

Madam Speaker Aagaard took the Chair at 10 am.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of international visitors, and also visitors from Gove: Jacynthe Cote, President and Chief Executive Officer, Alcan Bauxite and Alumina; Mr Richard Yank, President, Bauxite and Alumina Pacific Operations; Mr Doug Parish, Managing Director of Alcan Gove; Mr David Sutherland, Director Projects and Technology, Alcan South Pacific; Monsieur Sylvain Rouleau, Vice President, HR Communications and Government Affairs; and Mr Klaus Helms, General Manager Community Affairs, Alcan Gove.

On behalf of all honourable members, I extend you a very warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL REPORTS Skilled Workers Campaign

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I hope this report is of interest to our guests from Alcan.

I inform the House about the progress we are making in attracting skilled workers to the Territory through the government's Territory Skilled Worker campaign. During February and March this year, the Territory government ran a national campaign which included the New Zealand market, designed to raise awareness about our unique lifestyle and the great opportunities available for people who come to the Territory. We used newspaper advertising in a mix of metropolitan, suburban and regional newspapers, as well as a web advertising campaign that specifically targeted job sites. We followed this up with a three-month campaign run between June and August that targeted partners and families, and ran them in appropriate magazines. Radio was also used to hammer home our key messages and remind southerners that there is an alternative to a long cold winter. In fact, while snow was falling in Canberra and Hobart in August, the Territory government was sponsoring weather bulletins on the radio, reminding listeners of our warm Territory temperatures.

We had an amazing response to the campaign. So far, almost 3700 people have contacted us to get information about living and working in the Territory, and around a third of these people are recontacting us for more information. We have certainly succeeded in raising awareness about the Territory and what we have to offer. However, the good news does not end there.

I can confirm that people are already moving to the Territory as a direct result of the campaign. Information received from my department, as well as from Power and Water, indicates that at least 20 families have either moved, or are about to move, to the Territory. One family which returned their Power and Water campaign voucher is enjoying their move to the Territory. The husband is working and his partner is looking after their preschooler, and she is planning to return to the work force very soon. Another example comes from a call centre operator who received a big thank you for his help from a mechanic who won a job in Alice Springs. Speaking of Alice, a trained nurse and her family have relocated there from Ballarat, where she said it was snowing on the day they left.

These examples give us great cause for optimism. The decision to move to a new town or city does not happen overnight, and we would expect it to take some time for initial interest to turn into new Territory residents. It is a long-term campaign, and what is vital is the high level of interest and the commitment from people to move here in the future.

Indeed, independent market research commissioned by the department as a part of its campaign evaluation showed that, out of all people who contacted us for more information, 80% had discussed moving to the Territory with family and friends; 26% had contacted employment agencies in the Territory; 25% had responded to job advertisements; and 67% were seriously considering a move to our wonderful Territory. These figures are extremely encouraging and proof positive that the Territory Skilled Worker campaign is working.

That good work is set to continue. The government will work closely with the business council members to host information evenings in towns and cities interstate. We understand that this is a big commitment for the council's busy members and will, therefore, attempt to coincide these sessions with their existing travel commitments.

My department is currently working with the Territory Construction Association to host an information evening in Sydney in early November. We are also now developing a new southern winter advertising campaign to begin in April next year. My department continues to pursue various promotional opportunities such as advertising we placed in the *Australian Financial Review* special feature on the Northern Territory in mid-September. Importantly, we are continuing to stay in touch with those people who contacted us during the campaign, but have yet to secure a job in the Territory. To keep their level of interest high, we continue to send them up-to-date

information about living and working in the Territory.

Madam Speaker, the Territory Skilled Worker campaign has proved highly successful. We are working to build on the great start we have made in the coming year.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister for her report. She may well be surprised at this, but I really do welcome this report. Despite our political differences we, as parliamentarians and community leaders, do want people to come here, and we want any government to move heaven and earth in order to get people from southern states here. I commend you, Chief Minister, on some - though not all - of the work you have done.

It is important to sell ourselves to the rest of the country. We have a range of marvellous things here in the Northern Territory. Why on earth should we not sell ourselves? The difficulty we have is that we are competing with a number of other states which - and South Australia is probably towards the top of the list - desperately want people as well.

Sadly, we have seen - certainly, in the last few years - a population decline. I believe at one point, we were seeing the loss of one family a week from Alice Springs. That affects the whole economy; that was very significant. I noticed in relatively recent times that there was a very small increase in population growth. We can, in a bipartisan way, applaud any population growth - that is important. We need to provide - and this is business any government does - a good economy, good schools, a good health system, and a good lifestyle. Despite the differences we have in relation to some of those things, when we talk about education, schools, and the economy, you, Chief Minister, should know that you have our absolute support in doing what you can in the privileged position that you are in, to try your darnedest to get people here. We will stand with you shoulder-to-shoulder.

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank the Opposition Leader for her support on this; it is important. It is an issue that is bipartisan and above party politics, if we, as a parliament, can really be supportive of our strategy. I believe it is a good strategy. It has been carefully put together and is being evaluated as we go, and it is having results.

Population is keenly linked to economic growth. When you have a year like last year where we grew at 7.3%, you know that you have a good product to advertise. While our friends from Alcan are here, I say thank you for your contribution to that economic growth. I wish you all the very best

of success with the G3 expansion at Gove, which represents a significant proportion of our work force. As government, we are keen to work with you to make sure that you can build that work force as you need to, but also retain as you want to. Population is growing. I thank companies like Alcan for their commitment to that. I am confident of a bright future for the Territory and a growing population.

Humanitarian Settlement in the Northern Territory

Mr VATSKALIS (Multicultural Affairs): Madam Speaker, as you would be aware, Australia's permanent immigration program has two components: migration (non-humanitarian) for skilled and family migrants; and humanitarian for refugees and others with humanitarian needs.

Whilst Australia's refugee and humanitarian program for 2005-06 establishes an available 13 000 new places, the Northern Territory - in particular Darwin - has an allocated quota of 200 humanitarian placements. In the 2004-05 financial year, Darwin welcomed 155 humanitarian entrants, mainly from African countries and, in particular, Sudan.

The Australian Offshore Resettlement Program helps people from all over the world. However, the regional focus for entry on humanitarian grounds in 2005-06 will remain on Africa, followed by the Middle East and South-West Asia. This reflects the resettlement priorities of the United Nations High Commission of Refugees.

Humanitarian entrants face major challenges in adapting to the Australian way of life, such as learning English and understanding Australian culture. There are also many small challenges that have to be addressed, such as basic road safety rules, where to find or access familiar foods, and how to establish contact with like-minded individuals and make friends. Some will also have special needs borne from having spent many years in refugee camps.

Under the framework of the new multicultural policy, *Building on the Territory's Diversity*, the Northern Territory government will continue to work towards better understanding the needs of these people and putting in place mechanisms which address them. Organisations such as the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory, the Melaleuca Centre, along with government agencies, provide programs of support and assist where they can with the transition for our new Territorians. Our new migrants do, however, bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and information about new cultures to Darwin. They enhance our multicultural mix, and many of those who have come to Darwin under the humanitarian program

are making positive contributions to our community in general.

Unfortunately, whilst Darwin continues to receive humanitarian entrants, the Australian government suspended settlement in Alice Springs in 2002. Alice Springs has a positive history in the settlement of humanitarian entrants, supported by excellent work done by the Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia - formerly the Migrant Resource Centre - Northern Territory government agencies, and other service providers. I have written to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs on several occasions to support the reinstatement of humanitarian settlement in Alice Springs, which would be beneficial to the community in many ways, not the least of which is to help in growing the population base of the Centre.

To ensure a good case can be put to the Australian government for the reinstatement of humanitarian settlement, the following criteria developed by the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs must be addressed: regional locations should demonstrate sufficient population to support new communities; the location must have unrestricted accessibility to a wide range of goods and services and opportunities for social interaction; the location should offer good employment prospects, particularly in unskilled and semi-skilled industries; and the location must provide adequate access to appropriate services and infrastructure.

Madam Speaker, I can advise that the new working group consisting of representatives from the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Multicultural Community Services of Central Australia and other relevant government agencies has been established for the purpose of assessing the Northern Territory's position against the Australian government's criteria. This group is tasked with developing a detailed submission that will be presented to the Australian government in support of Alice Springs being once again in a position to welcome migrants under the Humanitarian Resettlement Program.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, this is a very important area, particularly in reference to the first statement with regards to skills shortage. Many of these refugees possess unique skills, yet the minister would probably be aware that many of these refugees are experiencing great dissatisfaction in being involved in program upon program that does not connect them with the opportunity of real and satisfying work. It appears, minister, as you are probably aware, that many of these programs, which are funded by perhaps the Territory government and the federal government, meet organisational needs of bureaucrats and

bureaucracies rather than meeting community needs, particularly when you look at the small business sector.

The small business community does not understand how bureaucracies work. They are having a hard enough time trying to find someone to work at Winnellie without having to understand how bureaucracies work and how to access programs. They do not have time to find out where these people are going and what programs they are involved in. On the other hand, you have refugees who are desperately seeking a start with real work. These programs generally run them through program after program, at great expense, and result in them being either taxi drivers or cleaners. We need to apply greater creativity and energy to solve that problem. Many of them need to find the connection from their skill which may not be perfectly suited to the need of the small business sector.

I met with Senator Cobb when he was in town, and I have worked with some of the agencies involved to try to create a unique bridging program. I hope to brief you on that, minister, so that we can make some progress and meet the skills shortage through our refugee community.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I welcome the minister's report. There is a need for skilled workers in the Centre. We have a history of success in settling refugees in Alice Springs. It was unfortunate that we were taken off the list. I came across a business the other day which had, I think, a young Sudanese refugee working for him in his garage. He had settled in well. He said part of the problem is sometimes the refugees come along and their qualifications are not always recognised. There is a need to support and help them gain that recognition factor. He also told me how he had brought someone across from Queensland to work and that person had lasted two weeks and walked off. We find people who come to our country seeking safety and a new life are more than willing to fit in within our community and work hard.

There was also a rumour around Alice Springs that there was going to be an influx of a large number of skilled workers. No? Not happening? That was perhaps a wish list more than anything else. We really need to continue that push to get the skilled workers into the Territory. Certainly the ones we have in Alice Springs - the doctors, the nurses, the IT people, the mechanics and what have you - have settled in very well and really are propping up, in many cases, many of our businesses.

Minister, anything you can do to make sure that we are back on the list, we appreciate.

Mr VATSKALIS (Multicultural Affairs): Madam Speaker, I totally agree with the member for Blain. We not only have significant problems with the skills but also with Commonwealth departments refusing to recognise the problems. They expect every person all over the world to go through a program that is structured like an Australian program. They refuse to recognise that people become plumbers, concreters or brick pavers through experience rather than through school.

Not only that, we have refugees who come here with qualifications. There is a Congolese refugee who is a qualified economist and he cannot find a job because the Commonwealth government would not recognise his qualifications. As a matter of fact, I went through that in 1983 when I came from Greece with a diploma in public health. I was told to go back to university and repeat the things I did in Greece. Fortunately, with the assistance of a dean of the university bringing back the curriculum from Greece, I managed to get 150 credit points, half of the course, as an exemption.

This is an issue that has to be addressed, and has to be addressed by the bureaucrats at the Commonwealth level. We have to be adaptable and we have to accept other standards. I agree regarding doctors and nurses and other professions like that, but why economists, plumbers or builders? Why do we not let them come in?

Crusty Demons Territory Tour

Ms LAWRIE (Sport and Education): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today about the event that every in Darwin is talking about this week: the tour of the Territory by the world renowned motorcycle stunt group, the Crusty Demons of Dirt, or simply, the Crusty Demons. The tour is being promoted as the Outback Assault. The Crusty Demons will be appearing at Marrara Oval this Saturday with the show starting at 6.30 pm. This will be an amazing three-hour extravaganza of aerial stunts on motorbikes, snow mobiles and quad bikes - a show never before seen in Darwin. The show will also be supported by rock band, *28 Days*, and fireworks and lighting displays.

The performance will then be replicated in Alice Springs at Blatherskite Park next Saturday, 22 October. This will be fantastic for the people of Alice Springs and I really encourage all sporting enthusiasts to get out and support this top shelf event. There will also be some free demonstrations and motor bike skills as the Crusty Demons Touring Group travel from Darwin to Alice Springs, stopping in Katherine and Tennant Creek. I hear that some of this action may include a dirt

bike demonstration in the middle of a popular Katherine hotel followed by autograph signings.

The group boasts some of Australia's and United States' best motorbike riders. Some of the riders are known throughout the world as some of the craziest people on the planet. Seth Enslow and Jimmy Blaze are famous for their blatant disregard for personal safety. There is a young Australian rider, Robbie Maddison, whom I recently had the pleasure of meeting during my official announcement of the tour earlier this month. Beware, parents, this experience may just encourage one of our own young motocross riders to one day become a member of the Crusty Demons.

I am extremely proud, as minister, to have been able to make this event possible. It was not much more than a month ago that the Crustys contacted my office with the idea of an Outback Assault tour. What particularly attracted me to the idea was that the tour involved the regions as well as Darwin. We have provided \$20 000 worth of financial support to assist with their freight costs, free public buses to ensure safe patronage, police support, event management advice, and the use of Marrara Oval to ensure their tour is a success.

It is a credit to everyone involved that we were able to pull together the tour so quickly. The government has invested a lot of money in the Marrara Oval so I was particularly keen to ensure the show would not damage it. We are a government that undertakes proper consultation and seeks qualified professional advice. Having once again called on MCG curator, Tony Ware, for advice, I am confident that the oval will not be detrimentally affected. The AFLNT agrees with me.

We know from the V8s that Territorians, young and old, love their motor sports. The two Top End motocross clubs alone have several hundred family groups that regularly participate in off-road motocross activities. It will be the first time that this particular sporting sector has been provided with such an elite and exciting event for their sporting code.

As we expected, tickets sales have been terrific. I understand that more than 9000 tickets have been sold for the Darwin show and ticket sales in Alice Springs are about 3000. I encourage anyone still thinking about going but leaving it to the last minute to buy their tickets today or risk being disappointed. Patrons can also make a 10% saving by pre-purchasing their tickets. This demonstrates a resounding support by the community for government to continue to attract such events to the Territory.

I have heard that the Crusty Demons are a wild group who will be pulling out all the stops to provide Territorians with an experience to remember. I hear it is an adrenalin-rushing event. This government looks forward to welcoming the Crusty Demons to the Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, unfortunately, I will not be able to attend the Crusty Demons as I will be attending a function with the crusty demons of media. The media awards are on the same night and I will be there at that hair-raising event.

Territorians are excited about this and I can understand why government will also be very excited about being able to deliver such an exciting program. However, if that minister were in opposition and it was me over there talking about the Crusty Demons, I suspect she would be saying things like: 'We have had a fairly horrific season of accidents on the road', and there would be the need to ensure that we do cover issues of road safety and safety attached to these sorts of events. It was not that long ago, sadly, that there was a young lad who came to grief on a motorbike, therefore, these sorts of issues need to be attended to in all our excitement as community leaders.

Also, there is the safety of the Marrara complex. We trust you; we have placed it in your hands. We do hope that the Palmerston Magpies will play their grand final on that field and it will not be damaged in any way.

Finally, the cost to government and the amount of money that has been spent on this event: I would like to know how many tickets have been provided to government as a result of your sponsorship, and how have those tickets been distributed?

Ms LAWRIE (Sport and Recreation): Madam Speaker, the Crusty Demons were not that generous. The costs went to covering their freight. We actually purchased tickets and distributed them through local schools and local members, as we do in a number of events.

Mr Mills: All electorates?

Ms LAWRIE: When I said 'we', we purchased tickets out of our own funds and they have gone to local schools. Some have raffled them; others have done different things.

Mr Mills: Any in Blain, perhaps?

Ms LAWRIE: It was certainly available to you, member for Blain, to purchase tickets and let your

schools raffle them too. I encourage people to do that if you have not done so already because it has been incredibly popular at the local schools.

I am also spending money to host a corporate box. I have brought together key business people around the community into that corporate box just to showcase the fantastic facility that we have at Marrara Oval.

I do not expect the Palmerston Magpies to be playing the grand final there. It would be more likely the Nightcliff Tigers and Saint Mary's anyway. It is great to see the NTFL season has kicked off. The Palmerston Magpies did a good job against Southern Districts; they gave them a bit of a thrashing on the weekend. Maybe they might get up and beat Waratahs this weekend, who knows. When the Tigers meet them, we will be right in front.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Reports noted pursuant to Sessional Order.

MOTION

Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 2005 - Magistrates' Salary, Allowances and Other Benefits – Disallowance of Part

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move - That this Assembly disallow so much of clause 3.5 of the Remuneration Tribunal Determination No 1 of 2005 in respect of Magistrates' Salary, Allowance and Other Benefits as it relates to the daily rate of travelling allowance set out in Table 2 so far as it relates to Brisbane and Perth; and the rate for lunch set out in Table 3 so far as it relates to places other than capital cities.

The Remuneration Tribunal Report on the Salary, Allowances, and Other Benefits for Magistrates discusses various changes to the remuneration, allowances and terms and conditions of the office of a magistrate which are made by way of the determination which accompanies the report being Determination No 1 of 2005. The report and determination were tabled in the Assembly on 30 June 2005. All or part of the determination may be disallowed by the Assembly within 10 sitting days of tabling.

This motion is concerned with changes to travelling allowances. Travelling allowances have been adjusted by the tribunal in line with Commonwealth entitlements resulting in some rates being lowered. The report noted that, in the tribunal's view, reduction of a rate is not detrimental to the magistrates as travelling allowance is an entitlement granted to ensure that a magistrate will not gain or lose financially as a

result of travelling on duty or other authorised official business, and the rates are set after comprehensive price reviews.

The daily travelling allowance rate for Brisbane and Perth was reduced from \$360 to \$325, and the rate for lunch in places that are not capital cities reduced from \$25 to \$19.

Following tabling of the report and the determination which, thereby, became public, the magistrates raised the issue of detriment contrary to the *Magistrates Act*, and requested that legal advice be sought. Advice was sought from the Solicitor-General who, contrary to the view expressed by the Remuneration Tribunal, advised that, in his opinion, the reduction is detrimental to the magistrates and thereby is contrary to section 6(2) of the *Magistrates Act* which provides that:

The salary, allowances and other benefits to which a magistrate is entitled under subsection (1) must not be altered to the magistrate's detriment during his or her term of office.

The Solicitor-General advised that whilst travelling allowance rates can be reduced under the Commonwealth remuneration scheme, because of the constitutional injunction against diminishing federal judges' remuneration does not apply to travel allowance, the provision in the Northern Territory *Magistrates Act* is a clear injunction against altering a magistrate's salary, allowances and other benefits to their detriment during their term of office. He advised that it is clear that some allowances – namely travelling allowance – have been reduced and that such a reduction is detrimental to magistrates.

As the power for the Remuneration Tribunal to make determinations of salary, allowances and benefits for magistrates – section 9B of the *Remuneration Tribunal Act* – is subject to section 6(2) of the *Magistrates Act*, the Solicitor-General's advice is that part of the determination that is detrimental to a magistrate in office is beyond the power of the tribunal and must be disallowed. The government has no objection to any other aspect of the determination.

I note that the passing of a resolution such as this has the effect of reviving on and from the date of the resolution the determination or relevant part thereof, in force immediately before the coming into operation of the determination subject to the disallowance. That is section 9 of the *Remuneration Tribunal Act*. A disallowance of that part of the determination dealing with reduced travelling allowance rates would, therefore, revive the relevant parts of the previous determination which related to those rates.

This means that the previous daily travelling allowance for Brisbane and Perth of \$360 per day will be revived. It also means that the previous rate for lunch in places that are not capital cities, being \$25, will be revived.

Madam Speaker, the government very much appreciates and respects the work of the Remuneration Tribunal and this motion for a partial disallowance of Determination No 1 of 2005 in respect of magistrates is only proposed after much consideration. Ultimately, it is the view of the government that it is appropriate to accept and act upon the advice of the Northern Territory Solicitor-General in this matter. Accordingly, I place this motion before the House.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the Chief Minister. I am aware of the circumstances. I was offered the opportunity of a briefing but did not think one was needed. I support the motion and do not propose to say anything else.

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I thank the opposition for their support on this, and restate that I thank the Remuneration Tribunal for their work. This is a partial disallowance that we do move after much consideration. The other aspects of the Remuneration Tribunal's work are very well accepted. On legal advice from our Solicitor-General, this is a disallowance that we must move in the House. I thank the opposition for their support.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL (No 2) (Serial 23)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr McADAM (Housing): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Housing Amendment Bill (No 2) 2005 is an important bill that will greatly increase our ability to keep all the HomeNorth home loan schemes responsive to the needs of Territorians. Honourable members will recall, on 23 March this year, we passed an amendment to the *Housing Act* allowing the administration of the HomeNorth scheme to be more flexible. Previously, any changes to the HomeNorth scheme, whether by amending an existing scheme or introducing a new one, could only be done through regulation. This is a slow and cumbersome process and seriously restricts our ability to respond quickly and effectively to shifting housing market conditions and the changing needs of our population.

The amendments removed the requirements for change to be made through regulation. Instead, the Chief Executive Officer, Housing, with endorsement from the Minister for Housing, was then able to approve and amend housing purchase assistance schemes. This meant that the schemes are now governed by business rules rather than regulations, allowing us to make more strategic and timely changes to HomeNorth as market conditions dictate. This brought the management of HomeNorth products into line with commercial lending sector standards, including that of the Territory Insurance Office. Under the new arrangement, we are able to respond quickly and effectively to market changes, allowing both the maximum purchase price and the household incomes to be increased on 1 July 2005. The loans that are governed under the *Housing Loans Act* and its associated regulations were not covered by this previous amendment. This was simply an administrative matter and this further amendment to the *Housing Act* aims to complete this process.

It is important that we ensure that people who took out HomeNorth loans in the past - that is under the old scheme - may have the benefit of future improvements to the administration of HomeNorth loans. It is for this reason the amendment bill repeals the remaining loan schemes that were not covered by the previous amendment. This will allow us to manage all HomeNorth loans under relevant business rules and to incorporate important new features into existing loans. For instance, we can allow Territory Housing to purchase an additional share in a property where the borrower is in financial difficulty, or to give borrowers the ability to access funds that they have paid over and above the minimum repayments to assist with such things as home improvements. These are features of the new products which may be extended to existing borrowers as a result of these amendments.

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

Debate adjourned.

LEGISLATION REPEAL BILL (Serial 18)

Continued from 24 August 2005.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the opposition will be supporting this bill and the next one on the Notice Paper.

In relation to this bill, it was a strange piece of legislation - strange for a few reasons, I guess, but one was because it was presented within months of the Territory election. I am compelled to say

that for a government that was at pains to say throughout the campaign that there was much more to do, I would not have thought a bill like this was one of them. It does rather have the appearance of someone in the department, or perhaps a minister waking up on 19 June, and saying: 'Oh my God, what can I ask my department to do?' Having said that, it is not an unnecessary bill. It is a bill that, in essence, cleans out the cupboard and is a bit of a stocktake of our legislation, seeing what we need and what we do not need. It is supported on that basis.

I make two points and would be grateful if the Attorney-General could provide me with a response in his reply. The first point is this: according to the second reading speech, you are retaining the *Northern Territory Surrender Act* of 1907 for its historical significance and, if I may say so, that is a very good idea. I wonder whether the *Transcontinental Railway Act* might also be retained for historical purpose? If not, why not?

Secondly, in relation to my dear old friend, the *Workmen's Lien Act* of 1893, I note that according to your second reading speech, it is to be retained - in other words kept on the statute books. Yet, you also said in the penultimate paragraph of my printout of your second reading speech that it is nevertheless set to be repealed by section 66 of the *Construction Contracts (Security of Payments) Act* 2004. My question is this: has not the *Workmen's Lien Act* been repealed yet? If not, why not? If it has not been repealed, why is it to be retained?

I perhaps could have expressed that differently, but the wording in the second reading speech is, with respect, a little confusing. On the one hand, you are saying the *Workmen's Lien Act* is going to be repealed by another piece of legislation which was commenced in 2004, and that the *Workmen's Lien Act* is going to be retained in any event. It is just a mystery to me. I do not think many people will go rushing to the High Court about this issue, but I would like something in the nature of an explanation.

With those two questions, the opposition supports the bill. I look forward to the Attorney-General's response.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition raised the matter of three of these repeals, or lack of repeal, and I can certainly clarify one of them; that is, the *Workmen's Lien Act*. The *Workmen's Lien Act* is being retained until the relevant section of the security of payments legislation becomes active. It is simply going to continue to act until overtaken by the new legislation ...

Ms Carney: And then it will go?

Dr TOYNE: That will go, yes. The others, if I could have some forbearance, I will just talk about the ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister for Justice, perhaps you could sit in the Leader of Government Business' chair.

Ms Martin: We can bear with it, Madam Speaker. We are dealing with ancient legislation here.

Madam SPEAKER: Let us have a little pause here in the proceedings.

Dr TOYNE: Madam Speaker, I am sorry about this. The *Northern Territory Surrender Act* has some constitutional attachments, and that is why it was kept, on the advice I have. The *Transcontinental Railway Act* is spent and should be repealed. Essentially, in the explanatory statement that we issued at the time of the second reading speech, you can see the reasons for including each of the acts in the repeal bill. I would stand by the explanations given for the other acts that are to be repealed.

Like you, I have a certain nostalgic attachment to some of these old acts and I thought it would be remiss to see these pass out of the Territory statutes without at least doing an obituary to one of them. I have before me the *Masters and Servants Act 1878* and I thought, given the current federal government's IR reforms, it is probably going to come back into some currency in the way that we comport ourselves in industrial relations in this country. I will read a relevant section, just by way of an obituary to some old legislation.

It is amazing, when you pick up an old act like this and see the complete difference in the drafting style. In fact, clause 7 goes for about one-and-a-half pages without any break in the text whatsoever. If you were trying to read this by candlelight you would have some severe difficulties. I will try to read it by our modern electric lights. This is dealing with situations where the servant has not fulfilled the contract with their master:

...

And if the order shall direct the fulfilment of the contract and direct the party complained against to find good and sufficient security as aforesaid, and the party complained against neglect or refuse to comply with such order, a justice may, if he shall think fit, by warrant under his hand, commit such party to any gaol within the said province, there to be confined and kept until he shall so find security; but, nevertheless, so that the term of imprisonment, whether under

one or several successive committals, shall not exceed in the whole three months.

...

In effect, I think that is saying that if you dud your master you go to gaol for three months. That is the way the Prime Minister seems to be heading at the moment; we are going to get rid of unfair dismissal. However, there are other steps. I am going to make absolutely sure that John Howard does not see this legislation as he might be tempted to use it.

I thank the opposition for their support for this bill. It is springtime, and in springtime you do clean the house out. It is good for health and it is good for quality of life, and we all know how much we love our great Territory lifestyle. Without any further comment, we will let the matter proceed.

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.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Aboriginal Interpreter Service

Mr McADAM (Local Government): Madam Speaker, the Aboriginal Interpreter Service is one of the Territory's youngest institutions, yet it is arguably one of its most important. In speaking about the service today, I am very mindful of the fact that it has rarely come up for discussion in this place and that public knowledge about the service is very limited.

The Northern Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia to have a permanent interpreter service for indigenous languages. It was established in May 2000 by the last CLP government following very strong community representation and, indeed, agitation. I do not need to go into the history and motivations behind the initiative back then; suffice to say that it has become an important part of the landscape since. An important part of that landscape is the way in which the interpreter service contributes to a more just and equitable society here in the Northern Territory.

Since the 1970s throughout Australia, interpreter services in the language of recently arrived Australians have become universal, and the Northern Territory Interpreter Service is a good example. These services were set up to provide valuable assistance for non-English speaking Australians in accessing health, social security and legal services, as well as a range of other government and non-government agencies.

These interpreter services are seen as a key part of the success of multiculturalism in Australia and critical to community wellbeing.

Yet, such services have never been available to indigenous Australians. Quite simply, the many thousands of Aboriginal Australians who do not have English as a first language or, indeed, any English at all, have been excluded from the kind of access to language services available to more recently arrived Australians.

The impact of this is, perhaps, difficult to imagine, but the costs are relatively easy to quantify. I am advised that a number of recent studies have shown a clear correlation between effective communication and improved health outcomes. However, achieving such effective communication is highly problematic when staff and clients do not share the same cultural or linguistic background.

In the Northern Territory, 70% of indigenous Territorians speak a language other than English at home. With indigenous Territorians making up around 30% of the population, this means that around one in five Territorians are automatically, and significantly, disadvantaged in their dealings with the health system. I do not need to remind the Assembly that indigenous health outcomes are the worst in the Territory; indeed, the worst Australia-wide.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service can and is playing a growing role in our health system, from critical care in our hospitals down to the community health services. Again, I will give credit to the last CLP government for having established the service and, for reasons I will outline, I believe this parliament should adopt bipartisan support for its future consolidation and growth.

Work on an interpreter service had been carried out by the then Office of Aboriginal Development in the 1990s. From 1 September 2000, the new Aboriginal Interpreter Service began to be accessed by Police and Emergency Services, Office of Courts Administration, Department of Public Prosecutions and Correctional Services along with legal and health services. The AIS arose from an agreement signed in July 2000 between the Territory and Australian governments, and has been funded since then on a 50:50 basis between the two governments. In the latest agreement, brokered in 2003 and renewed this year, this involves an allocation to the Territory of \$540 000 to the AIS, and further funds to Aboriginal legal services and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to administer the grant. Unfortunately, this funding from the Commonwealth only extends to 30 June 2006, with no guarantee of future support beyond this date.

Since the AIS was established, it has operated in large part with great success. Up to 18 August 2005, the AIS has operated across 104 languages and dialects, with 197 active interpreters including 103 active accredited interpreters. Since the beginning of the service, 9998 jobs have been requested, with 10 362 interpretations. In its task of providing fair and equitable services to Aboriginal clients, the AIS now operates two offices – one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs. The AIS maintains and uses a register of Aboriginal languages and interpreters throughout the Northern Territory. Maintaining contact with many of the interpreters is a major challenge as many do not have direct telephone contact. The service has established a weekly roster system to ensure interpreters are available at Royal Darwin Hospital, and the Alice Springs, Tennant Creek and Katherine Hospitals. It also has interpreters based at the Darwin and Alice Springs Magistrate Courts as well as the Katherine court on bail days. Interpreters are available to all bush court sittings.

Consultation with the communities is imperative in developing this service. Visits to remote communities are regularly undertaken to recruit and retain interpreters, discuss the role of interpreters, and monitor bush court proceedings. As well, the AIS operates an on-site and telephone Aboriginal language interpreting service and, since the establishment of the AIS, has supplied services to 246 organisations throughout all parts of the Northern Territory.

The challenges facing the service and the interpreters who work in it are enormous. Despite its successes, no one can deny there have not been problems and that some of these problems continue. I do not pretend we have a service that does not face considerable difficulties.

In outlining the three major challenges faced by the service, I remind the House that what we are talking about is still a fledgling service but one which, nevertheless, leads a nation. The first challenge is particularly focused on the use of the AIS by the legal system which takes up about a quarter of the service's work. The adversarial nature of our legal system, particularly in the criminal jurisdiction, can often place interpreters in difficult situations due to a lack of proper understanding of the role of interpreters in our courts. That lack of understanding has sometimes led to a perception, from defendants and complainants alike, that an interpreter 'takes sides' rather than serving as a neutral servant of the court. This arises particularly in cases involving serious physical and sexual assaults, and murder, especially for women interpreters who make up nearly two-thirds of the AIS work force.

A significant number of women in particular language groups refuse to do such cases or,

indeed, refuse to undertake court work at all. This has led, on a number of occasions, for example, late last year in the Alice Springs Supreme Court, to lengthy delays in the carriage of cases to the detriment of the prosecution and defence. For this reason, the AIS has stepped up its recruitment in all the major 15 language groups of the Northern Territory and is providing intensive mentoring for court interpreters. In addition, the AIS is seeking Commonwealth assistance and conducting workshops to explain and clarify to the community the roles of interpreters in a legal arena.

This, in turn, leads to the second major challenge facing the AIS: that of developing specialised linguistic databases for specific specialities such as legal and medical terminologies. Anecdotally, at least, it has often been remarked that the issue of informed consent to medical procedures is rarely properly attained without the use of interpreters, and similar issues arise for lawyers taking instructions from clients.

A legal terminology database is being compiled. It is in the process of being translated into the 15 major language groups. As well, there has been a series of educational DVDs produced, which further clarify the role of the interpreter in general, and their roles in the Magistrates' and Supreme Courts. In addition, the Australian Attorney-General's Department is resourcing the AIS to develop information and training packages to promote the increased use of interpreters in community health centres, which thus far has had a very low take-up rate of interpreting services. In conjunction with this, resources are being developed to facilitate better understanding of medical procedures and terminology by Aboriginal language interpreters.

The third major issue facing the AIS is that of training accreditation and employment. As I mentioned, there are 103 active accredited interpreters working for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service, with 80% of interpreters regularly engaged by the AIS accredited at the para-professional level with the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. This is achieved through regular workshops held throughout the Northern Territory in the 15 major language groups and is an ongoing process.

Interpreters are employed through the AIS as Northern Territory public servants on a casual basis at a specialist level. While this has worked relatively well thus far, it does present difficulties to have all interpreters employed casually and at the same level, as it does not allow for recognition of different skill levels or provide an incentive for further training and accreditation. Within the resources available to the AIS there is some argument for full-time employment with the AIS or,

potentially, attached to particular departments such as Health and Community Services. These issues are currently the subject of negotiation between the AIS and the Office for the Public Service Commissioner. As they are resolved, I hope to report further to the Assembly.

Of course, training is a two-way street. It is not a matter of simply dialling up an interpreter and sitting him down in a clinic, a courtroom or a meeting. There is something of an art to using interpreters efficiently and profitably. The AIS holds regular workshops for the users of interpreters and these have contributed greatly to the take-up rate of AIS workers. Sessions taken with Northern Territory agencies have included the Department of Health and Community Services, Aboriginal legal services, the Department of Justice, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Anti-Discrimination Commission, Territory Housing, Police and Emergency Services, and St John Ambulance. The take-up rate of interpreters across Northern Territory agencies has not been as great as one would hope for despite the demonstrable benefits of using interpreters. Again, there are ongoing discussions with the Public Service Commissioner on this issue.

It is clear to me that the Aboriginal Interpreter Service is an agency that has been a long time coming and one that will have an increasingly important role. Already, the AIS is starting to be used in the commercial sector and this is likely to become more widespread as the level of indigenous involvement in the broader economy increases.

As the use of interpreters increase so will the status of those employed in this important area. I cannot overstate the importance of the cultural, as well as the linguistic knowledge they possess, and I congratulate them on their wonderful work. Praise, too, must go to the hardworking public servants who have worked behind the scenes so hard, for so long, to establish this service.

I stated earlier that I feel there is a need for a bipartisan approach from this Assembly over the Aboriginal Interpreter Service, in particular over the security of its consolidation and expansion into the future with Australian government assistance. The Leader of the Opposition is the opposition spokesperson for the Attorney-General's office and also a lawyer. I suspect she well knows the importance of access and equity within the legal system and, indeed, the fundamental precept of a fair go for all.

As I have outlined, the AIS's role in the legal system must be that of a neutral servant of the court and benefit defendants and victims alike. Furthermore, as I have discussed, the AIS has a

continuing role in improving indigenous health outcomes in the Territory. For this reason alone, the AIS has a critical role into the future and must be supported.

I welcome a united approach from the Northern Territory parliament - government, opposition and Independents - in seeking sustained Australian government resourcing of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. For this reason also, I intend writing to my colleagues on all sides of the Assembly with the aim of achieving a bipartisan approach to the Australian government in support of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. The Chief Minister has already written to the Prime Minister to this end and it would be heartening if this could be followed up by all of us.

Madam Speaker, this has been the first substantive statement to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service since its inception some five years ago. Over that time, the service has undertaken, as I mentioned, over 10 000 interpreting jobs which is a remarkable record of service to the community which I commend to the House.

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

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for this statement and thank him also for his generous acknowledgement of the previous government's efforts. Not surprisingly, I can look you, minister, in the eye and say that you do have bipartisan support on this issue.

There are so many issues of importance in the Northern Territory, but this one, arguably, would have to be up there in the top five. We have a significant indigenous population and, as we know, so many of them need access our court systems, our hospitals, and a number of other services. I cannot imagine what it would be like to be with a doctor and not be able to tell him or her where it hurts. I cannot imagine trying to instruct a solicitor to act for me when I cannot convey to that solicitor what I want him or her to do. In the context of the legal system it is about access to justice, a matter about which I feel very strongly and always have. This is an important matter.

Forgive me for not giving you a lengthy reply. I am sure you will appreciate that your statement was a short one. I am a believer in saying what needs to be said; that you do not necessarily need to waffle on as politicians, by their nature, want to do. You do have our support. For my part, I will speak with and write to our federal representatives who do the best that they can with the federal government. It is much better, of course, to have our federal representatives sit with the government

than in isolation in the federal parliament, otherwise they have only the status of, for all intents and purposes, Independents to the extent that they can influence the federal government. You can rest assured that I will be encouraging them to do so.

I sincerely thank the minister for his statement. You have our assurance that, as I said to the Chief Minister earlier this morning, we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with you.

**Statement by Speaker
Media Arrangements – Speech by
Member for Macdonnell**

Madam SPEAKER: I advise honourable members that I have given permission to the *Northern Territory News* to take photographs, and also for ABC Radio News to record the speech on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service by the member for Macdonnell, Ms Alison Anderson.

I also advise members that by indulgence of the Chair, I have given approval for the member for Macdonnell to speak in language during her speech.

Ms ANDERSON (Macdonnell): Yawa, Madam Speaker, thank you.

Kuwarinya palya wankayni ngurra nyakutu. Ngurra ngakutu nyala katinyutjunku, Minister for Local Government-aku, panya interpreter service tjanu ara tjakultjunktjaku. Pana yanangu nyanampa tjutanku putu kulini walpalangku nyalitiji nyaltjii tjanampanyu kulintjaku. Yalatjinganya ngurra nganya tjunanyi yanangu tjukarru palantjaku.

Interpreter service nyatjatanja tjin meetinku para ultyainyu la-nyurra kutupa kutupaku, walapala tjuanku agency nyurrayanangu katinyin kutjaku-yanangu wanapi tjutana paluru tjana yananku ara tjukarru tjakultjunya-nyanka. Nyuallti nyalli governmentaku palyanyinka.

Nan mam arleke ukapunitja nyerrete maratijke lenterere muntjele etlitjereke, interpreter service nana-kunja releka kneteritjnurra namye. Relekunya nuna yanenyirea etelerama, tjan tjan lenterla nkamalanya governmenteka policyalku enta nyana elema nkentja itnakanla kana-nyitja nunakanala ejala etna elama lakana ntuma nuna anjanama interpreter service nina kneritji ka-opposition ngaka side mabala support militjika federal government njanika, letter intelitjika interpreter service njanaka

mona nuralku aranaitjeke Commonwealth supportamilitjika, nakennaken lurentje pitjmala eyera elamana.

Madam Speaker, I speak in support of the statement on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service brought to this House by the Minister for Local Government.

Firstly, I would like to address the Leader of the Opposition in Arrernte:

Unta Nama Argutja ngerita, Unta Nama Ngurra Ukapuntja maran.

To the member for Katherine, in Luritja:

Nunta wima wiyakutju Ngurra ngangka nyinangku, kuwarri nguntu Katulinkgulpi nyarang.

To the member for Blain, in Pitjantjatjara:

Nyuntu Schoolanka tjittjinaka warakingkupi kututja nyuntu tjiitj tjutuku wankapi.

Of course, Madam Speaker, I must assure you that nothing I have said was unparliamentary language, though, of course, none of my parliamentary colleagues would know this. That is because I spoke in my mother's tongue, and the languages of my father and my extended family, Arrernte, Luritja and Walpiri.

This is why the Aboriginal Interpreter Service is so important to the Northern Territory community. It adds to our understanding of each other and the way our important institutions and agencies work. Interpreter services are vital to the advancement of the Northern Territory. They are vital for economic growth, health, education, accessing banking, and the myriad of other services. Indigenous communities and people in the Northern Territory were held back by the lack of interpreter services.

As the minister said, an interpreting service for indigenous people in the Northern Territory only commenced in 1990. Prior to that, Aboriginal people did not enjoy the same rights as other Australians, particularly newer migrants who have enjoyed such services since the 1970s. The establishment of the interpreter service in 1990 was a significant achievement but, as the minister said, it needs expansion and improvement. I would like to see a greater use made of interpreters, particularly by government agencies.

In my time, I have attended many meetings where it was clear that the Aboriginal residents do not have a clue about the subject and the purpose of the meeting, but the government agencies plough on with their so-called consultation regardless. In reality, most Aboriginal language

speakers in such meetings understand one word out of five and, because of embarrassment they remain silent only to find out later that their silence and lack of participation has been read as consent. I have witnessed this situation time and time again with the result that I have grown quite cynical about community consultation. No wonder attempts at development continuously hit brick walls.

A standard must be developed so that all consultations with indigenous communities utilise interpreters so that the informed consent of Aboriginal people can be given for any policy changes that affect their lives. Informed consent as detailed in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* means providing information in a manner, language and time frame people can consider and understand so that they are adequately equipped for the decisions they are required to make.

This is particularly important for the development of more suitable governance arrangements in remote communities. At the moment, Aboriginal councils in the NT, to my knowledge, do not have an interpreter present at their meetings. They are required to discuss abstract Western concepts without any interpreting assistance, and then we all act surprised when these community councils run into trouble and fall over. Let us stop pretending and insist that our agencies use interpreters.

There have been many excuses in the past for failure to provide adequate interpreting services to Aboriginal people. One of the most common is the number of indigenous languages. In reality, most Aboriginal people are multilingual; that is, they speak a number of languages. Furthermore, there are significant similarities between languages that enable people to communicate effectively. For example, Luritja and Pitjantjatjara are used interchangeably as Eastern Arrernte and Anmatjere.

Such problems are not insurmountable. Consider the United Nations. They are able to provide simultaneous interpretation in a multitude of languages. All delegates are provided with interpreting in their native languages. Likewise, the deaf community, the oldest providers of interpreting services in the world, have developed techniques like the relay interpreting system to ensure the full participation of deaf-blind and other deaf who do not use Auslan, the language of the Australian deaf community. I urge Northern Territory officials to contact and network with the Australian Deaf Societies and their interpreting services to get a better understanding of how to provide professional interpreting services, particularly in developing skills so the interpreters can increase their accreditation levels. One of the

ways this has been achieved by the deaf community is to have assessment based on formal training, plus an evaluation conducted by other interpreters and a panel of deaf members.

In the Northern Territory, 50% of indigenous interpreters are accredited through NAATI, but most remain at level one because the effort has not been put into improving their interpreting skills. Improving the training and assessment methods for the Northern Territory Interpreter Service would help to improve the service and overcome the difficulties that the minister referred to in his speech.

It is not easy being an interpreter, as you need to have a thorough understanding of English and the relevant language. Too often, people think that an interpreter just needs to translate into English, but that is only half of the story. Effective interpreters are required to interpret from language into English and back, continuously code-switching throughout a meeting. This is not an easy feat, and we do need to invest resources into ensuring we develop these qualities. Interpreters are also required to understand specialist terminology, particularly for interpreting court and medical situations. The development of a database of legal terminology and the dissemination of this information to interpreters also assists in raising standards.

The interpreting service could also be significantly improved by changing the employment arrangements of our interpreters. Again, adopting from the system used by SA Deaf, a number of highly qualified interpreters need to be employed full-time. Their roles are to run the booking system, undertake the training and professional development of interpreters, ensure that accreditation and standards are met and be the mainstay interpreters for court and police matters. The Deaf Societies have achieved real outcomes for deaf people, to the extent that you see profoundly deaf accountants, teachers and lawyers, people who have been supported by sign language interpreters throughout their lives to achieve higher education and career goals.

It is not the lack of English that is inhibiting the development of indigenous people, but the lack of interpreting services, stemming from a lack of will amongst governments and their agencies. Of particular concern is Centrelink services. As I have said before in this place, 30% of Aboriginal families receive no income in any given fortnight, mainly because of access issues, primarily the barriers of language and distance. The failure by the Commonwealth government to ensure that their welfare safety actually catches remote indigenous language speakers creates a big drain on the services and resources of the Northern Territory government. Unless the Commonwealth

is forced to change its service delivery, the impacts will continue to be felt in the health, education, and family and community services sectors.

One of the major difficulties that the Northern Territory Interpreter Service has yet to overcome is the independence of the interpreters. As the minister said in his statement, when people do not perceive the interpreter to be independent, they do not have faith and will not use the service. A significant advantage for SA Deaf is that the interpreter service is operated by their community-based organisation and there is no problem with the issue of independence. Because interpreters in the Northern Territory government are casual public servants, there has been the perception that they are not independent. I have fielded many complaints from my constituents, not just in my role as an MLA, but also in my previous role as ATSIC Commissioner. I urge the minister to give this issue careful consideration and look at effective interpreter services in other Australian jurisdictions to improve our own services.

There is considerable demand worldwide for the expertise on how to deliver efficient and effective interpreting services. If we can get it right in the Northern Territory for indigenous people, we can export this knowledge and expertise around the world. Interpreting services level the playing field for Aboriginal people, allow us to participate as equal partners, and help redress the fundamental imbalance that exists in the Northern Territory.

At the beginning of my speech, I made a comment to each of the members of the opposition in my languages. I did not do this just to show off my linguistic abilities. I did this because I wanted the people in this House to feel, in a small way, what it is like to be an Aboriginal language speaker living in the Northern Territory. Despite my assurances to you, Madam Speaker, that I was not using unparliamentary language, I am sure that many members in this House had doubts.

Aboriginal language speakers experience that feeling of doubt, that feeling that you do not really know what is going on, on a daily basis. I hope that in a small way I have been able to demonstrate the difficulties that language barriers create. What I really said to the Opposition Leader in Arrente was: 'You are the most important woman in your group, and you must work very hard in your job'. To the member for Katherine: 'Although you have been in this place for only a short period of time, it is to your credit that you are now the second most important person in your group'; and, finally, to the member for Blain: 'You have started your working life as a teacher, and the problems of teaching children is still a major concern for you'.

The Aboriginal Interpreter Service is very important to the Northern Territory community. It adds to our understanding of each other and the way our important institutions and agencies work. Through breaking down the language barriers, we will achieve real reconciliation.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I commend the member for her response to the statement. As I wander from time to time around our community, I acknowledge I do not know a single word of Larrakia - not one. I probably know two words of Yolngu. I grew up in Western Australia, and I know about four words in Wanglatja. I went to teachers' college, and for the first time, I was exposed to indigenous language, and we learnt, as part of our linguistics course, Wangkatja, which is a sub-language of Pitjantjatjara. That was the first time that I, as an Australian, gained an insight into the linguistic wealth of our nation. I was embarrassed. I have had an interest in language for many years, growing up in an Irish-Catholic family, where mum had this exotic experience as a youngster living with an Italian family. She learnt some Italian words and that was really interesting. We knew a couple of Italian words. So we had insight into another culture and different food, and most interestingly, another language.

Then I married a lady who was born in Australia, but her mum and dad were born in Croatia. I discovered that my mother-in-law, who did not go to school very much and her opinions sometimes made us smile, could speak five languages. She could speak Italian, Macedonian, Croatian, Yugoslav and Greek, I think, without any problem at all. She just switched from one to another. She still did not know how to use punctuation in her letters, though, in whatever language. I was amazed.

Then I heard the story once that someone said: 'What do you call a person who can speak two languages?' 'Bilingual.' 'What about three languages?' 'Trilingual'. 'What about one?' 'Australian'. As someone wanting to learn a little more about other people, and how best to communicate, we recognise, one, there is a level of arrogance if we just lock ourselves into one means of interpreting the world around us - that being our own language - because there is an arrogance in that, and, secondly, we are requiring them to work to understand us; they have to do all the work.

I have spent time in Indonesia on many occasions. I speak enough Indonesian to get around. Many times, Indonesian people feel blessed that I know some of their language, as though I have done a wonderful thing. There are

millions of people there who speak my language, far better than I speak their language, and yet they are impressed that I have made the effort to learn theirs.

As English language speakers, if we are serious about the future, what is the place of language in our education system? There is a debate, and it has gone on for many years, whether we should just concentrate on the dominant language; that is, the best means to gain an understanding. I do not agree with that through my experience in linguistics. As an English teacher, you are strengthened in your knowledge of English if you have another language code to work against. It broadens your concept; you have a point of relativity, and that is important. It helps you to understand your own language if you can understand another language.

We need to have an increase in language teaching in our schools. If we are serious about our Asian relations, we should be teaching Asian languages in our schools. We should also be allowing indigenous languages into the curricula. I was in Alice Springs a few years ago, and one of the young lads who owns a restaurant there told me how good it is for him, as a result of his primary education, to be able to say 'good day' to a couple of the traditional people in Todd Street Mall in their own language. He learnt it at primary school and it is a little point of connection.

It is much more, as the member for Macdonnell said, than just translating one word into another. There is a whole translation of meaning and concepts, and there is the conveyance of something very powerful if you take the time to incorporate someone else's language. It is not just words and sounds.

There is more to language than words and sounds as a friend of mine discovered when he started to learn Indonesian. He grabbed hold of a computer, which was fairly new in those days; he thought this is going to be a piece of cake. 'I will develop a program that for every Indonesian word it will have a matching English word', and he worked out this program. Poor guy! He was very smart, but not smart enough to understand how languages worked. He thought he would be able to program these sentences and phrases from the two different languages together so that he would have a machine that would translate perfectly. It was impossible. Once you put in certain nuances of phrases and the conveyances of concepts from one language to another, the computer could not cope with it.

If they are taught languages, young people before the age of five can learn as many languages as they are exposed to. Up until the age of five, you could be exposed to 25 languages

spoken comfortably in your environment and absorb every single one of them perfectly. After that time it becomes increasingly difficult. That is why it is important to teach in primary school. That is how important it is to convey an understanding of the world around us and our culture here to allow other languages to be taught, and particularly our local indigenous languages. I support that.

I also call upon this government to take stock of its position on bilingual education. I am a supporter of bilingual education, obviously from the words that I have said. If we are serious about where we want to be in 10 or 15 years time, we have to take stock of our position with bilingual education. That is where it starts. This is a fine statement, and I support it, but it is not going to go anywhere unless we readjust our approach to language and what language represents, and allow our young people to be in a position where they can start to negotiate some of the difficult things we are having great trouble dealing with. They will be able to negotiate those difficult things that are only gained through an understanding of someone else's language. Therefore, bilingual education is critical. We will not be able to make much progress. We will have fine statements in here again and again but just minimal change underneath the surface. The words might alter slightly. I do not want to be in here in 10 or 15 years time and hear the same speeches reflecting the same problem with just superficial alteration to the statements.

If you go back through *Hansard* - and I have just looked back through *Hansard* here; these computers are amazing - it will show you speeches that have been made in this parliament for ages. Even though the roles have changed, it sometimes distresses me to hear the attitudes change in such a profound way when there has been a translation from opposition to government. I have been quite honestly gob smacked at times to see the attitude that seems to occupy those benches over there. But try me out. I am going to sit over there one day and I will not carry whatever it is that occupies members when they sit over there. I have seen you in opposition; I have seen you in government. Something has not translated in too many cases. There is something that happens around this place.

You were really keen about bilingual education in opposition; in government not quite as keen or enthusiastic. It is time to do it. Just give confidence to those poor people who are out there. They do not quite understand a lot of this stuff; however, they do hear your words and the way they are expressed, and they want it delivered otherwise it just increases confusion and disillusionment.

Most members would have read *Why Warriors Lie Down and Die*. The book gives an understanding of what it is like not to understand what is going on around you and, as the Leader of the Opposition referred to in the context of the legal system or in a health situation, trying to explain what is wrong with you. It is like a bad dream trying to get the meaning out and no one can really understand what you are talking about. However, as I mentioned at the beginning, it is further compounded by arrogance, believing that the person who is not understanding you has something wrong with them because they cannot understand you, because you are speaking quite loudly and clearly - but not in their language.

My Dad would be embarrassed at me mentioning this; he comes from that attitude within our nation which, to a great degree, has changed. There was an Italian chap who came and visited our farm to dig a hole and get some water, and he had a strong Italian accent. Dad realised that he was not a native English speaker and wanted to make very sure that he understood exactly where the hole had to be drilled. He started to speak very loudly - really loudly - to Alfredo. I said: 'What is going on here? Why are you speaking so loudly, Dad?' He said: 'So I can get him to understand'. I said: 'You do not need to speak loudly, Dad. He is not deaf; he just has an accent. That is all. Just speak clearly'. Too often, there is that attitude that is conveyed inadvertently through lack of education or understanding.

I welcome the statement. I give my support to bilingual education - which is tied to this. I ask the government to reassess its position on bilingual education. There has been some token change in rhetoric, but we need to see some action if we are really going to get to a place where we will be able to look back and say: 'Yes, there has been some significant change'. I support the statement.

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I support the minister's very important statement on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. Like my *Ingiya-punga*, the member for Macdonnell, I would like to make a very short statement in my native tongue, Tiwi.

Awungana mantanga, ngiya pupuka, marri nginja.

I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that was not parliamentary ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Excuse me, minister?

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Oh, unparliamentary! Everything I said then was not unparliamentary,

sorry. That was a very traditional Tiwi greeting. I said: 'Hello, my friends. I am good. What about you?' I also said '*Ingiya-punga*' which in my language is 'sister'.

My sister, the member for Macdonnell, highlighted how important our languages and the preservation of them are to us. Whilst I am able to speak my mother's Tiwi language, I am constantly reminded, and it is reinforced, of a piece of history, or my identity, which was removed. That was my ability to learn the languages of the Central Desert from where my father was removed as a child and lost all identity – both his language and who he was.

I commend this minister's statement because it is a very vital and essential service for the Northern Territory. As part of my contribution, I wanted to go back to the history of this service to some of the background information from its inception. Part of it started in 1976. There was a landmark case in the Northern Territory that considered the difficulties encountered by both police and Aboriginal suspects in the context of formal police records of interviews with Aboriginal people. There were three judges, but the lead judgment was delivered by Chief Justice Forster. He set out in his judgment a set of guidelines that have become known as the Anunga Rules. One of the guidelines was to the effect that, even if the suspect may speak some English, an interpreter should be present, and an interpreter's assistance utilised wherever necessary in order to ensure complete and mutual understanding. Obviously, the same need for an interpreter that applied in relation to police interviews also applied in relation to the participation of Aboriginal people in any subsequent court proceedings.

The Territory gained self-government in 1978 and a succession of CLP governments were in power between then and August 2001. Despite the clear notice issued in the Anunga case, and expressions of judicial concern in a series of subsequent Northern Territory cases, it was not until the late 1990s that any formal or systematic steps were taken by the then Northern Territory government to ensure that properly qualified interpreters were available to people in police interviews and court proceedings.

What happened then was that the government of the day was under pressure, both here and nationally, because of the harsh, negative impact that the government's mandatory sentencing for property offences laws, introduced in 1998, were having on Aboriginal people. The current Prime Minister, Hon John Howard, riding on his white charger, came to the rescue of his old mate, the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Shane Stone, and offered Commonwealth dollars for some programs aimed at ameliorating the lot of

Aboriginal people within the mainstream criminal justice system in the Northern Territory. The idea was that the Northern Territory government would be able to point to those programs as tangible measures being taken to help Aboriginal people and, thereby, divert attention from tragedies such as the suicide of the youth from Groote Eylandt, at Don Dale, sentenced to detention for stealing biscuits and cordial.

One of the programs was a pilot Aboriginal Interpreter Service which ran for a couple of years and then discontinued. As mentioned by the minister, the service started up again in May 2000 after vigorous complaints and lobbying by stakeholders, and by other agencies and institutions that had used the pilot service. The main challenge for the future is to facilitate the training and accreditation that will provide our best interpreters with nationally recognised qualifications as professional interpreters and translators. Due to infrequency of demand and problems of remoteness and base literacy, meeting that challenge is not possible for interpreters and translators of endangered Aboriginal languages which have only very small numbers of speakers. However, it should be and can be a realistic objective for interpreters and translators of the main regional languages in the Northern Territory: Arrernte, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri, Yolngu Matha, Anindilyakwa, Kriol, and my own peoples' language, Tiwi.

The national body, as the member for Macdonnell mentioned in her speech, is called NAATI, the National Aboriginal Association of Translators and Interpreters. NAATI has a number of levels of accreditation. Achievement of anything higher than the most basic level requires a good working fluency and literacy in standard Australian English, and the ability for an Aboriginal interpreter to effectively and articulately convey Aboriginal linguistic and cultural concepts in English. It goes without saying that they have to be able to do it the other way as well, but many Aboriginal people with poor English literacy skills can be quite effective and creative communicators of mainstream terms and concepts when they are speaking their own Aboriginal language.

What we are facing when it comes to many of our Aboriginal people currently working as base level accredited interpreters is the need to ground them further and better in spoken and written English, at least up to final year high school or to the first year at university. In that regard, some useful liaison and training expertise transfers could be engaged in by the minister responsible for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and the minister responsible for education.

I touched on the criminal system, but when I look at my previous life with the health sector, the

importance of using Aboriginal health workers with language skills, both in a hospital context and when people were coming to those clinics, was vital, particularly working in a multi-disciplinary team with doctors and nurses so that those health workers could translate and communicate the health problems of the patients so that they could be effectively treated.

I suppose the biggest part of my learning, apart from my own people, the Tiwi, was the privilege of working with the different Aboriginal groups in the Katherine West region. The challenge in Katherine West was to take a health reform concept and to work with the Commonwealth, the Territory and those remote Aboriginal communities to look at how they could make change and take responsibility for their health.

It was an interesting four years where we were to have many discussions. The Commonwealth people would fly in from Canberra and we would all sit around a table in the conference room. My teachers and educators during those five years were some senior men and women from those communities who were trying to get the Commonwealth and Territory government representatives to understand where they were coming from in health. They would sit in these meetings and listen to what was said, in English - particularly old Jack Little from Bulla, who is a lovable rogue, member for Daly, but a fantastic teacher in language. I do not think we utilise the skills of old men like Jack Little in our schools and with our youth. It can be a two-way learning process. It is not just about my language and you not understanding it, but it can be a two-way learning process. Old Jack Little showed the Commonwealth and the Territory just how that process could be done. He would take what was being said in English and set about repeating that message to those bureaucrats in Warlpiri, Murrinh-Patha, Ngarinman, and Gurrindji; so there were five languages that he would speak to those bureaucrats. Then he would talk to them in the most fluent English which enriched their learning and education. So whilst people see language as a real barrier, it can be enriching for non-indigenous people as well. There are many out there who want to be able to learn it, but it is trying to get those two connections.

The member for Blain mentioned bilingual education. I, and many others, have stood up previously in response to the education minister's statements on indigenous education in support of bilingual education. Bilingual education is important; it is about the maintenance of language. If you think about language, language is our culture; it is about our law and it has to be maintained. The focus on the real teachings of that language cannot just be a responsibility of schools; it has to be at our home when we are

sitting down with our families. That is the responsibility we have as parents; our families have that responsibility. My mother's untimely and quite tragic death, certainly for me, disconnected a vital part of my Tiwi culture. That is still continued through my mother's sisters and others on the Tiwi Islands but it also robbed my children of a vital piece of their culture.

Madam Speaker, the whole issue of interpreters of our languages needs to be seen as an essential part of our dealings across agencies with indigenous people. I implore the minister that the Aboriginal Interpreter Service not just remain as a fixture of Northern Territory institutional and public life in transactions, but also that its practitioners achieve the same professional standing and, hopefully, equivalent remuneration as interpreters and translators of Japanese, Chinese, Russian, or any of the European languages. I commend the minister's statement to the House.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I also support the statement from the minister on the interpreter service for Aboriginal people. It is a very important service. I also support the words of the members for Macdonnell and Arafura who have spoken about their own languages. They have said some very wise things. I am one of those who do not speak a second language, although in my younger time I learned Latin; however, there are not a lot of Latin people around here these days. I remember the 'I love, you love, we love' declensions. Believe it or not, though, learning Latin is a very important basis for studying English, as it is on this that a lot of English is based, especially grammar.

I learnt Italian, so I can still say '*Buon giorno signora. Come sta?*' I have some knowledge of languages. I have also spent a fair bit of time in Aboriginal communities. Ngangikurrungurr was the first language I came across and, although I cannot speak it, I certainly know that all parts of my body start with the letter 'd'.

My wife, who was raised at Daly River mainly for the younger part of her life, is a Wadjigan. She knows Ngangikurrungurr. She knows English well, but she happens to be at Belyuen at the moment doing a course on the Wadjigan language, so she is actually improving some of her skills that she lost in previous years by changing from where she traditionally lived to a different community.

I have also been exposed to Tiwi. I used to call it the machine gun language, because I reckon it was very close to Italian in the speed it was spoken. It was a little hard to understand until you broke it down. Tiwi must be one of those languages in the Territory that has had so much study done, that it is a language that really anyone

could learn. In fact, the member for Blain was talking about languages being studied at school. There was a Tiwi lady, whose name I cannot remember at the moment, who teaches Tiwi at Howard Springs Primary School, so the kids there are learning Tiwi and it is great. They will be able to go to the football and understand exactly what the coach is saying at three-quarter time, which will be handy if you are an umpire. That is the other language I learned.

A member interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Yes, having umpired football at many places, I have learnt bad language, and that is common sometimes on the football field.

There is another language that we could all do with an interpreter service for and that is the language of the law. We did speak about the Criminal Code Amendment (Criminal Responsibility Reform) Bill. If Aboriginal people think it is hard to understand things when it comes to legal services, I can tell you many non-Aboriginal people find it exactly the same. I would find it probably doubly difficult if I was an Aboriginal person trying, for instance, to understand the Criminal Code Amendment (Criminal Responsibility Reform) Bill that we spoke about yesterday. Not only is it hard for people like me, it must be doubly hard for people with a lack of knowledge of English.

The interpreter service is an important service. It does need support from people in this House. However, I have some questions that I would like to ask the minister. One of the glaring things that is missing from the minister's statement is that he has not said in the new agreement how much the Northern Territory government is going to put into it. This is a request for us all, as members of this parliament, to ask the Commonwealth government to fund this service. However, nowhere is a contribution from the Northern Territory government mentioned. That should be something we should be doing as well. This is our interpreter centre. I am to understand that, for instance, if an individual wishes to use this service they are charged. I am not sure whether the 24-hour telephone interpreter service for other languages has that charge but I am of the belief that an individual who asks to use this service is charged for it.

The other strange thing is departments which use it are charged but are then subsidised to some extent. Are individuals actually discriminated to some extent by having to pay the full cost of the interpreter service, whereas government departments are partly subsidised? The question I ask the minister: what happens to the money that is collected when people use the service? They are just a couple of important things.

There is a mention that commercial bodies are using the interpreter service and I believe they should pay. The only thing is, of course, if you are receiving money from the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth, I would presume, would query how much you are receiving for a service that they subsidise. Those are the issues that need to be clarified. Does the Commonwealth reduce the amount of funding by the amount of money we receive by charging for the service?

Whilst it is good we ask the Commonwealth government for funding, as was discussed here yesterday, we have increased funding in GST. I do not want to get into an argument about how much we are getting, but we are certainly receiving far more GST than we expected. I would think that it would be obligatory of the Territory government to spend some of that money on our own interpreter centre, not just to ask the Commonwealth for it. After all, it is for residents of our Territory.

One other matter I thought I would raise, and there have been a few things said about it, is the bilingual program. I was at Bathurst Island when it first started, and there was much controversy about it then. I have heard lots of debate. There was a government report done on it stating that it was a failure. I am one of those who still has some grave doubts about it. I know that the bilingual program has been operating a fair number of years now. I started at Bathurst Island in 1974 and the bilingual program came in, I think, a few years later than that. I am not picking on Bathurst Island or the Tiwis here, but I am just saying we brought in these programs yet we still have literacy for Year 3 at 9% of what the national average should be. We need to evaluate it very carefully before we start nailing our colours to the mast on whether it is successful. If we are still getting those results and bilingual is being pushed as the way to change things, I have my doubts that it is actually working.

I keep carping back that some of the old systems of literacy did work, otherwise why is my wife and her family quite literate and quite good in numeracy? They have come up through the old system, yet there are kids today even in urban schools who cannot read and write. My wife told me of one young fellow, who has now left school. She looked after him at Sacred Heart Primary, and he could not write his lunch order at Year 7. That is just not on in this day and age.

We are having an interpreter centre because people, basically, cannot understand English, which is the main language of our society. Whether we like it or not, English is the dominant language. The reason we need it is because many people are not literate in the language, and there are other concepts which the member for

Blain spoke about. There is the thinking process behind the language; it is not just a matter of typing out letters and putting them in the computer and coming out the other end with the same sentence in a different language. However, you would hope that, as literacy and numeracy improve in society, then an interpreter service would not be needed as much as it is today. I am not saying that it would be gotten rid of, but you would hope there would be more and more people who are bilingual and have enough knowledge of English to understand the concepts. I believe we are a long way from that because there many issues we need to overcome.

As the issue has been raised, I am saying bilingual is a good concept as a concept. However, I am one of those who says concepts are great, but are they achieving what we wanted? Sometimes we might have to swallow our pride and say: 'This is not working'. I look at other groups who are bilingual; for example, the Chinese and the Greeks are very prominent people in our society. We do not, generally, have a special school where they do both languages. The families are very much in support of keeping Chinese and Greek going within the family. For some reason, that is not as strong in Aboriginal societies - whether that is because of dysfunction in many communities; families have been broken up because of alcohol or petrol sniffing or there is such a great influence from the media - if you watch *Sesame Street*, I am sure the kids will say zee instead of zed. There are pressures from outside that we have very little control over.

It would be good to have a debate or even a paper brought out about bilingual education, raising some of the issues, showing us some statistics as to whether it is making a difference. I am not saying I condemn bilingual education totally. I have my doubts that it is making a big difference at this stage. The facts are that when we look at the budget papers and the numeracy and literacy for Aboriginal people in remote areas where bilingual education is mainly taught, they are a disgrace. If we had this budget book in 1956 when my wife had been at school, there would have been far higher literacy and numeracy rates than there are today. I raise that as a comment because it has been raised today.

Madam Speaker, to summarise, I support the interpreter service. I believe the Northern Territory government should be putting in some funds of its own. I would like to hear what the minister has to say about that. It is our interpreter centre as well, and we should not always be relying on the Commonwealth government for all the funding. They should have some responsibility for it, because we have had a partnership up until now. However, I would like to know how much we are putting in as well.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of members of Darwin's Danish Community. I also draw your attention to members of small businesses in the Darwin and Palmerston region. On behalf of all honourable members, I wish you a warm welcome.

Members: Hear! Hear!

LEAVE OF ABSENCE Member for Wanguri

Mr STIRLING (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that leave of absence be granted to the member for Wanguri, Mr Henderson, for the remainder of this day. I further advise that all questions relating to Mr Henderson's ministerial portfolios be directed to me, as I will be deputising in his absence as Leader of Government Business.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Leave to Move Motion - Nuclear Waste Dump – Commonwealth Government Legislation

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I would not normally do this, however, noting the comments from the opposition and the Independents about raising an issue of such importance to the Northern Territory, and not having an opportunity to speak about it, I seek leave to move a motion to enable that to happen.

Madam Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion, as I referred to before, relating to the proposed Commonwealth legislation to impose a nuclear waste facility on the Northern Territory, so we can have that debate now.

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS Move Motion - Nuclear Waste Dump and Commonwealth Government Legislation

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, if leave is not granted, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended ...

Ms Carney: You just accused the Commonwealth of being thugs ...

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Carney: ... and now you are cutting our Question Time. You know, it works both ways.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please resume your seat. You will have plenty of time to speak.

Ms MARTIN: Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me moving a motion relating to the proposed Commonwealth legislation to impose a nuclear waste facility on the Northern Territory. It is in light of the fact that we have had a number of comments from the opposition and the Independents saying: 'You are asking all these questions and where is our chance to speak about it?'

I would not do it normally, but I have moved to suspend standing orders.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I would love to debate this issue today, but I believe we should stick with protocol. We have another half-an-hour of Question Time. Our complaint was not that we should not debate it, because you have told us we will debate it. You are using Question Time to pre-empt a debate. This should be a time where we can ask other questions. We know this was going to come on. There will be adequate time to debate this at 3 pm. This is an abuse of the process. You complain when the opposition brings on censure motions and cuts out Question Time. You are doing exactly the same yourself. I do not support this. I believe we should finish Question Time, and then get on with this serious debate.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, can I simply ask in the spirit of goodwill that the Chief Minister reconsider her position?

Mr STIRLING (Deputy Chief Minister): The Chief Minister has reconsidered, Madam Speaker. We well know the views of the member for Nelson, and why he might be dodgy of getting into such a debate. The government ...

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, please pause. What is your point of order?

Mr WOOD: The accusations I am dodgy is totally incorrect. You know I am quite willing to debate this issue. You know the reasons I do debate the issue. I do not accept that as the reasons why. Protocol is what I am saying. We have half-an-hour for Question Time. Let us use it. I will debate it, do not worry about that.

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr STIRLING: The Chief Minister made it very clear that this would not be the normal process that either government or she would take. Such is

the nature of the legislation that Dr Nelson has placed in the federal parliament this morning - the single greatest attack on the rights of Territorians as citizens of Australia, simply because they can. Simply because we are not a state and do not have the same rights as South Australia, which told them very clearly where to put their nuclear dump when they wanted it to go there. That is why we came to the front of the queue.

We should not be at the front of the queue. We should be about 23rd or 24th on the list. It is simply an attack on the rights of Territorians as Australians, and the biggest attack that we have seen, that I have seen, in my time, in the history of the Northern Territory. The attack on the Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill was one thing; this is another question altogether. Such is the magnitude and the weight of the legislation that Brendan Nelson has presented in the federal parliament, it deserves priority treatment by way of a response by members of this Assembly. In the same way that this Assembly gives way on business to a censure motion, for example, from the opposition or any member of this parliament on the basis that that is the most important business of the day and ought be dealt with forthwith. The government sees this motion likewise.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, Question Time is an important time for people listening to this broadcast, otherwise it is cut off. They do not hear the debate on this motion the Chief Minister has put forward. Unfortunately, this might also be a stunt on the part of the government because the business on the paper is so very thin. All we have to debate are two statements.

I am still reading through the copy of the legislation from Canberra that I have been given. I have to admit I have been trying to read it as Question Time has been going on. Perhaps the government members have their minds upstairs writing all their statements. Certainly, members on this side are struggling to come to grips with what is in the legislation. In another half hour I would have finished reading it and at least been able to get my thoughts together. I do not think, Chief Minister, that half-an-hour of allowing other questions to be asked would have hurt and then we could have all debated this as we will.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support member for Nelson and the Leader of the Opposition, that in opposition, we have a series of very important questions that need to be raised and we only have limited opportunities to do so. We know that we have a full opportunity to debate this issue and we are looking forward to that. We have questions here that we do need to ask, to inquire of this government - questions that relate to indigenous education, assaults on teachers, and

the like - but Question Time has now been closed down. The fact is - and people who are listening to this broadcast should know very well - there is very little on the Notice Paper, very little work for this parliament to do. Why are we now removing half of Question Time so you can continue with this charade of pretending that you can do something when, in fact, it is just waste of time?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Order!

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I would like to move the motion now to suspend standing orders, despite what has been said from the other side of the House - which I find superficial to the point of great disappointment - that we are only doing this because there is nothing on the Notice Paper. This is, as the Deputy Chief Minister said, the greatest attack by the federal government - what are we doing in here? We are doing the legislation, we are looking after Territorians, and the federal government this morning has made the greatest attack on our legislation, has made what we do in here pointless, when they can simply put in legislation that overrides us.

We should be up in arms, and all I hear from the opposition is that we have to talk about something else. Other issues are important today. This is an important issue.

Madam Speaker, I will move the motion that we suspend standing orders.

Motion to suspend standing orders agreed to.

Media Arrangements Broadcast and Rebroadcast of Debate

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, considering the serious nature of the debate, I seek your authorisation for the recording and rebroadcast so that we do not ask the cameras to leave at this stage. This is a very important issue ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms MARTIN: ... and that the coverage of the debate be done by the media according to the usual guidelines.

Madam SPEAKER: I approve the continuation of the media during the debate.

MOTION Proposed Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Legislation and Impact on the Northern Territory

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly:

- (1) condemns the Howard government's outrageous proposed legislation which overrides the rights of Territorians in pursuit of its plan to impose a radioactive waste management facility in the Northern Territory;
- (2) notes that the proposed legislation:
 - (a) removes the rights of Territorians and their government to oppose the radioactive waste management facility or to appeal decisions of any kind related to it;
 - (b) overrides important environmental and heritage protection legislation; and
 - (c) blocks any Territory endeavours to suitably scrutinise, review or regulate the Howard government's plans;
- (3) supports the Northern Territory government's stand against the Howard government's outrageous legislation;
- (4) calls upon the Northern Territory's representatives in the Commonwealth parliament to stand up for the rights of Territorians and vote against this outrageous legislation;
- (5) calls upon the Commonwealth parliament to reject this legislation as an outrageous attack on the rights of Territorians, who because they live in a territory, do not have the constitutional rights of other Australians; and
- (6) that the Speaker forward the terms of this motion, together with a copy of the *Hansard* debate of members' speeches to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate.

Madam Speaker, this is the most important motion that I have spoken to in my 10 years in this parliament, and I do not say that lightly.

We enter parliament to enact legislation to affect the lives of Territorians in a positive way. The move from the Commonwealth government this morning makes that ambition - and what we are charged to do by Territorians, in many ways - pointless. We have a Commonwealth government which does not respect this parliament. We have a Commonwealth government which does not respect the rights of Territorians to make decisions about our future. I cannot think of anything more serious for us to debate and to send a very strong and united message to the Commonwealth government about.

Yes, the issue is about a nuclear waste dump. However, the more fundamental issue is about our rights as Territorians. I quote what the Prime Minister has said in the context of the debate which has surrounded the Commonwealth's nuclear waste facility and where it might be sited. This is why we are condemning this issue so strongly. The Prime Minister said that: 'The rights of Territorians will be no less respected than the rights of Australians in other parts of the country'. It sounds good, doesn't it? The Prime Minister says he is respecting our rights. It was in the context of this debate, it was not in general terms - well, I hope it is in general terms. It was specific to this issue of the nuclear waste dump. He said: 'We, the Commonwealth government, are not going to treat the Territory in a disrespectful fashion'.

I ask the House, I ask Territorians: what has happened this morning in Canberra? What has happened? This is no respect for the Territory. This is no respect for Territorians. This is no respect for our legislation. As well as the disappointment we all feel, there is anger from Territorians, and we have seen that anger since the Commonwealth government announced that it was going to site a nuclear waste facility somewhere in the Territory. I do not think the government even knew where the places were. The government thought: 'You are a Territory, you are second-class citizens, and we can override your legislation. We are going to do it', despite the assurances we received from Senator Ian Campbell in the time running up to the election last year. He said: 'No, absolutely no', there will not be a nuclear waste facility sited in the Territory. He said: 'It will not be on the mainland. Rest assured, Territorians'.

We have had much rubbish come our way about this facility. The fundamental issue we are dealing with today is our rights as Territorians. We know we are not a state, but we passed legislation

in good faith in this parliament about this time last year. What do we have? Commonwealth legislation that says: 'We do not care. We will override every aspect of that and we will not give you any right of appeal on it. You cannot review that legislation, you cannot appeal that legislation. You simply have to wear that legislation'. The Commonwealth government is not doing it to any other state. It is not doing it to the Australian Capital Territory. It is doing it to the Northern Territory because we are the most obvious place where it can override our wishes and our legislation.

It is worse than this. The bill that is going to give us a steamroll - great bill - is the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Related Amendment) Bill 2005. It sounds innocent enough. It is actually the most fundamental undermining of our constitutional rights that we have ever seen. Remember it, everyone; this is what the bill is called: the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Related Amendment) Bill 2005. I quote from the minister's, Brendan Nelson, second reading speech which he delivered this morning - this is why he is introducing the amendment bill to the parliament:

A number of existing state and territory jurisdictions have enacted legislation that purports to prohibit or regulate the Commonwealth's activities in establishing and operating a radioactive waste management facility and/or transporting radioactive material to a facility. State and territory jurisdictions may introduce further legislation purporting to prohibit or regulate the Commonwealth in these activities.

Recent statements from the Northern Territory government that it will attempt to obstruct and delay the project reinforced the need for this bill to ensure the Commonwealth can act with certainty and without undue interference ...

And this is how he described us:

... without undue interference from vexatious and wilfully obstructive parties ...

That is what 200 000 or so Territorians are. Do we feel like vexatious and wilfully obstructive parties? I say yes. Yes, we are, and we will continue to be so. He continued:

... parties to responsibly manage Commonwealth radioactive waste.

Brendan Nelson went on to give some history of why they have had to do it. They chose South Australia and the South Australians said no, and

took them to the High Court and won that. He said that, in July this year, the Commonwealth had done a desktop examination of Commonwealth sites. It did not look at any the previous work that had been done over a decade to determine where there might be the most appropriate site regarding environment, or whatever. He said: 'We did a quick desktop assessment,' and guess what we found? The Northern Territory. We found this big part of Australia, it is one sixth of Australia – I am not quoting from the minister now, I am précis-ing him - they found the Northern Territory. They said: 'Oh look, we have some Defence sites there. There are a couple around Alice Springs and there is one up in the electorate of Daly, Fishers Ridge. It is in the middle of a property. They will be fine. We can deal with that'. It decided that because we are a Territory, because it is possible to override our legislation, that that is where they would site the Commonwealth's nuclear waste facility.

This has been a cynical and unscientific exercise. Any justification by the Commonwealth along those lines is simply rubbish. Any justification that seems to say there are health issues involved, the use of nuclear medicine - it is all rubbish. It said: 'The Northern Territory is a Territory and we can override the legislation. We have some Defence sites there; let us give it a go', and that is what we are seeing. That might be the Commonwealth's rationale, but what it has done today is the most fundamental attack on our rights as Territorians.

The Commonwealth knows we have legislation that reflects Territorians' interests in this parliament and that we are serious about it. It has introduced legislation to make sure that that legislation is totally ineffective. It also overrides its own legislation in a number of different areas, to say: 'Nobody can question us on this. We are going to do it'.

This is dictatorial legislation. I would never have expected to see the wording that the Commonwealth has put forward today as good governance. It is written in the legislation in black and white. The bill provides the Commonwealth with the express authority to do anything necessary for, or incidental to, establishing or operating a Commonwealth facility at the selected site – that is one in the Territory, of course – and transporting radioactive waste to the facility.

We need to think about this for a second. These are extraordinary powers. You would not expect to see these sorts of powers given to itself by any government other than in times of extreme emergency - and they are extreme powers. I am not overstating this today. This is a fundamental attack on the constitution of the Northern Territory and our rights. But it is also very serious and draconian legislation. The Commonwealth

government is allowing itself to do anything it wants, anywhere it wants, to construct this facility, and it is outrageous. This is a travesty of good governance. It is abuse of our rights as Territorians. It is political thuggery from Canberra.

This act on the part of the Commonwealth strikes at the heart of self-government. It is an act of contempt - contempt for our government, our Assembly, for the Territory people and their laws. It is a shocking abuse of power on the part of the Howard government. Also, to leave no stone unturned, the Commonwealth is removing the right to judicial review under the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management legislation. It is removing the right to judicial review under this legislation. It is putting its decision beyond normal and proper review processes.

Last year, when we, as an Assembly, passed the *Nuclear Waste Transport, Storage and Disposal (Prohibition) Act*, the opposition members in this House, very sadly, said it was a stunt. I hope we do not hear those words today. They said it was 'ineffective' and 'a waste of time'. We proposed legislation and the opposition said: 'It is just a stunt. You are wasting your time'. What is our purpose? What is our constitutional purpose? To propose legislation to this House, debate and pass it. The Commonwealth obviously does not share that view. That is interesting. It does not think it was a stunt. It does not think it was a waste of time. It has acted, and has acted in the most draconian way.

If our legislation was so ineffectual, why does the Commonwealth government need to overturn it in such a dramatic way, by bringing in this sledgehammer legislation which it introduced this morning? Clearly, it has validated the fact that we have legislation here, and it has had to go to extreme powers in draconian legislation, to tackle it.

This new legislation is also contemptuous of the Commonwealth's own laws. The bill amends the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Other developments have to comply with this act. We are always cognisant of whether our relevant legislation complies with the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. We have to do that. But does this legislation? No, it is different. The Commonwealth is now saying that it can select its site without having to comply with existing processes under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. So much for their own act of parliament!

The Commonwealth government is also amending its *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act*. The amendment, as far as we can tell at this stage, will prevent a request

for a declaration of a sacred site under this act by Aboriginal people. So, it does not care about environment protection and biodiversity conservation, or about the rights in legislation of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. With this piece of legislation, it just flicks it. We say that the Commonwealth government will cite anything it wants, and do anything it wants.

This legislation also takes a sledgehammer to the proper laws and processes of the Northern Territory. It completely betrays their undertaking to talk to Territorians and to consult all the way. This latest salvo from the Commonwealth indicates to me that it is very wary of the Territory government's powers, and, importantly, of the strength of feeling in our Territory about the way we are being treated, to the extent that it preys on our vulnerability as a territory, not a state, and then blatantly overturns our laws.

It was interesting, and I have said this publicly: when I met with the Prime Minister just a couple of weeks ago I said to him: 'We are going to fight you about this,' and then had to say: 'We have ways to do this; we will use legislation'. Maybe I flagged it too early. But it was the right thing to do, I believe, on behalf of Territorians. I said: 'We will fight you. We will use every bit of legislative power that we have and we will keep using it. We will put one up, you can knock it down, and we will put it up again'. I said: 'I recognise that you have the capacity to keep knocking off our legislation because we are a territory and can take advantage of us. But we also have Territory power, Prime Minister, and we have Territorians who feel very strongly about this. Territorians will also fight this'.

Maybe it was those two aspects of what I said to him that underpinned why we have this extraordinary draconian legislation coming into the Commonwealth parliament today. I believe every Territorian would have expected me to say that, to not go down and pussy foot to the Prime Minister, and to say we will fight it. We will not be treated like second-class citizens. You will not just say where is the most convenient and easiest place in Australia to put this nuclear waste facility and then turn around and override our legislative powers.

It is a real attack, a fundamental attack, on our powers. The Commonwealth government did not even consult us. I went to the Prime Minister and advised what we would do, and the first we know is a report that in the Commonwealth parliament is this draconian legislation that overrides our rights. Even the member for Nelson should be concerned about overriding our rights. You are a member of this parliament. Is it acceptable that the Canberra 'powers that be' can say: 'Forget your legislation. We can just fix it like that'? No, it is not.

This is not a debate about a nuclear facility; this is a debate about our rights. The Commonwealth government obviously feels that, despite knowing how strongly Territorians feel about this, it does not have to consult with us. It does not have to take our views into consideration and, when it does tell us, it has not told the truth about what it is doing along the way. It has not told the truth. Twelve months ago, we were told: 'It will never happen. We have taken on board the views of Territorians'. It was less than 12 months later it said: 'Gotcha on that one. We are going to put the nuclear waste facility in the Territory'.

What I find despicable, and we have seen it this morning, is the federal members of the Country Liberal Party are complicit in what is happening in Canberra. They are obviously on riding instructions and they have gone out running this line that, somehow, stopping a nuclear waste dump would jeopardise the health of Territorians. It is a joke! To say that it will jeopardise the health of Territorians, that you will be thwarting Australia in how we use nuclear medicine and other associated matters, is just a joke. The answer given by both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Planning and Lands went to the heart of what a joke that is.

The Country Liberal Party has to be asking its members in the Commonwealth parliament what they are doing. If you are standing in here and are going to oppose this move from the Commonwealth government, how can two members of your party be out there supporting it? How can two members of your party, obviously with your support, be supporting it? I look forward to the contribution to this debate today by the members of the opposition because we can pick hypocrisy very well and so can Territorians. Territorians can pick hypocrisy very quickly.

This move by the Commonwealth government is nothing short of a land grab for Territory land and the rights for Territorians, indigenous and non-indigenous. In one fell swoop they are overriding any possibility of the Territory's anti-nuclear waste dump legislation operating. Yes, we recognise the Commonwealth already owns the three sites in questions. Yes, they are Defence lands. However, this new law gives the Commonwealth the right to acquire or extinguish all interests on the site that is selected. There is a clear reference to native title rights and it applies beyond land owned by the Commonwealth. It also allows the Commonwealth to simply acquire from any landowner land they might need to use as a route to the site. That is pretty scary. It is not only those sites they have selected, as this legislation gives them the power to acquire any land they want to enable the transport of nuclear waste to one of these sites in the Northern Territory.

If a Territorian owns land on the route to a proposed dump site, the Commonwealth government is going to walk in under this legislation and take it away from them to transport nuclear waste. I wonder how the member for Daly's constituents at Fishers Ridge will feel about this - a wonderful piece of land outside Katherine in the middle of a Defence site; which they did not know about until this happened. The situation is that the Commonwealth can acquire the whole route on their land to transport nuclear waste to Fishers Ridge. Talk about respecting the rights of Territorians! Talk about respecting the rights of that couple who have a lease on the land at Fishers Ridge!

This is a fundamental attack on democracy. Not only is the Commonwealth government removing or denying formal rights to object by removing many of the approval processes, they are removing rights to judicial review of their decision. The Territory public is being gagged and they are trying to flex their muscles and gag this Northern Territory government and this House of the Northern Territory. It will not work and we are not finished yet. That is why an important part of this motion today calls upon the Northern Territory's representatives in the Commonwealth parliament to stand up for the rights of Territorians and vote against this outrageous legislation.

This legislation has just been introduced into the Commonwealth parliament. It has not been passed. It has been introduced in the House of Representatives. It has not yet gone to the Senate and it requires Senator Scullion's support to pass in the Senate. We know how Senator Crossin is going to vote. Guess how Senator Crossin is going to vote? She is going to vote it down, and our Labor colleagues will be voting it down. What will Senator Scullion do? Senator Scullion needs to find a bit of backbone here because he cannot on one stage say - and I quote from Senator Scullion, in August, not so long ago, a report from the ABC saying: 'Senator Scullion says he has crossed the floor to vote against the dump in the past, and will continue to do so in the future.' It quotes Senator Scullion saying: 'I already crossed the floor to support a motion that says the Commonwealth should not do this. Now, any motion of that type I will also cross the floor to support, or if there is any legislation that comes before the Senate that can prevent the Commonwealth from providing this in the Northern Territory, I will vote against it.'

They are pretty strong words from Senator Scullion back in August. Yet, how do you put them together with what we have heard this morning when he said: 'Support the nuclear waste facility otherwise there will be serious implications for health and health services, not only for Territorians but all Australians'? It seems to me that since the

statements made by Senator Scullion a couple of months ago, the backbone has slipped some. He is now out in public telling Territorians it is time to vote in support of such a nuclear waste facility. The onus is on the members of the opposition here to make sure that Senator Scullion represents the Territory in the Senate. It is a very serious charge - representing the Territory in the Senate. That is what he is charged to do.

When Territorians firmly say we do not want a nuclear waste facility, I would expect Senator Scullion - as I am sure the members of the Country Liberal Party would - to be crossing the floor. It is an important test for Senator Scullion. The National's Senator Barnaby Joyce only this week has crossed the Senate floor and made a stand of principle about something he did not agree with. Good on Senator Barnaby Joyce. He has the guts to stand up for the people he represents. I want some guts from Senator Scullion. I want him to stand up in the Senate for the people he represents. We will be knocking on the doors of every Senator to explain the Territory's position and this fundamental steamrolling of the Territory's rights as a territory, and the rights of our parliament.

I do not know what we can say about the member of Solomon. The member for Solomon is also out there with Senator Scullion. He has certainly nailed his colours to the mast today and is supporting this legislation. He has been running this line all along and has been saying we should be considering a nuclear waste facility; we should be taking the interests of Australians into consideration. He has been telling Territorians it is a good thing. Well, Territorians have not been saying it back to the member for Solomon. In fact, they have been saying the opposite. It was fascinating during the show circuit this year. Notable in absence was the member for Solomon and the good Senator Scullion. Territorians were ferocious at the show. They were saying: 'We do not want this nuclear waste dump', and having the courage of their convictions. I did not see Senator Scullion at any of the show circuits, nor the member for Solomon. Their backbone wilted and they did not turn up. We expect the member for Solomon and Senator Scullion to stand up for the Territory.

This is a most important day for the Territory. We will not stand by and have the Commonwealth government simply steamroll over our rights and our legislation. We will not have them use their powers in a most draconian way to take advantage of the fact that the Territory is not a state, but a territory.

They learnt the lesson of how to deal with states in South Australia. They found that the South Australians were very strong in their

convictions about the nuclear waste dump facility and took them to the High Court. After that experience, and other places like the Western Australians enacting legislation to stop this facility being there, they said: 'Let us go for the Territory. We can go for the Territory, we can trample their rights. We know they are second-class citizens, and so we can actually put our will on them and put in a piece of legislation that says that we will get our way'. This is hypocrisy and deceit to Territorians. This is overriding Territorians.

This is a very important motion. As I said at the opening of my contribution, this is probably the most important motion that I have ever spoken to in this House. As Chief Minister, I am committed to standing up for Territory rights and the rights of Territorians. This is the most serious blow for both those aspirations that I have experienced. This is a very strong motion to the Commonwealth parliament. I will give a commitment to Territorians that I will be knocking on the doors of the Prime Minister, and Brendan Nelson, and every Senator to say: do not do this to the Northern Territory. Do not trample our rights and do not treat us as second-class citizens on whom you can simply impose your will. Do not lie to Territorians. Do not be hypocritical. Respect our rights.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, for the most part, I agree with much of what the Chief Minister has said. It is unusual. We have had two or three occasions in the same day where most members of the Assembly have been as one. I used the expression earlier today that we stand shoulder to shoulder with you in attracting other Australians to the Northern Territory. Just like the letter I wrote to the Chief Minister in June - I cannot remember the date - giving my commitment to bipartisan support on this issue - a letter to which, I might say in passing, I have not received the courtesy of a reply - however, on behalf of the opposition, I wish to make it abundantly clear that we will be supporting this motion with a qualification.

I say it in a context that members will have observed that I met with the Deputy Chief Minister; there has been a bit of haggling. I am not having a go at him. He has not quite come back to me with an answer. For those listening to this broadcast, I can say that we are at odds as to nine words only, and one of those words appears four times. Therefore, it seems to me that we at odds as to very little. In other words, we will be proposing an amendment, and we ask government to accept it.

I would like to talk about why we propose the amendment. Let us be honest: the motion uses fairly inflammatory language. It is our view that, if

we, as a parliament, want the Commonwealth government to take any notice of us - otherwise why on earth would we bother sending this debate - and they may not, but if we do have that expectation, we simply say might it be wise to remove the inflammatory language, to remove those intemperate words - in particular, the word 'outrageous' - which, I believe, does not lend itself to us, as a territory, being taken seriously.

The other proposed amendment was that the government suggested that we agree to instruct our Northern Territory representatives to 'vote against this outrageous legislation'. I am sure it comes as no surprise that we, all of us, should not support that. It is my understanding that it can amount to a contempt of the Senate, a contempt of the Commonwealth parliament, and in all of the circumstances it would be unwise to press that point.

Indeed, it is an historic day, historic since I have been a parliamentarian because I have never had to deal with anything like this. I was not around in the days of euthanasia. I was aware that people felt very passionately about that issue. Once the Commonwealth government overrode Territory legislation something quite remarkable happened. Most Territorians, regardless of their views on the issue of euthanasia, took a very dim, hostile, and understandably so, view of the Commonwealth government's actions. As I said on ABC radio today, someone called me today and said this is euthanasia all over again. We do not want that to happen.

I agree with the Chief Minister. This is about Territory rights. I also say that, regardless of how people feel about a nuclear waste dump, repository, call it what you will, there is a divergence of views, and I am sure all politicians have received them by e-mail, facsimile, telephone and other correspondence. Nonetheless, we can actually do something wild and crazy here - we can stand up, be grown-ups, and say, yes, this is about Territory rights, and we, as a Territory, do not expect to be so shabbily treated.

I hope that the apparent passion that the Chief Minister displayed would be as strong if it were a Labor government in power in Canberra. Whatever you say of the CLP over the years, one of its strengths, it always seemed to me even when I was a casual observer, was that, regardless of who was in power in the Canberra, the CLP in government took the view that if it was good for the Territory, they would be with it, if it was not good for the Territory, they would be agin it. I do hope - and, of course, it is only speculation - that this Labor government would be as vocal if it were a Labor government in government in Canberra.

Madam Speaker, because the Chief Minister, unwisely in my view, cut short Question Time, it is appropriate that I place on the record one of the questions I was going to ask. It is this:

Chief Minister, in your Nuclear Waste (Transport and Disposal) Bill last year, you put the following clause into law:

A provision of this act relating to the transport, storage or disposal of nuclear waste does not have any effect to the extent that it is inconsistent with the law of the Commonwealth.

Why was your legislation worded in this way, leaving the way open for the Commonwealth to do what it wants?

There is a follow-up question as well that I proposed to ask and that was:

Chief Minister, you and some of your ministerial colleagues - and I am pretty sure it was the Minister for Central Australia. I was not at the event at which he spoke, but was told that he said that he would use all of the resources of government to do whatever he could to ensure that the Commonwealth government could not provide a nuclear waste dump. My question is: what resources have you used?

You have a petition - good on you. We all know, and we have always known, that probably the only way you could do anything was to pursue legal action. I recall the Deputy Chief Minister saying that he was getting legal advice. Where is that advice and why haven't you acted? You must have known that the Commonwealth government, since making the announcement in about the middle of June, only a few months ago, had a seriousness of intent. Given that you surely knew that - if you did not I would be astonished - why did you not commence legal proceedings? That is something all Territorians have a right to ask. I would be grateful if, in the course of a reply, we could get an answer. I am not trying to be churlish, but you had an opportunity to do something and you did not. Please tell us, and the people of the Northern Territory, why you did not. Where were all of the resources of government that were to be used?

Much will be said about the two CLP members. It is appropriate that I state the CLP's position again so that the people are abundantly clear: the CLP opposes the siting of this facility. I have a folder of, basically, what everyone said about this issue. It is not the case that David Tollner was going around the Northern Territory saying words to the effect of 'you little beauty, let's have a

nuclear waste dump'. Look at his interview - it is not the case at all. The position is clear: it is opposed.

It is the case, of course, that being the very unique party that the Country Liberal Party is, we could have two representatives, Messrs Tollner and Scullion, who could sit in the Commonwealth parliament all by themselves as Independents. Now, even Labor Party members, in and outside the parliament, would surely ask themselves if that is a good idea. I think not because, like them or loathe them, it is advantageous to the Northern Territory to have ...

Ms Lawrie: What have they ever brought us?

Ms CARNEY: Wait for it, member for Karama, no doubt you will have something to say.

Ms Lawrie: I am looking forward to it. They do not have the guts.

Ms CARNEY: I put the question: forget about politics for a minute, we are talking about states' rights - is it better to have two federally elected representatives sitting on their lonesome in Canberra, or is it better for them to be part of, in this case, a federal Coalition government? We know what the answer is: it is better. No, they do not always win. They do not always win, but members of Cabinet do not always win. You win some and you lose some.

Messrs Tollner and Scullion have fought the good fight in relation to the siting of the facility and I know, perhaps more than anyone, the efforts they have made. It is a desirable position that the Northern Territory representatives, representing the people of the Northern Territory, sit with the federal Coalition.

We are concerned about the actions of the Commonwealth government. That is why we are supportive of the motion, save and except for those nine words. You can all grandstand, as it is what people in government do very well, but if you want a fair dinkum motion to go to the Commonwealth government, then why do we not do it in the spirit of goodwill? This is about Territory rights. I have only been in the Territory for 16 years and I have managed to pick up that there is one thing Territorians do not like, and it transcends politics; they do not like Canberra imposing its will. That is a fundamental proposition, one that I suspect the CLP is best known for defending than Labor ever will be.

Regardless of people's views on this particular issue, none of us like being told what to do by Canberra. It is clear that the Commonwealth government is going to impose its will on us. I repeat the question that I asked earlier: why did

this Labor government not act? Why did not you commence your court proceedings? Could that have created a situation whereby the events of today would not materialise? I would have thought that even the backbenchers of government who, I would think, would feel very passionately about the issue of nuclear waste dump, would surely be asking the ministers why nothing happened.

Getting back briefly to the two federal members, we were in the House today debating a statement on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service, and were asked by the member for Barkly to assist him and to work in a bipartisan way. He was going to contact our federal members, from both sides, and he said to me, indirectly, that it would be a good idea if I worked on the CLP representatives. I have undertaken to do that. There are countless other examples. It does illustrate that there are some benefits of CLP representatives sitting with the Commonwealth government. It would be absurd to say anything else. However, in politics, you win some and you lose some. It is regrettable that the Commonwealth government has seen fit to override the rights of the Northern Territory but, in politics, we all live with the consequences of our actions. In politics, like life, there are often some things you regret and some things you do not. We all have to live with the consequences of our actions. Had the Australian Labor Party Northern Territory Branch not fought so hard and so passionately against statehood, we would not be in this position.

Members interjecting.

Ms CARNEY: We would have been there. The CLP have been known all throughout the country, for 26 or 27 years, as being the party that not only brought self-government but went into bat for statehood. You lot said: 'Oh no! We could not possibly have that. Give us a thousand reasons why it cannot be done'. You campaigned, in a ruthless, disgraceful manner, and that is why you now live with the consequences of your actions. Why did you not act when you had the opportunity? Do you regret not voting for statehood? It would appear so, as now you are really into statehood. Well, too little, too late.

Members interjecting.

Ms CARNEY: Having said those things - I always know when I am onto something, I press those little buttons and they go on like that.

Returning to the central and important point - not that the ones that I have just mentioned are not important, but let us go back to the motion. I have not received an indication by way of a wink or a nod or any other means from the Deputy Chief Minister, I am compelled to talk about the motion on the books. In terms of that motion, we

support the motion's sentiments and what it seeks to express, save and except for those nine words; that is, 'outrageous' contained four times, and the part in paragraph 4 where we call upon the federal representatives to vote against this 'outrageous' legislation. We will not support that. I believe it would be terribly unwise for all of us to do that.

Our support for this motion is qualified only to that extent. If, Deputy Chief Minister, you would, in a spirit of goodwill, accede to our amendments then this parliament can do something really special. This parliament can tell the Commonwealth parliament that this is our intention and we are seriously unhappy about what they have done. I am not sure that this intemperate language advances our case very far.

In any event, we accept that this government has the numbers and it will do what it wants. However, please make no mistake; this is about states' rights or territory rights. We, like CLP governments before us and like individual Territorians who have been around a lot longer than I have, utterly resist and resent any Commonwealth government telling the people of the Northern Territory what to do.

On that basis, Madam Speaker, save and except for the qualifications, we are supportive of the motion.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, before you resume your seat, can I just clarify that you are moving an amendment?

Ms CARNEY: I was looking to do it somewhat informally. I will move the amendment if I require it. Something may have got lost in the translation.

Madam SPEAKER: Just bear in mind that you cannot speak again in the debate unless a further amendment is put forward by one of your members later.

Mr Stirling: I would recommend you put your amendment forward.

Ms Carney: Say again.

Madam SPEAKER: The Deputy Chief Minister is recommending that you move an amendment, in which case you need to have the amendment written and signed, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: I am happy to move the amendment provided I can find it, Madam Speaker.

I move that the four references to the word 'outrageous' be deleted. I further move that, in respect of paragraph 4, the words 'and vote against this outrageous legislation' be deleted.

We do have a clean copy. I will locate it and circulate it, Madam Speaker.

Mr STIRLING (Deputy Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear the Leader of the Opposition in response, in the sense of being fully supportive of our position, with the exclusion of a number of words - just nine words. However, it is the effect, of course, of those nine words on the whole that we need to explore a little more fully. I will do that in a little while.

It is interesting to take a step back and view the attitudes and the actions of Commonwealth government ministers – indeed, all members of the federal Coalition - once we passed 1 July and they took control of the Senate. It was the first time a Commonwealth government has had full control of both Houses since the Fraser government of 1975 to 1983. When Malcolm Fraser was Prime Minister, they did have control of the Senate. The comparison is interesting in this sense: the closer we came to 1 July 2005 and the federal Coalition approaching the date at which it would take control of both Houses, the more fully and more firmly the cloth of arrogance settled upon the shoulders of each and every minister in that government in their dealings with us, as ministers in a jurisdiction - and more fully, of course, across the shoulders of each and every member of it, with the singular exception of one Barnaby Joyce.

I rejoice in his courage in standing for his principles. I only wish we had in Senator Scullion a little of the calibre of Barnaby Joyce, who has had a difficult road. He is only a new member of the Senate and pressure has come from everywhere, I would imagine, when you enter Commonwealth parliament, particularly with the Senate as finely balanced as it is. As I said, I rejoice in the strength of Senator Joyce and hope that he might cross paths with Senator Scullion at some stage, shake hands and perhaps a little of that courage, that principled stance that Barnaby Joyce takes, might rub off on Senator Scullion who has a job to do in representing the interests of Northern Territorians as his constituents.

That is an interesting comparison. Fraser, of course, was recognised as quite an arrogant and aloof Prime Minister, perhaps mistakenly. Perhaps it was more to do with his shyness. The one thing the Fraser government could not be accused of was an arrogant use of that Senate majority and, as I said, in terms of this bill this morning and the industrial relations actions, this government has all the hallmarks of arrogance and an abuse of their Senate majority.

If you look at minister Nelson's second reading speech this morning, I am disappointed, again, in an individual sense that it is minister Nelson putting this forward, because I enjoy a very

positive and constructive relationship with him as a fellow minister for Education, notwithstanding I do not agree with everything he says and does and proposes. I do not agree with some of the processes that he undertakes in which to achieve his objects and aspirations. That is to be expected. We come from different sides of the political fence. Notwithstanding that, I do have respect for Brendan Nelson. I am very disappointed when I see statements such as this in the first second reading speech around the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Related Amendment) Bill where he says:

Recent statements from the Northern Territory government that it will attempt to obstruct and delay the project reinforce the need for this bill to ensure the Commonwealth can act with certainty and without undue interference from vexatious and wilfully obstructive parties to responsibly manage Commonwealth radioactive waste.

I resent this parliament and the Northern Territory government being dismissed as 'vexatious and wilfully obstructive' when we are simply standing up for the rights and interests, and seeking to protect the rights and interests of Northern Territorians. To be dismissed as vexatious is offensive in the extreme. We know what this vexatious and wilfully obstructive comment is directed at. It is a direct slant at the legislation that this Assembly passed last year, dismissed by the then Leader of the Opposition and members of the CLP as a waste of time, and a political stunt that would do us no good. Well, it did do some good. We were told, in more recent debates, that there may be no floor to cross. The member for Arnhem said, and I recall her words: 'There is always a floor to cross, whether it is to the floor of the Leader of Government Business in the Senate or the House of Representatives or, indeed, across the floor to the office of the Prime Minister to put your views'. I thought it was a telling use of the words of 'there is always a floor to cross'.

But we were told at the time that there maybe no floor to cross. Well, in fact, there is in relation to this bill, and this bill is a direct result of our apparently 'vexatious' move last year in passing legislation to protect the rights of Territorians. I am doubly disappointed that it is one minister Brendan Nelson who uses such terms as 'vexatious' and 'wilfully obstructive' in relation to properly passed and constituted Northern Territory legislation.

In relation to his other second reading speech on Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Bill 2005, he explained how successive Commonwealth governments since the Hawke government, way back in 1983, have

endeavoured to make responsible arrangements for managing Australia's radioactive waste, but they have been defeated by the attitude of state and territory governments which fully agree with the need for such facilities on the one hand provided, of course, they are not in their backyard.

In an attempt to deal with such parochialism, an objective, scientifically-based study to find a highly suitable site for a national low-level radioactive waste repository was initiated in July 1992 by the then Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Hon Simon Crean. After considerable effort and expense, the process ended last year following action in the Federal Court by the Rann government to oppose use of the selected site near Woomera in South Australia.

Let us look at these terms: 'an objective, scientifically-based study to find a highly suitable site'. What was that highly suitable site? It was not in the Northern Territory. It was at Woomera in South Australia and that is where, all things being equal, this nuclear waste dump would have gone but for the actions of the Rann government, as a state government, taking the legal action they did to the Federal Court to oppose the use of that site. So, they then go back to look again.

But two paragraphs later:

In July 2005, I ...

That is, Brendan Nelson:

... announced that, following a significant desktop examination ...

Oh, come on! Not a desktop examination. I do not know what a desktop examination is. I think it means you do not go outside your desk; that you do not go too far from your desk. You certainly do not go out in the field and investigate these things for yourself. We have gone from an objective, scientifically-based study to find a highly suitable site to a little desktop examination. Not a little desktop examination; it is a:

... significant desktop examination of Commonwealth sites, including offshore territories ...

He did not go and visit any.

... the Australian government will undertake detailed on-site investigations at three sites on Commonwealth owned land ...

Guess where?

... in the Northern Territory.

So that is where your little desktop investigation takes you. Nothing to do with the fact that we are not a state. Nothing to do with the fact that our legislation can be overridden, bullishly and arrogantly overridden, in this bullying fashion by the Commonwealth government.

It is interesting to me that you can go from an objective, scientifically-based study – the proper process undertaken by Simon Crean – which led them Woomera, to a 'significant desktop examination', all carried out in the confines of Brendan Nelson's office. Do not go from the desk. Do not walk too far from the desk; you will get the wrong answer. And the answer comes up: 'Hello, we have Commonwealth land in the Northern Territory and my "significant desktop examination" is telling me it has to be in the Northern Territory'.

Further, in the same second reading speech, the federal minister, Brendan Nelson, went on to say:

Recent statements from the Northern Territory government that it will attempt to obstruct the project reinforce the need for this legislation in the interests of responsible management of Commonwealth radioactive waste.

Again, I point to the comments from the opposition some 12 months ago where 'Oh well, it is all a waste of time what you will do, there may be no floor to cross because there is probably not going to be any legislation'. Well, quite the contrary. The legislation we passed last year, and the comments made by the Chief Minister and other ministers of this government, have proven, at least to Brendan Nelson, that we are going to attempt to obstruct this project and reinforce the need to him for legislation in the fashion that they have brought forward.

Part 2 of the bill provides clear and expressed powers for the Commonwealth to proceed with activities necessary or incidental to further investigating the three sites that they have identified:

... necessary because the Territory government has introduced a specific law purporting to prohibit the Commonwealth from establishing a facility, which could include activities essential to the process of selecting a site for ... [this] facility. Further, they have made it clear they will do everything possible to halt or frustrate the Commonwealth's actions.

So much for a political stunt; so much for a waste of time this parliament passing the legislation that it did. That legislation has directly led, in Brendan Nelson's own words, to this

Commonwealth legislation introduced this morning.

The very next paragraph says - I was always taught you never start a paragraph with the word 'because'; it reads all right here but I do not think it is correct English:

Because of these very real concerns about politically motivated obstruction of the Commonwealth's activities ...

I resent that and find that totally offensive. If this was a Labor government down there doing this, we would be at ramparts the same as we are against Brendan Nelson. If it was a Labor minister for Science that was trying to inflict this on the Northern Territory without consultation, without any reference to the democratic rights of Territorians as Australians, we would be at their throats the same as we are at Brendan Nelson's and Prime Minister Howard's. I resent, absolutely reject, this very real concern about 'politically motivated obstruction'. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a principle here and it is a principle that we as Territorians will be treated as Australians, treated with equal rights as Australians, notwithstanding the fact that we are not a state.

The further you get into this second reading speech the angrier you get. It is demeaning. However, every part of the speech does put weight to the fact that we were right in taking the action we did last year and does encourage me, in fact, that there is a long way to go in this debate.

Minister Nelson continues in his second reading speech:

A number of existing state and territory jurisdictions purport to prohibit or regulate the Commonwealth's activities in establishing and operating a facility and/or transporting radioactive material to a facility.

They certainly do. It is called the *Work Safe Act*. It comes under work health and we have legislation along these very lines.

State and territory jurisdictions may introduce additional legislation purporting to prohibit or regulate the Commonwealth in these activities.

It was something that was on the mind of this government as a further way of reining in the government's desire to have this nuclear waste facility foisted upon us in the Northern Territory. The effect, of course, of the two bills that minister Nelson has introduced in the Commonwealth parliament would be to render ineffective any legislation we might introduce now against the fact

of the legislation we passed last year which has led them directly to the legislative moves that they have put forward. Far from the stunt and charade that the member for Blain referred to in bringing forward this motion today, that 'this motion is a charade, and the legislation that passed last year was a stunt', I am encouraged further by the comments I find in minister Nelson's second reading that we are on the right path.

In relation to the role of Mr Tollner and Senator Scullion - what a risky path to take - both know that they are there on the votes of Territorians, paid handsomely in their jobs as a Senator and member of the House of the Representatives to first and foremost represent the best interests, and protect those interests, of all Territorians regardless whether as individuals they supported them. It is their job to further the best interests of their constituents. When we hear and come to grips with some of the statements they are putting about, as the minister for Health explained, I am frankly appalled at their unwillingness to share their burden of the load in taking this fight up to the Commonwealth government.

I am reminded of the actions of former Senator Tambling and the actions at the time of a once very proud political party, the CLP, which said very clearly to Senator Tambling: 'You are our representative in Canberra. You are the voice of the conservative vote and the Country Liberal Party in Canberra to put our views forward, to voice our concerns, and to do what we think is best for the Northern Territory'. Well, Senator Tambling found it too difficult on one issue around interactive gaming legislation where he thought that he should support the Commonwealth government line on that legislation, and he did so. It was not long after, when Senator Tambling failed to cross the floor and voted with the government on that interactive gaming legislation, that the CLP hierarchy called him in and harsh words, no doubt, were spoken. Senator Tambling's preselection as a Senator for the Northern Territory for the Country Liberal Party was withdrawn.

Well, hello, who did we get? Nigel. And Nigel finds himself in exactly the same position as one Gladys did some years ago. We know what Senator Tambling did. He thought, for whatever reason, he should support the government; and he did. However, it cost him his job as a Senator for the Northern Territory. There was a bit of guts and a bit of pride in the Country Liberal Party as a political entity at that time. They were not going to have a person put there by them, by their voting support, to represent their interests in Canberra, decide to be the voice of Canberra to the people of the Northern Territory rather than vice versa. It was an untenable position and situation to be placed in. Mind you, the Commonwealth gave him a pretty good job. However, that is beside the

point. I wish him well in his career. I understand he is doing a good job in that role.

That is what the Country Liberal Party stood for, and not all that many years ago. When they said: 'You are there to represent our interests,' they meant it. It is a pity that the Country Liberal Party today - same name but, sadly, a very different organisation to that organisation that dumped Senator Tambling - if they had any guts at all, and any principle, would be moving to call Senator Scullion in and say: 'Your choice is clear, Senator. You back us and you defeat this legislation and you cross the floor, or you are no longer - or not for very much longer - our representative in Canberra'.

In relation to the amendment put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, there was some little misunderstanding. I was happy, and I believe government would have been happy, to see the word 'outrageous' deleted from the motion. It is outrageous, frankly; there is no other word to describe the actions of the Commonwealth government. However, the amendment put forward does go further than just the deletion of the word 'outrageous' appearing where it does. It is in paragraph 4 where 'this Assembly calls upon the Northern Territory's representatives in the Commonwealth parliament to stand up for the rights of Territorians and vote against this outrageous legislation'. It is those words 'and vote against this outrageous legislation' which we see as particularly pertinent to the substance of the motion. It is calling on all of the Territorians in the Commonwealth Houses of Parliament to stand up for the rights of Territorians and vote against this outrageous legislation. That applies to Warren Snowdon, Senator Crossin, Mr Tollner and Senator Scullion. We could not support the withdrawal of those words.

Therefore, notwithstanding the support that we had from the Leader of the Opposition - and the government appreciates that support - we cannot in all honesty go as far as deleting those words 'vote against this outrageous legislation'. This applies to the four. The difficulty, we understand, would be around one Senator Nigel because of the position - and it is a pretty invidious position; and a position we might all have some sympathy for. However, he only has to step back from the whole issue for a minute and ask: 'What am I here for? Who put me here? Territorians elected me to represent their interests - not Canberra, the federal Liberal Party, or Prime Minister Howard'. It was the Country Liberal Party and the people of the Northern Territory who supported, strongly enough, the Country Liberal Party in the Senate election to make Nigel Scullion a senator.

Madam SPEAKER: Deputy Chief Minister, your time has expired.

Mr STIRLING: Madam Speaker, I urge support of the motion and reject the amendment.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak to the original motion, and make it quite clear to the House that I certainly do support the motion of the Chief Minister. We have to send a very clear message to Canberra that we will not accept this decision lightly. This is the worst result we could have. We had high hopes, when we debated the matter, that we might be able to negotiate with the Commonwealth government. However, all we have now is a slap in the face. It makes me feel sad; I feel really flat.

I am the only person left in this House who voted for the Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill. The member for Nhulunbuy voted against it. I guess he really did not care when they overturned the Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill. However, I remember after the long consultation we held, and the effort to travel around the Territory to make sure we heard Territorians' voices, it was such an emotive, close vote. We really did not know until the very last moment which way it would go. I remember when we got there, we were just ecstatic but, then suddenly, it was taken away from us. It just made you feel so flat, and that is a little like the way I feel at the moment.

Some of us have been in the Territory long enough to feel as though not only are we Territorians but we have the right to decide our own destiny. We have the right to make decisions for this place because we love it. Why should we have a body in Canberra going the other way? I am member of the Statehood Steering Committee Executive Group. Here we are trying very hard to rejuvenate statehood and this just makes you feel, 'What is the point? What is the point if the Commonwealth government can so easily pass laws that affect us so much?' It is one of those times when you feel, as a Territorian, that you are quite helpless with what is going on, it is almost outside of your destiny.

The Chief Minister probably remembers the Kevin Andrews bill that overturned ours. It was a blatant act on the part of the Prime Minister to hide behind a private member's bill to overturn those laws. I know she was not in parliament when the bill was passed, but I am just wondering, at the time, did she act when the Commonwealth parliament did that? Or, because she was opposed to euthanasia, did she not care? Member for Nhulunbuy, you and I are the last two surviving warriors on this floor; what was your reaction when that happened? Or are you just now doing this hysterical grandstanding because something that you introduced has been overturned? This brings back memories for me, and I am sure it brings back memories for the member for Nhulunbuy. We felt at the time we

were true Territorians, but now you wonder whether you are a citizen of Australia and if you have the same rights as other people in the other parts of Australia.

I know that I will continue along the path of statehood. I will continue to try to convince the community that it is a good thing. Perhaps this will be the impetus they need. I remember, and I have to say, member for Stuart, you are one of the people out at Alpururulum handing out no-votes.

Dr Toyne: It is not true.

Mrs BRAHAM: It is true because we sprung you doing that. It was a shame that, even though in this parliament we talked about having everyone going towards statehood, when it came to the vote, the Aboriginal vote was manipulated so much and it went out the door. That, to me, is a shame. I hope we can move past that, and because you are saying you support statehood, that you will really get behind it and help it as much as you can.

I am talking from the point that it is not the issue at the moment. This is the point I want to make first of all, that is relevant: it is the right of Territorians to introduce their own laws and not have the Commonwealth government telling us what we can do. When we debated the bill, I remember standing up saying that there should be negotiations but, obviously, the Commonwealth government has reached the point where it is no longer willing to talk or debate. I also said let each state and territory and the Commonwealth government look after its own waste. The Commonwealth must be desperate to present this bill at the moment; it is not a national answer to the nuclear waste problem. It is not an answer that will solve the problem for the nation. It seems to me that it is the Commonwealth government exercising its muscle, particularly when we have heard statements from Commonwealth ministers just this year saying that they would not support the dump facility in the Northern Territory. It is certainly a clear message to Territorians that the Commonwealth government does not respect our parliament and it does not respect our laws.

I looked at the motion and I have to admit I have only glanced through the bill. I did not get it until lunchtime - I was at a meeting - so I cannot talk in depth on the bill. I can say, Chief Minister, that this motion, as much as I will support it, does not go far enough. What it is saying is that we note the proposed legislation and the effect on us; it says we support the Territory government's stand against the Howard government - that is obvious; it calls upon the Territory representatives to vote against it - good; and it calls upon the Commonwealth parliament to reject this legislation

as an outrageous attack on our rights - that is all good. However, it should have gone further.

It should have been saying to Territorians and the Commonwealth government what we will do and what we could do. There has been so much talk but why don't we get Brendan Nelson, the author of this bill, to the Territory parliament and let him hear the views of Territorians? Why don't we take Brendan Nelson and the Prime Minister out to Harts Range and let them talk to the people out there so that they can hear for themselves? They are making a decision on our rights and on the rights of the Aboriginal people, and the pastoralists around Katherine, without even going to talk to them, without seeing them face-to-face.

Perhaps the Chief Minister, in her motion, should be talking about getting some of this action, not just condemning. We do not want it to look as though we are spitting the dummy. We do not want to look as though we are immature and stamping our feet because this decision has been made. What we want is to take an approach that says to the Commonwealth government: 'We are a parliament which makes good decisions for Territorians. We have done so well, over so many years. The Territory is a great place, but you are not listening to the people it is going to affect most of all'. That is what we should be doing in this motion, making sure we get out to those communities with whoever you can get from the Commonwealth government so that they can hear the message from the people. Most of all, you should be getting the Prime Minister out here to talk to the people.

It worried me a little in Question Time, as you know. It was difficult to hear question after question without being able to have any input. I do not think this is the time for us to be divided. I am hoping this motion is not there to embarrass the opposition or the federal members of parliament. I hope the Chief Minister is quite genuine in what she is trying to do. I believe that it is now time for everyone here to use their networks in the Commonwealth parliament. People in government should be there talking to not just their own side, but to their mates. Just because you are on a different side of politics does not mean you do not talk to people. I am sure there are ministers and members in the Commonwealth parliament on which you are on good terms.

Let us get down there and start talking. Do not just stand here and abuse Senator Scullion - that is certainly not going to get him onside - or use stories about him in parliament, and use terms like 'Gladys'. That derides the whole thing. It puts it down to that cheap, school ground level when, in fact, you are here to represent the people of the Territory and you should be above that sort of abuse. I would have thought a more conciliatory

approach perhaps? It might be too late for that, but we have to not just stand here and stamp our feet and say we object. We really need to make the right moves to get down to Canberra.

I would like to hear from the Chief Minister, when she sums up, what she intends to do. How does she intend to tackle it? More legislation is not going to help us. Sending letters is not going to help us. Protests on the streets of Alice Springs, great as they are, are not going to change anyone's mind in Canberra. We need to be down there lobbying them, or they need to be up here so we can take them out to the communities so they can see what we are talking about.

As I said to begin with, I felt flat. It just seems like history has been repeated all over again. Some of us who felt that disappointment at the time we lost the Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill thought it would never happen again. We thought statehood would resolve that but, unfortunately, we lost that as well. You can get kicked so many times but, now and again, like a true Territorian, you have to stand up again and keep on and keep fighting.

Madam Speaker, I urge all members of the House to support this motion.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I stand here in some trepidation because, after listening to the debate during Question Time, I certainly will not find too many friends on the other side of parliament.

Mrs Braham: Or this side.

Members interjecting.

Mr WOOD: That is okay. That is one advantage of being independent; and that is what you get for being truly independent. Sometimes, you have to stand up and say what you believe regardless of what other people think.

I do not agree with the Commonwealth overriding our legislation or breaking its promises. Show me a politician who has not broken promises. The Chief Minister, for instance, said she will introduce four-year terms in parliament. Well, we did not get that. Should I condemn the Chief Minister forever and a day? The Commonwealth government also has made some promises and broken them. Let us not get too high and mighty over broken promises.

This debate is not just about the Territory's rights and that is why, for me, this is a very difficult issue. This is something that has occurred because of Labor's total opposition to any radioactive facility. That is the Australian Labor Party, as well as Territory Labor. The legislation

that this parliament passed was also a red rag to a bull. When you put in clause 53(1), you were asking the Commonwealth to bring out some legislation to make sure it can override it. You put it in there; they came back with spades.

I see this as part of a very clever process that the Northern Territory Labor Party is doing to convince people that a radioactive waste facility is dangerous, it is not in the best interests of the Territory, and 'you do not want it in your backyard'. What this really shows is a Territory that is lacking in leadership. I have said many times before this issue is a national issue; it is an Australian issue. I have heard it time and time again: 'We only use a small amount of radioactive material in the Northern Territory'. No, as Australians, we use radioactive material.

I do not want to repeat the speech I made a month or so ago. However, we do know that every time you get in a plane, drink a bottle of coke, or get some radiotherapy down south, you are part of that nuclear and radioactive waste cycle. It is a responsibility of this nation if it uses that technology to find a way to safely store it. After all, it is difficult to believe that, if people support those types of uses of radioactive material and nuclear technology in industry and in medicine, they would not support the new Lucas Heights facility which requires a safe storage for materials - otherwise it cannot get a licence. The Commonwealth needs a place to store the waste. Surely, as a nation, we cannot keep saying 'not in my backyard'.

Fly over this great country and tell me where the dotted lines start and finish. You see them on a map and you believe that is the end of the world. We are a nation, we are a Commonwealth and, when you talk about this, it is the Commonwealth's waste. Who do you think we are? We are the Commonwealth. We are Australians and we need to find a place.

That is what annoys me so much in this debate. This debate has now gone down the path of the Commonwealth overriding Territory laws. You do not like that but you have to ask: are we to blame ourselves? Was there an opportunity as leaders, not only in the Territory, for all leaders of all states, of all territories, to get together and find a place? And we did. We had a state/Commonwealth arrangement. We have looked at sites around Australia for at least 10 years. Where is the site? Woomera - where half the waste is already stored in a form of asphalt from the Fishermen's Bend site in Melbourne. At the last minute, the South Australian government said no. We had a site. We had states and the Commonwealth working together. Why has all this fallen on a heap? What is the Commonwealth going to do?

You might say: 'Well, too bad'. I say let us grow up as a country and find a way to do it. We are missing an opportunity here to show we have leadership as a Territory. If, in the end, this is the only place that we are going to have it, come hell or high water, why do we not sit down with the Commonwealth and say: 'The three sites you have selected are hopeless'? I would probably agree with that, because they have selected them simply based on the fact that they are Commonwealth land. Why do we not deal with it? If we are getting it, let us see where we can put it, and let us see what benefits we can get from storing it. It will require \$30m to \$40m in construction and it will have to be maintained in a secure place. Instead of being so negative, negative, negative, why do we not look at some positives out of it? We are going to spend millions of dollars of taxpayers' money.

No one has told me if, at the end of all this, if it does not make one iota difference to the Commonwealth, why you are doing it. Someone said: 'We are going to fight the Commonwealth to the very end'. What are the legal ramifications? Are we able to fight the Commonwealth to the very end? I have not heard anyone say you are going to win. We are going to spend a lot of money that might even fix up Howard Springs or bring education to a lot of people who need it, but we are going to fight it. If the case is that we are going to fight it just for the sake of the hand on the heart, I say, let us try to use that possibility to our benefit and find a place in the Territory where it could be stored.

I do not agree with the Commonwealth's actions, but I do not support what Labor is trying to do. It is time, as I have said, for us to grow up as a nation, as Australians, because this is a national issue. This debate would not be happening if our leaders took out the emotion and swallowed their pride and looked for a solution. I have not heard one person in this House get up and say: 'Here is a solution', only 'Leave it where it is'. How many people have said: 'How do we have Lucas Heights and a safe repository? Oh, not in my backyard'. Let us see some positive alternatives to what the Commonwealth is trying to do. No, 'We just do not want it'. That is a sad thing, because we are going to end up with many politicians, whose only party they can belong to is the nimby party. We have to be a little more mature than that.

I know that there are issues about nuclear waste. I get told that I am not green. I wonder whether people around here believe that green is going around nude and walking to work. That is your version. We have advanced slightly in technology since then. Green means using technology that we know today for the benefit of our environment. If we went down that path, we

would not be driving cars, sitting here with electronic equipment broadcasting this, or have cameras recording it. We live in a technological society. That does not stop me being green. I watch telly - heaven help me, has that stopped me being green? I am not silly green. I am what I call 'sensible green', and that is important ...

Dr Toyne: Oh?

Mr WOOD: Say what you may. We opposed the Elizabeth River dam, not because we did not want Weddell to be built, but we thought it was an overkill. That is still being green, but it is still supporting development. If you cannot distinguish that, you are deliberately trying to distort where I come from. But that would not surprise me, because that is called politics.

The Minister for Infrastructure and Transport talked about the waste. I went to that meeting held by the Department of Education, Science and Training, and they said there will be three 45 m³ containers coming into the Territory over 10 years if we happen to have the waste storage. They also showed us pictures of how it would be stored in containers which could go to the bottom of the sea and you could drop sharp objects on them - you could do all sorts of things. They said this is the normal way that material is carried around the world all the time. They have not had one accident. Now, all of a sudden, when it comes to the Territory, it is going to fall apart, we are all going to die, we are going to have huge big things coming over the wall - oh, it is going down the Stuart Highway and people will all be zapped! They did not tell us that. Are you saying they were wrong? Are you saying people in areas where this is transported are different than us?

Mr Stirling: You are missing the point, Gerry.

Mr WOOD: No, I am not missing the point. I am saying you use emotion; I try to use some science. I went to the meeting to listen to some science.

However, that is not the issue I want to debate today. The issue I want to debate is that this is Australian issue; we need a place to store this waste. Why can we not get together as a nation? That is simply what my argument is. By supporting this motion, I believe I am just doing what you want me to do; that is, support your piece of ill-advised legislation about nuclear waste facilities. By supporting it, I am going back on what I believe is the real issue: it is a national issue. It requires leadership from our Chief Minister, from Mr Rann, from the Prime Minister and from all the other states. What is wrong with that? Why can we not sit down at a summit and sort this through? Can you tell me what happens in Australia when you run out of backyards?

Where is it going to go? Be real! This is an awfully big country and we cannot find a solution that would satisfy everybody? It shows a great deal of immaturity as a nation if we cannot find enough room for 4000 m³ of waste. As I have said before, one cricket pitch long, one cricket pitch wide and half a cricket pitch high. That is a pretty small amount of country to use for a facility that can be used to store this material safely. Why isn't it that we are going down that path? Why are we going down the path of confrontation? I say we are going down this path, not because of states' rights, because they do not want this facility, come hell or high water, and this is a method of doing that.

In other words, we have this Commonwealth legislation - I do not like it - but you will now use that as another means of getting support for what you believe is right. What we miss in this whole debate is the big picture. We have clouded it up with lots of politics and rhetoric - we will fight you there and we will fight you here - and petitions here and petitions there. We miss the point: what are we doing for our nation? We are not doing anything. We are not doing the people of this country a service by going down the path we are going.

Let us put this aside, sit down and talk, as a nation, and sort this mess out. It is not going to go away and, if we do not do that, we will get nuclear waste facilities where we do not want them and we will not have any control over it. Why not sit down and make sure we get it where it should be put? That would be a good solution, better than the solution we have here today. Because of that, and because I do not agree with the Commonwealth's action and I do not want to be part of what I believe is a political campaign, I abstain.

Dr BURNS (Planning and Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, earlier today, I spoke on transport issues related to nuclear waste travelling throughout the Northern Territory. I would not want to repeat that but, in short, there are question marks over this port's ability to handle this nuclear waste; about control processes that would be in place, just how much homework the Commonwealth has done in relation to this, and the very fact, I suppose - depending on which site is chosen - that these containers of nuclear waste will be travelling either through Darwin down to Katherine and Alice Springs, or up through South Australia to the sites there. They are very important issues to consider.

I want to support this motion because I believe it is right. I believe it is an expression of outrage, if you like, that most Territorians would back. It is outrageous legislation. Turning to where it deals with the application to state and territory laws, in section 13(1) it says:

A law, or a provision of a law, of a State or Territory (whether written or unwritten), so far as it relates to ...

It then names a number of criteria and continues:

... has no effect to the extent that it would, apart from this section, regulate, hinder or prevent the doing of a thing authorised by section 12.

This is all about the construction of a nuclear waste dump and the transport of the same.

If you go through some of those criteria, it overrides the use or proposed use of land or premises. As the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage pointed out, it overrides, in (b), environmental consequences of the use of land or premises' and in (c) the archaeological heritage values of land, including the land, premises or objects in the tradition of indigenous people. So it goes on. This is draconian legislation, and I believe the motion is quite correct when it calls it outrageous, because that is what it is.

In section 13(2), it says:

A law, or a provision of a law, of a State or Territory (whether written or unwritten), so far as it relates to the transport of controlled material, radioactive material or dangerous goods, has no effect to the extent that it would, apart from this section, regulate, hinder or prevent transport authorised by section 12.

Once again, we have this Commonwealth law that will override all the transport rules and regulations of the Territory. Anything that might, in the Commonwealth's view, put some hindrance or encumbrance on the transport of this material - safety issues - will just be swept aside by this legislation. I believe it is quite right to call it outrageous legislation and, for that reason, I do not agree with the Opposition Leader when she wanted that particular element of the motion struck out. Apart from that, I did agree with much that the Opposition Leader had to say.

The member for Braitling made a very fine contribution here today and gave me much to think about. It was a very sensible and measured contribution and I thank the member for Braitling for that.

However, the member for Nelson talked about 'not in my backyard' and was calling for leadership. Well, member for Nelson, how about you write to the Prime Minister of Australia and invite the nuclear waste dump to be in Nelson? Let us see you show some leadership in Nelson

and have it in your backyard. Why should 2% of the Australian population be compelled to accept 100% of the waste? That is the bottom line. Other people run the line of 'we produce uranium in the Territory, therefore, we should have all the radioactive waste'. Well, we also produce lead. Are we compelled to take every lead acid battery in existence? No, I do not think so. It is just a completely foolish way to reason and I completely reject it.

On the issue of sites that the member for Nelson went on in quite some detail about, there were some elements that I agreed with. Other sites elsewhere have been identified, and they have been blocked. However, with the three sites in the Northern Territory that have been identified, they suddenly jumped on to the agenda when the other sites were in places around Canberra and Sydney. They were not wanted there. There is a web of deceit operating which I do not think the member for Nelson has recognised, just because he feels strongly - and I understand the way he feels about it. He is particularly talking about medical waste and other uses of radioisotopes, and that somehow we should all be Australians and cop what the Commonwealth hands out to us. I reject that.

There has been a web of deceit. Ian Campbell was on radio on 30 September 2004 with Julia Christensen:

Julia: Now, Dave Tollner yesterday said that he can't rule anything in, he can't rule anything out. Can you rule out a national nuclear waste dump for the Territory?

Campbell: Well, what we have said quite clearly and unequivocally, many months ago, is that the Commonwealth is not pursuing any options anywhere on the mainland. So we can be quite categorical about that 'cause the Northern Territory is on the mainland. And we can also say that our preferred option, and the only options that we are pursuing, are on offshore islands. I think that the reality of this is that there is no one on the mainland who particularly wants a nuclear waste dump in their backyard, and that is why we are pursuing the practical option of going to an offshore island. So, the Northern Territorians can take that as a ... categorical assurance.

Julia: So there are no plans now and there will be none in the future under a Coalition government?

Campbell: No there haven't been. And, also, this is a Labor Party beat-up. You see the Labor Party spending money around

Australia beating this issue up. They obviously want to scare people. We have decided to be very open and honest where we want to pursue a nuclear waste dump ...

That is Senator Campbell. Going to Dave Tollner, he told ABC radio on 4 October last year:

... we have a bogus nuclear threat being run all over the televisions ...

He blamed the media, accusing them of being desperate for stories and running garbage. I would like to quote him word for word:

Now, you've had assurances from the federal Science minister, the federal Environment minister and myself on a number of occasions that there's not going to be a national nuclear ... waste repository ... in the Territory. This seems to just wash off you and the Labor Party and you still run this line that I'm calling for a nuclear waste dump. Well, it's rubbish.

I call on David Tollner, if he has an ounce of honesty in his bones after what he and Senator Campbell said, to stand up and oppose this particular bill at every opportunity. Senator Nigel Scullion should also be doing his job as well.

Brendan Nelson dropped the bombshell on 15 July this year that the Commonwealth government was going to locate the dump in the Northern Territory. Where was the member for Solomon? He was in France, as we are aware, looking at nuclear waste dumps. The Commonwealth government has been deceitful throughout.

The Commonwealth government has pushed this line about medical radioisotopes, and the waste with that. Also, that everyone should be doing the right thing because, if you had a family member or a friend who has ever had cancer, you are not doing the right thing by them by rejecting a radio-nuclear dump here in the Northern Territory. As the Health Minister said earlier today, most hospitals store their own waste, and it decays in a matter of hours or days in some cases. That is not the problem.

Where is the problem? It lies with spent fuel rods. It is all about the storage of highly radioactive nuclear waste products from the reprocessed nuclear spent fuel rods from the Lucas Heights reactor. These spent fuel rods were shipped to Scotland and France in the 1990s for reprocessing. The Commonwealth government has always known that these highly radioactive waste materials had to be returned to Australia starting in 2011.

CLP Senator Nigel Scullion's response was not to fight his Liberal Party mates; instead, he had the public information sessions which were a little disastrous for him. Basically, he claimed at one of these that the radioactive waste coming back from France had been 'de-radioactivised' – that was his exact word. They have not, Senator Scullion, they are still highly radioactive.

Dr Ron Cameron, Chief of Operations from ANSTO, which is the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation, spoke at a number of information sessions in Darwin and Alice Springs. This whole issue - the member for Nelson needs to listen to this because he talked about just two or three shipments of radioactive material - these reprocessed rods - coming back to Australia, is a lot more than two or three, and I will explain.

There have been some shipments of spent fuel rods to Europe. There was one to Scotland in the 1960s, then there was a big build-up at Lucas Heights. There was one to Scotland in 1996 and four to France between 1999 and 2004. The next two will then go to the USA, which will store the rods and not reprocess them. To emphasise here: the ones that have gone to Europe will undergo reprocessing and be returned to Australia; however, the USA which will take the next shipments, stores the rods and does not reprocess them. Therefore, there will be no waste returning to Australia. That is under the current system. However, the USA says it will not accept anymore rods after 2016. The story is that, with the continuation of the production of the rods after 2016 which is the cut-off date, the US will not be able to accept them. That is the real problem with these rods going to the US.

Ron Cameron was challenged on this at the forum here in Darwin and he admitted that his claim of only two shipments to the NT was conditional on the United States changing its law to accept spent fuel rods after 2016. That is most unlikely. There is a bit of a game going on here about exactly how many shipments will be going to this nuclear fuel dump.

To return to Lucas Heights. It is run by ANSTO, and this nuclear reactor known as HIFAR – the High Flux Australian Reactor – is due to be closed down next year. ANSTO plans to replace it with the open pool Australian light water reactor which is known as OPAL. However, here is the point: in order to get a licence for OPAL, ANSTO has to have a management strategy for the waste from the reprocessed spent fuel rods. Therefore, the waste will be coming to Australia for decades to come.

The Commonwealth strategy has been simple: it is to dump this radioactive waste in the Northern

Territory. I ask members to turn their minds to the future. What does the future hold for a national nuclear waste dump that is in a remote location and built to a standard that can accommodate low-level and intermediate-level waste? The answer, I believe, will be to upgrade it to take high-level waste. When we discuss radioactive waste, we are dealing with time spans that exceed human experience. How can we know what Australia's nuclear policy will be in the decades and centuries to come? HIFAR and OPAL are not power stations but research reactors. Australia does not have a nuclear power station, but will that always be the case? This is the question that is being debated in the community: should Australia go down the road to the nuclear power and, if it does, where will they store the high-level nuclear waste? The answer is obvious: it has to be in the facility that will be established in the Northern Territory.

In short, I support this motion in its current state. These laws that have been dumped on us today by the Commonwealth are outrageous; they are very draconian. They overturn not just the laws of the Territory in relation to nuclear waste, but laws across the spectrum to do with environment and heritage, the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites, transport, and a whole range of things - they are very far-reaching. It is outrageous, both in the way in which the Commonwealth and its representatives have conducted themselves throughout this whole thing, the lies that they have told Territorians - the obvious and patent lies that they have told Territorians – and the way that they have betrayed and been treacherous to Territorians. All this is outrageous, and it is quite appropriate that we call on our federal representatives to oppose this legislation.

Once again, I challenge the member for Nelson. If he wants to be a leader and 'not in my backyard', let him call for it to be in the electorate of Nelson. Let him hear what the people of Nelson have to say because I do not think they would be too happy about that. As a bottom line, I wonder whether the member for Nelson cherishes the whole notion of self-government in the Northern Territory. He does not seem interested in self-government and the preservation of our rights as Territorians. He talks about politics, but I believe he is cranking up his own political position. I suggest that he listens to what the electorate of Nelson and the wider electorate of the Territory has to tell him.

Madam Speaker, I support the motion. It is a very sad day for the Territory and for Australia that our Australian Commonwealth government has acted this way towards citizens of the Northern Territory.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I support the motion. However, the support is qualified on the following basis and for the reasons I will outline. First, as the former speaker just referred to, something that offended me and many Territorians was to be lied to on the eve of the last federal campaign; to be told that there would be no site in the Northern Territory. I accepted those words and found that they were false. My trust was offended, as many Territorians were as well. That is one reason why I support this motion because, as a Territorian, I expect integrity from our leaders.

Second, I support this motion because of a speech that Bernie Kilgariff made last year at the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Country Liberal Party in Alice Springs. He moved those who were in attendance with a speech about the rights of Territorians being second-class citizens in comparison to the citizens of other states. When we hear it expressed in such passionate terms, you cannot help but be moved. For Bernie Kilgariff, and for the fight for statehood and for equal rights for Territorians, I support this motion.

Further to that, I cannot continue on without reference to the actions of members of the present government, the Labor Party, and their role in the Statehood Referendum a few years ago. It was their actions that eroded support for a fundamental right of Territorians to move to statehood - it was white-anted and eroded, and they know it. One member here, the member for Daly, even admitted that he worked against that referendum and handed out pamphlets for the no case. The member for Stuart has been charged with the same actions. They said the words to the Territory community that they supported it - they said with their mouths, but with their hands they worked against it. If there had been action above short-term political gain and the drawing of dirty political spoil from that specific campaign, we would be in a very different position today. Reflect on that.

My concern, as a representative of the Northern Territory community, was very real today in Question Time. I said this was a waste of time. I meant it in these terms: that we have an opportunity, as opposition, limited though it be, to raise issues of concern to Territorians. If this government is genuinely concerned to have the views of Territorians represented, and to add weight to their argument that the Commonwealth government is acting in a cavalier and thuggish manner, you would have added weight to your position by allowing Question Time to run its course; thereby, there would have been little concern of that nature generated from members of the opposition.

The support for the tone of this motion I said is qualified - on the basis that I have outlined. Questions to test the integrity of government's opposition to this action of the Commonwealth government have not been adequately answered or are unanswered. Have you actually worked to try to find a solution, other than to position yourself very cleverly - the word used yesterday in your response to serious issues - to manoeuvre yourselves very cleverly with a single objective: to exploit this issue to the highest degree, to draw from it the maximum political benefit?

On that basis - as I noticed the Chief Minister, in her speech today, endeavouring to create that sense of outrage by turning her face to the cameras from time to time to ensure that they caught the theatre of this whole event - thinking Territorians want to see what sort of actions are actually put in place to make a real difference to an issue of concern.

The matters that have been raised by the member for Nelson are very weighty matters and are issues that do need to be discussed in this parliament. I would like to spend time discussing matters that the member for Nelson raised. However, those are not the issues that have been placed before us. We have been asked a very basic question: 'Do you want to have a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory?' Ask anyone. First answer to that question is obviously: 'No'. Let us move to the next question which will, obviously, follow this bit of theatre here, because it appears to be inevitable. You have already built the escape clause in your own legislation which was touted through this parliament and beautifully positioned in the media, that we are going to put in place the strongest possible legislation. Headlines through the paper gave Territorians a sense this great government putting in very strong legislation to grant a high level of safety from this dreadful occurrence. However, in the guts of it was an escape clause that allowed this move from the Commonwealth government today to occur.

Madam Speaker, in closing, my support is qualified in that I support the amendments that have been so well articulated by the Leader of the Opposition that we support the spirit of it. However, you need to take heed of your positioning of this issue so that we can actually then move to the next stage. I support the Leader of the Opposition's amendment. I urge honourable members, in the spirit of this debate, to follow through with appropriate support.

Dr TOYNE (Health): Madam Speaker, the first thing you do is to state your position. My position is of strong support for the Chief Minister's motion. I am outraged at the actions of the Commonwealth government, and feel nothing less than total resistance should be expressed through this

House. That is where I will end up with my contribution. The other thing you have to be clear on is the proposition before us. We have seen in the course of the debate, and the debate that has taken place out in the general community, quite a number of attempts to reshape the debate into different issues. Are we looking at Territory rights as the issue? Are we considering the proposition of a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory? Is this a health issue that we are talking about?

I would like to take each of those in turn. The overwhelming belief I have is that we are talking about Territory rights at this stage of the process. The reason for that is the way the Commonwealth government has conducted itself in bringing this issue to the Northern Territory - or I should say dumping it on us. You cannot expect any other reaction from the Territory community when it is simply unilaterally announced that we take it whether we like it or not and, if we put up any objection to it, we are called vexatious. We are presented with Commonwealth legislation that overrides anything that we might want to say through the people's house or through the community in general.

The member for Nelson talked much about leadership during his contribution. I am not sure how he perceives leadership because the essence of leadership is listening carefully to the people you represent and respecting and defending their rights and their opinion about an issue. We have gone around and listened very carefully to many Territorians on this issue, both in the meetings that have been conducted all over the Northern Territory, through the individual exchanges we have in the communities, and through the show circuit. Every time we have seen gatherings of Territorians, this issue comes up and we are able to get opinions from people right around the Territory.

I can talk to you in detail about the ones in Central Australia because it is probably Central Australia that is going to cop this if we cannot stop it through actions that we might want to take as a parliament and as a government. The Commonwealth government, through the agency and through Senator Scullion, arrived in Alice Springs to give us all the good oil on the fantastic benefits that this was going to bring to Central Australia. The meeting was held in the foyer of the Alice Springs Town Council - not the biggest internal space you can see around Alice Springs by a long shot. They were probably expecting 20 people to turn up, when 150 turned up. They were not turning up just to listen politely; they were turning up to express an opinion about the proposal.

Subsequently, a meeting was held at Centralian College; at that meeting there were 250 people. I was elsewhere in Australia at the time. However, I understand that, again, it was an angry, forthright meeting. What was revealing about those gatherings of people in Alice Springs is the wide cross-section that they represented from our community. There were people who would not normally be seen together, united in a single cause. There was a real cross-section of the Alice Springs community. At the rally last week - again 150 people, maybe more - a whole new group has appeared, who are the traditional owners out on the Plenty Highway and the Tanami Road on whose land these facilities could well be situated. There was absolute unanimous opposition to the proposal.

Why would that not be happening? There was absolutely no consultation whatsoever with our community. This was all announced after the fact; after decisions have been made in Canberra, that did not even make sense regarding the earlier scientific work and assessments that had been done by the Commonwealth government. We were being sold a mickey; being used to dump a problem on the Territory that the Commonwealth government had built up around itself for no other reason than it thought it would get away with it here.

I know the Territory community pretty well after the nearly a quarter of a century I have been part of it, and I know this is going to be fought out to the bitter end. We have often taken on larger opponents in everything from sport to politics. More often than not, we have prevailed as, being a smaller community, we are persistent and focused. We will certainly be out there with Territorians helping them to take whatever action they want to take in their communities to oppose this unilateral proposition from the Commonwealth.

Is it an issue of nuclear waste and, if it is, what sort of nuclear waste are we talking about? As I said in my answer to a question during Question Time, I am sick to the stomach - if I can coin a phrase - of the use of sick people in the Northern Territory - seriously ill people, the cancer sufferers - as a pawn in this argument. Dave Tollner stands condemned for going out with that proposition, appearing to threaten the security of treatment of these patients by claiming that our refusal of the nuclear waste dump would cut supplies of vitally needed radiotherapeutic substances. It is dishonest and scurrilous in the way they have used that argument. I want to clear that up; let us get the medical argument out of this once and for all. In the type of radioisotopes that are used in medicine here in the Northern Territory, generally the amount taken in an oncology unit - which has been used as an argument even by the member for Greatorex. He

needs to be careful commenting in the context of the debate at the moment about the basis on which an oncology unit might be set up in the Northern Territory. The radioisotopes that are used in radiotherapy have a half-life of only eight minutes. We are talking about syringes, gloves, that are best stored at the hospital in a secure environment, simply because that sort of stuff should not be mixed up with general garbage. It is not high density; it is not in sufficient amounts to link to the needs that might be met by a nuclear waste facility. The sort of needs are far more than what the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport was talking about in his contribution.

The three main types of treatment in oncology units generate very little radioactive waste:

- (1) radiation beams from linear accelerators that generate no radioactive waste;
- (2) Brachytherapy treatment, mostly with iridium 192 - when the iridium source is depleted it is sent back to the supplier, about once a year, so there is no waste at the hospital; and
- (3) the treatment involving Iodine 25 seeds being permanently implanted in the patient - as Iodine 25 seeds have a 50-day half-life, the hospital stores any left over after a treatment until they are safe.

Pharmaceutical waste is only produced in minute quantities in the Northern Territory and it is short lived, low-level waste from a privately-run nuclear medical facility in the Royal Darwin Hospital. This waste is placed in a secure laboratory for several days where it decays to normal radiation background levels. It is then considered to be no longer radioactive and is disposed of safely with other clinical waste from RDH. No other health facility in the Northern Territory produces radioactive pharmaceutical waste.

Of the storage currently at the hospital, which was made much of in the early part of this debate, the NT has the lowest volume of low-level radioactive waste - about 2 m³ to be exact - anywhere in the nation. It is safely and securely stored in an NT government interim waste facility which is a thick concrete walled storeroom with lead lined doors, deep in the bowels of the Royal Darwin Hospital. Waste comprises mostly spent industrial sources and disused gauges that can be stored safely for an indefinite period.

I understand that Lucas Heights can only function for at least another decade and probably

another 20 to 30 years. Therefore, there is no basis for claiming that the decision to locate the nuclear waste here in the Northern Territory has any bearing on the ongoing treatment of cancer patients in the Northern Territory and elsewhere around Australia. It is simply a complete lie to be going on public record making those sorts of claims. It is the worst possible form of political activity to be doing that.

I join my colleagues in supporting the original motion rather than an amended one, simply because the whole point of this stage of the battle with the Commonwealth is to say to our federal representatives: stop this legislation going through the Houses of Commonwealth parliament - stop it right now - so that we are not faced with overriding legislation that is going to cancel out the Territory level legislation. They can do this. Nigel Scullion and Trish Crossin need to very much represent the Territory's interests in the Upper House of the Commonwealth parliament. I join my colleagues in calling on them to do so.

Madam Speaker, those are the main issues I wanted to contribute to the debate. I support this motion very strongly. I feel very passionately about it and I support it as a Central Australian as well as Northern Territorian. If the Commonwealth government had respected this parliament and the Territory people and had properly put this proposition - if they had done that, and if the Territory people said: 'Yes, we will help out on a national issue and have a look at this' - I would go with what they wanted to do. However, the fact is that they have been treated with total contempt and arrogance. I believe, before you even look at the specific issue involved, that we have to stand up for our rights and tell the Commonwealth parliament, in the strongest possible terms, we are not going to cop this.

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage): Madam Speaker, I also speak in support of the Chief Minister's motion. Today, as I said earlier, the Commonwealth's nuclear dump legislation is a kick in the guts for self-government. It is extreme legislation that is unprecedented in its attack on community rights and proper processes to protect our environment and heritage. It comes from a government which will stop at nothing to have its own way.

Government took the strongest action possible on behalf of Territorians by introducing legislation to prohibit the transportation and storage of nuclear waste in the Northern Territory. At the time when I introduced that legislation, I stood here proud as a Territorian and an indigenous person who cares about the Territory and knew that we were doing something good in making sure that our environment was going to be

protected for years to come. This was despite the calls from the opposition and the then Leader of the Opposition who called it a meaningless political stunt and condemned the Chief Minister for allowing a junior minister to present such a meaningless piece of legislation. The Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management (Related Amendment) Bill was introduced by the Commonwealth government this morning, and I quote from Dr Nelson's second reading speech:

Recent statements from the Northern Territory government that it will attempt to obstruct and delay the project reinforce the need for this bill to ensure the Commonwealth can act with certainty and without undue interference from vexatious and wilfully obstructive parties ...

This bill is targeted directly at us and, if acting to protect the interests of Territorians and our unique environment is acting vexatiously and obstructively then I, like many of my colleagues on this side, plead guilty. This legislation gives effect to another lie perpetrated on Territorians by this arrogant Commonwealth government. Our rights are not being respected. It is sledgehammer legislation. It is designed to avoid scrutiny and allow the Commonwealth to do whatever it wants.

Other states and territories should be very concerned over the Commonwealth's actions. As I said today, this waste will need to be transported through New South Wales and, most likely, other states. Many communities along the way have declared themselves nuclear-free. This extreme law crushes their view as well.

This government will stop at nothing to entrench its own power. We are seeing it on industrial relations, with university fees, and with their nuclear dump. They are power hungry and they will stop at nothing.

The extreme legislation single-handedly wipes out all Northern Territory environmental, heritage and public safety laws that it comply to their facility and replaces them with nothing. It is even unclear now whether an environmental impact statement under the Commonwealth's own EPBC act will be prepared.

If the Commonwealth government gets its way and establishes the dump - we will still fight to make sure it will not - it will have no way to ensure it is operating properly. It will be a law unto itself. We will have no way to review procedures or monitor environmental impacts, and the issues are very real. The Fishers Ridge site, for example, is underlain by a shallow aquifer that feeds many springs in the region and recharges the deeper Tindal line aquifer. Katherine's water supply and many irrigators depend on bores in this aquifer.

Water also discharges directly from this aquifer year round into the Katherine River. The Harts Range site is underlain by sediments that are likely to have high permeability. This site is located between two very active rivers, and it is feasible that a flood would result in one or both river channels migrating across the floodplain, potentially seriously damaging any storage facility. Now, with this draconian legislation, our capacity to address these issues has been unilaterally stripped away.

The actions taken by the Commonwealth are not those of a government that is confident in its own arguments. Extreme legislation that tramples on people's rights invalidates not only the Northern Territory but the Commonwealth's own environmental laws, and would not be necessary unless there is something to hide. A government confident of the validity of its arguments and the safety of its proposed facility would be more than happy to subject itself to the same processes that it expects industry to conform to. It would be happy to argue its case and present the information in an open and transparent way with all the usual checks and balances. This legislation wipes all that away in one fell swoop, putting our environment, our heritage, our indigenous sacred sites, our tourism and agriculture industries at risk.

The Prime Minister, the minister for Science, Brendan Nelson, and the member for Solomon, Dave Tollner, cannot avoid the fundamental questions that Territorians have been asking over and over again: why, if this material is so safe, is it necessary to transport nuclear waste across thousands of kilometres to the Territory? Why are they flying in the face of accepted waste management principles that dictate waste should be stored as close as possible to the place where it is generated? Clearly, if it is safe, the Commonwealth has numerous Defence and other government-owned pieces of land close to the ANSTO reactor that would be just as suitable and present less risk of accident in transportation. Yet, the Commonwealth government has chosen instead to dump on the Territory. There is, obviously, another agenda.

Alternatively, if this waste is not safe then the Commonwealth needs to come clean. We are fighting to have these questions answered and this legislation will not stop us from continuing to do so. What we do know is that this waste will stay with us for generations to come and we will continue to tell the Territory community about this.

The storage and disposal of nuclear waste is problematic. Spent fuel is hot and radioactive and must be stored under water to remove heat prior to permanent storage or reprocessing. In reprocessing, plutonium and unused uranium are separated for reuse. This leaves about 3% of the

fuel as highly radioactive material requiring permanent disposal. For intermediate level waste, approximately 80% of initial radioactivity is lost after 100 years, with a small amount still remaining after another 100 000 years. Low-level radioactive waste generally decays to background radioactive levels in less than 500 years. About 95% decays to background levels within 100 years or less. The potential risk for exposure is, therefore, present over a very long term.

There is inherent uncertainty involved in predicting waste site performance for the period that nuclear waste is to be isolated. The time frames over which protection is required can extend well beyond the lifespan of current or forthcoming generations. Risk of disposing of radioactive waste in a near surface repository include incidences during handling and storage and/or the failure of barrier integrity of the containers and facility resulting in the release of potentially harmful radionuclides which can contaminate groundwater and surface water, and have potentially harmful effects on human health and biota. Surface sites are vulnerable to natural and manmade hazards, and surface storage has a risk of gas flux transporting radionuclides to the accessible environment.

Indeed, how can we trust a government that has lied to us to properly run a nuclear dump and which is now removing all accountability and checks and balances? We were told that the dump would not be in the Territory and that was a lie. We were told that our rights would be respected, our position as a Territory would not be taken advantage of. Today, we know that was a lie as well with the introduction of this legislation. The Commonwealth government tells us that this facility will only receive low and intermediate waste; that it will not accept high-level waste, and it will not accept waste from other countries. Will we wake up one morning to find out that this too has been a lie?

As if this legislation is not bad enough, the behaviour of the member for Solomon - and I join with the Minister for Health who has said that the member for Solomon has stooped to a new low in trying to justify this dump on the grounds of public health. Using Territory cancer sufferers to justify a nuclear dump is shameful. The member for Solomon knows that we do not need a nuclear waste dump to have nuclear medicine. This is a man who fought to have the name of the train changed; however, he has no fight in him when it comes to standing up to Canberra or to the Prime Minister's nuclear waste being dumped on our doorstep. The only ticker the member for Solomon seems to be hearing is John Howard's Geiger counter.

The member for Araluen asked a question regarding a supposed inconsistency in our legislation. As I said, having had carriage of that piece of legislation, the clause was debated and explained in parliament at the time and it was the Attorney-General on 18 August 2004 - and I will just go back over for the member for Araluen - who said at the time when we reached that clause:

If you are going to have a bill going to Canberra, you want one that is as hard as possible to overturn. That is why we sought the advice of our Solicitor General, Tom Pauling QC, in the wording of the bill and the proposed amendment that was foreshadowed by the opposition.

The Attorney-General went on and read some of the advice SGO/2004/625:

This office has advised over many years on the peculiar difficulties that arise constitutionally where Territory laws conflict with Commonwealth laws.

Many statutes have just turned provisions to avoid invalidity. The purpose of subclause (1) of clause (5) was:

(a) to reflect the constitutional position relating to inconsistency between Commonwealth and Territory laws ...

In summing up, Madam Speaker, we will fight this legislation, this nuclear dump and this arrogant Commonwealth government that thinks it is a law unto itself. It is vital for our kids, our industry and, most important, for our environment.

Mr KNIGHT (Daly): Madam Speaker, as some would know, one of the sites, Fishers Ridge, falls within the electorate that I represent. Like every other member here, I have roughly 4500 constituents that I represent, and I take that seriously. We have boundaries which we have an interest in - either buildings or river systems. I take that job very seriously, as does every other member.

One of those constituents is Barry Uttley and his wife, who live within this boundary. I represent those people around that area, and I take that very seriously. What really gets on my goat is the member for Nelson who comes in here and tells me that those people there - those constituents of mine, the people who live around Katherine and the Uttley family - should take this on behalf of the Commonwealth government for all Territorians. They should just take it. He is such an authority on my constituents, on those people. He has never spoken to them and he has never been to

the site. How dare he talk about those things? He is a big advocate for the little bloke and for environmentalism, but he does not stick up for those people down there. He is a bloody hypocrite.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Daly, I ask you to withdraw that.

Mr KNIGHT: I withdraw that, sorry. The member for Nelson went on to talk about finding a place to store it within the Territory and he quoted the nimbies - not in my backyard. Well, perhaps he is an 'imby' - in my backyard. As has been mentioned before, I am sure the member for Nelson would gladly have a nuclear waste dump in Shoal Bay or Howard Springs. He should tell his constituents that he would not mind having a nuclear waste dump at Howard Springs. If it was decided by the Commonwealth government, in all of its wisdom, that is where it should be, he would say: 'Fair enough. We have to take it for the rest of the Territory and rest of the Commonwealth. It will be in Howard Springs and I will be happy with it'. That is what he is saying.

He went on about states' rights. Not so long ago - it would have been this week - he talked about the Jabiru Town Council. Poor old Jabiru Town Council. They have to have representation, they have to be respected for their governance there. What about us? Why can't we have our say? Why do you defend the Howard government for opposing our democratic rights within the Northern Territory ...

Mr Wood interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Daly, will you please direct your comments through the Chair.

Mr KNIGHT: The member for Nelson went on to talk about showing some leadership; do something positive and find a solution. Well, why do we have to do it? Why do we have to do it for the rest of Australia? He also went on about these three little shipments, three little boats that the minister for Planning talked about that - and that is not exactly true. For the member for Nelson, the legislation opens it up to more than three shipments; it opens it up to all waste within the world - not just the ANSTO waste which is sitting in Edinburgh, but the whole world. He also went on about 'it is national, let us sit down and talk about it'. Well, it is too late. The Commonwealth just burst in, put this legislation through, and it is too late. If you can rein in little Johnny Howard down there to stop it, good luck to you.

Mr Wood: I am not the Chief Minister, sadly.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Wood: He asked me a question, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Nelson!

Mr KNIGHT: The Member for Nelson is a very big advocate about the science of it all. Well, let us talk about the science of it. He talked about the study that went on for the best site in Australia. I believe it was actually quoted by ANSTO during their public consultation that Woomera was the best site in the world. Okay? The South Australian government opposed it. So, what did they do after that? This little desktop exercise, which sounds a curious thing ...

Mr Stirling: Significant desktop analysis.

Mr KNIGHT: Yes. They looked at about 40-odd sites and came up with what they called a matrix. This is their scientific basis which the member for Nelson talked about ...

Mr Wood: I did not agree with that. You did not listen.

Mr KNIGHT: You talked about the science of it. What did they do? They had three categories: suitable, most suitable and unsuitable. Fishers Ridge is unsuitable. The two sites which have now been selected in Central Australia - guess what? - were not even on the list! That is the scientific basis for this. Canberra had numerous sites which were most suitable. That is the basis of the scientific argument.

During the public consultations in Katherine, the Commonwealth minister made comments about 'we are looking at offshore locations'. I asked the ANSTO staff there what happened to all these offshore locations. 'Oh, we were looking at them'. I said: 'Where? Where did you look?' They said: 'Oh, Christmas Island. That is the best site'. I asked what happened with it. They said: 'Oh no, the wharf, the storage, blah, blah, blah'. The federal minister said: 'We are looking at offshore locations. We have given up on the rest of Australia; offshore is the best way to go'. So, they had a look at Christmas Island and the wharf will not even take it! What sort of basis is that?

Last week, I was at the Jawoyn AGM at Banatjarl, which is adjacent to Fishers Ridge. Those people within that community are quite interested. ANSTO and DEST came down to talk about the nuclear waste dump. They spent 10 minutes talking about it - 10 minutes. The people live about 5 km away from where it is going to be. They did not provide any interpreters. We have talked about the interpreter service today. They did not provide any interpreters for the people there. The comments from ANSTO were: 'The site is a bit wet'. Well, no bull - it is wet! You

cannot put a nuclear waste dump on top of an aquifer which stretches from almost Mataranka to Pine Creek. It is 80 km wide in some places. The benefit? The people asked what they were going to get out of it. 'Well, you might get four full-time jobs'. Four full-time jobs for this facility which will be there for thousands of years!

From what I understand about the legislation introduced by the Commonwealth today, it opens up the Commonwealth to act outside its own ANSTO act, which has been mentioned. This means that they can put whatever nuclear waste they like in the dump. High-level nuclear waste from around the world could be on its way to Katherine. No doubt, the Commonwealth will deny they have these intentions, but we have learnt that they simply cannot be trusted on anything they say on this issue. It would not surprise me at all if they already had contracts signed with countries that do not want their own nuclear waste. The haste to get this dump up and running is remarkable. It is remarkable that Dr Nelson, the minister for Science, is introducing this legislation when he has not even been to the sites involved.

We saw this week, the minister for Environment make this decision about crocodile safaris, even though he has not even been to the Territory.

I understand that Fishers Ridge and the other two sites in Central Australia are significantly mentioned in the legislation; so, it is going to be one of those three. Here we have a minister legislating to place nuclear waste dumps in places he has never ever been. It is the height of arrogance. I will be writing to Dr Nelson, urging him to come to Fishers Ridge, have a look, speak to the people, sit down with Barry Uttley, who is in his 70s, and have a chat with him about why this man who has worked all his life should have a nuclear waste dump sitting right in the middle of his property. Previous studies have clearly found that Fishers Ridge is unsuitable; it has been ruled out as there is a possibility of it flooding. Territorians do not want this dump, full stop, and that goes very strong for the people of Katherine.

We talked a bit about statehood. The member for Blain talked about statehood and that it was our fault. It was Territorians' fault that we did not agree to statehood. Statehood was a question for Territorians on whether they were mature enough to move on to that next stage of governance. Do you know what? Territorians were so mature about statehood that they said they did not want the rubbish that the Stone government put up in haste, and they rejected it. This is the denial the CLP have because - guess what? - Territorians got it wrong with the elections in 2001, and they got it wrong again in 2005. Is this just a denial from them that anything is actually happening?

We can talk about the science and a whole range of things, but nobody in the world wants these dumps. Educated people from down south - politicians - every time you mention the dump they want to move away from it.

In closing, Madam Speaker, it really, in some ways, rests with Senator Scullion. One of the previous Leaders of the Opposition took a very strong stand on their federal minister, Mr Tambling, who did not toe the party line - and they disendorsed him. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition, if they do not do what you instruct them to do as a party up here with the decision that the CLP made and supported, that they reject this nuclear waste dump, the CLP should disendorse the Senator - and they should do it very soon. I also urge the CLP to actually support this motion. They put up an amendment. However, with the gravity of this situation, they should support this motion, because I certainly do. Again, to the House, I would like to state my support for this motion and urge everybody else to do the same.

Ms ANDERSON (Macdonnell): Madam Speaker, I speak in support of the Chief Minister's original motion. The Howard government has shown today the contempt it holds for Territorians, especially those of us who live in remote areas. The Howard government shows its contempt by not bothering to talk with the people who stand to be affected by the nuclear waste dump. The Howard government has already told us we do not matter; we live in the middle of nowhere. Well, I have a message for the Howard government: this is not in the middle of nowhere, it is our home. Black and white Territorians have made the Territory their home. The blood of black and white pioneers run through the Territory. We, as black and white Territorians, have invested our children's future to living in the Territory, and we certainly do not want a nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory.

Harts Range, Kintore, Hermannsburg, Titjikala, Santa Teresa, Alice Springs, Docker River, Mt Everard, Papunya - these places are nowhere? They are places people live - places that are sacred, places where people bring up their families. They are not places that deserve to live with the results of the Howard government's contempt of Territorians and their ignorance of our home. They are not places that should have to live with the Commonwealth nuclear waste dump. We should not have to live with the Commonwealth forcing an unwanted nuclear waste dump on us.

People in the bush were already angry at the Howard government's nuclear dump plans and the lies they have been told. I have already heard from people in Central Australia today who are

further outraged and angered by the Howard government's legislation. Arrernte people have loudly and clearly said no to this nuclear dump at rallies and meetings in Alice Springs; however, the Howard government has completely disregarded them, their feelings and wishes. The Central Land Council was due to hold meetings next week with Arrernte traditional owners about the nuclear waste dump and the Commonwealth had accepted an invitation to present its case at the meeting. However, today's moves in the Commonwealth parliament has exposed the Howard government's pretence that anything which traditional owners have to say about this actually does not matter.

The Central Land Council has already put out a statement expressing its strong condemnation of the Commonwealth government's legislation today. Only last week, traditional owners held a rally in Alice Springs to protest the Commonwealth government's nuclear waste dump plans. Representatives of the Athenge Lhere estate group spoke heartfelt words about what the land meant to them. Kathy Martin, on ABC radio and television, when she spoke about our land, which is Mt Everard, and how a nuclear waste dump would destroy it, was actually crying. This is a lady who is 68-plus; the land means so much to her. She told us that land is kangaroo and emu dreaming. The land is not nothing; it is part of us, and we are part of that land, that culture, and that law.

I do not mean that for Aboriginal Territorians, but for white Territorians as well. As I said at the beginning, we have invested our children's future in living in a clean Territory. We need to send a strong message to the Howard government that we do not want a nuclear waste dump in our backyard in the Northern Territory. What we sell to international tourists is the beauty and the cleanliness of the Territory, and we need to keep that beauty and the cleanliness here in the Northern Territory.

Madam Speaker, I support the Chief Minister's original motion.

Ms MARTIN (Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, we have had a fairly substantial debate this afternoon on what is a very important motion for the Territory. In my opening remarks, and in what we have heard through the debate, the fundamental issue in what the Commonwealth government has done is about Territorians rights. It is about a trampling of those rights, a steamrolling through very draconian legislation, of aspirations of Territorians to be able to determine their future for themselves. I thank everyone in the House for their contribution. They have been very thoughtful contributions. I will not make particular remarks on contributions which have been made.

However, one of the issues that was referred to in a few of the contributions is the hypocrisy which we have seen from the Commonwealth government in this issue. This is almost separate to the issue of Territorians' rights, a very substantial one and at the heart of what we are doing. However, if you look at where it has come from, that is, the announcement made by Brendan Nelson, the federal Science minister, in June when he was sitting on a drum of low-level nuclear waste - he was probably somewhere in Sydney around Lucas Heights - saying: 'We have made this decision, it is fine. Look how safe this stuff is'. There he was, dangling his legs over the side. He said: 'It is so safe that we are going to take it thousands of kilometres away and put it in the Northern Territory'.

There is the fundamental of the Commonwealth government's argument about what we do with this nuclear waste. If they are arguing, as Brendan Nelson, federal Science minister is, that it is perfectly safe, why not, in keeping with all the best work health and safety guidelines and management of potentially dangerous materials guidelines, keep it close to home where it is manufactured, in an area in Sydney? It has logic. If it is so safe to store, if it will not take up very much space - I told the Prime Minister I could find him some space in Sydney. If he needed Defence land, pop it on North Head, I said. There is a nice bit of land at North Head and there is other Defence or Commonwealth land in Sydney. That is one side of the argument.

The other side is, if radioactive material is a dangerous material - whether it is low, medium or high level - and does need to be isolated and people kept away from it, then how are we going to keep this dangerous material safe in a remote part of the Northern Territory? It does not make sense. That is not providing the best security. In this world where we have been discussing security so much over the last six months, in light of what happened just a week or so ago in Bali, it is an issue.

I challenge the Commonwealth government to say how it is going to keep a very remote facility safe to every Australian's required standard. There is a real conflict there. Either it is safe or it is not safe and, if it is not safe, then keep it close so you can put appropriate security on it. Even though we are talking about the issue of fundamental rights for Territorians, even the arguments surrounding where you situate a nuclear waste facility are ridiculous. If it is safe you can keep it close, and if it is dangerous you should be keeping it close. We do not know what kind of waste it is going to be, but you have to make sure that waste, no matter where you put it, is secure, safe and is not going to damage the environment. If it is somewhere near the Royal National Park in Sutherland near the

ANSTO facility at Lucas Heights, it has to be safe there. It has to be secure. It must not damage the environment. Equally, if it is going to be in the Centre of Australia, those same things apply.

We are not going to have our environment damaged. We are not going to be vulnerable to security issues. This is our Territory; we have to be confident of what is happening. It is an important part of the arguments that surround where this facility should go. More fundamentally, we have seen that this is about a states' rights issue. It is about the fact that we are a territory and the Commonwealth government said 'We do not care, we can override your legislation'.

The use of the word 'draconian' for laws is an interesting one. We have seen that these laws introduced by the federal Science minister are particularly draconian. They simply override Territory legislation and they cast aside some significant federal legislation. Also, there is no appeal mechanism or judicial review in this. Listening to the debate and to that re-statement about judicial review, I thought it was only two weeks ago that COAG was dealing with this same fundamental issue about the laws you put in place and the importance of having, in every law, a process of judicial review. We argued the issue around the COAG table and there was agreement that this was absolutely fundamental to any law; particularly laws that were like the ones we were debating about people's rights and the ability of our security organisations and police to be able to detain people and monitor people. This fits the same criteria and, yet, in this law introduced by the Commonwealth government, none of that applies at all. We do not have any ability from any citizen, let alone a Territorian, to challenge those laws - no judicial review, no appeals. It is a most draconian law and totally inconsistent with the philosophy being espoused by the Prime Minister only a couple of weeks ago.

I was interested to hear that there was some discussion of statehood and a level of blame given to the Labor Party about undermining the statehood process in 1998. I take members back to that time, and where the blame for statehood not working should firmly rest. That has to be with the Country Liberal Party and the then Chief Minister. Looking through some of the documentation from the time - I pay tribute to former Chief Minister, Steve Hatton, who was a stalwart for statehood and spent 12 years with our Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee which dealt with statehood. He was reminding everyone after the failure of statehood what it was all about. He said: 'Yes, one of the campaign slogans at the time was "We want statehood not Stonehood"'.

Let us get straight here about where the real dent to our aspiration for statehood came from.

That was the then Chief Minister who was seen strongly as gazumping the process and using it for his own political purposes. Who was lined up behind him - except the member for Nightcliff at the time, Steve Hatton? The entire Country Liberal Party, all cheering their Chief Minister on. Therefore, let us just get some perspective on what is being said about statehood and the strong support the Labor Party has always had for a proper process moving to statehood; the recognition of all the issues in the Territory that have had to be resolved and dealt with before we actually move to statehood. They are complex. I am amazed that we can have some members of this parliament wanting to rewrite history. I suggest going back to the *Parliamentary Record* - which is a snapshot of some parts of that statehood debate - it would give you a better idea of what in fact did happen. To blame the Labor Party is simply not accurate.

I was very disappointed, at the time, that we did not achieve statehood. However, there were many reasons for it. It was the way the questions were put together, the way our indigenous community was excluded from the debate and, certainly, the one that galled people, particularly in Darwin, was the way that the then Chief Minister just took over the process, shortcut the process, and seemed to everybody in the community just to be wanting to be premier Shane Stone rather than Chief Minister Shane Stone. We saw what happened in the national referendum when it came to being a republic or not. If politicians put their hands all over processes like that, they will go down. Certainly, on a referendum for us like statehood, Shane Stone showed the way on that.

I just received news, which is good news for this House. The CLP Senator for the Northern Territory has just stated on ABC radio he will support the legislation ...

Mr Vatskalis: No, they are not!

Ms MARTIN: He will support their legislation? For a moment, I got excited; I thought we had a small victory ...

Mr Vatskalis: He will not cross the floor!

Ms MARTIN: He will not cross the floor. What more we can say? I have the press release. For a moment, I thought he was going to do it. I have the press release from the member for Solomon today - somewhere on my desk - and it is a disgrace. It has some of the worst arguments I have seen for what, obviously, he is going to do in support of this legislation as well. I was going to quote from it. However, it is an appalling press release that does exactly what we are criticising; saying that there is a definite link between health outcomes for Australia and the Northern Territory

being the site of a nuclear waste dump. I have found it!

He is almost threatening the Territory, which I find appalling, in that, if the Territory legally challenges this federal legislation, then a final decision on the waste management facility will be held up by April, and health services, as we know it in Australia, will fall into a heap and we will, to quote him: 'reduce Australia to third world health status'. That is what he is saying in his press release: 'We will be reduced to third world health status'. He says that unless we agree to this nuclear waste facility that is what is going to happen to Australia. Talk about being conned by the Commonwealth government! We have both members of the CLP - Dave Tollner by his press release today saying: 'We have to do this, Territorians, we have to do this', and now the CLP Senator saying he will not cross the floor, he will stay with the government. He will not represent Territorians and he will not cross the floor. I do not know how the Country Liberal Party can sit in this House and hold their heads up at all. It is a disgrace that your federal representatives are simply doing the Territory in; that they are not standing up.

I have some further clarification on Senator Scullion in case the members of the once-proud Country Liberal Party have missed this. I do not know whether this is a direct quote, but Senator Scullion told the ABC that he thought the federal legislation was 'disgusting', but that he would not vote against it. What a man of backbone and character! Even though he thinks something is disgusting he is still going to vote for it, because that is where he sees his opportunity.

Madam Speaker, this has been a very sad day for the Northern Territory. We have heard words from two members of the Country Liberal Party that, even though they do not like the words 'outrageous' they will support the motion. Yet, at the same time, members - and they have not spoken out in this debate against them - of their own party are going to not stand up for Territory rights and allow the Commonwealth government to override our laws. They are going to allow the Commonwealth government to override the wishes of the vast majority of Territorians and find a site in the Northern Territory for a nuclear waste dump. Fundamentally, what is outrageous in this - there are two aspects to the outrageousness - one is what the Commonwealth government is doing, and one is the Country Liberal Party. There are two elements of outrageous: the Commonwealth government in their attitude to the Northern Territory, and the Country Liberal Party and what a disgrace it brings on the Territory.

There is a challenge for the Opposition Leader here, and a challenge for the political party that

she is a part of; that is, they take action against their two federal members because this is unacceptable. The Country Liberal Party needs to take action against the member for Solomon and the CLP Senator for the Northern Territory for not standing up for Territorians. We saw what happened to the previous Senator; he was disendorsed and lost his support of the party. If you have any qualities of leadership, or any aspirations to stand up for the Territory, I say to the Opposition Leader, this has to be done. This is a disgrace; it is a shame on the Country Liberal Party. A challenge for the Country Liberal Party: stand up for Territorians, where ...

Ms Carney: Why didn't you commence your court action ...

Ms MARTIN: ... stand up for Territorians. It is not the government in Canberra you are standing up for ...

Ms Carney: ... when you had the chance to do it? You sat around ...

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Ms Carney: ... pontificated for four months grandstanding ...

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Ms Carney: You missed it. You dropped us in it. You have dropped the Northern Territory - it is so your problem.

Ms MARTIN: Stand up for Territorians and take action as a party against two disloyal Territorians who are not standing up for the Territory. This is a very important motion. We have actually seen today some real disloyalty to the Territory in two of our federal members. It is a disgrace. It is outrageous.

Madam Speaker, I ask that we have a vote on this very important motion. We support the original motion. We believe the amended motion should be rejected and it is time to have a vote. Let us see where the once proud Country Liberal Party, our opposition in this parliament, really stands.

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, there are two questions before the Chair and I will deal with the amendment first. The question is that the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition be agreed to.

Motion negatived.

Madam SPEAKER: The question now is that the original motion as presented by the Chief Minister be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Aboriginal Interpreter Service

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms McCARTHY (Arnhem): Madam Speaker, I support the ministerial statement on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. Effective communication is vital for all members of society in order to access adequate basic needs of health, education and housing. Simply, to be an informed citizen in this country where access to information and services is a fundamental human right is enshrined in our constitution. It is a right all citizens are entitled to, and yet it is a right that is still relatively young for the indigenous people of this country. I say young because it really is only since the late 1960s that Aboriginal Australians were included as citizens and given the right to vote in a referendum that had an overwhelming yes vote. Compare four decades of the right to vote to well over 200 years for white Australians, even less for white women.

In the 1960s, there was such profound support for the Aboriginal people by white Australians to ensure that every person in this country had equal rights, an opportunity to equally share in the prosperity that this nation was experiencing then, and continues to do so now. If only we could have had the foresight and determination then to establish an Aboriginal interpreter service right across Australia. Where could we be today? Not only would so many languages still exist in strength but Aboriginal people and communities would, no doubt, feel a greater sense of empowerment over their lives. Perhaps even a number of generations of white Australians may have had the opportunity to study an Aboriginal language in school. Maybe I could have had the opportunity to learn my language in school along with the Italian and Indonesian languages that I was exposed to. Just like the member for Nelson, who said earlier in this House today, *'Buon giorno, come sta'* - parliamentary language indeed. I would say *'Buona notte'*, at this time of the day *'come sta'*.

Just over a decade after the referendum, the Northern Territory achieved self-government. At around that time interpreter services in the languages of recently arrived Australians became universal. As the minister stated in this House today, those services were set up to provide valuable assistance for non-English speaking Australians in accessing health, social security, legal services, as well as a range of other government and non-government services. It took a further two decades before an Aboriginal interpreter service was established and, yes, it was under a CLP government, a government that fought long and hard for nearly three decades

against land rights for Aboriginal people and yet, despite this stance, thankfully had the insight to secure and establish an Aboriginal Interpreter Service. For that I say thank you.

It is a service the Martin Labor government is incredibly supportive of and will seek to expand extensively. It is a service that employs nearly 200 active interpreters across 104 languages and dialects. My own language of the Yanyuwa from Borroloola in the Gulf of Carpentaria is unique as linguists have identified it as the only Aboriginal language that has a dialect - one for men and a different one for women. When young boys listen to the language of their mothers or their grandmothers from when they are young, they grow up understanding the dialect of the Yanyuwa women. But when these young boys become young men they then have to start speaking the dialect of men. Sometimes it can be a case for amusement when a young adolescent male starts speaking the women's language. The dialect difference is unique to my language and, sadly, it is one that is perhaps taken for granted because there has not been a concerted effort to hold on to language, nor are there any language lessons in schools or night classes about Yanyuwa or Garrwa language - nor Mara and Kudanji for that matter, the other language of the Borroloola region. I hasten to add here that the Borroloola Language Centre and Papulu Appar Kari Language Centre in Tennant Creek are seeking to address that concern but they do need support. There are still strong speakers of the languages in the Borroloola region. My mother is fluent in all the languages of our homelands and it is from her knowledge of language and culture that I seek to gain deeper understanding of my people.

The member for Nelson said earlier in his response to the statement that non-English speaking communities like the Chinese community can keep their languages strong through their families. He asked why that is not the case in Aboriginal families. The answer is quite simple. It goes to the heart of many troubles plaguing Aboriginal people; that is, the history of dispossession. What we see today is the result of history, of past policies and practices. It cannot be denied nor overlooked. Language was not encouraged, especially for those children removed from their families. How many times have we heard the loss of identity of the Stolen Generation, of how they were unable to maintain their mother's tongue? Even I am reminded of how I need to focus strongly on maintaining my mother's tongue of the Yanyuwa and Garrwa people.

It is so powerful to hear my fellow parliamentary colleague, the member for Macdonnell, speak so fluently in her mother's tongue of the Arrernte and Luritja people. That poignancy is highlighted even more as we stand in

support of a statement on the importance of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service by a minister who is also indigenous. It is, indeed, quite humbling.

It is true that there are complex issues for interpreters especially in translating in the legal system. In Central Australia, Arnhem Land and the Top End region there is enormous reliance on interpreters in the legal system, especially in the courts. I know the pressures that interpreters are placed under when there are difficult cases such as murder cases or cases of a sexual nature. The pressure is great on these men and women who try to bring about better understanding of the western system of law to their fellow countrymen and women, and yet they themselves are often found on the stinging end of criticism or accusations of 'helping the other side'. No one likes to be misunderstood or even misrepresented - and that goes for those 200 courageous speakers of Aboriginal languages right across the Northern Territory who put up their hand to help Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to better understand one another.

I encourage the minister to look closely at further employment opportunities for Aboriginal people on our communities with respect to language. With 70% of indigenous Territorians speaking a language other than English at home, when indigenous people make up 30% of the population, then it is a strong argument for providing work in the area of languages. I urge the Northern Territory parliament, the federal parliament, all politicians present here to consider the employment opportunities beyond the 200 interpreters employed currently - not just in the health and legal system, but go further into boards and committees, government and non-government and even in tourism. Even the steps towards statehood deserve employed interpreters. Have a look at the strength of language in the communications industry through Imparja, and CAAMA in Central Australia, through the Yolngu radio, BRACS communities like TEABBA, the Top End Aboriginal Bush Broadcasting Association.

When Australians travel overseas to Paris, Rome and other romantic European destinations and even to our near neighbours in Asia, languages of those countries are seen as an exciting and enriching opportunity, an experience of another culture. We have our own diverse culture right here with indigenous people right across the Northern Territory.

When Yolngu Matha is taught at Charles Darwin University for those interested to learn, I know I will be signing up. I want to learn about other languages other than my own of the Yanyuwa and Garrwa people. I see it is vital to communicating more effectively with my constituents in northern Arnhem Land. I would like

to learn the Anindilyakwa language of the people of Groote Eylandt whose dreaming and stories or *kujika* is linked so closely with the Yanyuwa and Garrwa people of the *kurdarduku* dreaming, the broлга dreaming. I encourage other members to consider doing the same if they have not started.

I know the member for Blain has spoken of knowing a few words of Yolngu Matha but I urge him not to just stop at a few words. Learn the language and be proud of it. Aboriginal people want to share that knowledge because they know just as I do the more non-Aboriginal people who understand language the better the relationship will be.

I also encourage the minister to consider in his plans for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service that speaking an Aboriginal language be a criteria for those who wish to work with our communities. Why not open the door for public servants to have an opportunity to study an Aboriginal language relevant to their area of work? Why must it be the Aboriginal community that must understand completely the Western system? If we encourage Chinese, Greek and Indonesian speakers for jobs related to those communities, or in negotiations with those countries, why not do the same right here in our own country? I am so sure that such a policy position - Territory and federal - would invigorate pride and respect by all Territorians in speaking a language from the oldest living culture in the world, that of Aboriginal Australians. I urge the Martin government to give it serious thought.

Baginda yamalu yinda, from the Garrwa, Mara, Kudanji and Yanyuwa peoples, *bawuji mawilu bawauji*.

[From my people, the Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Mara and Kudanji, a warm welcome to you all and thank you.]

Mr Deputy Speaker, that was, indeed, parliamentary language.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a matter at the heart of our justice system that a person has access to information about his or her rights, duties and obligations under the law. In the health system, the ability to communicate is often critical to effective diagnosis and treatment. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service is a necessary tool for service delivery in both my portfolios of Health and Justice. I propose to inform this Assembly today of the extent of the use made by my departments of the Aboriginal Interpreter Service.

The Department of Justice recognises the value of delivering justice-related services and information to indigenous Territorians in their own language. Various areas of the department have

regularly utilised the AIS since its inception, and strongly support its continuation. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has a responsibility for ensuring that the integrity of evidence presented to a court in criminal cases is unquestioned. The Director believes it is impossible for his office to effectively carry out its function without the facilities offered by the Aboriginal Interpreter Service and, thus, strongly supports the continuation of the service. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions utilises the Witness Assistance Service and works closely with the AIS in the training of interpreters in legal issues including court processes and the criminal justice system.

The Witness Assistance Service, WAS, also works closely with the AIS in organising the training of prosecutors to develop appropriate skills in working with interpreters. Members of both organisations have given presentations to conferences hosted by the other. WAS arranges interpreters to attend proofing sessions between prosecutors and witnesses to prepare for giving evidence in the court. This includes meetings between witnesses, victims and their families, and prosecutors, to discuss legal issues and specific matters in relation to individual cases, and court appearances to interpret for witnesses in the Supreme Court, the Court of Summary Jurisdiction and bush courts in remote areas.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecution's use of interpreters is now a matter of course. In 2004-05, the AIS was used by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions 178 times. Since 2000, the ODPP has used the AIS on 1100 occasions. The Aboriginal Legal Services, including the Family Violence Prevention Units, used the AIS on 3100 occasions. The service is also used extensively by the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine. The two domestic violence legal services funded by the Department of Justice are encouraged to use the AIS, and have free access to it. The AIS has conducted two training sessions per year, one in Darwin and one in Alice Springs, since its establishment for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution staff - a total of 10 workshops.

The AIS has assisted the Anti-Discrimination Commission by providing interpreters for the translation of its anti-discrimination awareness-raising video into 14 of the most commonly spoken NT indigenous languages. Distribution of the video Territory-wide is almost completed and, as a result, the commissioner has received invitations to visit outlying communities to speak about rights and responsibilities under the *Anti-Discrimination Act*. Without the assistance of the AIS, the commission would be unable to

access qualified interpreters to assist it on remote area visits as the need arises.

NT Correctional Services utilises the services of the AIS on an 'as needs' basis for reception of prisoners, as well as for issues related to welfare, medical and legal matters. Four prisoners have recently successfully completed their Diploma in Interpreting, which was delivered in partnership with the Indigenous Interpreter Service and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education.

The Office of Crime Prevention is currently looking at ways it can utilise the skills and expertise of the AIS in relation to consultation with indigenous communities in and around Central Australia. Once a process has been piloted, and opportunities and barriers revealed, the office will look at ways this can be more broadly implemented. Regional Crime Prevention councils are provided with an annual \$5000 administration grant, and the Office of Crime Prevention encourages the councils to use this funding to access the services of the AIS. The department has also used the AIS services for non-face-to-face interpretation, for example, on a range of fact sheets on changes to the law. In these instances, the AIS has provided useful advice about the content of the message being relayed.

I turn now to Health where understanding information, whether it is spoken or written, is critical to good communication. This is even more important when the language being spoken is not your own, and becomes essential when you are asked to make decisions regarding your health care. There is a huge difference between traditional Aboriginal health explanations and the biomedical model scientific explanations, and how these are understood with the differing world views. Interpreters generally share the same world view as the patients they assist and can provide that vital communication bridge across cultures. In our public hospitals, this is well recognised and efforts to access Aboriginal interpreters have seen an increased regular use of their services.

In all hospitals, Aboriginal interpreters are available on-site for agreed days and times, as well as separate arrangements outside these times for specific patients. Services cover patients in hospital, outpatient clinics, in particular pre-admission clinics, same day surgery and emergency departments, and other key areas as required. Interpreters are used across disciplines and cover communication matters such as medical and mental health assessments; explanations about their condition; consent for surgery or procedures; social issues and family conferences; discharge planning; and information about taking

medications. At times, they can assist with belligerent individuals and can advise staff on appropriate behaviours and cultural practice and help identify what the real issue may be.

In each hospital, there are also Aboriginal Liaison Officers employed by the department. Their role is to provide cultural brokerage and welfare support services and, when applicable, interpreting services for their language group. They are encouraged to do the formal interpreter training course and become registered as interpreting is a specific skill. Aboriginal interpreters provide an interpreter service only and are requested on an as needed basis.

Royal Darwin Hospital has three duty interpreters each weekday morning from the main language groups of the current inpatient population. They do ward rounds, visiting patients of their language group, explaining what an interpreter is as this is a new concept for most Aboriginal people. An interpreter coordinator arranges any bookings and ensures that staff understand how best to make use of an interpreter. Often staff have managed without an interpreter for many years and are unaware how communication can be vastly improved when both sides understand each other properly.

In association with the Sharing True Stories research project, Royal Darwin Hospital has made a video which is used for staff education on how to work with interpreters, addressing an area that has done poorly nationally. In the last 12 months, services at the Royal Darwin Hospital have increased from around 50 occasions per month to currently between 100 to 150 occasions per month where an interpreter is used.

Alice Springs Hospital has increased interpreter access by securing one male and one female interpreter for three mornings a week, instead of booking interpreters as required, although this can still occur. Their main focus will be the key outpatient clinics, Emergency Department and mental health. Katherine District Hospital has increased regular services from one morning per week to five mornings a week. They are also assisting with the translation of written documents such as *Patient's Rights and Responsibilities*, and the *Ten Tips for Safer Health Care*, a national safety and quality initiative.

Gove District Hospital has actively sought interpreter training for one male and one female Aboriginal staff members as they both speak Yolngu Matha, the main language group for the area. There have been difficulties in accessing interpreters in the area. As is often the case, family members provide this service but can become embroiled in the decision making process rather than just interpreting. Tennant Creek

Hospital uses interpreters on a daily basis and expects staff to access the Aboriginal interpreters. As the member for Barkly has noted, there is less take up of Aboriginal interpreters in community health and the proposed Australian government training packages will assist in improving this take up. Mental Health Services access Aboriginal interpreters more easily for in-patients but try to make arrangements for community patients and visits. The hospitals have found having interpreters on-site increases access, and up to half of the formal sessions start spontaneously rather than through formal bookings.

In the community, increased awareness by both Aboriginal people and professional staff can assist in access to the service. We know that it takes special talent to become an Aboriginal interpreter and sometimes we ask more of them than what they are able to provide. This may affect how people view the service. Aboriginal interpreters are being requested more and more and there is a need to increase the numbers in order to cover the language groups that regularly attend the different services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support my colleague in his bipartisan approach to seek support from the Australian government, and I would further add, to continue and increase the Aboriginal Interpreter Service for the Northern Territory.

Mr WARREN (Goyder): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support this important statement by the Minister for Local Government on the Aboriginal Interpreter Service. I know there is bipartisan support for the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to continue and I welcome this support. We, as a government, are proud to be leading the rest of Australia in providing this important service. We are the only state or territory in Australia to have a permanent interpreter service for indigenous languages. As the minister pointed out in his ministerial statement, it has become an important part of the Territory and does provide a more just and equitable society for indigenous Territorians.

It is imperative that this service continue. We do not want to disadvantage or exclude our indigenous Territorians by the cessation of this service, as it is critical to their wellbeing as external pressures are forcing our indigenous Territorians to engage the wider community in service provision and other activities within and associated with their communities. As an inclusive, modern, compassionate society it is incumbent upon us as a matter of ethical principle to ensure that all Territorians are not disadvantaged in engaging with the wider community.

As explained, the AIS has so far been funded on a 50:50 basis between the Territory and the

Commonwealth governments. The Commonwealth funding only extends to 30 June 2006 and continued financial support is not guaranteed beyond that date. At the moment, the main users are in important areas of health and legal situations, but there is an embryonic but growing need in the private sector to engage in meaningful dialogue with our indigenous Territorians. In the future, I can clearly see that as more indigenous Territorians wish, as is their right, to take advantage and participate in our growing economy and move into more joint venture and private sector activities on their land with mining companies and construction companies, as well as tourism ventures, for example, they need to be able to participate on an equal basis and not be inhibited by language barriers. Direct engagement will also enhance a mutual respect and understanding between private sector contractors and miners and their indigenous partners. There is no doubt in my mind that the private sector will take advantage of this service.

A couple of notable examples so far include the current Gove expansion project. Interpreters from the AIS were utilised over the expansion of the mine at Nhulunbuy but have also been utilised more as consultants as well as interpreting for their countrymen. AIS interpreters were also used in the early negotiations regarding the potential gas pipeline from Wadeye to Nhulunbuy. AIS interpreters actually travelled with the mining company to consult with communities along the proposed pipeline route.

I have been advised that DBERD and the AIS have already entered into discussions to focus on promoting and encouraging indigenous economic development throughout the Territory. They are looking at all levels of business and economic development in the communities and regional centres to increase employment opportunities. It is envisaged that with this increase in the work that becomes available due to the economic development in towns and communities there will definitely be an increased demand for the use of interpreters, especially in the tourism industry in such areas as the Cox Peninsula within my electorate of Goyder, and nearby Dundee in the adjacent electorate of Daly.

There is also a huge potential for the likes of Telstra to utilise the AIS such as liaising with communities on appropriate and effective infrastructure and development for these communities. Furthermore, there is a major role for the AIS in facilitating negotiations with the land councils and Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority personnel to promote and develop throughout the Territory. What cannot be denied is that in the five years since its inception, over 10 000 interpreter jobs have already been carried out and this is a success by any measure.

I, therefore, encourage not only the minister and his department to strive to ensure the AIS funding from the federal government continues, but also strongly encourage my parliamentary colleagues from the CLP to lobby their federal parliamentary political colleagues for financial support necessary to ensure that this vitally important service continues and expands to meet not only the needs of today but also the growing private sector needs of tomorrow.

Mr McADAM (Local Government): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all members who have taken the time to speak on this important issue. It is something which, in a way, humbles me because I never thought I would be in this position 20-odd years ago.

It was on an occasion through my involvement with the Aboriginal legal rights movement in South Australia that I became conscious of the need for appropriate communications to occur, particularly in a legal area. At that time, I was a field officer and we would travel throughout the Pitjantjatjara lands. I would travel with a lawyer attached to the Aboriginal legal rights movement, and the magistrates would travel separately as would the police prosecutors. During the course of around two years, I became aware of the different approaches to understanding how people communicated.

Over a period of time, there was a lack of understanding of the cultural and traditional issues of indigenous people. In this particular case, you would always have young indigenous people and older people sitting in court not being aware of what the situation was, and when the magistrate would ask: 'How do you plead?', it was always a case of 'guilty'. No one was there to assist those people to get their point of view across. Equally, that applied in regard to the police as well, as they were just acting on evidence. I guess they operated in a way which, in effect, did not take into consideration the concepts and the views of indigenous people. You also had the magistrates who were imposing a law on people without them fully understanding it.

In a way, I do have a degree of appreciation of some of those difficulties in being able to communicate. The role of interpreters over the years has alleviated some of those issues. However, I agree that we do have a long way to go.

On an individual basis, I want to thank all the speakers. First, the Leader of the Opposition for her bipartisan approach. I understand that she will be talking to her federal colleagues about this matter and seeking their support. I appreciate that and, if necessary, I am quite prepared to talk to them as well on behalf of the Northern Territory

government if they so wish. I thank the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition for her support.

The member for Macdonnell spoke in her mother's language and it was very appropriate that that occurred. I know the member for Macdonnell spoke prior to the lunch adjournment. During the course of that lunch break, I was approached by a number of people who told me that there was an eerie feeling; something that they could not understand. I guess it was because she was speaking in her mother's language. Of course, people did not understand it. This gives us an appreciation of how indigenous people must feel. English is a dominant language and, in almost all circumstances and situations, indigenous people are addressed in English no matter whether they appear in the hospital or in the court. It was a very salutary lesson to many people who may not have understood or appreciated that particular fact.

The member for Macdonnell also reminded me of what occurred in Tennant Creek around 1994-95. People will be aware there were community debates regarding grog issues in Tennant Creek. A wonderful indigenous person by the name of Valda Shannon asked to address a workshop. There were probably around 300 people there; at least 100-odd non-indigenous people. Each of us spoke in regards to issues in question. Valda stood and spoke in a combination of Warlpiri and Warumungu. She spoke about 15 to 20 minutes. Everyone kept quiet. At the end of her speech, the immediate response from the non-indigenous population was: 'What is going on? We do not understand what she was talking about'. Valda, basically, said to them: 'Well, that has been the problem, because you have not been prepared to listen'. Of course, the obvious reason was they did not have an understanding of the Warlpiri/Warumungu language.

Things are changing across the Territory, and I am very much encouraged by the minister for Justice. He has given us some information regarding the extensive use of interpreters by his department and in the health area. I know for a fact that many indigenous people in Tennant Creek act as interpreters - some through this particular assistance and some on a voluntary basis. They do a wonderful job in the area of health.

I would also like to address some of the issues raised by some of the speakers. The member for Arnhem talked about employment opportunities. I agree with you, member for Arnhem. I believe there is a lot of potential for employment opportunities for indigenous people who may wish to become interpreters through the proper training courses or accredited training programs. As you go around the communities, it has become very stark, particularly over the last two months. I

visited something like eight to 10 communities. We all know that one of the biggest issues on indigenous communities is governance issues - management or mismanagement. There are always issues to do with some of the administrative detail. Almost without exception, it was almost right throughout all the communities I went to. I am not going to name this particular community but, on this particular occasion, I asked the community to give me an understanding of what happened regarding the decision that I had to take. They said they did not know. I asked them why. They said: 'No one told us. We could not understand what they were trying to say to us. People did not bother to sit down and explain it to us'. Yet, that community, along with a whole host of other communities, is the first one in the firing line in terms of blame.

You are correct, member for Arnhem, there are some real opportunities for some of the other government agencies and departments, including non-NGOs, to avail themselves of interpreters to ensure that the proper messages are getting across, so that people fully understand the implications of what they are doing. I say this with all honesty because that is one of the biggest issues in regards to some of the governance issues in our communities. The reason is because people do not take the time out to explain situations to people and do not give them access to the proper knowledge. It is all coming from a whitefella perspective and the expectation is that we have told them, they know, and that is it. To me, that is a sad indictment on us as a society, and we have to make every effort to ensure that we allow indigenous people out there in the bush the opportunity to be able to get first-hand information and knowledge so that they can make decisions in the interests of their community.

The other issue which the member for Goyder raised, and I thank him for raising it, was the capacity for indigenous interpreters to be retained by the private sector - referring to the mining industry - in terms of a whole host of development. I know that the mining industry uses interpreters. There are also other projects where they are on indigenous land or where there is a requirement for an indigenous input, so that the knowledge is out there. I encourage the private sector, as I do government agencies, to become fair dinkum in being able to employ indigenous interpreters so the full information is out there and people fully understand what the issues are all about.

There was a whole host of other matters raised by all the speakers. They are all considered, and it is something which this government will pursue and attempt to try and address those issues.

The member for Nelson wanted some questions answered. He asked what funding the

Northern Territory government was going to provide for the AIS. As I mentioned previously, there is a 50:50 arrangement in place at this point in time. The Chief Minister has written to the Prime Minister seeking discussions regarding ongoing funding beyond June 2006 and, subject to those discussions, a decision will be made by the Northern Territory government as to what the funding requirements might be. I give the assurance to the member for Nelson and, indeed, all the other members, that when we get to that stage I will work strenuously to ensure that appropriate funding is provided and that the Aboriginal Interpreter Service continues beyond 2006.

The member for Nelson suggested it was discriminatory that people should pay for the service and government bodies get subsidised. As I understand it, presently, it is the Department of Justice and the health services which are the recipients of this particular program, because of an understanding in the first instance with the Commonwealth. There is also provision for interpreters to be employed by other agencies and departments and the private sector on an as-required basis. It is incumbent upon other government agencies, particularly in those areas where there is a need to ensure appropriate communication with indigenous people, that they make every effort to employ Aboriginal indigenous interpreters.

The member for Nelson also asked what happens to the money when people do use the service. I suspect he means what happens to the money they receive. The majority of that money goes towards paying the interpreters on an as-required basis. Where possible, in all cases, the money is distributed to the interpreters.

In conclusion, I fully appreciate the role of Aboriginal indigenous interpreters. We appreciate the work they do in the community. I know we have many more challenges in being able to ensure that these people are used right across the Northern Territory. I will be working very hard to expand this program so that we get a better understanding, and we give people the knowledge and the capacity to be able to carry out their jobs in a fair and just manner. That is what it all boils down to. The whole issue boils down to us as the Territory respecting indigenous culture and the rights of indigenous people. The Aboriginal Interpreter Service goes part of the way.

I was a bit taken by a comment from the member for Blain a little earlier in his speech when he said that he was speaking to a young person who was a waiter in Alice Springs. He said how proud that young person felt because he was able to walk down the main street in Alice Springs and address the traditional owners or indigenous

people in their own language. That is what it is all about. It is the reason why we should continue to strive as hard as we can to ensure there is a proper understanding; that we give people, both black and white, the opportunity to be able to communicate in a way which brings credit to us in the Northern Territory.

I pay special tribute to Trish Angus who is the divisional head of the Libraries and Indigenous Services, and also Colleen Rosas who did a great job, and last and by no means least, to all those Aboriginal indigenous health workers out there who work so hard. They perform a very difficult task. We have already heard that, sometimes, there is conflict within the indigenous community in the sense of their role. That probably is a challenge within itself, quite apart from being able to provide the service to our indigenous people. One of the things we have to do is promote the role of indigenous Aboriginal interpreters in our communities so that they fully understand and appreciate the important role that they play.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank all the contributors tonight.

Motion agreed to; statement noted.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Turning Priorities into Action - Building Healthier Communities

Dr TOYNE (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is just over 18 months since this government launched its vision on priorities in health and community services. I stand today to update the House on how we are building healthier communities. The Martin Labor government has a solid record in working to improve the health and wellbeing of Territorians. I have stood in this House on many occasions and extolled the great advancements that we have made in key areas in health in particular. I will continue to do so because it is true.

In four years, we have increased funding to the system by 43%; more than 100 extra nurses and 40 more doctors now care for Territorians in every corner of the Territory. NT HealthDirect is providing reassurance and quality advice to families and individuals 24/7, and the list goes on.

Essentially, Territorians can be confident that we have a sound health system run by men and women who are professional, hardworking and caring. You need to look no further for proof of this than the outstanding health response over the past week to the tragedy of the Bali bombings. We stand by our staff and support their endeavours. We are in this for the long haul; to continue to build a healthier system; to learn from our mistakes; and to make responsible decisions

that lead to safe, sustainable services for Territorians.

We are at the beginning of our second term of government and, on a personal note, I am delighted and proud to continue to lead the Health portfolio and to work with the dedicated and talented health professionals around the Territory to build a better health system for Territorians. At the beginning of this second term, it is timely to take stock of where we have come from and where we are going. In doing so, I want to focus on the hard stuff. I also want to advise the House on how this government has created a policy framework and how the Department of Health and Community Services is using this framework to tackle these issues and reform our health system.

I want to begin by returning to where we started. The Martin Labor government inherited a health and community services system on its knees. The Department of Health and Community Services was chronically underfunded in key areas. Previous governments had cut nurse numbers, starved the system of resources and failed to put in place systems for the proper management of resources. We commissioned a no-holds-barred, independent assessment of the department and its activities, and we accepted the majority of the Banskott Health Consulting Report, much of which was daunting to hear. The review drew a stark picture of a system which was sick. It made over 300 recommendations for structural, service and cultural reform. It told a story we did not necessarily want to hear, which we had to hear. We listened and we got on with it.

To shape policy and to guide the expenditure of the extra \$100m we had already invested in the system, in February 2004 government launched its five year vision for health and community services to ensure all Territorians enjoy long and healthy lives, and that we have a health and community service system that is responsive, accountable and effective.

Building Healthier Communities – A framework for Health and Community Services, 2005-2009 articulated a number of commitments and priorities, including many of the recommendations of the Banskott Review. Ten key themes, six service action areas, and four enablers to build a better system were laid down in black and white. I want to take a few moments to explain to the House, particularly as we have so many new members, what these 10 priority areas are, and what some of our achievements have been in each:

1. giving kids a good start in life: for example, we have invested \$2.2m a year in the child health initiative to

deliver better services to children in remote Aboriginal communities;

2. strengthening families and communities: we are supporting and strengthening the links of family and community to help individuals lead healthier lives. I am sure the member for Karama would have more to say in this area;
3. getting serious about Aboriginal health: a five-year action plan for Aboriginal Health and Families articulates a forward-thinking pathway towards core services and cultural security in the way that they are delivered. We have already done much in this hard area, especially in renal initiatives;
4. creating better pathways to services: NT HealthDirect, Hospital in the Home, and the transit lounge, the list goes on;
5. filling service gaps: we now have more specialists – visiting, outreach and resident; the hospice; maternity services (home birthing, Community Midwifery Program and more remote midwives); 100 extra nurses; 40 more doctors; and we have injected significant resources into areas where there was particular pressure, for example, at the Alice Springs Hospital;
6. tackling substance abuse: again I will leave it to the member for Karama to update you on our groundbreaking reforms to tackle petrol sniffing;
7. building quality health and community services: for the first time, all five of our public hospitals are fully accredited as are a number of community care centres and dental clinics. To enhance clinical governance, the department has created the NT Hospital Network, Clinical Reference Groups, and a Quality and Safety Council;
8. creating better ways of working together: by working with all areas of government, and with the community and its organisations, we will build healthier and stronger communities. This is evidenced by the department's outstanding role in its response to SARS, the Asian tsunami, and locally in the relentless work to eradicate the dengue carrying mosquito from Tennant Creek;

9. valuing and supporting our work force: for example, if I focus on nurses, we are phasing out single nurse posts; we launched the Nurse and Midwifery Awards; the department is improving orientation for remote nurses via the Pathways to Professional Practice Program; and is providing leadership training specifically for nurse managers across the Territory; and
10. creating a health information network: for example, the Health Connect trial in Katherine is doing leading edge work; and an e-prescribing pilot and Clinical Resources on Call, a web based repository of reference materials, are proving very successful with clinicians.

Enshrined in the philosophy 'BHC', as it has become known, and underpinning health policy, service planning and delivery are a number of key pillars:

- we plan and support services for all Territorians;
- we will deliver care as close to Territorians' homes as possible;
- we will build and invest in quality services based on evidence and innovation;
- we recognise the value of community and family and the role and responsibilities they have in health and wellbeing;
- we believe in a responsible and accountable system, and in meaningful community engagement; and
- we know that prevention is better than cure, and we will invest in services accordingly.

Building Healthier Communities is a touchstone that provides the Department of Health and Community Services with clear directions and priorities. Rather than prescribing every action, it highlights just some of the things in our five-year agenda within each of the 10 action themes. It spells out where efforts should be focused and how financial resources and the professional skills of staff should be applied. Its integration into everyday life of the department is vital to its success. Ministerial briefings link advice to BHC, ensuring that the department stays focused on government's directions; the language palette and the priorities of BHC have become part of the language of the health system; and the BHC brand

is ever present in public communications; a visual marker and promise of what we deliver.

Systemic reform - the model and process: *Building Healthier Communities*, and the iterative cycle that surrounds and supports it, is a blueprint that shows how government, the public service and the community can work together in turning policy into action. Staff and community engagement is present every step of the way. Of course, where public safety is at risk, government has the responsibility to step in and act, balancing the realities of government with the wishes of the community. At times, governments just have to govern and make decisions. Community engagement is something that governments often talk about, but it is not easy and we do not always get it right. Anyone who has looked in a fair-minded and open way at the Territory's history in this area would see that it is a difficult history marked on occasion by conflict and exclusion.

Part of 'the Territory way' is individualism and self-reliance, which sometimes shades over into cynicism and distrust of authority, including government and government departments. This government is working to address that legacy. Through Community Cabinets, by close contact with our constituents, and via a formal community engagement framework, we are having conversations with our community. In particular, we are committed to a dialogue with Aboriginal Territorians that is more than just hot air. We know that Territorians want to see change, and that things are starting to change.

In this context, I want to reassert this government's commitment to Aboriginal community control. The capacity of a community is vital to success but, wherever a community is in terms of its capacity, or however a community wants to work with us, government and its agencies will work with it in the planning and delivery of services.

As the history of BHC shows, our government has more than a rhetorical commitment to community engagement. The thoughts and views of Territorians and of Health and Community Services staff have been instrumental in the implementation of *Building Healthier Communities*. Following its launch, the second half of 2003-04 saw the entire Department of Health and Community Services mobilise in a consultative planning process. The input of over 2100 people, including those from 185 organisations, from across the Territory helped the department to write business, program and regional plans. These plans also form the basis for partnerships with the non-government sector, the Australian government and other states. This was just the beginning. Each year, as part of its core business, the department undertakes a business planning

process that includes key stakeholders and continues to reinforce BHC and integrate emerging issues into new plans.

A series of 'family' documents including regional plans, *Aboriginal Health and Families: a Five Year Action Plan*, renal and palliative care strategies have also been published that reiterate and expand on the priorities of *Building Healthier Communities*. The value and wisdom of these documents comes from extensive consultation with a range of stakeholders including professionals, peak bodies, consumers, advocacy and support groups. More are on the way. A five-year strategy for rehabilitation services and critical care are currently in development.

Fundamental to the success of the department in implementing BHC has been the introduction of theme leadership and reporting mechanisms. Ten senior members of the department have been appointed to steer the 10 key themes of BHC, and this leadership overcomes 'siloing' in the department and promotes collaboration and the implementation of themes. Theme leaders are also responsible for ensuring priority in business plans to the range of activities and program linkages that will, for example, give kids a good start in life. Government receives quarterly progress reports that detail achievements, hot spots, regional activity, collaboration and what is next. In this sense, we can be confident that our priorities and policy directions are being implemented.

I want to turn now to some of the challenges that we have had to address on the way. It would be easy just to continue to highlight our achievements in health. I want to acknowledge the areas where things have been difficult, where we have had setbacks or re-thought a position to get it right, and where there is still more to do.

Health is a hard business. It always has been and always will be. Occasionally, the system lets people down. When you have a system as large and as complex as ours that is working to overcome the health burdens and geographic challenges that we face, this is inevitable. I do this because, instead of just listing our successes, I want to present an honest picture of the challenges we face and how we try to meet them.

For example, we can all recall the media headlines about building works, staffing numbers and waiting times at Alice Springs Hospital. All of these issues provide opportunities to sell newspapers and for cheap political shots. The reality is that Alice Springs Hospital is amongst the busiest in Australia. Industrial relations have sometimes been fraught as the hospital has struggled at times to fill nursing rosters with

permanent staff, particularly in the critical care areas. However, there are some bigger issues.

First, Alice Springs is the only receiving hospital in a catchment area of one million square kilometres. Second, the hospital is experiencing significant increase in demand. Third, the reality is that it is incredibly difficult to attract staff to Alice Springs and retain them, in an environment where there is a worldwide shortage of skilled health professionals. My concern about these issues is such that I have met personally with the nurses to hear their concerns first-hand.

What are we doing to take the pressure off the hospital and its staff? This government has demonstrated its commitment to Alice Springs Hospital over many months. We have committed \$10m to fix the building works that were commissioned by the previous CLP government; an extra 39 nurses have been employed; and funding for extra staffing increased by \$1.94m in Budget 2005.

A reinvigorated local, national and international recruitment campaign has already yielded over 860 inquiries from nurses and midwives, which have been actively followed up. A senior nurse from Alice Springs and a hospital manager from Tennant Creek are travelling to London this month to interview 200 fully qualified nurses and midwives. A new television commercial promoting nursing opportunities in the Northern Territory will soon go to air and a new web site will be launched.

Under the new NT Hospital Network, the department has created support, professional development and relief arrangements for Alice Springs Hospital by seconding nurses from the Royal Darwin Hospital to Alice Springs. Under the partnership agreement with Charles Darwin University, the department has created more opportunities to grow our own nurses. Alice Springs Hospital already has 164 beds and 24 more are on the way as part of a series of election commitments to the people of Central Australia.

NT HealthDirect is giving quality advice to Territorians to help them decide if they need to go to an emergency department. In the first quarter of operation, the service took nearly 4800 calls away from our public hospitals. The service has exceeded expectations. In its first three months, NT HealthDirect received almost double the anticipated number of calls, demonstrating the effectiveness of the service and public communications, and projected usage rates exceed those of similar long-established services in the United Kingdom and Western Australia. Most important of all, rather than answering phones, doctors and nurses are able to focus on treating the patients in front of them.

There is no excuse for violence or abuse towards staff working anywhere in our health system and I am determined to take a zero tolerance approach to such behaviour. The department has put in place a solid framework to manage aggression against staff and is currently developing a public awareness campaign in partnership with the ANF which supports this message. I certainly had pleasure in announcing this initiative today at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I will continue to meet regularly with the ANF as well as senior officers of the Department of Health and Community Services.

As I said earlier, health is a hard and often emotional business. There has been, and will continue to be, increasing demand and pressure on the health system, especially in the acute sector as we work harder in primary health care, particularly in the bush.

We have invested in the system in many ways not least by increasing funding by 43% in the last four years. However, there will never be enough money in the health system and we will have to keep focused on the areas which will yield the greatest health benefits to the greatest numbers. In an environment of increasing cost pressures, we have to continue to respond to the evidence and invest accordingly in building healthier communities. We have already demonstrated our willingness to do so through a number of election commitments. We have already delivered over 100 more nurses and the next four years we will see the creation of another 75 nurse positions.

The Territory's first hospice opened last month to deliver culturally sensitive support and medical care to people with a life-limiting illness, and their families. As part of a \$33m health package, we will undertake a \$25m upgrade of the Royal Darwin Hospital tower block and open another 24 beds at the RDH. An additional 24 beds will also be opened at Alice Springs Hospital, and we have committed to a \$5m upgrade of the emergency department there. We have expanded Hospital in the Home in Darwin and will extend it to Alice Springs. These initiatives are about building the capacity of our two main hospitals to treat more patients, reduce waiting times, and free up beds.

Many of these commitments are aimed at the three most common complaints about the health system: waiting times at the emergency departments; elective surgery waiting lists; and referral of some people to specialist medical and emergency treatment to other parts of Australia.

By their very nature, our five fully-accredited hospitals are geared to treat the sickest quickest. Our dedicated health professionals, or government, cannot predict what cases will walk or be carried through the door. It is those people

who cannot walk through the door, who are critically injured and need life-saving attention, who have to take priority. This means that Territorians with less acute problems sometimes have to wait to see a doctor or surgeon, whether that is in a context of the emergency department or for elective surgery.

The remoteness of even our major cities means that there is no capacity for emergency by-pass arrangements as there is in other jurisdictions. Add to this our health profile, challenges in attracting and retaining GPs to remote and regional Australia - a federal government responsibility - and it means that the enormous pressure on our hospitals, health clinics, and our emergency departments in particular is unlikely to ease.

It is often what you do not see that really matters - those life saving interventions that happen behind closed doors. Of course, I understand that for any Territorian needing medical attention, for any parent concerned about a sick child who has had to wait, for our health professionals at the coalface, this is cold comfort. However, it is the reality of any modern public health system that there are many competing challenges for the finite resources that are available to us.

We have done much to fix the system through our significant investment in health. We will continue to do so in a planned, evidence-driven way. We have all heard it; many of us have even said it: 'If in pain, get on a plane'. The reality is not that it is not possible to provide all specialist medical services within the Territory. Government, our specialists, surgeons, doctors, and nurses, would dearly love to treat Territorians on Territory soil. But as anyone knows, we still do not have the critical mass to manage the more complex acute procedures safely and sustainably in the Territory. This is a factor of living in our remote, rugged, uncrowded and beautiful Territory. This is the same as any other regional part of Australia. In fact, some rural hospitals in New South Wales divert patients to Brisbane because their major urban hospitals are under too much pressure. Instead, we support Territorians and their carers to travel to have their essential surgery or treatment interstate and we have invested an extra \$0.5m in 2005-06 for this purpose.

How do our hospitals compare to those interstate? When it all adds up, in many ways we are doing well in health. This is evidenced by the recent report card of our public hospitals in the Australian government's *State of Our Public Hospitals* report released in June 2005. This annual examination shows service trends and performance of public hospitals at state/territory and national level. Measured on a per capita

basis, the Northern Territory has more hospital beds, admissions, elective surgery admissions, and more emergency department presentations than any other Australian jurisdiction - proof that the NT hospital system is one of the busiest in the country, and that we have injected significant funding into caring for Territorians.

In 2003-04, the NT had:

- the highest public hospital recurrent expenditure per person in Australia; we spent \$1223 per person, more than double the Australian average of \$552 per person and an increase of 58% from 1998-99;
- the highest number of hospital beds per capita in Australia; 3.8 beds per 1000-weighted population compared to the national average of 2.47;
- the highest number of emergency department presentations; 628 presentations per 1000-weighted population, more than three times the national average of 202, and
- the most elective surgery admissions per capita in Australia; 34 elective surgery admissions per 1000-weighted population compared to the national average of 26.

Even when things are not the responsibility of this government or are beyond our control, we have shown that we are prepared to step up to the plate and persevere in working collaboratively to find a solution. Take the situation in Tennant Creek where residents have not had a general practitioner for many months. GP services are an Australian government responsibility. Nevertheless, the Department of Health and Community Services has worked collaboratively with the mayor, the Division of General Practice and with other stakeholders to get a result. The Royal Flying Doctor Service has now agreed to provide GP services for the town and this will be implemented as soon as arrangements can be finalised. In the meantime, the Tennant Creek Hospital has expanded its services to cope with the health needs of local people and visitors. The Department of Health and Community Services will also provide a fully fitted room to the GP service. I commend the member for Barkly who has been tireless in his advocacy for better health services for the town and the region.

We will continue to press the Australian government to fulfil its responsibility to provide access for Territorians to bulk-billing general practitioners. After all, this is often the reason why many Territorians present at our emergency

departments with health problems that can and should be treated in the community.

Difficulties in attracting and retaining GP services in the Territory are another reason why this government launched NT HealthDirect. Again, it comes back to maximising our resources to fill service gaps, thinking creatively and using tested models of service delivery based on evidence and need.

This government is here for the long haul and is determined to resolve challenges as they arise, which currently includes our ambulance service. St John Ambulance is a great institution. In the Territory, the men and women of St John do a great job and provide quality services to Territorians. Yet, there has been much public debate about ambulance services. We know that, just like the health system as a whole, their part of the system is under pressure. We want to sort this out for the good of all Territorians who need to know that they have a safe, sustainable ambulance service into the future. That is why we have commissioned an expert review to get a full and objective picture of the ambulance service's needs and options. This review is a big step. It is about what the future of a safe, sustainable ambulance service looks like, including options of who will deliver them to Territorians. It would be irresponsible for us to take decisions of this magnitude without independent expert advice. Whatever the outcome of the review, the government will ensure that Territorians will continue to receive quality ambulance services.

I raise this as it is a topical example of how this government is not afraid to tackle the hard issues. It lies at the heart of our approach to government which is responsible, evidence-based, practical as well as compassionate.

Turning now to the second term agenda: what are we going to be doing as we move into this term of government? Part of the success of the *Building Healthier Communities* model is that its intent and principles form a central, stabilising stake in an iterative cycle of policy formulation and implementation. This government recognises that, in order to deliver responsive health services to meet changing needs, its policy framework needs to evolve. While *Building Health Communities* is a five-year framework, we cannot afford for it to remain static. It is a living, breathing document, derived from the ideas and opinions of professionals and the public, and it will continue to be so.

In our second term, we will cement and consolidate initiatives and reforms from our first four years. We need to make sure we are getting it right and we need to do that now. I have seen the problems faced in indigenous communities and

know the importance of evidence and logic to find the solutions. The changes required to impact on the health status have no quick fix or easy answer.

As Health Minister, I have committed this government to igniting a generational change in the Territory. To put it simply, I want the next generation to be much healthier than the last. We have implemented the Child Health Initiative based on the clear scientific evidence that what happens to babies before they are born and during their first years can shape the rest of their lives. By addressing these maternal and child health priority areas of effective ante and postnatal care, improved nutrition and child growth, adequately resourced child health work force particularly in remote communities, and standardising routine maternal and child health monitoring, treatment and referral protocols and improving the timeliness of interventions, we are working on reducing the burden of preventable chronic disease and, in turn, providing a high return for health investment.

Over the coming months, we will reshape and recast *Building Healthier Communities* to meet the current and emergent environment, to continue to build on what we have already achieved, and to take into account the promises we made to Territorians at the recent election. In addition, we will continue to engage with our stakeholders and the community. Part of this is talking openly and honestly about the reality of running a complex, pressured, modern public health system. Part of it is acknowledging when things do go wrong and learning from it when they do. By 'telling it how it is', by being honest about where we are doing well and where we need to do better, we will remain a government that is transparent and accountable.

Another aim will be to tell the general public about what we can offer and what we cannot and why. We need to continue to deliver innovative and integrated services, and explain how Territorians can get the most out of their health system. This includes appropriate use of facilities like our emergency departments which are already under enormous pressure. Of course, we will continue to fiercely advocate for the Territory at the national level and strengthen the partnerships that we have forged. Rather than a focus on the headlines, we want to create room for honest examination of this system as a whole, and I invite the opposition to take part in this debate.

In conclusion, we have achieved much but we still have much more to do. Yet again, we are in this for the long haul and we want to get it right. Before I finish, I acknowledge and thank the enormous efforts of staff and our community partners in the implementation of *Building Healthier Communities* thus far, and I look forward to their collaboration in the next stages.

Effective government policy is guided by the needs of its citizens and the best available evidence. We are a government with a vision, but we have proven that we are not a government driven by superficial good intentions or glossy booklets. We are a government tackling the responsibilities of government, getting its hands dirty, engaging the community, and grappling with the responsibilities of the difficult area health inevitably brings. We are a government that is not afraid to acknowledge when things go wrong, and to rethink a position when the evidence and the professionals tell us that is what we should do.

Building Healthier Communities encapsulates a vision which is fuelled by pragmatism. Part of this is improving the prognosis of the sick system that we inherited.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of this statement.

Ms LAWRIE (Family and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I endorse the statement made by my colleague, the Minister for Health, about the record of the Northern Territory government in building healthier communities.

The *Building Healthier Communities* framework is, of course, just one part of a much broader approach to achieving the vision of this government for communities that are safe and more inclusive, and where people have greater equality of opportunity and access to the resources they need to live productive and satisfying lives. This will mean better outcomes for all in relation to health, education, employment and social wellbeing.

The Family and Community Services portfolio covers the program areas of Family and Children's Services, Aged Care and Disability, Mental Health, and Alcohol and Other Drugs. The portfolio plays an important role in protecting the rights of the most vulnerable people in society. It provides support to family members and carers. It seeks to engage directly with families and communities in developing strategies to tackle important social issues impacting on family and community life, such as violence and substance abuse. In carrying out this important work, the Martin Labor government acknowledges the independence and vital role of the community sector, and recognises the longstanding contribution community organisations have made to building communities, delivering services, and addressing economic and social disadvantages.

One measure of the significance of the community sector contribution, and of our recognition of their role, is the fact that, during the 2004-05 year, \$54.7m in funding for community-based services was provided through

my portfolio to about 250 organisations throughout the Northern Territory.

There is no doubt that this government faces significant challenges. Over the past decade, there have been major changes in aspects of family life, as well as changes in broader social conditions affecting families. There has been an increasing level of demand for services and a growing complexity in the type of issues confronting government.

The need for improvement in health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians has been described in *Building Healthier Communities* and its sister document, *Aboriginal Health and Families*, as the greatest challenge for Health and Community Services. The *Building Healthier Communities* framework provides guidance and support in maintaining an appropriate focus and approach in meeting these challenges. It emphasises that the task of promoting and protecting the rights and wellbeing of individuals cannot be achieved without the existence of strong families and communities. A balance must be struck between promoting the rights and freedoms of individuals, and the function of existing care networks between meeting the immediate needs of individuals for treatment or crisis intervention, and being proactively engaged with individuals, families and communities to promote wellbeing.

The framework also highlights the importance of reforms to health and community systems if better outcomes are to be realised. Developing the skills and capacity to work together, whether across programs, departments, or between sectors will be essential. Changes to legislation can help to promote new ways of doing things and strategic partnerships help to create the right sort of relationships needed to get the job done.

Over the past 18 months, there has been a concerted effort within Family and Community Services to achieve a better balance in the allocation of resources towards prevention and early intervention, while at the same time ensuring treatment and intervention services are maintained to a high standard.

A start has also been made in carrying out other necessary reforms to the community services system. These reforms include three major initiatives that have implications for all community service programs. These initiatives illustrate the commitment and determination of this government to making the fundamental reforms necessary to improve outcomes for all Territorians. I would like to take a moment to talk about these three initiatives before going on to describe some of the other progress we have made in meeting challenges in three of the service action areas identified in *Building Healthier Communities*.

Strategies for working together: these three initiatives represent a new approach to partnership development that moves beyond the signing of service agreements to redefining relationships and developing new ways of doing business. In April of this year, the Northern Territory and Australian governments signed an overarching agreement on indigenous affairs. This agreement establishes new arrangements over the next five years for working together and in partnership with Aboriginal people and communities in order to take action and address entrenched levels of disadvantage among Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

Schedule 1 of the agreement commits the governments to work together on improving early childhood outcomes, improving access to education, preventing family violence, and tackling substance abuse. During the past financial year, 2004-05, the Northern Territory government announced that a recurrent indexation formula will, in future, be applied to the Territory portion of any funding provided by the Department of Health and Community Services. This action was in response to representations from the community sector that, over a period of many years, the real value of funding had significantly declined. This trend, combined with current cost pressures, threatened the financial viability and sustainability of the entire community sector. This new funding formula will help existing funding maintain its real value over time. It will result in funds being indexed at the rate of 4.15% during this financial year, 2005-06.

During the past financial year, 2004-05, the Territory government also developed a partnership framework with the non-government sector. 'Common Cause' sets out a basis for shared understanding and more consistent practice in relationships between the Northern Territory government and the community sector. Within this whole-of-government framework, the Department of Health and Community Services has entered into negotiations with the Northern Territory Council of Social Services to address work force development, another key issue relevant to the viability and sustainability of the community sector. A funded project is to be developed around the goal of improving the recruitment and retention of a skilled community sector work force. Strengthening and developing strategic partnerships will provide a boost to the current focus on reform and development.

I will now describe some of the progress my portfolio has made in meeting the challenges in three service action areas.

Strengthening families and communities: there has been a wide range of activities relevant to this service action area. The initiatives I will talk about today are merely selected highlights; however, together they illustrate the breadth of the reforms

undertaken. At the most basic level we have provided an opportunity for increased community input into policy and service development through the Family and Community Services Advisory Council. This council complements the work of the Disability Advisory Council. It serves as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas about the needs of Territory families and communities, and as a source of advice in developing appropriate strategies.

A number of initiatives recognise the need to support parents in the vital role of bringing up their children. During last financial year, 2004-05, this government facilitated a 7.5% increase in the number of child-care places, and minimised the cost of child care to parents through the distribution of \$2.94m in Northern Territory child-care subsidy to licensed child-care centres. In addition, the Office of Children and Families established Parentline, a confidential telephone counselling service which can provide immediate assistance for parents and family members. Any time, any place, people can call and get the assistance they need. The award winning Northern Territory Families web site provides additional information about children and young people's development and the common issues parents confront. In addition, increased support was also provided to foster parents by indexing the payment rate according to the consumer price index and, for the first time, funding the Northern Territory Foster Carers Association to employ a development officer.

As my colleague, the Minister for Health, has outlined, this government inherited a service system which was chronically underfunded to meet both existing needs, or to undertake the necessary reforms to meet the priority areas and challenges that we identified in *Building Healthier Communities*. In response, funding for the Family and Community Services and Mental Health areas has been significantly increased in order to improve the quality of existing services and to extend the range of services provided. We have also increased funding to the important areas of Disability Services.

Funding for the FACS program in the past financial year, 2004-05, was increased by \$2.8m to provide for improved child protection services as part of a \$53m package over five years to improve the response to child protection concerns, redevelop out-of-home care services, and develop intensive family support services. The Homestrength program was allocated \$0.5m. Homestrength is a Darwin-based program to help families in need and at-risk youth. In addition, several Aboriginal Resource Workers were employed to work with communities in their region to build local solutions and strategies. In order to support and enhance the process of reform, draft

legislation has been developed to provide a more contemporary legislative framework for child protection that promotes prevention, early intervention and support to families as well as protecting children from abuse and neglect. This new legislation that I will bring forward in the future will help to reinforce that child protection is indeed everybody's business.

Giving kids a good start in life: the importance of children's early years is now widely recognised and the benefits of supporting young children and their families is well documented. Family and Community Services has an important role to play in shaping early childhood experiences through the quality of child care, parenting support, child protection and family support services provided to children and their families.

Together with early childhood education and child health services, they amount to a significant existing investment in fostering the growth and development of young children. The Department of Health and Community Services and the Department of Employment, Education and Training have together developed the early years framework to facilitate greater coordination and possible integration of these services. The comprehensive children's services project at Moulden Park Primary School is one example of an attempt to coordinate the provision of child and family services in a school setting with the involvement of families, the school community, and service providers. As well as improving the coordination and integration of services, the project has also been successful in attracting other funding which has increased the range of services available to children and their parents.

An evaluation has provided some evidence of improved outcomes for children and an increase in their level of parental involvement in the school. It is providing valuable information that is supporting possible extension of the model to other sites such as Karama Primary School and Maningrida Community Education Centre.

Tackling substance abuse: substance abuse has been identified as one of the most significant issues confronting Territorians, and in particular, Aboriginal families and communities. It has an adverse effect on long-term health outcomes, has a devastating impact on family relationships and, in many cases, is a significant contributor to community dysfunction. Early in the week, I spoke in response to the Treasurer's statement on the alcohol framework and detailed the work my department undertakes in providing treatment and services to those experiencing the harmful effects of alcohol. I will not repeat that today but, suffice to say, that the implementation of the alcohol framework is a core aspect of our commitment to tackle substance abuse.

One of the action items in the tackling substance abuse section of *Building Healthier Communities* is to explore the options of legislative reform to combat petrol sniffing. That action item had followed from the interim report of the substance abuse committee of this parliament. That was where we were at 18 months ago. Since then, it has been 18 months of action. Not only have we explored it, our volatile substance abuse legislation has passed through parliament and comes into effect early next year. We are backing this legislation with \$10m worth of treatment programs and services right across the Territory. This money is already flowing. By June of this year, \$1.36m had been spent in remote areas for new treatment and rehabilitation services and to begin the process of providing information and conducting community planning. A further \$2m will be expended this year.

Tenders have been called for residential treatment centres in Darwin and Alice Springs which provide treatment programs dedicated to people with chronic volatile substance abuse problems. These services will be the first ones of this type in Australia. There is a long way to go but we have taken some pragmatic, bold and necessary steps towards tackling this tragedy. Sadly, we do not have bipartisan support for our fight against petrol sniffing. The CLP made it very clear that they adamantly opposed spending \$10m on tackling petrol sniffing. They went to the election this year with a plan to scrap it. It is their choice. It is sad that, despite all the attention that the scourge of petrol sniffing is receiving, we are still having to go it alone without bipartisan support.

In closing, the new approach to partnership development, together with the other initiatives and reforms I have described, demonstrate that while there is some way to go things are truly beginning to move in the right direction. I acknowledge the dedication, passion and commitment of the staff within government and in the broader community sector. These people often work in very difficult areas in very difficult circumstances every day of their working life. I look forward to working with them in continuing the progress that has already been made towards building healthy communities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe there has been agreement between the opposition and the government to adjourn the statement this evening. The opposition's health spokesman is on leave of absence due to some tragic circumstances in Alice Springs. I move that the statement be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms LAWRIE (Family and Community Services): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to start by sending my thoughts and best wishes to those members of the Pakistani, Indian, and Afghani communities who have been affected by the devastating earthquake of last Saturday. With real fears that the death toll of this terrible natural disaster may well exceed the estimate of 40 000 people, there are many in our local community who have loved ones, family and friends in some of the worst affected areas.

My good friend and President of the Islamic Society of the Northern Territory, Dr Waqar Ahmad, has told of the miraculous story of his auntie who lost her hilltop house; his cousin and three children who were trapped inside the rubble of their house until the Pakistani Army was able to pull them out safely; and his elder brother who was trapped under a collapsed wall of his factory - but all still alive and well.

While the world gathers to send in assistance, the people of the Northern Territory will, no doubt, rise to the occasion if required. I have heard that the majority of the Pakistani community of Darwin who have relatives in Kashmir are having difficulties contacting their loved ones. While communication links are damaged it will take time for contact to be established. All we can do is hope and pray to God for the safety of all.

I also take this opportunity to express my best wishes to those of the Hindu faith who are preparing at the moment for the celebration of Diwali, the celebration of light. The Hindu religion is the oldest religion in the world, the major religion of India and the second most prominent religion in Sri Lanka. In Darwin, there are around 400 Hindus originating from different parts of the world. The celebration of Diwali will be held by both the Hindu Society and the Indian community, and I will be very pleased to take part in the celebration that will be held by the Indian community at Nightcliff High School.

A Hindu temple is located at 44 Patterson Street in Malak, and a Hindu Society, which was established in 1988, has invested thousands of dollars in building the temple, the car park and landscaping the area. The temple has been operating for 12 years and, on 13 November this year, a celebration called Kumbavisagam will be held to revitalise the powers of the deities in the temple.

Diwali is a celebration of victory of right over evil, celebrated as the festival of light, signifying a

bright future. This festival is celebrated in a colourful manner in many countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Fiji, Bali, and many African countries. I know there will be a large number of Territorians who will be preparing for this wonderful festival. I wish them all the best for the coming year.

I now come back to my electorate in Casuarina. I had the pleasure of being invited to share in the Dripstone Children's Centre inaugural community sausage sizzle on Friday, 13 September. The Dripstone centre is located at Ellengowan Drive and provides a fantastic service for hundreds of kids from Casuarina and other neighbourhood areas. Members of the committee which runs the centre asked me for a donation to buy a barbecue, and I made a substantial donation. I was very pleased to see the barbecue in full swing cooking sausages. I have to tell you, though, that I felt very embarrassed when I saw the plaque they put on the barbie which they bought with my donation. It is called 'Kon's Cooker'. I thank them very much for this privilege. It was a great night. They had the fantastic band and all the young kids had a great time dancing to the beautiful songs the band performed. I wish them all the best.

Nakara Primary School renovations, as I said before, have been finalised at a cost of \$2m. The staff and students are really enjoying the new facilities and the comfort of the Stage 1 upgrade completion.

Last term's achievement awards went to Emily Moo, a Year 3 student, and Madalena Foo in Year 6/7G. I will be presenting those students with their achievement awards tomorrow at their assembly. I was unable to attend the assembly on the last day of school last term due to my commitments in Indonesia.

I also visit the Alawa School in my area, and I am checking the upgrades regularly. I am very happy to say that the steel work for the roof is now in place and the upgrade is progressing fantastically. At the end of the term, the new upgraded facilities will be ready to be utilised.

I was also delighted to be involved with the Alawa Primary School community during their recent Literacy and Numeracy Week celebrations. The week started off with every class from the Upper Primary, Lower Primary and Early Childhood contributing towards a rolling story. The storybook written by Alawa Primary students is called *Adventures in Pumpkin Land*. The book began with Miss England's Room 7 students and finished with Mrs Neve's Room 6 students. The week ended with a huge celebration where everybody in the school community, including teachers, students and staff dressed as their

favourite book character. Some of the characters I met included Mary Poppins, Tigger, a Jedi Knight and Charlie from the Chocolate Factory. Everybody was invited to a final lunchtime celebration barbecue. I was very impressed to see so many parents, family members and friends supporting their children and the school community by sharing in the spirit of Literacy and Numeracy Week and enjoying the barbecue hosted by the school.

Dripstone High School organised, as they do every year, a Crop and Colour, and that was another successful day. Of course, people volunteer, collect money and then have their hair cut or coloured. My friend and colleague, the member for Wanguri, was there and he dyed his hair green and red. He looked very spectacular. He said that he was not game to cut his hair fully because he was afraid that it would never grow back again, and I understand that fear.

This year's funds raised went to the Down Syndrome Association and the Bone Marrow Donor Institute, with approximately \$1500 raised for each charity. This is another great effort by the students and staff who got involved at Dripstone. It is a fun-filled event that generates a lot of interest each year, and the students really enjoy it especially when staff members cut or colour their hair. Dripstone High recognises the importance of supporting the community and, over the past five years, has raised more than \$30 000 for charities such as the Cancer Council, the Bone Marrow Donor Institute, the Down Syndrome Association and the Leukaemia Foundation.

Still on Dripstone High, I send my congratulations to Kylie Wells, a Year 12 student who won a place in this year's Australian International Space School in Adelaide during the mid-semester break. The Australian International Space School educational program highlights Australia's role in space science and astronomy, using scientists and specialists in these fields of study. The school is aimed at informing and advising students about career options in space science and technology. The students were given a tour around the restricted areas of Woomera's Rocket Range, and also viewed a Zuini Rocket Launch. Night-time astronomy sessions were held for interested students who were able to view various star clusters and a close-up of the planet Mars. Kylie was the first Dripstone student to attend and was a fine ambassador for her school. I was very pleased to offer a donation towards Kylie's fundraising for this trip. Obviously, space is not the final frontier for Kylie but I believe it is the beginning of a fantastic career.

The 25th birthday/reunion celebration for Dripstone High School in the electorate of Casuarina was postponed from Saturday,

1 October to Saturday, 29 October at 7 pm until late. It promises to be a night of entertainment with a buffet meal and an auction with many prizes. If Mr Greg Cilento is the auctioneer, I am pretty sure I will be leaving the premises with quite a few things under my arm, to the horror of my wife. He always manages to get some money out of us to support his school. He is a very good auctioneer: you cannot scratch your nose or your head, you always finish up buying something you did not want. I am looking forward to attending the 25th year celebration. Dripstone High School is one of the finest high schools in Darwin, with excellent facilities and excellent teachers and it provides fantastic educational opportunities for students in the area.

I would like to close now, but I will end on a very sad note. In the past few months, I have seen two very young men in my electorate losing their lives in traffic accidents – two tragic events. Both the young men were well known in the community, both attended Dripstone High School, and both were very young, about 18 or 19 years old. The latest was Kosta Passas who died after a very sad accident in Marrara. As a father, I can understand the pain and suffering of the parents when you have children and you raise them up with all the difficulties and all the dreams, until one night, unfortunately, the police knock on your door to bring you the sad news.

I congratulate my colleague, the member for Johnston, for his initiative in starting the new campaign for seat belts. Sometimes we have to show some really hard advertisements to put the message in the head of the people. I will never forget the advertisement about the person who drinks the last beer, jumps into the ute with his son, does not pay attention to the stop sign and a big truck comes and kills them. It will always stay in my mind.

This new advertisement produced by the department is absolutely fantastic. It shows the last few seconds before a person who is not wearing a seat belt is going to die. It says to this person what he is going to miss out on. He is going to miss out seeing his kids again, and listening to the voice of his wife, and when he tries to put on his belt it says it is too late now and it is really tragic. It does not show any blood and guts but it strikes a message really hard.

I know we have young people who have very fast, powerful machines, driving late at night on slippery roads, not experienced and getting into difficulties. Not wearing a seat belt can be the last straw that can cause death.

I encourage all members to enforce that message through messages in their newsletter. Our newsletters are distributed to every single

house in our electorates free of charge. If we put in the message, inevitably they will see it. If not 100%, even 60% or 70% of the people will see the message and, if it stays in their mind, we have achieved something. If we save one life by putting three lines in a newsletter, that is the best achievement in our whole electoral life and I believe that.

I am very sad and I would like to pass my sympathy and commiserations to the family of Kosta Passas. Hopefully, we will not see such tragic events repeated on our roads again.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I concur with the words of the member for Casuarina. That is a good idea; I have a newsletter as well. I do not know whether we can get a printed advertisement about wearing seat belts, but it is an excellent idea. There have certainly been far too many young people killed recently, especially on Darwin roads. I thank the minister for those words.

I thank the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage for allowing us to have some people from her department - I think they are from your department - at a meeting, which I could probably say cynically I organised. However, I will not go into that, I will just say a meeting which was held at Girraween Primary School on Tuesday, 27 September. There was Trevor Haig and Des Yinfoo from Water Resources, and Paul Heaton from Power and Water. I would like to especially thank them because they put a terrific amount of work into that meeting. I wrote to the minister earlier about that matter and I have here the PowerPoint presentations they put together for us which we have printed and sent out to quite a number of people who were at the meeting.

There were nearly 200 people at that meeting and it just showed the interest in water in the rural area. There were many people like me who are struggling to pump water out of the aquifer because the aquifer is so low. Admittedly, I have an old bore and it is only at a moderate depth, but there were many people in similar circumstances and they would be struggling to pump more than about an hour a day. Gardens and lawns are certainly not something that some people can afford to spend too much water on at the moment.

It has been a long Dry Season. I see big clouds out there today across the other side of the harbour. Many people in the rural area would love a couple of big storms. It would allow time for the aquifer to recover a little.

There are other pressures on the aquifer at the moment. The mango season is in full harvest, there is a lot of water used in horticulture, and so this is the time of the year when the aquifer is at its

most delicate, you might say. In fact, one of the charts the Power and Water people gave us was a breakdown of how much water is used in the rural area from the aquifer: 16% is used from Power and Water's production bores; 25% is used from rural domestic; but the biggest use is actually from agriculture and horticulture at 59%. Even though people have some concerns about the amount of water the production bores use, they have to put that into perspective. There is quite a lot of water used for horticulture and agriculture.

There were some issues raised and many questions asked, and all the speakers gave extremely good answers to those questions. One of the questions that people were looking for an answer for was whether the government is going to put meters on their bores and if they were going to be charged for the water used. Power and Water has said definitively no. I think the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport made a statement in Alice Springs last year saying the government was not going to have meters on bores. Most people accept that. Ten years ago, if you had spoken to rural people they would have probably lynched anyone who mentioned bores being metered.

Trevor Haig from Water Resources spoke about the need to get accurate information on how much water was in the aquifer because it is a guessing process. They could send a survey out and ask people how many fruit trees they have, how big a garden, how big a lawn, how many times you have a bath, etcetera. That would be just an approximate amount by which they could establish how much one household may use. What they wanted was for people to voluntarily put a meter on their bore so they could get an accurate cross-section of the rural area to find out how much water is actually taken out of the aquifer. They could then start to do proper modelling and planning for new subdivisions and find out how much water we can use without having an effect, especially on environment and also on people who presently use the water.

It was pleasing that when Trevor Haig asked how many would be willing to put a meter on their bore, about half the people there immediately put up their hands. I do not think you would have got that response 10 years ago. People would have seen that this was a prelude to being charged for water. What is happening is that people are becoming more concerned about the use of water. That was shown by the number of people who turned up and raised hands to say 'Yes, we are concerned and we would be willing to put a meter on our bores to measure the amount of water'. That was a really positive thing that came out of the meeting.

A couple of other things came out of the meeting. A number of people asked: 'Why isn't

the government building a new dam?' The government has said it is still looking at 2020 to 2025 before we need another dam likely to be at Adelaide River called the Warrai. I would be interested to know whether the department of Infrastructure and Transport has done the preliminary work required for the building of the dam. This dam has been on the drawing board, you might say, for quite a number of years. I have not seen an environmental impact statement; I am not sure whether they have ever called for one. Has the engineering design been sorted out, the geology of the area, native title and sacred sites, etcetera? Has all that been done? It would be nice to know that when the time comes to build this dam, we do not have to wait around. If it needs to be built, we need to make sure that all those conditions are done early and not late.

The government is obviously not ready to build a dam at the moment. Some people think that they should build it right now. It will be at least a \$100m dam. It would hold twice as much water as Darwin River; it would be a fairly enormous body of water. It is a decision that the government is going to make based on population growth, and population growth in the Northern Territory is not that high. You are talking about a slow population growth. Somewhere along the line, the government is going to have to say: 'This is the time when we start to build this dam'.

What they are doing in the meantime is looking at putting an extra metre on Darwin River Dam. In fact, in today's paper you will see an advertisement placed by Power and Water which asks for companies to put in tenders to look at the feasibility of putting an extra metre on Darwin River Dam. I presume what they need to do is work out whether the dam wall - which is much higher than one metre above the existing level - will satisfactorily hold back another metre of water. That would add quite a bit of water to the Darwin water supply - I think about 10 000 megalitres, which is about two-and-a-half times the amount of water that comes out of the production bores in the rural area.

Most people would like the production bores to not be used as much as they are. However, Power and Water made an interesting comment as to why we have water coming from bores in the rural area. Most of us have believed that (1) they are trying to put off building the dam, and (2) they are mixing it with water to make the Darwin water softer because Darwin River water is acid and the water coming out of the ground is alkaline and it makes softer water. Power and Water brought up a very interesting reason as to why we need the bores in the rural area; it is an alternative water supply for Darwin if something goes wrong. For instance, if there is an algae bloom, a pump breaks down or the pipe bursts, we have a supply.

We have enough bores out there to supply Darwin and Palmerston with at least the basic water needs.

In the days where terrorism is a real threat and, unfortunately, we have people who probably would be quite willing to poison water supplies, it makes good government policy to have a secure secondary water supply into a big city. People are more at ease with the concept of having 'their' water, as we call it, being pumped into the Darwin water supply system. There are about three bores going at the one time, even though there are more bores there. However, they circulate those bores to make sure they are still operable. I imagine if there was a problem with Darwin River Dam, all the bores would come on-line.

There is certainly some concern about drawing too much water and the effect, not so much the aquifer, but on the environment. Places such as Black Jungle and Howard River flow for a reasonable time of the year. Black Jungle requires a swampy, wet area to keep it alive. As you know, Black Jungle is the home of the endangered species – the name of the palm has just gone past me. Anyway, there is an endangered palm species in that area and it is a very important area, which is why it is a conservation park. We have to assess whether the continual number of bores being sunk, especially domestic bores with new subdivisions, could have an effect on Black Jungle. The palm is *ptyschosperma bleeserii*. I should have remembered that. It is unique to the Litchfield area.

We have to have enough water for horticulture; mangoes are one of our big industries. The interesting thing is that people have riparian rights; therefore, if you are near a creek you have the right to take water for domestic or stock use. That is one of the rights you can have with a bore. The area which, I suppose, is under some scrutiny in horticulture is commercial use of water which normally is not allowed under riparian rights. However, in the case of the rural area or the Darwin water region, the government some years ago made it an exemption that horticultural people did not have to get permission unless they were pumping water from the aquifer at more than 15 litres per second from their bore. What you have now, of course, is that horticulture is one of the main removers of water. Whether there is going to have to be some discussion in the future about - maybe not metering bores so much - but actually putting limits on the amount of water that can be taken from the aquifer in the horticulture region which might require more efficient use of water, I do not know. These are issues which were raised.

There is talk that you could still use Manton Dam. The problem with Manton Dam is that it is

used for recreation - water skiing, swimming, paddling – therefore, there is a human use in that area. If it was to be brought on-line it would have to have far more chemicals in it and a new plant to purify the water, which they estimate at about \$8m to \$10m. That is an option. Whether people want to have more chemicals in their water, I am not sure because, at the moment, Darwin River is very clean water as is bore water. We use the minimum amounts of chlorine and fluoride in our water as it is so good. I am not sure people would like to see extra chemicals in their water if they did not need too.

There were a couple of other issues, one being Howard Springs, which was raised recently. One thing the people showed us was that last year the aquifer did not reach its normal level, as it was a bad Wet Season. It was about 5 m below its normal height. The Wet Season finished around the end of March, so people started pumping water much earlier than normal, which meant not only did you have an aquifer that was starting off below its normal level, you had people pumping water out earlier. We are having a pretty long Dry Season, because it still has not rained substantially in the rural area. There have probably been about two showers and they were so far apart you would hardly know that we had any rain. We are struggling a fair bit with water in the rural area, so at least it highlighted to people what the problems were.

Finally, we were discussing Howard Springs the other day and, in the heat of the moment, I said to the minister that she had not been out to Howard Springs Park. I would just like to apologise for my statement. It was incorrect. It was said at a time when perhaps I should zip. I did not, and I would just like to say to the minister that I apologise for that. She obviously had been out there. At the same time, I thank her for coming out this weekend. We are having a meeting with the Friends of the Springs at 11 am, and I appreciate that very much. Hopefully, from that meeting we will be able to sort some solution out for the dear old Howard Springs.

Ms LAWRIE (Karama): Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the celebrations we had last weekend in Karama when we were honoured to get a visit from Jana Pittman, the World Champion 400 m hurdler and one of Australia's greatest hopes for a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games in March in Melbourne next year. Jana Pittman flew into Darwin just to visit the good folk out at the Karama Shopping Centre. The reason for her visit is that she is sponsored by Blackmores, the vitamin and mineral supplements. They had held a national competition and it turned out that Karama Coles won the national competition for sales of Blackmores products, so

we had the good fortune to have Jana Pittman come to talk to people at Karama.

She was a fantastic ambassador for sport, may I say. She is considerate, articulate, and very warm natured. She is a country girl and she shows that she has not lost any of her honesty and openness for which country people are renowned. No effort was spared by her in engaging the young kids at the Karama community, signing autographs and answering questions. It really was a very lovely morning. We kicked off at about 11 am, and we had Jana up on stage and I introduced her to the good folk in Karama. We had a performance from the *Sing Song Sign Choir*. They were absolutely magnificent; they had the crowd spellbound. I congratulate all the young Sign Choir girls, they do a lovely job and it is great to see so many kids sticking together and learning sign language and coming out into the public and performing it. Rachel Kroes, who teaches them sign language, lives in Northlakes. She has a great heart and a genuine capacity to educate children in sign. I know she also teaches adults and she is a magnificent community worker. She does a lot of it for the love of it to get an understanding and awareness of sign language and it was a beautiful performance. There were two songs were performed by the Sign Choir and Jana Pittman made special note of how impressed she was with it.

We then followed up with a question and answer session where I was able to ask Jana Pittman questions about her career, hopes, dreams, ambitions, hobbies, and likes, and she did it all in very fine nature. Then we had the Manunda Terrace Rope Rangers, fantastic skipping group from Manunda Terrace Primary School, who have competed nationally and done extremely well in Sydney in skipping. They showed what great talent we have in the local area in terms of skipping. They had the crowd enthralled by some pretty tricky skipping displays that they did. As a quirk, there was a local family there and they had a family tree of the Pittman family. They unrolled this family tree and Jana spent some time looking through to see which part of the tree they were related through, because it was Pittman with the double 't' spelling that she has in her surname.

I thank Blackmores for bringing Jana Pittman to the Karama Shopping Centre. I congratulate the manager of Coles Karama, Andrew Parkin, who has been doing many good things to boost the participation of Coles in the local community. He is always willing to donate sausages when I hit him up for sausage donations for local groups such as the Sea Scouts. They had a sausage sizzle out the front of the shopping centre on Saturday morning and the proceeds of that went to the Good Breakfast Start Program run by Red Cross

and two of our local schools, Manunda Terrace Primary and Karama Primary School. It was a great community event on Saturday at the shopping centre which just came alive with people thrilled and excited to have a world champion, one of our Australian heroines, here in Karama and engaging with the local families. It was a really inspirational session for the young children of the area. I thank everyone involved in that.

I acknowledge the creativity and inspiration of Malak Primary School. They celebrated the special literacy and numeracy focus day at the school on Wednesday, 28 September. They launched their flower power garden. They have spent a lot of work, with the Kiwanis contributing a lot of effort. Volunteer Kiwanis have come in and reworked a section of the school grounds that had become run down over the years and there is a magnificent flower garden there now.

The literacy focus day celebrated with the opening of the flower garden with performances and some really amazing displays that have been created by the children at the school and the teachers all went to a great effort. Each class had an activity going, whether it was story telling and plays. There were so many performances by the children, and it was truly amazing to see how a focus on literacy can bring out such creativity and imaginative and talented performances by the students of Malak School. I congratulate the Principal, Russell Legg, who is showing great leadership in that school community. He is supported by fantastic staff such as Jo Wrench, Natalie Eden and Trish Espinoza. I know they are all in a running for a national award for Excellence in Teaching and I wish them all the best in that award. I heard the other day from Trish Espinoza that she has reached the final 100 nationally. It is good to hear that our teachers are being recognised for their excellence out at Malak.

Also, congratulations to the Malak School community. I congratulate the chairperson of the Malak School council, Chris Kelly, who is an energetic, committed, hardworking parent in that school community, who was there as were many parents on the literacy focus day with the flower power garden putting in a great effort for the school yet again. Congratulations to Chris Kelly and to all the board members who I saw at the flower power garden celebrations.

Thank you very much to the Kiwanis for putting in the effort at the local school at Malak. They said to me that they got a lot of joy out of it. They really enjoyed working with the school. The children had made up a beautiful story book superimposing photos of some of the Kiwanis volunteers at work into it. The Kiwanis were absolutely chuffed at the gesture that the students had gone to, to thank

them for their assistance in creating the flower power garden.

I also acknowledge that Karama Primary School has held its school concert and there were hundreds of people at the school concert. It was the best attended school concert I have seen in about six years. Very impressive. I congratulate Marg Fenbury, the principal of the school, and the chairperson of the school committee and the school council members. They went to a big effort to ensure that the whole community turned up for the school concert which was held late afternoon into the evening. The children just loved the performances in front of their parents. It was fantastic to see that so many parents had made the effort to come and watch their children. It was a real credit to the Karama Primary School community the way they enjoyed the evening, had lovely performances and the parents were absolutely chuffed at the talent shown by their children. It was just a lovely event.

I also acknowledge, in my role as sports minister, that we have kicked off and launched the NTFL season. I congratulate John Mitchell and Tony Frawley who work full-time at AFLNT. There was a huge effort behind the scenes to get prepared for the start of the season. There was a special moment on Saturday at the official function for the launch of the season where I had the opportunity to make a speech and talk about the great partnership we have between the government and the AFLNT administration. There was a lovely moment there where, without his knowledge, Bob Elix, chair of the board of the AFLNT, was presented the merit award, a very rare and distinguished award. I have to say there were almost tears in Bob's eyes. He is an incredible participator in community life, an alderman on the council, and has worked at a very high level of community life in Darwin. It is the first time in quite a while I have seen Bob taken aback and moved by a gesture which took him by absolute surprise.

Congratulations to Bob for all the effort he has put into the AFLNT and the NTFL. His leadership has taken them through significant change. It was noted in the speech by Mark Crossin, who is a board member of AFLNT, that it was good to see the big man moved. I believe there was a bit of a tear in the eye. Congratulations Bob, and well done to the AFLNT crew to keep that a secret from him and surprise him with such an award.

I had the good opportunity to go from the NTFL season launch having seen some of the game between Palmerston and Southern Districts, and then the following game between Wanderers and Waratahs, before going out to Richardson Park to the home of Rugby League. There was a fantastic crowd there on Saturday night to see a very

exciting game in the curtain raiser. I have to say I have not seen such fantastic game of Rugby League - other than the great games on television - for many years with the Darwin Under 17s versus the West Tigers Under 17s. When I looked at the two sides lining up I thought: 'Oh my God. Our Darwin boys are going to get thrashed', as some of those West Tigers Under 17s were physically big guys. You would be shocked to think they were Under 17s; they were enormous and our Darwin guys, whilst there were a couple of big ones amongst them, were normal 17-year-old sized guys and they took it right up to them. It was an exciting, fast, action packed, agile game. There was incredible skill on both sides from the Darwin boys and West Tigers.

There was nothing between the two sides and there was a 10 point difference at the final whistle with West Tigers taking it out. I praised our Darwin Under 17s when I presented the man of the match trophy and the shields as they were in the game every step of the way. Scoring tries, a couple of conversion kicks which we missed, were the only differences between the two sides and magnificent rugby talent running around out there for the Top End. Everyone there was justifiably proud of our local guys.

I hear that the Papua New Guinea versus the Australian Kangaroos game afterwards was a great Rugby League performance and everyone went away happy that evening.

It is good to see across our footy codes such talent in the Territory, and such enjoyment of the sport. It was a great pleasure and I will be getting out to Rugby League the next chance I get because it is a phenomenal display of talent we have here in the Territory in league.

Congratulations to the NTFL for kicking off a successful season launch on Saturday, and congratulations to Barry Moore and the team at Rugby League for putting on a fantastic display in our home town of Darwin.

Ms ANDERSON (Macdonnell): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I talk about a community which is 368 km east of Alice Springs. I attended the opening of the Bonya community on 7 September. For the last 20 years, Bonya has stood as a symbol of neglect of governments. A population of over 60 people has lived in a handful of tin shelters with one communal ablution facility fitted with old style chipboard heaters. The pit toilet, painted black inside to reduce the number of flies, provided homes for snakes and spiders. At some point in Bonya's history, the government had installed powerlines - however, they failed to provide a generator or connect them to any of these tiny tin shelters, so the power poles and wiring stood there rotting over all these years.

Family community facilities were the women's centre, which is nothing more than a large tin shed, a small school and a health clinic. The school and the health clinic were in good condition; however, they were located some distance from the community as the community had been built in the middle of a flood out.

On my first visit to Bonya, I was utterly appalled at the deplorable conditions that people were being forced to live in. I was determined to bring about change, as was the then Chairman of the ATSIC Central Remote Regional Council, Mr Clarry Robinya.

Working together, Clarry and I were successful in having Bonya rebuilt. While I worked at the national level fighting for the National Aboriginal Health Strategy funds to undertake the project, Clarry worked at the regional level holding meetings ensuring that the planning had the informed consent of the community, and hurrying up the different parties when things were bogged down. Clarry also made sure that IHANT housing funds were pooled with the NAHS funding, so that half of the community would not have to keep living in these horrible little shelters.

Today, Bonya Community has been totally rebuilt; there are eight new four-bedroom houses that are connected to power, water and sewerage. The roads around the houses have been sealed and there is absolute - how shall I say? - happiness now in that community that they all finally out of those tin sheds on top of the hill down near the creek to live inside real houses.

The community store, which has been operating a healthy food program out of a demountable, has moved into a section of the community centre. I am very proud of my role in this development. I am also proud of the way that my regional council chairman, Clarry Robinya, did everything in his power to make this development a reality.

As always, we were supported in our endeavours by the staff of the Alice Springs ATSIC Office, and I thank them for their support, in particular Kevin Kerrin, Rhonda Loades, Brenda Smith and Tony Hazelwood. I also want to acknowledge the integral role played by Mr John Hayes and Ms Virginia Hayes, who were employed as community CEOs and pulled together the project at the community. This was not an easy task as, initially, the only form of communication was via satellite phone. However, they conducted their roles with a great degree of competence and I thank them for their hard work.

One of the most pleasing aspects of the Bonya development has been the participation of community residents in the reconstruction of their

community - not only in the planning stages but also their work in dismantling the old community and insisting on building a new community. They are rightly proud of their endeavours and I congratulate them. I also congratulate the community leaders: Minnie Panaka, the chairperson; Theo Alice; David Blue; Shirley Draper; Natalie Madrill; Georgina Blue; and Ada Blue. These families have shown real determination to have lived in tin sheds for 15 to 20 years of their lives and now, in 2005, are living in houses, as we have all enjoyed for many years of our lives. I enjoyed the opening at Bonya, Madam Speaker. Just to see the surprise on those children's faces that eventually they had their school and child-care centre and their parents are now living inside houses.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I wish to report tonight my recent trip to attend the Executive Meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Nadi, Fiji. As you may be aware, this was my last meeting as a regional representative on the executive committee of the CPA, so it was with a little sadness that I attended.

The executive meeting was one of the most volatile I have ever attended. I came away feeling that I am not so sad about leaving because the whole make-up of the committee seemed to have changed. Much of the discussion and debate centred around whether the Secretary General's contract would be extended, and who would be the next Chairman of the Executive. Some of this did tend to flow over into the main conference, and some of the Clerks said that they turned up to watch the gladiators at work. We certainly had a very volatile, interesting meeting.

The CPA, as you know, has 53 member countries and is divided into nine regions. The representatives on the executive are from these nine regions. It has always been an association that has given much back to the Commonwealth countries. The executive works hard to determine the programs for the following year and where the conferences will be held. However, as I mentioned, it is not without controversy and good robust debate, I guess we could call it. I suppose you would expect that when you get a whole bunch of parliamentarians together.

The Small Countries Conference was also held in Nadi. This conference is made up of those countries which have a population of 400 000 or less. There are 43 countries which qualify to attend the Small Countries Conference. It is one of those occasions when the small countries can get up and have a say without being overwhelmed by the much larger countries of the Commonwealth. It did call for larger nations to assist the small countries in promoting their rights

in the international community. You could understand how a small country like Cook Islands with a population of about 7000 people can be completely forgotten in the big scheme of things. It is trying to get recognition, especially in fair and equitable treatment in areas such as trade. You have heard the debate in Australia about trade and what happens with America. Well, you can imagine how difficult it is for the small countries to have a say in what would happen.

They also discussed how small countries will be impacted upon by natural disasters and global warming. It was rather ironic that in my contribution I mentioned that the federal government had promised to upgrade the Royal Darwin Hospital to be a regional centre for disaster response. Little did I know that that would be happening so very shortly afterwards when we came back. We sometimes forget the impact of natural disasters and cyclones on our small island nations.

Because of the overlap of the executive, I was only able to attend one session of the Small Countries Conference, but I know the Leader of the Opposition did also, so she possibly will report on some of the other things. They had a discussion on the format of future conferences. When the small countries held their conference in Darwin, the format was introduced whereby there was much more interaction, rather than just people presenting and then a bit of feedback. The Clerk of our Assembly gave a most worthwhile paper on how our conference was held and the success of the workshops, with the encouragement of member countries which attended that Small Countries Conference to ensuring that future conferences would have that feedback. However, the whole debate was gazumped, I guess, because the debate turned to increasing the participation to include jurisdictions with a population of 1.5 million.

If you could imagine, if we increased the population criterion to 1.5 million, we might again be disadvantaging those very small nations. The debate went on for some time, but it was interesting that it was not resolved. The representatives from the branches of those small nations certainly should have the opportunity to be able to talk in a forum where they are not overwhelmed by the large countries.

I attended one meeting of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee. The Leader of the Opposition is on the executive of that, and I went to one of their meetings. It is obvious that their emphasis is on obtaining more representation of women in parliaments. The Commonwealth women parliamentarians discussed ways to increase the representation of women in parliaments, noting that the

Commonwealth goal of having women occupy 30% of parliamentary seats by 2005 has been extended to 2015. Women members argued the achievement of gender equity in areas such as education and employment would contribute substantially to the achievement of all the millennium development goals. We can be pretty proud because we have gained that 30% within the Northern Territory parliament, so that is great.

The 51st CPA Conference was the next conference that I participated in. The CPA consists of 183 branches and parliaments and legislative states - provincial and/or federal - of the 53 countries of the Commonwealth with a membership of around 14 000 parliamentarians. It provides a means of regular consultation between members of the Commonwealth parliaments, and it seeks to improve understanding and cooperation among the countries, and to promote the study of and respect for parliamentary democracy. As well as the annual conference, the CPA also sponsors and promotes regional conferences and seminars, and visits by parliamentary delegations - you would be aware that we have had some here - and the dissemination of information.

This particular conference was chaired by the Speaker of the Fijian House of Representatives, and also the 2005 President of the CPA, Hon Ratu Epeli Nailatikau. The countries discussed the progress made to date in achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and members agreed that parliaments must press their governments to speed up the rate of progress made to date, and repeatedly noted that the eight goals are all interconnected so progress in one area will move the world closer, not just to individual targets in all areas, but to the attainable of a free and equitable world where wealth is common to all. The promotion of equitable development especially for small states was stressed. That is a wonderful goal, but we only have to look at some of the devastations occurring across the world to be able to understand that that particular goal will not be reached easily and there will always be peoples in the Commonwealth who are disadvantaged.

There were a number of discussion groups. One of the most interesting was the group discussing the role of parliaments in combating HIV/AIDS. I am assuming that HIV/AIDS is a reportable disease in the Northern Territory. I am not sure of the statistics on how many, or how bad it is, but the scale and enormity of the problem in some countries is critical, although it seems to be that its impact is only a small amount, a fraction, of what is yet to come. When you heard people from countries like Uganda talking about what has happened, and even in Papua New Guinea, it is getting to the very desperate stage. The study group produced a booklet, *The Role of*

Parliamentarians in Combating the HIV/AIDS Pandemic. It is an extremely worthwhile publication and it is very valuable because it targets areas such as what should parliamentarians do, what should legislators do, and what should the CPA do. I looked through it and, rather than doing your own research, the study group that has put this together, small as it is, has covered nearly everything. It is an extremely good document. I would be more than happy for people to have a look at it if they want to.

I neglected to say that prior to the conference - and I nearly forgot this - there was a FOI workshop held for the Commonwealth Pacific countries on freedom of information. Again, our Clerk was instrumental with our Information Commissioner, Peter Shoyer, in facilitating the workshop. I received extremely positive feedback from that workshop. It is interesting that these small countries are now discussing and debating that, and it is something that we have only introduced into the parliament in the last term.

There were many other papers. I also have some pamphlets which were put out each day at the conference to keep people up-to-date. The Clerk's office had a number of papers available. This one is interesting: *Achieving Democracy in Fiji - A View from the Bench* which was presented by Justice Michael Scott of the Fijian Court of Appeal. I do not think that I can ever recall when a judge came in to address a group of parliamentarians and that was very interesting. This other one, *Fighting Corruption: What Can Parliamentarians Do?* was presented by MP from Nigeria. As I listened to him, I thought how brave he was to discuss this particular topic in front of so many of the African countries. I suggest to members they might like to have a look at it on the site and get some of these papers because they are really interesting.

The Fijian Islands are in the heart of the Pacific Ocean and they have had a long standing relationship with the Commonwealth. Its history with the Commonwealth dates back to 1970 when they gained independence from the British Empire and was granted automatic entry into the CPA. However, they experienced instability within the country in 2000 and were banned from the CPA. The CPA does ban countries that are not democratic. They re-entered in 2003 after the country restored democracy after the successful general election in 2001. The history of the Fijian parliament is quite interesting. However, they are now back on track and I hope it will continue like that.

The Fijian people were the most gracious hosts. The participants stayed mainly at the three Sheraton Hotel resorts. All resorts in Fiji are built

on leased land. The Sheraton owns none of the land that they build the resorts on. It is interesting in that Fiji has said: 'We will retain our land. It will always be Fijian, although we will lease it'. There is development: you can build a house, buy a house, but you will never own the land, even though you own the house. It is something we could look at since we are talking about leasing Aboriginal land, even though it has, at times, been controversial.

The three hotels we stayed in employ 1400 staff and the emphasis is on making sure the locals have employment; so much so, that they will not bring in big equipment if it means that a number of people will lose their jobs on the shovels. On one occasion, I took the local bus to town which was interesting as I was able to see the contrast between the resort and the villages where people live in homes without running water and electricity, as well as a school that was under-resourced. I hope that the influx of tourists into Nadi will benefit the local people who seem to be happy, always smiling, have a good work ethic and are willing to welcome visitors to their land. However, they work with extremely low wages. The receptionist at one of the hotels we were at was getting \$3 an hour. You would probably need at least \$180 a week to live comfortably in Fiji but when you are getting \$2 or \$3 an hour. It is pretty hard.

I thank the CPA again and thank the Australian branch for allowing me to represent them on the Executive. I urge all members of this Assembly to, at some stage, attend one of the conferences.

Mr BURKE (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I would like to open on a rather personal note. As many members may be aware, my family was happy to welcome another addition to the clan. Flynn McKenzie Burke made his arrival at 12.21 am on 21 September. For those who are interested he was 50 cm long and weighed approximately 3.5 kg or 7 pound 14 ounces in the old measure. He is a dear little boy and younger brother to Brandon, my other son, and Leesa, my daughter. He shares his birthday with my wife's Evil Aunty Sandra, as she is known, who has just recently left visiting us from Melbourne. She came up here specifically to have a look at the newest addition and to get a bit of Darwin's lovely weather. Surprisingly, she did not find it too hard having come out of a Victorian winter and straight into a Top End build up.

Flynn also shares his birthday with another family friend, Mick Gulovsen. He has been a long-time friend of my father-in-law, and was equally pleased, with Evil Aunty Sandra, that Flynn was born on his birthday.

I would also like to mention cousin Ursula and almost-cousin Lisa who have come up here a few times on visits and are now looking at the job market and the prospect of moving up here permanently. They have been thoroughly enchanted with the Territory and the Top End, and have decided that it is a much better prospect than Melbourne. All members here would heartily agree with them. Ursula's brother, Anthony, was up here a while ago and he had the same sentiment so, if we can just convince their brother, Richard, we will have one wing of the entire clan up here from Melbourne and will have just two other wings to convince.

I also welcome on board my electorate officer, Joanne. She has been with me a few weeks now replacing chaos with order in my office in the Palmerston Shopping Centre. Her help is invaluable, as I am sure all members would say of their electorate officers. It is a small world though, because I have since found out that Joanne's father played football with the member for Drysdale, and she knows the member for Drysdale from a long way back. It is surprising what a small world it is and what connections there are. Once again, I thank Joanne for her assistance and look forward to, hopefully, a long partnership delivering for the people of Brennan.

The relocation of the 1st Aviation Regiment gets closer and closer. We cannot wait to add the personnel to our population. The 1st Aviation Regiment, as members will know, is the Tiger helicopters. This relocation represents the biggest addition to the Northern Territory Defence community since the start of the Army Presence in the North project more than a decade ago. Considerable work has been done at Robertson Barracks in preparation for their arrival. Having seen some video of the capabilities of the Tiger helicopters in terms of manoeuvrability, they really do look to be a great addition to the Army's capabilities.

An important forum was held on 29 September in Palmerston. It was the Middle Years public consultation at Palmerston High School. There were a few people who attended – concerned parents. It would have been great to get more people along, but at least the opportunity was there. I should recognise that, as well as my attendance, the members for Drysdale and Blain were also there. In fact, it was encouraging to hear the member for Blain support the Middle Years project. I hope that his voice for support continues as we consider the education system in the Territory and how to move forward. It is not a simple question; it is not easy to simply implement. It does require community consultation and, from what I saw of the evening, people were interested and were enthusiastic about the change that is being considered by government at this time.

I attended a school event between sittings, the Battle of the Bands, which was held at Dripstone High School, one of the high schools I attended. It was gratifying to see how many bands were there competing, all taken out of the high schools of the Northern Territory, and also at least one band had a couple of members who were primary school students. The quality of the competition was fantastic. They received a great reception from the students who were able to attend the Battle and the students gave strong support to all the bands - it was great.

Palmerston High School was represented by four bands which is a great number to come from the one high school. I thank the organisers, Rebecca Fong and her co-organisers Matt, Rachel and Mary, whose surnames I neglected to get on the day, but wish to recognise them nonetheless. I also wish to recognise the fact that these four wonderful people are student teachers who have done this as part of their university course. This was their idea, something they wanted to put together, and they did. It speaks volumes of them. It is the Charles Darwin University's program, and I thank Dripstone High School for agreeing to host the event, and all of the other high schools who allowed their bands to compete.

Whilst I am mentioning Palmerston High School, I am pleased to say that I have been to the high school and had a look around at the facilities. I had the chance to meet the staff and principal. As with all schools, I like to recognise the hard work that the teachers and the principal, Mr Chris Dias, do. I can also say that Palmerston High School is excited about the prospect of the extra funding that will be put into education in Palmerston and look forward to the decisions that will be made in the very near future.

I also recognise Ms Ann Walker who received an award for Excellence in Literacy Teaching, which was an award sponsored by the Australian Literacy Educators Association Top End Council. This was an award presented by the minister for Education, the member for Nhulunbuy. It is important to recognise the efforts of our teachers, as I said. They really have a huge impact on us all and it is something we take with us through the rest of our lives. I am sure we can all remember teachers who we thought a great deal of as well as teachers who we perhaps did not get on with quite so well.

An important event for Palmerston recently was the Driver Primary School 20th birthday celebrations. The celebrations were a huge event, well attended by the community. The festival atmosphere was enjoyed, I would say, easily by 200 people, possibly more.

In attendance were Ms Daphne Reed, the first principal of Driver Primary School when it opened; Ms Fathma Mauger, the current acting principal; Mr Rob Preswell, the principal who at the time was on a leave of absence completing work elsewhere in the department, and also recognised was Mr Art Libian. Going back to what I said about it being a small world, Art was a teacher at Wanguri Primary School when I attended there as a student. You cannot help but bump into people over the years. I have seen him periodically through high school but it is some time since I last saw him. He has not changed that much in all the years that I have known him. I would just like to say that Art Libian is one of those teachers who is just a bundle of energy, a bundle of enthusiasm, and has a gift to impart to students in his charge. He has been at the school since it opened. I congratulate Mr Art Libian on his contribution, not just to Driver, but to education in the Northern Territory as a whole.

I had occasion to attend Sacred Heart Primary School. I went to the fete they had which was well attended. I was also present for their book parade on 30 September and the costumes that the students dressed up in were a testament to the amount of work and support their parents had given. I just like to quickly say they put on a play called 'Superkids' which had the theme of bullying. Again, it is a testament to the teachers and to the principal, Cath Neely, the quality of the play and the commitment of the students in addressing a serious issue of bullying in schools. I could go on but I note the time. I look forward to being able to recognise more of the schools in my electorate in Palmerston in the near future.

Mr KNIGHT (Daly): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I celebrate the life of Maggie Wilingari from Timber Creek who passed away on 26 July of this year at the age of 87. I have known Maggie for the past nine years, with my work and personal life in the upper VRD area. Maggie was born by the Yellow Hole water hole at Yundand which is situated on the East Bain between Limbunya Station and Kildurk Station. Her father was a Yangula who was an old man. Her parents took her back to VRD and, during that time, she walked from the VRD area across to the Humbert River visiting family.

In 1931, she moved to Timber Creek at the age of 13 and with her promised husband, Sydney Djuraba, who was a prisoner for cattle theft. Sydney was returned to VRD after his punishment but Maggie stayed at Timber Creek with the Ngaliwurru people and learnt and spoke their language. She knew the names of plants, bush tucker, and animals in the area but she had never forgotten her own language which is Ngaringman.

In Timber Creek, Maggie met and fell in love with her second husband, George Judpunigardi, and had three children, Jerry, Judy and Eileen. Her first child, Jerry, was born under a nutwood tree near the old camp on the other side of Timber Creek by the old police station. George was a police tracker, a ceremonial leader of the Ngaliwurru clan and Maggie would help him with the pack saddles, clean the handcuffs and chains. She worked long and hard, setting tables for the police dinners at the Timber Creek Police Station. She spent many a time helping her husband at the famous race meetings which were held at VRD Station, cooking dinners and setting up the camps.

I attended the funeral with several hundred other people. The diversity of the people paying their respects signified the extent to which she was respected by both Aboriginal and European people throughout the Katherine and Kimberley region.

Maggie went on to work long hours as a housemaid for the police. In the 1950s, at the age of 19, she went to Coolibah Station, cooking for the stockmen, managers and family where she was highly respected. In those days, Maggie worked only for bread, beef and clothes. In 1973, Maggie moved to Bradshaw Station for manager Rowley Walker, where she was in charge of the kitchen until 1983. She retired at the age of 65 and moved to Timber Creek where she met new friends and continued to do part-time work, such as ironing for the Foggarty family and other people in the district.

Maggie was the proud grandmother of 16 grandchildren, including Lorraine Jones, an Aboriginal Community Police Officer at Timber Creek who won the Police Bravery Award in 2005. Maggie had 58 great-grandchildren and 6 great-great-grandchildren. Maggie is survived by her three children and they are very, very proud of her. I wish Maggie peace and I extend my regards to the entire family.

I would like to now talk about some other events in my electorate. Last sittings, on 25 August, I attended a function at Adelaide River for the Top End Group Schools. Top End Group Schools is a group of 15 small schools throughout the Top End of the Northern Territory. These schools include Adelaide River, Belyuen, Douglas Daly, Dundee Beach, Gochan Jiny-jirra, Mamaruni, Middle Point, Milikapiti, Nganmariyanga, Peppimenarti, Pularumpi, Tipperary Station, Waruwi, Woolaning and Wooliana. The schools come together every so often to celebrate. Over the time prior to them coming together, there was a gentleman by the name of Chris Atkins who had worked with the staff and students at these schools. He was supporting them in developing songs and doing performances. He did it like a bit of a message

stick ceremony. He would work with one school and they would send a message to the kids at the next school, who would then in turn move it on.

It was a great performance. They had sports during the day and performances at night, and the final big performance was one that I attended. Actually, in that time they did a performance at the Darwin Festival, which was a great day. They performed at the Ludmilla Campus as well and they camped there, which they were very pleased to be able to do.

The words of these songs are quite interesting, and this is what the kids come up with. The Peppimenarti kids developed a song called *We've got the Vibration*. The preface for it is:

In Peppimenarti we heard the voices of the people and we felt the vibration from the music coming across the sea from the Tiwi Islands.

This is this passing the message along.

The people were sending us a message to 'respect each other with your mind'.

I will read the chorus:

*We've got the vibration
Sing it out to the world
We're sending out a message
To be happy and kind
We've got the vibration
Sing it out to the world
We're sending out our message
From deep inside
Respect each other
With your mind*

They are great words from those kids.

The Belyuen, Dundee and Woolaning kids came up with another song - they grouped together because of the size of their schools – which they called *Break it Down*. Their preface was:

And the message was heard that day, to continue to help each other out and break down the fences between people of different colour, different race and different land. To share our lives with everyone and come together as one.

Some of the words they talked about were:

*We're helping each other out
I'm inviting you to stay
Won't you come into my house
Come and sit down with me today.*

They are very encouraging songs.

The kids from Tipperary - which is quite small school - and Adelaide River and Wooliana - Wooliana is at the Daly River and is a very good school; I have attended it several times – had a song titled *Come on Let's Go*. Some of the words are:

*We're going into the next day
And it's all going to change
We're going into the future
Everyone is on their way
We go swimming in the Daly
We're going down to a new world
We sprout our wings and fly to the moon
In our flying cocoon.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate all those things.

I will just read the song from the Palumpa kids who have a great school. Their principal, Cynthia, does a great job. Their song is titled *We Be Happy We Feel Good*. The preface to that is:

Sometimes we all dream of travelling to other places but always we seem to come home to our land, to our people, to our loved ones, to our home. May we be happy. May we feel good.

This is an excellent event. I would like to thank Chris Aitken, who is the brother of - let me get it right - Wilber Wilde. He actually had a Rumba master there who put on a very exciting performance at Adelaide River. I hope to get around to all those schools. I congratulate all the kids for developing those songs; they were certainly very enlightening. I will try to provide some of these words to members of the House.

I would like to move on to another event I attended. The Wadeye secondary girls had an art exhibition. I would like to inform my colleagues of the project undertaken by seven of the Year 12 students of the Thamarrurr School at Wadeye who are undertaking Stage 2 of the Year 12 studies. These girls are Claudette Bunduck, Freda Bunduck, Suzanne Dodd, Dorothy Kintharri, Bernadette Munar, Barbara Narndu and Damiscene Narndu.

Under the tutelage of their Year 12 teacher, Emma Connellan, who helped organise the project, the students made art works which focused heavily on totem designs which were made by etching which is an intaglio printmaking technique. Also, screen printing and tie-dying pieces made at Wadeye were taken to the exhibition. The exhibition was held at the Charles Darwin University. Around 50 people attended and there were some dignitaries there- apart from

myself, of course. One of the magistrates from town was there. They sold almost everything that they produced. There were 37 exhibits, and they were very reasonably priced between \$80 and \$100. There were half a dozen prints of each and it got a bit excitable when a few of the prints ran out. I believe I got the last one of Barbara Narndu's prints. There were a few other people who would be disappointed that they did not get them; they were very sought after.

This project was very important, as it not only raised the self-esteem of these young women, but also taught them skills in business, communication, technology and the arts. It is exciting to note that the girls have placed their art on an Internet site – www.dirrmu.com - which will go on sale at the end of this week, and have started their art business called Ngakumarl Dirrmu Ngankungime. Some of the works have been purchased by CDU for their archives, and one lady bought pieces to exhibit and sell in Denmark.

The girls will continue to produce pieces of art and also work in other areas for their community. For example, Claudette is hoping to work in the office of Murin Air alongside her father, and where her mother is also the president. Other girls will be going on to do Certificate III in Workplace Training and Assessment to become teacher assistants, or work in supportive areas in the community helping families.

I wholeheartedly congratulate the families of these girls who flew the expensive trip to Darwin for the night to support them. From Wadeye, I congratulate the principal, Jan Pilcher Juniper, and Tobias Nganbe, Julie Taylor, their art teacher, Leon Stainer from CDU, and the arts facilitator, Andrea Campbell, for making this project a success. These girls have been doing this for a little while now. I went to an art exhibition of theirs last year at Wadeye and it sold out, and they have done it again. It is a great learning experience for them and I wish them all success.

Mr WARREN (Goyder): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I wish to talk about a couple of very important events, one I have just been made aware of by my colleague, the member for Daly. That is the Top End Group Adelaide River Festival. From all accounts, from the member for Daly, it was a great event and I am pleased to say that a couple of schools in my electorate are amongst the Top End Group, and that is Belyuen and Middle Point. For the record, the Top End Group School is made up of 15 small schools throughout the Top End of the Northern Territory and together they form what is known by the acronym TEGS.

Over the past four years, musical consultant, Chris Aitken, has worked with staff and students

from each of the schools within the Top End Group School to support their performing art programs. In 2005, a different approach was used and the concept of a musical narrative spanning across locations has developed. It has been developed into a performance being presented at Kultura, for other schools in Darwin, and at the annual TEGS Adelaide River Festival, which my colleague, the member for Daly River attended, and for which I am very grateful.

Chris Aitken has been supported by staff and students from each school as they jointly composed the songs featured in the Moving with the Song theme for the festival. He also worked collaboratively with musicians, Mark Grunden and Matt Lotherington to bring the whole performance together. Chris has worked with individual schools passing a message of hope, trust and understanding. This performance also talks of their responsibility to cherish and preserve their land.

I would like to conclude by putting on to *Hansard* the song which Middle Point put together, called *We've Got Cooperation*. It will only take a couple of minutes so I will read it in full:

*We'll discover the world out there
We are the people who care
We're learning from our mistakes
Working together
We've got what it takes
We've got cooperation, whooo, whooo*

*We're voting for new leaders
To make things better for us
Creating our new nation
We're the younger generation
We've got cooperation, whooo, whooo*

*We'll create and negotiate
Won't take or retaliate
We'll all agree to be free
We could start a revolution
To find a solution
We've got cooperation, whooo, whooo*

*We'll get an education
We'll have cooperation
Stop droughts, floods and wars
Right across the nation
We've got cooperation, whooo, whooo
We'll make a new system
We'll negotiate with the world
On wars and pollution
And we'll find a new solution
A sensible conclusion
We've got cooperation, whooo, whooo*

That is great for the kids and their helpers to put that together. I am pleased to be able to present that and have it recorded in *Hansard*.

The schools at Middle Point take me back to my own childhood. I have a lot of affinity with a school like Middle Point. I went to a one teacher school as a child and had some of the most memorable and great experiences I cherish right into my adulthood. I hope that the kids out there get the same sort of education, the same sort of thrill that I got as a young primary school student in my early days. That song is a great effort and I look forward to hearing what they come up with next year.

Recently, the 2005 Telstra Northern Territory Business Woman of the Year Awards were held and the 2005 winner of the Telstra Northern Territory Business Woman of the Year award and also the winner of the Australian government, private and corporate sector award was Dr Sandy Griffin, the Principal Environmental Scientist with HLA Envirosciences. I am particularly pleased and proud for Dr Griffin because she is also a well known, highly regarded, active member of our rural community. Dr Griffin is the popular captain of Virginia Bush Fire Brigade. I am pleased to say I know Dr Griffin personally. She is a very private person. Fortunately, I was able to source her background and achievements from the Telstra web site and I have quoted heavily from that source.

The HLA consultancy provides advice on environmental management, environmental impact reduction and avoidance, risk assessment, environmental assessment, occupational health and safety, and environmental contamination remediation. Dr Griffin established the Darwin office in 2003 and has been responsible for the organisation's substantial growth in that time. In this role Dr Griffin oversees business development, marketing, and management of staff as well as fulfilling her consulting role. She has over 15 years experience working in the area of natural resource management based primarily in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. She has been involved in a number of research programs related to feral animal ecology and also has significant experience in weed management.

Her doctoral thesis was awarded with a Chancellor's Commendation in 2003 focused on estuarine zooplankton ecology in relation to algal blooms and water quality. While studying, Dr Griffin was the president for the post-graduate students association at Curtin University lobbying for improved study conditions for post-graduate students resulting in nomination for the inaugural University Service Award. Dr Griffin has been the project manager or major author of over 25 reports and has been published in several international and national scientific journals. She has also worked as lecturer in natural and cultural resource management at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. There she learnt a

great deal about the impediments to education for indigenous people in Australia.

Dr Griffin will now go on to represent the Northern Territory at the National Telstra Business Women's Awards in Melbourne. Over the past decade, the Telstra Business Women's Awards have become an integral part of the Australian business calendar celebrating the achievements of some truly remarkable women. Past winners include some of Australia's most talented business leaders whose career paths and individual achievements continue to inspire business people around the country. It is worth noting that last year's Telstra Australian Business Woman of the Year, Janine Allis, commented that:

These awards are really amongst the most respected awards in Australian business and it is fantastic to have your name associated with such a prestigious accolade. For women who are looking to build their profile, the awards offer incredible prospects - with vast media, speaking and promotional opportunities.

Janine also said:

Importantly, regardless of whether you win or lose, the whole process offers an amazing experience to meet an incredibly rich and inspirational group of business women, from corporate high fliers, leaders in health and sciences to entrepreneurs.

As members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly can see, these awards are among the most prestigious in Australia, and I am sure I speak on behalf of all Territorians when I wish Dr Griffin all the best as she now goes on to be our representative at the national awards.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.