initial intake of five children. This has now grown to 13 students and they now expect this number will grow considerably as soon as the new facility is open and more local students take advantage of this facility.

Many of the students require support from occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech pathologists. In the past, this has been very difficult to facilitate, but the new annexe will change the situation completely. The fact that the special education annexe is attached to the Humpty Doo school will allow these special kids to be educated in the same school as their brothers, sisters and friends. This will help enhance their self-esteem, as well as encouraging tolerance and understanding from the other school students, school staff and the local community.

I cannot finish without paying tribute to the Humpty Doo school community, the school

principal, Felicity Hancock, and the dedicated staff of the current annexe led by the committed Kaye Jukes, the special education and annexe senior teacher. The great news is that the planning for the annexe will commence immediately and construction will start as soon as possible.

Being able to deliver this kind of community project reinforces my reasons for entering politics. It makes me very proud of the rural community who lobbied strongly for this facility. It is great to be part of a fabulous community like this.

Mr BURKE (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I would like to remind members of the excellent facility available at the Palmerston Campus of Charles Darwin University, the Karawa Training Restaurant. The training restaurant is open to the public through bookings. On many occasions - and I have the timetable with me if members are interested - it provides an opportunity for trainees and apprentices to experience their chosen profession in a setting which is very similar to the real experiences they will have in a fully commercial restaurant. The restaurant has fantastic kitchens and I know from the experience that the meals and service is always good, and the enthusiasm of both patrons and those who are cooking and serving is always fantastic. It is a great evening, so if people can go, I strongly encourage them to do so. As I say, I have the nights that the restaurant is going to be open for the next few months. It is a fantastic way of supporting young apprentices and trainees who are going through their training.

I would also like to mention, in a similar vein, the Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre. Corrugated Iron has run for many years and has been a great vehicle for young people interested in the dramatic arts and associated vocations such as lighting, directing, and dance. It is a vehicle for them to really strut their stuff.

Just recently, my daughter was one of several young people who did just that in Corrugated Iron's production of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*. It is a tale that members of the Assembly would have some sympathy for. The main character sells his soul to the devil in order to have control of the world through control of the character called Potus, which is an acronym for President of the United States.

The Director was Sean Kavanagh, Assistant Director Gary Baldwin, and Choreographer Samantha Chalmers. Also involved were Robbie Hoad, Chris Kluge, James Dunlevie, Dixi Joy, Alison Dowell, Cath McKay, Todd Williams, Paul Hill, Damien Pree, Jules Healy and Andrew Gillies. On the stage performing with my daughter, Lisa, were Ben Orchard, Gray Baldwin, Andrew Gillies, Finn O'Branagain, Philip Tarl Denson, Suzanne

Stevens, Jessie Adams, Cameron Angus, Leorah Riley, Siana Cork and Sarah Sutcliffe. They put on a fantastic show. It was very professional and I, my wife and Lisa's godmother, Fiona, enjoyed the night and the performances. It is such a high standard and we are very lucky to have Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre as well as these young people to participate in that production.

I would also like to mention a local band here in Darwin called Flesh Petal. It is a grunge punk band. The members are Nira Quinn, Finn O'Branagain, who I mentioned as one of the actors in the production of *Dr Faustus*, and Michael Cassells. They are currently trying out for a position as one of the bands in *BassintheGrass* and I am sure, if they are selected to be part of that performance, they will do themselves proud.

I would also like to mention some of the people who supported the *Dr Faustus* production: John Knight Winnellie Secondhand; Rhonda Somerville at Harlequin Costumes; Jill Forner and Mark Bowling at the ABC; Fred Van't Sand; Fiona MacDonald; Jack Tinapple; Ken Conway; Jeremy Rice; and Kit Marlowe. Corrugated Iron conducts workshops, and anyone who has an interest in dramatic studies and the arts should see if they have the time to get involved.

Many members of the Assembly may know that Friday, 7 April, was Walk Safely to School Day. I took great pleasure in becoming involved in Bakewell Primary School's early morning walk and breakfast for students and their parents. It is a great community event which has a great message. Hector the Cat turned up as well to show his support, and the children had a really great time. As well as encouraging safely crossing the road, and being careful on the walk to and from school, it was also a morning where it encouraged the children to have a healthy breakfast of cereal and fruit. It was covered by one of the local radio stations; and it was good of them to get on board and promote this activity, as I understand there was only other school, in the Top End, which got involved in such a big way. I would like to congratulate, again, June Wessels, the principal, and the council of the school and the many teachers who also showed their support for getting right behind this, getting the school into the celebration and making a fantastic morning of it.

I believe much is required of teachers. I guess it always has been but more and more teachers are really feeling pressures on their time and so the willingness to get involved in something like this, which is outside of their usual duties, is just fantastic of them. It is really no surprise when you are talking about teachers that they offer so much of their personal time as well to get involved in these community events.

Speaking of community events this weekend, on Sunday, 7 May, is the 2006 Simply the Breast inaugural yacht race in Darwin. I seek leave to table the promotional poster for the event so that it is part of the record.

Leave granted.

Mr BURKE: Thank you, honourable members. It is going to be a great day of sailing and competition. There is both the competition class and then there is the cruising class, I understand, as well as a couple of fundraising lunches going on. I encourage members to get behind the event. I will see you there on Sunday, to see our wonderful Darwin Harbour decorated with the many sails of boats participating and watch the crews perform under pressure as they race around the harbour.

It would be remiss of me to not make mention of the long weekend that we have just recently celebrated. The May Day long weekend is an important celebration for those of us on the Labor side of the House. It should be important for everyone because it celebrates the winning of an eight hour day in the workplace and celebrates many other wins that unions have had. It is a symbolic day and it is great that it is still celebrated in the Northern Territory. The dinner on Saturday night was a fantastic affair at the Tracy Village club which is somewhat fitting given that it was the site where many workers lived during the rebuilding of Darwin after Cyclone Tracy. Darwin really does have a strong tradition of union participation which is no mean feat when you think that unions traditionally have their membership in manufacturing industries and Darwin and the Northern Territory as a whole does not have a great deal of manufacturing when compared to other centres like Victoria and New South Wales.

Congratulations to the organising committee, Didge McDonald and Jamey Robertson, both of whom have always been involved with the union movement in the Northern Territory for the last 25 to 30 years. Their names are almost synonymous with the union movement here in the Territory.

I know also that unions reclaimed the long weekend in a sense in Alice Springs and there was a union float in the march which was fantastic to see.

What was also good during the march on Monday was the level of community participation, not just union participation. The community was getting involved and yelling support from the sides of the streets, and watching the march. There were also tourists who had already arrived in town and beaten the march on their rivals to enjoy the start of the Dry Season. The post-march concert, one of the few free concerts left, I guess, was

enjoyed by many people. I know with family visiting here at the moment that they thought the whole spectacle was fantastic. Maybe we can use that as part of our tourism push in the future.

I would also like to mention that this week we see the start of the Palmerston night markets. It is a fantastic event in Palmerston and it is something which gets much interest from the local community, tourists, and those vendors who tour the country as well. It is a great evening, and a great event. I encourage all members to get down there this Friday and sample some of the great food that will be on offer and to see in the start of the season of the Palmerston night markets.

Mr BONSON (Millner): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I talk about a well-known Territorian who recently passed away after a serious illness: Basil Cyril Roe Snr.

Basil was well known throughout the Northern Territory community. He had lived here for many years and was involved with many different families. His wife, Janet Roe, is a volunteer and helper for me in my office and does many things around the Millner area. She is a volunteer in retirement assisting me with advice and volunteering work. Basil and his children and his grandchildren are well known to the Territory community.

I take this opportunity to read from the eulogy for Basil Cyril Roe Snr:

Basil Cyril Roe Senior of Yawuru and Torres Strait Island heritage was born on 1 November 1938 at Beagle Bay Mission in Western Australia. He was the third child of William Roe (deceased) and Mary Roe, nee Djiagween (deceased). His siblings are Bill junior who is the eldest, Gordon (deceased) and after Basil came Roy (deceased), Gerry (deceased), Colin and the only sister, Diane. In 1940 when Basil was a two-year-old Bill and Mary decided to leave Beagle Bay and Broome to start a new life in the Northern Territory. They came to Darwin to join Bill's father and initially they lived in a tent, then moved into Bill and Rose Clarke's block at Salonika, building a shack.

In 1941 they moved to Katherine setting up a camp living with Mary's sister Patricia and Snowy Dodson. During the bombing of Darwin and Katherine in 1942 they were evacuated to Balaklava in South Australia where they lived in the racecourse stables where they stayed until 1945. Basil attended the Catholic School at Balaklava.

On their return from Balaklava they spent a short time in Katherine and eventually

moved back to Darwin to set up permanent residence. They lived at Parap Camp at Stuart Park in Darwin where the family established life-long relationships with other local families. Some of these families included the Lew Fatt, Angeles, Stew, Hazlebanes, Cardonas, Abalas, Ah Kits, Gees, and many others. The Roe family also established strong links with local fishermen, Japanese pearl divers from Broome and Aboriginal people from the Tiwi Islands and Arnhem Land.

After Parap Camp many of the families were relocated to Eden Street in Stuart Park and the surrounding areas. During his childhood and youth, Basil enjoyed playing football, boxing and other sports along with his brothers. His father, Bill, ensured that his sons learnt how to fish and shoot to feed the family and the many visitors that frequented the house. Survival on the land was important to Bill and Mary, and there were many mouths to feed, and it was also an important part of handing down his and Mary's cultural traditions.

During the late 1950s, Basil met Janet Smith, a young girl from Tasmania on an around Australia working holiday. The two fell in love and married in 1959. Basil worked at Transport and Works as an apprentice mechanic at that time. They had their first child, Basil during that year.

After the tragic deaths of Snowy and Patricia Dodson, his mum, dad and brother, Bill, decided to take care of the younger Dodson children. Basil and Janet took Mickey under their wing and raised him. The following years, they had Theresa, Margie and Bradley.

During the early years, Basil and Janet established a home in Berrimah to raise their family. Basil was always good with his hands from an early age, making toys, go-karts, fixing old bombs and, later, he made spears, sinkers, fixed fishing nets and had great pleasure from nurturing his banana, lemon and chilli trees. If the large mango tree on the block could talk, it could tell some funny and hair-raising stories.

Most of his working life was spent at the wharf employed by the Darwin Port Authority as his father and his grandfather had done before him, starting as a mechanic and working his way to become foreman at the forklift shed until his retirement 25 years later. He developed some great and long-lasting relationships with his work mates. Being on call during

the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy, Basil was instrumental in assisting the cleanup of the wharf area alongside Jacko, Mickey and many of his close work mates.

There were always crates of crabs, fish, scallops, bugs and prawns in the freezer to feed the large household at home. A seafood smorgasbord was on the menu most nights. Other nights included goose, crocodile, turtle, wallaby and goanna. Basil was renowned for welcoming into his home many people who needed shelter, food and someone to talk to.

The great love for Basil was to take his family out bush, with Gordon and Lorraine and Kenny and Marjorie Hewitt families to shoot geese, let the kids go bush bashing, and sit around the campfire all night telling funny stories. This was an annual event and an important part of his life.

After his retirement and when his children left the nest, he travelled to Bali, and East and West Timor. There Basil made some great friends and they welcomed him into their villages and homes and treated him as one of their own. He learnt the local language and kept up-to-date watching his satellite television of Indonesia.

The sparkle in his eyes was for his grandchildren. He especially enjoyed showing Timmy and Josh ways of the sea and the land through fishing and goose shooting. His grandchildren's ages range from 27 to two years. Basil's face was filled with delight and joy when his great-grandchildren came along. This gave him great pleasure in the later stages of his life.

Other proud moments in his life included Mickey graduating as a barrister, and Hannah as a lawyer; Theresa, Margie, Inala and Samara gaining tertiary qualifications; Bradley obtaining his motor mechanic ticket; Patrick Dodson's appointment as Chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation; Mickey becoming Social Justice Commissioner for the Human Rights Commission and professor at ANU; helping Basil Jnr build and establish a successful business on the family property; his grandfather, Paddy Djiagween turning 110; and the successful determination of the Rubibi native title claim of Broome, his ancestral home.

In the later stages of Basil's life, Janet became full-time carer with the assistance of his family, friends and others providing

love and support. Basil will be remembered by many people for his happy face, generous nature, respectfulness and his hard-working nature. He will be sadly missed by all who loved him, especially when the geese fly overhead, the fish are jumping and visiting his favourite spot under the mango tree at Berrimah.

It is very fitting that we are gathered here today in this cathedral where Basil, his father and brothers, dug and carted the stones from the Larrakia cliffs for the erection of this significant important building.

Madam Speaker, Mr Basil Cyril Roe Snr will be sorely missed by those Territory residents who knew him over the last century. His children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will, no doubt, represent him to the best of their abilities in what he stood for and what his family stands for. I would like to thank Janet Roe again for all the assistance she has personally provided me. I hope on this sad occasion that she can look at her children and grandchildren and see her husband and the beliefs and principles that he stood for in them.

Dr LIM (Greatorex): Madam Speaker, earlier today you advised me that you had left a letter on my desk. Unfortunately, I had not the occasion to look at the letter, and thus was not prepared when you announced just a short while ago that part of my adjournment speech from last night would be expunged from the record. I respect your decision, Madam Speaker, and I am in no way wishing to dissent from your decision. However, I would like to make some comments about it if you would indulge me.

I made the full adjournment statement last night, in the presence of many members of government in this Chamber, in the presence of the Leader of Government Business, and with a duly elected Deputy Speaker in the Chair - I thank members opposite for giving me the time to do that last night without any interruption - at which time I read out a letter sent to me by a resident in one of the flats at the Kurringal complex. Nobody made any objection to what I had to read out. I also qualify that this was something that I took no judgment on, reading it in its entirety. I now find, 24 hours later, that I am advised by you, Madam Speaker, that the words will be expunged.

It is unprecedented, if I may observe, that such a matter, or such a statement, or contents of a member's contribution is expunged. Usually a member's contribution is expunged at the request of the member, rather than at Madam Speaker's direction.

However, it now being expunged, and while I have no choice but to accept it, I accept it very reluctantly. I might have breached Standing Order 62, but I would have thought that members opposite would have pulled me up had I breached a standing order. At other times, when they are concentrating on what is being said from this side of the Chamber, objections, interjections and points of order are frequently called. Last night, just like tonight, people prefer to read other material rather than paying attention to what is being said. That is the member's choice, whether you are reading a newspaper, a magazine, playing the computer, or paying attention to what members are contributing in adjournment.

Many a time, members on this side of the House have been slagged by government members. While I monitor members opposite, sometimes in my own office on the CCTV, by the time I get into the Chamber, quite often it is 30 seconds to a minute past the event when those words were said. I felt that, at those times, it would have been inappropriate to then call a point of order, but in this instance, a point of order has been made some almost 24 hours after the event.

In regards to this letter, it is a letter which came from somebody living in the Kurringal complex. His complaint came following a particularly long period of extreme frustration with a neighbour, one that he called - well, let us not go into a very nasty description - but it was a neighbour who has caused extreme distress to the neighbours around her flat. This particular tenant in the Kurringal flats the letter writer complained about has frequent visitors who commit all sorts of acts of antisocial behaviour, cause extreme disturbance in the neighbourhood to the extent that the security officer who attended Kurringal complex was attacked on a couple of occasions.

The neighbours have collectively put in several hundreds of phone calls and complaints to Territory Housing in an attempt to get this tenant evicted. When evidence is provided, or had been provided by various tenants of this troublesome tenant to Territory Housing, both written and verbal evidence, it appeared nothing was going to be done. However, around March of this year action was being taken and the tenant was about to be evicted. Unfortunately for the complainant and the neighbours around the problem flat, there was an allegation of interference in the due process and the tenant was not evicted.

Imagine the frustration the people at the Kurringal complex would have felt after hundreds of complaints, much letter writing and many telephone calls, many late night and early morning disturbances, and when personal safety is severely affected. It is no wonder these affected people want to lash out. It may be justified that

they lash out at one particular person; I do not know. Again I say I do not make any judgments as to whether the evidence provided by this letter writer was indeed absolutely accurate. However, the letter was written to the Ombudsman and it is significant that the person took that extra step to complain to the Ombudsman. I trust the Ombudsman would investigate this case properly ...

Mr Bonson: No doubt he will, no doubt he will.

Madam SPEAKER: Order.

Dr LIM: If the Ombudsman does that, then at least whatever the outcome there may be a sense of: 'I have done as much as I can and if I have lost my appeal, well there is nowhere else to go'.

My concern is that we have many neighbours from hell in Territory Housing - we all know that. Every member of parliament would have come across constituents in their electorates who come into their offices or ring them up complaining about neighbours from hell. It is important for us to deal with it. As the shadow minister for Housing I feel it is my responsibility to deal with those people who are not covered by a Country Liberal Party sitting member. They ring me from all over the Territory, they write to me, they e-mail me and frequently, I make house calls.

Madam Speaker, you know that I have visited some of your constituents in regards to their Territory Housing issues and we have worked together and have resolved some of those difficulties. It is important that people who make complaints about such things have a voice somewhere.

This letter writer felt that interference has been caused by a significant person. You can understand that he would have felt that he was just an average Joe Blow who has never complained, and that somebody significant in the Territory was obstructing, or so it appears, so where else would he go? He has nowhere else to go. The way to deal with this sort of thing is to try to diffuse it in the quickest way you possibly can and that is to fight it face-to-face.

That is why I make house calls. When you sit with them and talk it through, it actually diffuses the situation. Often, when you see the troublesome tenant and talk through what issues there might be you find there is a complete misunderstanding by all parties concerned.

I presented this letter because I felt it was important the letter writer had a voice. I am disappointed his voice was squashed in an unprecedented fashion in this Chamber. I would

have preferred I was pulled up last night when I was making the speech, but that was not to be.

Anyway, so be it. I intend to speak to the letter writer to explain what has happened with this letter. I understand, Madam Speaker, that the rushes are now circulating. If, indeed, the electronic version is still on the website, it might be deleted by now. I do not know, and if it is, it is. If it is not, you can imagine the media will be on it, 'What the heck is going on?' and they will be rushing to the website right this very moment, downloading the content of that letter.

I asked for guidance regarding the privilege of the content of the letter, now that this letter is public, whether the letter writer is protected by parliamentary privilege, and I have been assured that that is the case. It is important that the person who wrote the letter, having presented it in this parliament, is not inadvertently put into a situation where he has no privilege at all, because it would be most unfair on this gentleman. If there is an issue of privilege, then I need to hear it explained, here and now, to ensure that there is some sort of equity for this letter writer.

I believe that if you have expunged this letter that was in *Hansard* in the last 24 hours, but provide privilege for this letter writer because the letter in fact has been tabled, it is in the Tabled Papers and should stay there forever, and he is protected by parliamentary privilege that will be fine.

Mr HENDERSON (Wanguri): Madam Speaker, as the member for Wanguri, I am always pleased to be involved with the school council and their activities through the year. Tonight, I pay tribute to Julie Donohue, who has served on the school council for four years, three of them as chairperson. Julie first joined the school council as a committee member in 2002, and dived right into the action by becoming the council's COGSO representative. In 2003, Julie was elected as vice chair of the council and, by mid-year, had stepped up to the chairperson position following the resignation of Ian Lockley. Julie has taken this heavily demanding position in her stride and has remained the elected chair through 2004 and 2005. I have enjoyed working with Julie over the past three years and have been inspired by the effort and energy she has injected into the school and its growing success.

Julie and her husband, Brett, have always been very passionate about fundraising activities and always the first to put up their hands to donate time to important school causes. To both Julie and Brett, thank you very much for all your hard work and the many hours you have devoted to the school. It has been wonderfully appreciated by the school community. Julie resigned from the

position of chair following her daughter, Carly's graduation from Wanguri Primary School. I wish Julie and her family well, and as Carly settles in at Dripstone, I may see you all again soon at the Dripstone High School Council meetings.

I also take this opportunity to make mention of another very special member of Wanguri Primary School community. Correne Hirschausen has worked for the Education Department for 28 years, the past 15 of those as the administration officer at Wanguri Primary School. Sadly for the school community, Correne retired from her position last month to spend some well deserved time with her family and her new grandson.

Correne commenced with the Education Department in 1978 at Rapid Creek School, where she was an extremely active office worker, council member, photo coordinator and parent. Correne was also the school's COGSO representative and organised a major forum in Darwin opposing the closure of Rapid Creek Primary School, and she was very saddened when it happened.

Following the closure of Rapid Creek School in 1992, Correne and teacher, Jean Burger were both transferred to Wanguri Primary School, and Correne took up the position of administration officer. Fellow office workers remember the day Correne arrived at the school, thumped on the counter and said in her very enjoyable accent, 'Can I have some attention, please?' Fifteen years on and not much has changed in the Wanguri Primary office. You always know when Correne is buzzing around, her unique laugh gives her away.

Wanguri will also fondly remember Correne for her bubbly theatrics, dressing up as a bin fairy for previous principal, David Hasslet, and year after year, pulling out her Christmas fairy and Santa's little helper outfits for the festive season, all made on her trusty Janome. Whilst at Wanguri, Correne has also been renowned as the photo and newsletter expert, producing the school's newsletter since shortly after she arrived. If anyone is looking for something in the office or archives, you will hear the words 'Ask Correne' shortly afterwards.

Correne has served the school council's secretary for the past seven years, is an avid supporter of the school assistants and a vocal union member, and has always donated her time for fundraising events and functions. Over the past 15 years, Correne has seen the school change and adapt to the ever-growing community, and has seen the coming and going of eight principals and many teachers and staff. Correne has seen the students grow from children to young adults, including my electorate officer who recalls going to see Correne in the office for a bandaid as

a child and, 15 years later, was calling her for school council dates.

I join with the staff, teachers, students and parents in wishing Correne all the best in her retirement and thanking her for all her hard work and commitment over the years. I am sure Correne took great memories and friendships with her when she left. Correne, you will be very sadly missed.

I was pleased to join the students, parents and staff of Wanguri Primary School at a special barbecue breakfast to celebrate Harmony Day last month. I enjoyed having breakfast with my children, Isabelle and Liam, at the school, meeting their friends, teachers and other parents. We all had a great time. Well done to the Harmony Day committee for bringing everyone together for this event.

The breakfast was followed by a special Harmony Day assembly with many class performances demonstrating the culture and heritage of the different countries represented at the school. A fashion parade soon followed, with students and staff wearing different multicultural dress or costume. So much work went into the assembly by students and staff, and it was fantastic to see so many parents there.

During April, I had the privilege of presenting the newly-elected SRC and house captains with their badges at Leanyer, Wanguri and St Andrew's Lutheran Primary Schools at their special induction assemblies.

I congratulate the following 2006 SRC students from Leanyer Primary school: Emily Sharp, Analise Favretto, Shadae Heatherington-Tate, Tayla Bulluss, Fergus O'Gallagher, Louise Jettner, Taylah Church, and Kate Brotherton. House representatives are: for Kakadu House captain, Sian Mann; vice captains, Lewis Mulvena and Emily Houl; Coburg, vice captains Braedon McLean and Samantha Strawhorn; Uluru vice captains, Jack Hatcher and Monique Favretto; and Litchfield vice captain Sean Niuwenhoven and Pieta Hawke.

I also congratulate the Wanguri Primary School's new SRC members: Jaiden Baker, Teliesha Peckham, Jesse Jesson, Clinton Imber, Monica Mu, Timika Kahu-Leedie, Melissa Spry and Jennifer Da Silva. House captains and vice captains are: Captains of Victoria, Jordan Page and Marissa Ellison, vice captains Molly Shadforth and Shanice Calma; Dundas captains Brad East and Rachel O'Grady, vice captains Nikitas Koulouriotis and Kimiora Kahu-Leedie; Palmerston captains Troy Soly and Brandon Mu, vice captains Nicole Jurgens and Kane McAdam; Wellington

Captains Dakota Stokes and Samantha Carpenter, vice captains Hayley Cowan and John Maillis.

At St Andrew's Lutheran School, I was pleased to attend their assembly and also present SRC members and school captains with certificates and badges. School captains are Jeremy Kay and Ashleigh Wyatt, and SRC members are Adam Menzies, Jasmine Alm, Matthew Vaughan, Deanna Smith and Joel Kay.

I would like to congratulate all those students for putting up their hands to be leaders in their school communities. I am sure it will be a richly rewarding experience for those students over the rest of the year.

I am pleased to see that, with support from the Northern Territory government, the Eisteddfod is able to go ahead this year. The government has provided easy access to mailing and e-mailing facilities and offered clerical support. The principal of Leanyer Primary School, Henry Gray, has told me without this support the 2006 Eisteddfod would have to be cancelled. I congratulate Principal Henry Gray at Leanyer. He has been a strong supporter and on the organising committee of the Eisteddfod for many years. It is great to see that 2006 is going ahead.

Finally, I also congratulate the organisers of the May Day celebrations this week. It is a marvellous institution here in Darwin that has been running for many years. I was trying to remember my first May Day march - and I have not missed one since, I think, 1984. When I thought about that on May Day, that is 22 years that I have marched in the May Day march. I have not missed one. I congratulate Didge MacDonald and Jamey Robertson who really put in a huge amount of effort coordinating the celebration of the eight-hour day, and something that all Australians should remember with pride, and never forget that the union movements across this great country of ours have delivered many of the working conditions we all take for granted. Despite the Howard government's reforms, we will certainly work hard as a Labor Party to make sure those conditions are not eroded.

To Didge McDonald and Jamey Robertson, congratulations, guys, on another fantastic May Day. I hope I get to march for another 22 years.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.