

Madam Speaker Aagaard took the Chair at 10 am.

MINISTERIAL REPORTS **Trainee and Apprenticeship Numbers**

Mr STIRLING (Employment, Education and Training): Madam Speaker, this morning I make one of my regular reports to the House on trainee and apprenticeship numbers in the Northern Territory. Growing skills of Territorians is a priority of the Martin government; we believe it is critical for the future economic and social development of the community.

We are doing this by growing apprentice and trainee numbers right across the Northern Territory, providing training opportunities to up-skill existing workers on the one hand, and to build the skills of those not yet in the work force on the other. Getting our young people into apprenticeships, particularly in the hard, traditional trades areas, is not all that easy. We have introduced a range of incentives to encourage both employers and apprentices by our Jobs Plan 1 and 2; the Get VET marketing campaign; employer incentives; the Workwear/Workgear Bonus; the Work Ready NT program; and Build Skills NT program. As a result of each of those initiatives, we are seeing growth in apprentice and trainee commencement numbers and, importantly, we are keeping more of them in training to completion.

Since 2001, there has been an increase by 28% in the number of people entering apprenticeships and traineeships, and 2585 commenced in 2004. At the end of 2004, there were 2910 apprentices and trainees, an increase of 32% on 2001. That number has now increased to 3232 as of 12 August, indicating a 47% increase. At the end of 2004, there was a 65% increase in the number of completions, compared to completions in 2001 - 1408 completions in 2004, compared to 848 in 2001. While those numbers are improving - and improving significantly - there is clearly more to be done.

I can also advise the House that we have had a 41% increase in the last four years of indigenous Territorians taking up apprenticeships and traineeships - 696 commencing in 2004.

We are also seeing an increase in commencements in the regions. More does need to be done, though. We are looking closely at why there is less take-up of the Martin government's initiatives to build on the numbers and build up-skills in the regions. There has been an 11% increase in Alice Springs between 2001 to the end of 2004, with 480 commencements in 2004. Jabiru region has seen an 18% increase, with 95 starting in 2004. The Barkly has seen a decrease,

although there were 98 commencements in 2004. There was a spike in 2001 associated with the railway project, but it is important that the Barkly region rebuilds these numbers. I have the Department of Employment, Education and Training looking at more avenues to get young people, particularly young indigenous, into training areas. The Katherine and Nhulunbuy regions have seen increases of around 5%, with 198 commencements in the Katherine region, and 99 commencements in Nhulunbuy. As with the other regions, the department will work more closely with Katherine and Nhulunbuy to build on the current take-up.

The number of apprentices in traditional trades increased by 47%, with 679 commencements in 2004, compared with 218 in 2001, which is good news for the future of trades in the Northern Territory.

We are working to keep moving the work force ahead. We will continue to keep a strong focus on planning and implementation around building a better-skilled and responsive work force.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, whilst I am pleased that the minister has read to us a report on how things are going in this field, I must acknowledge that he is pre-empting debate. The details of this issue will be investigated far more deeply, and more appropriately, within this parliament this very day.

I also note that the minister has used the word 'reform' in education recently. I urge the minister to take seriously the word 'reform' so that we can culturally change the way that education is delivered, and genuinely change the way that we equip our young people to participate in the potential development of the Northern Territory.

What we have here is a list of figures - and there have been some pleasing changes and increases in those who are taking up apprenticeships and traineeships. However, the more important question is: what is the quality and the nature of the training that is being provided? Does it directly match the skills shortage? Are we genuinely equipping young people to participate in industry in three, four, five, 10, 15 years time? Are we changing the way that education is delivered? Are we providing cultural change so that our community recognises the value of trade and vocational skills? We can do that by promoting streaming within education.

I acknowledge the report, but it is a little disappointing that we would take this opportunity, in a very limited time, to pre-empt debate when we are going to be able to investigate this matter far more seriously during the body of debate this very day.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I am pleased that we have this emphasis on gaining apprentices; it is certainly something we need. However, there needs to be more monitoring of what is happening out there in the workplace.

I have had a number of concerns raised with me, including the fact that the apprentices this year in some trades have commenced, but there are no trade courses available at Charles Darwin University in Alice Springs. I am not sure whether there is a similar case in Darwin. Some apprentices have spent 18 months and have not had one trade course available to them. It seems as though your push to get more apprentices has, in fact, caught Charles Darwin University short in that they have not always had the trade courses available. That is one concern.

The other concern is that, sometimes, there is no monitoring or following up of young apprentices in the workplace, and quite often, the conditions under which they are required to serve their apprenticeships would be considered unacceptable. I have contacted your office on a couple of occasions over these matters. The New Apprenticeships Centre in Alice Springs says they visit workplaces about every three months, but I wonder whether that is sufficient. I wonder whether there should not be more monitoring to make sure our apprentices are actually getting a fair go because, in some cases, the demands upon them are greater than would be expected of anyone.

I have two concerns: (1) what follow-up do you do when people become an apprentice; and (2) why aren't the courses available for them so they can complete their trade requirements?

Mr STIRLING (Employment, Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I thank members for their comments. I take on board what the member for Braitling was saying.

I am assured and advised that the New Apprenticeships Centre does visit on a three-monthly basis. If that is not occurring, and an apprentice sought the advice of the member for Braitling, I appreciate that those issues, at any time, are put through directly to our office. The 18 months without access to the first block release training, particularly, would seem to me to be highly irregular and out of the norm. We would also appreciate advice and information behind those sorts of issues so that we can take the most immediate action we can. We do have a good relationship with Charles Darwin University on these matters. We take them to them promptly and, generally, they respond as best they can.

In respect of the comments from the member for Blain, other than the fact that this is up for

debate later on today, I ask him to take note of the fact that we did restructure Employment, Education and Training into one department and a whole-of-life learning exercise all located within that one department. We do have a concise strategy behind where we put the training dollar ...

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, your time has expired.

Mr STIRLING: ... and it comes out of information from the labour market report.

Oral Health Services

Dr TOYNE (Health): Madam Speaker, the recent actions of the Howard government mean that, on things such as industrial relations, the sale of Telstra and the location of a nuclear waste dump, Territorians are going to have to get their teeth into defence of the rights of Territorians.

As Health Minister, my job is to make sure those teeth do not have any holes in them. Therefore, I would like to inform the House today of significant improvements in oral health services being achieved across the Northern Territory.

In recognition of the importance of good oral health to the overall health of people in the Northern Territory, this government has significantly increased funding to oral health services. An additional \$1.6m in recurrent funding has been provided to oral health, which will be fully implemented in 2005 ...

Dr LIM: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I cannot hear the minister at all. He reads into his paper. I ask him to project his voice because a couple of people are talking about something as well. That is all I am asking.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you, member for Greatorex. Minister, if you could just project your voice. We are trying to fix the amplification in the Chamber today.

Dr TOYNE: I will speak up, Madam Speaker, and we will see if you can hear. You probably will not understand anyway, but I will do that.

Dr Lim: That is all right. I have ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order! Leader of the Opposition, order! Leader of the Opposition!

Dr TOYNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker. These funds are being utilised for additional clinical equipment, dentist salaries and an additional dental technician; an additional dental therapy team for East Arnhem; an oral health

promotion officer; a dental prosthetist; a dental hygienist; and support for client information system.

The previous CLP government let the children's dental service run down and hid the Loan Report, which recommended substantial changes. This government released the report and has made those changes. The Minister for Employment, Education and Training and I jointly launched a \$1.7m four-year upgrade program for 36 school dental clinics on 24 November 2004. Four schools - Gray Primary, Driver Primary, Leanyer Primary and Manunda Terrace Primary - have recently had their new dental chairs installed, each worth \$27 000. Ongoing upgrades of 36 school dental clinics will continue.

I am pleased to advise that, in the context of national and international dental shortages, we currently have a high level of dentist positions filled. At present, approximately 13.6 of the 16 full-time equivalent positions are occupied. A specially created web site has been developed to attract dentists to the Northern Territory. Senior staff visit interstate dental schools to promote the benefits of living and working in the Northern Territory. Visiting dental students from the universities of Western Australia and Adelaide undertake clinical practice placements under the supervision of dentists in Darwin and Alice Springs. In July 2005, a new career structure with relevant pay rates for dentists was agreed. All of these strategies are aimed at raising the profile of employment in the Northern Territory's Oral Health Services.

For the first time in some years, Alice Springs has full dental staffing which, during August, includes a number of locum positions covering the staff for leave. While the position in Tennant Creek has not yet been filled, a regular visiting service is being provided from Alice Springs. A locum has been identified to provide a full-time service in Katherine from early September while recruitment is undertaken. As a result of the number of dentists employed, waiting times for routine dental treatment in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs have substantially reduced, on average, by about six months. These times are expected to continue to improve markedly with near full dentist staffing. Of course, access to emergency dental care continues to be provided on a same-day basis in the majority of cases.

An important aspect of recruitment and retention of dentists is an appropriate remuneration package. The new career structure addresses the need for higher starting salary for new graduates, a higher salary level for experienced dentists, and the introduction of dentist manager classifications. The new graduate pay level is equivalent to the

Queensland starting rate, which has been the highest in Australia for some time. The new management structure has been implemented across the Northern Territory under a single program director.

Madam Speaker, all of these are steps forward. I hope, for once in his life, the member for Greatorex, in reply, might actually acknowledge that the government is doing a pretty good job in this area of health delivery.

Dr LIM (Greatorex): Well, here you go, minister, looking for praise for a job that he has done so poorly all these years as the Minister for Health. I asked him for a health briefing five weeks ago, and it was only until this week that I could get some positive advice that we would get a briefing on Friday. And he gets up today and tells me about dentistry!

Dentistry has suffered significantly under this government; people have complained in the northern suburbs and in Alice Springs. Tennant Creek does not have a dentist, he said - and that is your problem.

Let me take you to another problem that is more crucial. You talked about remote health and getting dentistry services out there. You are 22 nurses short in remote health at the moment. You have clinics out there in the bush without a nurse. That is more critical! People need to get to the clinics there for services. What do they get? They say: 'No, there is no nurse here. Sorry. You can get your teeth fixed but, when you are crook, there is no nurse who can help you; cannot fix your infections, diarrhoea, or your chest infections'. That is the sort of health care you have, where basic health cannot be delivered. And you get up here and tell us: 'Oh, I am fixing up dentistry'. Well, there are many people in the northern suburbs who are not getting dental services that they justly deserved. There are Alice Springs people who are not getting dental services they deserve, and Tennant Creek is still waiting for you to get your act together.

Minister, you have to get your priorities right. You just do not seem to be able to get a handle on this job. The former minister was sacked because of that, and you are doing a worse job than she did! It is time you moved aside and let somebody who is capable of doing it take on the job.

Dr TOYNE (Health): Madam Speaker, I believe the member for Greatorex has filters in his ears that filter out any good news that might come his way. I will give him some more: planning is under way to facilitate dental therapists accredited under the new scope of practice for dental therapists, to treat high school students in remote communities. Until now, only dentists have

treated high school students and the new *Health Practitioners Act 2004* has enabled this development to occur.

I believe that it is vitally important for our clinical services to be benchmarked against national standards. The Top End service is undergoing an external periodical review with Australian Council of Health Care Standards in August 2005. Oral Health Services NT will now work towards an integrated external accreditation review in 2007. This will be conducted by the ACHS. This government commitment to dental services has resulted in improvements, as I have mentioned today; equipping oral health services with a capacity to meet substantial challenge of improving oral health of Territorians.

Rapid Creek Conservation Corridor

Dr BURNS (Planning and Lands): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to provide this update for the Assembly on the securing of land for the protection of the Rapid Creek conservation corridor, as depicted in the Rapid Creek Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives of 2000. This is yet another example of the Martin Labor government fulfilling its election commitments.

Rapid Creek provides an important wildlife corridor in Darwin, and a significant wildlife refuge; particularly during the Dry Season when the availability of fresh water is restricted. It also forms part of a green corridor within the urbanised northern suburbs from the Darwin Airport through to Darwin Harbour.

The Rapid Creek Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2000 identified the need for a 100 m corridor in order for the creek to be ecologically sustainable. This corridor was to extend 50 m each side of the mid-point of the creek. It is also fair to say that much of the public interest focused on establishing the 50 m component of the corridor on the Jingili side of the creek between the Water Gardens and McMillans Road. Most of the land on this side of the creek was relatively large rural sized blocks; which were zoned RL1. As a result of public discussions, they were rezoned as specific use, or SU50, with some land next to the creek forming an O3 zone to establish the 50 m corridor on that side of the creek.

On subdivision, this O3 land was to be transferred to the Darwin City Council at no cost to establish the corridor. This arrangement was to allow landowners to capitalise on the rezoning and subdivision, whilst also establishing the corridor. Unfortunately, the last CLP government supported a decision to allow some of the O3 zone land to be retained within the subdivided blocks, and not transferred to the Darwin City Council to form part

of the Rapid Creek protected corridor. I have to say I believe that the processes involved with that were far from transparent; but that is another story.

In contrast, the Martin Labor government is committed to the Rapid Creek Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives to provide an open public space between the creek and private land. The Martin Labor government also made the decision to establish and rehabilitate the creek corridor as a whole, as opposed to it happening piecemeal as subdivision of the freshwater blocks took place over an indefinite period of time. To create the conservation corridor, the government decided to acquire additional land from the landowners who had already subdivided, and from landowners who had not yet applied for subdivision approval. Negotiations were held with each landowner to consider all the issues arising from the proposed acquisition, including the relocation of water and electricity services and placement or relocation of fencing and earthworks.

All land necessary for the corridor has now been secured from affected landowners. I am pleased to advise that acquisition by agreement was achieved with all the affected landowners. Earthworks and fencing works on the conversation corridor have recently been completed. Management of this part of the corridor will initially rest with the government but will be handed over to Darwin City Council to manage in the longer term.

Madam Speaker, \$300 000 was allocated in the 2005-06 budget for the enhancement and protection of the Rapid Creek corridor. These upgrades will be undertaken in close consultation with the Darwin City Council, the Rapid Creek Catchment Advisory Committee, the Landcare group and, of course, the local community. The rehabilitation and development of the public access corridor will provide the community with a passive recreation area which will not only benefit the community but also serve to protect the valuable natural asset of Rapid Creek. Securing the conservation corridor has received a great deal of public interest and input from the Catchment Advisory Committee, Landcare groups and the community in general. I have received extremely positive feedback from members of the community regarding the handling of the land acquisition by the department.

Although it might appear to some that securing the corridor has taken a long time, the negotiated acquisition process has, in fact, expedited the protection of this valuable community asset. I am proud that the Martin Labor government has taken the necessary action to further protect and preserve Rapid Creek and its immediate environment for this and future generations. I pay

tribute to the member for Millner and other members who have been very supportive and active during this process. Along with those members and the public, I look forward to further programs to protect and enhance this natural asset that can be enjoyed by all Territorians.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I was going to surprise the minister by being very charitable and commend him on his statement because it is a good outcome, so I will do the nice bit first. It is a good outcome securing the conservation corridor. It is very difficult to argue against it, and why would we? I agree with you; it is a good outcome and one that has been desired by a lot of people in Darwin for some time.

I had planned, minister, to sit down at that point until you said that what happened some years ago, in your view, was far from transparent. How dare you raise such a cowardly, gutless ...

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition ...

Ms CARNEY: ... allegation ...

Madam SPEAKER: ... I just suggest that you need to be careful about what you are saying.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: I will allow it at the moment but, if you continue, I will ask you to withdraw.

Ms CARNEY: How dare you raise an allegation like that in this Chamber without anything that vaguely resembles substantiation? I know that it is very easy for the likes of you. You have form on this; you reckon you can get away with just about anything in this Chamber, you little grot.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition ...

Mr HENDERSON: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Ms CARNEY: I withdraw ...

Madam SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition has withdrawn.

Mr HENDERSON: How many times does the Leader of the Opposition have to be told to mind her language?

Ms CARNEY: I will withdraw, Madam Speaker, but he does have form. If you have a serious allegation to make, do two things. Do us

all a favour, minister, make it outside the Chamber and ...

Members: Time!

Ms CARNEY: ... come up with some evidence, otherwise people will just take you for the sham that you are.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the minister on his statement about protecting Rapid Creek. It is certainly one creek that needs protecting. However, minister, for consistency you need to check other creeks. A classic one has to be Mitchell Creek. I will be very pleased to congratulate the government when it declares a corridor over the whole of Mitchell Creek. The minister for Environment and Heritage talked about Living Waters ...

Ms Scrymgour: Get it right!

Mr WOOD: Living Rivers. Living Waters is a church at Humpty Doo.

It is time that we also made sure that we had living creeks.

One of the things you could do is take out the exemption that creeks in urban areas - I believe the minister at that time, Fred Finch, signed off that those creeks be exempted from the normal requirements of the *Water Act*. That would be a positive thing the minister could do.

I also think that we need to look at creeks like Mitchell Creek in relation to Darwin Harbour. We have a Darwin Harbour Management Plan. I do not believe that just planting trees beside creeks is necessarily the way to go. Creeks are physical things that wind and move, and there is a tendency these days to straighten them and plant trees on them and call them a creek. I do not call that a creek; I call it green drain. We have to be prepared to make some hard decisions on how to protect those vital areas in our suburbs.

When we are talking about water courses, we need to look at water courses that are being developed as part of subdivisions, and I especially refer to Fairway Waters. One of the first questions I asked in this parliament was: who is checking the amount of nutrient leaving those lakes in Fairway Waters that are discharging into the harbour? The answer was that it was fine; there is some bacteria in the water that will eat it all. I do not believe that.

Looking at the type of water that is leaving our suburbs, there is definitely a need for the government to come up with some open reports fed back to this parliament about how we are

discharging nutrients from those developments into the harbour.

Madam Speaker, I congratulate the government on the corridor for Rapid Creek; it is great.

Dr BURNS (Planning and Lands): Madam Speaker, I will respond to the member for Nelson first. Negotiations are ongoing in respect of Mitchell Creek. There are substantial amounts of money involved, the ask from Delfin, but negotiations are continuing.

In relation to what the Leader of the Opposition raised, I have been on the public record a number of times within this Chamber expressing my concerns about the process that happened around Rapid Creek and those blocks. It is simple, member for Araluen: what happened is that the subdivisions proceeded with the O3 zone shown there, and it was signed off by the DCA through a public process. The then chair of the DCA signed off on what was called a 'minor variation', which took nearly all of that O3 land out of the corridor and put it back in to two private blocks. It was less than transparent and the residents of Jingili, I know, feel very cheated by that because there was no purple sign that went up; there was no public process around that and there are question marks about it.

Reports noted pursuant to Sessional Order.

MOTION
Review of Jury Service Payments

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I move:

That there be a review of the impact of jury service pay entitlements on Territory private employers and employees to ensure they are not disadvantaged financially.

I note that the government has signalled that it will amend the act. However, until that amendment is presented, I prefer to speak on my original motion. Madam Speaker, maybe you can keep control of when we can and cannot speak when the amendments are presented because it can get a little difficult sometimes.

This is a simple but important motion. It has been raised by a number of people in my electorate and that is why I raise it here today. Jury duty is an important part of being a citizen. As a citizen, you are empowered as a juror to be part of our justice system in the Northern Territory. In larger states, it is not difficult to get people as jurors. However, in the Territory, especially with the small population and its even smaller towns, it

can be quite difficult, with the result that people can be called on several times for jury duty.

Also, many working people cannot get time off or cannot afford to take the time off. This is the basis of the motion. If you are a member of the public service and you are called up for jury service, you are paid, but if you are not a member of the public service, you receive \$20 for each attendance at the court and \$60 if selected to serve on a jury. Those figures come from the Supreme Court web site.

The minister has sent me a letter that says, upon application, persons summoned for jury duty can be paid up to \$40 a day for attendance and then \$90 when empanelled. Regardless of that, it is not a lot of money. For a self-employed person, this is simply not enough to cover losses associated with being away from work or having to find someone to take over for the day.

In a case that was referred to me, the person called up employed apprentice who could not run the business if he was not there. In the case of an employee who is on jury duty, the amount of money they receive is not exactly enough to encourage people to want to be a juror.

However, if the employee is a public servant, they are covered by by-law 20 of the *Public Sector Employment and Management By-Laws*, which says:

- (1) *The Chief Executive Officer may release an employee, who produces proof of being summoned as a juror, without deductions from pay or leave credits.*
- (2) *An employee who is on paid leave and is summoned as a juror may have a period equal to the time required to attend as a juror credited to the employee's leave entitlement.*

In the case of private employees, they are not covered by this generous offer by the government. The Supreme Court web site says that a private employee would have to negotiate any extra payment with his employer. That seems a bit unfair. On one hand, a public servant receives full pay, courtesy of the taxpayer, to attend jury duty, but if you are not a public servant, then you get your little allowance and have to quibble with the boss to make up the rest. That certainly is not going to encourage people to want to be jurors. If the government believes in the worker as much as they said they did yesterday during the IR debate then, surely, they would support anybody serving on a jury getting a fair payment to cover what they normally were paid. Isn't that exactly what the government does for the public servants?

This motion is not saying the government has to immediately change anything. What it does is ask that the government at least review the impact on private employees and employers. As I said, we should be encouraging people to be jurors; we should pay jurors as if they were covered by the same public service by-laws that cover public servants.

I know one of the arguments against that from the government is: 'Well, when you compare what other states pay, we are no different'. However, I say we are different. We are a small population over a large area, and it is very difficult, sometimes, to get people to serve on juries. One way to encourage that is to make sure that you do not inhibit people who would be willing to serve on a jury, but cannot do so because of the financial restraints because they work in the private sector.

Madam Speaker, I ask the government to support this motion. If they present an amendment, then I would like to speak on that amendment.

Dr TOYNE (Justice and Attorney-General):
Madam Speaker, I have said previously in this House that, where a proposal has merit, we are always prepared to respond to it. We can certainly give the member for Nelson some comfort on this issue that he has brought to the House today.

The government believes that jurors' allowances, generally, are on par with those paid in other jurisdictions, so we will not be supporting the generality of the motion that the member has brought here. The government will, however, be undertaking a review of juror allowances paid for lengthy trials. Our examination of the situation, here and elsewhere around the nation, shows that jurors in a lengthy trial can experience some disadvantage. We will be conducting a review of jurors' allowances for lengthy trials.

I would like to take the opportunity to speak generally about the role of juries and jurors in our justice system. In the Northern Territory, persons charged with serious offences are tried by judge and jury in the Supreme Court. This ensures every person accused of a serious crime receives a fair trial, free from government or political influence. At the same time, it imposes upon members of the public a share in the responsibility of upholding the laws made for the protection of the community from violence, dishonesty and other forms of wrongdoing.

Jury service may impose some temporary inconvenience to those chosen to serve, but is essential to the maintenance of individual freedom and security. Jurors in a criminal trial must determine whether the accused is guilty as

charged. In a civil trial, the question to be determined is to who is at fault. In a criminal trial, 12 jurors are required, and up to three reserve jurors can be selected. In civil jury trials, four jurors are required. Jury trials are held in Darwin and Alice Springs.

Currently, a juror in the Northern Territory is paid \$20 for each attendance at court. If a juror is selected to serve on a jury, the amount is increased to a maximum of \$90 per day. A travelling allowance of 27¢ per kilometre is allowed. This compares favourably with other jurisdictions for average length trials.

In the case of lengthy trials, all state jurisdictions within Australia allow for an increase in the daily fee. In Western Australia, for a trial lasting five days or less, a juror is entitled to \$20 per day. However, should the trial proceed beyond five days, a juror is entitled to be paid up to \$240 per day. In New South Wales and Queensland, the daily fee for a juror is \$81 and \$30 respectively. However, for trials that proceed past 10 days, then a fee of \$110.60 and \$120 respectively is allowed. This is currently not an option for Northern Territory jurors under the *Juries Regulations*.

There has been an increase in the number of lengthy trials in 2005. In 2005, several trials in Darwin ran from four to six weeks; one trial ran for 12 weeks. It is estimated that, throughout 2006, there will be a continuation of the incidence of lengthy trials. For example, there is an upcoming criminal matter which is expected to be scheduled for an eight-week trial in 2006.

Whilst there is an element of community service when serving on a jury, clearly, citizens should not be unduly penalised financially in doing so. Following preliminary advice received from the Department of Justice on this issue, the government has instructed the department to review fees payable to jurors on lengthy trials, with a view to easing the financial burden on jurors selected for these trials.

I hope the member will take that as a constructive response to his motion. We would like to amend the motion, Madam Speaker, by omitting the words after 'on' from the member for Nelson's motion and inserting the words: 'jurors who serve on lengthy trials, to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged'. This would then give us an amended motion:

That there be a review of the impact of jury service pay entitlements on jurors who serve on lengthy trials to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged.

I hope that that would capture the problem that you have, quite rightly, brought to our attention. It is a reform that we believe also has merit, and I certainly commend the member for bringing it to us.

Mr WOOD: A point of order, Madam Speaker! Are we now speaking to the amendment?

Madam SPEAKER: We have not actually received an amendment.

Dr Toyne: I propose ...

Ms Lawrie: It has not been moved.

Dr Toyne: You can speak to either, because we have not ...

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak to the member for Nelson's motion. It is a good motion and a very difficult motion, I would have thought, to argue with; it just seeks a review. Everyone in this Chamber will know people who have been called up for jury service, and some of those people will not be public servants but people from private business. Business hates jury service; we all know that. We also know that business is obliged, indeed compelled, to discharge their employees in order to attend for jury service. I believe it is an offence if they fail to do so.

In any case, there is great merit in agreeing with this motion because, though being a member of a jury is a critical and important civic duty, the fact is that, apart of business hating it, many people in the population actually hate it. For my part, I cannot begin to imagine why, but there you go. Lots of people do what they can - they try to move heaven and earth - not to be on a jury, whether they are individuals employed or otherwise or, indeed, some small business operators.

It is not just an issue of cost. I believe that the importance of serving on a jury is something that should be taught to our kids, but I know that is going beyond the scope of this motion. To increase the amount of money jurors receive is the decent thing to do; \$20 and \$90 are not significant fees. Whether we are on par with other jurisdictions is neither here nor there, in my view. Indeed, I note the member for Nelson's view; we do have a small population. Where I live in Alice Springs, it is even smaller than Darwin. The Attorney-General was right: we have juries sitting in two places in the Territory - Darwin and Alice Springs.

When I was a lawyer, I used to go into the court and see lots of people lining up, whenever the Supreme Court was sitting in Alice Springs,

waiting to see whether they would be, ultimately, empanelled. For those people, many of whom were employed in private enterprise, they waited around for hours and hours. If some of them managed to get back to work, it would not have been for long. The cost to business is significant. I would like to think that it even has come up when business operators have spoken to the minister for Business. We all know this problem; it has been around for years. It is particularly bad in an area like Alice Springs where the construction is so small. Given that people, generally, try so hard to get off jury duty, in a small place like Alice it is common for people to be called up at regular intervals. There is a small number of people who do, I am happy to say, take their civic duty seriously and they actually enjoy being members of a jury. However, when you have a small pool from which to draw, we, as legislators, need to do all that we can to encourage people to perform their civic duties.

In relation to the Attorney-General's comment about the review extending, or that he is prepared to look at it but only to the extent of increasing the amount paid for lengthy trials, with respect, Attorney-General - nice try, but it is not good enough. The fact is that, yes, there are lengthy trials; whether there have been a few more in the last couple of years does not address the motion. Lengthy trials will not affect, you would have thought, the number of jury trials that are undertaken in any given year. There will still be, for the most part, a lot of non-lengthy trials in Alice Springs and Darwin. There will be many Territorians called up to perform their civic duty and many of them will think: 'Why bother for \$20 just to go to court to wait around to see whether I am empanelled to get \$90?'. They will do all sorts of things to ensure that they do not perform their civic duty.

We live in a society that, it seems to me, is increasingly providing financial reward or recompense in order to encourage citizens to do a whole lot of things. It pains me to say this because, as a lawyer, I regard jury service very seriously, indeed. We must, as a parliament, catch up. \$20 or \$90 is not good enough.

Madam Speaker, I commend the member for Nelson for bringing this motion. I know that we are not speaking on the amendment; I reserve my right in that regard.

Madam SPEAKER: We are actually speaking on the amended motion.

Mr Wood: Are we?

Madam SPEAKER: Because the minister moved that. Is that correct?

Mr Stirling: You can speak on either, can't you?

Madam SPEAKER: At this point, you are speaking on both. The question before the Chair is the amended motion, and you can speak on either, I believe ...

Mrs Braham: I can speak on either?

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: The minister did not actually move ...

Dr TOYNE: Yes, I did, I moved it. I moved the ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: You moved the amendment?

Dr TOYNE: I thought I did.

Madam SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to, so anyone who has not spoken is speaking to both. If you have spoken before, but only to the first, you can speak again to the amendment.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I wish to speak to the original motion.

Madam SPEAKER: You can speak to the original motion and you can speak to the amendment, member for Braitling.

Mrs BRAHAM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to hear the support given to the member for Nelson's motion. Quite rightly, minister, you should be seeking a review of all the payments for jury service. It is our responsibility to do duty on juries, but there should never be a penalty attached to it. It seems to me that it is disadvantaging private enterprise far more than public servants. It is creating an inequity within the Territory that, in this day and age, just should not be there. It is often very disruptive, not just to employment but also to family life. For those who are involved in long, lengthy trials, there is an enormous amount of pressure put on them to fulfil their obligations, both from their employer and their family.

I know that there are statutory bodies and committees that the government has established where sitting fees are paid and, although they are often quite generous, they are certainly a lot more what juries are paid. I am referring to the Development Consent Authority or even the Statehood Steering Committee. Those members receive sitting fees but, for some reason or other,

when it is something as vital as a jury, which is making a decision about a very important trial, we tend to undervalue that contribution and the input of jurors.

I recall a pharmacist who had to sit on a government committee and had to employ a relief pharmacist. To find someone to take on relief duties in private enterprise, you are looking at big bucks. For a juror who has to find a relief employer to take over the responsibility of the business, you are looking at a substantial amount of money. The juror is being doubly penalised because they are not recovering their normal salary and they have to pay extra for a relief person to operate their business.

It does create enormous inequity, whether it is for one day, whether one is empanelled or not, or whether you are there for a lengthy trial. There is a reluctance, in many cases, for people to go on juries for this simple reason. You only have to look at the courts when juries are being empanelled to see the way people will try to get out of jury service. You cannot blame them. Let us face it: why should they be disadvantaged by doing something that is their civil duty?

The minister spoke, generally, about how juries operate, but I would like to remind him that, when you sit on a trial, quite often, as an everyday member of the society, you listen to some of the most extraordinary events that are way outside your own personal experience. There are some trials that are really quite graphic in detail, and it is often very hard for people who would never experience the sort of language they hear or the scenarios they hear about, and they have to come to grips with it.

I have written, I think, to the Chief Justice suggesting that you do not say to someone when a verdict has been delivered: 'Thanks very much. Now you can go home and look after your kids and feed your family'. That juror has been through days and weeks of emotional trauma listening to these horrific cases. There is no levelling when it is all over; there is no counselling for the jurors. They are kicked back out onto the street, and that is often quite difficult, particularly if they have been on a jury where the verdict has been very hard to reach or where there have been mixed emotions. As part of the jury system, there should be some way that these people are counselled after a trial so that they can resume their normal everyday life without being traumatised by what they have gone through. I am referring to the very difficult cases that we often hear of within our courts.

Minister, remember that it is not just the financial burden; it is also the emotional burden people carry when they sit through many days of a trial. That is something we should take into

account. That is why I believe you should really look at the overall structural arrangement for jurors.

There are many costs associated when you have to leave your job to go on jury service. It is not just your wages; it may be child-care expenses, relief staff, or loss of business in some way. I am not suggesting that the government compensate for all those areas, but there should be some sort of structure that will compensate in some way.

There is no point in us saying: 'We know the rest of the states do not do this'. Victoria is one exception; when there are lengthy trials of over one year, the compensation is a lot higher. What is the definition of 'a lengthy trial'? In the minister's option, a lengthy trial may be three months but, for someone in the work force, it may be a week because that affects their family income greatly. I would like to hear the minister define for us exactly what he is talking about so that we can get an idea of whether he is really considering all the financial hardship.

Regardless of all that, I really appreciate - well appreciate is not the word - commend people who go on juries. I know just how difficult some of the cases in Alice Springs have been and how it has affected them long after the trial has ended. I just ask the Attorney-General to think about that particular suggestion; that he looks at some way we can assist people when they are finished.

Madam Speaker, I support the member for Nelson's motion and I doubt, at the moment, I support totally the minister's amendment.

Mr BURKE (Brennan): Madam Speaker, I will not speak for too long. I would like to add my voice to those who have expressed their admiration for people who do serve on juries. It is an important position to hold and an onerous one. A review into the recompense paid to people who are called up is welcomed, to ensure that they will not be financially worse off by having to attend as part of their civic duty.

One point I would like to make in this debate is that employers also have some responsibility in this. It is interesting to note that, under the awards and enterprise bargaining agreement system, employers sign up to provide recompense, or not providing any penalty through not paying wages, or topping up the wages on top of what a person may get from the state, for attending jury service. I would like to make the point that, already, in my personal experience, this sort of topping up and commitment by employers is not included in Australian Workplace Agreements and will not be concluded in further workplace agreements. That is a sad reflection on those employers.

I hasten to say it is not all employers. In my experience, many employers, including large employers, will not protect those leave entitlements for jury service that are protected under awards and enterprise bargaining agreements. Those AWAs still pass the no disadvantage test, and that test will be abolished if the proposals that are being discussed by the federal government at the moment go through in that form.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from members on this issue. I will take up what the member for Brennan said. It is good if employers do top up the funds of people going for jury. The problem I have with that, of course, is that sometimes the employer has to find someone to take the place as well, so he gets a double whammy trying to replace someone, especially in jobs where he cannot do without that particular person.

To some extent, I see it as discriminatory in the sense that the government pays its public servants. The government is a big company with lots of money and so, to pay someone to go to jury service is not a big deal; they can afford it. However, for a small business, sometimes that can be a fair burden, especially if someone, for instance, is attending even for a long period. You do not necessarily attend one day; sometimes you can attend several days because they still have not made up their mind.

I make the point that I would be interested to know: if the rule did not apply in the public service that you had to pay the public servant for attending jury duty, how many AO5s would put their hand up to attend for \$20 a day? I do not think too many. On top of that, of course, an AO5 is probably earning a considerable amount of money where they are getting hit for 47% tax so, if they receive \$20 attendance fee, they probably actually receive \$10 attendance fee. I do not think too many public servants would be very pleased to lose their day's pay to receive a \$10 attendance fee. That is the issue: there is a group of people in our community of which it is not a concern, and they are encouraged to be on jury service simply because they know they will receive their full pay - their full wage for the day. Yet, there are people in private enterprise - and I take the point made by the member for Brennan, some good employers will pay - in a lot of small businesses such as one person who employs someone else, for which that can be very difficult and a financial burden.

The other issue I have is that, if the government is going to review such a very narrow thing - that is, the allowances for jurors - why would you split hairs over whether it is lengthy or not lengthy? How much is paid to Victorian

people to go to jury service takes up half a page on the web site; it is not a huge issue. Where do you distinguish between a lengthy trial and a non-lengthy trial? What is the difference? Why would you not look at the lot?

Minister, you wrote to me in December and said you had no intention of having the review. I heard this morning that there has been some review, I gather, of payments to jurors, and you are now going to look at reviewing jurors who are going to be on lengthy trials. I find it difficult to understand why, with such a simple motion - that you agree with; you think it should be looked at because of financial hardship - you would not look at it from the point of view of someone, for instance, who had to attend the court for a week on \$20 a day. You would not look at that as a reason for a review. For \$100 a week for a bloke from Bechtel - I do not know whether Bechtel would pay his jury fees; they might. I heard one bloke today say: 'I am very happy to work out at Wickham Point, I get \$1600 a week'. That is great. He would also be on the 47% taxation limit. He would get around about \$10 for sitting at the court for the whole week. I do not think he would appreciate \$10 a day. Perhaps Bechtel, in their award, do pay for jury service.

What I am looking for is to try to get a little uniformity; to get from the government a review which will not only look at increasing the entitlements of those empanelled on jury duties, but to do it so that they support and encourage people to be on juries. That is really what it is about. There are people out there who do not mind being on a jury; they see it as an obligation. However, the financial burden is too great and they find that strange. They are the ones who are asking for this. They are the ones who, perhaps, are needed to be on lengthy trials.

My problem is, whilst I reluctantly support the amendment because it is better to have half than none at all, it is for those people who came to me asking for some changes. I would have thought this was not a great big deal; that you could look at the lot in one go.

I was trying to think of an example. I do not know what you could look at as an example. Well, maybe we are going to study guide posts on the highway, but we will only study the guideposts on dirt roads and not the ones on bitumen roads to see how long they last. Why don't you study the lot? Why don't you look at the lot? There would be no great big difference in the cost of that review.

Surely, the people who are going to take up this review would not have any difficulty looking at the financial difficulties of someone on a short-term basis? I find it hard to accept the logic

that we only look at this from a long-term trial perspective ...

Mrs Braham: You need to know what is the cause of 'lengthy'.

Mr WOOD: That is a good point, member for Braiting. We probably need to define what you mean by a long-term trial. Is it some cases, for instance ...

Dr Toyne: Five days.

Mr WOOD: Five days? I did not know whether it is the case where people do not know they are on for a long-term trial. People may have more experience that I in those matters, but you might think you are going to turn up for one day like I turned up at Darwin hospital for some day surgery and, seven days later, I was released. I am not sure that the same thing applies when you attend the court.

Speaking on the amendment, I believe it is splitting hairs that we do not need to split. Whether on short-term or long-term trials, people can be disadvantaged. It can be difficult, especially for very small business, as they are the backbone of our society, especially the Territory. As I said, I mentioned to the member for Goyder yesterday that, at places like Coolalinga and Humpty Doo many small businesses only either working themselves or employing one person, would have difficulty receiving \$20 a day. The government could be positive here and include those people who attend shorter trials in this review; that would not be any big deal. I hope the government might change its mind on this amendment.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, speaking to the amendment, now that I have had a look at it, it does seem curious they have amended the motion in the way that they have. The original motion is as follows:

That there be a review of the impact of jury service pay entitlements on Territory private employers and employees to ensure that they are not disadvantaged financially.

After the amendment, the motion then becomes:

That there be a review of the impact of jury service pay entitlements on jurors who serve on lengthy trials to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged.

I am also curious as to why it is that the minister for Business has not participated in this debate so far. All this motion calls for is a review. You can have a review. You do not even have to do anything; just review it. I would have thought

that, given the spirit in which the motion has been brought by the member for Nelson, it may well be an interesting - and I do not even need to put it any higher than that - opportunity for the minister for Business to seek the views of businesses around the Territory. How significant is this problem?

As a local member - and I am sure that other members here will know - you might get half a dozen, maybe 20, calls a year. I know as a lawyer, people speak to me about it not infrequently. How significant is the problem? This is part of a review that needs to be undertaken. By changing the motion like this, the government has very much just put all of business, all the private employers, to one side and has said: 'Well, we will have a look at it, but we will only have a look at it from the juror's perspective'. That is only half of the motion. I see this as an opportunity for government. I really do not know why it is that the government would, it seems to me, be quite strident in not allowing a review to have a look at this issue from the point of view from business as well as individuals.

However, Madam Speaker, it looks as though the motion will not reflect the original one put forward by the member for Nelson. I commend him for bringing it to us. I remain somewhat perplexed as to why it is that this government refuses to undertake a review, having a look at this issue from the point of view of Territory business.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT
(TERMINATION FOR UNACCEPTABLE
CONDUCT) BILL (No 2)
(Serial 12)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The aim of this amendment is to give people who have been adversely affected by misconduct of tenants the opportunity to present a case to court as to why the tenancy agreement should be terminated. Under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, the only person or body who can seek such a termination is the landlord - and I am talking about private and public housing. This is fine; except that, in many cases, the landlord is often slow to react. It is neighbours who have to put up with disruptive or abusive conduct 24 hours a day, seven days a week, yet they are powerless to do anything, except complain.

The reason I am introducing this amendment is that, for some time, I have seen people become exasperated and desperate in coping with behaviour of unruly tenants and their visitors in public housing. Some people have left town; others apply for a transfer only to find themselves in a similar situation. I spoke to one elderly resident recently who finds herself confined to her unit and afraid to open the door when people bash on it for fear of being humbugged. I might add that she is an Aboriginal lady who just will not answer the door when people start banging on it at all hours of the morning and night. Although complaints are lodged, a lack of action by the landlord, in particular, the Department of Housing, really exacerbates the problem.

At present, tenants must write letters of complaint to be used as evidence so that a portfolio can be compiled. However, if a case goes to court, they find they are also expected to front up; courts are reluctant to accept statutory declarations as evidence in their own right. A resident, under the current guidelines, must present in court. This is not always easy to do, particularly as long delays and many incidents have occurred before this action takes place and, by then, relationships between neighbours have well and truly broken down.

It is well known there are difficulties with some public housing tenants and their visitors in Alice Springs. The majority of tenants are law-abiding citizens who are willing and able to live in peace with fellow residents, but there are others who cannot peacefully cohabit in housing for a variety of reasons or, perhaps, because they are unable to control the behaviour of their visitors.

This is a complex issue and it requires a range of solutions. I appreciate the time the minister has already given in listening to concerns. I welcome the preventative measures that the department has already introduced, such as employing a Community Liaison Officer, and the deterrents such as increased security patrols. I believe this amendment, however, complements these measures by asserting the rights of neighbours, who should not have to endure continual disruption to their lifestyle - and it is a lifestyle issue.

The amendment gives them the right to formally lodge a complaint to a court for a tenancy agreement to be terminated if that agreement has been breached for reasons of objectionable behaviour over a period of time. This amendment enhances section 100 of the *Residential Tenancies Act*. At the moment this section states that a court may terminate a tenancy agreement where the conduct of a tenant has been unacceptable in any of the following circumstances: when a tenant has been using the

premises or allowed it to be used for an illegal purpose; when the tenant has repeatedly caused a nuisance or allowed a nuisance to occur; or when a tenant has repeatedly caused or allowed an interference with the reasonable peace of other people living nearby. The section states that only a landlord can lodge an application for terminating an agreement.

I am proposing two key changes to this section. First, allowing an interested person - meaning a neighbour or someone affected by the behaviour - to make an application to a court to terminate a tenancy agreement. This will give the affected persons the legal avenue to uphold their rights to quiet enjoyment of their home. An 'interested person' is someone who has been adversely affected by the conduct of the tenant. Second, the landlord will be given the opportunity to be heard by the court when an application to terminate an agreement has been made by the affected person.

This arrangement provides a fair go for the neighbours and for the landlord. It is not without precedent; the South Australian *Residential Tenancies Act* contains a similar provision, and I believe it has been utilised by hundreds of people who have been so affected by unruly tenants that they have had to resort to court action.

There does, however, remain the issue that people are reluctant to front up in court to present their case, and a court will only accept in-person evidence rather than a statutory declaration. It is important that any moves by a neighbour to evict a tenant are made based on evidence rather than a vexatious claim. The point is that, in South Australia, people have the option to take action themselves rather than relying on the landlord.

My amendment alone will not solve the problems presently being experienced in Alice Springs and other urban centres. Living in the suburbs in public or private housing means people are living in close quarters and need to comply with certain standards of acceptable behaviour. This is clearly written in the *Residential Tenancies Act*, section 54, and the Department of Housing's Tenancy Agreements. When a tenant has difficulties with their tenancy, the solution should not just concentrate on that tenant. Affected neighbours should also be considered, because it is their privacy and their right to enjoy their home free of harassment and nuisance that has been severely impeded, sometimes permanently.

If the measures introduced by government - and I believe there are still more, we are still waiting for the Living Skills program to occur - change the antisocial behaviour of the tenant, then that will be good for everyone. However, if there is no change with intervention,

then neighbours should be able to protect their rights. This way, my amendment works hand-in-hand with the government's measures. Madam Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

EVIDENCE AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 14)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time. This is a straightforward bill, and I will not be long. It seeks to amend section 26E of the *Evidence Act*.

The Attorney-General introduced the Evidence Reform (Children and Sexual Offences) Bill in August last year, and we debated it in October. It was a memorable debate. Notwithstanding the difficulties I had with the bill for all of the reasons I articulated, the Attorney-General's intention was, and I quote from part of his second reading speech:

The purpose of this bill is to reduce the trauma experienced by child witnesses and other vulnerable witnesses such as adults with intellectual disability in criminal proceedings for sexual offences, and improve the quality of evidence from those witnesses in criminal proceedings.

As I said in the course of the debate, the bill, in fact, dealt with a number of offences that were not sexual offences, such as in sections 181, 184, 186 and 188 of the *Criminal Code*, to name but a few. Clearly, the bill - that is, the Evidence Reform (Children and Sexual Offences) Bill - was not confined to just sexual offences. I remember saying at the time that the bill arguably should have changed its name to be called the Evidence Reform (Children, Sexual and Other Offences) Bill. In any event, the purpose of the bill was to improve the giving of evidence for children. I am not sure whether, when inserting the new section 26E, as it was then, was an oversight, or whether it was deliberate to limit its application to children who are the victims of sexual offences. In any case, there is a need to amend section 26E.

Section 26E(1) reads:

In a proceeding in relation to a sexual offence, as an exception to the rule against hearsay evidence, the court may admit evidence of a child's statement to another person as evidence of the facts in issue if the court considers the evidence is of

sufficient probative value as to justify its submission.

Put simply, it provides an exception to the hearsay rule in cases of sexual offences against children, whereby the evidence of a child's statement to another person amounts to evidence of the facts in issue.

Section 26E should be amended so that it relates to children who have experienced an offence other than a sexual offences - and this is the hub of the issue - so that section 26E is not just confined to sexual offences against children, it is extended to other offences against children. By limiting section 26E to victims of sexual offences, I believe we are ignoring children who are the victims of other crimes and other forms of abuse who do not have the same benefit and protection afforded by section 26E.

Sad though it is, there are victims of a range of offences that are not sexual offences, but they are equally significant. They are outlined in the *Criminal Code* and, indeed, outlined in the *Community Welfare Act*. They include things such as emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect and so on. All children should be protected and assisted by the law. The protection afforded to children who are the victims of sexual assault should be extended to all other child victims of equally abhorrent crimes.

Evidence of a child's statement to another person may be a teacher, a doctor, a nurse, a friend or a social worker, in just the same way as evidence of a sexual offence may be disclosed to such people.

As I said, I am not sure when section 26E was created. It was the intention of the government to limit its application to only victims of sexual offences but, I guess, it does not really matter. The fact is it has come to my attention that there are sound reasons for amending this part of the *Evidence Act*. I know of no reasons why such an amendment would be opposed. We are, all of us as community leaders and members of parliament, serious about doing what we can to make the legal process better and easier for children who are the victims of crime - all crimes.

Madam Speaker, there is no politics in this. I did not even bother issuing a media release; I do not propose to. This amendment is about doing what is right and decent and not having regard to whether there is a headline in it. I ask the Attorney-General to consider the amendment in the spirit in which it is put. I look forward to his favourable response.

Debate adjourned.

ELECTORAL AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 16)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Dr LIM (Greateorex): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time. I will not have much to say to this. I want to introduce this and will speak, initially, about the amendment, and then give some rationale behind the amendment. The amendment is to introduce Subdivision 7 ...

Ms Scrymgour: He is mumbling.

Ms Lawrie: Cannot hear you!

Dr LIM: Madam Speaker, there are times in the parliament when there is decorum, necessary when there is lots of background noise, but I ask the member for Karama to restrain herself if she possibly can and allow me to speak uninterrupted.

Ms Lawrie: I cannot hear you. I want you to project your voice.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister!

Dr LIM: The amendment is to include in Subdivision 7, Other Offences, a new clause 295A regarding damaging electoral material. I have added:

(1) *A person must not without lawful authority –*

(a) *destroy or damage any electoral material; or*

(b) *for electoral material that is lawfully fixed to a place or object or lawfully left at a place - remove the material from the place or object.*

There is a penalty of 50 units or three months gaol.

Some of the examples that we used regarding damaging, defacing or moving, included when there was a poster and it was defaced deliberately. Obviously, if the poster was to become detached on its own through a storm or whatever, and fell onto the road and somebody drove over it, that is an accident. You would not impose any penalty. However, to deliberately remove an election poster, for instance, from a place to which it has been fixed such as on a light pole, that would be an offence - or even removing election pamphlets from letterboxes.

I added the definition of what is damage, which will include defacing, vandalising, or tampering with in any way whatsoever. I also added that

'electoral material' means anything that pertains to an election in what the Electoral Commission uses - anything that is authorised material that has been published as electoral material.

The reason why I chose to go down this path is that, during the last election campaign in Alice Springs, in my own electorate, for some reason somebody, or many people, found that my corflute posters were very attractive and I lost 20 of those from the light poles! They might be using them as a dartboard, perhaps. However, 20 posters were removed from the lamp posts. I thought it was quite significant in that, on the day of the election itself, or the day before when I needed the corflutes to be placed at the polling booth, potentially there would have been insufficient had I not had spare ones stored away in another safe place.

The other thing was on the eve of the election, of polling day, I had a whole team of people go out to the polling booths - two in my electorate - to erect those posters at the most suitable and appropriate places. We were pretty well organised and were there fairly early in the day and got it all done. Within two hours of the election posters being placed, I received a phone call from a person who had witnessed the removal of my posters from the polling booth. That witness was most outraged that it had occurred. That witness has given me his name and advised me as to whom he saw remove my posters and place them elsewhere.

I thought that was really not playing the game on a level playing field. This is really grubby politics. This is now doing whatever it takes and members of parliament, or people who aspire to be parliamentarians, should really be above that, and they should also ensure and encourage their supporters to be above that sort of behaviour. It is very sad to see that sort of thing happen. It is not only one person; there are more than one person involved. When I attempted to correct the wrongdoing, I was surrounded by three very large individuals - I am not particularly big - and told where to get off.

When I rang the Electoral Commission to complain, and said: 'Look, this is just not on; you must do something about it', I was advised that there is nothing within the *Electoral Act* for the Electoral Commission to do anything about it. The only thing the Electoral Commission could tell me to do was to say: 'The polling booth is now so many hundreds of metres away from the polling booth door, and that way then all posters would have to be removed'. Well, if that is the case, then that is a level playing field, that is fine, and I was prepared to accept that. Anyway, the decision was not made by the Electoral Commission to

exclude all posters from that particular polling booth.

When I inquired further as to what I could do to at least seek some justice or restitution, the answer was: 'You can report to the police'. I did speak to a couple of police officers about this matter. I have not put in an official complaint as yet. The police told me that, yes, under the *Criminal Code* they can actually investigate and proceed further once the investigation is completed.

I thought that was one avenue, but it still disturbed me that, within the *Electoral Act*, there was nothing that the Electoral Commission could do. I would have thought that everything that pertains to an election, including the behaviour of people with regards to the election, should be within the gambit or the powers of the Electoral Commission. Unfortunately, it is not, and it is for that reason that I have brought this amendment forward. It is not onerous in any way. All I want to do is to ensure that there is a penalty within the *Electoral Act* for anybody - whether it be a politician or a supporter or a member of the public - who decides that spray paint on a corflute sign is an interesting, funny or silly thing to do. As you know, those corflute signs are very dissolvable. If you spray with appropriate material, such as petrol or kerosene, they dissolve into nothing. It can have a very costly impact on the candidate.

My recommendation is that we should have this amendment in the act to ensure that, during election times in particular, such material is not being interfered with in any way whatsoever, and that we conduct elections in an orderly and professional manner - not do whatever it takes just to get your face in the public; that was very bad.

With those words, Madam Speaker, I seek support from the House that we will have this amendment passed in due course.

Debate adjourned.

MOTION

Government Election Commitment on Apprentices

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I move -

That the Assembly call on the Chief Minister to explain to Territorians why her government's election announcement of 2500 new apprentices cannot be achieved and why the completion rate of new apprentices will be only 48%.

The nature of this motion is to endeavour to recognise that a community has a particular

expectation of which politicians can become aware and exploit to their own political advantage; something I find shameful. I am sure members on both sides of this House, in quiet moments, would also feel ashamed.

To stand before a community which has concerns for the aspirations of their young who are going through primary school or early high school, and wondering what the future may hold, they recognise that there are significant skills shortages. It appears that community leaders have, in the last 18 months, awoken to this. Polls, I guess, have demonstrated that the community is becoming aware that there is a significant shortage of real skill to be able to access the economic potential of the Territory and of our nation.

To recognise all that and, in the heat of battle when we are trying to win the hearts and minds of electorates, we make grand statements. In this case, the Chief Minister would have known full well, I would expect, that the grand announcement excited people instantly - mums and dads, and young people in particular. In the heat of the moment, they would have thought that this was fantastic and had a rush of excitement and hope.

That grant announcement was '10 000 new apprentices will be delivered'. In the euphoria of the election campaign, that was thrust forth again and again. The election is over and, in that moment, people thought: 'This is great; we are now going to have 10 000 new apprentices'. Sadly, we investigate that, and it fades into the background of memory of many mums and dads when they recognise that that is not exactly what will be delivered - not at all. What has been delivered is a grand announcement that capitalises on a concern within the community, for short-term political gain, and will serve to disappoint, confuse and to cause the profession that we have, being community leaders, to be tarnished.

Let us get to the deeper issue: is this factual? Will 10 000 apprentices be delivered? That was what was stated. Will 10 000 apprentices be delivered? No, 10 000 apprentices will not be delivered. That is a little too complicated to say in the heat of an election campaign; it probably would not serve the short-term political objective. No, 10 000 new apprentices will, sadly, not be delivered. Sounds fantastic, but they will not be delivered.

Will there be 10 000 apprentices trained? No, there will not be 10 000 apprentices trained. Closer inspection: what sort of training will be provided? 'We will not be delivering to you, the people of the Northern Territory, 10 000 new apprentices; we will be providing training for

10 000 places - apprentices and trainees'. Oh, all right, well, that is the same is it? No, it is not. We can have an argument about this but, honestly, most people think an apprentice is an apprentice; that is, someone who is indentured in an area of trade skill and becomes a tradesman or woman. It takes three to four years of sacrifice and hard work to become an apprentice.

Within this place, you are accustomed to such grand announcements. I find it very sad that, at a time such as an election campaign and, in particular, seizing on this in the moment of victory, and echo, again and again, that there will be 10 000 apprentices, with the Chief Minister saying 'We will deliver', to be particularly disappointing, because it holds the aspirations of young people and their families, and it is blatantly wrong.

Sadly, we are going to have to disassemble this and have a closer look. I would like to know - and I believe it is beholden upon Her Majesty's loyal opposition, to hold this side of the equation - exactly how many apprentices, in the traditional sense, will be delivered? All right, we will go to the next stage because it was dishonest to even assert that they will be delivered. No, they will not be delivered; we will provide training for them. Okay, that goes to the question of attrition.

How many apprentices will be provided with training in this current term of this government? How many apprentice positions, in the three- to four-year time of training that is required to train an apprentice, will be provided for? I am not talking about traineeships, but apprentices - the boilermakers, the plumbers, the electricians, the pastry cooks - that whole area where there are clearly-defined skills shortages and very serious deficiencies. How many positions will be provided in that specific area, which the minister and Chief Minister recognises is the core of the problem? How many will be? No, it is not 10 000; that is a lie. There will not be 10 000 new apprentices of that nature.

Mr STIRLING: A point of order, Madam Speaker! If he is going to accuse the government of lying, he needs to do so by way of substantive motion.

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order, Acting Chief Minister.

Mr MILLS: You are very sensitive, minister, you accused me of lying yesterday.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, if you can be a bit careful with what you say.

Mr MILLS: Well, I said that statement that was made before the Northern Territory community is a lie, it is not true - it is untrue.

Madam SPEAKER: I will allow that, member for Blain but, perhaps, if you could try to be a little less inflammatory. Continue.

Mr MILLS: It is not true ...

Ms Carney: It is a whopper!

Mr MILLS: It is not true. It needs to be established exactly how many apprentices will, in fact, be delivered. It comes to the question, though, of attrition, and I will revisit that issue a little later.

I now turn my attention to training. I will never confuse education with training; there is a clear difference between training and education. We need to dwell more seriously upon that distinction, because we are talking about serious matters here far beyond being re-elected and having our little moment of glory on the stage. We are here to address the core issues; to leave a legacy and make a difference - not to our electoral fortunes in the short term, or our business cards, but to address the real issues.

Education empowers a person to participate actively in all that the future has to hold. It opens up to a person the range of possibilities, and grants them the capacity to respond way beyond the reach of here and now. Training provides the capacity to respond to a very specific task. It is relatively superficial when contrasted with what education is; they are two different things. On a general and wider comment, I assert that our education system has confused this issue; the difference between education - attending the deeper issues, the principles, the values that undergird learning, progress and development in life - and training - teaching someone to do something. That is a superficial issue, required and necessary, but we should never ignore the deeper and undergirding issues surrounding what real education is.

Back to training and traineeships: traineeship is a title that covers a multitude of sins. There is much that occurs in the field of training. Sadly, in my electorate, I have many young people who come in with a flush of excitement that they have now enrolled in a traineeship, they are going to university, and they feel really good about it because they did not do particularly well at school. They feel charged up for a moment and I just love seeing that. However, then they describe to me that the training that they are doing, or the course that they have enrolled in, and I do not really have the heart, at that point, to rain on their parade - because I do want to encourage them as it is a tremendous thing to have someone enthusiastic for moment about what the future holds. Sadly, I have seen what has happened; I have been in this job for some time. They will go

off and come back with a certificate, and then find that it is a certificate and that is about it; it does not connect to a job.

Perhaps they have enjoyed the university experience and want to go and get another certificate or, perhaps - and sadly, it is often the case - they become a little disillusioned when they had that the training - which the minister would report had occurred and 'We have delivered'. But what have you delivered? What is the quality of this? Does it attend to the core issue of being able to equip and empower people to participate in the economic development of the Northern Territory? No, often not.

We need to do a far more serious analysis of what is happening in training and what it, in fact, does cover because the resources that surround this whole area are colossal. The confusion also is enormous. People in Berrimah, are working away trying to get their enterprises running and to get skilled people to come alongside who have some values, work ethic and a bit of understanding of how the workplace operates. They are crying out for good people to come in, and you have this whole industry of training provision which is an exceptionally expensive operation. It strikes me that if we were able to sieve it all out and to see how many people are actually involved in the delivery of training, put them all on one footy field lined up at Marrara stadium and, on the other oval, put all the people who are actually having training delivered to them, we would find it is an excessively expensive operation. How much money, how many people are actually involved in the training industry and what is the nett real result of this activity? Let us not confuse activity with outcome and result. Let us not confuse activity and endeavour as the objective. We need to make sure that underlying this is a clearer understanding of exactly what it is we are trying to achieve.

The statistics sound good when delivered in the House, by the minister who said: 'Look what we have achieved. We have achieved this, that and the other'. Well, that could be a report on activity. I am not saying that every bit of it is in vain, because the good endeavours of good people struggle through anyway. However, I will say it could be done a lot better. We need to be far more honest with the statements that we make to ensure that we are, in our role, attending to the core problem. Are we equipping our young people to participate in the economic development of the Northern Territory in the area of apprenticeships? Are we meeting the expectations of the small to medium size enterprises? Are we? From what I hear, no. If so, why not? How could we do it better?

I will turn to the issue of attrition. I will accept the minister's comments as quite accurate and fair in estimates when we are, in fact, providing training for trainees and apprentices in the number of 10 000 that we will not actually be delivering 10 000. We have dealt with that. The statement made by the Chief Minister and asserted by this government was untrue - and blatantly untrue. No, there will not be 10 000 apprentices. Yes, there will be training provided for 10 000 over the term. It is a very different proposition, far less appealing and attractive to the ear of a potential voter, and misleading. So, now we have a stark difference. We are not going to actually deliver 10 000; we are going to provide training and apprenticeships for 10 000. There is a difference. It is blatantly misleading to make that assertion. Let us go now to the issue of ...

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, the issue here is to say 'blatantly' misleading is the same as saying 'deliberately' misleading. If you could just say 'misleading', I will allow that. It is the 'deliberately' misleading which is the issue.

Ms CARNEY: Can I speak to the point of order, Madam Speaker? With respect, can you advise us what is unparliamentary about using the words 'blatantly misleading'? I accept that there are conventions in words such as 'lying' and so on. However, in the context of a debate 'blatantly misleading' is not something that, with the greatest of respect, can possibly amount to being unparliamentary. I simply ask that you let us know why it is that the term 'blatantly misleading' is considered unparliamentary?

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Blain, can I just clarify you were referring to the Chief Minister? Is that correct?

Mr MILLS: The statement that was made by this parliament ...

Madam SPEAKER: I just want to clarify that you were referring to the Chief Minister as having blatantly ...

Mr Mills: Misled - blatantly misled.

Madam SPEAKER: My concern was that it was about the Chief Minister, as opposed to the government ...

Mr Mills: I said both of them, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: If you were referring to a person who has clearly deliberately misled, then that is the issue. If you were speaking in a general way about the government misleading, I will allow that. However, if you are referring to a member of this parliament and saying that they

have, essentially, deliberately misled, I will not allow it.

Ms CARNEY: Speaking again to the point of order, Madam Speaker. Do I assume that all members of this Assembly cannot say of one another that someone has misled, blatantly or otherwise? Are 'misled' or 'misleading' words not to be used in this Assembly?

Madam SPEAKER: The question is in relation to 'deliberately misleading' - that needs to be done by substantive motion, particularly when you are relating specifically to a member. If you are being more general and you are referring to the government, that is not a reflection on a member. The issue is about a reflection on a member, present or not.

Mr MILLS: All right. Well, I have to say that I am caught in a tricky spot because standing in front of a crowd again and again and saying: 'We will deliver 10 000 apprentices' - perhaps you did it unintentionally! Perhaps you did not mean to say that, were given a piece of paper on which it was written, and told: 'Say this; that will get them', and had no idea that that was in fact untrue and impossible. Nonetheless, I will accept that it was unintentional, just read from the script, and said it without understanding what was being said. However, the machinery that passed that piece of paper across and said: 'Say this, Chief Minister' obviously knew the truth.

We will move on because we need to drill down to the question of attrition because we have established that. I have not established it; that it is not true was established in estimates by the minister responsible. What is true, though, is that there will be apprentices and traineeships. We need to learn more about those and what is the nature of this training. Does it actually address the real aspirations of young people? Does it really equip them to unleash the potential of the Territory through their engagement in it? We have those questions to investigate and we have some time to do that.

Now we go to what really is the case: it is only close to 50% of those who go in to training who will come out the other end with a completed qualification - 50%. That was covered in estimates, as I said before. It is a reasonable thing; it is a concern, of course, that there will be nearly 50% attrition. Of people who went through tertiary education, many fell along the way and did not complete it in that period of time. You will find the same within training. However, if you have nearly 50%, that means you will deliver - no, not 10 000 apprentices and traineeships - but training for 10 000 and, in fact, 5000 will come out the other end. There it is quite a different proposition,

and hardly as sexy as the original statement that is made in front of the masses.

We really must attend to the question of attrition. I hope, in the minister's response, he will explore more deeply and robustly this question of attrition. What is the nature of the attrition? Where are the highest levels of attrition and why? How is the answer to that question being addressed? Are we fixing the problem? We need to keep data on this sort of stuff. That is the important business; it is quality control and ensuring that our training programs are actually meeting the expectations of our clients. It is not just the young people who are the most precious in this case. If they fall out of training for whatever reason - and there are some tragic stories there in the sense that I know young people who have been really bruised by the experience. The workplace has not worked for them; the training has been shoddy; they have been run around the place and they have withdrawn to go and work somewhere else where they will never really add to their skill base. Worse than that, they have had their hopes dashed. That is why it is really tragic, and that is why it is so important. I hope the minister will include substance in the area of attrition and what lies behind that story.

I could go into that further; however, noting the time, I would like to finish my comments with what I hope the minister means when he uses the word 'reform' in education. 'Reform' is a great word for politicians to say, and it sounds fantastic, about as fantastic as saying: 'We will deliver 10 000 apprentices'. By saying 'reform' people are so keen to follow, and have, sadly, been disappointed again and again. They are keen to follow, when you say: 'We are going to reform education and get everybody involved; come along and have a talk - but we really will not do very much, we will just go through that process'.

We actually have an opportunity to do something here. If we are going to talk about reform, there is great potential for reform. Already, as the minister is aware, debate around this nation has been running for a couple years on the question of reform in education. For too long, education has been controlled by the profession, largely through the mouthpiece of the education unions who have controlled the education agenda. Those days are numbered. There has to be a new engagement with the whole proposition of education and how it matches the aspirations of young people and our wider community. I applaud the minister's initiative in now having the community involved in discussions about education, because we really need to put some serious questions on the table so that we can actually ask very difficult and honest questions, and hang around with enough courage to come up with answers and be prepared to implement them.

One question is regarding the expectation in our community of education. What do we expect from education? Well, I do not believe the expectations of parents are properly realised. What is going on in education is quite confusing. The children go off to school and come home - the nature of things have happened with us too - what happened at school today? You would think the kids would have a bit of a shot at answering that. However, when it comes time for the school report, it really does not shed much light on exactly what is going on in school. If you look around other countries and see what is happening in education, you find that the successful systems of education are moving more to allowing teachers to spend more time actually teaching, rather than spending their time developing curriculum - which is taking up an enormous amount of time for teachers - so there becomes more detailed and more strongly focused text books and curriculum-based education rather than a broad framework approach. That allows clearer reporting to parents, so that parents understand what is going on in school and can be more engaged. Parents are, generally, intimidated by what goes on in school and are afraid to ask questions because they feel they are out of their depth. If we have clearer standards in education that are clearly reported, then parents will not feel so intimidated and be able to be more involved. That is what is happening in successful education systems around the country.

The next step is, if you have clear standards in education, you can discern whether a student leaving primary school should go down the vocational path, or go to the pre-university path. That is called streaming. There are lots of terms that could be used to describe those two paths. There becomes clearer identification of which pathway the student should go down. This links up to this issue of apprenticeships and traineeships. If we build in that notion by the virtue of having clearer standards that can be clearly reported upon, and that a student's ability and, let us say, vocation in life, becomes more clearly identified, they have a greater sense of achievement if they can be engaged in something that they know will lead to some thing, like vocational and technical training or down the tertiary path.

Once again, remember at the beginning of this, there is a very great difference between education and training. That must occur all the time. We should not be afraid of separating those two paths so that we can have a greater level of educational success; that those who engage the system - and the minister has been to many of our high schools, particularly in junior high school. Many students, particularly boys, are finding it an environment where they do not really feel they have succeeded. They are going through all sorts of

activities; getting reports that do not really let them know whether they have done well or not; they feel that their reading ability is not as good as many of the others in the class; they want to get some recognition; and they muck up in class. The teacher does not have enough time to attend to that because they are spending time writing curriculum, engaged in responding to vague frameworks within the education curriculum side of things. They do not have enough energy to engage the individual kid, find out where they are coming from, manage the classroom behaviour and keep them moving along on a clearly defined path.

Over the top of that, we have another problem; that our community has been given a bum steer. They think that, in this environment that we currently have, their kid is successful if they go to university. We applaud them with functions here at Parliament House, in Alice Springs, and they get their names in the paper. They are going off to university and they are going to study and go to higher ...

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

Mr MILLS: My goodness, has it?

Dr LIM: Madam Speaker, I move that the member be granted an extension of time to complete his remarks.

Mr Stirling: After Question Time. It is luncheon adjournment.

Madam SPEAKER: Excuse me, Acting Chief Minister. Before I put the motion, would you be willing for us to go the lunch break and to continue your remarks after lunch?

Mr MILLS: I will finish up within 10 minutes, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: I believe there are some meetings on at the moment. It would be much easier if we could continue ...

Mr Stirling: We will give you leave after Question Time.

Madam SPEAKER: Quite happy to give you the leave now and we will have it after Question Time.

Mr MILLS: Okay.

Motion agreed to.

Debate suspended until after Question Time.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: I advise honourable members of the presence in the gallery of senior citizens from Casuarina, Johnston, Brennan, Drysdale and Nightcliff electorates. I am very pleased to see people from Nightcliff, in particular.

We also have visitors from Western Australia and the Netherlands and, in the gallery which I believe is called the ministerial officers' gallery, Flora Love, from the Karama electorate, who is a regular visitor to parliament. In fact, I understand that Mrs Love attends almost every day of parliament and, I am sure, would have a great deal of feedback for honourable members. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a very warm welcome to our visitors.

Members: Hear, hear!

TABLED PAPER

Auditor-General's August 2005 Report to the Legislative Assembly

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I table the Auditor-General's August 2005 Report to the Legislative Assembly.

MOTION

Print Paper - Auditor-General's August 2005 Report to the Legislative Assembly

Mr STIRLING (Acting Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Paper - Auditor-General's August 2005 Report to the Legislative Assembly

Mr STIRLING (Acting Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, I move that the report of the Auditor-General be noted.

Twice each year, the Auditor-General reports to the Legislative Assembly on matters arising from audits conducted by the office. The Auditor-General provides parliament with an independent opinion on findings about financial information, internal controls and performance management systems of the Northern Territory Public Sector. Through the Auditor-General's appraisals of existing practices, we can find ways of improving how our public service operates. The Auditor-General's reports ensure all members of parliament are better placed to appraise the performance of public sector administration.

Importantly, the Auditor-General brings these matters to the attention of agency chief executives for their consideration ...

Dr LIM: A point of order, Madam Speaker! The motion has been moved to print the report; could we have a look at it while the Acting Chief Minister is speaking to it?

Madam SPEAKER: I am sure it is being delivered, member for Greatorex.

Mr Henderson: We are just tabling it.

Dr LIM: We do not have it.

Madam SPEAKER: I ask the Table Office to get copies of that.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Dr LIM: Talking to the point of order, Madam Speaker, if I may. It is usual practice that the opposition be afforded the opportunity to have a look at the document while the speaker is on his feet addressing the document. At the moment, there is nothing there and we would like to have a look at it.

Madam SPEAKER: It is being delivered right now, member for Greatorex. Honourable members, could we please have a bit of order here. I would like to hear the Acting Chief Minister now.

Mr STIRLING: Madam Speaker, the Auditor-General's reports ensure all members in this parliament are better placed to appraise the performance of public sector administration. Importantly, the Auditor-General brings these matters ...

Dr LIM: A point of order, Madam Speaker! This is the Remuneration Tribunal Report and Recommendations. It is the wrong one, and I would like to have the right one so I can have a look at it, please.

Madam SPEAKER: I believe it is coming out. Member for Greatorex, it is simply an error. They are coming out now.

Dr LIM: Speaking to the point of order, I am sorry to hold up proceedings. My concern is that the Treasurer is going to get up and speak to it, and that is it; we have no chance to even respond if we wish to without having a look at the report. We need to look at the report so we can respond.

Mr HENDERSON: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker. For a point of clarification, maybe there is some confusion in terms of the dialogue between the Whips. This is just a tabling report that the Acting Chief Minister is making. He will seek leave to continue remarks at a later hour. The report will be distributed, people will have time to read it, and it will be debated in the next sittings, as is standard.

Madam SPEAKER: Essentially, the debate will be adjourned and it will be like other items for debate. It will be available for the next sittings.

Ms CARNEY: I am sorry, Madam Speaker ...

Madam SPEAKER: The debate will be adjourned after we have gone through the formalities.

Ms CARNEY: Now that we have the report ...

Madam SPEAKER: This is the normal procedure.

Mr Henderson: We are not debating it today.

Ms CARNEY: Can I finish, please, member for Wanguri? Now that we have the report, thank you, of course, the Acting Chief Minister can continue with what he was saying.

Mr STIRLING: I take offence at being invited to continue my remarks by the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, that is your privilege only, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: That is correct, Acting Chief Minister. I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will not be doing that again.

Mr STIRLING: She should have other matters on her mind; in fact, correcting the record of this parliament.

Importantly, the Auditor-General brings these matters to the attention of agency chief executives for their consideration and any necessary action.

Within the Department of the Chief Minister, the Auditor-General found some errors with the systems and processes relating to ministerial travel during the period 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2004. Travel undertaken by members of the Legislative Assembly in their capacity as ministers, or by the Leader of the Opposition - the claimants - is administered by the Department of the Chief Minister - the

department. The conditions under which travel may be undertaken, and the allowances that are payable, are set down in the Remuneration Tribunal determinations. Unfortunately, the department's systems and processes did not ensure compliance with Remuneration Tribunal determinations. The nett cost of these errors was less than \$1000, and were largely underpayments. The department has acknowledged these errors and fixed them. The department put in place improved supervision and internal audit capacity in the area at that time.

The Auditor-General also found that, within the Department of the Chief Minister, with the exception of Community Engagement Grants, it is not common practice for formal written agreements detailing the terms and conditions of the grant funds provided to be prepared and agreed to by the grant recipients. The majority of grants made by the department, being 235 of the 303 grants noted in the Auditor-General's report, were Community Engagement Grants provided under formal agreements. Of the remaining grant payments, 65% of the amount related to grants provided to government owned organisations, including Major Events Company. The funding is directed at specific outcomes that are clear and identifiable, such as the delivery of the V8 Supercars event. All such organisations are independently audited and have senior government representatives on their boards.

It is considered that formal grant agreements covering each payment to these organisations would not provide additional accountability. The department considers it has dealt adequately with grant payments and has appropriate controls over these payments, whilst being mindful of not burdening small community associations with unnecessary red tape.

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

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Speaking to the motion, in the few minutes that have been made available to me and based on what the Acting Chief Minister said ...

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, do you realise that we are adjourning the debate for the next sittings?

Ms CARNEY: Well, Madam Speaker, I understand that the Acting Chief Minister is moving to adjourn the debate. That is the question before the Chair, as I understand it, and I would like to speak to the motion.

Mr Stirling: I sought leave. That motion should be put.

Madam SPEAKER: It is getting very confusing today. Is leave granted for the Acting Chief Minister to resume his remarks at a later date?

Leave granted.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make some remarks in relation to the report that has just been tabled by the Acting Chief Minister.

Madam SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

Mr HENDERSON: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: No. The Opposition Leader is allowed to seek leave, and it is a question of whether or not the leave is granted, so I will have to call that again because I did not hear it. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have had the opportunity of looking at the main matter to which the Acting Chief Minister referred when he was talking to this report, and I would like to make some observations.

Mr STIRLING: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I seek clarification. I sought and was granted leave to continue my remarks at a later hour. It has the same effect as adjourning the debate.

Madam SPEAKER: I understand from the advice I received, Acting Chief Minister - but I might have misunderstood the advice. On advice, what I understood was that we have allowed you, Acting Chief Minister, to continue your remarks at a later hour. That is not an issue and that would normally mean, at this stage, the adjourning of the debate. However, the Opposition Leader sought leave to make comments at this moment and, because leave was granted ...

Mr Stirling: Well, she has contributed to the debate. She cannot come back and speak again, that is all. I want to point that out.

Madam SPEAKER: We are aware of that, but she has sought leave to speak to the matter now ...

Mr Stirling: Yes, that is fine, but she cannot speak ...

Mr Henderson: But she cannot speak again when we bring it back.

Madam SPEAKER: We are all thoroughly confused. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I think we are all square. I wanted to make a number of comments in relation to something, it seems to me, to be very serious and goes to the heart and the integrity of this government. The independent Auditor-General has drawn some conclusions as a result of ministerial travel that raised very serious issues. The Auditor-General said at page 18 that only 14 of a sample of 81 records selected for examination were found to comply with RTDs. This is about ministerial travel. This is about - and we have heard of it in other jurisdictions - rorting the system. This is about ...

Members interjecting.

Ms CARNEY: No, well, in other jurisdictions ...

Mr Henderson: Less than \$1000 in underpayments, not over payments.

Ms CARNEY: ... we have seen evidence ... I am sorry you are starting to squirm, member for Wanguri, but it is probably going to get much worse for you, sport - it is going to get much worse for you.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: In other jurisdictions, even the most casual political observer, or even those interested in history, will know that rorting systems can cause, and should cause, quite properly, politicians their jobs.

It is staggering that the Auditor-General has said only 14 of a sample of 81 records selected for examination were found to comply with the RTDs. The Auditor-General goes on to list some of the errors; he probably did not have space to list all of them. One of them, staggeringly enough is, and I quote:

... one instance where travel allowance was paid notwithstanding that the claimant was on leave.

Travel allowance was paid to a minister who was on leave. This is outrageous! Another example:

... payment of full travel allowance made even though the claimant did not use commercial accommodation.

These are very serious matters - very serious matters, indeed.

To only have, out of a random sample audit of 81 records, 14 that are correct - you are joking;

you have to be kidding me! This is absolutely scandalous. The Auditor-General also refers to the wrong number of nights being used for the calculation of travel allowance payable resulting in the incorrect payment being made. Does this mean that government ministers have been receiving in excess of their allowance? If so, what action has the Chief Minister taken in relation to those government ministers? Who are they? Who are the rorters? Who are the ones who have not been named in this Auditor-General's report? Do the members of the Labor government know who they are? Does the Chief Minister know who they are? Might she be interested? I would have thought so.

This is unusual - and that is something of an understatement - for an Auditor-General to refer to this sort of thing; to have so many examples and so few of the 81 records selected for examinations to have complied with the RTDs. I note the reference that the Department of the Chief Minister acknowledges that the number of administrative errors in regard to ministerial travel during 2004 was unacceptable. Too right, they would be unacceptable if you have one instance, for example, of travel allowance being paid, notwithstanding that the claimant - a minister, that is who we are talking about - was on leave.

I remember there was a rumour going around that the former minister, Jack Ah Kit, took his family to see the AFL Grand Final in Victoria. I wonder if he claimed government TA for that? This has a real smell about it, and you can rest assured that, to the extent that we are able, we are going to chase some rabbits down some burrows.

Mr Henderson: You are not going to find much.

Ms CARNEY: The member for Wanguri may not have any regard to concepts such as misuse of taxpayers' money ...

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, that is a fairly serious imputation ...

Ms CARNEY: Indeed, it is. It is based on ...

Madam SPEAKER: I ask you to withdraw, given that you were, basically, implying that is the member for Wanguri's position.

Ms CARNEY: Sorry, no. I did not think that I did, but if the minister thought that I did then, I withdraw it. I do not know who the culprits are, Madam Speaker. Someone on that side of the House will know who the culprits are. Perhaps the member for Wanguri knows who it was who has misused taxpayers' money through false and deceitful travel.

There is another matter that the member for Greatorex has pointed out to me, which is from page 18 of the Auditor-General's report. This is damning stuff. Accommodation costs being paid ...

Mr Henderson: Less than \$1000.

Ms CARNEY: Wait for it, member for Wanguri. ... directly to accommodation providers while, at the same time, claimants - that is, ministers of the Crown - also received travel allowances intended to meet accommodation expenses.

Dr Lim: Double dipping.

Ms CARNEY: This is double dipping; that is what it is called. This is probably about as serious as it gets. Any misuse of taxpayers' money by anyone through false and deceitful travel claims is an outrage. I now call on the Acting Chief Minister to undertake an investigation into the Auditor-General's findings to tell the people of the Northern Territory which ministers, current or past - and I am referring, of course, to the minister who retired at the last election, Jack Ah Kit - have, on the basis of the material contained in the independent Auditor-General's report done this. Who claimed travel allowance and received it when they were on leave? Who received full travel allowance when they were not in commercial accommodation? Who has been double dipping? Is it all of you or is just some? If so, which ones?

Mr Henderson: Dear, oh, dear.

Ms CARNEY: The member for Wanguri is saying: 'Oh, dear me'. I am sorry, member for Wanguri, that you do not regard taxpayers' money in the serious way that people thought you might. You may well have a cavalier regard for the hard-earned money of Territorians - hard-earned money of Australians, when it filters through by way of GST revenue.

However, this has a real smell about it. There is an aroma of skull-duggery. What is interesting is that I would have thought once material like this found its way into the Auditor-General's report - and you blokes would have known it was there; we have only just found out about it. That poses another question: when did you blokes know it was there? Was it before the election? Oh, I think it would have been. When did you find out? When did you know it was there? What action have you taken in respect of it? You shallow people! You went to the Northern Territory election two months ago, and I reckon you knew all about this stuff more than two months ago.

Mr Henderson: Well, you are wrong. Wrong!

Ms CARNEY: You knew all about it more than two months ago. The member for Wanguri is saying: 'Wrong' ...

Mr Henderson: Is the Auditor-General part of this conspiracy?

Ms CARNEY: You had better read this, sport, because on page 19, and I refer you to it:

The Department of the Chief Minister has commented ...

The Department of the Chief Minister will know all about this. It is your boss' department, the Chief Minister's Department. If you are seriously asserting that you blokes did not know about this until this document landed on our desks today - what can I say? You just do not have any creditability. I do not buy it for a minute that you and your mates did not know what was in this. I do not buy it for a minute that you and your friends did not know that some of your little mates were rorting the system.

Even though you do not like it, member for Wanguri, this is all about providing an effective and robust opposition. If you blokes are going to rip off the system, you can bet your bottom dollar that every single time, we will be having a great deal to say about it.

Notwithstanding the very serious matters contained in this report, there might be some form of explanation. It might be that it was 'just a little mistake or two'. If that is the line you are going to run, you should act now, you should give it us, you should make a statement to the public via the media. If, on the other hand, it goes deeper than that, no doubt you will try desperately hard to spin your way through it. However, we will not let this rest; if you blokes have been rorting the system, we will chase you down every single burrow.

It was not a surprise when we saw members of the government get a bit twitchy when we wanted this report - and now I know why. Now I know why it was that they were very happy for this to be laid on the Table with, probably, the naive hope that, 'Oh well, it is laid on the Table. We have a small opposition, no one will read it'. Well, we will be reading it all right! I know people in the public service, who work so hard to earn their money that is so easily being spent by ministers of the Crown, will be listening and thinking: 'Oh, my God, what have they done?' We will chase it; we will get people to help us chase it.

In the meantime, the Acting Chief Minister can say to the media, who are presumably waiting outside, what the story is. If there is an

explanation, please give it to us. But it does not look good.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to continue my remarks at a later time.

Leave denied.

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to make some comments on the Auditor-General's report.

Leave denied.

Mr HENDERSON: Mr Deputy Speaker ...

Dr LIM: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! When a member seeks leave to speak or to do anything in this Chamber, it only needs one dissenting voice and leave is not granted.

Suspension of Standing Orders - Speak to Report Forthwith

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me commenting on the Auditor-General's August 2005 report.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, what a performance from the Leader of the Opposition ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HENDERSON: I will start by saying that I certainly knew nothing of this issue until it was brought to my attention by the Leader of the Opposition in her recent contribution.

Ms Carney: So, Hendo is starting to ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr HENDERSON: Whilst the Leader of the Opposition was ranting and raving, I have had a chance to read the Auditor-General's and the Department of Chief Minister's comments, and had some preliminary advice. Of course, this issue will come back for substantive debate when we debate the report. However, I can say, categorically, there has been no rorting, no culprits, no double dipping, and no false and

deceitful travel claims as asserted by the Leader of the Opposition - absolutely categorically.

Ms Carney: It is in the report.

Mr HENDERSON: The Leader of the Opposition says: 'It is in the report'. It does not say that at all. The report does not say that there has been rorting, culprits, or false and deceitful travel claims. It does not say that.

Ms Carney: It does not actually say that.

Mr HENDERSON: It does not actually say that. Okay. Correct. So this is your interpretation of the Auditor-General's ...

Ms Carney: Read what he says!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr HENDERSON: This is your interpretation; your flight of fancy and hyperbole, your indignation ...

Ms Carney: One instance where travel allowance is paid ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please do not interject any more!

Mr HENDERSON: ... in regard to the Auditor-General's comments and report.

Let us go through this. It is a fact that there were administrative errors and that there were, as documented on page 18, instances where travel allowances were overpaid and underpaid. When you talk about rorting, culprits, and false and deceitful travel claims, you might think that there have been some ministers lining their pockets with huge amounts of money.

Let me read from page 19 - it was something that the Leader of the Opposition did not point out in her flight of fancy and diatribe that we heard. I will read the first paragraph from the Department of the Chief Minister, which has commented:

The department acknowledges that a number of administrative errors in regard to ministerial travel during 2004 was unacceptable.

The department has acknowledged that, yes, it made mistakes, even though the nett result of these errors equated to less than \$1000.

There has been no rorting, no culprits, just administrative errors in the administration of ministerial and the Leader of the Opposition's travel during that time period. My advice is that

the department has conducted a thorough audit of all monies paid, not just during the periods alluded to - not alluded to; put on record - by the Auditor-General, but for all travel payments. For the majority of those payments, ministers were actually underpaid; for some payments, ministers were overpaid. However, those errors have been corrected and ministers who were underpaid have been paid the correct amount, and ministers who have been overpaid, the record has been corrected. However, the nett sum of this great conspiracy ...

Ms Carney: Get a full audit. Get a full audit done!

Mr HENDERSON: ... brought by the Leader of the Opposition is less than \$1000.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Carney: Only 80? How many?

Mr HENDERSON: Less than \$1000.

Ms Carney: So, it was not much money and, therefore, it is all okay? I do not think so!

Mr HENDERSON: Really, what an extraordinary and desperate performance. The department has acknowledged administrative errors; those administrative errors have been corrected. Systems have been put in place to ensure that it does not happen again. This whole hoo-ha is in regard to less than nett \$1000. I accept that \$1000 is a lot of money; it is a lot of money to everybody. However, if the Leader of the Opposition is going to try to lay a trail to say that a minister, or a number of ministers, have been ...

Ms Carney: Why don't you agree to a full audit?

Mr HENDERSON: ... rorting their travel allowance, she has absolutely ...

Ms Carney: Let us have a look at this.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, Leader of the Opposition!

Mr HENDERSON: She has absolutely nothing to cling to.

Ms Carney: This was only 81.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition!

Ms Carney: Eighty one. Eighty one.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, please do not interject any more!

Mr HENDERSON: Well, Leader of the Opposition, there have been only 14 out of a sample of 81 records found to comply with the RTDs. It is not good enough, and the department accepts and acknowledges that it was unacceptable. You did not read that point, and you did not go on to read: '... even though the nett result of these errors equated to less than \$1000'. Why did you leave that bit out?

Ms Carney: Why aren't you agreeing to a full audit?

Mr HENDERSON: It did not actually fit in to the ...

Ms Carney: How much more is there to this? How much more?

Mr HENDERSON: ... grandstanding and shrieking from the Leader of the Opposition. Why did you leave that bit out? Because it does not actually fit in with the conspiracy that you are trying to paint here, Leader of the Opposition. We will have a fulsome debate on this; this is the first I have ...

Ms Carney: You better have an inquiry.

Mr HENDERSON: I can assure this House and Territorians, categorically, that there has been no rorting, culprits ...

Ms Carney: That is not what it looks like.

Mr HENDERSON: ... no double dipping, there have been ...

Ms Carney: But there has, there has!

Mr HENDERSON: There have been no false and deceitful travel claims. These have been administrative errors that have been acknowledged by the department. They have been acknowledged by the department - unless the Chief Minister's Department and the CEO are part of this conspiracy as well - and the sum total of what we are debating is less than \$1000.

We will bring this report back for more fulsome debate. I totally refute in this House all the allegations made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I also have not had, I suppose, sufficient time to ...

Mr Stirling: Why don't you save your remarks for later on?

Mr WOOD: Excuse me! Thank you. I will explain why I am standing. I listened to the ..

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, can you wait for a moment, please? Through the Chair, can you seek leave to speak to the report? Unfortunately ...

Mr WOOD: I ask through the Chair: when I finish speaking, can I seek leave to ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: No.

Ms Lawrie: You can, but it will be knocked back.

Mr WOOD: I thought I would ask advice from the government: are you going to give me that ...

Members interjecting.

Mr WOOD: I will seek leave whether I can speak on this motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do you seek leave to speak on this motion?

Mr WOOD: Yes.

Leave granted.

Mr WOOD (by leave): I would like to make a few comments about what has been put before us. There is an issue here that needs clarification. The Leader of the Opposition has brought it out and has made some allegations ...

Mr Henderson: Very serious allegations.

Mr WOOD: Yes, based on the Auditor-General's report. I note that the Chief Minister's Department said that the nett result of these errors equated to \$1000. The difficulty with that is that is a nett result. If someone overspent by \$10 000 and someone else underspent by \$9000; you will get a nett result of \$1000. The question I was ...

A member interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Just hang on, hang on. The question would be: did the person who overspent by \$10 000 do something they should not have done? Certainly, the person who did not get the money was not a problem. You cannot analyse from that statement whether there were some errors that were really over the top.

All I am saying to the government is: if you believe that there is no roting here, then bring to the parliament the records so that we can see whether it was the minister's fault that, for instance, payment of full travel allowance was

made even though the claimant did not use commercial accommodation. Was that the minister making that claim, or was it an error within the administration?

If it was an error within the administration then, surely, we should then at least be able to say: 'What have you done to fix it, because there are mistakes being made within your department'? If the mistakes are being made by a minister, then we should see that as well. All I am saying is the government now has a duty, using the principle of open and transparent government, to come back with all these examples - that is, 61 out of 81 records - showing us how they occurred.

The government has made a statement that there was not a great problem. The opposition has made a statement that there is a great problem. The easiest way is for the government to table all the documents relating to these errors so that we can see whether (1) they were administrative, and then we can say: 'How come they were administrative and do you need to fix up your administrative processes?'; or (2) has there been a problem with the minister over claiming what they should not have claimed? It might be that they have fixed it up when notified; but it is still a record. Therefore, the simplest way is to bring those records here to parliament, table them, and then we will be able to decide whether there has been any roting or it has just been errors of administration.

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

Leave denied.

Debate adjourned pursuant to leave granted to the Acting Chief Minister, Mr Stirling, to continue his remarks at a later hour.

MOTION **Government Election Commitment** **on Apprentices**

Continued from earlier this day.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, in continuing, I appreciate the opportunity that has been given to me to continue my comments. I will endeavour to restrict them to about 10 minutes. By way of explanation as to why I have gone over, it was largely to do with the issue of how to manage the word 'misleading' - whether it was done deliberately, blatantly, or by accident.

However, the point remains, there has been a proposition put to the Northern Territory community that this government will produce 10 000 apprentices, which has been demonstrated, quite clearly, to be false.

On further investigation, they are not apprentices, as the general public understood, but apprentices and trainees, which covers a vast multitude of programs that may or may not address the core issue of skills shortage. Most people recognise the area of skills shortage as being in the trades, and we are talking about traineeships that are, in many cases, short-term programs that do not match the profile of traditional trades with which the term 'apprentice' is synonymous.

In *The Australian* today is the headline that a global search has commenced for 20 000 skilled workers. That is the magnitude of this problem, and that is why this is a serious matter. This community was deliberately misled because it is not the case. We have a serious problem. The aspirations of young people, the potential of the Territory, has been dealt with in a very shoddy and self-serving way by making such assertions in the context of a Territory election - false, and this government should be ashamed.

Judging by the behaviour we have seen since coming to office, this government will not stand in a dignified position and make a genuine explanation so that we can move on and restore some kind of faith in those who have been charged with the responsibility of leading this community, not just for their own political term, but into the future. Apprentices are what are required, and it takes three, four or five years to train a single apprentice. To have the hopes and aspirations of young people damaged, or their confusion increased, is a responsibility that lies at the feet of this government.

The comments I was making prior to the luncheon adjournment addressed the notion of 'reform'. I will stand by the minister's intent to develop a reform agenda. I welcome that, and will take my role as part of this parliament and as a community leader to strengthen community debate on education reform as it relates to the increased profile and valuing of trade and technical skills within our education system. It is not necessarily dealing with it after school. If we are really serious about making genuine change and leaving a real legacy, we need to attend to what happens in upper primary and secondary schools.

If we, as a community, start to change our language and attitude towards trade and technical skills, and afford due recognition to those young people who leave the education system and take an apprenticeship, with the same level of value from the dinner table through to certificates that are awarded in this building or recognition in the paper - if we celebrate them to the same level as we celebrate those who go off to university and

receive recognition for their graduation from different courses, we have made significant gains.

One way of measuring that is if all of the technical studies areas of our high schools are centres of activity rather than repositories of broken desks and stage props. I want to see those rooms operating again, where young people are able to take great pride in their activity at school to make things, use their hands, learn how to weld, cut timber, use power tools of different kinds, and strip down small motors. Then the good business folk and experienced trades people are given the opportunity to invest their experience in young people through our high schools. That is when we start to make some change to the way we respond to a skills shortage.

That is primarily what I needed to say. I will close with what is really the greater concern: this government had an opportunity to lead responsibly on this matter, but have gone down the path of endeavouring to create an effect for short-term gain and have, quite callously, I would say, and carelessly misrepresented what is the core issue here; that is, they are not apprentices, they are apprentices and trainees and the community has been misled. I urge members, in the interests of young people and their families, and where the Territory will be in five, 10, 15 years time, to support this motion.

Mr STIRLING (Acting Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Blain started his contribution by declaring this government ought be ashamed of its efforts here. In fact, we stand tall and proud in relation to skilling Territorians. Skills for jobs and growth were a key focus for the Martin government at the outset, and have been and remain so since we came to government in 2001. Skilling and training Territorians is, absolutely, an important part of the government's work for Northern Territory families and local business. The agenda in this area has been clearly laid out on many occasions: better education and training for all Territorians; access to education and training so that all Territorians are given the opportunity to enjoy high wage and high-skilled jobs; and building a skilled and competitive work force supported my an innovative and responsive educational and training agenda.

When we came to government, we refocused employment and training by abolishing the former Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority and creating the Department of Employment, Education and Training. The old NTETA became, in large part, the new employment and training part of DEET. At the same time, we brought in, a bit later, the first ever Jobs Plan and work force report for the Northern Territory which laid out the government's priorities

in employment and training, and strategies for getting results in the areas of jobs for Territorians, increased numbers of apprentices and traineeships; training to better meet the needs of industry and business in the community; more funding for small business for apprentice and trainees, particularly in traditional trades; and an emphasis on preparing young Territorians for the work force through closer links between schools, industry and better career advice.

I stood in this Chamber for 10½ years in opposition, calling on the then CLP government to introduce a jobs plan, year after year, to give our kids a crack at apprenticeships in the work force, and they never, ever did. It is churlish for the member for Blain to suggest that we have, somehow, failed the course. The work force report is a massive document. You can go through it, and I encourage the member for Blain - he has probably never seen this despite its availability, and would not have the energy to pick it up and read it. If you just go to anywhere in it, this is on East Arnhem region, Nhulunbuy, you can look down the list: occupations, tradespersons and related workers, metal fitters and machinists, 109 people employed, 5% of the total employment there. If you turn over, you can go through structural steel and welding tradespersons, electricians, motor mechanics, region by region, through the Northern Territory - where they are, what they are doing. The occupation listing indicates the occupations most likely to be in shortage in this area, East Arnhem: children's care workers, electricians, metal fitters, machinists, secondary school teachers, structural steel, welding tradespersons, tradespersons. The regional shortages: chefs and motor mechanics are hard-to-fill vacancies, dentists in general, medical practitioners are in shortage, and a waiting list for nurses to enter Gove Hospital, although nursing is not a shortage in the area.

He asks us whether we are strategic in how we spend our training dollar. Well, what does he think this is? What does he think this massive body of work, put together by the department over the past couple of years, is? This is the bible in informing this government, Employment and Training, and DEET, as to where the dollars should go into training, because it tells you, not only where the tradespersons are across the Northern Territory now, and all other categories of employees, but where the skills shortages are, exactly what those skills shortages are, and the amount of effort that we need to put into training. Part of that overall program also has been boosting indigenous employment by offering better career pathways, better matching of training to jobs, and better learning support.

That jobs plan that I called on the CLP to do 10 years ago could have been in place serving Territorians well into the future. As it is, by the time we came to government in 2001, we were well on the back foot in skills shortages. We developed an employment and training strategy, a first for the Territory. We organised a work force NT report, a first for the Territory. Whether the member for Blain likes it or not, it is the most effective school strategy - in fact, the only school strategy - ever introduced to the Northern Territory. It has been done through the Jobs Plan, and establishes a clear strategy for directing the training dollar most efficiently into the future.

As I said, despite evidence of a looming skills shortage - and traditional trades have had skills shortage in the Northern Territory for the past 20 years - the previous government could never, ever, muster the energy or the vision to produce such a plan, and every year meant another block in the road to building the skills of Territorians.

We are making sure that every young person who wants a trade or a traineeship can get one, and that they are given support to keep them in training as well; and every business has enough assistance to make it viable for them to put on more trainees and apprentices. Under that first Jobs Plan, we set priorities, we took action to meet those priorities, and we met them. We planned for funds commitment to employment, vocational education and training programs and initiatives over the previous three years: \$110m to train, retrain and prepare Territorians for employment and to increase community building capacity; \$33m to fund and support the training of 7000 apprentices and trainees; \$1.2m over the three years to provide pre-vocational training for Territorians to assist them gain apprenticeships and traineeships; and \$7m in incentives for employers to increase the employment of apprentices and trainees in small business, traditional trades, public sector, and community local councils.

I can advise that we are seeing results from these initiatives, especially in the uptake of apprentices and trainees. In 2001, 2018 commenced training. In 2004, 2585 commenced training, an increase of 28%. In 2001, there were 848 completions and, in 2004, 1408 completions, an increase of 65% since we came to government. In 2001, 2200 apprentices/trainees were in training, and in 2004, 2910 apprentices/trainees were in training, an increase of 32%. As of 12 August 2005, there are 3232 in training, a 47% increase on 2001.

Let me just go to some of the issues before I look at completion rates, an issue for the member for Blain. Some of the language he was using was quite disturbing, in getting into semantics and

philosophy about the difference between education and training, and between an apprentice and a trainee.

I refer him to a page from DEST, the federal Department of Education Science and Training. It was at the federal level that new apprenticeships were introduced some years ago: New Apprenticeships Centres sprang up all over Australia. 'You will be amazed where new apprenticeships take you and what industries they are available in: agriculture, hairdressing, food, finance services, business services, utilities and energy, light manufacturing, local government, retail ...' and so on. Are they all traditional trades four-year apprentices? No, they are not. In many cases, those categories are 12-month traineeships, as we used to refer to as Australian traineeships. It is a federal government use of language some years ago that said: 'No, they are all apprentices; they are new apprentices'. The member for Blain went on and on and waxed lyrical about the differences between apprentices and traineeships. Some are four years, they are competency-based; some are 12 months, what we used to refer to as traineeships. The federal government and the industry refers to them all as apprenticeships, whether they are one, two, three or four-year qualifications that the trainee is seeking.

The other issue that really concerned me was the bent that the member for Blain has in regard to his philosophical approach to education overall. It is one of extreme elitism. That is what concerns me because he said: 'There is a big difference between education and training'. Well, I refer him to his federal counterpart, the federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Brendan Nelson. I was as pleased as anyone in Australia when Brendan Nelson became the federal minister for Education early in 2002, because one of his first statements was:

I would be as proud of my son and daughter if they were to become a tradesperson in this country, as I would be proud of them if they were to become a doctor or a lawyer or a scientist or any other such category.

He was placing a value on vocational education and training. He was saying that the pathway through to a metal trades machinist is as a valid and legitimate form of education, and pathway to employment, as is the pathway through NTCE higher education and a university degree. He stood by, and has made that comment at every vocational and education training awards that I have been to. I support his approach; it is non-elitist. It says that I value the role of the plumber, the carpenter, the butcher, the

candlestick maker, as I do, the lawyer, the scientist, the professor and so on.

There is something wrong with the member for Blain's approach to all of this when he says education and training is very different, as if we ought not have vocational education training in schools or school-based apprentices in our schools because, somehow, they weaken this elitist view of education. It is an exclusive and elitist approach, and a harmful approach to young people. We want young people to value vocational education and training and the opportunity to get an apprenticeship. It is a complete contrast to current thinking and practice and, of course, flies in the face of strategies employed by both this government and at the national level to get more kids into apprenticeships and traineeships.

What he wants us to do is put young kids in boxes: 'You are a bit slow; you should go to tech school'. That is the way they did it in the 1950s, mate: 'You are a bit slow, you are not coping too well; you go off to tech school and be a mechanic, because you are a dumbo'. 'You are a bright kid, we will keep you, you go through to Year 12, you go onto university and you can be whatever you like'. Well, that is the failed, discredited and disqualified approach of 40, 50 years ago. It is an approach probably favoured by the Prime Minister, but not by Brendan Nelson. It is certainly an approach that is favoured by the member for Blain.

He talked about streaming, and this is the same thinking. He talked about streaming in a vocational education on one hand, because that is the B grade list, and higher ed: 'Here is the higher achieving kids, we value these kids, but not them. Let us shunt them off to the workshop'. Up the chimney it would have been a couple of hundred years ago, with the broom behind you.

We are about options, not about streaming. We are about options for recognising that all students have individual characteristics and they cannot be painted black and white in exactly all of the skills sets that they may contain, and the potential that each individual might have. We want to give all young people an equal taste of possible future pathways, whether it is directly into work, into vocational education and training, or into higher education.

He talks about this mix as if it ought not occur. Look at Charles Darwin University, our university. It manages higher education on the one hand, and is the largest public provider for vocational education and training in the Northern Territory. It balances them both. Look at Taminmin High School. It has academic, right through to NTCE, but also has one of the strongest vocational

education training systems within our secondary system in the Northern Territory. What the member for Blain would do, should he be ever minister for education - and I pray to God that he never will be - would be to limit the options of our kids at a very early age: 'You are not getting the mark, son. You do not belong in higher education. Here is where you are going, this is the path for you'. 'You on the other hand, an A-class student, you ought be taking the higher ed stream. We are going to make sure that you get there'.

What we and what Brendan Nelson are about, is encouraging all the young people to realise whatever potential that they possibly can, and to think about all options. We and Brendan Nelson want more young people in apprenticeships. We will encourage them all. We certainly will not get into this elitist approach that the member for Blain brings to this debate.

What does he make of CSM and its tremendously innovative training program around information technology for young students in our schools? It is training. Obviously, not very good. Well, go and tell those kids that CSM has been turning out, under Kim Ford for the last few years: 'That is just training; we do not really value that too highly'. It is a fantastic program, and I commend Kim Ford and CSM at every opportunity I can for the resources they put into that because it gives kids a real look at the IT industry, and options for them into the future.

School-based new apprenticeships - not on, because that is a mix that might contaminate the higher order of education! Education and training simply cannot sit together because training is about doing things, it is about learning tasks; education is about purifying and broadening the mind and wonderful things such as that.

Dovaston Training Centre: I would absolutely recommend the member for Blain get along and meet Shirli Dovaston from the Dovaston Training Centre and see what she does about giving people a change to broaden their career horizons, and to improve their lot in their working life. I love going to the Dovaston training awards because you get this marvellous cross-section of people doing all sorts of skills acquisitions through Dovaston training.

There is one person who springs to mind. It is an AO1 who sat within the Registry Section of one of our departments sadly, for 18 years - 18 years as an AO1 in Registry. An ageing indigenous woman has been at work every day of her life at the same level, at the same task, for 18 years. You have to commend that woman's persistence. You also have to ask questions about a system that allowed that to happen; a system that said: 'That is your job forever'. Through people within

this particular department, who got her enrolled in these training courses with Dovaston, her horizons are opening up, despite her senior years, for jobs at a higher level, of greater productivity, of greater interest to herself, and of greater benefit to the department. Guess what? She will be paid a bit more, as well! They are the sorts of outstanding achievements and results of Shirli Dovaston, just as one example.

He says there are too many training organisations out there and it is very expensive. All I ask is that he go along and meet Shirli. Arrange a time to go down, spend an hour with her and he will learn a little about just how valuable a training organisation such as Dovaston Training is.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am running out of time. In the estimates, we talked about 48% of those who commence an apprenticeship or traineeship will complete that apprenticeship or traineeship. It is slightly lower than the national mark, which varies around the 50%, plus or minus. DEET studies undertaken by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research identified that those rates are not different from the numbers that enter or start a tertiary qualification across the nation.

He talk about apprenticeship dropouts, as being dropouts and that they do not belong anywhere else; that is all they are good for, an apprenticeship. Hello, hello, hello! About the same number of tertiary-seeking students - that is, in our higher education system - also drop out. The member for Blain does not want to refer to that.

We will continue to pursue incentives to get more young people both into apprenticeships and traineeships. We will not adopt an elitist approach. We value, very highly, trade skills in our community and we will be working to get more to stay to full completion. Completion is the best outcome, obviously, in terms of the full skill development and recognition and accreditation of the training. DEET tell me that national studies have revealed that over 60% of people who start but do not finish an apprenticeship or traineeship are in full-time employment after the cancellation of their training contract.

Our commitment is to support 10 000 apprentices and trainees commencing over the next four years, and we are doing this through incentives to employers, to apprentices and trainees and, importantly, programs to build on the capacity of our young people to enter into apprenticeships and traineeships and stay in training.

Under the Jobs Plan, we have seen small businesses and businesses in skills shortage areas take up the employer incentives: 138 incentives for trade apprentices; 244 incentives for small business employers; 27 incentives for local community councils; \$1.5m to date; and allocations to 30 industry areas in Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and other communities.

We are promoting the importance of a trade and of taking up vocational education and training via Get VET, Try a Trade and VET in Schools. We are building on the work-ready skills of young Territorians, and are giving them a taste of the real world of work and of the commitment required to do a good day's work. We have programs in place to get more Territorians the pre-vocational skills essential to get into apprenticeships and traineeships, and to keep up with their study and work.

Under Jobs Plan 2, we will spend \$73m a year over the next four years to train and skill Territorians. That is an outstanding commitment. In terms of per capita, it is far and away the most outstanding contribution from any state and territory. The initiatives to support 10 000 trainees and apprentices over the next four years are: a Workwear/Workgear Bonus of \$1000 to new apprentices starting out in skills shortage areas; \$300 to all other new trainees and apprentices; a \$2m Build Skills NT program direct to industry to skill and up-skill existing workers; \$800 000 for Work Ready NT, a new school to work transition program over four years to ensure students are better able to make the transition from school to work; 1000 incentives worth \$3000 each over four years for small businesses to take on an apprentice or trainee; 650 incentives worth \$7000 over the next four years for businesses taking on an apprentice in a traditional trade; ongoing base funding of \$32m per annum for Charles Darwin University, \$9m for Batchelor; and 40 new scholarships per year worth \$4000 each for Territorians taking on vocational education and training study at Charles Darwin University.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the motion called on me to explain to Territorians why the 2500 new apprentices cannot be achieved. It is being achieved, as I speak. There will be 10 000 over the next four years.

Dr LIM (Greatorox): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to add some words to this motion that was moved by the member for Blain, and I would like to confine my words specifically to the motion. I heard both the member for Blain and the member for Nhulunbuy range quite widely on education itself. The motion says:

That this Assembly calls on the Chief Minister to explain to Territorians why the government's election announcement of 2500 new apprentices cannot be achieved, and why the completion rate of new apprentices will be only 48%.

What exactly happened was, prior to the election, the Labor Party, the Chief Minister, was out there saying that her government, if re-elected, would deliver 10 000 apprentices in the next four years of this term of government. On the night of polling day, on Sky News, she was televised saying her government was committed to 10 000 apprentices and, in her own words: 'We will deliver'. That is what we want to ask her: how will she deliver 2500 new apprentices every year?

The Acting Chief Minister then tried to redefine what she meant by apprentices. Before an election, they said: 'Oh, we will deliver 10 000 apprentices', and did not bother to tell anybody out there what you meant by that. You assume everybody understands what the word means. I understand the word to mean if I am in training to be an electrician, a motor mechanic or a plumber. These are the traditional trades, where you learn through an apprenticeship. Every mum and dad would believe, when you say: 'I will deliver 10 000 apprentices', you mean those types of trades.

Immediately after the election was over, and after the rush of blood to her head when she said she would deliver 10 000 apprentices over the next four years, the political spin started. The whole thing then gets watered down: 'Oh, we did not mean 10 000 apprentices like everyone understands it to be, we meant 10 000 apprenticeships and traineeships'. The spin started within a few days of an election, and that is what really disturbs me - this government would say and do anything so that they can win government. And they did it well, I must admit that - but by whatever it takes. That is what it is about; whatever it takes. It is much the same as that Richardson guy - what was his name? You say what you like, because this is politics ...

Mr Mills: Graham.

Dr LIM: Graham Richardson. Say what you like, do what you like; this is politics - whatever it takes, just win. This is a government that also said: 'We will be an honest and transparent government. We will do the right thing by Territorians. We will not be arrogant. We will have the highest of standards. We will have integrity in public life'. This is what we are talking about.

My understanding of 'apprentices' is that you have to do those three to four years of training as an apprentice with a qualified tradesman. When

you then really hone down to it, the government says: 'Oh well, we are not talking about that anymore, we are talking about 2500 apprenticeships and traineeships'. The expectation in the public out there is different, though. When people hear there are going to be 2500 apprenticeship jobs going, that is what captures the imagination. If it is true, and is deliverable by this government, I will not have any problem with it - not a problem. This is a fantastic target to achieve, to aspire to, and good on you. However, it is not true.

In fact, during estimates, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, when I asked him about that, actually confessed that there will be around 750 Territorians each year who will be in their first year of apprenticeship ...

Mr Mills: Quite a bit different.

Dr LIM: A big difference to 2500! That is not even a quarter of it, isn't it? That is all he aspires to. Even in that, there is still the attrition rate you have to look at as well. When they start talking about 2500 traineeships/apprenticeships - and I give him that leeway for the time being - he will now have only 750 apprentices. That is what he is going to fund with that \$1000 grant under the Workwear/Workgear Bonus. That is the truth isn't it? The truth is, each year at best, you will commence 750 Territorians in apprenticeships, and the rest will be classified as traineeships. They will be anything from three months, six months, to 12 months of training. That is not telling Territorians the truth. That is why the opposition finds it so difficult to accept.

The minister earlier spoke about how you must include any type of training into this definition by the Chief Minister. The Chief Minister was keen to promote apprenticeships as she, I believe, understood it to be. In my mind, when I heard the Chief Minister talking about 10 000 apprentices in the pre-election campaign, I genuinely believed that she understood that her government would deliver 2500 actual tradesman each year. It was only after she was told after the election: 'No, that is not what we meant', that the political spin started.

I have said before this - the clock has suddenly gone very fast for some reason. Are you adjusting the time, or I am losing the - thank you. I have just lost my place here.

In regards to new apprenticeships, I have said before I believe our indigenous youths are now on the brink of becoming the next wave of tradespeople in the Northern Territory. This is a wonderful opportunity for indigenous youth to take up this challenge; to take up the training that has now been made available so that they can actually

seek meaningful employment after that. It is a pity that we are not seeing more indigenous students lining up to take up these apprenticeships. I look forward to the government spending the money that we have put into this program, strongly promoting this amongst our indigenous young people.

I, like the minister and the member for Blain, believe that the value of a tradesman would be equal or better, if not in monetary terms and other criteria, than what I now define as professional people. I believe that a plumber or an electrician, within five years of attaining their certificate, could be earning much more than a doctor working in a hospital. He seriously would. You see tradesman on \$150 000 a year. You can see young tradesmen who own their own businesses having \$0.25m and higher in their annual turnover. That is a fantastic achievement that, in years past, would never be something that happened. Today, tradespeople can achieve much more than most professionals can.

It is also unfortunate that, in our current education system, we do not promote the trades as strongly as we have promoted higher education. It is a fall back to the days of the Whitlam government when higher education became free, and the national media and parents were captured by the thought: 'I want my child to go to university'. What happened was the drive was there for everybody to go to university and, suddenly, anything less than university was not good enough, and the trades lost their significance amongst the Australian population.

Fortunately, over the last five years or so, this federal government, under John Howard, has continued to push the value of trades. I believe that, over the next few years, people will start to appreciate, more and more, that making trades as your first choice after school will become a very much desired thing. I remember when I was going to school back in the 1960s, my Australian counterparts were leaving school at Years 10 and 11 to go into trade school. Not that I would suggest to any young school student to leave school at Year 10, but some students would like to do that. In fact, they would prefer to leave school at Year 10, because that is the way they are inclined - not that they are academically not as capable; they are just not interested in studies. They are interested in practical applications of their skill and, sometimes, the best avenue for them is to go with a trade. Ideally, you do Year 12 at school and then, with your longer stay in school, you get a better grounding to become a much better apprentice as well.

The motion is really about the political spin that this government has put to the pre-election promises that the Chief Minister made; the

election victory speech where she promised Territorians that she would deliver 10 000 apprentices in the next four years. That is an issue that has not been responded to by this government. I believe that the government has allowed these mischievous, misleading comments to be perpetuated just so they could win government. That makes it an uneven playing field. We have to retain our integrity in politics and, unfortunately, this does not seem to be occurring under this government.

In this document called *Good Governance, Labor's Plan to Build a Better Territory*, it says under the heading Integrity in Public Life:

Holding public office brings with it an obligation to act with honesty and propriety. Labor will instigate systems to facilitate the monitoring and scrutiny of ministers' and members' of parliament behaviour and performance.

This is a very strong ethical sentiment, which I strongly support. It would be nice to see that the Chief Minister herself maintains the standard and either says to us publicly: 'I was wrong in saying that there will be 10 000 apprentices over the next four years'. Say: 'I was wrong. In fact, what I meant to say is that I cannot deliver 10 000 apprentices over the next four years. What I meant to say was that I can only deliver 750 apprentices in the next year and each year coming'. Then she should promise that she will stick with those comments in the future. If not, what happens then is she perpetuates what I would call misleading statements to Territorians at all times.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, in closing, I trust that members opposite have had the opportunity to listen carefully to what has been presented in this motion. However, the minister's and the Acting Chief Minister's responses to my comments leave me a little saddened. Any careful, impartial reading of the words that have been presented from this side of the Chamber and responded to, and the spirit and the tone in which they were responded to from the other side of the Chamber, is the very reason we have brought this issue before the parliament.

The way in which it has been responded to causes grave concern and serious disappointment. To make personal attacks on those who raise an issue of concern I find sad. We are talking about a deeper issue and hoping that, by debate in this Chamber, we are able to move forward to a better place for Territorians - not a better place politically for us, but I guarantee, if you start to attend to issues in a genuinely honest way, you will win great support from the Northern Territory community. That was

the heart of the motion. That was the nature of the comments that have been made from this side of the Chamber. To have them refuted in such a thuggish way is quite disheartening. I heard the comments when I was a humble backbencher in government, new to this Chamber only six years ago, from the same members - including the member for Wanguri - hand on heart and speaking of a great grand vision of a whole new Territory and a dramatic new approach to the way in which we conduct our affairs in this Chamber.

I have to say, in my observation through three elections in six years, I have been greatly saddened by the hypocrisy and the blindness in the way in which debates have been conducted in here when we endeavour to raise matters of significant and genuine concern with the resources that we have in opposition, trying to probe down to the core issue. To be passed off in the interests of self-protection and political gain is disappointing.

I am not going into the details of the appalling response from the minister, which was really to cover their own position when we are endeavouring to address what really are the underlying issues surrounding traineeships, apprenticeships, the aspirations of young people and their children, their families, and where the Territory could be in five, 10, or 15 years time. My goodness, it is outside of a political cycle. Let us be bigger than short-term protection of our own political position and face-saving, and start to serve the Territory. Then we will gain the respect of this wonderful community.

The point was quite clearly presented - difficult to hear however, sadly, as I said before - that there was an assertion that there would be 10 000 new apprenticeships. The Chief Minister's claim, promise, commitment, has been shown to be false. It is not that at all. It is a bit like saying: 'Family, we are all going to Bali. We are going overseas for Christmas', and you end up in Mandorah. It is overseas, but it is not the place that you said you were going to. It is that same kind of thing, but without a hint of an apology, or any attempt to accept responsibility for misleading. That is what is sad and genuinely disappointing. The Acting Chief Minister stood and used his time to protect himself and resort to personal abuse, and an ill-considered and low-level attack on what really is something that is beyond politics and should be attended to in a mature way. That is disappointing.

I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Greatorex, who has served as the opposition spokesman for Employment, Education and Training, and has had vast experience and is genuinely concerned about these matters. It is a matter of principle, as he alluded to, that has been

violated here and seems to be treated with no respect whatsoever, sadly.

The member for Nhulunbuy, the minister, is an odd fellow. At times, he is thoroughly charming and eminently helpful and rises above, and then, blow me down, he turns into some kind of political, nasty, bottom-feeding animal and attacks and abuses people. I have had difficulty in understanding how they can co-exist in one place; the issue of integrity.

I digress, and perhaps we can deal with that over a meal around the Speaker's table sometime, or a private beer behind the scenes, because those sorts of things I reckon are quite important, when our community looks at us as community leaders to see how we deal with the real issue. Anyhow, I could digress and go for a long time on that issue, because I believe that our community expects more.

I urge honourable members, who have heard with their own ears, thought their own thoughts, felt with their own heart, to realise that what we were talking about was an issue of principle, and accept responsibility for the words that have been said. They were spoken by a community leader - in this case, the Chief Minister – and she should accept responsibility for those words and acknowledge that they were actually misleading. She should address the truth in the best interests of kids and their families, and the future of the Northern Territory, and not be solely influenced by short-term political self-interest. I urge members to support this motion.

Motion negated.

MOTION

Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee - Reference - Fixed Parliamentary Terms

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move that this Assembly refers to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for consideration the recommendation that there be fixed parliamentary terms for the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

I will start with a quote:

It is good enough for the American Presidency. It is good enough for New South Wales. It is good enough for the ACT. It would stop this ridiculous argy-bargy. We need to have that, and we need to clean up government.

The person who spoke those words of wisdom was then the Opposition Leader, one Clare Martin ...

Mr Mills: Oh no! How embarrassing!

Ms CARNEY: True story. ... on 11 October 2000, when she moved in this Assembly, amongst other things, that the government introduce fixed four-year parliamentary terms.

Whilst I acknowledge that a similar motion to this was, in fact, placed before the House two years ago by the member for Nelson, I do feel that it is of significant importance to revisit the proposition. The recent Territory election provided a clear example of why our community needs fixed four-year terms. We had reports of businesses delaying investment decisions until the election was over - not uncommon with elections - of people delaying the purchase of property because of the possibility of a change of government and, for many weeks, there was the distinct possibility that the Labor government could not secure supply and, therefore, pay its bills.

Governments are elected to govern, to run the administration and finances of the Territory in a responsible and guarded manner. They are responsible for the process of government but, by not having fixed four-year terms, these principle foundations of government and public administration are open to manipulation and personal whim. The opposition believes that these principles should not be the subject of party political benefit, and should not be placed under pressure or the perception of pressure, just to secure and an optimum opening to help one party have more chance of being elected than the other. The electoral cycle should not be manipulated by any one party.

When the member for Nelson introduced a similar motion he said:

We should really be voting on what a government has done over its whole term. We should be looking at that rather than what they have done in the last five minutes. There has been a tendency in Australia and the Territory to go to an election just after some great statement has been made or some great project, or something that is going to happen in the Territory.

The member for Nelson must have had a crystal ball; the Labor government did exactly what he predicted. The government secured financial close on the waterfront project and then - kaboom! - an election was called five minutes later, just like that: a big announcement and then an election. As the member for Nelson said, governments should be judged on four years and not just the last five minutes.

This Labor government would have been facing a problem, as they are quite happy to make announcement after announcement but, in fact, deliver very little real activity. A perfect example is their *Volatile Substance Abuse Act*. It is still not in force after several months.

As we have seen recently with the uranium mining debate, this government is quite ready, willing and able to relinquish Territory powers back to the Commonwealth. We do not want the Territory government to abdicate its role in this important matter.

Perhaps the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee will have more backbone than the government itself and will lead the Territory to fixed four-year terms. Therefore, the opposition's specific motion proposes that this Assembly refer to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for consideration the recommendation that there be fixed parliamentary terms for the Legislative Assembly. My reasons for referring the matter to the committee revolve around the fact that the Northern Territory does not have a constitution as such, but is governed under the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act*.

Madam Speaker, you will be in aware that, in opposition, the government was unequivocal about this issue. The now Chief Minister supported fixed four-year terms. Specifically, in October 2002, the then Opposition Leader Martin moved that the Northern Territory move to 'act immediately to clean up government in the Territory by introducing fixed four-year parliamentary terms'.

Once again, the Chief Minister, as Chief Minister, back-pedalled on another promise. Perhaps, as they say, 'absolute power corrupts absolutely'. This Chief Minister does not attach much importance to telling the truth, or to some of the values she so proudly espoused only a few years ago.

Her idea of four-year fixed terms was to introduce the Northern Territory Electoral Bill in February of last year, providing a three-year minimum term. Therefore, the government of the day now has a full year in which to manipulate the Territory electorate, the Territory's businesses and the Territory's electoral processes. In essence, the fixed three-year term changed nothing.

There has been a move all around Australia to seriously consider four-year fixed parliamentary terms, and I believe that that move by all jurisdictions has been a positive one. South Australia, New South Wales, the ACT and Victoria have fixed four-year terms and these have seen, I believe, improvements in the electoral stability of those parliaments and, most certainly, stability in

the processes of government and the perceptions of governments. It is fine to have a political and, perhaps, an ideological view on this topic but, at the end of the day, all politicians are elected representatives of the people. Parliament is the forum in which the peoples' will is enacted and the government is the process of carrying out these decisions. It is in the best interest of our Territory community that stability is brought to the electoral cycle, as it can only be in the best interest of those we serve.

Why is it that four-year terms are desirable? There are compelling reasons, and I have incorporated here some of the member for Nelson's points that he made a couple of years ago.

The reasons are as follows. For months, institutions and companies are forced to put planning and decisions on hold, until one person makes the final call about when we all might vote. In addition, the electoral process, put simply, is given some certainty. Further, it reduces the opportunity of the government of the day to choose a day that will benefit its own chances of re-election. It allows local members and candidates more time to plan and serve their electorates. Incumbents have more capacity for raising finance than oppositions, and four-year terms may smooth that anomaly. It allows candidates who are proposing to stand some time to go around their electorate and campaign effectively and, more importantly, to organise their affairs so that they can undertake the major operation; that is, the standing for parliament. It would also remove the power fulcrum away from executive government and into the hands of parliament.

The Victorian government introduced fixed four-year terms in 2003, and the Premier, Steve Bracks said at the time, and I quote:

Fixing the date of the election in this way means that the electoral process is strengthened through certainty.

The Premier went on to say:

The Premier of the day will no longer be able to nominate the date of the election and any advantage of the government in choosing the timing of an election is diminished.

Perhaps that is why the Chief Minister failed to honour her promise.

As I have said previously, having a bob each way with a three-year minimum term is not the same as having fixed four-year terms. The government is treating the Territory public with

contempt by proposing such a compromise and seeking to sell it as some sort of certainty in the electoral process. Obviously, there would be reasons for the early dissolution of parliament, or for the election not being held on a nominated day. Those reasons may include things such as: a successful motion of no confidence in the government; the failure of supply or appropriation bills, a clash with a Commonwealth election or some other inconvenient time, such as Easter; or exceptional circumstances such as a cyclone or an outbreak of disease.

The bush poet and critic, Edith Sitwell, said, and I quote...

The public will believe anything, so long as it is not founded on truth.

It is time for the Chief Minister to start to honour her promises and tell the truth. Her public is beginning to see through the veneer, and will do so over the next four years.

The *Northern Territory News* editorial of 4 June 2003, highlighted the hypocrisy of the Chief Minister, and I quote:

NT Chief Minister, Clare Martin, showed some support for fixed-term parliaments when in opposition. She should throw her weight behind the idea now she is in power.

Chief Minister Martin was reported as saying:

You'd have to say that I'm pretty much on the record as saying that governments should run their full term.

That was reported in the *Northern Territory News* on 20 November 2003. She was more than pretty much on the record; she moved a motion in October 2000 and argued that motion herself.

The Chief Minister is starting to make a serious habit of saying one thing and then, when she discovers that it is not electorally popular or if she thinks that cheap political point-scoring is the order of the day, then she comes back with the backflip with double pike. This is not the way politics should be practiced in the Territory or, for that matter, any where else. Territorians deserve better than this from our politicians - all politicians.

Fixed four-year parliamentary terms do bring stability to the process of government, it prevents the electoral process from being manipulated for party political gain, and it will prevent this Chief Minister from saying one thing and doing another, just to be re-elected. This Chief Minister does not attach much importance to telling the truth. She should attach some importance to standing by her

views as expressed prior to becoming Chief Minister. Madam Speaker, I move the motion.

Dr BURNS (Planning and Lands): Madam Speaker, on coming to government, we committed to open and accountable government. Over the past four years, there has been a whole lexicon of measures that have been implemented by the Labor government, including freedom of information, a whole range of acts and reforms. This parliament, as members in the last Assembly know, was very busy in the reform agenda of this government to bring open and transparent government.

Included in those reforms during the first term of government, we conducted an independent review of the *Northern Territory Electoral Act*. That review, as most members would be aware, was carried out by Minter Ellison Consulting. This review made a number of recommendations that were successfully implemented in time to conduct the most recent Northern Territory general election.

It is important – in fact, vital - that Territorians have confidence in our democratic and electoral system in the Northern Territory. That confidence is now underpinned by an independent Electoral Commission, which is a significant achievement. The legislation we introduced last term enshrined the uniqueness of conducting an election in the Territory and guaranteed, most importantly and fundamentally, independence in the electoral process.

Many Territorians would be surprised to know that, until we came to power, the electoral process was run from within the Chief Minister's Department. That meant that the resources of the Electoral Office and its ability to do its job was governed by an agency of government. Our reforms implemented last term guaranteed that the appointment of polling places and mobile polling places were not subject to any minister.

The Northern Territory now has an independent redistribution process.

One of the issues explored during the review was the issue of fixed terms. As a government, we looked at fixed four-year terms and saw some merit in them which, through consultation, was also reflected by some of the community who thought that there was merit in having a fixed four-year term. Others argued that it entrenches bad governments that you cannot get rid of, and that it grinds bureaucracy to a halt. With a fixed term, bureaucratic decision-making can start winding down some considerable number of months out from an election. Campaigns move into government and the bureaucracy can, understandably, get nervous and go slow rather

than pursuing and actioning government policy. I observed the same thing happening within business in the Territory as the election grew closer. Therefore, this is a very important issue. Some very real issues like that were raised.

What we introduced was a balance. It provided an important level of certainty. There is a minimum of three years and a maximum of four years, which gives that window of 12 months for an election to be held.

During the second reading debate for the *Northern Territory Electoral Act*, the then leader of the CLP, the member for Blain, said: 'I am happy with the compromise'. The current leader of the CLP, the member for Araluen, did not even discuss the issue of fixed terms during that debate. You can argue both sides of the coin on fixed term but, as the then Leader of the Opposition said, we have found an acceptable compromise position.

The reforms we made to the *Northern Territory Electoral Act* last term were significant. As I said, it established, for the first time in the Territory, an independent electoral process and an independent electoral redistribution process. This was something that was long overdue. We did not change every law we have about the election process; in fact, many of them work well.

I pay tribute to our election officials. They do a very good job over very difficult areas. The Territory is unique, and it is hard to imagine a more difficult terrain and circumstances than our electoral officials have worked in over many years, and have done a very fine job.

In short, we carried out reform of the *Northern Territory Electoral Act*. We believe that it is sufficient. The former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blain, said it was quite acceptable. Now we have the member for Araluen, the current Leader of the Opposition, pushing fixed four-year terms. The government's position is clear on this issue, and we certainly will not be supporting this motion.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, it was disappointing to hear the minister say that, because the motion really was just to refer the matter to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I would not have thought that would have been the end of the world because, in the end, the government has the numbers on the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and if it does not like to discuss a promise that the then Opposition Leader made on 11 October 2000 that she would introduce fixed four-year parliamentary terms, then that that is a shame.

When the then Opposition Leader, now the Chief Minister, raised this issue in the Assembly, she spoke about: genuine freedom of information laws; creating a statutorily-independent Ombudsman's Office; creating a statutorily-independent Electoral Commission; properly empowering and resourcing the Auditor-General; reforming members' entitlements, particularly in the areas of superannuation and – ooh – travel; introducing a ministerial code of conduct; establishing a genuine parliamentary committee system including an Estimates Committee; cleaning up the procurement process to ensure transparency, and to prevent members of parliament probity on government contracts; reforming the operation of parliament, including changes to standing orders to ensure the Speaker's independence - that might have slipped by; and reforming Question Time by limiting the time allowed for ministers' answers to questions - well, I did not see that, but that is an interesting one; and - finally, No 10 - introducing fixed four-year parliamentary terms.

Do we have parliamentary terms? No. What did the Chief Minister say at the time?

Finally, fixed four-year parliamentary terms. It is good enough for the American presidency. It is good enough for New South Wales. It is good enough for the ACT. It would stop this ridiculous argy-bargy. We need to have that, and we need to clean up government.

Sounds like a case of famous last words, because we do not have fixed four-year parliamentary terms. I believe it might be seen as a bit of an excuse to say: 'Well, we have done all this and, therefore, because we have been 90% right then we should not worry about the 10%'. The 10% was: introduce fixed four-year parliamentary terms. I believe that was a broken promise, and I hear lots about broken promises in this parliament. It amazes me when one side says: 'The federal government broke a promise on nuclear waste'. Then I see: 'We will introduce fixed four-year parliamentary terms', and they have not done it.

The minister said: 'We have introduced certainty, we can have an election somewhere between three years and four years'. Well, we spent, probably the last 12 months before the last election, guessing. When we were going to have the next election kept the newspaper full of guesses. That is exactly the problem, and exactly the reason why I support the idea of fixed four-year parliamentary terms. It makes it difficult, especially for people who would like to be members of this House, to know when there will be an election. It works perfectly well in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and the United States.

Some people say: 'If you know when the date is, then people start electioneering a long way before the date'. I can guarantee that there were members of the CLP who were not waiting to find out when the date was; they were electioneering about 18 months before we were going to have an election. It probably would have been two years if we would have been on fixed terms. I believe that is actually irrelevant.

I also believe what we should take note of is that the government, to its credit, did review the *Electoral Act*. However, what it forgot was one of its recommendations which said:

Fixed election dates achieves two objectives: they provide for certainty for election planning so that all political players are aware of the election date and can make arrangements accordingly. In the Northern Territory context, fixed-term elections could be used to ensure that elections are always held in the Dry Season, or in a way that takes ceremony time into account, for example. Fixed election dates in the Northern Territory would also assist with setting and advertising mobile polling schedules, and ensuring that mobile polling was provided at times and places that suited voters. Fixed election dates also take the timing of an election out of the hands of the government of the day, removing the opportunity for the perception that a government may take political advantage by calling an election at the time it judges to be advantageous to it.

It finishes off saying:

... widespread support for fixed-term elections was indicated during the public consultation process.

This was the review that reported back and said that we should have fixed-term elections. This was the government that said that we should have an open and transparent government; an independent Electoral Commission; an independent Ombudsman Office; freedom of information laws; introduce a ministerial code of conduct; standing orders to ensure Speakers' independence; and reform Question Time by limiting the time allowed for ministers' answers the questions ...

Mr Henderson: Twenty questions we had yesterday; that is a record for this parliament.

Mr WOOD: No, no, I did not say that, I just said reform Question Time by limiting the time allowed for ministers' answers to questions. I am not doing accounting, I am just quoting you ...

Mr Henderson: A record for this parliament.

Dr Burns: We assault liberty?

Mr WOOD: Oh, very well. I am not knocking that; I hope ...

Dr Burns: Be honest!

Mr WOOD: I hope we can work towards that.

However, what the Chief Minister, who was then the Opposition Leader, was asking for was good government. She wanted a government that was seen to be independent. They brought in this independent review of the Northern Territory electoral system ...

Mr Henderson: Yes. We have an independent Electoral Commission.

Mr WOOD: That is right. One of its key recommendations was to make sure that elections were held to:

... take ... the election out of the hands of the government of the day, removing the opportunity for the perception that the government may take political advantage by calling an election at a time it judges to be advantageous to it.

I bet your bottom dollar if this report had been in while the government was in opposition, they would have just said: 'Yes, yes, because look at the all the things we said; all those 10 points'. They would have jumped up and said: 'Great. It supports our No 10, introduce four-year parliamentary terms'. However, when it got into power, it decided that was not so good, because we all know that governments do not support fixed-year terms - not just this one; the ones that do not want fixed-year term - like the idea of jumping the gun. They just had a good news story - go for election. Or it is great scandals in the opposition: 'Someone went after someone else's missus - dreadful. Someone has been found rorting the system - dreadful. Go for election, this is the time'.

Is that really what democracy is about? Governments should be elected on their four-year term record, not on their three-and-a-half-year term record, when the weather is nice so everyone feels lovely, when they have record results for income, industry is rocking along, and housing is going up. If you think you have done a good job, look at it at the end of four years. Ask the people to judge your record over that four years; not be opportunist and wait for the period when you think: 'Oh, we will get a few extra votes here because the opposition is in a terrible state; they have had six leadership challenges in that period and

someone took their car and crashed it into a pole, and all sorts of scandal. Then we go for an election'. Is that good democracy? I do not think so.

The people of the Northern Territory said they did not think so also, because the 'independent' review said, and I quote again:

... widespread support for fixed-term elections was indicated during the public consultation process.

Well, blow me down! That just seemed to disappear very quickly.

It is all very well to say: 'We are a government that supports an independent Electoral Office, independent Ombudsman; we are open and transparent. But we just want to leave a little there for ourselves just in case we might get kicked out of office. We want to make sure we have that chance when things are going well that we can get an advantage over the opposition'. I know, I know. In your place, if we did not have fixed terms, I would probably say good idea too. However, we are supposed to lift ourselves above that level. That is why we had an independent review. They looked at it from process. They looked at it from process not politics.

You are looking at it now from a political point of view. 'What will we gain by not bringing it in? Well, we can gain a little flexibility regarding the time we go to election'. That is politics.

What we are asking for is this to go to Standing Orders Committee and seeing whether fixed-year terms is good process. Is it better for the Northern Territory to have fixed-year terms? Is it better for parliamentary process to have fixed four-year terms? I believe it is. This particular motion is not about that. It is about whether we can justifiably send it off to the Standing Orders Committee - beg your pardon, Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee - to have a look at it. Surely, that would not do any harm to anyone.

That is not as bad as asking the government to come up with the records of ministerial travel and accommodation to see whether they have any administrative problems in that area. I say that now, just in case I get gagged at the end of this. I just thought that I would bring that up.

This is not as serious as that issue. This is just an issue that you would have thought a Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee could consider, and report back to parliament because, after all, they are only going to look at something that the Chief Minister said that she would bring in. Here is a chance for the Chief Minister to say: 'We do not think it is a good idea. It has been to the Legal

and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and our reasons for not bringing it in are such and such'. Well, that is not going to do much harm.

Even though I support it, I cannot see any harm in going to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Surely, that is not the end of the world. We have not asked the government to spend money or to bare their soul; we just ask to go to the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I support the motion from the Leader of the Opposition; it is a good motion. For the sake of looking at improving our processes, surely this would not hurt. As I said, I support this move and I hope the government will just change its mind and let it go the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, there is no need for me to spend time arguing the merits of a fixed term for members opposite, except that that is the case, otherwise they would never have held that position in opposition. It is not an issue as to whether the proposition has merit or not. It does. It is an issue of principle and of honesty. Riding alongside those words are the self-evident assertions of hypocrisy. In the interest of fairness, openness, honesty are words that have been spoken that, sadly, have lost their value by actions.

You see I like to use the analogy for those many members in here who assert they love Aussie Rules football. Similar to a game of football - let us say it is the grand final - and you had a system whereby the reigning Premier is given the opportunity to sound the siren at the time of their choosing in the fourth quarter, we would all declare that is being rather unfair. You know how long the first quarter is going to go, the grandstand is full of people, they are following the game; the second quarter, you watch the clock; third quarter, you watch the clock; but there is no clock in the fourth quarter; there is no time keeper. So, in the fourth quarter, by quirk of constitution or some regulation that sits on the books, the premier team has the privilege of saying: 'Right now is a good time, looking at the scoreboard. Now is a good time, blow the siren, we have the grand final'. The grandstand would be appalled, and the very code of football would lose respect.

It is in that simple analogy that it is clearly demonstrated that fixed terms are right; they are fair. The way that our community is developing, we require greater confidence in the mechanisms that we employ to make decisions on our behalf. We need to trust the institutions and so, if words like openness, honesty and transparency are to mean something and we redeem the value of those words, we start to act in accordance with the themes and principles we once held to be true.

Sadly, going back to the footy analogy, if the people in the grandstand were observing this, they would also feel the injustice of such a system. To extend further, the grandstand has been watching. They have seen hypocrisy and they make their quiet assessment. They have seen principles and values ignored. They have seen hypocrisy rule, and they have seen alteration of positions to suit short-term political self-interest. They have seen that, and it is quietly registered. It may not bear fruit at the next election, but it resides there and it will not go away. It will affect the way in which all of us, whatever side of politics, will be treated with less respect because we become part of a system that will do whatever it takes to advance their own interests. This is a very good case in point.

I visited New South Wales during the last parliamentary term on two occasions to observe the conduct of their election. I did not expect that it was fixed terms. I had already been to Victoria and assessed their election, with ongoing speculation as to when it would be. When it occurred, I was down there for a time to observe.

When I went to New South Wales I found a completely different atmosphere within political organisations, the public sector and the wider community. The political organisations were focused, not on when we can guess when the other side might go, but on being prepared to present their policies at a set and open time when everyone was ready. Government was running to a clock with which they could not interfere, and the community could then look and assess to see how they had gone. When the siren sounded, the community looked to see the scoreboard and see how they had gone. The judgment is taken out of the hands and the influences of politicians.

The public sector was able to run its full course. The efficiency dividends, I am sure, would have increased because, in the public sector, when there is no possibility of political masters interfering with programs and timing to suit their political objectives, the programs run in a far more efficient manner. They run to the end of a set time.

On the community side of things, socially, I was absolutely fed up with the question: 'When do you think it is going to be?' Everywhere you went! 'I do not know. Ask Clare'. For 12 months, every conversation was prefaced by: 'When do you think it is going to be?' Then you would have to sit still, nut it out and come up with some sort of answer. At the end of it, I was really quite appalled because it is such a waste of effort in the public sector, our community, and politically. It is a pox on all of us when this sort of position, which was once so dear, has been abandoned.

I will finish by saying this: if, come a time, perhaps in the not-too-distant future, I am standing on that side of the Chamber, when the people around me say that they will institute a four-year set terms, we will do it.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, it is disappointing that, given that the government has so many members, so few are interested in participating in this debate.

Mr Mills: They are more interested in federal matters.

Ms CARNEY: Yes, as the member for Blain says, they are much more interested in talking about federal matters. However, that is their right because we live in a democracy. It just occurred to me that politicians, perhaps above anyone else, tend to be, by their nature, more interested in politics, politicking and parliaments and things like that than the average Joe.

I thank members for their contributions. Much has been said, and I guess it does not need to be said. I suspect members of the Australian Labor Party are not particularly enamoured with the great democracy that is the United States of America. I take the view that, whilst it does not do everything right, it is incontrovertible that it is one of the world's - arguably the world's greatest - democracy. I do not always agree with the Chief Minister but, as she said in October 2000, if it is good enough for the American presidency - blah, blah, blah - it is good enough for the rest of us, basically. If it is good enough for such a huge democracy like the United States, I wonder why it is not good enough for the Northern Territory of Australia.

I notice that, when the member for Nelson made his contribution, he referred to broken promises. Indeed, it is a broken promise. There are others. In the context of government and governing, there are some that spring to mind. I believe we have a list of them in my office. In the context of this debate, a couple are noteworthy. I remember the Australian Labor Party campaigning prior to the August 2001 election, when it had been put around that they would reduce the number of ministers. Indeed, they did reduce the number of ministers, but it was not really too long after that that it crept up to eight. We were always very encouraging, because the CLP took the view that you really cannot govern properly with fewer than nine. At last, the Chief Minister, only in recent weeks, has gone up to nine. It goes to show how priorities change when you are in government.

There was also - and I do not know whether it was true or not - word going around prior to the August 2001 election that members of Labor were

so outraged and ideologically upset about these things called government white cars, they vowed and declared to get rid of them. Last time I was down there, I saw quite a few of the white cars. I do not know if the government cars are continuing to drive some of the children of members of government around the traps, but I just note with interest that the white cars are still there.

It is interesting how the worm turns. I do not trust the Chief Minister. I believe she is a woman driven by political expediency. Some would say that is equality. I am of the view, however, that in matters of principle and integrity and being truthful, at the end of the day, even to yourself, when you look in the mirror as you are brushing your teeth at night, if you can think: 'Oh yes, I am a reasonable human being', that is really important. Obviously, the Chief Minister does not.

We will talk about this motion again but, more importantly, we will be talking about the hypocrisy that is this Chief Minister, and her inability to attach very much importance to the truth or the telling of it. We will also be pursuing her hypocrisy and her inconsistencies over the next year or four years. I know that the motion will not succeed. It is brought to the Chamber, in any event, seriously. I would not mind betting that, even though they are unable to say so, there are members of the Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party who probably have some sympathy with it. But that is politics.

We bring the motion in good faith. You could do something really wild and crazy like all vote with us. That would be a truly outstanding result. However, I am sure that that will not be the case. In any event, the motion is brought in good faith and I thank members for their contributions.

Motion negatived.

MOTION

Alternative Energy Supply for Electricity in the Northern Territory

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly calls on the Chief Minister to explain to parliament why the government has not formulated a plan or strategy to secure a long-term alternative energy supply for the generation of electricity for the NT.

Once again, our responsibility is to make decisions in the best long-term interests of the Northern Territory, both socially and economically. The two are connected. In order to drive an economy, we need an efficient and reliable supply of energy. The member for Wanguri is often calling out: 'You need to get out more'. Well, we

do get out and we hear, as any member in here would hear if they spoke to business operators, that the cost of power in the Territory is holding the development of the Territory back. Therefore, we have to attend to that issue and endeavour to find a cheaper source of energy - at the very least, an ongoing and reliable source of energy to take us beyond the next four years.

I believe it is Jackson Browne who produced a song called *Running on Empty*. The truth is, as we assess this - once again, not from a political point of view to try and score a point against government - this is a real issue that we all recognise. We can play games to try and get in front of the camera and blame someone else, but the fact is there is an ongoing deeper issue: the Territory's energy supply is running out and we do not have a guaranteed supply of energy over the horizon.

I have often visited my family in Western Australia and embarked in our car after we have packed it up. One thing I consider very carefully is how much fuel I can carry in my tank and where the next fuel station is: 'Rest assured, family, it is going to be okay; I know where we are going to fill up next'. However, the whole of the Territory community, and all the families in it, are actually driving off down the road and do not know whether they are going to be able to get to the next fuel stop.

Just over the horizon, there is no guaranteed supply of gas. The Amadeus Basin is running out. Currently, Power and Water has enough gas from the Amadeus Basin in Central Australia to meet forecast electricity demand only until 2009. That is just over the horizon. New gas contracts need to be put in place now to ensure continuity of supply. We need to know when we are going to have the opportunity to connect to a new energy supply.

The problem is that the demands of the Territory community on gas is very small when we consider the demands of growing economies around us such as China, India and the United States. We are in a very difficult position. How will we get enough gas to allow the real potential of the Northern Territory to be unleashed? I believe that the best is definitely yet to come for the Northern Territory, but the future is dependent upon a more affordable supply of energy which leads to more affordable electricity. The Territory has no secure energy supply of gas to produce electricity beyond 2010. That is an alarming problem; it rings alarm bells and keeps some of our small business operators awake at night. It sits in the background and has occupied the minds of previous CLP ministers, and current government ministers.

This is not an attack on the Labor Party directly; this is recognition of a problem that affects all of us. We need to move to a solution. It appears, of course, that we are going to expect that the endeavours to procure a solution must come with some political spin-off. Really, that is just chicken feed; that is trash. The real benefit must be for Territorians, for industry, for the future, to allow that best which is to come, to be realised. I say that this issue has to be approached in a bipartisan way because it is so serious.

The production of electricity in the Northern Territory is dependent on gas from the Amadeus Basin near Alice Springs. Contracts to supply this gas to Channel Island expire in five years. This government has not developed a plan or strategy to secure a long-term alternative energy supply. Gas from the Timor Sea will come onshore at the Wickham Point LNG plant. This government has failed, to date, to secure any of this gas for domestic power generation in the Territory. Plans to supply Blacktip gas to the Alcan upgrades through the trans-Territory pipeline has collapsed. With the collapse, the opportunity to deliver a new supply of gas for domestic power generation has been lost - words that can be spoken fairly easily - but behind the loss, is a very sad story. To date, there has been no success - in fact, failure - on securing that long-term alternative energy supply for the Northern Territory. That failure should be fairly noted. We need to move to a solution.

This issue is extremely important and I call upon the Chief Minister, in the best interests of the future of the Northern Territory, to establish a bipartisan parliamentary committee to develop an action plan in the interest of unleashing the full economic potential of the Northern Territory, so that we can, together, move to a solution. That will unleash creativity and allow exploration of all sorts of possibilities.

Recently, I was in Western Australia attending my daughter's engagement party and my mother's 70th birthday - but they are of no concern in this debate. Whilst I was there, I visited my home town to find a new wind farm had been established in mid-west of Western Australia. Most of the residents there were very keen to say: 'Come out and have a look at the wind farm; something special has happened in our area'. I said: 'Yes, I have seen it from a distance'. Dad insisted that I go and have a closer look at this wind farm. I was absolutely amazed when I saw it up close. It is going to be completed at the end of this year. They have 54 of the world's largest wind turbines, 78 m high. Each individual blade is 41 m long. The diameter is 82 m across. At capacity, this wind farm will generate 90 megalitres of power, enough to supply electricity to 60 000 homes. It will be one of Australia's largest wind energy facilities.

Looking at that led me to consider the possibilities for creative solutions to a clear problem. I have been down the Barkly; there is plenty of wind there. There is some power that results from wind generation. We have plenty of sun light and there is solar generation. Alternative supplies have been considered, but it opens up the possibility. We really do need to engage great creativity in addressing this issue. We need to approach it in a very sensible way.

I fear that the way the debates have been conducted over the last three days, and to date, demonstrates that there is a greater interest in claiming direct ownership of this: 'No, no, let me sort it out; don't you guys get involved in this. It is all us and we will do whatever we determine'. This is much more than politics. This is such a serious issue. We need to attend to the possibilities because, as the Territory economy and the energy demands of the Territory are relatively small but so important, it is had for us to compete against multinationals. We seem to be living off the crumbs and at their whim and mercy.

During the election campaign, another opportunity was explored and placed before the electorate; that was, to recognise the need for bringing electricity, perhaps, into the Northern Territory as an extension of the national grid ...

Mr Henderson: I wouldn't go there, Terry.

Mr MILLS: I am not afraid to look at that sensibly, because there needs to be a time to explore options. In the heat of an election, as the member for Wanguri is well aware, there were all sorts of games at play. I have seen them played in this Chamber. However, let us look at them pragmatically and sensibly. That is something else we should not dismiss. I know it would be very difficult for government to quietly consider it. I will not tell anyone; it will not be embarrassing for you to have a look at it, or even a variation of it.

It seems to me that federal Treasurer Costello is talking on a grander scale; that there needs to be a national electricity grid. That discussion needs to occur. We are Australians and we have vast natural resources all around us. We are blessed to have great resources of gas here, not far off the coast. There is the possibility of generation of power in the Territory that then feeds back in to the national grid, just as the wind farm that I mentioned a while ago is not simply to supply power to 60 000 houses in the mid-west region, it is to supply power that goes into the state grid.

There will come a time when the nation makes decisions in a mature way as to how electricity is generated using the great natural resources that we have, and to generate power so that the entire

nation can realise its potential. That is why I am not afraid to go to the issue of connection to the national grid as one possibility.

There is opportunity, too, as I mentioned, about wind generation. One of the benefits of the wind energy facility - and there are possibilities in the Barkly to increase that - is that it is one of Australia's largest wind energy facilities. Each year, the clean energy created will displace 400 000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions that would normally be produced by traditional fossil fuels. This is the equivalent of removing 80 000 cars from the roads each year. That is what is actually happening.

There are new things, new discussions that have taken place and new solutions, and we should be involved in that. This parliament, as a place for making decisions, should be engaged in that in a bipartisan way. We could consider ideas that the member for Nelson has. Hot rocks, which I do not understand, seem to have potential. That should be considered as well.

The purpose of this motion is directed towards the economic growth of the Northern Territory. Of course, economic growth encompasses so many different but related issues: social policies, things that we want to achieve for our community, for those who are advantaged and those who are disadvantaged - the purpose of economic growth; environmental policies; industry policies; taxation issues; industry incentives to unleash the great potential of the Territory; and so on.

Perhaps nothing impinges on the economic wellbeing of the Northern Territory more than properly priced power, both for domestic and industrial commercial uses.

Today, in addition to the matters that I have already raised with government, and offered a spirit of cooperation to attend to a core issue, I would like to commend to government an important debate that this parliament must have at some time soon. This is an issue of passion. It is an issue that will polarise the opinions of Territorians. It is an issue that will be condemned and dismissed as not even being worth speaking about. It is also an issue that I and, indeed, the CLP, have not yet finalised any particular view about.

I urge the government to allow, sponsor or promote a proper and considered debate on the use of nuclear power. Instead of the childish political point scoring that we saw yesterday when the government promoted its federal and ACTU scare campaign on industrial relations, I urge the Acting Chief Minister to acknowledge this important issue and to facilitate a series of debates on this issue. I could point out that the

federal Australian Labor Party is going to debate the merits of nuclear power. I quote former Labor premier of New South Wales, Bob Carr:

The world has got to debate whether uranium-derived power is more dangerous than coal. Coal is looking very dangerous. There ought to be a debate. The planet is warming up and we need some new energy source until wind and solar and hydrogen become available.

It is so easy to be alarmist and, certainly, fearful of nuclear energy. I approach this issue with great caution and immense respect and sensitivity. However, we should never, ever be fearful of healthy debate. It is what binds our democracy together and allows us to work towards solutions. Even former Premier Carr and the former President of the Australian Conservation Foundation, Peter Garrett, have said that they agree that it is time to reopen the debate. Peter Garrett said: 'It is time to reopen it'. Make no mistake that no one would be falling into the position of advocating that Mr Garrett is a supporter of nuclear power stations. Neither am I.

It is recorded in a national newspaper even today, and I quote the headline: 'Climate calamity forecast by the end of the century'. The story claims that Australia faces the prospect of a dry and dusty Murray River, the disappearance of world heritage areas, the death of coral reefs and rising seas, and all by the end of this century. The main culprit, in the article, is coal burning.

As I have said, I do not know myself how I feel about this incredibly important and divisive issue. I am being honest with you, I am not coming in here and saying 'Yes'; I am saying that we need to talk about it. However, considering that the Northern Territory, honourable members, is a major producer of uranium, the time has come for mature debate, to revisit the use of nuclear power - to talk about it.

I ask the government to facilitate a serious and considered debate on this issue and, in concluding, to support the motion that has been presented to this Chamber. I recognise they might play clever games with the words and so on, and stride the stage and talk about the great things that they have done, and what happened 20 years ago, but do not worry about that. See underneath it, that we do have an issue of great significance that extends beyond political cycles, and start to move debate in a healthy path where we can responsibly talk about things that are difficult, so that we can grow and develop and realise the full potential of the Northern Territory. Maybe our community would grow stronger as a result, if we approach it in a mature and responsible way.

I offer it in that spirit. I can only trust - as I used that word in a debate yesterday; and I mean that - that it would be received in that spirit. I hope my trust is not misplaced and I go upstairs and find a press release has come out and misrepresented this honest position. I can see a little activity over there: 'Goody, yeah, yeah, yeah! Pay this one out'. It is not presented in that spirit at all; it is presented in the same way in which Peter Garrett, Bob Carr and many Australians now approach this issue. It is time for healthy debate. It is time to grow up and come out of our political bunkers and start talking about some serious business. Maybe, just maybe, the gallery is full of people who develop a new, healthy respect for parliament - and politicians even, who come out of our bunkers and start talking about real problems in the interest of the future of the Territory.

Madam Speaker, I commend this motion, and the words that have been spoken to support it, to honourable members.

Mr HENDERSON (Essential Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak in regard to this motion. The motion calls on the Chief Minister to explain to parliament but, as we all know, the Chief Minister has been meeting with the Indonesian President today. Therefore, as the new Minister for Essential Services in the new government, I am responding on behalf of the government.

First of all, as the new Minister for Essential Services, this issue of future of gas supply for the Power and Water Corporation is the No 1 issue that I am faced with at the moment. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition; it is a crucial issue. It is certainly an issue that is receiving a huge amount of work at the moment. I say to the ...

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Madam Speaker! You have to refer to people by their proper title. I am not the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr HENDERSON: Not the Leader of the Opposition, I am sorry. The member for Blain. I was just having a flashback.

Madam SPEAKER: Please withdraw, Leader of Government Business.

Mr HENDERSON: In deference to the current Leader of the Opposition, I withdraw. I was just having a bit of senior's moment in Seniors Week at the grand age of 43, earlier this week. I am just having a bit of a senior's moment.

Mr Mills: That is all right, Chief Minister.

Mr HENDERSON: The member for Blain. I will say before I start and make some points here that I respect the member for Blain; he is one of

the thinkers. We are all thinkers in the parliament, but he thinks things through and he talks honestly, which I certainly respect. However, at the end of the day, we are all politicians, and the member for Blain ...

Mr Mills: I thought we were going to ...

Mr HENDERSON: Oh well, this is interesting, in that we have just had a considered position from the member for Blain, which is condemning the Chief Minister and the government for not formulating a plan or strategy to secure the long-term alternative energy. It was a considered statement, but the motion we are debating is to explain to parliament why we have not formulated a plan or strategy to secure a long-term alternative energy supply for the generation of electricity for the Northern Territory. That is what we are debating.

The strategy certainly is there. There is a commercial strategy, a negotiating strategy, there are consultants engaged, and there is an enormous amount of work going on in securing the best possible deal for the Northern Territory in our future gas and energy supplies.

As the member for Blain would know, there are huge stakes here. These contracts are worth up to - if a 20-year contract was signed, current prices - around about \$1.5bn. Therefore, regarding the suggestion that we need a parliamentary committee to negotiate and develop the strategy - that is not going to work because there are pretty hard-nosed commercial discussions going on with a number of potential suppliers of gas to the Northern Territory. Why would you flag your negotiating position and strategy publicly? The stakes are high and the importance of this decision to the Northern Territory is quite extraordinary. The negotiating strategy, the commercial strategy, is not a strategy to be banded around publicly.

However, to say that we do not have one goes in total disregard to briefings that the opposition have had, and the extensive questioning of the CEO of Power and Water, the Chair of the Board, by the shadow minister in the Estimates Committee, where the official board position was put, which I am not going to read over and over again. As a government, we try to do the right thing in as much as we can assuage the concerns of the opposition that there is no plan, there is no strategy and, come 2009, the lights are going to go off because that, quite obviously, is not going to happen.

The member for Blain made a very considered statement in this House today. However, just a month ago, on 21 July 2005, he e-mailed an officer in Power and Water seeking a briefing; the

subject of which was 'Power for beginners briefing'. Therefore, in just a month, we have gone from needing a briefing in 'power for beginners' to a motion in the parliament today saying that we do not have a plan or a strategy. Just add water and, one month later, we are an instant expert. Really, that just does not stand up - it does not stand up at all. To say that the opposition, the member for Blain, is not trying to play politics here is a bit cute when, just a month ago, he acknowledged in the e-mail that he wanted a 'power for beginners briefing'. I am not, obviously, going to mention the officer, 'Dear whoever ...', and I will table this e-mail:

... opposition members would appreciate a briefing from PowerWater. The purpose is to give an introductory briefing to provide members with a working knowledge of GOCs and power/energy issues both short and long term.

Here we had, a month ago, the member for Blain seeking an introductory briefing to energy supply issues both long and short term. If that is not acknowledging that the opposition really does not know, or did not know one month ago, exactly how this particular issue was progressing, well nothing else is. Yet, a month later, he comes in here with a motion condemning the government for failing to have a plan or a strategy. It gets even more bizarre because, two days after the member for Blain - who is not the shadow minister for this particular area - wrote this, the shadow minister for essential services, the member for Greatorex, wrote to me asking for a briefing from Power and Water. Here we had poor old Power and Water wondering who it is they need to provide this particular briefing too. Anyway, we sorted it out and I urge members of the opposition at any time, to seek briefings, quite appropriately through government. Agencies should provide briefings to members of the opposition, or any member of this parliament, regarding current issues, so when people do get up and speak publicly about service, supply or infrastructure issues, they can actually speak knowledgeably and truthfully to the Territory community about what is happening. The advantage of being able to give briefings is that you do get the facts.

The member for Greatorex got the facts and received an extensive briefing and, certainly, asked dozens of questions in this area for over two hours in the recent Estimates Committee proceedings. These issues were well and truly covered at length. It is just a bit strange that the member for Blain is the one who has come in here and condemned the government for not formulating a plan or a strategy to secure long-term energy supplies.

It is pure politics. They have been briefed - or at least the opposition spokesperson has been briefed. When was the Estimates Committee? Just on 7 July, barely six weeks ago, all of these issues were canvassed at length. The opposition is well aware that this issue is front and centre, crucial to the department and government at the moment. Very complex commercial discussions are taking place with a number of potential gas suppliers.

To come in here today and try to condemn the Chief Minister, asking her to explain to parliament why we have not formulated a plan or strategy, is blatant politics. To say that the Chief Minister, as the Leader of the Opposition was saying, is totally politically motivated - as if the Leader of the Opposition is not a politician and does not have a political bone in her body - can be reduced to pious comments.

The member for Blain moved away from the motion to, essentially, rehash the opposition's election campaign. When I said to the member for Blain that he should not go there, he revealed that they still seem to be wedded to their campaign slogan about unleashing the energy of the Territory and energy is the key. He went further than that by going back to a totally discredited policy that was put by the opposition to the people of the Northern Territory that somehow our future energy needs would be secured by building a massive power and extension cable from Queensland to the Northern Territory, and we could buy electricity direct from producers in Queensland.

At the time when that policy was put to the people and dropped, we could not believe our luck! We knew there would be an issue because they had been talking about energy in the days leading up to the announcement. We thought there had to be an issue on electricity prices or what have you - we did not know what it was going to be. When the extension lead slung over to Queensland was dropped, we could not believe our luck.

I cannot believe that any shadow minister, Opposition Leader, or any politician in the Northern Territory, would be so unprofessional, so crazily brave, to put a policy to the people of the Northern Territory promising - and they tried to muddy it up by saying we would fund a feasibility study; there were television advertisements, flyers in every letterbox and radio advertisements - promising Territorians that, if they voted for the CLP, they would reduce the cost of electricity by 30%. That was the promise they made to Territorians. Of course, immediately people thought: 'Gee, that is a pretty good offer; I am interested in that. I will see what is going on'. To make that commitment to Territorians to reduce

the cost of electricity in the Northern Territory by 30% without having one independent, third party expert commentator come out and say that that could be achieved, was crazily brave. Territorians did not bite.

It got worse. When we did a search on the company that was making this proposal with whom the opposition got into bed, it had been formed some – I forget how many weeks – three weeks earlier. It was a \$2 company, no paid up share capital, no obvious source of financing. We then had every industry expert - there were articles in the *Financial Review* – and commentator came out and said this could not possibly be done in terms of an appropriate return on capital investment without massive public subsidies - and they were massive.

The member for Blain still came in here and said we should have a look at this. I refute it. The company concerned got into bed with the opposition. They tried to portray that they were, somehow, independent and they had approached government – I think we had an approach about two days before the election was called, something like that – with this amazing proposal by a company that had \$2 of paid up share capital but could not explain at all how this thing could be financed. There were even significant issues about the reliability of such a powerline struck across thousands of kilometres of northern Australia, through the tropics.

Really, it was quite an amazing proposal, particularly in the light that we have a gas-fired power station here at Channel Island. All of our power generation are gas turbines. We have 22 trillion cubic feet of gas just to the north of us in the Timor Sea in the Bonaparte Gulf. Why would you dismantle all that infrastructure and rely on a private utility in Queensland to supply energy for the Northern Territory? If there was one thing that would scare a lot of potential investment from the Northern Territory, it is the reliability of electricity supply, let alone the cost of electricity. Most commentators said that, without massive public subsidies, the cost of electricity in Darwin would probably increase by in the region of about 40%. It really was quite a crazy, brave proposal.

For that proposal to resurface here today as something this government should commit serious time and effort on in considering is really quite bizarre. I am surprised the member for Blain went back to the powerlines of Queensland.

He then went on to talk about nuclear energy, and it is time the country had that debate. The federal parliament currently is. There is a committee of the House of Representatives actually looking at that at the moment. It is going to be interesting to see what that committee is

going to report to the federal parliament. So, there is a public debate occurring at the moment. It is, quite appropriately, happening in Canberra because it is Canberra and the Commonwealth, under the ANSTO act. As my colleague, the Minister for Mines and Energy, keeps explaining to members opposite who do not want to hear, it is the Commonwealth that actually has all of the power in the regulation of uranium mining and the generation of nuclear power at Lucas Heights in Australia. Therefore, it is quite appropriate that the Commonwealth parliament is having a look at the whole issue at the moment. That debate is occurring, and it will be interesting to see what that committee reports back to Australians.

However, to try to leap from that to, potentially, that we should be looking at - even though he said he opposed nuclear power generation for the Northern Territory but, somehow, because we have a lot of uranium here, given that we do not have, according to the member for Blain, a plan or strategy to supply alternative energy for generation of electricity - a nuclear power plant here. Again, I understand what he is trying to say, but it really is quite ridiculous and unfeasible, certainly for the next several hundred years, I would imagine, in the Australian context.

The government will vote down this motion before us. If there is one issue that does need to be resolved across Australia in developing the potential sources of energy, it is the Commonwealth, through its taxation, licensing and regulation system, actually having a national energy policy. We do not have one. The Commonwealth government's policy is to let the market dictate; there should be no intervention from government. What the market is very clearly saying is that, if you just let the market rule then, obviously, the market will sell to who is prepared to pay the highest price. Every other developed country that I am aware of does have an interventionist policy in developing its energy reserves in the national interest.

About three weeks ago, the United States Congress and the Senate passed a US energy bill. It has been drafted over the last three to four years, and it is an interventionist policy to ensure that in the United States, which is very rich in energy resources, the people or the companies that are licensed to develop those resources, have to do so in the national interest. The United States government is using levers such as taxation and depreciation, and also investment in certain areas where there is market failure, to ensure that the US, its economy and its people, do benefit in the national interest from the developments of those resources which, quite rightly, in the Australian context, belong to the Australian people. They do not belong to the people who are licensed to exploit them. That is

certainly an issue that the Chief Minister keeps taking up at COAG.

In the discussions I have had with a number of very significant industry players just recently, there are reports going to the Resources minister, Ian Macfarlane, from some pretty significant industry groups saying that we are missing out in hundreds of millions of dollars of investment in Australia because we do not value-add to our energy sources, particularly gas. There are huge amounts of investments going missing, particularly in the plastics, chemicals and fertiliser industry, as a direct result of the Commonwealth government having a 'hands off, let the market rule' approach to the development of our energy resources.

It is an interesting debate, but I can say this government is doing everything that it can to get the best possible outcome for Territorians. I will just finish with a quote from Mr Neil Philip, the Chairman of the Power and Water Corporation Board, who was questioned for two hours by the shadow minister - quite rightly, he did a good job; I have actually read the transcripts of that - trying to inform himself on all of these issues. Mr Philip said:

Security of supply: we will secure gas. Our job is to get it at a price that saves taxpayers a lot of money and does not transfer an inordinate profit from our side of the table to the producer's side of the table. That is our job.

There are certainly many more experienced people than me who are trying to get the best possible deal for Territorians. We will get the best possible deal for Territorians. The future of the Northern Territory's energy supply is in using natural gas that is found in abundance in waters to our north, and that is where we will continue to focus our effort. The government certainly does not support, and will be voting against, this motion.

Mrs MILLER (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, today I contribute to the debate about why this government has not formulated a plan or a strategy to secure a long-term alternative energy supply for the generation of electricity for the Northern Territory.

A considerable amount of discussion has taken place over recent times highlighting concerns for future electricity supplies for the Territory, and it is only natural that these concerns are being expressed. The Amadeus Basin in Central Australia, which has been producing gas since 1987, supplies the natural gas for the generation of electricity to the Northern Territory. The two main fields of East and West Mereenie produce from approximately 57 wells, with the nearby Palm Valley gas field producing gas to Alice Springs

from 11 wells. Gas from these areas supply the whole of the Northern Territory through the pipeline which extends 1628 km to Darwin.

The concerns that have been raised in recent times in relation to the life of the Amadeus Basin gas fields is that they will not be able to continue to supply gas to generate electricity at Channel Island. During estimates, the Managing Director of Power and Water, Mr Kim Wood, when questioned by the member for Greatorex about the future of the gas supplies to Alice Springs made the following statement:

We are extremely confident of sourcing gas. The people of Alice Springs should not be at all concerned about unavailability of gas. There is a long gas tail in the Central Australian fields which would take many years to be fully consumed and is more than capable of supplying Alice Springs' needs for a number of years to come.

That gave some assurance to the people of Alice Springs, but there have been very differing opinions of the life of the Amadeus gas field. Some have said it will be expired by 2007, some say 2009, and some say 2011. I heard a very well-informed comment from somebody just this last week, telling me that they were already discussing severance pays in the Amadeus Basin, so that tells me that it is fairly soon.

If you consider the worst case scenario, the Amadeus Basin will not have sufficient supplies to provide gas for the rest of the Northern Territory beyond 2007 - and that is just a couple of years away. Therein lies the problem that has brought us to this topic today. Why has this government not formulated a plan or strategy to secure a long-term alternative energy supply for the generation of electricity for the Northern Territory?

This government should consider all options available and should be talking to all suppliers and players until it gets the best deal for Territorians. One thing is for certain: to have a real and sustainable growth in the Northern Territory, we need to have a cost competitive energy supply. Real growth and real future is built by development projects. How can major business plan long term after 2009 without the security of a reliable and long-term energy supply? What certainty is there for business? At this moment, there is none. How will - using as an example - Compass Resources at Batchelor be assured that they will still have a reliable energy supply in 15 years time?

The resources industry requires high volumes of energy to operate. To have confidence to invest in any future major project in the Northern

Territory, the most important aspect in a company's decision-making is based on cost - and energy is high up on the list of expenses, especially in the resources area.

It is well known that there is an abundance of gas close to our northern shores in the Timor Sea. I especially refer to the Blacktip Joint Venture which, I would certainly hope, is actively marketing to Power and Water. Gas is the cheapest and cleanest form of energy and large quantities are readily available for access by the Northern Territory. However, let us keep our options open. Maybe there are other gas fields that could be considered by this government. Maybe the Papua New Guinea connection is the answer. Has government talked to Santos about a trans-Territory transmission line? That may be a good option. As I said before, government should keep all options open and be speaking to all providers.

While I was researching, it was very interesting to read of several different types of energy. I was particularly interested to research solar power. I believe that Alice Springs, in the middle of Australia with its clear blue skies and heat generated during the day, would be an ideal place to focus on solar power. This government should look to the future and develop the solar power industry in Alice Springs, and highlight it as a project to demonstrate to the rest of the world. You cannot get any cleaner than solar power. It makes sense to me to utilise this natural resource. Alice Springs could become the solar power city in Australia, and this could lead to further research and improvements and further development in the solar power industry. I am aware that some regional and remote communities already have solar power and it makes sense. Why not encourage and develop this industry in and for Alice Springs? There is one thing that is pretty much guaranteed; that is, the sun is going to shine most days in Alice Springs. What better natural resource could we have at our fingertips? Sometimes, the most obvious answers are right under our noses and we just take them for granted.

Other forms of energy could be considered but, at all times, volume and cost will determine the outcome. As I have said before in this Assembly, we are elected to represent the constituents in our electorate and across the Northern Territory, and we have a responsibility to have full and robust debate in all aspects in developing legislation, and across a wide range of issues. We cannot make and form decisions without having good and intense debate. I have no doubt that a very emotive and controversial energy source in the form of nuclear power will be debated at length some time in the future in this Assembly, despite the fact that the Leader of Government Business

has just said probably in the next 100 years or so. That is not exactly bringing it out into the open so that we can make an informed decision about it. I do not have any preconceived ideas about nuclear power, but I believe this is a place where we should have robust and open discussion about it.

I hope that the questions that have been raised in this statement today will be answered by government - and, as the afternoon has gone on, some of those have been - and that reassurance can be given that government is formulating a long-term alternative energy supply to generate electricity for the Northern Territory.

While I am talking about energy, I am going to speak a bit about resources. I would like to briefly talk about another interesting potential fuel that has great economic implications for the Territory; that is, biodiesel. The Chief Minister announced in July that a biodiesel plant will be built in Darwin that will meet all environmental needs. I will be watching this development closely, as will my colleagues, as I believe the commercialisation of ethanol and bio-diesel are positive steps for the Territory.

The potential for agriculture to benefit from not only using the bio-fuels, but to contribute to their production with commercial crops of sorghum and maize grown by the megaton, can only be of economic benefit all round.

Madam Speaker, I will be watching developments in bio-fuels with great interest. I have had great pleasure in contributing to today's debate.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions. Members would recognise, I am sure, that this is a very important issue. The most encouraging comment I heard, from the member for Wanguri, is that he recognises, as his responsibility as a minister, that this is the main issue; that is, the securing of a long-term alternative energy supply for the Northern Territory.

I heard him say 'Hear, hear' when I said the best is yet to come for the Territory. We all accept that the best is yet to come for the Territory. That potential will not be realised unless we develop maturity in the way that we approach problem solving, and to unleash some creativity. That will take some courage, because there are issues that are benign, warm and fuzzy. Biodiesel is nice to talk about, and I am very pleased that the member for Katherine has raised that and supports it. There is great potential there. There is tremendous agricultural potential in the Northern Territory. Biodiesel has a great future in the Territory. We need to make sure it develops.

Wind in the Barkly, as I have said, has potential. I have been impressed by what I have seen in Western Australia recently.

There is solar. It was the foresight of former governments that recognised the potential of solar energy, and the solar car race was a means to develop that technology.

Tidal power comes up from time to time. That is another area we could look at.

Connection to the national grid – I will not scoff and discard that out of hand, as did the member opposite. I am not so confident of my own opinion in such things. While I am using that as a definition, to be excessively confident of your own opinion is the precise definition for arrogance. To have an inflated view of the importance of your own judgment on things ...

Ms Carney: And of oneself.

Mr MILLS: And of oneself. When the proposition to investigate extension of the grid to bring in Darwin was proposed, by nature, mature people would like to have a look at that. Granted, it was in a political context; it was in an election. Put that aside now. Let us now attend to it and have a good look at it.

I note that the Treasurer, Peter Costello, is also speaking along similar lines. We need to start thinking about things; national issues and how this great nation can draw on all the resources that we have to move forward. That is going to require courage to come out of political bunkers and start talking about things, and being able to express a view openly, recognising that some issues are benign and easy to talk about because the crowd is with you. However, if you are going to show leadership, you are going to have to talk about some issues that are difficult, such as nuclear power.

There is no way around it: if we are going to develop, even in the context of a community, we need to be able to talk about tough stuff. This is where it is going to start. Growing up in a family where some things are just not talked about means it is not a healthy family, nor does it breed a healthy community if there are some topics you cannot talk about because they are just too scary. I am not going to be a part of that. I am a big boy. I can talk about things; I can think about them.

We should show the way. The call upon the Chief Minister and this government to sponsor a series of debates on that very topic should be accepted in the spirit in which it is offered. The techniques of debate used the very precise words that were put on the record and then they were dealt with in a very efficient way. Notwithstanding

that game that is being played, anyone who has read the words here, and the ideas that are contained in those words, and the principles that underline the arguments and presentations, should be challenged. I encourage honourable members to respond to that challenge with some courage, and with an eye on and over the horizon, because the Northern Territory is running on empty. We do not know where our next fuel stop is. It is the most serious issue that we need to attend to, and now is the time to start talking about some difficult stuff.

I commend the motion to honourable members. I seek your support of the motion. All I ask - because I can predict what is going to happen, of course, but you never know; live in hope - if that is the case and you get locked in and you cannot do it because it is scary to jump out by yourself – say: ‘Yes, blow me down, I will support this’, chuck away a position. There are 19 of you, for goodness sake, and four of us. It is not going to hurt. You might feel good a bit about yourselves and sleep really well tonight.

Notwithstanding that, I ask, if you cannot do that, to at least accept the quiet challenge and allow it to develop. We are not talking about something that is going to be conducted in six months or three weeks, it is the beginning of a process to develop some maturity as a community, as a parliament, and as leaders within our community. At least accept the challenge. Keep it to yourself if you need to and, in time to come, we will begin the process of discussing difficult but very important issues. I commend the motion to honourable members, Madam Speaker.

Motion negatived.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION **Member for Araluen**

Madam SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition has sought my leave, pursuant to Standing Order 57, to make a personal explanation. I ask that members listen to the personal explanation in silence.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a personal explanation relating to what I consider to be a misrepresentation of one of my statements to the House earlier today. In doing so, I complied with the requirement for seeking this permission, having followed *House of Representatives Practice*, specifically the 5th Edition on page 483, subtitled ‘Personal Explanations’.

The misrepresentation occurred during Question Time, when I asked the question of the Acting Chief Minister regarding Senator

Nigel Scullion. I have attributed all of the following quotations to *Hansard*. My question was:

You know that Senator Trish Crossin today put a motion in the Senate calling on the federal government to keep its promise not to put a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory. You will also be aware that the motion was passed with the support of Country Liberal Party Senator Nigel Scullion.

That was the only relevant quote by me to the act of misrepresentation to which I am referring. The Acting Chief Minister misrepresented me when, some time later, he replied in answer to the member for Millner:

I have just received advice that the Leader of the Opposition said that Senator Scullion was in the Chamber.

The member for Wanguri then interjected:

No, you said 'voted'.

The Acting Chief Minister said:

... he was not even in the Senate! I find it absolutely appalling that the Leader of the Opposition would stand here and mislead this House in the fashion that she has ...

Madam Speaker, I sought your leave to set the record straight and, in all of the circumstances, I ask for an apology - which can be done formally or informally - by the members for Millner and Wanguri, and the Acting Chief Minister.

MOTION

Leave to move Motion - Personal Explanation of Leader of the Opposition

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I seek leave to suspend standing orders such as would allow me to put a motion in the following terms. The motion that I am proposing for a suspension of standing orders is:

That this Assembly -

- (1) notes with approval that the Australian Senate today voted to endorse a motion moved by Senator Trish Crossin which condemns the Commonwealth's proposal to impose a nuclear waste dump facility on the Northern Territory;
- (2) notes that Senator Nigel Scullion was not present in the Senate Chamber when the motion was considered; and

- (3) calls upon the Leader of the Opposition to make a personal explanation regarding the misleading assertion she made earlier today in the Legislative Assembly that Senator Nigel Scullion supported the passing of this important motion by the Australian Senate.

Leave denied.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS Move Motion relating to Personal Explanation of Leader of the Opposition

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent me moving a motion relating to the personal explanation of the Leader of the Opposition.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION Personal Explanation of Leader of the Opposition

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move -

That this Assembly -

- (1) notes with approval that the Australian Senate today voted to endorse a motion moved by Senator Trish Crossin which condemns the Commonwealth's proposal to impose a nuclear waste dump facility on the Northern Territory;
- (2) notes that Senator Nigel Scullion was not present in the Senate Chamber when the motion was considered; and
- (3) calls upon the Leader of the Opposition to make a personal explanation regarding the misleading assertion she made earlier today in the Legislative Assembly that Senator Nigel Scullion supported the passing of this important motion by the Australian Senate.

What an extraordinary personal explanation from the Leader of the Opposition, who just keeps digging a hole deeper and deeper for herself regarding what happened in Question Time this morning. I thought that she, in the personal explanation, would apologise to this parliament for misleading ...

Ms Carney: Oh, I do not think so!

Mr HENDERSON: ... the parliament in regard to the support or otherwise - which turned out to be otherwise - of Senator Nigel Scullion in the Senate earlier today on the motion put by Senator Trish Crossin opposing the nuclear waste dump.

I will read again what the Leader of the Opposition stated ...

Dr LIM: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I seek your guidance. I understand that personal explanations are not to be debated. I grant that the Leader of Government Business did not debate the personal explanation, but he has sought suspension of standing orders so that it allows him to move a motion which, in effect, allows him to debate the personal explanation. I do not believe that is appropriate.

Mr Stirling: Oh well, sorry.

Ms Lawrie: There is no point of order.

Mr Stirling: There is no point of order.

Madam SPEAKER: I do not think it is a point of order, but that the standing order refers to debate at the time the personal explanation is made, and this is a separate motion.

Dr LIM: Speaking to that point of order.

Madam SPEAKER: No, I have just made the ruling and call the Leader of Government Business.

Mr HENDERSON: Madam Speaker, this is a very important issue because it goes to the heart of the responsibility that we have as parliamentarians elected to this parliament to actually tell the truth and not mislead this Assembly. What the Leader of the Opposition put in a question to the Acting Chief Minister this morning, I will read:

You know that Senator Trish Crossin today put a motion in the Senate calling on the federal government to keep its promise not to put a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory.

Fact – correct:

You will also be aware that the motion was passed with the support of Country Liberal Party Senator Nigel Scullion.

‘The motion that was put in the Senate today was passed with the support of the Country Liberal Party Senator Nigel Scullion’. No qualifying statements - there was a motion in the parliament and the motion was passed with the support of Senator Nigel Scullion.

Any person listening to that would assume, from the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, that the CLP Senator for the Northern Territory was in the Senate when the motion was put and - on the voices, there was no division - supported the motion. That is not what occurred ...

Dr Burns: I thought he had spoken to it.

Mr HENDERSON: Not at all; it was passed with the support. I pick up the interjection from my colleague, the member for Johnston. If Senator Nigel Scullion was so keen to support this motion why was he not in the Chamber? He would have jumped and sought to speak in support of the motion. I do not see how the CLP Senator could have supported the motion when he was not even in the Senate. That is the crux of this.

The Leader of the Opposition has tried to be too cute by half. She was too cute by half, coming in here today trying to catch government on the hop and asserting to this parliament that Senator Nigel Scullion was in the Senate today and supported the motion proposed by Senator Trish Crossin. Quite graciously, I thought, my colleague, the Acting Chief Minister, got up and said: ‘Well, if that did occur, well done. It is good to have a united position’. But what weasel words we have.

Also, to compound that, we now have the Leader of the Opposition making it even worse by trying to assert that, somehow, this side of the House has misled the parliament and seeking an apology. What an absolute detraction, arrogance and misuse of parliamentary privilege, and the privilege that we all have to be in here to speak the truth.

This motion is a serious motion because it goes to the heart of her credibility to actually, when she comes into this parliament, tell the truth and to be big enough that, if she does make a mistake - and she could well have made a mistake. There could have been a phone call from Senator Nigel Scullion’s office to the Leader of the Opposition’s office today saying: ‘Trish has just put this motion in the Senate and I am pleased; I am supporting it’. Quite rightly, that could have been a genuine mistake to come in here and say: ‘Senator Scullion supported that motion in the Senate today’. If she was to come in here and say: ‘Look, I misunderstood the position. Senator Scullion actually supports the proposal but he was not in the Senate today and I want to correct the *Parliamentary Record*’, then we would all accept it in the fair game of politics that you can make mistakes.

She has not done that; she has made it even worse. The news wires have been running hot

since Question Time this morning, with ABC News pointing out - and certainly Nigel Scullion has been contacted - that he was not in the Senate today when this motion was put. Sure, the Leader of the Opposition's office is funded as though she is a minister - she has ministerial officers, she has media liaison people. Her office would have known that Senator Nigel Scullion was not in the Senate today when this particular motion was put.

To come in here now this evening and still hold on to the perception that Nigel Scullion was in the Senate today, and try to seek an apology from members of this side of the parliament for misleading the House, I believe is a contempt of this parliament. It is a contempt and a deliberate misuse of the responsibility that she has, not only a member of parliament, but as the Leader of the Opposition, to put her case to the members of this House in a truthful way.

The motion is very clear. I call, again, on the Leader of the Opposition to correct the record and admit that she did mislead this House by making a very clear assertion that Senator Nigel Scullion was in the Senate today and supported the motion that was put by Senator Trish Crossin in opposition to the proposed nuclear waste dump.

The media that has been running - I will read from the 2 pm news, and I would be surprised if the Leader of the Opposition has not seen that - the leading bulletin on the ABC 2 pm news:

A motion calling on the federal government to honour its election promise not to put a radioactive waste dump in the Northern Territory has passed through the Senate without debate.

He could not even be in there to put a united Northern Territory front - we only have two Senators in the Senate. Trish Crossin has been flagging for a number of weeks now that this motion is going to be put. It was probably an item of business on the Notice Paper. It is a crucial issue regarding public debate here in the Northern Territory. The Opposition Leader says that she opposes the siting of the nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory. What could have been more important? What could have been more important for the good Senator Nigel Scullion in Canberra today not to be in the Senate and speaking in support - showing bipartisan political support from the only two Senators the Northern Territory has - in opposition to this nuclear waste dump? But, oh no, the good senator was too busy.

I will continue the ABC news bulletin:

The Labor Senator Trish Crossin put the motion to the Senate in an attempt to force

the CLP Senator Nigel Scullion to show his stance on the proposed storage facility. But Senator Scullion wasn't in the Senate Chamber when the motion was brought because he was in a committee meeting.

What a wimp-out! - some Senate committee meeting. You do not have to go to all of the committee meetings, as we know. It was more important for Senator Scullion than standing in a bipartisan way with Senator Crossin in the Senate telling the Upper House that we, in the Northern Territory, do not want a bar of this nuclear waste dump.

The Leader of the Opposition is just too cute by half. The CLP are totally wedged on this issue. I believe the parliamentary wing of the CLP in this parliament is opposed to the siting of a nuclear waste dump, because they have had the feedback that all of us have, as local members: Territorians do not want a bar of this, and they have been lied to by the federal government - a federal government of which Senator Scullion and Dave Tollner, who sits in the House of Representatives, are a part. They are part of this federal government that has lied so contemptuously to the people of the Northern Territory.

It is quite obvious from his actions - and actions speak louder than words - that Senator Nigel Scullion had an opportunity today to put it very clearly on the *Parliamentary Record* in Canberra where he stood on this issue, and he ducked it. You have to ask why he ducked the issue, because some Senate committee looking into Tweedledee and Tweedledum would not have had the same level of importance to the people of the Northern Territory.

For the Leader of the Opposition to come in here and try to cover up for Senator Scullion's absence from the Chamber today, and deliberately mislead this House to try to protect some semblance of cooperation and unanimity of opposition to this nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory, is a blatant disregard for this parliament.

To come in here knowing that Senator Nigel Scullion was not going to listen to what the Leader of the Opposition and the parliamentary wing thinks - he is going to do his own thing, regardless of what his party and the people of the Northern Territory's position is on this particular issue - and try to mislead this House to believe that he was physically in the Senate supporting Senator Crossin's motion, is a contempt of this parliament. The Leader of the Opposition has compounded that contempt by coming in here earlier this evening with a personal explanation and digging the hole even deeper. This issue is not going away. It goes to the heart of the

credibility of the Leader of the Opposition not only on this issue, but any other issue she may care to talk about. To come in here and mislead this parliament on the position of the CLP on this nuclear waste dump, when the people of the Territory are demanding to know what their representatives are doing, is absolutely reprehensible.

I call again, in terms of this motion, for the Leader of the Opposition to make a personal explanation regarding the misleading assertion she made earlier today in the Assembly that Senator Nigel Scullion supported the passage of this important motion by the Australian Senate. She can get up and say: 'Okay ...', whatever the excuse is, '... I got it wrong. Scullion was not in the Senate. He did not support the motion'. He could not possibly have supported the motion, because he was not in the Senate. How can he support a motion when he was not in the Senate? He had the opportunity; it was on the Notice Paper. I am sure Senator Crossin's office would have contacted Senator Scullion's office to say: 'Come on, Nige. Let us get together on this. Let us show a united front. Your leader up there in Darwin has supported a similar motion in the Territory parliament. It is time for us to stand shoulder to shoulder'. Senator Nigel Scullion was nowhere to be seen.

For his absence to be covered up in here by deliberately misleading this parliament is a contempt of the parliament and the people of the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition has a responsibility to put the record straight. She has a responsibility. I urge her to do so. This also goes to whether her colleagues know this. Did her colleagues know that Senator Scullion was not in the Chamber, or were they also complicit in this deception of the people of the Northern Territory in this parliament?

We have the member for Blain standing up, time after time - I personally like the guy - being totally pious about our responsibilities as leaders in the community and 'Come on, let us have non-political debates on potential issues'. This is a very serious issue for the people of the Northern Territory. The CLP is wedged. Senator Nigel Scullion is, obviously, reserving his position on this issue. He has said as much in meetings across the Northern Territory. He is not going to flag which way he would vote if he were forced to vote. He had an opportunity in the Senate to make his position clear today. He did not. He squibbed it; he was not there. For the Leader of the Opposition to come in here and assert that he was, is a contempt of this parliament and a contempt of the people of the Northern Territory. She has to put the record straight.

Madam Speaker, I am offering her another chance to do so, and if she does not, we reserve the right to take this debate to other places.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I always know when I am on to something by the way the member for Wanguri conducts himself; he is so predictable. I hope he is not a poker player in his private time because he would be very bad at it. Also, his feigned indignation amounts to some of the worst acting I have ever seen. I know why they are doing this. I know why you are doing it. I know you are doing it in an attempt to deflect attention from what is being described outside this place as the travel rorts scandal. I also know that you are doing this because you were outfoxed. As a lawyer, I love outfoxing people. You were outfoxed ...

Mr Stirling: What, by lying?

Members interjecting.

Dr LIM: A point of order, Madam Speaker! I believe the Acting Chief Minister should withdraw those words.

Mr Stirling: I will withdraw it, Madam Speaker, but I put the member on notice – very close to a substantive motion ...

Members interjecting.

Mr Stirling: ... and if this is wilful, having been misleading of this Assembly, it will go to Privileges!

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order! Honourable members, I would like the debate to continue with a level of orderliness that we have not seen so far.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Back to the issue of being outfoxed. They are a touchy lot, the members of the Australian Labor Party. It is just so wonderfully predictable. It is these sorts of things that makes my job so utterly enjoyable. There are so many things to say and so little time in which to say it. I will see if I can be direct and really simple, especially for the member for Wanguri.

Let us deal with some facts. Who is interested in dealing with facts? Here we go. According to the *Hansard*, the question was:

You know that Senator Trish Crossin today put a motion to the Senate calling on the federal government to keep its promise not to put a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory. You will also be aware

that the motion passed with the support of CLP Senator Nigel Scullion.

I do not know why it is that, subsequently, members of the government then decided to go off into absolute fantasy land, accusing me then, as they do now, of misleading. When one says something was supported, in this instance, it was supported. You can support just about anything without being in any particular place ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: I never asserted, and the *Parliamentary Record* reflects it. I am glad that the Acting Chief Minister finds it so funny. I do not know what problems he has with the English language. Madam Speaker, they then say of me, that I said ...

Mr Stirling: The squirmy dirty lawyer. The dirty lawyer tactic.

Ms CARNEY: Here are some facts, boys. According to the member for Millner, that I told the parliament that Scullion attended the Senate - wrong, wrong!

Mr Henderson: You said he supported the motion.

Mr Stirling: You said he supported it.

Ms CARNEY: The member for Wanguri ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Ms CARNEY: Can I be heard in something that vaguely resembles some silence, or at least order, Madam Speaker?

The member for Wanguri is on the *Parliamentary Record* as saying - and this is how reliable you are: 'No, you said voted'. I respectfully refer the member for Wanguri back to the *Parliamentary Record*.

Mr Stirling: Well, that was your intention.

Ms CARNEY: Where was the word 'voted'? It is nowhere to be seen in it.

Mr Stirling: Support means voted.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, Acting Chief Minister!

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Then, of course, the Acting Chief Minister

asserted, in the way he usually colourfully does, that I misled the House. They still believe it. Well, it could be said that they believe it. I actually do not think they do, because, even though I do not ...

Mr Stirling interjecting.

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Acting Chief Minister, would you please resume your seat.

Mr Stirling: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

Ms CARNEY: No one likes to be outfoxed, and I suspect that the Acting Chief Minister, most of all, does not like to be outfoxed. When we go back to the arrogance that is this Labor government, so early in this second term, I would not have expected to see it quite so early but, clearly, it is creeping in.

The fact is that the censure motion is a farce; it is a sham, like much else that the Labor government has done this week. It is interesting; I thought, with the Chief Minister - I cannot say that she is not here - doing other things, that the member for Wanguri, the Leader for Government Business, who is often referred to as the one who is going to take over from this Chief Minister - some say it could be in 18 months; if things continue to go our way it could even be sooner. In any event, the member for Wanguri is the one often proposed by media observers and some people in the public to be the next Chief Minister. Such is his obsession with what is happening in Canberra that I now form the view that, in fact, the member for Wanguri may well be considering a move to federal politics. He has been obsessed with it all week. He has been saying: 'What is happening in Canberra? What is happening in Canberra?'

I am also very surprised at this motion because Labor, despite the differences I have with them in so many respects, actually have shown themselves - and I take my hat off to them in this sense - to be pretty politically astute, pretty politically clever. Why did the Acting Chief Minister not know that Nigel Scullion was not in the Chamber? Scullion has said on radio that he supported the motion. He made it clear to his colleagues that he would cross the floor if required. The vote was taken; it was done on the voices. What the member for Wanguri and his comrade colleagues have not mentioned - or maybe it has not occurred to them - is that this motion could not have passed without Senator Scullion's support because, I am happy to remind the member for Wanguri and his friends ...

Mr Henderson: He was not there.

Ms CARNEY: ... that Labor does not have the majority in the Senate nor do the minor parties. You cannot possibly come in here and say that a Labor motion would get up if it was not supported by the likes of Senator Scullion. He supported it and that ensured that the motion passed. It is as clear as the nose on your face.

I am astounded, frankly, by the size of this political grandstanding. The travel rorts issue obviously underlies the cause of concern that members of the government have with this. It may be that the staffers on the fifth floor or perhaps members of parliament, after the Acting Chief Minister was, I would have to say, reasonably gracious after I asked him the first question - maybe some bright spark thought: 'Oh dear, it is embarrassing to be so gracious to the CLP. It is embarrassing to be so gracious to Senator Scullion. How do we get out of this one?' Then, a few heads got together and they said: 'What we will do is create something out of nothing and see where it takes us'. Well, it just will not wash.

I know why you are doing this censure motion; possibly in your position I would have done the same - I do not know. You are doing it to deflect. You are deflecting from travel rorts, from the fairly gracious comments made by the Acting Chief Minister, and you are really angry. You are really angry and you are throwing mud. It will not stick, because you might think people in the media are stupid; I do not. They will have access to the *Parliamentary Record*. The personal explanation I made deals with facts ...

Dr Burns: There will be another leadership challenge coming up! I think so.

Mr Kiely: Only takes one-and-a-half!

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: For the Leader of Government Business to say, amongst all the drivel that he put in his censure motion, that I have made quote 'the clear ...

Mr Kiely: More consensus.

Dr Burns: Did you run this one by your colleagues?

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker, could I please - I mean I am happy to yell but I would rather not.

Madam SPEAKER: Member for Johnston.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you. The member for Wanguri said that I had made the quote 'clear assertion that he ...' - meaning Scullion - '... was in the House'. Where is such an assertion? I feel

very sorry for people who do not have a great grasp of the English language. It is, obviously, a disadvantage that so many people unfortunately suffer. I was not aware that the member for Wanguri had such a difficulty with it. Perhaps over the four years, he might like to ring up some of his old English teachers and get them to run a few things by him.

This is a government that will argue that the sky is black when it is blue. Let me say that the question I asked has no basis for this hysterical knee-jerk reaction in a censure motion. When I became Leader of the Opposition, I thought that yes, I would pop some censure motions. Well, I hope the next ones are going to be better than this. If you want to get stuck into me, do so. However, can you deal with some facts rather than simply inventing things and making things up?

Another reason, of course, that the government is doing this is to attack my credibility. That is not going to work either because, unhappily for you, the *Parliamentary Record* is on my side. It is on my side; it does not actually assist your argument. Because of the problems that the member for Wanguri has with the English language, I doubt that he would have been able to pursue a career in the law, for instance. Had he pursued a career in the law, he would have picked up that, when you are making an argument, you actually should try to stick to the facts. If you have a good argument and facts on your side, you will win, in almost every forum, particularly courts, except in this parliament under this arrogant government with this arrogant Leader of Government Business.

He will win the censure, good on you, get over it. You were outfoxed; you do not like it. Your acting is terrible. Clearly, your English needs some work. Your feigned indignation I will giggle about, probably for the next couple of hours. Your argument is based in fiction and fiction alone. There is nothing more you can say. Get over it! If I were you I would try to be less arrogant. Get on with the job of governing for the people of the Northern Territory. That is the job at hand, not personal, fanciful attacks on me. I am sorry that you struggle so much with English. I am happy to speak with you out the back ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members.

Ms CARNEY: ... to run it by you again. However, maybe you just do not want to understand I suspect that that is the case.

It is a sham. I am over it; I hope you get over it. I think that steam will be coming out of the

Acting Chief Minister's ears and nose for another half hour. He has been a bit twitchy over the last couple of days. He has had a couple of outbursts, but not as many as he usually does. Perhaps it is that post-election lethargy where he just has not quite found his straps. It must be difficult being the acting Chief Minister. It must be especially difficult for the member for Wanguri because that is a job he covets. He wants to be the Chief Minister ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members.

Ms CARNEY: ... that he wants to go to Canberra. In any event, you blokes still owe me an apology. Give it a go. If the Acting Chief Minister is going to get up, then that is fine. Get it out of your system. Make your veins go all funny and go red. It matters not to me. What I have is that I can stand on the *Parliamentary Record*.

There is, of course, in conclusion, a final other reason for your outrage about this - your feigned outrage: you want to drive a wedge between CLP members; a reasonable political strategy. We will be doing the same, fellas. You must have been gutted when Senator Nigel Scullion made it very clear that he would do just what you wanted him to do. In a media release issued yesterday by the Acting Chief Minister, at the end it said he wanted Senator Scullion to stand up for the Territory. Well, he did.

Mr Henderson: No, he didn't.

Ms CARNEY: He did!

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Ms CARNEY: The motion would not have passed without it. The motion passed. Hello!

Mr Stirling: He did?

Ms CARNEY: What part of this deal do you not understand? I am so sorry. Maybe you got an F in English, or something; I do not know. I am sorry that it does not suit your political agenda that Senator Scullion supported this motion. I am really sorry, but he did.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: He did! He supported Trish Crossin's motion. I am happy to be as gracious as the Chief Minister was before someone upstairs thought: 'Oh, dear! How are

we going to get out of this one?'. I commend Trish Crossin and Senator Scullion for doing the right thing. This is what we were arguing about on Tuesday. This is what you wanted.

Are you so shallow and so absolutely hypocritical that you do not want to do that now? You got your result. We got our result. The parliament, the Territory got the right result. What is your problem?

Madam Speaker, I could go on, but I have made my position fairly clear. I am absolutely appalled and aghast. Not much surprises me these days, particularly the antics of the Labor government: a very aggressive, arrogant government. You blokes still owe me an apology. I look forward to receiving it.

Madam SPEAKER: Before I call you, Acting Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition, I am informing you that this is not a censure motion. This is a motion, so I am correcting that.

Mr STIRLING (Acting Chief Minister): Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked about being aghast and appalled. I suspect that her three colleagues are a little aghast and appalled by her performance here today.

The other point I want to make before I go to *Hansard* is this: she is very fond of throwing the term 'arrogance' around, 'you blokes' and 'you blokes are all so arrogant'. Nothing can be more arrogant than, having been caught out on a mistake, to walk in and demand an apology; to walk in, having been sprung, and demand an apology – nothing! It was breathtaking in its arrogance in the extreme.

I will be brief, Madam Speaker. I want to point out the words used by the Leader of the Opposition:

You will also be aware the motion was passed with the support of Country Liberal Party Senator Nigel Scullion.

The galleries were full of our senior residents, the media was up there watching this when those words were uttered: '... with the support of Nigel Scullion'. People were interested and impressed. Why were they impressed? Because they believed Nigel Scullion had stood up for the Northern Territory and voted to support the motion in the Senate. That was the intent of the Leader of the Opposition: to create the belief that Senator Nigel Scullion had voted to support the motion in the Senate.

Further on from that, it says:

Despite what you and others have had to say about him, Senator Scullion did stand up for the Northern Territory.

I will read it again:

Despite what you and others have had to say about him, Senator Scullion did stand up for the Northern Territory.

Just where? Just where did he stand up for the Northern Territory? He was in a committee room; he was not even in the Senate! She said:

He supported the motion. He stood up and supported the Northern Territory.

There are two statements that would lead any reasonable person, including the many seniors and the media who were here, and this side of the House, to conclude that one Senator Nigel Scullion did stand up in the Senate and vote with Trish Crossin and the others on this motion.

Nothing, Madam Speaker, could be further from the truth. This is not a censure motion, as you pointed out; this was another opportunity sent from the government by the Leader of Government Business – and she has had two; I invited her in Question Time to put the record straight. The Leader of Government Business has given her another opportunity. However, so breathtakingly blind is she in her own arrogance, it is beyond her and beneath her dignity to admit: 'Whoops! I made a little blue here'.

The other point I make is that I have been party to about three Privileges hearings over in the 15 years in this parliament, always as a member of the committee, I am pleased to say, never one of the alleged misleaders. What I learned very quickly was that it was not simply a case of prosecuting that the member had misled the House, because that was quite clear. In each case, there had been a misleading of the House. What is necessary to prove and find is that the member deliberately – deliberately - set out to mislead the House.

The opening comments by the Leader of the Opposition - and again, in her arrogance, and she thinks she is so clever as a lawyer - was, 'I love it, I love it when I have outfoxed them'. That is the lead for the prosecution. She has prosecuted her own case before a Privileges Committee. 'I love it when I have outfoxed them'. She has been deliberate - absolutely deliberate - and with great intent, has set out to mislead this House, the media, and the many aged Territorians who were here listening and were impressed by what she had to say.

Territorians are entitled to know the truth, Madam Speaker. We will look very closely at this second attempt by the Leader of the Opposition to clear the record because, far from clearing the record, I suggest she has dug a hole a few metres deeper.

Dr LIM (Greatorex): Madam Speaker, I would like to address this motion which, I believe, is a travesty of justice, and has nothing about fairness or truth in it. Let us go through this factually and honestly.

First of all, we have heard read out before - and I will repeat it - what the Leader of the Opposition said. She put this in a question:

You know that Senator Trish Crossin today put a motion in the Senate calling on the federal government to keep its promise not to put a nuclear waste facility in the Northern Territory. You will also be aware that the motion was passed with the support of the Country Liberal Party Senator Nigel Scullion.

That is fact one.

Then we come to the question that the member for Millner asked. Let me just make a side comment here first, that, having worked with the member for Millner these last few days as the two opposing Whips, I have grown to respect the intention and keenness of this young man and his desire to do the right thing. Unfortunately, I believe he, as a junior member of this party, was told he has to ask this question. If he, in his own time, thought it through, he would have declined to ask it, because this question was definitely factually wrong. The member for Millner said this:

Earlier in Question Time, the Leader of the Opposition told the parliament that Senator Nigel Scullion attended the Senate earlier today and voted in favour of the motion moved by Senator Crossin relating to the Commonwealth's plan to impose a nuclear waste dump on the Northern Territory.

That is what he asked and those were the exact words that he used. Therefore, what was said by the Leader of the Opposition earlier this morning, and what was then alleged to be said by the member for Millner are now in contradiction. He repeated the question. The Acting Chief Minister then responded. This is, again, something that I found was definitely steering completely away from what was the fact. The Acting Chief Minister said this:

The Leader of the Opposition indicated that Senator Scullion voted in favour. If he voted in favour, clearly he had to be in the

Senate Chamber to take part in the vote on the motion.

He further added:

I find it absolutely appalling that the Leader of the Opposition would mislead this House in the fashion that she has...

That was when a point of order was called. Those are the facts that I want to lay on the table first.

Fourth fact is that I understand that the Senate majority for the Coalition is one. So, for any vote to be carried in the Senate, it needs either the whole of the Coalition, or the whole of the opposition and the Independents plus one from the Coalition. To have a Senate majority, either you have all the Coalition, or all of the Opposition, all of the Independents and the Greens, and one from the Coalition. Without the one from the Coalition, you cannot get the majority; the vote cannot pass successfully in the Senate. Those are the four facts. Therefore, when the Opposition Leader said Senator Trish Crossin's motion was carried in parliament in the Senate, it had to mean that Senator Scullion actually supported it. Without his vote, they will not have the majority in the Senate ...

Mr Burke: Not turning up would mean it was defeated anyway, Richard.

Ms Carney: We have numbers as well as language?

Mr Burke: Go back to the rules, mate.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Brennan, order!

Dr LIM: That is the logic of it. Obviously, what was said by the opposition this morning was absolutely correct. What has happened ...

Mr Natt: Misleading!

Mr Burke: It would have made it equal, in which case, it would have been defeated.

Madam SPEAKER: Government members!

Dr LIM: Madam Speaker, I ask that you ask the backbench over there – an observation I made was that, in the last term, a particular backbencher used to rattle like an empty vessel. He has learned, he has matured, and he has actually been quite a decent member this last few weeks. The new bunch have taken over and they rattle like empty vessels they have shown themselves to be ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Dr LIM: Let me now draw all these facts together. Without one Coalition Senator voting with the opposition or the Independents, they cannot get a majority. The Leader of the Opposition never said anything but words which said that Senator Scullion supported Senator Trish Crossin's motion.

Then the lies began. Firstly, with words such as Senator Scullion 'attended' the Senate and that the Leader of the Opposition misled the House. Those were the lies that started to come true. What has happened is that the government has been found out. They were wrong on that count. Logically, they were wrong. Not only that, but through the day, they were also hit a couple of times with the travel rorts. They are now reeling upstairs on the fifth floor: 'What have we done?' 'The boss is away and we are in trouble, so let us go in there and give the Leader of the Opposition a punch in the head'. Well, it is not working.

The Leader of the Opposition explained in her personal explanation exactly what happened and told the truth. The only way this government can come through with this arrogant style is to try to lash into the Leader of the Opposition. Seriously, if they want to do that, they should bring a censure motion against her. It would be the most ridiculous act that I have seen of the government: to bring in such a motion against the Leader of the Opposition.

For the last 11 years I have been here - and I take my hat off to the member for Nhulunbuy who has been here 15 years. He has served a long time, he has learned a lot, and he knows a lot more than I do about this parliamentary process. In 11 years, I have seen many motions passed in this Chamber - many motions - where not every member is present in the Chamber. If you look around the room at the moment you can see many empty chairs ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Greatorex.

Dr LIM: I am not saying who is here or not here; I am saying there are many empty chairs. Mine is empty at the moment because I am standing up. What happens is when a motion is passed - when you call for the ayes and the noes and the vote is taken, not every person is in the room who answered the ayes or the noes. Yet, a motion is taken to be passed or not passed on the voices. It is not the number of people who are

seating in the chairs that makes the difference; it is how the vote is taken.

I bring you back to the point again, that without Senator Nigel Scullion's vote in the Senate to support Senator Trish Crossin's motion, it would not have passed because it would not have the numbers. It would not have the numbers. It just could not happen.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, please.

Dr LIM: It is impossible. It is illogical ...

Members interjecting.

Dr LIM: It is illogical. This government ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Dr LIM: This government has bounced off a couple of heavy blows to themselves today and now, the only way they can try to recover, is to distract with a media release - shortly I am sure, if it has not already gone out - accusing the Leader of the Opposition of misleading. That is what it is, I am sure. Believe me or not, the media knows full well, and understands what has happened today.

What has happened today is that Senator Nigel Scullion supported the motion to the federal government not to put a nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory, and that the Leader of the Opposition, in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, has not misled the House. However, what has happened also is that the media understands that the Labor government is currently reeling from several major issues that are within their own parliament. Travel rorts is definitely one of them. I am sure, over the next few weeks, more of this information will start to permeate through, and I trust there will be some investigative journalism going on to discover what has happened.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION
Public Accounts Committee –
Review of Operation of Estimates Committee

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I move –

That this Assembly refers to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration, extending the operation of the Estimates Committee for a further four days to enable

an appropriate, reasonable and accountable level of scrutiny of the budget.

Members will recall that we had this debate a month or so ago after the Estimates Committee hearings, and members of the government will know the concerns expressed by the opposition. They are not new. Members on the government side, no doubt, will be relieved to know that I do not propose to repeat all of what I said last month. However, there are some matters that I will raise again.

Before doing so, however, I will deal with the wording of the motion. It does ask the Public Accounts Committee to consider extending estimates for a further four days. I will outline shortly why we chose four days. The Public Accounts Committee and, indeed government, when considering this motion, should not be hung up on four days. Two or three days would assist. I do not think you need to be very clever to identify that. Even one extra day would assist.

The reasons we ask the committee to consider the extension, as I said, was outlined in a fairly fulsome way during the last sittings, but ...

Madam SPEAKER: Hopefully, the door will close soon.

Ms CARNEY: The door may well have closed. I will deal with some of the matters again, and also provide some additional reasons for the rationale of this motion.

Members will remember - some of those who have been around in the previous term - that when the Treasurer introduced the estimates process in May 2002, he said a number of notable and noteworthy things. He said estimates:

... will benefit the opposition and benefit Territorians

He said:

Accountability is often a word often championed by oppositions and certainly by ourselves in the past, but this government is serious about accountability and we see the estimates committee as another vehicle in favour of it.

The Treasurer, the member for Nhulunbuy, went on to say the Estimates Committee would provide:

... individual members with an unparalleled opportunity to gather information on the operations of government.

The member for Nhulunbuy and Treasurer also said, referring to his government, that:

... *we are not so arrogant to think that it ...*

Being the Estimates Committee process:

... *is absolutely perfect.*

Members will recall when we debated this matter after the last estimates hearings that I referred to what the Treasurer said at length. I refer members to the parliamentary debate after that hearing where he said that he endorsed all of the comments made by members of the opposition. The fact is this: the estimates process has not met the expectations or objectives set by government or, indeed, the Acting Chief Minister.

When he made the comments he did in May 2002, I had reason to believe him. As I said, when we last debated this: I do not mind people having opinions different from my own but, at least, I want them to be consistent.

The government suggested that the Estimates Committee hearings would achieve a number of things. It certainly achieved some, but there is room for improvement. In 2002, the Treasurer said that the government was not so arrogant as to think it was perfect. We have talked about arrogance before. It is clear, in the event that this motion is unsuccessful, that the government has become arrogant.

In relation to the Estimates Committee hearings, we know that a number of questions were not asked. The government will say - and they have said it in previous years when we have talked about estimates - that they are stupid questions and should not have been asked, anyway. No one buys that. In fact, it is appropriate that I put on the *Parliamentary Record* that we had many people in the Territory providing us with those questions. Some of them were, in fact, public servants who helped us in their own time. In reply, I would be grateful, as I am sure they would, for the Leader of Government Business or the Treasurer not to insult them by slagging off about the questions that were asked, because a lot of people helped us.

The bottom line is that the opposition did not have enough time. There was not enough time. For example, with the portfolios I held then of Health and Justice, there was a total of three hours to ask questions on Health, with a budget of \$650m or thereabouts, and Justice with a budget of \$127m or thereabouts. It was not enough time. It did not provide scrutiny in the terms outline by the Treasurer when he introduced the Estimates Committee in May 2002.

The opposition, shortly after estimates, placed approximately 250 questions on the Written Question Paper. They are on the Written Question Paper now, we would be grateful to receive some answers. However, given the government's reluctance to answer questions, it is likely that we will not have those answers for many, many months.

Recently, I received a letter from the Attorney-General, some five months after I sent my letter to him - five months; hardly a government that is open, honest and accountable, that is working very hard, or that has the decency or good manners to reply to letters from local members. We were taught as children that the epitome of good manners is to tolerate those with bad manners. That is clearly the situation we are in.

I am not holding my breath waiting for the answer to the 250 questions of relevance that we asked in relation to the Northern Territory budget and its application to government departments and services in the Northern Territory. However, I sincerely use this opportunity to ask the government to provide us with those answers in any event, and to do so in a timely manner. We know that you have the answers; the public service would have prepared them for you prior to estimates. Pull them out of the bottom drawer and provide them to us unless, of course, you are so arrogant that you do not believe that the opposition should have the answers to legitimate questions that are asked in the name of scrutiny of your budget. In any event, the fact that there 250 questions or thereabouts on the Written Question Paper, shows that there was not enough time in estimates.

Since estimates, of course, there has been an additional minister appointed to this government. There are now nine ministers. The CLP always suggested that there be nine ministers because, with nine ministers, any government governs better. However, now with nine ministers, surely the government does not expect to have the same amount of time allocated next year as there was this year - that would be surely absurd. Hence, our view is that the Public Accounts Committee would need to review the amount of time that is allocated, in any event, and as a result of the appointment of an additional government minister.

It is appropriate, I believe, that the Public Accounts Committee review estimates. Now that there is an additional minister, surely it follows that there will be further time allocated. Accordingly, we suggest that, when and if the Public Accounts Committee undertakes that review, that they use that opportunity to allocate more days.

I said at the outset that, when considering this motion, the government really should not be hung up on the four days we have suggested. It is fair to say that it is an ambit claim. The government is free to make a sensible amendment in the spirit of compromise. However, we have suggested four days for the following reasons.

The current process is that estimates generally goes from 8.30 am to 11 pm, which often was extended to 11.30 pm. Minister, these are not sensible work hours. I hear that Labor members are keen not to sit as long as we do; they want family-friendly sitting hours. I support them very strongly in that regard. It is really absurd to be sitting in parliament, or estimates, debating and asking questions about often complex matters late at night and with few hours sleep. The long hours for estimates, in particular, favours the government; we know that. The government is much better resourced than the opposition in staff and the public service. Even so, the hours that are allocated to estimates are not sensible and they are not in the best interests of Territorians or, indeed, good government.

Secondly, public servants came to this building throughout every day of estimates. Often, some of them turned up at 9 pm or 10 pm. Due to time constraints, some were sitting for a couple of hours, and then were told to go home because they were not required. The member for Katherine, for the second year in a row, was unable to ask representatives from the Northern Territory Tourist Commission questions because she ran out of time. Public servants were left sitting there for a couple of hours, and then basically were told: 'Thanks very much for turning up, I am sorry that it is 11 or 11.30 at night. Now go home'. That is not good enough - it just is not. If government respects and values our public servants, surely it would concede that this is not a courteous way for public servants to be treated, and it certainly is not an effective use of their time.

For the foregoing reasons, we say that the hours should be reduced. This is not prescriptive; this is an idea to be considered. Government may wish to reduce the hours to, say, 8.30 am to 6 pm which, invariably, will go to 6.30 pm, based on previous years. That means that there are five-and-a-half hours each day, over a period of three, that would need to be reallocated. This, of course, does not include the relatively short time allocated for GOC. It also means that, instead of the allocation of 13.5 hours each day, a total of 9.5 hours would be the daily allocation. Therefore, working within the present system, some 17.5 hours should be reallocated, if you accept that we reduce the time for each day – so, instead of sitting until 11.30 pm, we sit until 6.30 pm. The leftover hours tell us that, over three days, it amounts to 17.5 hours, and they should be

spread. If you accept that 9.5 hours is about the daily allocation, the additional 17.5 hours should be spread over two extra days. I know that sounds complicated, but I am sure that it will come out right in the *Hansard*. Therefore, if we reduce the amount of time we have to more sensible working hours for everybody, that gives us approximately two extra days that we will need, if the government accepts this proposal. That is just dealing with the reallocation that gets us two days.

Over and above what we say is the reallocation - or put another way, is simply better timetabling of hours - more time is needed for the scrutiny of the budget and questioning of ministers. That is a simple proposition, I believe, based on the arguments put not just today, but after this last estimates and, indeed, in previous years. Certainly, given the fact that there is now a ninth minister, our view is that two more days of nine hours or thereabouts is ideal, taking us to the figure of four more days for estimates. However, as I said at the start, four days would be great, but we will settle for three; we will settle for two; hard-pressed, we will even settle for one. I do not think the government can seriously argue that no more time needs to be allocated. It cannot be the case.

We bring this motion today to follow up, in the best way we can, the concerns that we raised after the Estimates Committee hearing recently. I do expect the motion to be defeated; however, it is important that we follow up in the best way we can. Also, if the motion is going to be defeated, as I am sure it will, that at least we try to remind the government that there will need to be a review of the Estimates Committee process and, when that happens, please consider extending the time. We do bring the motion seriously. We regard the deficiencies of the estimates process seriously. We urge the government to consider our proposal. We are only suggesting that the matter be referred to the Public Accounts Committee for consideration. We do not even put it in any higher than that. Clearly, the government has the numbers in the Public Accounts Committee, so there is absolutely no fear of being railroaded into doing something that government members do not want.

Government might wish to consider indulging us by accepting this motion or, in the alternative, proposing an amendment. Put simply: will government at least look at this? I guess that is all that needs to be said. We do not propose a second speaker from the opposition, because it really would be repetitive. The arguments are on the public record after the last estimates, and I have simply sought to go through some of those arguments again, as well as highlighting the Assembly's attention to the fact that, due to the

appointment of a ninth minister, surely it is logical to expect an extension of time.

Madam Speaker, the motion is put in good faith, and I hope the Leader of the Government Business considers it in the spirit in which it is brought to the House today.

Mr HENDERSON (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, the government is not going to be supporting this motion. However, I will hand an olive branch to the Leader of the Opposition. On the issue of the ninth minister, we will consider how we are going to accommodate that during the Estimates Committee process. Certainly, there is logic in that particular argument.

However, we are not going to support referring this to the Public Accounts Committee because we have had many hours of debate in this parliament in regards to the processes established for the Estimates Committee. Going round and round in circles over the same old arguments over and over again is not going to convince the government that the process that we have in place needs to be extended by a further four days. However, in regard to the additional minister that, obviously, needs to be accommodated and we will have a look at it. With 10 months or so away from the next Estimates Committee process, the Public Accounts Committee will have lots of important work for it. We will look at ways that we accommodate the ninth minister and also allow scrutiny of that minister's budget.

After each Estimates Committee, we have endured debate about the process. A quick look through the *Parliamentary Record* shows we have debated the process for about 12 hours, in total, in this parliament. Also, we had a comprehensive review of the Estimates Committee process conducted by the Standing Orders Committee in 2003. It was a comprehensive review; public submissions were called. The media which covered estimates were invited to put submissions in. CEOs of government agencies were invited to make submissions and there was a lot of debate across government, certainly in this parliament. The media made submissions. There were a few intrepid souls, to my memory, members of the public, who also made submissions. Essentially, the resulting overwhelming consideration and response from people who did make submissions was that there was a bit of tinkering around the edges but, overall, the process worked well.

I believe that we have had in the not-too-distant past - we are just talking a couple of years ago - very significant committee scrutiny of the Estimates Committee. I am pleased that the current opposition, the CLP, supports the estimates process because, for 26 years, they did not. We have had all of the debates in this House

about the merits of the Committee of the Whole. I believe for the first couple of years - and I do not know, I think from what I am hearing now, the opposition is now finally recognising that the previous system that was available in this parliament prior to the estimates process, the Committee of the Whole, was an inferior process to the current process. It is good to see that the opposition has finally come to grips that the Estimates Committee does provide for much closer scrutiny and accountability of the government's budget. It does it for a very significant reason, because the committee can directly ask questions of public servants who are responsible for administering those budgets.

Previously, in the Committee of the Whole, public servants could not speak. They were muzzled, they were gagged, and you had the farcical situation where the opposition of the day had to submit all its questions in writing. You had the bureaucracy spending many thousands of hours, cumulatively, providing written responses for the minister, and the farce in the parliament of the shadow spokesperson standing up reading a question submitted to the minister and the minister reading out an answer prepared for him or her by the bureaucracy. Now we have a much more interactive process, and the capacity for shadow ministers and members of the committee to directly ask questions of the public service. The level of accountability of the government budget has been lifted exponentially.

We have an Estimates Committee process that runs to 42 to 43 hours and, as we have had many debates in this House - over 12 hours since we introduced this process - that far exceeds any previous record - for want of a better word - of scrutiny at the budget in the old previous Committee of the Whole. Therefore, the issue fundamentally for the opposition, in asking for an extra four days - we could have an extra two weeks, where does it end? - is to be very targeted and organised in regards their scrutiny of ministers and their stewardship over their budgets. We still believe that the 42 to 43 hours that are provided for that process is an appropriate amount of time.

On top of the introduction of the Estimates Committee process, we have introduced freedom of information legislation. The capacity is there for the opposition, the Independents, and members of the public to get access to government information prepared through the Privacy Commissioner - not in minister's officers - to squirrel away for information if they believe there is some sort of issue that needs to be uncovered. That freedom of information process was not in place under previous governments.

We have reformed parliament. Today, Mr Whip, there were another 20 questions

answered in parliament. I will give the Leader of the Opposition an assurance those questions she has put on the Written Question Paper will be answered.

We are not hiding from anything, but we want an efficient process that provides the committee the capacity to ask questions of ministers and public servants regarding budgets. The system is a much better system than the one that was in place prior to that.

We have had an exhaustive and comprehensive review conducted by the Standing Orders Committee in 2003, where many people made submissions and the overwhelming representation was that the process was pretty good. We do not believe there is a requirement for an extensive overhaul. It really is not about accountability. If we were to accept another four days, it would grind the public service and the business of government to a halt for another four days. One has to ask: to what great outcome for the people of the Northern Territory? I do not think it is for any great outcome, but simply a capacity for members of the opposition to grandstand and carry on.

There are many other avenues for the opposition and Independents to seek information from government, as well as the Estimates Committee process. Try asking government ministers for briefings on important issues. You have the capacity to come and speak directly to senior public servants to get information on policy, outcome and program issues. You have the capacity to use freedom of information legislation to seek information, and to put questions on the Written Question Paper. We have introduced television cameras into the parliament to open up the parliament in Question Time to the people of the Northern Territory.

This issue keeps going round and round and round and, as I have said, I will extend an olive branch to the Leader of the Opposition. We will look at how we accommodate the ninth minister. That is a consideration that I will take on board as Leader of Government Business and, at another time, consult with the opposition and the Independents about how we do that. However, I see no merit in supporting this motion for this reference to the Public Accounts Committee. There is an issue regarding the ninth minister, and we will look at that and come to an accommodation.

However, government believes that the Estimates Committee process is working well. It provides a level of scrutiny and accountability that was not here in previous parliaments when we had the Committee as a Whole. I am not going to offer advice to the Leader of the Opposition

because she would probably accuse me of being arrogant.

I would like a dollar for every time she calls this government or any of its ministers arrogant between now and the next election because we can, obviously, see the political tactic there ...

Ms Carney: It will be a lot. You will need a long bit of paper!

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr HENDERSON: It is a political tactic and, I suppose all political tactics, depending on which side of the fence you are on, probably have a degree of legitimacy. However, it is a tactic and it is not grounded in truth. The number of times she is going to make that assertion over the next four years will probably be in the thousands, possibly in the tens of thousands. If we had a dollar for every time she is going to use that line, I would like to donate it to a worthy charity, because it will be grandstanding, just like this motion.

Madam Speaker, we will find a way of accommodating the ninth minister. We will be an accountable government, as we were in the first four years. We are certainly looking forward to being an accountable government to the people of the Northern Territory for another four.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I support the Estimates Committee that the government has introduced. It was a good move and it opens up the government's departments and the government itself for questioning on policy issues and other matters, especially now that we have accrual accounting where you can question the government not only on the dollar figures, but on policy. That is important.

I hear what the Leader of Government Business is saying, that there has been a review but, in reality, there are some problems. One of the problems we have is that departments are not equal. A classic example is when the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, or Lands, Planning and Environment - I have not quite caught up with the new names - has a department that is quite big. It is not only big in size, it is big in spending.

I do not want to mislead parliament, but I do not think that we have been to the Estimates Committee and discussed ports, because they are always down the bottom of the list. Issues relating to the port are very important because we are spending a lot of money down there, and that is an area that should be scrutinised.

When I give qualified support to what the Leader of the Opposition is proposing, I am not necessarily saying that we need four days or that

the hours need to be changed drastically. However, I believe if we had an internal review of what has happened with the Estimates Committee over the last couple of years, it would certainly be worthwhile. It would even be worthwhile looking at the questions. I know at times I rabbit on; there are others ...

Mr Mills: You are too hard on yourself.

Mr WOOD: I did not say 'rabid', I said 'rabbit'.

There are times when, perhaps, even the questions are either repetitive or, instead of being direct, they have a series of question that leads up to the trick question, you might say. Perhaps there is a need to look at whether the opposition and Independents are not using the time as well as they possibly should because, naturally, estimates has some politics in it. If you can get a few points out in the Estimates Committee, I suppose, well and good.

On one hand, I do believe we are not getting some of the department's questions in the Estimates Committee, or some parts of the department, and that certainly needs to be looked at.

As regards the hours, they are long hours, and maybe it is easier on some other groups because they can swap people all the time. However, when you start at 8.30 am and you have two half-hour breaks and you finish it after 11.30 pm, that is a fair length of time. I do not recall signing any AWA to say that I should work nine hours in a day. The government should be objecting to those long hours. It does not sound healthy to me. In fact, there should be some base protection for people like us who have to work that long ...

A member interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Yes, there is a bloke over there I should employ.

They are long hours. You have to ask: what is the sense of having long hours. This place is empty for a good time of the year. I am not saying it is empty of the staff - dare I say that. The parliament itself is not used, and there could be an argument for lengthening the time and shortening the day hours. For instance, we only talk to Power and Water on the Friday for two hours. There may be an opportunity there to lengthen it, because after that, we come back to parliament and report on the week's events. Surely, there is room to move there.

I know there are issues about whether you have public servants available, etcetera. I say it would be very hard to have - you do not want public servants on standby. However, a lot of

times they are on standby simply because they are still there at 11.30 pm and we have not got to them. For those public servants who are involved in the port, for instance, I do not think they have ever been asked for advice or answered a question since the Estimates Committee started. That is the area that we need to look at.

I know the Leader of Government Business has made some good points but, in reality, if you look at what is actually happening at the Estimates Committee, some ministers are not getting all their sections of the department questioned adequately. There are cases where I know the Leader of the Opposition said: 'Oh, I need to finish off because the Independents, who sometimes wait there patiently, have a few questions to ask', because there simply is not enough time to question the ministers. Health is a huge issue. Law and order is a huge area, and Transport and Infrastructure is a big area. I hope we have a system where you could adequately question them without wasting time, without too many silly questions. That is why I say opposition and Independents need to tighten up on how we question the government so that we do not spend a lot of time building up to the big question, but we get to the point quicker and we just ask the question there and then.

I will support the motion. I am not necessarily saying I support the part that says four days. As the Leader of the Opposition said, you could take three, two or one. I would probably be the same. The Public Accounts Committee could look at what has happened in the last, say, two Estimates Committee; see what departments have not been questioned, and perhaps even evaluate the type of questions and how the opposition and Independents use that time - that is a fair thing to look at - and come back to parliament and say: 'This is the result of our review'. From that point of view, the motion put by the opposition is worth supporting.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I particularly thank the member for Nelson for his support and his comments. In relation to the comments made by the Leader of Government Business, I am relieved that he did not yell, frankly. That was a pleasant surprise, and I thank him for that. I may have misheard him, but I understood that there was something about a charity and that he was going to - was it donate a dollar every time we used the word 'arrogant'?

Mr Henderson: Yes, there would be a lot of money.

Ms CARNEY: Did I hear you correctly, minister - through you, Madam Speaker - that you were going to ...

Mr Henderson: If we were going to do it, it would be a lot of money.

Mr Stirling: It would not matter; you would go out and say it anyway.

Ms CARNEY: ... donate a dollar to a charity?

Mr Stirling: You have no credibility.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Acting Chief Minister. He has a habit of making his presence heard.

Mr Stirling: You go and make it up, like you did today.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Ms CARNEY: In any event, I will have a look at the *Daily Hansard* tomorrow. If it is the case, as I thought, that the Leader of Government Business has said that he will donate a dollar to a charity every time I use the word 'arrogant' – if that is the case – well, I will match him, Madam Speaker. I will match the member for Wanguri, dollar for dollar on the word 'arrogant', every time it is used. I expect it to be used a lot over the next four years. I will go one step further. I will match him ...

Mr Henderson: No basis in fact.

Ms CARNEY: He can keep tabs because he has the resources up there to do it ...

Ms Scrymgeour: Oh, sit down!

Madam SPEAKER: Order.

Ms CARNEY: He can keep count. We do plan on doing it a lot, so the charity needs to be a really good one. In light of the adjournment debate I made last night and of the women's play for golf breast cancer day in Alice Springs, I would like to nominate, member for Wanguri, the National Breast Cancer Foundation as our agreed charity. I look forward to the National Breast Cancer Foundation receiving an awful lot of money over the next four years. I will kick it off; I will put some money in the bucket right now. The government is arrogant, arrogant, arrogant! It is dollars, so I will spare you all and I will not keep saying it repeatedly tonight.

In any event, getting back to the motion, the Leader of Government Business' response is predictable. There is an hypocrisy working here if one looks, although the struggle with the English language makes it tricky for the member for Wanguri. If one looks back at what the Treasurer said in May 2002 about what he and government intended the Estimates Committee to provide, it

has changed. The objectives have not been met. That is hypocritical. It is arrogant not even to concede it – there is another dollar – and the government has, through the ministry of spin upstairs, spun it to make it, somehow, look quite different from the way it actually is. We need more time; it is as simple as that.

Madam Speaker, with those comments, I will conclude and I look forward – in fact I might even, when I leave the Chamber later, send an e-mail to the National Breast Cancer Foundation and alert them to the possibility that they will be receiving an awful lot of money at the expiration of four years. We should formalise it, Madam Speaker, and I am happy to speak to the member for Wanguri privately. However, be very certain, member for Wanguri, I will match you dollar for dollar every time I use the word 'arrogant' about your government, because I plan on using it a lot.

Motion negated.

MOTION
Defer Law of Property Amendment (Sale of Residential Property) Bill

Mr WOOD (Nelson)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move to defer the Law of Property Amendment (Sale of Residential Property) Bill 2005 to the next sittings.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Remuneration Tribunal Report – Recommendation No 1 of 2005 for Judges

Mr STIRLING (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I table the Remuneration Tribunal's Report, Recommendation No 1 of 2005 for Judges.

In 1984, the Administrator issued a standing notice of request which requested the Remuneration Tribunal to, from time to time, inquire into and report with recommendations on the remuneration allowance to be paid to judges. The last full inquiry for the Northern Territory Supreme Court judges by the Remuneration Tribunal was completed in 1991.

In February 2004, the Chief Minister wrote to the Remuneration Tribunal requesting the tribunal as an independent body to review the existing determinations and make recommendations as to the salary, allowances and benefits applicable to judges of the Northern Territory. In addition to recommending any changes to judicial remuneration and benefits, the tribunal has also made a range of recommendations on such matters as a generic determination of all judges' benefits with schedules to cater for variations of benefits which apply to individual judges;

amendments to the *Supreme Court Act* and the *Remuneration Tribunal Act* to empower the tribunal to make determinations of remuneration for judges; and matters to deal with remuneration setting travelling allowances and benefits such as pensions, annual leave, long leave, travel expenses, air fare entitlements and official travel. I would be tempted to suggest that long leave should read long service leave, Madam Speaker, in that context.

Government supports full transparency and accountability to ensure that there is absolute confidence in the judicial system, and is awaiting advice from the Department of Justice on what changes, if any, may be necessary to ensure that this is achieved whilst, at the same time, retaining a system that is workable and practical.

I table the Remuneration Tribunal's Report and Recommendation No 1 of 2005 for Judges.

MOTION

Print Paper - Remuneration Tribunal Report – Recommendation No 1 2005 for Judges

Mr STIRLING (Treasurer): Madam Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT Management of the Daly River

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage): Madam Speaker, today I provide details of the steps taken by government to manage the resources of the Daly River. I will outline the major investments that have already been made by government, and proposals for new investments to maintain the natural, cultural and economic values of this magnificent river.

The Daly is a beautiful river. It is visited by locals and international tourists, has some of the best fishing in Australia, and supports a vibrant pastoral industry and emerging agricultural enterprises. The Daly is also a biologically and culturally important place. It is unique amongst the Top End's few major rivers that flow all year round. In the Wet Season, it is fed by monsoonal deluges falling in its huge catchment extending over 52 000 km². The Wet Season's flow in the Daly River peak at more than 3000 m³ per second. Those Wet Season waters also spill over the banks of the river to deliver the water and vital nutrients that sustain the huge floodplain wetlands and their fauna, including some of the most beautiful water bird breeding colonies in Australia. These wetlands also support nurseries that are essential to sustain fish populations, including the barramundi. Much of the customary economy of

the region's Aboriginal people is drawn from wetlands fed by the flows of the Daly River.

In the Dry Season, flows in the river depend substantially on inputs of water from springs fed by the major aquifers that underlie large parts of the catchment. The chemical characteristics of these groundwaters developed through their sustained exposure to limestone substrates cause suspended sediments in the river to settle rapidly and thoroughly, making the Dry Season waters unusually clear for a longer period than would otherwise be the case.

These crystal clear waters are not just pleasing to the eye. Their clarity allows more light to reach submerged plants so that large meadows of water plants develop on limestone pavements. These provide favoured feeding habitats for the pig-nosed turtle, which is of special significance to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Breeding turtles also move up and down the river searching for favourable nesting banks that have developed in new places each year as the sand shifts during the big Wet Season floods. Obviously, the turtles would be denied access to these nesting banks during the breeding season if the river stopped flowing during the Dry. Beyond the river itself, huge breeding colonies of magpie geese depend on earlier inundation of the floodplains by the first major Wet Season floods moving down the Daly.

This snapshot of just a few of the special features of the Daly River should make it clear to the Assembly why this unique river system demands the careful and responsible approach to management that this government has brought to the region. For example, shifts in the balance of spring and surface-derived flows following excessive groundwater use, would see changes in the quality of the water in the river, suppressing growth of submerged plants and, in turn, affecting the turtles.

Cessation or heavy restrictions of Dry Season flows will have catastrophic effects on the essential character of the river itself. Interception of early Wet Season flows by dams or other impoundments would affect not only the nesting of magpie geese, but many other biological processes on the floodplains surrounding the river. I am determined to prevent this sort of damage to the important values of the Daly River and its wetlands.

However, there is more to the Daly than ecology. It is socially, culturally, and economically very important. For example, communities such as Nauiyu rely on the Daly for their essential water resources. For decades, the landscape in the Daly catchment has been used for pastoral enterprises and, recently, more intensive

agricultural enterprises have emerged. I am informed that there are no more favourable sites in the Top End for a range of agricultural activities than the Daly River region. Others have looked for benefits from tourism based upon the Daly's beautiful scenery, natural features and great fishing. Of course, the region's Aboriginal people have sought to restore customary use and protection of special sites in the Daly catchment while also seeking ways to improve their livelihood.

The lessons from the exploitation of Australia's great river systems over the last 100 years are clear for all to see. If we allow development in the Daly to significantly change important ecological processes, then we will lose our great fishing, irreplaceable wildlife will be lost forever, we will diminish the Daly's overall economic potential, and we will be culturally the poorer.

Government will support responsible development, but not development at all costs. We are not willing to support development at the expense of the future of the river and its social values, or by favouring the interest of one section of the community over others. This government will manage the Daly in a way that reflects the interests of all of the region's people, not just a select few.

I am proud that this government put the community first in our unique environment. We have shown this with the Darwin Harbour, our environment grants, and with the Daly. It is an inclusive approach, and it stands in stark contrast to that of previous regimes: a history of failed agricultural enterprises that resulted in horizon-to-horizon land clearing with not a single tree left standing.

Government has accepted that achieving the benefits of responsible development, while also looking after the special values of the rivers and its catchment, are complex tasks that require time and resources. This government will provide the resources needed to get the balance right, as well as the time needed to use those resources effectively.

This government's approach to the Daly has been groundbreaking. The establishment of the Daly River Community Reference Group in December 2003 was an important first step in ensuring that all sections of the community had a voice in determining the future of the Daly River and the values that should be protected. Representation included local residents engaged directly in forms of agriculture; local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents with other interests; and sectoral interests such as the NT Cattlemen's Association, the NT Horticultural Association, the Environment Centre and the Amateur Fishermen's

Association and local government. The group was chaired by Rick Farley, an eminent Australian with long experience in negotiating resource use issues, particularly those involving the interests of Aboriginal people. Jim Forwood, Chair of the Landcare Council and Pastoral Land Board, acted as deputy chair. Public submissions were also invited, in association with a number of open meetings at which there were a total of 221 attendees, a number of whom made presentations. The CRG visited Power and Water facilities at Katherine, the NT government's agricultural Douglas Daly Research Farm and some private farms in the region, and they had a short tour along the river itself.

The terms of reference for the CRG called for preparation of a land use plan that would balance options for development against conservation and resource management issues. To avoid rapid development that would pre-empt the result of the community's deliberation, the government imposed a moratorium on additional land clearing while the CRG went about its task. As well as providing the time needed for the group to do its work, the government also set other important boundaries; namely, to specify that there would be dams in the Daly River itself and that growing of cotton would not be considered.

The CRG met formally on six occasions, and also did out-of-session work through various subcommittees and workshops. It was supported by an independent expert reference group, which assisted the CRG to work through technical matters. Government staff gave presentations to the group on key issues, including agricultural potential, water use and management, planning legislation, human demography, social indicators for the region's population, and conservation of biodiversity. The chair and senior government officers associated with the expert reference group also met separately with representatives of all the Aboriginal groups with an interest in the region.

Government gave the CRG unprecedented access to government information, and commissioned a number reports specifically for the group's consideration. Information made available to the CRG included a draft conservation plan for the Daly River bio-region; a consolidation of ecological studies of the aquatic environment and revised recommendations regarding water flows for the environment; a demographic profile of the Daly River region; an introduction to the Aboriginal people of the Daly River region by the Northern Land Council and the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority; a report on Aboriginal perspectives on water management in the Daly River; and a brief study of the social values of the Daly River catchment, including views of non-residents.

The CRG presented its report to government in November 2004 and made 23 specific recommendations. I will not pretend that all members of the CRG agreed with all these recommendations. There was certainly healthy debate within the group. This, however, by no means represents the failure of the CRG process, which provided parties, for the first time, with an opportunity to bring their legitimate interest to the table in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and with a genuine desire to ensure a sustainable future for the Daly.

Considerable consensus was achieved on critical issues and, in the areas where differences remain, government now has a much clearer understanding of community values from which it can chart a path forward. There is no doubt that the CRG's report is a very substantial and important achievement. The group completed some difficult and critical work on many of the matters that needed to be addressed to construct a sound plan, and so provided a solid foundation for future management of the Daly River.

Amongst the most important of the CRG's recommendations was to call for a new approach to the Daly called adaptive management. Adaptive management offers an approach that deals with the inevitable trade-offs that occur when making decisions that seek to minimise the risk of adverse impacts on our environment when all of the information needed for decision-making is not available. In the past, this dilemma between risk and information gathering has often been dealt with in either of two ways: to allow no change to the environment until research resolves all of this scientific uncertainty - this is largely unobtainable, with a consequence that valuable resources are not utilised for community benefit - or to allow unchecked changes to our environment in the face of little or no scientific understanding of the consequences, which often arise when it is too late to prevent irreversible damage.

Adaptive management provides a middle path between these two extremes. It allows management of our natural resources to be adjusted by learning from experience. It means that modest development and cautious use of our natural resources can occur under carefully crafted monitoring and management arrangements that are continually adjusted in the light of experience. I want to emphasise that adaptive management does not mean trial and error, and it does not mean ceasing research that will reduce uncertainties. Put simply, as we set out on our course of sustainability for the Daly, adaptive management offers the opportunity to constantly trim our management sails so that we are always pointing in the right direction.

Other important recommendations of the CRG were to:

1. specify minimum environmental flows that sets limits on the amount of water available for production in the Wet and Dry Seasons;
2. establish limits on river flood harvesting to protect critical environmental reworking and maintenance of sandbars within the river, and to protect the connections between the river and its surrounding wetlands and floodplains;
3. review and revise relevant natural resource management legislation;
4. establish a community-based group to manage the catchment over the long term, supported by new or revised laws;
5. create an Aboriginal reference group to advise the wider community group on Aboriginal interest; and
6. develop community capacity to engage productively in the management of the catchment.

Importantly, the CRG acknowledged that in its process, it did not provide a full understanding of the views of the region's Aboriginal interests and the values they wish to protect. Given that 11 language groups have connection with the region, those views are diverse. However, it was clear from the consultations associated with the CRG process that there were many important shared concerns that went beyond maintaining the water flows for the environment. There was considerable anxiety that traditional owners and others with customary obligations may no longer be able to influence the way the land and water was used and would, therefore, lose the capacity to honour their responsibilities as stewards of their country.

Government has given in-principle support to most of the CRG's recommendations. We have adopted the CRG's tight limits on water use for immediate application; agreed to establish a new Daly River Management Advisory Committee and Aboriginal Reference Group to participate in long-term management of the river and catchment; committed to the development of an adaptive management approach to the long-term protection of the river; approved development of enhancing monitoring systems for water availability and water use; approved a review of all natural resource management legislation with a view to providing a best practice framework that

encourages planning and delivery of sustainable practice integrated across portfolios; and committed a total of \$3.5m to implement these actions.

The highest standards of water and land monitoring will be applied to the Daly. It will provide certainty for all resources users before any further development occurs. The Daly will not become another River Murray. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the government has recognised and accepted the CRG's reasons for being unwilling to propose a land use plan for the Daly. The issues were complex, and the range and quality of information was insufficient, at this stage, to support a plan of the standards required for good environmental outcomes.

More time and more effort was needed to do justice to the special values of the Daly River. We have, accordingly, taken steps to provide additional time and more resources for work on the values of the river. Government has approved development of a major monitoring and research program to inform future planning; renewed the moratorium on land clearing and further subdivision for mixed farming until the additional research and monitoring is in place; and reaffirmed the ban on dams on the Daly River mainstream and on cotton growing.

I regret the need to impose further restrictions on land-holders. However, through the CRG report, we have been advised by both community and technical experts that to press ahead now with a rapid or substantial development would be simply too risky. Government has, quite properly, concluded that it will be better to take the time to get the science, our understanding of the full range of interests, and the management arrangements right, rather than to risk entrenching styles or levels of development that turn out to be unsustainable. At the same time, we recognise that prior research will not provide absolute certainty about the effects of management decisions.

Even at the end of the development moratoria, we will still need robust systems to manage risk. That is why we have agreed to take up the CRG's proposal for adaptive management. For the most productive learning to occur under adaptive management, the community must be closely involved in the process. They participate in setting clear management objectives, in working out how to get new information from the new management experience in review and analysis of monitoring data, and in determining and making effective responses to any evidence of change of a sort or level that they have determined to be unacceptable.

Under adaptive management arrangements for the Daly, this government will continue to put the community first. Through adaptive management, the effectiveness of our management arrangements is continually reassessed through a cycle of design, implementation, review and adjustment. In working through these processes, information and understanding will be shared, and the community's capacity to deal with future challenges will be built up.

Using the adaptive management framework, once we have filled the major gaps in understanding of the Daly River and its surrounds through research we can begin to make cautious decisions based on the best analysis available. Because of the importance of good environmental monitoring, government will give special priority to building much improved systems to measure water availability.

Water use and water quality in the Daly catchment: we are also seeking Commonwealth government participation in these arrangements and I am confident they will come on board. The details of other monitoring programs covering terrestrial environments will be determined in conjunction with the proposed Daly River management advisory committee. To date, we have made no commitment in establishing a statutory catchment management authority as sought by the CRG. This is one of the more expensive models for community engagement, and one that we would probably have difficulty in matching for all other catchments. Final decisions on the statutory support needed by the advisory committee will be made in conjunction with a wider review of relevant legislations. I can assure the Assembly the government is committed to doing whatever is required to make the management of the Daly River for both conservation and sustainable production an example of best practice in environmental management.

Getting it right in the Daly River is only one, albeit very important, element of the government's major commitment to better environmental management of our river systems. We have already undertaken an important first step in a larger and longer-term process by creating a new Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts which brings together all the functions in natural and cultural heritage, environment protection, and the management of natural resources. The new department will be responsible for coordinating a review of all legislation having a bearing on protection of the environment. New and amended laws will provide an improved framework for more effective delivery or our commitment to the higher standards in conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. I will be making further statements

about these larger initiatives in subsequent sittings.

For the present, I will focus on an exciting new program directly associated with the Daly River called Living Rivers. The Living Rivers program will draw on experiences in the Daly River to provide a statutory and administrative framework for focused planning and management for Territory rivers. It will:

1. establish maintenance of river health as a core goal in all relevant Territory law and processes for land and resource management;
2. set standards, criteria and processes for maintaining the ecological, culture and recreational values of the river;
3. recognise and provide for the maintenance of the full range of ecosystem services provided by rivers that contribute so much to the wellbeing of Territorians;
4. accord special status to rivers that are particularly valued by the Territory community and demand additional level of protection for the unique values;
5. provide for use of waters for domestic consumption and economic production consistent with maintenance of ecological and cultural values;
6. recognise proper management of groundwaters and vegetation corridors along rivers as essential for maintaining river health; and
7. provide mechanisms for genuine community involvement in setting and achieving targets for maintaining the character and functions of our rivers.

Government will be seeking strong public participation in refining these ideas and identifying the most effective ways of implementing our new Living Rivers program. My department will shortly be seeking nominations to the Daly River management advisory committee and an Aboriginal reference group to support the committee. Discussion papers will be issued to seek submissions on the implementation of adaptive management principles and practice in the Daly River and elsewhere. I have little doubt that the Daly River will be recognised as one of those rivers that would demand special levels of attention under the Living Rivers program.

We have all heard the rhetoric about the unique opportunities open to the Territory to avoid mistakes made in other places, where critical natural assets have been damaged and huge costs incurred to make mostly imperfect repairs. Our government is committed to go beyond the rhetoric to build a framework that genuinely embeds high standards of environment management in all of the processes of government. I look forward to the challenge of working with the new department and the community to establish Australia's best standards in environmental protection and natural resource management.

I thank all of those who gave so generously of their time and energy to the Daly River Community Reference Group, and to those who made submissions to the group. As I have acknowledged, the task they took on was challenging. Their efforts have made an important contribution to the government's thinking about the ways in which we can increase options for sustainable livelihoods that depend on our rivers, while maintaining our special lifestyle and the features of the environment in which they depend.

In closing, the recent election saw a clear choice on the environment. It was a choice between a Labor government that will protect and manage our magnificent Daly River or the CLP that said: 'We know it all already and we should let the bulldozers rip'. Territorians have clearly said that they want the Daly protected and managed properly. Government has made a very significant commitment to ensure we have the scientific knowledge and systems to manage the Daly to the highest standards anywhere in Australia.

Importantly, we will continue to put the community first. Government will continue to apply a cautious approach to the development of the Daly. If nothing else, the history of past failed agricultural enterprises should be cause for caution and careful thought. Nevertheless, I have not doubt that some further development to the Daly will be possible once the research is undertaken and the monitoring systems are in place. This will only occur under the strict land clearing controls that this government has introduced and under an adaptive management regime that will be constantly reviewed. I am determined that they will not be a repeat of the mistakes made in the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this government will ensure that the Daly continues to be a living river for the benefit of all Territorians into the future. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mrs MILLER (Katherine): Mr Deputy Speaker, in responding to the minister's statement on the management of the Daly River, there is no doubt about it: the Daly River is not only recognised as an icon in the Northern Territory, but it attracts huge numbers of visitors from interstate each year. One of the reasons for its attraction is that it flows all year round. There is some magnificent scenery along the stretch of the Daly, unique habitat and bird life and it is a beautiful part of the Northern Territory – and let us not forget the fantastic fish species, especially the famous Territory barramundi renowned throughout Australia.

Mr Wood: And the mullet.

Mrs MILLER: Yes, all the species.

All Territorians want to be assured that the Daly is in good hands for future generations, myself included, and I agree there have to be checks and balances. As with all important issues that come into parliament, there has to be a balance presented so that informed decisions can be made in the best interests of all concerned.

Some members involved in agricultural and pastoral industries in the Daly have spoken to me over the past two years about their frustration with the way government has intruded into their lives and livelihood. They claim they have been made to feel as though they are committing some dastardly deed, and that this government has had to take drastic steps against them, which has effectively tied their hands behind their back. At this stage, their confidence in the future of their property investment is low.

The clearing of Tipperary many years ago has left quite a large area unwooded. I believe that is what sparked this urgency. I have to admit that when I visited Tipperary two-and-a-half years ago, I was shocked by the extent of clearing, but there is nothing dastardly happening in the Daly area now. That happened some time ago and landowners are well aware of their responsibilities and of the long-term commitment to best practice for future sustainability.

Land management is governed by a stringent set of rules and guidelines that were updated in 2004. Everyone to whom I have spoken in the Daly region has to meet these guidelines, and they are well aware of them. There was a ridiculous rumour being bandied around that claimed that a 100 000 ha of land was going to be cleared. It was just that: a ridiculous rumour that was purely scaremongering by some overzealous environmentalists. Another rumour that caused panic was that water for irrigation in the Daly region was going to extract excessive amounts of water from the river, therefore, damaging the

ecosystem. At present, there is 2% of available water being used for irrigation, which is hardly devastating.

The agricultural industry, in partnership with the horticultural industry, has been proactive in the Daly region in developing a strategy to address an environmental management system. These people are not bandits or pillagers; they have shown leadership and responsibility towards their surrounds, and should be given the respect they deserve. There is no new direction in economic development in the primary industries for the Daly region at present, and nothing that favours development. As a matter of fact, economic development in the Daly area has been severely hampered by moratoria, and there are moratoria on just about every aspect of primary industries, which has been another sign of unnecessary panic. Moratoria were placed on land clearing, growing of cotton and dams. It is no wonder there is such a lack of confidence in the future in the landowners who have made a significant financial commitment in the Daly region.

The way forward for the Daly region is for industry and stakeholders - and that, of course, includes the indigenous landowners - to work in partnership to develop a water and management strategy for the whole of the catchment area. I am pleased to note in this statement by the minister that she has said the community must be closely involved in the process. It is vital for the community and the horticultural and agricultural industries to be involved in all aspects of the adaptive management of the Daly. Despite the fact that the minister does say, importantly, we will continue to put the community first, there have been a lot of members of that community who have contacted me to say they have felt that they have been put last.

The minister has also stated that a Daly River management advisory committee will be set up. That is a very sound idea. However, again, I urge the minister to ensure that to have a balanced committee, it is very important to involve all stakeholders to have a balanced outcome. As I said earlier, they have been feeling as though they are lepers and left out in the cold. To ensure that the Daly River advisory committee operates successfully and with the best possible outcomes for everyone, please ensure that there is a balance.

I look forward to looking at the new legislation that will be introduced for Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts. I was encouraged when I read about the Living Rivers program, and I support the ideas that the minister has spoken about today.

I cannot finish though, without making comments about the minister's closing remarks when she said that, before the last election, the CLP had said we would let the bulldozers rip into the Daly region. That is so very untrue, minister, and you know it. We stated quite categorically in this House that there needed to be a balanced view of what is already in the Daly region and what would be sustainable into the future. At no time did we say that we would support bulldozers ripping thousands of hectares of natural scrub land - and we never would. In addition, there were no plans by landowners to have massive clearances either.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I look forward to watching how the Daly River management committee is established, and how quickly and effectively they get on with the tasks that have been outlined in the minister's statement today. I have to say again: I hope and trust that you will always involve the residents, who are already committed to the Daly, and that you will have wide and open consultation when you have the Daly River management committee established.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank the minister for her statement. There is no doubt that the Daly River is one of the Territory's icons. Having lived and worked on the Daly for a time in the early 1970s and early 1980s, it always is a special place for me. It is a beautiful river, especially in the Dry Season, and can be a raging and powerful torrent in the Wet Season. It has been the subject of agricultural development from the early 1900s when boats would come up the river to pick up the peanut harvest. It has been touched by the missionaries as far back as the 1880s. It has had a long association with the cattle industry. It also has moved from a place for Darwinites to spend their long weekends to a major tourist and fishing destination for interstate tourists. Of course, it always has been Aboriginal for, as Bidy Lindsay once said: 'You may own what is on top, but it is still our country'.

Just to make a note there, I was reading something out of the Daly River Community Reference Group summary where, because of the number of people fishing on the Daly these days, Bidy and her family all tend to move out now because all their favourite fishing spots are a overcrowded. I actually have great sympathy with them because, when I used to live there, weekends could be like a Bagot Road on 7.30 am, with the number of boats going up and down the river.

The river has been developed over many years, for better or worse, with crops grown such as maize, peanuts, cotton, tobacco, Townsville stylo, forest trees, mangoes, tropical fruits and vegetables, sesame, soya beans, Tully and jarra

grasses and, of course, gamba grass. Trees have been harvested from its river banks. Sand was used to build houses at the Daly River. Weeds such as Noogoora burr and mimosa have infested its banks and surrounds, and gamba grass uncontrolled can also be a threat. Tin, gold and copper were extracted from the region. Land was cleared on Tipperary Station in the 1960s and 1970s. The Douglas Daly Research Station was set up and the area surrounded was earmarked for agricultural development. The new town of Fleming was identified. Farmers interstate were sought to develop the area as a grain bowl as part of the ADMA scheme; the silos at Fleming bear testimony to that. Today, fattening cattle, hay, watermelons, and tourism-based industries including fishing, arts and crafts are the main activities.

It has a small population with the biggest outside of Katherine being the Nauiyu Daly River Community. I say this all to put into context that exploitation or development of the Daly has been occurring for some time; it is not something new. It was good for the government to set up the Daly River Community Reference Group, and the report of the group certainly makes interesting reading. The million dollar question is: where to from here?

Although the minister has mentioned in her statement the areas that the government is going to act on, what is missing from this statement are a number of things. What are you going to do with all the recommendations of the community reference group, especially the ones you did not mention? I thought I would take time to look at some of those particular issues.

There are a number of recommendations from the community reference group. One of the recommendations was that there was sustained investment required to enable local communities to develop capacity and engage in, effectively, the management of natural resources. They spoke about the limits of knowledge and understanding, and about the lack of long-term and benchmarking data which is a key factor in this. In recommendation 10, they said that adaptive management, policies and actions should be refined and adjusted on an ongoing basis. I know the minister spoke on that earlier, but I will make some comment on that later. Regarding community engagement, the public has a right to participate in decisions about the future of the region. What is the government doing to promote that idea? The report spoke about transparency and accountability, the decision-making processes, and that the performance of government and land-holders in protecting the values of the regions should be open to public scrutiny and accountability.

Also, there were specific recommendations, and we should look at a number of those tonight. They recommended the role of the controller of water resources under the *Water Act* should be redefined to separate the different functions of water resource allocation, licensing, regulation, and monitoring. I am interested to know whether the government has moved on that particular issue. The group said that there must be sustained whole-of-government investment and funding to improve the capacity of local communities to engage in natural resource planning and management of Daly River catchment. What has happened to that?

They made what is probably the most important recommendation: that a Daly catchment management authority should be created to deliver integrated natural resource planning and management in the catchment. That particular recommendation leads on to a whole other series of recommendations for the Daly River, because they asked that this particular authority should develop an integrated catchment management plan and should act as a water advisory committee, and form a relationship with the Daly Catchment Aboriginal Reference Group. Therefore, this authority would have a lead role in the management of the Daly. For instance, recommendation 12 says a research program with projects, commissioned and supervised by the Daly catchment management authority, should be undertaken to provide more complete information. It listed all the matters that should be looked at: the Aboriginal cultural significance; the level of environmental flow; the relationship between rain, pool, groundwater aquifers and river flow – and it went on and on with quite a lot of issues that need to be addressed. Again, this recommendation presumes that the government will support a Daly catchment management authority.

There are quite a few other recommendations about which I am interested to hear whether the government is going to go ahead with. For instance, the metering of all new bores and pumps; the regular auditing of meter and water pumping records by government agencies; regular monitoring of water quality; how much water can be pumped from the river after a peak flood; and maintenance of spring flows to the Daly River during the Dry Season. There are also other issues such as external independent audit of the water allocation plan. Is that going to happen? Weed management and eradication are critical issues and should be given priority under national heritage trust regional investment strategy. Has that happened? All recreational fishers should be licensed as a measure to contribute towards management of research and development of the recreational fishing industry. What is the government's position on that? That is recommendation 18.

Recommendation 19 says that power boats operating in the Northern Territory should be registered and the operator licensed; this will assist in the identification, safety education, awareness and control of activity. And it goes on. Provision 4 was that where needed, restoration for an incentive program of vegetation corridors on all streams and rivers in the Daly River region. There are a number of other recommendations. It would be interesting to hear what the government's position is, because we are dealing here with an important report by the minister, the basis of which is from this particular document from the Daly River Reference Group. We need to be a little more specific so that the people who are involved and those affected know where the government stands.

An important area the government has to look at is also those specific recommendations that they could not get consensus on. They cannot get consensus; the ball is in your court, you have to make a decision. One would be meters on existing bores, and who will pay for them. Obviously, that was fairly heated topic. Regarding hydrodynamic modelling, their recommendation said that, basically, if a person puts an application in to subdivide some land and pump water, that person will have to pay for it - no agreement. What is the government's viewpoint on that?

Charges for water used - very interesting, because, I suppose, if you charge for water on the Daly you charge for water elsewhere. Of course, a lot of people might be interested in that, especially in our rural area. Water trading was another issue that they could not agree on. Also, that urgent hydrodynamic modelling of groundwater systems for the Katherine East area should be undertaken, and the existing water licence reviewed if the allocation for total consumptive uses could reduce spring in-flow to the Daly River system was another recommendation. They could not agree there. Although I note that there was only one person who did not agree, but it would still be required for the government to make up its mind.

Regarding EISs for subdivision, they say each application for subdivision should require a preparation of environmental impact statement. That is a pretty big task for a landowner but, again, there was not support.

Gradual development versus moratorium - very interesting section. They actually brought out two recommendations, and could not get agreement on both. What is the government's point of view? I know that they have a moratorium at the moment, and I will come to that a little later.

Their recommendation for water allocation, was that there should be a cap on water

allocations at existing levels of extraction - no agreement. Regarding aquatic habitat, the government's commitment to no dams on the Daly River should be strengthened by articulating, but with no new weirs, bund walls or diversion of any rivers, creeks, billabongs or wetlands in the Daly River catchment - not agreed to. The funny thing is, the government said no dams, and here they are here discussing it. That is good. At least they are discussing it.

Vegetation corridors should be a minimum of 1000 m on both banks for level 6 and level 7, graduating to 100 m for level 1 streams - no agreement. In fact, that is one of those issues the government should really not be so precise with. Protection of rivers should be done as you see it; checked out on foot or, as we say, ground-truthing – do not stick to sizes; work it out on the ground.

Minister, there are many issues that need to be looked at. There are quite a few recommendations that are very important.

It seems to me that all these matters need to be sorted out and addressed within the next 24 months, or you will have to keep extending the moratorium on clearing land, and that will not be welcome news for farmers who have been awaiting a decision. What I refer to there is page 105, or even before that, under Adaptive Management, there is a whole series of recommendations that need to be actioned within the first 24 months. We are nearly one year since this report was tabled, and there is a series of recommended management actions. For instance, they said members of the Daly River catchment management authority should participate in a workshop on scientific understanding of groundwater recharge in karst aquifers in the Top End and elsewhere.

We have a recommendation; the government has not made a decision on whether we should have an authority. The longer before you make a decision, the harder it is going to be to comply with these recommendations. There are things such as whether we should measure the long-term trends in the level of groundwater bores and establish the relationship between rainfall, land use and recharge of both the Tindal limestone and Ooloo dolostone aquifers. Again, a series of recommendations to be actioned in the first 24 months, such as to audit ground water extraction licence conditions by using meters on groundwater pumps above an agreed minimum pump capacity. They recommend to change licence conditions if required and action within the first 24 months.

What is the government doing in relation to that? Another recommendation was that the Daly

River management authority determine buffer width for agricultural land to protect rivers from sediment inputs derived from farm soil erosion. Good idea, but we do not have an authority.

Page after page are recommendations by the CRG - even things such as designing and implementing an investigation on the significance of bank erosion by boat-generated waves. I raised that issue in the Estimates Committee with the Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries. Here is the recommendation that we should be looking to it being actioned in the first 24 months.

There is a whole pile of recommendations, the status of which, minister, should be stated in your summing up. We need to know your position with all those recommendations. It is not only us; you need to be telling the landowners and the groups in the Daly River region. I highlight that fact because is very important.

Minister, I do not agree with broad-scale clearing, but I would have thought if your government had identified the wildlife corridors that were supposed to have been identified - I gather some time ago, farmers in the Daly were told that there would be a mapping of the wildlife corridors that would need to be protected. I am not sure what stage that is at, but if they had been identified and if it sets out strict guidelines for buffers along creeks - which is mentioned in the report - and a natural buffer along the Daly River identified, some limited clearing could have been allowed in line with your adaptive management plans. If not, then I am a bit confused about the whole approach.

If you read the report on Pasture Hay Management on the Daly River on pages 104 and 105, clearing using the principles already established in your land clearing guidelines for the Territory would have very little effect on existing regimes. As I said before, I am not a fan of broad-scale land clearing. I prefer to see natural vegetation corridors left, not only for wildlife but also designed along contours to act as erosion controls, and to slow water run-off to allow for more penetration of moisture into the soil. These corridors can also be used for shade areas for stock.

A cautious approach is needed, but surely the government could make decisions based on a case-by-case basis rather than one big decision that presumes there are no variations allowed to government policy at all. If the government is not willing to do that, can you really say that you are using adaptive management regimes, which you define as 'modest development and cautious use of natural resources'?

I believe one of the actions that not only this government, but the previous government, should have done was to develop a longitudinal national park over the Daly River, similar to the Flora River Nature Park. I said that many years ago, but there was a fear by some that it would become a land claim. I still believe it should be done, using the model that I have spoken about in parliament, combining Aboriginal interests and non-Aboriginal national park philosophy into a unique land title, so we could have a longitudinal national park over the Daly. It may not be possible to do the whole river because of private holdings, but much of it could be done. There might be some compensation required, but I believe it would be well worth it.

Another area that should be looked at, and not just for the Daly, is the fencing off of our water courses. I was recently talking to Barry Kelly, the manager of Jindare Station near Pine Creek, and he agreed to that. We should be keeping cattle out of streams. There may be times at the end of the Wet when stock could be grazed along the banks to keep the fire loads down but, in general, they should not be allowed in those areas. I mention that because, even though we are talking about the Daly River, have a look at the Victoria River, which is mainly affected by cattle, and the water there at the end of the Wet Season. It is just red from the amount of soil that runs off. It certainly looks far worse than the Daly River. I sometimes think that we are putting a lot of emphasis into the Daly, which is fair enough, but we should be putting equal emphasis on some of our other big rivers.

Minister – I hope I have not missed a page; bear with me, I am sure there was something else I was going to talk about - you have announced, with excitement, the Living Rivers program, but it just sounds like old programs rehashed. This one looks horribly like beneficial users guidelines ...

Ms Scrymgour: Like what?

Mr WOOD: Beneficial users guidelines. I recommend you go and find the details of that. I know governments love programs and spending heaps on consultancies but, when it comes to some basic concepts about protecting our creeks, we do not need all that stuff. We should know by now that, if you put in certain strategies, you will go a long way to protecting our creeks: mark out, by a mixture of ground-truthing and aerial photography, a buffer; in built-up areas, remove your creeks from subdivisions; fence them where possible; keep livestock outside most of the time; maintain firebreaks and keep control of weeds. Very basic; it does not need five PhDs. You could do that because we know it can be done down south. I always recommend people go and have a look at the Torrens River in South Australia, with

all the money they are spending on fencing it off after ...

Ms Scrymgour: You just have to look at the Murray.

Mr WOOD: Yes, but I can guarantee – do not worry about the Murray, go and look at the Torrens and how much ...

Ms Scrymgour: No, that is what we need to learn.

Members interjecting.

Mr WOOD: The Murray is one type of river – very low, compared to the Daly. Well, 70% of rain ends up in the Tropics; we get the most rain here. I know what you are saying about comparing the Murray, and that is fair enough, but it is not a true comparison – different soils, different regions with all the problems, and in a lower rainfall area. We have different systems. You have to be careful you do not compare two things that are not quite the same.

Two last points, minister. If you believe in Living Rivers, then remove the exemptions I mentioned here today for creeks in suburban areas granted by minister Fred Finch under the *Water Act*. When you have done that, please apply the same concerns to Mitchell Creek. It needs a management plan and it needs a minister who cares and understands that even little creeks are just as important as the Daly River, especially when you are talking about the health of our harbour.

You say you should put the community first with our unique environment, but have you really shown that with the Darwin Harbour? It is still hard to believe that when your government continues to allow extractive mining in the centre of the harbour - a couple of weeks ago, two mining leases in a mining reserve, which is not supposed to be mined. You are still permitting the centre of the harbour to be dug up. There would be uproar in the Daly River catchment if that kind of development was to occur within 100 m of the Daly River banks. So, let us be a little careful.

When I used science on Tuesday I was howled down. Science has nothing to do with radioactive waste facilities; it is all about perception and politics. When I talk about cotton, I get howled down – again, for the same reasons. Mr Deputy Speaker, can I ask for a small extension please?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Someone has to move that for you, member for Nelson. Your time has expired, unless someone is going to jump and offer.

Mr HENDERSON: Oh, I will be nice to him tonight. I move an extension of time for 10 minutes to allow the member to conclude this remarks.

Mr Wood: I will not be that long.

Mr HENDERSON: Do not say we are not nice to you, Gerry.

Mr Wood: Yes, I believe you.

Motion agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your time is extended. Please continue.

Mr WOOD: When I talk about cotton, again, I get howled down for the same reason. When I debate cotton, I do not do it for the fun of it. What I do is try to show the hypocrisy of the government in allowing other crops to be grown on the Daly which use the same amount of water ...

Ms Scrymgour: Cotton.

Mr WOOD: Hang on! ... and require more spraying than cotton, but are not banned. What I am trying to emphasise is that it is not the crop; it is how the crop is grown. I would not support any crop that destroyed the Daly. It seems, under this government's thinking, you could grow a crop of tomatoes badly and cause erosion and pollute the river, but you could grow cotton as grown in the trials of Katherine and do no damage - and you would ban cotton but not tomatoes. That is the logic I am putting forward ...

Ms Scrymgour: What about land clearing?

Mr WOOD: I am not recommending anything. I am saying cropping is the important issue. How you crop is how you will affect the Daly River, not the crop. No science, no logic, just fear of perception of politics - not a good basis for any agricultural policy. Government goes for perception, I go for the signs.

When it comes to Daly, the minister says that the government has made a very significant commitment to ensure - and I quote you: 'We have the scientific knowledge and systems to manage the Daly to the highest standard anywhere'. 'Science', the same word she has used when referring to the Daly. I applaud that science approach. I just wish the government would not be so selective when it comes to other issues of importance. This is reflected in the government's statement of no dams or cotton on the Daly.

The issue here for me is whether you trust, right or wrong, the community reference group to

handle those issues. Regardless of your opinion of these issues, the reference group should have been regarded as mature enough to investigate and report those issues. That is sad. This is a good group put together. Give them the whole bunch of issues so they can come back and say: 'Of course, no way'.

I said before when the issue of dams is being spoken about, I certainly do not want to see the Daly River dammed - no, thank you. However, where do we debate whether you can have off-farm dams to store water that, obviously, we are receiving in the Wet Season - whether we can pump water? What you going to do with it? You are going to store it in a dam. Could we take 10% of the water at the top of the catchment - say, the Ferguson and some of those rivers and tributaries - to small dams and pump that down for the agricultural area without an effect? No one is looking now, and that is what is disappointing. If they come back and say: 'Stupid idea, it will ruin the river' - terrific. However, you have not allowed your community reference group the scope to look at all those issues. If they come back and say: 'Cotton, we agree with Kon - dangerous stuff. Put sugar cane in' - well, that is fine. But you have not even given them that opportunity.

I have to stand up here and say you are wrong. It would be nice to have someone else, independent from you and me, look at the same issue. But you have not allowed that, and that is sad.

I do not see a mention of gamba grass. I was at Jindare Station, where it is used as pasture crop for fattening cattle. I spoke to the manager and he said: 'We love it because it fattens our cattle'. I said: 'But it spreads'. He said: 'Yes, but we try to keep it down so it does not ever seed, but our neighbours do not particularly maintain their blocks'. I have gamba on my block at Adelaide River; I know how hard it is to control. If you do not have animals to control it, it is a real pest. It is down on the Daly - Jindare is not far from the Daly. We are not going to tell pastoralists that they cannot grow it; you would have an uprising. However, we have to start to put in some controls. Perhaps you have to be licensed to grow it. I am not sure if the manager agreed with what I said or not; that perhaps you have a scheme where pay to grow gamba. You pay \$2000, \$3000, or a \$1000 for a licence to grow it, and it is inspected each year to see that it has not spread, say, 500 m away from the property it is on. If you have done the right thing and kept control of it, you get you licence fee back - the carrot and stick approach. We have to start looking at policies for the beneficial uses of gamba and, then also, at the same time, work out what we are going to do about its spread.

I spent some time recently – and I will I talk about it in the adjournment debate - at the Top End at Butterfly Gorge, which is upstream from Douglas Hot Springs. I did not bring the photo which I have of gamba grass amongst the rocks in a little creek. I could not believe that gamba grass up that far. When it starts to get out into those parts of the world, I start to get particularly worried.

Minister, I thank you for your statement. I know I have had some criticisms, and I have asked you lots of questions. It is an important statement. There are a lot of people who want some development to occur because their livelihood is at stake. There are other people who say: 'Whoa, whoa'. Some of the Aboriginal interests are saying: 'This is changing; it is a bit much for us'. How do you balance those interests, because I do not think life is going to stand still; we move on? We have issues such as the number of people just visiting it - forget the farmers and the Aboriginal people who live there. There is an outside influence of a large volume of interstate tourists who bring their boats down and use that river; it is becoming more and more used. That is nearly outside the control of all the people you are talking about. It is changing whether we like it or not.

I welcome this statement, and I hope when we adjourn now that, perhaps, when you reply you could give fairly detailed answers of where these recommendations are at. If you do not have enough time, would you at least table some documents which highlight where you are at with some of these recommendations?

One of the most important issues that you need to tell us is: are you going to establish a Daly River authority to manage the area? You have mentioned in your report that it is expensive, but you do not say whether you are going to go ahead with it or not. So many of the recommendations in here depend on whether that authority actually exists. I hope you take those points to heart and give us a response next week.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Araluen – I mean Arafura.

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Arafura): Mr Deputy Speaker, you are looking for a short life, I can tell you!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: It is so easy to get people confused in this House.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Mr Deputy Speaker, just prior to the election, I was pleased to return to the Tiwi Islands to attend the very important re-enactment and commemorative celebrations for 300th anniversary of Maarten van Delft landing at Karslake on Melville Island. This was a wonderful day that drew visitors from all over Australia, as well as from the Netherlands.

Maarten van Delft's landing at various places along the coast of Bathurst and Melville Island was a defining moment in Australian history, yet it has been largely ignored by historians and, indeed, by education systems throughout Australia. When I went to school, Australian history as it was taught then, essentially began with Captain Cook's voyage of discovery along the east coast of what was then called New Holland. Little attention was paid to the very significant contact between Dutch mariners and indigenous people of the Top End that occurred quite regularly over many decades before British interest in Australia blossomed as a result of Cook's expedition.

As Peter and Sheila Forrest, who wrote the report on it, and have reported recently in their history column said: if the Tiwis had responded differently to van Delft's visit, it is a strong possibility that Australia would still be New Holland, and we would be speaking Dutch tonight. I believe that there are some in here who speak Dutch. The Tiwis demonstrated that they were prepared to die for their country and stoutly resisted van Delft's incursion, so much that the Dutch captain made strenuous efforts to befriend the Tiwi and establish good relations with them. He stayed in the area for several weeks, long enough to trade with the Tiwi and also, strategically, decide that the Tiwis had nothing of significant mercantile value to his masters, the directors of the powerful Dutch East India Company, the VOC. As a result, the Dutch lost interest in New Holland and the Tiwis were to remain as sole masters and mistresses of their land for at least another century before British strategic interest led to the establishment of Fort Dundas near present day Pirlangimpi. Even then, Tiwi resistance was strong and the British were kept as virtual prisoners at their isolated outpost for four years before giving up and moving on to less hostile areas in Australia's north.

The re-enactment and commemorative celebrations were jammed pack with fun, including Tiwi and Dutch traditional dancers. It was quite funny. I was asked to make the official address on that day, with His Honour the Administrator, Mr Ted Egan. There was plenty of celebration, and Ted sang in Tiwi with all the Tiwis and sang

with all the Dutch. Part of that re-enactment was the Dutch contact with Tiwi, and my sister is of Tiwi origin and my brother-in-law is Dutch. I thought I would just share that because it was quite poignant.

There was a lot of Tiwi and, particularly, Dutch traditional dancing. They did an exchange, and the Tiwis learnt how to do the Dutch dancing and the Dutch were doing the Tiwi dancing. There was a sailing regatta and athletic events, and a great day was had by all, including the Dutch Ambassador to Australia who visited and unveiled some very special Pukumani Poles that will stand as a permanent reminder of this very special day in Tiwi and Australian history.

I acknowledge the great work of Kate Hadden, on secondment to the Tiwi Land Council who, with the CDEP workers over on the islands, did a fantastic job of setting up all the bough sheds and areas so that the celebrations could go off without any problems. To the Tiwi Land Council but, particularly, Kate Hadden, and to Tiwi Island Local Government and their CDEP crew, thank you for hosting and pulling together this wonderful event.

However, much has happened since then. There have been many events in any one of the communities within the electorate on a daily basis.

I would like to fast-forward to 5 August, which was just under two weeks ago, when I attended the Tiwi Island Training and Education Board Graduation. It was the fourth graduation ceremony of TITEB which, all up, had a total of 77 students who graduated from full certificate courses, with a further 126 students receiving Statements of Attainment for completing short courses and for partial completion of certificate courses.

To date, 150 apprentices have been employed through TITEB; 45 of these have now completed their apprenticeships and 48 are in the process of completing. It is also important to note that 120 of the original 150 apprentices are still employed by various employers on the Tiwi Islands, and I extend my congratulations to all those who graduated.

Where there has been a lot of training and apprentices in many of our Aboriginal communities, it is certainly starting to pay dividends, particularly on the Tiwi Islands where we are not just having training, but that training and pathway is leading into full-time employment, and not CDEP for which I am very thankful. I am glad we are not training our young people to go into CDEP; many of them are actually going into full-time employment, which is something that is starting to prove quite a good outcome there. We

still have a long way to go, but this is a start and is certainly a great one.

This Saturday, I will be attending the eagerly awaited Gunbalanya Open Day, which is held every year in the fantastic community of Oenpelli. Members may know that the Open Day held in Gunbalanya has been held for the past 15 years. I encourage everyone to attend the event. Some of you might want to do a drive out to Jabiru and go across Cahill's Crossing and share in the fun and the activities with the local community. Entry into the community is permit-free; it is the one day of the year where they lift all the permits. It is like the Tiwi Islands Football Grand Final, which is permit-free. Key features of this year's event, as with previous years, include a football carnival, netball, scenic flights, rock art tours, cultural dancing, didgeridoo playing and demonstrations. Of course, a must is a visit to Injalak Arts and Craft, where there will be painting and weaving displays and locally produced art for sale.

On a recent visit out to Jabiru, I was delighted to meet up with Michael and Wendy McHugh who run a travel agency there. They were keen to inform me about the excellent tourism season currently under way at Kakadu. Michael was especially forthright about the Chief Minister's very effective and active role as Minister for Tourism, and was very pleased with the increased Northern Territory government promotion of the park.

I was also pleased to catch up with Sam and Robyn Nepia, Andy Ralph and Ronnie Westmead, to name a few.

At the moment, particularly in Darwin, it is festival time and it will happen in Alice Springs, I think in early September. Just in case no one heard me the first time, this Saturday is Gunbalanya Open Day. On 2 September, it is the Mahbilil Festival in Jabiru, Mahbilil meaning afternoon breeze in Mirarr, which is the local traditional owner group at Jabiru. I am not being biased, but the cultural content of both of these festivals has to be seen to be believed.

Mr WARREN (Goyder): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, today in parliament I am proud to take this opportunity to tell my fellow parliamentarians and fellow Territorians a great little story of personal success and achievement by some of my indigenous constituents of the Cox Peninsula on the other side of Darwin Harbour.

It involves a publican, his wife, and 12 indigenous itinerant men whose lives were turned around. These are people I am proud to call my friends, and telling you the story makes me feel very proud of all these people and what they have achieved. In their small way, they have shown how habitual alcoholism need not be a life

sentence. It is a story of how a group of down and outers have had the courage and fortitude to draw on their inner strength and fight habitual alcoholism and rejoin the workplace. It is also the story of the dedication of a couple of decent Territorians named Steven and Andrea Brown.

This is their story and, poignantly, it began on New Year's Day 2002, the first day of a fresh new year and the first day of a fresh new start for these men. Like many special things, it started so insignificantly. A group of unemployed, down and out indigenous men unexpectedly appeared on New Year's Day at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. They came to check out the pickings in the aftermath of the New Year's Eve celebrations from the night before. Steve Brown, the publican, and his wife, Andrea, were cleaning up when, quite unexpectedly, these men offered to pitch in and help. Finding the odd half empty packet of cigarettes was an added bonus. Most importantly, Steve and Andrea were so impressed that these men pitched in and helped, that Steve offered a couple of them casual employment from time to time, and this continued over the next couple of years.

The men, at that time, were itinerants or long-grassers, as they preferred to be called. Despite the myth, they truly wanted to work, but nobody would give them a chance because they lived in the long grass. Fortunately, Steve and Andrea are very compassionate people and they have had plenty of previous experience in training indigenous people in their business activities over the years. Steve and Andrea saw the potential of these men and decided to go the extra yard and explore the possibility of finding work for them or training them themselves. They chose the latter and decided to seek assistance.

This decision was not made lightly, as the Browns are also realists and were well aware of the potential pitfalls of training and employing alcoholics in a hotel environment. After lobbying by Steve Brown on behalf of these men, the Commonwealth Department Job Network provider, ITEC, came on board and provided this opportunity. ITEC formed a joint venture with the Mandorah Beach Hotel and arranged for a 26-week training and employment program for those 12 long-term unemployed Aboriginal men, under the personal supervision of Steve Brown.

They commenced their work on 28 February 2005. At last, someone had shown them some dignity and given them a chance. We must remember that the majority of these men had been long-term unemployed, some for more than 20 years. They had become totally dependent on welfare benefits for most of their lives. There was one lad who is 26-years-old and has never had a job. All but four of the men lacked any work skills.

They lacked self-esteem, basic social, literacy and numeracy skills, and their personal health and hygiene was generally poor, and most had a high dependency on alcohol.

Despite these shortfalls, these men certainly wanted to better themselves, and they were extremely keen and enthusiastic to complete their work training at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. It should be noted that the men were so keen to participate that some of them walked the 15 km from Belyuen to work each day. How many of us here today would walk 15 km to work to keep our jobs?

Initially, five of the men had lived in overcrowded houses in their community. Steve Brown consequently allowed them to stay at the hotel. These five Mandorah boys have benefited from staying at the hotel, because they got three good meals a day and they only had to share a room with one other worker. Out of the initial 12 participants, one very keen participant, unfortunately, passed away; one left the program of his own accord; and one other drifts between the long grass and a couple of days work a week, or returns for a meal when he is really hungry.

What is most exciting about this particular work training program is that, of the nine remaining, overall there has been an ongoing 90% attendance rate. In fact, three of the men have not missed a day's work during that period. One of the men even went to gaol, served out his sentence, and has since returned to complete his training. How dedicated is that?

Of course, there have been times when things have not gone so well. To say otherwise would simply be untrue. In Steve Brown's own words:

It has not been all smooth sailing because you need to deal with matters as they arise, and they are certainly different to everyday ones that most businesses have dealt with. There is respect and trust that you have to gain between employer and employees, and I believe we have achieved that. They know what is expected of them and, if they do not toe the line, then there are consequences. They have a favourite saying when they are trying to get something out of me. They will pick one amongst the group to approach me to say: 'Go on, try test him out', which usually ends up in laughter, a definite 'No' or a 'Good go' from me.

This year, the men received Community Development Program Certificates from Territory Tidy Towns 2005 for their efforts in yard maintenance at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. They have also received glowing praise from Volker

Mischker, remote areas lecturer from Charles Darwin University. Volker especially praised their knowledge, the practical experience they had gained, and their ability to relate what they have learned to others.

The remaining nine members will shortly finish their training. I am pleased to relay Steve Brown's message that, if there is anyone out there in the business world who would like to give these enthusiastic and loyal workers further opportunities, then please feel free to contact Steve at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. However, the story does not end there.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the legendary Kenbi Dancers performed and enthralled tourists at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. Despite their success, subsequent hotel management changes and other factors, unfortunately, led to the disbanding of this group. Some of the 12 men on the ITEC work training program were members of the original Kenbi dance group. They would often tell Steve Brown about the fun they had and the enjoyment they gave to tourists when they used to dance their corroborees at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. They made it clear to Steve that they would love to be given a chance to perform again. Once again, the supportive Steve and Andrea gave the idea considerable thought before agreeing to provide the support and guidance needed to reform the Kenbi Dancers.

The current dancers expressed a strong desire to revive and reinforce the traditional practices and corroborees for the younger generation, and to share some of their unique culture with the wider community. They wanted everyone to be able to share and experience some of the unique and vibrant Kenbi lifestyle as seen through their traditional dance, and to showcase an affirmative perspective of indigenous culture - a perspective that is not always appreciated by visitors to the Top End.

With the support of the Browns, the Kenbi Dancers are now performing two nights per week at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. Hotel guests from across Australia and overseas can now enjoy the half-hour corroboree incorporating traditional dance and music. Of equal importance is the opportunity it gives the younger generation of dancers to perform and participate in the corroborees. The corroboree dancers perform their magical and mystical routines on the white beach sands of Mandorah against the shimmering backdrop of the city lights reflected off the waters of Darwin Harbour. With the city skyline silhouetted against the starlit night, guests can kick off their shoes and feel the cool sand between their toes, hear the sounds of tidal flow gently lapping the shoreline, taste the salty sea breezes, breathe in the aromatic scent of driftwood burning

on the beach campfire, and let their imagination take them on a dreamtime experience. This is a 'whole of senses' experience and sends shivers down your spine as the audience is whisked away to a spiritual link with the Kenbi people, their homeland and their culture. The dance and music depicts the animals, tells the stories of hunting and family gatherings through traditional chanting, clap sticks, the hum of the didgeridoo, and the beat of thumping of feet on beach sand. It is a truly special and not to be missed show.

I would now like to make special mention of Robert Gordon, who is the last surviving member of the original Kenbi dance group in the 1970s. Other members of the group include Ross Yarrowin, Nicholas Jorroch, Henry Jorroch, Tasman Yarrowin, and younger generation members include Tyrone Mardi, Darryl Lane, Paul Lane, Simeon Bigfoot, Luke Jorroch and Clinton Jorroch. The Kenbi Dancers now include some ladies too; namely Lynette Fejo, and her twin daughters, Gabrielle and Karlee and, of course, Lizzie who convinced the other ladies to join in. Furthermore, young boys such as Clayton, Wesley, Reggie and Lionel often join in too. No group would be complete without its roadie, and Glen Morgan is in charge of all the equipment and is responsible for preparing the performance area. Finally, the story teller and narrator during the corroboree is Lyle Cooper, who brings a professional approach to the whole show and helps bridge the cultural gap between the performers and the audience. He is certainly appreciated by all.

Steve and a couple of the Kenbi Dancers hold a promotional stall at the Mindil Beach Markets each Thursday and Sunday, where members of the dance group attend and encourage Darwin tourists to take the 15-minute ferry ride across the harbour to Mandorah to see the show. As an interesting aside, the Kenbi Dancers decided as a group that they should set a goal for the money they raise from performing, and not waste it on alcohol. They mutually agreed that the group would travel to Melbourne and watch a couple of AFL games. Shortly, 10 of the dancers will fly to Melbourne on 27 August to watch AFL games live at the MCG and the Telstra Dome. Another three dancers are going to travel by ferry and holiday in Bathurst Island, as they do not wish to fly on a plane.

In conclusion, these are now a confident group of men who know how to talk to and engage tourists and locals alike about their corroboree show and their work at the Mandorah Beach Hotel. They enjoy telling visitors what they can expect to do and see at Mandorah. They are true ambassadors for their people and appear at the markets all painted up and dressed in their nargars. They are a far cry from being intoxicated

itinerants who once humbugged tourists in the streets of Darwin. This is now a group of working men who are actively participating in society. They have a dream of one day running and operating their own indigenous tourist resort or retreat somewhere on Darwin Harbour. From little things big things grow and I will leave the final words to Steve Brown:

These men have our respect and appreciation in the work they have achieved and they really should be showcased to other communities in the Territory by the various government departments and agencies.

Mr ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: I might just make a comment there, member for Goyder, my wife's uncle, Uncle Bobby Lane, was the leader of the Kenbi dance group, and their intention is to name that new road to Channel Point after him. It is just that you now have some Lanes dancing in that group. I just make that as a little comment.

Mrs MILLER (Katherine): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, it is a great honour to have a road named after him.

The Minister for Health this morning presented a report on dental services in the Territory. I was particularly interested to listen to what he had to say because, in the time that I have been the member for Katherine, I have had quite a few complaints from residents in Katherine about less than favourable experiences with the government dental services in Katherine.

I want to say from the outset that the complaints have not been about the quality of the services provided because, in most of the cases, it was the lack of service that was the complaint, with the exceptionally long wait to obtain an appointment. The most recent complaint that was received by my office was when a resident in Katherine had a dental appointment in February this year. She received a telephone call a week prior to that appointment with the explanation that the dentist was going bush. As the dental treatment was not of an urgent nature, the lady concerned was not unduly worried about it and the dental surgery rebooked her an appointment for May, which was still three months away. May arrived and, when the lady arrived for her appointment, she was advised that there was no dentist there on that day. She was just a little upset because it was the clinic that had made the appointment for that day and they said they had not been able to cancel it as they had forgotten.

The lady's appointment was then rescheduled for June. This is the poor woman who has had the problem since February. This time, she arrived at the clinic to be told that the dentist had gone bush

once again. The clinic had not contacted her because they claimed they did not have her telephone number. Well, they had her telephone number back in February to contact her about her appointment to be cancelled but, somehow, they had managed to lose it. This demonstrates very poor management, which is unacceptable. This lady has been treated very badly, and you can understand how upset she has been. As I said before, she is one of several complainants who have contacted me in a reasonably short time.

Many health card holders have been severely disadvantaged in getting dental care in Katherine and have been most inconvenienced. While there is a private dental surgery – Mario has been there for many years and provides an invaluable service to the Katherine region – there are also many people who cannot afford to pay for that service and who suffer discomfort unnecessarily whilst waiting to see the public dentist. In the instance of severe dental problems, these people have had no choice but to go to Mario, which has put them in financial difficulty. He, of course, looks after them very well with paying arrangements, but that is not the point. They are under stress and discomfort before they even go to him, so they do not need the extra stress of a huge dental bill.

It was heartening to hear in the Minister for Health's report this morning that a full-time dentist is planned for Katherine as of September. I can assure the minister that this news is going to be very well received, and that the new dentist is going to be very busy.

The next challenge is: will I be standing here in 12 months time with the same complaints? Can we retain dentists in the Northern Territory, and can we retain them in regional areas? I sincerely hope so, and I certainly hope there are incentives for those dentists to remain in the regional areas.

On another note, I wanted to address the Community Harmony program in Katherine. There was a pretty good pilot program set up in Katherine a couple of years ago now, put in place to address antisocial behaviour. Katherine was the pilot for it. It started with an intense group of people and comprehensively covered most areas in Katherine. I know that it probably started there because of our deep concerns about antisocial behaviour. Things have been progressing slowly, as these things do.

One of the really good outcomes from the project was the Kalano Community Patrol, which had been operating for quite a few years. They came under the umbrella of the Harmony Program and received, in the last financial year, \$0.5m to implement some strategies in Katherine to complement the police in addressing antisocial behaviour, and to take the load and responsibility

from the police. There were a lot of activities that the community patrol was able to take on under the legislation.

They have had pretty good success. It has been slow and they spent a lot of time training 13 personnel. Maurie Burke, a retired Police Commander, was the person who took these people under his wing and trained them really well. I was very proud to see them well presented - they were in strict uniform; immaculate at all times. They have taken a lot of pride in the work they have done in the last 12 months especially. They were trained so well and they provided a really good service around Katherine. There were some 17 camps around Katherine, which is down to about four at the moment.

Of course, they are very proud of what they have done. They spent a lot of time talking to itinerants and people who are living in the long grass about their options of going home under the Return to Country scheme, or going into public housing, which some have chosen to do. That, I might add, has presented another challenge in the housing area, but that is something we can sort out.

The really disappointing aspect of the Kalano Community Patrol's future is that this year, they have had funding halved – well, less than halved; back to \$203 000 – which, effectively, has cut the whole service in half. Naturally, some of the trained staff have had to leave. They are extremely disillusioned because this was something about which we had given them a lot of encouragement and which lifted their self-esteem. They had pride in their work, and it was a meaningful job for them.

I am deeply concerned that the program, which has been coming along so well - with just four little camp areas left around Katherine - is now threatened by the lack of funding. I would ask the government to look at that again, because the Community Harmony Program has put a lot of time and effort in Katherine. However, this one especially was extremely important. The Kalano Community Patrol is doing such a great job around Katherine, especially in the CBD area, and they definitely need government's support. We need it in Katherine to continue improving the problems that we have had, and to make a big difference. I strongly urge the government to look at that funding again and support the improvements to Katherine that we were having.

Ms ANDERSON (Macdonnell): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, let me put to this House some of the great things that have happened in my electorate of Macdonnell, and talk about people who are really showing initiative to carry their communities and their people forward.

I had great pleasure last week in attending the opening of a café at Tjuwanpa. Tjuwanpa is an outstation resource service centre for 40 homelands spread through the Western MacDonnell Ranges. Under the leadership of Conrad Ratara, Joe Braedon, Mark Fly and Helen Stuart, and guided by their CEO, a very capable and wise Peter Byrne, Tjuwanpa is really moving ahead. This café is operated by Quinton Kenny, a young 20-year-old man from Yakala homeland. Quinton, who was a CDEP participant, undertook business studies and a food handling course in preparation for the opening of the café. The vision of the outstation resource service is to support Quinton in developing the café business and, ultimately, to establish him as a sole trader.

Currently, Quinton has a steady flow of business from the workers at the factory that Tjuwanpa has built for the production of ablution blocks for homelands. This is a wonderful initiative, as it builds on the existing skills of the homeland residents, and is creating real job opportunities and skill transfers. Two years of planning and hard work by the Tjuwanpa leadership led to the construction of a factory that has been built by Tjuwanpa CDEP participants. This factory will shortly commence the production of the ablution blocks. I understand that they have won a contract to provide ablution facilities to a number of homelands, and that they are aiming to eventually create five full-time, unsubsidised jobs.

Next door to Quinton's café and across the road from the factory is a small art gallery. This operation is run by a young indigenous woman from the homelands. They are targeting the tourist market that drive through the beautiful West MacDonnell Ranges, and hope to go on-line to widen their market. I believe everyone in this House will agree that these initiatives by Tjuwanpa Outstation Resource Services are highly commendable.

I also want to bring to the attention of this House the dedication and hard work of Phillip Alice, an Aboriginal Community Police Officer from Ltyentye Apurte, Santa Teresa, who recently received a Police Medal for 10 years dedicated service. One of the first ACPOs, Phillip's commitment has been vital to the success and viability of the ACPO program. The Aboriginal Community Police Officer's job is important and very stressful. Not only do they have the law and order issues to police, but they are the prime cultural brokers between police and Aboriginal people. The police force would be well served by developing a career structure for ACPO so that valuable people like Phillip Alice can work their way up through the force.

Phillip provides strong leadership for his community, and this is visible everywhere you

look, particularly so in the youth program. I was delighted to see the number of young people who attended the recreation centre at Santa Theresa. This centre is open every night. It is run and supervised by the parents and is a model for other communities to follow.

Finally, and on a much sadder note, I want to pay tribute to one of our Eastern Arrernte elders, Mr Petrick of the Atitjere community, Harts Range, who passed away a week prior to the election. Mr Petrick worked hard all his life holding down jobs in the pastoral industry and with the PMG. Most importantly, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Atitjere Homelands, and was at the forefront of the development of the Atitjere Homelands, which became Arltarlpilta Council, incorporating the communities of Harts Range, Mt Eaglebeak, Irrerlirre, and Foxhalls Well. Mr Petrick was a driving force in this community, and his leadership shows in that his community is not beset with the major issues of substance abuse that our other communities have to confront. He was also a great believer in education and, at the time when there were no schooling facilities at Harts Range, he sacrificed his cultural life to move to Alice Springs to ensure his children - and many other kids that he and his wife, Agnes, grew up - received a good education. Today, because of his hard work, children are able to attend school at the community, and I understand that this community has one of the best school attendance rates, just as they have one of the lowest 'failure to thrive' rates.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, when he died, he left behind him a thriving community and many well-educated people who can and will continue his good work. This is the work of a real community leader. In closing, I extend my condolences to his wife, Agnes, his children, Eric, Rosalie, and Anthony, his extended family, and to all residents of this wonderful community that he helped build.

Dr LIM (Greatorax): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I speak about something that is dear to the hearts of every Territorian. I notice that, over the last few months, the *Northern Territory News* has also taken up on it. On page 2 of the *NT News* every day, it publishes a list of petrol prices across the Territory. Today, looking at the Shell web site where it gives spot prices, as well as the 28-day average price, Brisbane was 103.6¢ per litre; then Perth the next cheapest, 113.6¢; Sydney, 114¢; then Adelaide at 115¢; then Melbourne at 116.3¢; and Darwin at 116.6¢. That is the 28-day average. In fact, today, the spot price in Darwin was 120¢. Based on that web site's figures again, today's price, as I said, was 120¢ in Darwin; Parap, 121.9¢; Berrimah, 117.9¢; Palmerston, 118.9¢; Katherine, 112.9¢ - and to digress, normally the Katherine

prices is always cheaper than up here, I do not know why; and Alice Springs also - then Tennant Creek, 143.7¢; and in Alice Springs, 124.9¢. I wonder why we have not yet been able to publish comparative petrol prices for each of our cities and towns in the papers, so that people can look at the price of petrol being sold at a particular station, and say: 'I will go to that station and buy petrol from that station'.

However, I want to read some words that were uttered by a member of parliament some years ago. They were:

This is a very important issue for the Territory. Fuel prices are one of the most emotive subjects in the Territory - except for, I suppose, the arrival of the first rains or the arrival of the Dry. Fuel prices affect us all, directly through the price we pay to fill up our cars and 4-wheel drives and the fares we pay for transport in taxis, buses, and plane fares. Significantly, given the Territory's isolation, vast distances and small population, it also affects the price of just everything we buy, due to fuel's impact on freight costs.

It goes on further. The politician said this:

The Chief Minister, in answering questions on fuel prices, has said the lack of competition in remote areas is a direct contributor to high petrol prices. But then, he also says that high prices in Darwin are a direct result of too many outlets for too few people. In other words, if you have too little competition high prices are the result and if you have too much competition you also get high prices.

Most people would agree with the concept of too little competition potentially driving up prices, but too much competition is generally seen as driving prices down. This means that there is something else is keeping the prices high in Darwin. I wonder what that is? I quote further:

It's not good enough for a government simply to say it's all too hard when we know that everything that happens in the Territory has an underpinning fuel component to it - freight, your jar of coffee at the supermarket, the taxi you jump into, your car you fill up, plane fares, whatever. The cost of fuel underpins it all. And it's really ...

...

... government's slavish adherence to the GST. But let's look at what is causing the problem. Is it the concentration of

ownership of distributors and retailers in the Territory? Is that the problem? Are there some measures we can take about it? What about the federal fuel grant scheme to offset the impact of the GST? Is it working? Where does Darwin sit in the equation? Where do the more remote communities such as Bathurst and Melville Islands sit in the equation? What assistance is available to them? Are the communities actually availing themselves of this federal fuel grant scheme? What do we know about it? Or is it just pot luck? Some get it, some don't - who cares?

That same politician went on further at another time:

... this is an issue of great importance, it is a matter of public importance to the Territory. We are talking on this matter of public importance about fuel prices, about the state of business, about public confidence in the Territory, and what it all just comes down to is just how are Territorians coping?

Then the politician went on and spoke about high fuel prices that affect every single one of us. I quote:

If we are not being affected every time we go to the bowser, then it is the impact on everything we buy in the Territory that has to be freighted here. It's the impact of everything that moves round the Territory. And it doesn't ring a jot, does it?

I quote again:

Well, the impact of fuel prices is making people angry. It is making people angry every time they fill up their car, every time they have to go on a trip, every time they go to the supermarket, every time they buy anything. They know that in that high price we pay, because we have the highest cost of living, part of that component is the high cost of fuel. Even when you get on a plane now there is a surcharge for the high cost of fuel. Everything we touch in the Territory is impacted on by fuel.

These are the words of none other than the member for Fannie Bay when she was the Leader of the Opposition - a scant few years ago; less than five years ago. Just before the last election, she commissioned a review of the petrol prices which cost us \$90 000 - \$90 000 and what have we heard from the review? A big zero. Not one cent has been saved by this review. Not only that, nothing has come out of this review. The review was a political stunt just before an election to

pretend that this government was going to do something about petrol prices when, in fact, there is nothing they can do about them. That is what I am led to believe because the report has done nothing.

Why did the Chief Minister go around beating up petrol prices when she was in opposition and suddenly, when in government, decides to go into hiding? Today, the fuel prices are well over \$1. I can remember the day when she stood in front of a petrol bowser with a price 100¢ on it. There was a picture of her and the petrol bowser in the *NT News*.

Today, this government has done nothing, absolutely nothing, about petrol prices. If it was good enough for her to criticise the then government about petrol prices, I would like to see her do something about it. If she cannot, then she should be honest with Territorians and tell us that she cannot do anything about it.

Imagine, if the price of petrol in Darwin is 120¢, what it is in the bush. I shudder to think what it costs in the bush. If you are in Yuendumu, Kintore, or at Daly Waters, it is 139.9¢.

It is true what the member for Fannie Bay said about how petrol prices impact on everything we do in the Territory because of the distances we travel. I have not driven from Alice Springs to Darwin for quite some time now, so I have not had a chance to experience the cost of fuel along the way. However, I seriously believe that what this government has to do is take on the recommendation that was made when the food price review was done: that we published, on a very regular basis, comparative food prices across the region.

Coming back to the *NT News*, if we look at the prices that it publishes each day, it includes the spot price from each town from north to south and then compares that with the capital cities interstate. What I would like to see is this government, through one of its arms - whether it is through business or Treasury or even community services - survey the petrol stations in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy, Alice Springs and other towns in between, and publish the prices of petrol in the various petrol stations. What will then happen is that Territorians will go through the paper each day and look it up. Then they will decide to go to petrol station ABC or XYZ.

If the consumers were to shop around based on petrol prices, then it will bring in serious competitive pressure onto each of the service stations. Then you will see real competition. At the moment, no one knows and, to go around town searching for a petrol bowser that is cheaper than the next, will cost you more because you

burn up fuel, and have tyre and engine wear and tear. You would not want to do that. You would go to a petrol station where you vaguely knew what the petrol price is. If you think it has not changed much, that is okay. Alternatively, if you happen to see one that is a bit cheaper on the way home or on the way to work, you might drop in to pick up fuel. However, if the lists were published every day of prices at 10 or 20 service stations in Darwin, 10 service stations in Alice Springs, three or four in Katherine and Tennant Creek, what will happen is that people would know which is the cheapest one to go to. They would go to that because it is easier to find and they would drive there without excessive costs to themselves. That is how you bring in competition.

This government does not care, obviously. It has gone into hiding. There has been four years of Labor neglect. They have neglected Territorians, without a doubt. There is no concern by the Chief Minister whether people are paying higher prices or not. She, like all of us in this Chamber, has a fuel card. We get our fuel for nothing in the sense that the Legislative Assembly picks up the cost. Therefore, what does she do? She says it does not hurt her pocket so she does not worry about it very much. Others pay, and pay highly for the fuel they use.

It is important that government do the right thing and provide the surveys on a regular basis. I suggest to the government that it does it at least once a week because of the rapid rise and full of fuel prices at the moment, so that people will know.

Mr NATT (Drysdale): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, this evening I would like to highlight to the House the marvellous work the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, or the LNAC, is undertaking with indigenous people in Darwin.

The LNAC was incorporated in May 1998, and is a focal point for the Larrakia people in relation to native title and land rights information, as well as overseeing a range of activities, services and projects. As we all know, Larrakia is the language group name of the Aboriginal people who are the traditional owners of the land on which Darwin stands, and many square kilometres surrounding our wonderful city. They have a strong and proud history, dating back well before Philip Parker King sighted Aborigines fishing in the bay when he and his crew were surveying the north Australian coastline from Arnhem Bay to Cape Leeuwin in 1819.

I have been supplied with a document by the corporation which outlines the Larrakia history from that time. The content of this document is taken from various publications, journals and newspapers which someone has painstakingly

documented for this group. It makes very interesting reading, and really outlines the historical steps the people have worked through over hundreds of years from very early days, when they lived from the land and the sea, to today, where they have banded together as a nation to play a significant role in the betterment of indigenous people.

It is interesting to read a significant proportion of the Larrakia people's ancestors were severely affected by a smallpox epidemic in the 1860s, probably introduced by European visitors or fishermen from neighbouring islands. They have also overcome disputes with neighbouring skin groups; adapted to European laws and regulations; coped with being segregated and moved, on regular occasions, from camp to camp by white settlers; dealt with the forced separation and migration of loved ones and family members by the Australian government to places far from their homelands; and, of course, assimilation into a non-Aboriginal population.

There were two other significant world events coupled with these many years of torment and hardship figuring in their history; those being World War II and Cyclone Tracy. Of course, these two events affected everyone in Darwin at a time. However, the Larrakia people have survived all of this adversity and, I am very pleased to say, are working extremely hard to ensure their heritage is maintained but, furthermore, working closely with their family groups to make a difference to many lives.

I was kindly invited to a graduation ceremony conducted by the LNAC in conjunction with the Batchelor Institute for the Larrakia CDEP participants at their cultural facility at Karawa Park on Murphy Road, Marrara last month. Although I, unfortunately, did not have time to tour the facility at length due to another meeting engagement, I was impressed with the professionalism of the group and their enthusiasm to ensure their graduates were quite rightly recognised for their wonderful achievements. Greg Lyons from BIITE acted as the master of ceremonies for the morning. He did a wonderful job of introducing the CDEP graduates to certificate presenters; namely, Mr Isaac Brown from BIITE, Mr Chris Taylor from CDU, Mr Shaun Mahoney from the International College of Advanced Education, Ms Kym Gates, who is the CEO of CAAPS Alcohol and Other Drugs, and Ms Julie Barnes from Territory Palliative Care.

As I mentioned earlier, the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation is involved in a range of activities and projects, and the graduate CDEP program is part of those activities. The LNAC have around 70 people on the CDEP in areas such as office administration, land care

incorporating nursery and landscaping, Larrakia Aged Care Services, and Community Harmony project. As well as these activities, various other courses have been completed by the students, and I would like to spend a small amount of time naming a few of the successful students.

Achieving their Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management was Ali Bond, Dennis Dunn, Wade Hewitt, Daniel Lalara, Mark Mick, Krystal Noaks, Danny Raymond, Daniel Talbot, Dwayne Webb, and Trish Zammitt.

Achieving Certificate II in Community Service Support Work were Kerry Archer, Mona Banderson, Bianca Fejo, Edwina Fejo, Kathleen Fejo, Maurice Fejo, and Rachel Roman.

Achieving their Certificate III in Aged Care Work were Jocelyn Archer and Rosemary Parfitt.

The Parks and Wildlife trainees were Nathan Houlst and Robert Risk.

The Charles Darwin University Certificate III in Child Services was earned by Kathleen Fejo.

The International College of Advanced Education Certificate III in Office/Business Administration recipients were Jamie Lewis, Genaya Williams, Justine Williams and Tracey Wills.

The CAAPS Alcohol and Other Drugs achievers were Karina Amess, Travis Borsi, Jamie Lewis, Daniel Parfitt, Bill Risk Snr, Bill Risk Jnr, James Smith, Genaya Williams and Tracey Wills.

I congratulate these people on their achievements and wish them all the very best for their future undertakings. It is great to see people achieve a goal that they have set in their minds to achieve. I could see on the day the students were extremely proud of their endeavours, as were their families and parents - and quite rightly so.

I also would like to add another name to the congratulatory list, that being Kelvin Costello. Kelvin is a coordinator of LNAC and he puts an amazing amount of time into the corporation and its activities, and takes an enormous amount of joy and pleasure from watching his people graduate from these courses. I acknowledge his dedication and excellent work and thank him for the invitation. Kelvin is also ably supported by very dedicated staff whom I will mention at another adjournment.

The cultural facility at Karawa Park is gradually being developed and is worth visiting. The corporation is trying very hard to encourage tour operators to include the park on their visit maps, to

witness indigenous culture activities such as basket weaving, spear making and throwing, traditional dancing, as well as story telling and many other activities.

I was particularly pleased to read the article that appeared in yesterday's *NT News* about a group of at-risk youths who have painted a large water tower with Aboriginal art at East Arm's Vopak fuel terminal, situated in my electorate. This exercise was organised by the Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation in collaboration with the fuel company, and is a wonderful initiative for youths who are at-risk with drugs, alcohol, antisocial behaviour and petrol sniffing. Well done to Mark Moreen, Costa Edmund and Titus Bishop. Your dedication to this project is fantastic, and your art will now be displayed for all to see; something you should be very proud of. Congratulations must also be extended to Vopak for their partnership initiatives with LNAC.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I understand that there are a number of projects the LNAC are currently involved in, and have initiatives to employ others. This is a great story for indigenous people. Congratulations, LNAC and all those involved in the progress achieved over these past few years. I look forward to visiting the park soon, and reporting to this forum on new achievements in the future.

Ms CARNEY (Araluen): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I pay tribute to an outstanding Territorian, a man who died only a few weeks ago and who has been referred to as the epitome of the Alice Springs personality; a true giant among Territory pioneers. Lesley John Loy, known to his friends as Les, passed away on Sunday, 5 June 2005, aged 75, after being diagnosed with cancer only nine weeks prior.

It is fitting to put Les' life on the public record, because he was never one to boast of his virtues, even though he made such a significant contribution to the Territory. He did a lot of things for other people; he was a doer.

Les was born in August 1929 at Nichols Point, near Mildura, Victoria, to John and Amy Loy. He was the eldest of four boys. During his childhood years, Les lived on an eight acre block on which his family attended cattle. Through the Depression years, the Loy family survived from picking grapes, fishing, rabbiting and a little rustling of the next door neighbour's sheep.

The war years were tough on Leslie's family although he never really spoke of this time in his life. His father was enlisted in 1940 and was not discharged until 1945. It was during this time that his mother, Amy, raised the family as the sole breadwinner.

At the age of 19, Les married his partner for life, Marie Therese McCarthy, on the 11 June 1949. They have three children, Michael, Annette and David. They had a fourth child, Patricia, who was tragically involved in a fatal car accident at the age of 21.

Through the early years, Les established a long and successful business relationship with Reg Ansett. It all began in Les' home town of Mildura where he was working as a secretary at Mildura Bus Lines. He spent most of his days in the office and, on the way to and from work, he travelled along the bus routes picking up passengers as he went. In 1956, Les packed up his family and moved to Hamilton where he took on the role as personal secretary to Reg Ansett. He moved again in 1958, this time to Adelaide, where he took on the running of Ansett Pioneer Express for Mr Ansett. Remembered in Les' eulogy Michael, his son, said:

Reg must have thought a bit of Dad, as I remember Reg Ansett inviting Dad and I to a Test match in Adelaide in the late 1960s to watch the West Indies. What sticks in my mind was that Reg had hosties coming in with the sandwiches. He catered airline food.

Cricket was said to be one of Les' great love. He loved it all except for Shane Warne. Les was from a family of sportsmen, and remembered as a natural sportsman who could play anything. He captained the Railways Cricket Team in Alice Springs at the age of 41 and, in 40°C heat, took 7 for 14 in the final season. Les loved golf and had a much envied handicap of 6 but, in fact, could have been lower if he had only found more time to play more often. When talked into playing bowls with a friend of his, Keith Lomas, they took out the Territory championship. Les Loy was a natural sportsman.

Back in 1960, Les and his family moved to Alice Springs after being approached by a consortium to run Territory Transport. Les devoted four years to the company and is well known for tripling the company's turnover from £1m to nearly £3.5m. Les did such a good job that, when he left the company, he was given the car he was driving, the house he was living in and the Olympic Tyre agency. His son, Michael remembers Les' generosity in those days in his eulogy, and I quote parts of it:

Aboriginal artists like Claude Panka and the Namatjira sons came to his door to sell paintings. Les bought them and gave them to every travelling rep that came through.

It was not until much later that Michael realised that that was Les' way of putting money into the

hands of indigenous people when the country was still administering indigenous people under the Department of Aboriginal Welfare.

After leaving Territory Transport, Les finally ventured out on his own forming Alice Springs Mercantile Agency. He went on to buy the Neptune Service Station, developed a car dealership and, in 1965, took over Alice Springs Real Estate which became ASREAL and later merged with LJ Hooker. Les also became the Territory's first licensed real estate agent; the licence number earning him the title Agent No 1.

Les was instrumental in a large number of developments. His family say these were mostly unacknowledged except by those who knew him. Through his real estate business, he had a hand in almost every Alice Springs development including the Western Precinct, Yeperenye, the FAI Building, and Helm House, to name but a few. Les was a consultant to the developers of the Golf Course Estate, and instrumental in the development of all of Sadadeen, my own electorate of Araluen, Greenleaves, and about 80% of the Larapinta land developments.

Les was awarded with the notable Ken Waters Award for the most outstanding contribution to the real estate industry by an individual in 2003. The Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory said that it was in recognition of Les being a member of the institute since its inception, and for being instrumental in the planning and construction stages of various residential and commercial developments throughout the Territory.

Les became involved in politics and public office, becoming a town council alderman in 1980 until 1984, and was elected Deputy Mayor in 1981. A friend of Les' by the name of Hermann Weber recalled that he and Les campaigned under the banner of 'older men for Aldermen' with Peter Sitzler as their campaign manager. They lost, but Les got in next time and Hermann got in, in a by-election. Les was also involved in the formative years in the Country Liberal Party back in 1974.

Les was also well known as one of the Northern Territory's leading racing stalwarts. As a member of the Alice Springs Turf Club, he was Chairman of the club for a period of 10 years, as well as being a committee member on many other occasions. He is not only remembered in the racing fraternity for his great service to the turf club, but was actively involved in all Northern Territory racing and was part owner of an outstanding youngster, the diminutive but big hearted Doright, who won a Guineas and a Northern Territory Derby. The horse was originally purchased for a mere \$1400. It went on to win around \$240 000 in prize money. He was

also a part owner of the very smart Darwin-based galloper, Silent Majority. The Alice Springs Turf Club now honours Les' memory with the running of the Les Loy Memorial Handicap at their anniversary race meeting at Pioneer Park.

Back to 1995. After 35 years in Alice Springs, Les left and headed to Darwin on buying an interest in LJ Hooker, taking up the position of Managing Director. The move from Alice Springs surprised many people who believed that Les and Marie would never leave Central Australia because they loved it so much. Les' family believe what he did when he moved to Darwin was one of his greatest achievements. Through negotiation for and on behalf of the Larrakia people, he was able to extinguish native title over some of their land around Palmerston and change it to freehold.

Les was appointed to the inaugural board of the Larrakia Development Corporation. His son, Michael said, and I quote

He was quite proud of the fact that he thought he had become an honorary Aboriginal. This was the model that enabled the recent Larapinta land release on behalf of the Lhere Artepe people in Alice Springs.

It is important in the parliament of the Northern Territory that the life of Les Loy is honoured in this way. It is appropriate that the permanent *Parliamentary Record* records the life and the legacy of Les Loy. Les passed away quietly and without pain at the Calvary Hospital in Adelaide early in the morning on Sunday, 5 June. Les is survived by his wife Marie, children Michael, Annette and David, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Les takes with him so much of the Territory's history. One thing, for sure, is that Les leaves the Territory a better place for his part in it.

Les Loy was a man I knew very well. When I first went to Alice Springs as an articled clerk, I worked in the law firm above ASREAL. I was introduced to Les fairly early on, and Les was described as an important person in Alice Springs. It did not really matter to me whether he was an important person in Alice Springs; what mattered to me was that he afforded me great courtesy and respect and, as a newcomer to the town to which he had so greatly contributed, he made me feel very welcome. Les and his family have always been very good to me and I share with them the very sad loss of Les.

To all of the Loy family, and I am sure on behalf of all members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, I express my deepest sympathy to them and I say that your husband,

father, grandfather and great-grandfather will be sadly missed and never replaced.

Dr BURNS (Johnston): Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to talk about a very special facility within the Johnston electorate. I did know about it before I doorknocked the area; I had met Peter McGrath and he had told me about his venture along Freshwater Road. However, while doorknocking there, I made an appointment to go and see him. I met with Peter and his wife, Sue, who are running Feathers Sanctuary on Freshwater Road.

Peter gave me a fantastic opportunity to visit his property and see his establishment and the bird and native life that abounds there. Feathers Sanctuary is an exclusive style of accommodation, set on two acres of landscaped grounds in Jingili. Each hut has its own private glass-fronted viewing aviary abutting the corner of the room. The bird collection is diverse, both native and exotic. Guests are able to enter the Waterfall Aviary and view the birds at close range. Other aviaries are dotted around the property, and there are a number of wild birds that frequent the sanctuary.

The purpose of keeping birds at Feathers Sanctuary is to breed some of the rarer species held in the collection. Many of the birds being held in the sanctuary are not common in aviculture, and Peter and Sue will continue to add species. The landscape has been developed with the purpose of attracting the native bird life.

Endemic species of wildlife currently utilising the waterway and native food trees planted in the sanctuary are as follows. Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I have a list of endemic species and I ask that these be incorporated into the *Parliamentary Record*. Similarly, I also have a list of captive birds which I also request be incorporated.

Leave granted.

Azure, Forest and Sacred Kingfishers; Pardalotes; Rose-crowned Fruit Pigeons; Greater and Intermediate Egrets; Nankeen Night Heron; Pheasant Coucal; Burdekin Ducks (numbering between 10 and 50 birds at any one visit the sanctuary); Grass and Water Whistling Ducks (numbers up to 79 visit on regular basis); White and Grey Goshawks; all common species of native doves; Curlews (up to eight birds visit during mating season, attracted by our free-ranging sanctuary Curlews); Lemon-breasted Flycatchers; Red-headed, Dusky, Brown and Rufus Honeyeaters can be seen at most times of the day feeding on native flower bushes planted on-site; and Banded Rails.

The captive bird species include: African Grey Parrots (from the Congo); Dusky, Red and Green-naped Lorys from Indonesia; all NT native Pigeons, including Red-eyed Partridge Pigeons; Curlews; Jacarnas; Tawny Frogmouths; Banded Stilts; Green Pygmy Geese; Mangrove Golden Whistlers; Sacred Kingfishers; varied Trillers; Red-tailed Black Cockatoo; Friar birds; Fig birds; Fig Parrots; Red-headed Honeyeater (rare to keep these birds alive in captivity but these are doing well); Red-backed Fairy Wrens; Blue Wrens; Superb Fruit Dove; Crimson Chats; Gouldian Finches; Metallic Starlings; Bustards; Whistling Ducks (water and grass species); Burdekin ducks; and Magpie Geese.

Also ranging over the property are Red-legged Pademelon Wallabies and Sugar Gliders, and barramundi and freshwater crocodile can also be seen.

Peter and Sue are more than happy for visitors to accompany them on the daily rounds of feeding the many bird varieties, and provide an opportunity to learn about the native birds that are attracted to the area.

Once fully operational this Dry Season, Feathers Sanctuary has already attracted a large number of overseas tourists and Australians alike. It has been designed and built to accommodate guests seeking something different. It is quite unique to stay in luxury accommodation on a private bird park so close to the city of Darwin. This borders on to the Rapid Creek corridor that I spoke about earlier today, so it is a fantastic area. This is really one of the features why Peter and Sue actually bought property in that area; because it affords a certain feeling of the environment surrounding the creek, and they have done a great job there.

The interaction with free-ranging birds on the sanctuary fascinates the overseas visitors and gives them a glimpse of what the Territory has to offer. I was very impressed with Feathers and must congratulate Peter and Sue on their hard work in getting this fantastic place up and running. It was my privilege to have a cup of coffee in their house, which is a great style of house, based on an Indonesian style - very open plan. They have done a fantastic job there. They have certainly invested a lot of money, and are building a fantastic facility, very much enjoyed by tourists, both from interstate and overseas.

I would like to share some experiences I have had with the French community recently. On 7 July, I attended a reception held at the home of the Honorary French Consul, Ms Zoe Marcham,

where I was privileged to welcome the French Ambassador, Monsieur Patrick Henault and his wife, as well as Monsieur Robert Farhi, the Science attaché at the French Embassy in Canberra, also accompanied by his wife. I thoroughly enjoyed the very colourful evening, together with the many members of the Australian/Africa community attending in their national costumes.

The purpose of Monsieur Henault's visit was to present French awards to two long-time Darwin residents and to acknowledge their long involvement with the Alliance Francaise and the Consular Service. Mrs Marie-Benedicte Harrison received the high award of Chevaliere dans L'Ordre National du Merite, and Mrs Colette Lecul, whom I have know now for some years as a constituent of Moil, received the medal of Chevaliere dans L'Ordre des Palmes Academiques, which is the Knight in the order of the Academics Palms, for her contribution and dedication to the Alliance Francaise, the French community and the Francophones and Francophiles visiting Darwin. What a fantastic honour, but so well deserved for Colette's commitment. The two awards delighted the French residents of Darwin who, for many years, have appreciated the devotion and friendship of Marie-Benedicte and Colette.

Later, Monsieur Robert Farhi welcomed the crew of the Antarctic science ship *Le Du Fresle* and presented awards to 15 students aboard with certificates of merit. This was a unique event, and was the first time that scientific exploration ships have taken students on the trip to Antarctica to assist with their PhD.

On 16 July 2005, the second Bastille on the Bay Ball was held at the Coastal Marine Park on the wharf. The ambience started at the entrance, where guests were greeted by a brilliantly lit Eiffel Tower, followed by the Can Can dancers from the Darwin Dance and Drama Academy, who presented three very lively numbers, including one from the film *Moulin Rouge*. The food was superb and the whole evening passed beyond the expectations of all behind-the-scenes workers, who did a fantastic job ensuring the great success of this ball.

During the evening, my colleague, Kon Vatskalis, had the honour of presenting lifetime memberships to very deserving members of the French community, namely Marie-Benedicte Harrison, Collette Lecul and also Barbara Bagglely. Their work within the French community is greatly appreciated, as is their work in other areas; namely the Australian/Africa Association, the Cancer Council and Kormilda College, just to name a few. Later in the evening, the Education Coordinator of the Alliance Francaise, Elizabeth

Tinarin, presented certificates of appreciation to the sponsors of Alliance Francaise, and a fantastic time was had by all.

Tonight, I would like to speak about a real champion who has come out of the electorate of Johnston. That, of course, is Danni Miatke, who now studies and trains in Melbourne. I am very fortunate to have her mum, Linda, and stepfather, Ken, living in the Johnston electorate to ensure I keep up to date with Danni's achievements. I am sure we all kept up with Danni's achievements when we read the paper and saw the newsreels of her fantastic victory in the world championships. As we all know, Danni won gold at the World Championships in Montreal at the beginning of this month, during here international debut at an international long course meet.

Danni Miatke was a relative unknown who qualified fastest for the 50 m butterfly, amongst a star-studded field. The tension in Darwin, and at Danni's home, built up to fever pitch before Danni went on to win her first world record, when she claimed gold for Australia in the women's 50 m butterfly with a time of 26.11 seconds, a new Australian and Commonwealth record. Danni's determination is now renowned, as are her words:

I am so excited. I wanted this and I was on the blocks and I was saying to myself, 'It's mine, it's mine, I know I can do it' I wanted it, and I usually get what I want.

Great work, Danni, you have great determination.

The Australian Swimming Team went on to be the most successful at a world swimming championship, hauling in 12 gold medals, five silver and four bronze. Less than two weeks later, I read that Danni again hit gold at the Australian Short Course Swimming Championships in Melbourne, winning her first individual short course gold medal in the 50 m butterfly. She also won a gold medal in the 4 X 200 m freestyle relay, a silver in the 4 X 100 m medley, and a bronze medal in the 100 m freestyle, with more to come.

Danni's coach, Rohan Taylor, plans to move her into the 100 m and 200 m freestyle, and 100 m butterfly in the lead-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. I wish Danni all the best in her future swimming dreams, as I am sure all members do. We all look forward to hearing about her successes.

In March this year, two young boys in Jingili, 11-year-old Jack Anstey and 12-year-old Michael McMahon, took up a petition around their neighbourhood to the Darwin City Council because they were concerned that park equipment removed from their local park due to its

age and failure to meet Australian standards, would not be replaced.

The efforts of Jack and Michael made the local newspaper and the council undertook to discuss the boys' petition at a meeting at the end of March, where it was referred to the Community Services Committee. Council is still considering which parks will be upgraded in the next round and, hopefully, the boys will hear soon about the future of Darren Prior Park in Jingili which is, of course, in Gaden Circuit, Jingili, where these boys live. It is very commendable that young people these days are getting more and more involved in their community and taking it upon themselves to try and get action on projects close to their heart.

The fine example set by Jack and Michael was mirrored recently in the petition started by 12-year-old Zac Menzies to bring the Australian flag that flew over Darwin's Government House on 19 February 1942 back to Darwin permanently.

I would like to speak tonight about a young sportsman in the electorate of Johnston. I was recently asked to assist a young cricket player from Moil in his fundraising effort to play cricket in England. Tim Garner has been playing cricket through his primary school years and now in his high school days. He has represented the Territory on a number of occasions, and in this place I have recognised his skills for his representation of the Territory. I wish all the best to Tim. I hope to bring back a report of his efforts in England with a Northern Territory and Australian team. It is great just to know there are young sportsmen in the electorate of Johnston. There are young people who have real community spirit.

There are great enterprises in the electorate of Johnston. It is a fantastic electorate, Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, and I am very proud to represent it.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.