

Madam Speaker Aagaard took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION
**Increase in Standard Taxi Licence and
Multipurpose Taxi Fee**

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, I present a petition from 183 petitioners praying that an increase in the standard taxi licence cost and the multipurpose taxi fee be rejected. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Madam Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, this petition of undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory advises the Northern Territory government that we object to the proposed 15% increase in standard taxi licence costs, as stated by Hon Delia Lawrie, minister for Transport, to come into force in December 2007. It is unfair that the public should be asked to subsidise the \$10 lift fee for multipurpose taxi vehicles.

We, the undersigned, therefore call on the Northern Territory government to reject the introduction of a 15% increase, or any other increase, in standard taxi licences and that the \$10 lift fee for multipurpose taxi vehicles be subsidised by the government, not the travelling public or the licensed taxi operators.

MINISTERIAL REPORTS
Sports Policy

Mr VATSKALIS (Sport and Recreation): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report on the work that is under way on a comprehensive sports policy for the Northern Territory. This will be the very first sports policy ever put in place for the Territory and, this fact alone, makes it a very important document indeed. Of course, we need this to be so much more than simply a document, and that will happen because of the comprehensive research and consultation that is currently under way.

Several months ago, I approved a plan of attack or a methodology to kick-start the work necessary to put such a policy in place. This included a firm time frame for delivery, which I am happy to report will be completed by June 2008. To ensure that this important work does not overlap with the work of the Sessional Committee on Sport and Youth, a presentation has been made to the committee and the exchange of

information has already begun. The committee is happy with the framework, and they will be regularly updated on the status of the policy as it develops.

Importantly, a reference group has been established to identify issues. The reference group consists of key members from government and the sporting sector. These are: Steve Rossingh, Chair from Sport and Recreation; Nicola Jackson, Secretariat from Sport and Recreation; Benieka Lythgo, Secretariat for Department of Local Government; Rebecca Godden, Local Government; Fiona Justin from Department of Chief Minister; Annie Villesèche from Department of Health and Community Services; Maria Marriner from DEET; Pippa Rudd from Department of Justice; Pauline Polychrone from Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Simone Drury from Darwin City Council; Mark Blackburn, Palmerston City Council; and Des Friedrich from the Darwin Turf Club. I anticipate that a member from the sessional committee will soon also join this group in addition to a federal government representative. These members bring to the table a wealth of experience and skills. I look forward to working with them during the process.

The terms of reference have already been approved and a website is currently under construction. I will be publicly launching the website in the very near future, and all of the documents such as the terms of reference will be available for the public to access. This website will be accessible through a link from the current Sport and Recreation site.

Broad community consultation is probably the most important aspect of the policy development. I have recently approved the commencement of a consultation period commencing immediately and winding up in February 2008. This section of work will commence with targeted consultation with some sporting bodies, and then lead into open community forums for individuals, clubs, sport associations, and any other interested parties. Of course, we will be ensuring widespread advertising of the important forum dates. I will be urging everyone with a stake in sports within the Territory to become involved. In addition, stakeholders will be encouraged to have their say via the website if they feel it is more appropriate to their needs.

I anticipate this document will shape areas such as resourcing, elite athletic development, and facility development well into the future. It will be a valuable guide for government, as it will have been informed by those people on the ground who are delivering sporting outcomes to the community. This is a momentous step forward for this government in the area of sport and recreation. I am excited this process has already begun. I very much look forward to hearing what the Territory's

sporting community has say to about the development of sport and recreation into the future.

Mr CONLAN (Greatorex): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his report this morning. I acknowledge the work of the Sport and Youth Committee in developing this overarching sports policy. Sport is such a mainstay in the Northern Territory, and all of us contribute to sport in some way - or at least probably have. I know the minister is a big fan of sport, particularly the round ball kind.

I ask the minister where we might be with the test cricket match in Darwin in the Top End? There was a story in the *Sunday Territorian* about that. It is welcomed across the Northern Territory. Many people from outlying areas of the Territory, particularly in Central Australia, like to come up and see first-class cricket played in the Top End.

The Rugby League matches form such a great part of the Territory. We have had huge success in Alice with the NRL last year. It was the Panthers and the Knights and around 6000 people turned up for that game. That is a quarter or a third of the town of Alice Springs. That is a fantastic response by the community and demonstrates the support and the interest in Rugby League in the Territory. Unfortunately, we did miss out on the game in 2008 due to an appearance fee of sorts. Hopefully, we can address that for 2009 and 2010. I know Northern Territory Rugby League is concerned that if it goes too long for Alice Springs; if there is a four-year gap, the promotion and the enthusiasm and all that marketing that has gone into getting that interest in the game will wane. I am sure the minister is on to that. I welcome the report and acknowledge the work by the Sport and Youth Committee.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his report. Yesterday, I touched on the issue of looking at sponsorship and from where that sponsorship is coming when you are formulating the sporting policy. We were discussing the relationship between alcohol advertising and sport in the Northern Territory. There needs to be some work done on where the government can step in, from time to time, to replace that sort of sponsorship where a club would prefer not to have a connection with alcohol, as has happened with the Katherine Football League. That is an area that could be looked at.

We have been talking about all the issues in Aboriginal communities. We have been talking about employment and health. Sport is a crucial part of trying to overcome some of the problems we have in these communities. In many cases, the facilities are not up to scratch. Two months ago, I visited parts of the Barkly. I went to

Canteen Creek; it has a lovely dirt oval. The same thing at Alpurrurulam. They have two ovals; one has a bit of grass on it, the other has not. It certainly would make better for better participation if some of these facilities could be upgraded.

The other area that needs looking at is facilities for women playing sports. Locally, I know that at Freds Pass most of the sporting facilities, except for the Pony Club and Polocrosse, generally are for males. There needs to be more emphasis on providing facilities so that women can play a greater role in sport.

Mr VATSKALIS (Sport and Recreation): Madam Speaker, I thank members for their comments. Our government is very keen to support sports. Let us not forget that our government was the first government in the Territory to bring test cricket to Darwin. We have invested more than \$1m in TIO Stadium. I am glad to have the opportunity to talk about international cricket. Eight months ago, Cricket Australia called us and told us they want to upgrade the lights at TIO; two months later they came to us and said they are not interested in the lights anymore, they want us to invest money in the MCG. I pointed out that TIO Stadium is capable of having international cricket. However, Cricket Australia and Cricket NT wants government to invest in local infrastructure. They presented us with a 200-page report. We analysed the report and prepared a submission to go to Cabinet for consideration. They asked for \$6m; Cricket Australia is prepared to only put in \$1m, so we are going to have some very interesting discussions.

ICT Awards

Mr McADAM (Communications): Madam Speaker, today I report on the continuing good work of Territorians involved in the Information and Communication Technology industry. On Sunday, 10 November, the 2007 Northern Territory Information and Communications Technology Awards were held in Darwin. The awards are jointly conducted by the Northern Territory branches of the Australian Computer Society and the Australian Information Industry Association. The awards recognise outstanding achievements by businesses and individuals of the Northern Territory Information and Communications Technology community. They also provide a launching pad for further representation and recognition of Territory achievements at national and international information and communications technology events.

The recent national recognition of the Territory company, SRA Information Technology, is a great example of where the NT ICT Awards can lead. As the overall winner of the 2005 Northern Territory ICT Awards, SRA went on to become a

dual category winner of the National iAwards, and they also won the 2007 Australian Business of the Year Award at the national Telstra Business Awards. SRA have continued their success at this year's NT Awards by taking out the Department of Corporate and Information Services Exporter Award. SRA's award recognised their development of the award winning Envirosys application that provides environmental data management solutions to the mining, oil and gas, water, agriculture, construction and government sectors.

SRA were also the sponsor of the ICT Project Excellence Award category at this year's NT Awards. The winner of this category was IdenteArt which also won the prestigious IBM Platinum Award. Mr J Easterby-Wood, a director of IdenteArt, also won the Fujitsu Achiever Award. IdenteArt is an award winning Northern Territory owned company utilising industry leading technology to safeguard art, craft and antiquities against counterfeiting or theft. Since its inception as a small research project in 2005, IdenteArt developed its 'First nation art and craft authentication and certification system'. Originally designed for the Alice Springs indigenous art market, the IdenteArt system now protects the authenticity and ownership of arts and crafts worldwide. As the overall winner, IdenteArt will now go on to represent the Northern Territory ICT Industry at the 2008 National iAwards.

J Easterby-Wood won the Fujitsu Achiever Award for his work in developing the well-known marvin animation software as well as the IdenteArt initiative. In the past five years, J has brought major recognition to the Territory IT and Communication industry by developing the multi-award winning marvin animation platform.

Members may have also noticed in the *Northern Territory News* dated 14 November 2007 an article describing the creative and business partnership between one of J's companies, the Northern Territory Institute for Community Engagement and Development Pty Ltd and Microsoft. Originating in the deserts of Central Australia, marvin was developed as a tool to spread awareness of substance abuse in the Northern Territory's indigenous communities.

Marvin is now being used by the Australian federal, state and territory governments' agencies in health, education and justice sectors. The Microsoft Partners in Learning program will now take marvin to a new global community of educators right across the world. This partnership will enable marvin to be used to engage and communicate with communities around the world and, in particular, developing nations.

Seventeen countries have already signed up to use marvin in their education systems. I wish J every success in all his future endeavours and I will be keeping a keen interest in the development of marvin and the IdenteArt system.

As Minister for Communications, I am heartened to see an NT ICT industry that is proving to be highly capable in developing solutions for both business and government.

Madam Speaker, the 2007 NT ICT Awards night was a resounding success, highlighting the achievements of a vibrant, growing and increasingly important industry sector in the Northern Territory.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his statement. He, more so than any other Minister for Communications, has made reports in the Chamber which illustrates his enthusiasm for this area - an area that has been pretty much under-rated in the last 10 years or so.

In the Territory, we are blessed with those very clever people who do the stuff they do and contribute to information and communication technology, not only for us in the Northern Territory, but for everyone else in Australia and, indeed, beyond.

Marvin is a great success story and everyone in this Chamber will know of J's enthusiasm. He is an incredibly enthusiastic young man, as he should be, because marvin is very impressive. All of us know it pretty well. In fact, Peter Toyne had some involvement with it and continues to do so. I remember Peter always spoke enthusiastically about it when he was in parliament.

It is great to see that SRA, IdenteArt - all impressive - are acknowledged in the awards that we have, not just this year, but next year in 2008. We should also pay tribute to those people who work in this area who are not recognised by awards. There are an awful lot of people working, particularly in Darwin and, similarly, elsewhere in the Territory who are unrecognised. All of us are very fortunate that we have such enthusiastic people committed to improving information technology and who are embracing the ongoing effects and consequences of that. Marvin, in terms of education in the bush in particular, is something of which J and all of us should be very proud.

Renewable Energy

Mr NATT (Mines and Energy): Madam Speaker, last weekend's federal election result has shown graphically that Australians care deeply about issues such as climate change, the

environment and renewable energy. The incoming Labor government made a raft of promises that will have an effect on renewable energy in the Territory into the future. I take this opportunity to update the Assembly on the state of affairs with regard to renewable and alternate energies in the Northern Territory.

My Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines administers the Australian government-funded Renewable Remote Power Generation Program in the Territory. This program has been running since May 2001, and provides cash rebates to those who install renewable technologies, including power supply systems and water pumping systems in remote areas. Rebates approved and paid in 2006 and 2007 total \$2.4m and \$4.4m respectively. Of these, 45% of rebate approvals were for indigenous outstations and communities, 42% for pastoral stations, 7.6% for tourism, 2.4% for household, 1.8% for government operation and 0.9% for industrial operation.

The incoming Commonwealth government has flagged significant increases in renewable power generation activities, and we welcome that, as we are already significantly involved and committed to the promotion and development of alternative energy sources.

A good example of this commitment over and above the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program is our involvement in the development of geothermal, or hot rock, energy. The federal government has committed to providing up to \$50m to assist companies to seek geothermal energy. We are well placed in the Territory. The Territory has an extensive area that is underlain by shallow heat sources, some of which are expressed near the surface as thermal springs. This encouraging scenario has prompted the Territory government to approve the development of legislation to regulate geothermal exploration and development. Drafting of a geothermal energy bill is progressing. I am looking forward to the commencement of exploration for yet another source of clean, green energy.

The Northern Territory is well placed with respect to solar power. In addition to the installation of solar powered power generation at a variety of locations in remote areas under the Remote Renewable Power Generation Program, Alice Springs is now Australia's fourth solar city. In June of this year, the federal government's Australian Greenhouse Office approved a detailed business case for the Solar City Project, with total funding of \$36.4m. Some \$3.5m of this is to be contributed by the Northern Territory government. This massive project is subject to joint agreement between the Territory government and the Alice Springs Town Council on behalf of Solar Cities Consortium. The project will see the installation of

smart meters, domestic time of use trials, installation of solar technology at residential and iconic sites, financial incentives, as well as the provision of information and advice on energy efficiency and demand management. The Solar City Project will make Alice Springs one of the most energy efficient and environmentally friendly cities in the country, and that is great news for the residents and environment of Central Australia.

As I have outlined, the Territory government is well placed to facilitate projects committed by the incoming government. Another example consistent with the Rudd government's proposal to establish an emissions trading scheme is the research under way in the Territory into biofuels. At the Katherine Research Station, departmental scientists are investigating the value of crops, including soya beans and sunflower seeds, as biofuels. This research holds the prospect in the future of assisting the biodiesel industry generally, and particularly the \$77m Natural Fuels Darwin Ltd operation at East Arm.

The recent federal election has clearly shown that the issues of climate, environment and clean energy are on the table to stay. I am pleased to report to you that the Territory is well placed to participate in the future plans of the Rudd Labor government in Canberra, and to continue the work already undertaken to ensure that we retain our clean, green image and the environmentally responsible energy developments we have already begun.

Mrs MILLER (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for his report this morning. It is interesting that he mentioned that the new Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has promised all these wonderful things. That is really good. I noticed in one of the interstate newspapers this morning that he is being referred to as 'President Rudd'. It will be quite interesting to see how that turns out.

Research of renewable energy is extremely important for the Northern Territory. We have already had and realised the benefits of solar energy in the Northern Territory. Alice Springs being recognised as the fourth solar city in Australia is an absolutely wonderful outcome for Central Australia. Solar energy needs to be captured. It will certainly make a difference in many of the remote communities.

There are benefits that need to be taken up with geothermal. I know they are looking at geothermal in the top end of South Australia and have gone some way towards developing that as an alternative energy.

The minister knows that I am very much in favour of biofuels being developed in the Northern Territory as an industry. It also offers an

opportunity for our primary industries to develop even further. I thank the minister for his report.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, it is a good area to be involved in. It is very interesting. So much can be done in the future in this particular area. It is good to see the government is getting behind it. With the solar city in Alice Springs, and the funding that will encourage residents to take on different strategies, I hope will encourage more people to do so. Already, we have had people saying: 'I have solar panels on my house to provide X amount of power for my home, but I feel the government should give me more of a rebate, or help me more with putting it in'.

Minister, you know what I am going to say: what about water tanks? We talked yesterday about the Water Amendment Bill and how much is used. Are you going to give a subsidy to people who want to put in a water tank? Will you ensure every new home on the communities has a water tank? I can give you an example of a small outstation that has had four houses completed. They cannot be occupied yet because there is no power generation. This is a perfect example of where you should put in the solar generation for this small outstation, rather than rely on waiting to get a big generator that will need diesel fuel. There is still much more that can be done but what you have talked about today clearly shows us that they way ahead is going to be positive.

Go to the new Labor government. Get as much money out of them as possible to assist you in that way. Grab it while it is there and grab it while they are new and happy to please. I would like to know how much funding they will put into this particular strategy and how much the NT government will also contribute to ensuring that we have a clean, green society.

Mr NATT (Mines and Energy): Madam Speaker, I thank members for their support of this report. I am pleased and looking forward to working with the Rudd government in this area. The last 11 years under the Howard government did not have any plans or initiatives for climate change. I am really looking forward to working with the minister involved with this after the announcement today.

In relation to the water tanks, the appropriate minister is handling that. I am looking forward to the geothermal bill. That is a really exciting area for the Northern Territory in the future. The member for Nelson has a particular interest in the matter as well. When that bill is presented, we hope early next year, there are going to be exciting times ahead.

East Timor Museum Cooperation

Ms SCRYMGOUR (Arts and Museums): Madam Speaker, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory is increasingly involved in the development of museums in our immediate region. Currently, two exciting international museum exchange programs are under way at MAGNT.

The first of these programs was initiated by MAGNT through AusAID. MAGNT applied for, and was successful in receiving, an inaugural Australian leadership award fellowship grant of \$115 000 from AusAID. This funding has enabled three staff from the Division of Culture and Museums, Ministry of Education and Culture, Timor Leste, to undertake intensive training at MAGNT as part of a seven-month museum development and training program.

Mr Joao Fatima da Cruz, Mr Manuel Smith and Mr Abilio da Silva have been at MAGNT since May this year immerse themselves in the day-to-day operations of exhibitions, facilities and collection management programs. Their experiences during this time, such as working intensively on the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award and establishing a specialised collection database for the Timor Leste national collection, will be invaluable upon their return to Dili. When they go back, these AusAID fellows will use their insights and knowledge gained from their experiences at MAGNT to contribute towards the long-term process of planning and establishing a national museum of Timor Leste. I had the pleasure of meeting these three men fairly early in the piece and I am sure all members of this Assembly will join me in wishing them the best in their future work.

This project is now in its final phase with planning workshops drafting critical policy and procedural documents for the proposed Timor Leste museum being hosted by MAGNT. This workshop will be attended by Mrs Cecilia Assis, Director of Culture and Museums, Timor Leste, thanks to the support for the UNESCO Office in Jakarta through the Museum to Museum Program. Following the completion of the AusAID program, plans are under way for a joint exhibition of Timor Leste artefacts to be presented at MAGNT in 2008. This ambitious exhibition will feature the collections of both Timor Leste and the MAGNT, and will deepen the social relationships between the Northern Territory and Timor Leste.

The relationship between MAGNT and Timor Leste has been building for many years. The MAGNT was instrumental in initiating a salvage operation of the national collection of Timor Leste in 2000. In 2003, staff from MAGNT delivered training workshops in Dili as part of a broader

UNESCO training program. In 2006, under the auspices of UNESCO's Museum to Museum Program, a delegation of staff and Timor Leste visited our museum in Darwin and local Darwin heritage sites.

The second exciting and equally significant MAGNT partnership program is based in Kupang, West Timor, in the eastern Indonesian province of the Republic of Indonesia. The Australian-Indonesian Institute has recently announced support for a Cultural Heritage Collection Management Partnership Program between MAGNT and the Provincial Museum of Eastern Indonesia to be delivered in 2008. This program will enable MAGNT to conduct conservation and collection management training at the Eastern Indonesian provincial museum in order to develop collection storage infrastructure. The Provincial Museum of Eastern Indonesia includes magnificent examples of indigenous wooden carvings and textiles whose preservation is important for future generations.

The MAGNT has extensive experience of preserving cultural material in tropical environments, and also working in remote communities in the Northern Territory. Conditions in the Northern Territory are similar to Eastern Indonesia and Timor Leste. Through these partnership programs, such as outlined above, the MAGNT benefits from the enhanced knowledge of our collections and strong working relationships within the regions supporting research, collections development and collaborative projects that explore history and culture of our shared regions.

Mrs MILLER (Katherine): Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for her report this morning. It is very important to be always looking at new initiatives and ways to continue to develop interests in museums. In the past, the word 'museum' used to give connotations of old, stuffy, uninteresting objects covered with cobwebs. It is very good to see that turnaround has been happening over the last few years in all Australian museums. These exchange programs are extremely important for us to be able to have an understanding of other people's cultures and to see how those cultures lived. I thank the minister for her report. I believe it is a very important step forwards to creating an interest and retaining interest for other cultures and our museums.

Madam SPEAKER: The overall time for ministerial reports has expired.

Reports noted pursuant to standing orders.

DARWIN WATERFRONT CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 128)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation Amendment Bill is to amend the *Darwin Waterfront Corporation Act*. The amendments, which are minor in nature, clarify that:

- the maintenance of water quality within certain areas of the Darwin Waterfront Precinct is a municipal function of the Darwin Waterfront Corporation;
- the corporation has the ability to enter into arrangements with the Darwin City Council or other bodies under which the council or other body can perform functions of the corporation; and
- lessees of land owned by the corporation are liable to pay rates to the corporation.

It was always envisaged that the corporation would be responsible for the maintenance of water quality in enclosed bodies of water within the precinct as part of its municipal functions. The bill clarifies that this function is a specific municipal function, rather than a broader function of the corporation.

To ensure consistency between the operations of the precinct and the Darwin CBD, it has always been intended that the corporation outsource a number of its municipal functions to the Darwin City Council, or other bodies where appropriate. As the waterfront project has developed, it has become apparent that the act needs to be very clear about the corporation's ability to enter into arrangements to outsource its functions.

The bill ensures that the corporation can enter into arrangements with the Darwin City Council or other bodies under which the Darwin City Council or other body can perform municipal and other functions of the corporation. The amendment also makes it clear that, where such an arrangement is entered into, the arrangement may provide for the council or other body to exercise powers of the corporation for the purposes of the arrangement.

The act provides for the precinct to be excised from the municipality of Darwin and for owners of land within the precinct to pay rates to the corporation. The bill clarifies that lessees of land

owned by the corporation are also liable to pay rates to the corporation.

As can be seen, the amendments are minor in nature and simply serve to clarify certain elements of the act.

I commend the bill to honourable members and table a copy of the explanatory memorandum.

Debate adjourned.

LAND TITLE AND RELATED LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 131)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This bill provides a series of amendments to land title and related legislation. Land title laws are laws that need to pass the test of time. They should be designed to last because they regulate one of the fundamentals of a stable modern society: land tenure. However, society does change and with such change comes a need to reform land titles laws so that they facilitate modern living arrangements while maintaining, as best possible, the attributes of simplicity and security of title.

Property ownership legislation was commenced in the Northern Territory in 1976 taking the form of the *Unit Titles Act* and the *Real Property (Unit Titles) Act*. There were substantial amendments to legislation in 1986 to cover staged condominium developments; in 1993 to cover estate developments; and in 2001 for building developments. The result is that Northern Territory legislation broadly covers the range of possible unit title developments. However, the legislation has become fairly complicated as it contains various approaches to development and land titling issues. Additionally, some parts of it, such as those relating to management, are out of date when applied to large-scale developments. Accordingly, the government, with the support of the Territory business and development organisations, is committed to reforming this legislation framework to make the land title framework simpler and more efficient for users.

It is proposed that the reforms proceed in two stages. This first bill presented here today makes interim changes designed to bring about a few fundamental reforms. The second bill, scheduled to be introduced in 2008, will reform the entire process for the development of land for unit titles. It will be designed so as to cater for developments that are currently occurring.

The major change in this first bill is to amend the *Planning Act* so that the subdivision provisions of the *Planning Act* cover all land developments that lead to unit titles. Currently, some of them proceed as land use developments; that is, an application is made for approval to use the land in a particular way, such as for flats or townhouses. At the end of the process, separate titles may be sought but this is not necessarily the case. Historically, this has led to some land use distortions, with unit titles covering land developments that look very much like ordinary subdivisions, excepting that the area under title is less than would be permitted under an ordinary subdivision of land.

The second major change under this bill involves amendment to Part 5 of the *Unit Titles Act* so that new management modules may be developed for the various kinds of land titles developments. Currently, the management and the decision-making provisions of Part 5 are very much designed to deal with small scale residential developments. There is a need for a different management and decision-making structure for suburbs and multiuse development. The changes to Part 5 will permit regulations to be made setting out management and decision-making structures for the various types of developments. The regulations will also set out how decisions are made as to which management module will apply to a particular development. These management modules and regulations will be developed in conjunction with the industry and professional groups associated with the management of bodies corporate, as well as others involved with land development.

The bill also makes some other changes to unit titles legislation. These include simplification of the consent provisions which will be brought into line with the provisions in the *Land Title Act*. Currently, where a subdivision is proposed, consent is required from each person with a registered interest in the land that is affected by the proposed subdivision. It is often very difficult to work out whether an interest is affected by the subdivision. Under these amendments, the Registrar-General must not require consent of a person unless that person's interest in the land would be adversely affected by registering the subdivision.

The amended section 52 provides the Registrar-General with various powers for the situations where there is doubt about whether the interest is adversely affected. Thus, the Registrar-General has the power to dispense with consent if he or she obtains an appropriate indemnity from the person seeking the consent. Such a power can be exercised where, for example, the person whose consent is required cannot be located. Additionally, the bill provides

that consents are not required from service authorities. The *Unit Titles Act* currently provides that the consent of the Crown is not required.

In times past, this applied to most service authorities and utilities that held easements over land. This ceased to be the case when those service authorities ceased to be part of the Crown. The service authorities are involved in the subdivision process and, thus, are in a position to look after their own interests as part of that process. This is said noting that a subdivision approval does not affect rights under an easement.

Also, in respect of unit titles consents, the bill removes the need to obtain two sets of consents. Currently, relevant consents are obtained at both the approval and the registration stages. The bill provides that consents are only to be required at the time of the registration.

The bill also makes various other changes to the *Unit Titles Act* so as to provide statutory recognition of the fact that the subdivision and land development provisions are administered by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure rather than the Department of Justice. In essence, most of the roles of the minister in the current legislation are to become the responsibility of the Surveyor-General.

The bill also amends the *Land Title Act* so as to apply the consent provision to consolidations.

The bill amends the *Law of Property Act* by inserting new section 72A. New section 72A deals with the consequences on certain contracts if the settlement of a transaction cannot occur at the due time because of a failure of the computer or systems that underpin the lodgement and registration processes of the Land Titles Office. Subject to any provision in the contract between the affected parties, section 72A will deem that time has ceased to be of the essence, that the contract has not been breached; and that a party, by giving notice, can set a new time being a time not more than seven business days after the time when the computer is operational continuously. The provision is modelled on section 70A of the Queensland *Property Law Act*.

The key reforms of this bill will carry over into the new legislation proposed for 2008. That new legislation is intended to reform disclosure provisions, regulate management rights, deal with redevelopment of unit developments, and provide greater flexibility with regard to amalgamations of unit title developments. The detail of the amendments will be discussed with the affected industries and professional groups prior to the legislation being introduced into parliament.

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

Debate adjourned.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AMENDMENT (MUTUAL RECOGNITION) BILL (Serial 125)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the *Professional Standards Act* to facilitate the mutual recognition of Northern Territory and interstate schemes for the limitation of occupational liability. Professional standards legislation has been enacted in all states and territories to, in part, provide a cap on occupational liability. Such legislation also protects consumer interests by requiring insurance to be taken out and risk management strategies implemented. It also covers procedures for complaint handling and disciplinary action.

The *Professional Standards Act* was enacted as part of the national tort law reforms, with the specific objectives of improving professional service standards and limiting the occupational liability of professionals in certain circumstances. The groups affected by this legislation include accountants, legal practitioners, engineers, surveyors, and medical professionals. Under the act, professional associations can propose a scheme and seek to have it approved by the Professional Standards Council. The schemes benefit members by capping liability in the event of a claim against them in connection with the performance of their occupation.

Introduction of the Professional Standards Amendment (Mutual Recognition) Bill 2007 aims to implement a decision of the Standing Committee of Attorneys-General whereby states and territories agreed to amend their professional standards legislation to enable mutual recognition of schemes approved in each jurisdiction. Mutual recognition will cut the red tape currently facing professionals who wish to have capped liability when providing services in other jurisdictions. It recognises the reality that the work of professional practices often transcends state boundaries.

I now turn to the key provisions of the bill. Under professional standards legislation, an occupational association may submit a proposed scheme to the Professional Standards Council for approval. Alternatively, an occupational association may ask the council to prepare a

scheme on its behalf. The bill provides that a proposed scheme may indicate an intent to operate in the Northern Territory only, or in both the Northern Territory and one or more interstate jurisdictions. If a proposed scheme indicates an intent to operate in more than one jurisdiction, the bill requires the scheme be advertised in each of those jurisdictions and the advertising requirements of each of those jurisdictions be met.

Under professional standards legislation, the Professional Standards Council is required to consider a range of matters before approving a proposed scheme. In considering whether to approve operation of a scheme in more than one jurisdiction, the council must consider all of the usual matters including all comments and submissions, the effect of the cap on those who deal with members, the nature and level of claims, costs of insurance, and the implementation of risk management strategies. In addition, the council must consider any other matters specified in the professional standards legislation of the interstate jurisdiction, and all relevant matters in the context of each of the jurisdictions concerned. The council may then submit the scheme to the minister administering professional standards legislation in the various jurisdictions. They, in turn, may authorise the publication in the *Gazette* of the scheme referred to them by the interstate council.

Under professional standards legislation, a person who is, or is reasonably likely to be, affected by a scheme published in the *Gazette* may apply to the Supreme Court for an order that the scheme is void for want of compliance with the act. Consistent with this existing right to challenge, any person who is or is reasonably likely to be affected by a scheme in its application in another jurisdiction may also mount a challenge. While the professional standards legislation of states or territories is largely consistent, there are some jurisdictional differences. In recognition of this, clause 11 of the bill provides that a court may not make an order that an interstate scheme is void for want of compliance with the Northern Territory act on the ground that the scheme fails to comply with the requirements of the Northern Territory act relating to the contents of schemes; and may make an order that an interstate scheme is void on the grounds that the scheme fails to comply with the requirements of the interstate law under which it was approved in relation to the contents of the schemes.

Again, consistent with the power of a minister or the council to review the operation of a scheme in a home jurisdiction, clause 12 of the bill provides that a review may also be conducted to decide whether the operation of an interstate scheme should be terminated in the Northern Territory. Under professional standards legislation, either the minister, the council, or an

occupational association may initiate the amendment or revocation of a scheme. Clause 13 of the bill provides that the provisions relating to the amendment and revocation do not apply to an interstate scheme. Clause 14 of the bill inserts a separation section governing the termination of an interstate scheme operating in the Northern Territory. Either the minister or council or an occupational association may initiate the termination.

Other important provisions in the bill require that when an instrument revoking a scheme that also operates interstate is published in the *Gazette*, the minister must give notice to the relevant interstate ministers and, when the minister receives notice that an interstate scheme that also operates in the Northern Territory has been revoked, he or she must publish a notice in the *Gazette*.

Clause 15 of the bill inserts a more comprehensive provision on the duration of schemes to cover both the Northern Territory schemes and interstate schemes which may operate in the Northern Territory. Clause 16 of the bill provides that for the purpose of dealing with a scheme that operates, or indicates an intent to operate, in both the Northern Territory and another jurisdiction, the Professional Standards Council may first, in the exercise of its functions under the act, act in conjunction with the council of the interstate jurisdiction and, second, act in conjunction with the council of the interstate jurisdiction in the exercise of that council's functions under interstate professional standards legislation.

The model bill is supported by the Professional Standards Council and by key professional bodies including the Law Council of Australia and the National Institute of Accountants. This bill is also supported by the Law Society Northern Territory which was consulted during the drafting of the bill.

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

Debate adjourned.

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL (No 3)
(Serial 126)**

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to amend five acts which fall within the Department of Justice portfolio. The acts amended in this bill are the *Bail*

Act, the *Criminal Code*, *Juries Act*, the *Law of Property Act* and the *Powers of Attorney Act*. I will detail the amendments in the order they appear in the bill.

The first set of amendments is to the *Bail Act*. The first amendment to the *Bail Act* alters the definition of, and reference to, 'bail condition' so that it is consistent with the new provisions and conduct agreement created by the *Bail Amendment Act 2007*. The second amendment to the *Bail Act* clarifies that judges of the Supreme Court may hear bail applications by telephone or other means of electronic communication when an accused person is arrested on a Supreme Court warrant. Currently, only magistrates in the Court of Summary Jurisdiction can hear bail applications by telephone and only when the warrant pertains for a matter in that court. This has meant persons subject to Supreme Court bail undertakings must travel to either Darwin or Alice Springs in order for the court to determine the question of bail. This is a time consuming and expensive exercise for the accused but also for the Territory police working in remote areas. This new provision will enable the Supreme Court to hear bail applications remotely, ensuring that bail determinations can be made quickly and without the need for applicants to travel unnecessarily.

I turn now to the amendment to the *Criminal Code*. This amendment will restrict the availability of jury panel lists in circumstances where the trial judge deems such restriction to be necessary. In some particularly sensitive matters, there may be good reason to restrict access to the identity of citizens who are to perform the important duty of juror. The amendment is not intended to usurp the general right of an accused person to know who the members of the jury will be. There may be persons on the list with a legitimate conflict in hearing the matter and accused persons should be entitled to know and challenge their participation. However, in some cases it may be necessary to ensure the safety and impartiality of jury panel members by not disclosing their personal details to the parties.

The third act to be amended is the *Juries Act*. Currently, those over the age of 65 are automatically excluded from jury duties. This is notwithstanding the fact that many persons over this age are still willing and able to undertake this important civic duty. The amendment in this bill lifts the age restriction. It also permits persons over the age of 65 years to apply to exempt themselves from jury service on a permanent basis if they wish. They will do so by giving notice to the Sheriff of the Supreme Court. This can be done on their 65th birthday, or at some later stage, when the individual determines that he or she is no longer willing or able to fulfil this service.

The fourth amendment in this bill was brought to the former Attorney-General's attention by the member for Goyder, and I extend my thanks to him for that. This amendment is to the *Law of Property Act* and relates to rights of way, or easements, and those who use them. Currently, property owners have no right to recourse if a grant of a right of way is being abused. This may be through overly noisy passage, littering, damaging native flora and fauna, or even property damage. This amendment will enable owners to rely on the act to ensure easements are used in a reasonable and orderly fashion. Owners will be entitled to seek a review of the grant of easement if users fail to respect their obligations.

The final amendment contained in this bill is to the *Powers of Attorney Act*. This amendment provides for the mutual recognition of these instruments. Under the new provisions, provided that a power of attorney is properly created under the law of another state or territory, it may be registered in the Northern Territory and relied on as a valid instrument for use in Territory business transactions. This will ease the burden on many persons who have executed or are responsible for interstate enduring powers of attorney. If, because of age or infirmity, the donor of the power becomes incapable of signing a fresh power of attorney for use in the Northern Territory, the interstate instrument will now be considered a valid instrument in Northern Territory transactions.

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

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL (Serial 127)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The main purpose of this bill is to make consequential amendments to various Northern Territory laws; update superseded references; correct typographical and grammatical errors and omissions; and clarify ambiguous terminologies in the affected acts and subordinate legislation. None of the amendments constitute substantive changes in policy or programs of government.

The bill amends various acts by replacing all references to the 'consolidated fund' 'consolidated revenue fund' and 'consolidated account' with the 'Central Holding Authority'.

Following earlier amendments to the *Financial Management Act*, the definition of 'consolidated

revenue account' was defined in the *Interpretation Act* to mean 'the Central Holding Authority'. However, this was intended to be a temporary measure and it is now considered appropriate to update all of the items of relevant legislation to reflect this change.

The bill amends section 7(2) of the *Legislative Assembly Members' Superannuation Fund Act* to increase the time required for tabling annual reports in parliament from three sitting days to six sitting days. This amendment was made to align the time requirements for the tabling of reports with other statutory bodies which have a six-day tabling rule.

Section 99(7) of the *Firearms Act* is amended by substituting a cross-reference to section 102, which should now be in section 93D of the act.

The *Motor Vehicles Act* is amended by omitting the current definition of 'Road Transport Charges Laws' in section 5(1) and substituting reference to 'the *National Transport Commission (Road Transport Legislation - Road Transport Charges Act) Regulations 2006* (Cth)'. This amendment is required because the current definition of 'Road Transport Charges Laws' refers to the *Road Transport Charges (Northern Territory) Act* which is no longer in force.

The bill also amends the definition of 'configuration' in the *Motor Vehicles Act* to refer to 'Road Transport Charges Laws'. This is to clarify that the *Road Transport Charges (Australian Capital Territory) Act* of 1993 of the Commonwealth now exists in the *National Transport Commission (Road Transport Legislation - Road Transport Charges Act) Regulations 2006* (Cth). Additionally, the bill repeals section 13(1A) as the fees for heavy vehicles now prescribed in the *Motor Vehicles (Fees and Charges) Regulations* which provide that the registration fees for heavy vehicles are set by reference to the *National Transport Commission (Road Transport Legislation - Road Transport Charges Act) Regulations 2006* (Cth). Therefore, it is not necessary to make the distinction between vehicles of the kind to which to the 'Road Transport Charges Laws' apply.

This bill amends an incorrect description in section 198(2) of the *Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading Act*. Section 198(2) refers to 'the amount (if any) prescribed as a penalty for default', in the context of failure to pay an annual licence fee. However, section 198(2) incorrectly describes this amount as a penalty, when there is no offence attached; therefore, it cannot be a penalty, rather it is a fee. The proposed amendment removes the words 'as a penalty' to provide that the section reads 'the amount (if any) prescribed for default'.

There are other amendments made by the bill which are of a very minor nature and are generally self-explanatory.

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

Debate adjourned.

BONAPARTE GAS PIPELINE (SPECIAL PROVISIONS) BILL (Serial 119)

Continued from 18 October 2007.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the opposition supports this bill, which is designed to remove possible legal impediments to the construction of the pipeline and, of course, that should be supported. It shores up who is covered by the Sacred Site Certificates, and access to roads and waterways for the purpose of allowing a pipeline to cross those obstacles. It also allows access to, and the power to create easements over, pastoral leases. Construction may present some irritation to pastoralists; however, easements, unless they run through homesteads, should not present serious threats to the pastoral properties affected. The pipeline will also require the use of local materials. These amendments will enable the minister to permit the extraction of minerals without having to go through the usual advertising process. This makes sense and it is supported.

Madam Speaker, with those comments I am not sure that much is gained by me adding much more.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I also support the Bonaparte Gas Pipeline (Special Provisions) Bill. I thank the minister for the briefing we had on this particular matter.

Some of the concerns that I had were in relation to the environmental protections because, on reading the second reading speech, it was not clear what environmental protections would be required for the construction of this gas pipeline. There are also issues in relation to permission to go through pastoral land and Aboriginal land. The good thing that came out of this briefing was that it appears that those areas of concern are covered under the licence. The licence was developed from an environmental impact statement which was put out before construction was to commence.

That was the means by which protection could be given to waterways and roadways, as well as pastoral properties and Aboriginal land. That was something that should actually have been put into the second reading speech, because people will read that speech and say, 'Yes, this is all about

ensuring the construction of this pipeline goes ahead smoothly and efficiently', as we all want. However, it really does not say in that second reading speech how normal concerns about environmental damage and respect for Aboriginal land and pastoral properties would also be affected when cutting across roads and, I presume, it might even cut across the railway line - I am not sure. It may not cut across the railway line. They are the important things that you probably should have mentioned in the second reading speech because, at that time, the Environment Centre also raised concerns regarding what the environmental protections were. If that had been mentioned in the second reading speech, that would have helped.

I have a copy of the licence, and it talks about the environmental impact. It relates to simple things such as: all the structures and facilities, survey markings, other related infrastructure must be of a temporary nature; the licensee must not construct new vehicle tracks unless unavoidable; the licensee must take such steps as reasonably practicable to prevent the spread of noxious weeds by washing the vehicles down; the licensee must take steps as reasonably practicable to minimise disturbances to the soil, rocks, rock formations, creeks and watercourses; and they also must take precautions about possible contamination of underground and surface waters. It also has what I think is a good clause under Environmental Rehabilitation which says that following soils disturbance, the licensee must replace topsoil as near as possible to its original profile and contour and, of course, the licensee must remove all rubbish.

There are areas which are written into the licence, and I presume the licence is enforceable so that if they do not do that, they can be in trouble. There are also complaint mechanisms in relation to native title. There are the normal things such as the requirement for insurance and a range of general principles in this as well. If I had not known these conditions were in the licence, I probably would have said that I would not support this bill but, as I said, after the briefing it was explained to me that this was in the licence which I have here. Therefore, in that case, Madam Speaker, I support the bill.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I genuinely thank the members opposite for their support. This is critically important legislation regarding the continued economic growth of the Territory.

The pipeline that will snake its way to Darwin from the Blacktip gas field is another symbol of the massive progress and development of our economy over the last six years. Not only will this pipeline deliver energy to the Power and Water

Corporation, it will deliver continued prosperity to the Territory in the future. It is yet another example of the push by the government to broaden and diversify our economy.

As the member for Fannie Bay indicated in her second reading speech, this bill is designed to facilitate the establishment of this critical pipeline, and it is not an unusual bill when the building of pipelines occurs. Territory laws do apply, and I stress that. However, some modifications need to occur to guarantee certain rights to the pipeline. The bill creates statutory rights in relation to road and waterway crossings. These rights are required to maintain continuity of the pipeline corridor. It creates a mechanism to enable authority certificates issued under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act* in connection with the Bonaparte gas pipeline to be relied upon by the project participants, including contractors, subject to the same conditions whether the project participants were the applicant or not. This mechanism allows future owners of a pipeline to have the benefit of, and the obligations imposed by, the authority certificate.

The bill removes the advertising objection period for the granting of an extract mineral permit or licence under the *Mining Act* for the benefit of the Bonaparte gas pipeline. Finally, the bill provides that the pipeline corridor is exempt from subdivision requirements of the *Planning Act*. The bill does not throw out environmental laws and regulations.

I thank honourable members for their comments and support. I move the bill be now read a second time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**JUSTICE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL (No 2)
(Serial 122)**

Continued from 18 October 2007

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I will be brief. I note that there are some amendments. I should state that the opposition supports this bill as well as the amendments. The reasons why this bill makes its way into this place today were outlined in the former Attorney-General's second reading speech. It makes changes to several pieces of legislation or bills to be read cognate.

This legislation changes the *Construction Contracts (Security of Payments) Act* and allows for an extension of time. The changes are straightforward and supportable. An extension to 90 days, in particular, just makes commonsense.

Criminal Property Forfeiture Act: although changes to time lines are interesting, we are not sure that the changes are going to achieve what is intended. However, we are prepared to support the change in any event. I do not propose to go into it because the changes are going to be made and we support them. We should state that our expectation is that there may need to be an amendment down the track. If we are wrong on that, that is fine. I can assure you that the opposition is not losing any sleep in relation to it.

The other change, a third amendment, is to the *Legal Profession Act*. The amendments give effect to changes in the *Criminal Property Forfeiture Act* in relation to lodgement of costs and decisions, and so on. They are supportable. Equally, the amendments to the *Construction Contracts (Security of Payments) Act* are supportable. Finally, the amendment to the *Victims of Crime Assistance Act* is supportable for reasons which are obvious.

Minister, we note that the reasons for the bill were really very neatly outlined by the former Attorney-General and we support the bill.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her support. Yes, you are quite right. The former Attorney-General well and truly did his job on this one. Let us move to the committee stage.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 26, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 26A:

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 24 to insert a new clause 26A:

After clause 26, in Part 4

Insert

26A New section 676A

After section 676

Insert

676A Rule-making power

- (1) The Disciplinary Tribunal may make rules for its practice and procedure.
- (2) The rules may provide for the giving of a notice to a person to appear at a hearing of the Tribunal to give evidence or produce a document or other thing.

Amendment agreed to.

New clause 26A agreed to.

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

Bill reported with amendments; report adopted.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

MOTION

Reorder of Government Business

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2006-07 be brought on forthwith.

Ms Carney: Now?

Ms LAWRIE: We are just reordering. That is all.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, I am not sure that we are able to agree or disagree, but for the sake of the *Parliamentary Record* I protest on the obvious basis. We have Whips representing both the government and the opposition. Clearly, something has broken down from the government's side ...

Ms Lawrie: No, no.

Ms CARNEY: Clearly, something has broken down from the government's side. Unless the minister is flying solo and has reordered the agenda, we ask that, in your private discussions with both Whips, we ensure there is open and effective communication. It so happens that I have my TAFR speech here. The member for Blain is, in fact, shadow Treasurer, and he was going to go first. This is an inconvenience. I record the protest in those terms and ask that you note it accordingly.

I wonder whether the minister could indicate, so that my colleagues and I can get ready for the

next one, what is intended to be the next item of business so that we can prepare for it?

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Yes, for clarification for the Leader of the Opposition, I can advise that following the debate on the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, I expect to go on with debate on the Police Administration Amendment.

Ms Carney: Is that all for today?

Ms LAWRIE: Following the Police Administration Amendment, we will then go back to following the order of the Notice Paper, to debate on the Domestic and Family Violence Bill.

Ms Carney: The others?

Ms LAWRIE: That is the debate for today.

Ms Carney: Thank you.

Ms LAWRIE: There will be a tabled report later, and the MPI, as you know.

Motion agreed to.

MOTION

Note Paper – Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2006-07

Continued from 18 October 2007.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, today, significantly earlier than expected, I respond to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report for the period of 2006-07.

There is nothing more irritating in the parliament than to hear the former Treasurer – and I look forward to seeing tomorrow who is the next Treasurer, and it might even be the member for Sanderson; that would be, in my view, alarming. However, the member for Sanderson wants the job so, no doubt, he will follow the form of the previous Treasurer and bang on and on about the government's so-called fiscal restraint when, in fact, they have shown none whatsoever. I should say that the former Treasurer was many things, but at least he did not get drunk at cricket matches and make advances towards women.

Whoever the next Treasurer is going to be, they need to be reasonably bright, because they make important decisions for the future of the Northern Territory. I am not certain whether the next Treasurer – whoever that might be, presumably it is someone low down on the backbench, has ever read a Treasurer's Annual Financial Report or statement. One wonders whether they have actually read the budget documents. I have.

When I came to the parliament, I did not know budget documents at all. I was in private practice. My approach was to ring my accountant and ask: 'Am I making money?', because that was my accountant's job. So, in this job, I have had to learn a great deal about many things but, in particular, Treasury matters. They are – and I believe it would be acknowledged by both sides – complicated. Particularly in the parliament, we need to have an understanding of those matters, and they are not easy to understand.

However, parroting the lines is something that, no doubt, a future Treasurer from the government side will be able to do. However, we take this opportunity of asking, whoever it is, can they actually understand what they are talking about because, otherwise, the Territory is not in safe hands.

In any event, turning to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, we make the following comments.

The income for the Territory in 2000-01 was \$2.2bn, and the income for the last financial year was around \$3.3bn. On the back of this, the government has been able to return modest surpluses and has been able to put some money into the ballooning superannuation debt that the government carries. The former Treasurer has done the fiscal equivalent of standing in a rainstorm, and now he is bragging about getting wet. What the former Treasurer has not addressed are the structural issues which face this government, not the least of which is the overall debt situation the government has on its books. The former Treasurer often commented about the financial situation he had inherited from the former CLP government. I can tell you that the government struggled with the income it had at the time, built on a redundant taxation system that was out of step with the rest of the world, a taxation system that was aggressively defended by the Australian Labor Party all over the country and, indeed, in the Territory.

The GST has been the main source of the significant increase in revenue. We, of course, have own source revenue, but the GST windfall has been incredible, and significantly more than this Labor government expected and, I think it can be fairly said, significantly more than pretty much anyone expected. So they have had a lot of money, Madam Speaker.

It was easy, therefore, for the former Treasurer who, by his own admission, admitted he was not very good at economic stuff, to berate the former CLP government for being poor fiscal managers and, yet, in the next breath demand to know why the CLP government did not spend more on a

range of areas across the Territory. Now, this government has significantly more money - significantly more money. Oh, what an opportunity to have an extra \$1bn in a collective back pocket - an opportunity never had by any government in the Territory's history. Therefore, when government ministers say they are doing this and they are doing that - so you should be spending that money. You should be recruiting more police and improving the health system. With an extra \$1bn you would be very negligent, indeed, if you did not spend it appropriately.

We argue with one another about where the priorities are, but I do not think ministers of government should puff themselves up too much and say, 'Aren't we great fiscal managers?' when, in fact, the government is spending the money it has received as a result of an extra \$1bn a year, primarily from a revenue source that they vehemently opposed.

In any event, for the former Treasurer to argue that the CLP was not a good economic manager in government, and whine that they did not spend enough in the same breath and, then, pat himself on the back for being - in his own mind at least - a good Treasurer is bizarre when one considers the additional revenue he has received.

The question has to be asked: why is it that the government and the former Treasurer - each and every one on the other side - would call the government good fiscal managers? The reason is simple. It is because they are bound by the same rules that govern every jurisdiction in the nation. Several elements need to be considered when we talk about state level finance. For example, the operation of the uniform presentation framework means that all governments have the same reporting standards. It is as easy to read the federal budget as it is to read the Territory budget, the Tasmanian budget, or the Victorian budget. It has long been accepted as a truism in accounting that the chosen accounting methodology does have an effect on budgetary policy. This means that they have the same framework in place as every other jurisdiction - the old comparing apples with oranges line. They abide by the same sets of rules and they operate in the same fashion as other jurisdictions.

More importantly, because this government has had the enormous hit of GST plus local taxation revenue, it has, as I said, been well cashed up. They have proudly boasted - and from public perspective, I can understand why - that they have increased spending in a range of areas. They will continue to do so, but we will continue to remind Territorians of the additional money that they have received. You have to ask though, why it is that people are still being treated on hospital trolleys at RDH; why it is

that the extra 200 police on the beat promised by government has not materialised. You have to wonder why it is that we have the high rate of crime and gang activity on our streets around the Territory but, particularly in Darwin, when the government has had so much money that could have been spent in order to minimise crime. It is one thing to spend; it is another to achieve results.

It is important for us to pause and look at how various departments operate. Of course, even some of the newer members will understand that that is the process we embark upon in our estimates process. The first observation worth making in relation to Health is that I recently heard the Health Minister - or the former Health Minister maybe - say that he was coming in on budget. Yes, sort of. Surely, after an 80% raise over a couple of years, that should not be too hard. Health has come in on its 2006 appropriation, but the operating statement reveals a \$12m deficit caused by a deterioration in accumulated funds. That figure is now approaching \$100m since 2001, and the reason is primarily caused by depreciation being listed in the operating statement ...

Dr Burns: Speak to the shadow; he got a briefing about it.

Ms CARNEY: ... as a negative accumulation funds position.

Dr Burns: Understand it.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: I do not know why you are getting excited ...

Dr Burns: I am not getting excited. You just do not understand.

Ms CARNEY: ... you were the one, I am not sure if I have it here, you were the one. Well, hello, you have just joined us, Dr Burns. Good on you. You were the one who said in this place on 30 November 2005, two years ago almost exactly:

The Leader of the Opposition has been talking about a \$100m blow-out. This is all part of budgetary processes.

All part of the budgetary process - a \$100m blow-out? Your former Treasurer admitted to not knowing very much.

Ms Lawrie: Calm down, do not get hysterical.

Ms CARNEY: You should have a word, Leader of Government Business, and you have not distinguished yourself in any way shape or form in the three days we have been sitting here. You need to tell your little mate over there that if

he wants to contribute to a debate, he can have his turn rather than hurling whatever he regards as his best shot across the Chamber. You lot have been a rabble this week - an absolute rabble. At the end of it, you need to regroup and to get some of the old discipline back. In any event, I hope I have made my point, minister. In any event ...

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, can you just pause while I acknowledge these students in the gallery. Honourable members, I advise you of the presence in the gallery of Year 7 Marrara Christian School students accompanied by Anna Clark. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So sooner or later, that depreciation issue will have to be attended to. Allowing it to roll out and accumulate from one budget to the next simply reflects an indifferent - some would say cavalier - attitude towards the asset base of the Health department. In short, expenditure matched appropriation but there was nothing left over to deal with depreciating assets, and that position has deteriorated over the last six years. There can be no doubt about it.

Also an issue in Health is reflected in its annual report. Twenty-five percent or thereabouts of Health staff are administrators, not including executives - and they add another 2%. That means that for every three nurses in the field there is one admin staffer. What do they all do and what are they all needed for is the obvious question which, indeed, is being asked by people outside this building.

In discussions with the private sector in health delivery down south, it was revealed recently that they manage with 6% administrative staff. While I understand that the Territory is a unique jurisdiction, we nevertheless struggle to understand how that 25% figure could be considered to be efficient. The former Treasurer has been mindful of the issue because he said that he knows he needs to reduce the size of the public service. He said that he would go he if he did not manage it. Well, he went he on Monday morning, Madam Speaker. He went he all right. He said that he wanted to pack up his bat and ball and sit on the backbench. One wonders whether we will hear a pronouncement from the next Treasurer, whoever that might be, as to whether they will support the former Treasurer's remarks to reduce the size of the public service. I know ministers opposite are aware of this. We know it is raised by

a number of key organisations - I think the Chamber of Commerce is one. We know that there are issues and we hope that the new Treasurer is able to address that issue. In fact, we might specifically ask him about it at the relevant time.

Rather than achieve a reduction in the size of the public service, which the former Treasurer said would be by attrition, what we have seen this government do is add to the senior or executive level of the public service. I cannot remember, but a figure somewhere in my head says that public servants at the executive level have increased by about 38%; if I am wrong on that I stand to be corrected. However, there has been a significant increase in senior executive public servants. It used to be in the Northern Territory that when you looked at a government department's organisational structure, there were a couple of points at the top and there were lines going down. What we have seen under this government is a significant broadening across. We now have deputy secretaries, and things filter down from there. A couple of deputy secretaries and it is just getting significantly broader. It is an interesting comparison - and we have done it - if one looks at the old organisational structures of departments and the new ones. It is not to say that organisational structures should not change, they should, but it is very significant that instead of the hierarchy going down it is broadening under this government.

That is why public service wages are going up significantly, especially at the senior and executive level. That was an issue that the former Treasurer talked about at length both in and out of this parliament. He said he would go he if what he said would happen, and it did not happen and he will not be around any more. I am sure whoever is Treasurer will be aware of the issue because Treasury will make them aware - as if those on the other side are not aware of it at all. So that is a challenge for the next Treasurer.

There are so many things to pursue in this report and my colleague, the shadow Treasurer, will go through those matters as was intended by the second speaker on this report. My colleague, the member for Blain, will go into some other areas.

Nevertheless, I plough on to talk about contingent liability, a term probably not understood by the member for Sanderson in the event that he becomes Treasurer. Someone will have to tell him what it is. In any event, that exists in the budget as the Treasurer's Advance. It is a little number in a piggy bank in which, each year, we put \$30m or \$40m away so that the Treasurer has a fund to deal with and to spend on unforeseen matters during the year. Some people - I think it is the

Subordinate Legislation committee - will actually see the Treasurer's Advances. They are public documents in the sense that every time the government needs a bit more money there is a formal process through which to go, and you will see a Treasurer's Advance, where the Treasurer will arrange for money to be transferred or moved from the piggy bank for want to better expression.

In any event, \$30m or \$40m is put away by the Treasurer and, presumably, will be put away by the next Treasurer for unforeseen spends for the year. That is reasonable, I suppose, when you think about it because a budget is a mere prediction and it cannot account for the unexpected. The interesting thing, though, is that year in, year out, the advance is drained by the Treasurer usually before Christmas. Year in and year out, the government spends much more than it predicts. For example, in the year 2004-05, the Treasurer's wages bill blew out by a \$120m more than expected, earning a sharp rebuke from the Auditor-General in his February 2006 report. If you have not read that report, you should. It was a sharp rebuke. The wages blow-out alone was much bigger than Percy Allan's – remember Percy? He has gone into folklore now - \$107m and not the CLP's which was sold so effectively to the press. Considering ...

Ms Lawrie: The difference is we put our figures in the budget papers.

Ms CARNEY: You have not done well, Leader of Government Business. I would not press your luck. You might say something you shouldn't and that would be a bad thing for you, given ongoing issues.

Percy Allan, an effective media campaigner or campaign against the CLP, was sold effectively by the spin doctors upstairs. However, considering the claims by the former Treasurer of fiscal restraint it does not resemble reality. The former Treasurer had no idea - in fact, he even admitted it - and has never experienced the hard times as the former government had to do in the past. Listening to the former Treasurer became increasingly irritating and we often wondered whether he understood what he was talking about because, often, what he said did not really resemble what was happening in reality.

I acknowledge the member for Blain as a shadow Treasurer. I believe he does know much more than the former Treasurer who, as I said, by his own admission said the other day that he did not know too much about it. We look forward to his contribution, which has come on a little earlier than my colleague expected due to the appalling communication system and the appalling lack of leadership shown by the Leader of Government Business.

Madam Speaker, I digress.

Dr Burns: Be flexible.

Ms CARNEY: You should not say too much, sport, because you have not distinguished yourself either.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker, this government is in the box seat. It is in the box seat because ...

Mr Mills: And they love it.

Ms CARNEY: And they do, which is fair enough, but you are in the box seat. An extra \$1.1bn a year to spend must be wonderful. We question your ability to spend it in the right areas, on the right things, in the right ways. I do not know what you look so happy about. I do not know whether you naturally have an expression like that, though I suspect you probably do ...

Ms Lawrie: Oh, Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker, the government is in the box seat. The Minister for Health is in the box seat. Why, we ask, is it the case that hospital patients are being treated on trolleys at RDH? Surely, as the Minister for Health, you would not be happy with that. Surely, with all of the additional revenue you have, you would not be happy with that. Surely, with the honoured position you hold, you would be highly motivated to do something about that. And all we hear from the minister is talk, talk, talk, which is ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: One wonders, Madam Speaker, when the government and the ministers will wake up and see that there is another world. It is not all about life on the fifth floor. It is not a competition to see who issues more media releases. It is about serving our fellow Territorians and doing the right thing by them. They come in here and gloat and spin in the way that they do, but you cannot escape the facts. I know you spin the facts, and I suppose that people expect that increasingly from this government. However, there are some facts. I have outlined some of them, some of them my colleague will outline, and I look forward to hearing from the Minister for Health. No doubt, he is at the point where he believes his own government's spin.

One wonders whether any of them will talk about the additional \$1.1bn in GST revenue and own source revenue that they have received. It is an astonishing figure ...

Ms Lawrie: Wrong, wrong, wrong. You are wrong about that figure. You are leading with your chin.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms CARNEY: I believe I have filled the breach, waiting for my colleague, the shadow Treasurer, who did not expect the matter to be - well, for the sake of the *Parliamentary Record*, my colleague is saying that he is expecting someone from the other side to talk about this bill. That is my usual expectation too. However, because of the breakdown in communication that has occurred on the government's side, because of the poor leadership shown by the Leader of Government Business, we just do not know what to expect any more, Madam Speaker. No doubt, members opposite will regroup and they will do a slightly better job next year.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, it really is a concern that the schedule has been managed in such a way where important matters like this are handled in a manner which diminishes the capacity for proper debate, and is also evidenced by the unwillingness and unpreparedness of members opposite to state their position. It just reinforces the underlying and sad notion that seems to be permeating this place; that there is a greater interest in maintaining a perception, creating an impression, and sustaining the idea that, at all costs, they must look good, must appear good, where the resources of government are focused upon the communication of the message, which is: 'Look at us, we are doing okay'.

The truth is a different matter. You put the truth aside and you focus on the resources to manage the message. If honourable members have been elected to this parliament, you are required - in fact, obligated - to give an account of yourself, not your government's position. One day, you will be truly held accountable on that, if not on a constant, quiet basis as you reflect upon what really this is about. To change the schedule without the courtesy of forewarning or advising the opposition further reinforces that sad notion, which is regretful.

As we are going into the festive season, we need to look at the way that our affairs are being managed. You have heard that famous statement

that it is the economy. The higher message when one looks at the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report is that, at this particular point in time, the economy is bearing certain favourable factors, one of which is the resources boom. Somehow, the message being pushed out by government is the creation of the image that this government has something to do the resources boom - in fact, its creation. The resources boom is something that has had an influence and an effect upon the entire globe. It would only be the foolish or the deliberately knowingly and callously dishonest who would stand and push a message out that, as a result of the resources boom, the economy is going well and, in fact, create deliberately the impression that because the economy is going well, it is a direct result of 'our actions'. You are going to be in trouble with that line because it is not the truth. It is not the truth ...

Ms Lawrie: Oh, come on!

Mr MILLS: It is not the truth.

Ms Lawrie: A man who had not signed their exploration licence requests. They were sitting on his desk.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr Henderson: There were over 1000 of them unprocessed.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms Lawrie: So we processed them.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MILLS: If you have the courage of your convictions, I would have expected you to be on your feet now, rather than have two from the opposition - one and two - and silence from that side other than interjections - one from the Chief Minister and one from the Leader of Government Business - without having the courage of convictions to stand up and give an account for yourselves ...

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Madam Speaker!

Mr MILLS: ... during the proper process of this parliament ..

Madam SPEAKER: Please pause, member for Blain.

Mr MILLS: Oh, it is a point of order, is it?

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! If the member for Blain had paid attention to administrative orders, I am actually

carrying this debate. If I stood you would not have had the opportunity to speak. I will be speaking after you.

Madam SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr MILLS: No, there is no point of order. It is a minor and churlish point and, perhaps, technically correct. Oh, yes, give a little wink: 'I got a good one'.

Nonetheless, that minor, immature point that has just been made really does not do anything to erode the truth of the matter; that is, there are global factors being brought to bear upon the Northern Territory. Thankfully, by courtesy of the way that the Territory is so richly blessed with resources, we are the beneficiary. The requirement of government is to manage this particular phase.

I am not going to wade in and say every aspect of your management has been deplorable. It would be immature of me to run that sort of argument because I am not in the business of playing this game as though it is a game; it is a serious business. You need to bring an element of truth and maturity to bear upon your arguments. If you are going to play a political game and do whatever you can to score a political point, one day you are going to find yourself sadly deficient in real support within the community because the community expects more. They expect people to have a sense of bearing upon these matters when it comes to the economy, as well as smaller matters. Often, the smaller matters actually reflect what is really at the heart of all this; that is, a desperate desire to look good at all costs: 'To heck with the truth, to heck with reality. Let us just craft it in a way that I look good today. It is only about me, after all'. That is the attitude. Grow up! That is the attitude that has been brought to bear on so much of the activities of recent times.

When it comes to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report, we have sniping comments, little by the way of substantial contribution, sitting back there smirking and winking, as though, 'Just you wait, I'm going to show you, because you're wrong, wrong, wrong.' Let us have a proper discussion about these things.

Broadly speaking, these are facts that stand clear, that are fed through every message in that report; that is that the central responsibility of a territory or state government is to deliver services. Those who assess the capacity, the success or otherwise of the ability to deliver those services have given their views on that. The wider community has taken its position on these matters. Your core business is not message development, promotion, focus groups, and the like. Your core business is to deliver services, plain and simple.

In many respects, that explains why, in the federal campaign that was just conducted, with the votes being counted as we speak, members of the Territory Labor government were noticeably absent during the campaign. The reason being ...

Mr Henderson: You were in Taiwan.

Mr MILLS: You would think that they would be out there banging their drum, pushing their message and drumming up support. But, in fact, they were hiding in bunkers, keeping an exceptionally low profile. They kept a low profile, all 19 of them, particularly those in the northern suburbs and Darwin. They kept a low profile because they had seen the polling ...

Ms Scrymgour: What, did you go out bush? Did you go out to the bush electorates?

Mr MILLS: I am talking about the northern suburbs and Darwin principally.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms LAWRIE: A point of order, Madam Speaker! We are here to debate the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report. Can we get to the substance of the report and debate that. I am looking forward to it.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Member for Blain, there is a fair bit of latitude but if you could come to the point reasonably soon.

Mr MILLS: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and if that be the judgment that you bring to bear upon this, I look forward to that ...

Madam SPEAKER: There is a fair bit of latitude, is what I said.

Mr MILLS: ... same judgment being brought to bear upon answers to questions during Question Time. We only hear the reference to the fair amount of latitude, but not being brought to the point. I will endeavour to bring it to the point. The sharp point which, unfortunately, has been very difficult for the opposition – well, that opposition - to follow, is that, because of your inability to deliver services satisfactorily, you have received a rising level of disapproval within the community.

This is how it works, Leader of Government Business. The managing of the economy, the managing of Treasury, is to provide the resources to deliver your core business, which is the delivery of services. You see, you need money for that and it is the way you manage your books that provides you with the capacity to deliver services.

If you are insufficient in your capacity to deliver services, those who have given you the responsibility to be in the position of delivering services - which are services to the community, not services to yourself and how you look and appear - it is about what you can do for the people that you have been elected to represent. If you have been found wanting, people will become cranky.

See? This is putting the budget story in simple terms that people will understand. If you have been found efficient, as being involved in the campaign, I was able to see the polling results, as you also would. I do not know what circle you operate in, but I know that your campaign would have seen the polling results. There is a certain level of concern within the community about your capacity to deliver the services which can be delivered through an effective management of the economy, i.e. keeping the books in check and making sure that you fund appropriately the right sorts of strategies to acquit your central responsibility: to deliver services. That is your business; that is the business.

As a result of that, that is why there was a very and noticeable low profile from the members in the northern suburbs and in Darwin ...

Ms Lawrie: Not true. We all stood on.

Mr MILLS: Anyway, you can go and explain that at some other stage, but while the count is being conducted as we speak ...

Ms Lawrie: What, you want to gloat over that?

Mr MILLS: I did not hear that but, perhaps, Madam Speaker ...

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MILLS: Was it rude?

Ms Lawrie: No, it was not rude.

Mrs Miller: You usually are.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MILLS: Madam Speaker, we need to explain to people that we represent so they can understand. I will leave it with these three key facts that illustrate the central matter. Having dealt with the global trends that are brought to bear on the Territory - and it is fantastic the way it has created employment opportunities, investment. I supported the statement about going to China and cultivating those relationships - fantastic. I would have liked to have had some support, too, for the work that was conducted in Taiwan, but you are not able to raise yourselves to that. I wonder how

many of you actually read the media releases. There was sufficient work that was conducted whilst in Taiwan on behalf of the Northern Territory. However, because I come from the other side of parliament, it is much easier, member for Brennan, to fire some cheap shots from over there and to criticise. Well, that is on your own record. I tell you, there was a lot that happened over there and it complements the work and the strategies of government. I am happy to support those sorts of things.

So those sorts of things are happening. The Territory government - a mixed bag in managing that. I am not going to go down the path that some would, only picking out the faults and trashing anything that government does. I am not that sort of person, but if it warrants criticism it will be given. Those sorts of things are occurring.

Then there has been the increase in the value of land and we have had weird positions taken by government. One time this is supposedly the truth and, then, there is another truth that is quite different as a result of focus polling, so we do not really know what the truth is. Some people do, if they really think about it, but we do not have that level of thought. All that aside, these are the core issues.

The Territory population has increased by 7%. That is great; the Territory is growing, 7%. The 204 000 people, as the Chief Minister said on a number of occasions, they what this is about, and the delivery of services to them. The business of government is to deliver those services. During the time since they came to office, the population has increased by 7%, the capacity of government to generate its own revenue has increased. It has increased 67%. That is a far greater percentage leap than the 7% Territory population increase; 67% increase in taxes, fees and charges that have flowed to government as a result of its capacity and its desire and interest in finding ways of attracting revenue. That revenue then is used to deliver services. That goes back to the other story about the low profile and the low approval rating on certain matters relating to law and order, health and education. However, I will put those aside because you will probably argue that has nothing to do with it. They have. It is all connected, you see, the whole-of-government approach and what this is all about.

Then there is the GST. Once people stood in the Chamber and said: 'Oh, it is terrible'. Why? 'Because John Howard says it is a good thing, so it is a bad thing'. When it came in you think: 'Oh, it is actually not too bad, but we do not get enough of it'. So you have a lot of it. It comes in and you have an 80% increase in the GST that comes into the Territory. 'Whacky do, we have created a resources boom; we have increased the value of

land all by ourselves. Aren't we a clever bunch? How did we do it? Do not ask that question, we do not really know'.

In fact, the truth is that we did not. However, let us forget the truth and tell people we did something. We have more money than we ever expected. Now the responsibility is to deliver services, and that is where it comes back to. You will probably rise to your feet, acting Treasurer, and give it your best shot. I am really looking forward to it, because I do not know who is going to be the Treasurer. The member for Sanderson? I hope not because then he will get a formidable opponent. There are really quite serious matters that need to be attended to in matters Treasury.

Those are the broad areas that reflect upon this issue related to Treasury, and I am looking forward to the response. It is sad that other members have not risen to their hind legs and had a shot at this. After all, 'it is us and we are doing okay, and we do not want anyone to sing out of tune' ...

Ms Lawrie: Last year only you and the Treasurer spoke.

Mr MILLS: Oh, you keep those sorts of records, do you?

Ms Lawrie: Read the *Hansard*. I read *Hansard* in preparation for today.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MILLS: With those broad comments, which will be substantiated by anything in that report and any other report that flows from Treasury, I commend the work of the officers of Treasury. I am looking forward to seeing whether this government has found any other ways of collecting revenue, as I believe they have in recent times. They will fluff the story around a bit, but there is more to come. I leave it with my dear Dad. He has always held this view, and what we find in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report reinforces what Dad said. He is a simple farmer, and he told me years ago that Labor governments are really good at spending money, but they are not very good at making it. Dad, I will give you a call and say I mentioned you in parliament. He told me that in the sheep yards, in fact, when I was about 15 and I have always remembered it. I believe it is true.

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members, I remind you that the standing orders indicate that when the Speaker is speaking, that no one is to be speaking.

Debate suspended.

VISITORS

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the Gallery of Tasma McCall, electorate officer to the member for Blain; Pat Witte, the electorate officer to the member for Katherine; and Karen Berry, electorate officer to the member for Greateorex. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

Member: Hear, hear!

Madam SPEAKER: I also draw your attention to visitors in the public galleries who are here as part of the Parliament House Tour Program. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend to you a very warm welcome.

Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY SPEAKER Christmas Greetings

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I wish you all a very happy Christmas and break. I look forward to seeing you again in the new year.

I also extend my thanks to the staff of the Department of the Legislative Assembly, particularly the Clerk and Deputy Clerk. I am sure that all members join with me in thanking them for their hard work over the year.

Members: Hear, hear!

MOTION Note Paper - Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2006-07

Continued from earlier this day.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, the 2006-07 Treasurers' Annual Financial Report provides further evidence of this government's ongoing commitment to fiscal responsibility. All key fiscal aggregates improved from the projections presented in both the May 2006 and the May 2007 budgets with a cash surplus of \$33m, this being the fifth consecutive cash surplus, a massive turnaround from the final days of the CLP governments.

In addition to achieving a cash surplus this government also made a contribution of \$150m

towards the Territory's unfunded superannuation liability associated with pre-August 1999 employees. Accrual surpluses were also achieved for both the operating result and fiscal balance for the first time since the introduction of accrual accounting in 2002-03. We continued to invest in the infrastructure at record high levels with actual expenditure of \$567m; \$75m higher than the previous high in 2005-06. Nett debt for the non-financial public sector was reduced to \$1.4bn, \$165m lower than the estimate in May 2007 and the lowest level since its high point in 2001-02. When measured as a percentage to revenue for the non-financial public sector, both nett debt at 39% and nett debt plus employee liabilities at 106% are also the lowest level since 2001-02.

2006-07 also saw the result of the 2006 Census, with an increased population outcome of around 4000 to 210 674, resulting in improved levels of GST in 2006-07 and forward years. The opposition's spokesperson noted that revenue had increased by 67%; however, failed to mention that funding for service delivery and infrastructure investment have increased dramatically over that time to combat the substantial neglect in key areas that we inherited from the previous CLP government. These include increases to police of 65%; health, 73%; education, 38%; and the consistently high levels of infrastructure spending. These are figures this government is very proud of and mirror an increase in our frontline staff particularly nurses, police and teachers.

The opposition concentrated on the supposed increase in executive contract officers. It may surprise both the members for Araluen and Blain that in 2006-07 the number of executive contract officers actually dropped by two. The shadow Treasurer also said that there had been a large increase in own source revenue. I am glad he mentioned this point. This is an indicator of a very strong economy, where people are trading, investing and buying. People are moving here, living here and feeling confident to invest here. This total increase in own source revenue is despite the government's reduction in the payroll tax rates, increases in the payroll tax threshold, and the increased concessions for first homebuyers and Territorians buying their own home.

In conclusion, this Treasurer's Annual Financial Report reflects the Territory government's commitment to firm, disciplined fiscal and economic management. I commend the report to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; paper noted.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 97)

Continued from 17 October 2007.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): The opposition supports this bill. This bill is significant in a number of respects. A couple of areas create a level of discomfort for the opposition, as I am sure they did for the government, and I will get to that before too long. Nevertheless, on balance, although these matters are always difficult, we believe that, at this stage at least, the right decision has been made. This is in respect of the warrants and searching provisions, so we are prepared to offer our support.

The bill seeks to amend the *Police Administration Act* in several ways. It seeks to amend the act to entrench the concept of promotion by merit. It amends the provisions dealing with the appointment of a special constable. It amends it to remove from the minister the decision to suspend without pay and moves that power to the commissioner. It makes lawful the possession of drugs by police for training purposes. It provides a legislative framework for the use of animals, namely dogs and horses, by police. It amends the urgent and normal search provisions to expand them to weapons and explosives in certain circumstances, and includes a change to the operation of legislation for the search of vehicles and other conveyances without a warrant. It amends the act to enable the police to hold a person who is intoxicated long enough for them to sober up before charging and bailing that person.

It enables the use of digital rather than tape recording – that is, obviously, very welcome. It empowers the police to establish crime scenes - welcome for very obvious reasons. It significantly increases the penalties for making a false report to the police. It makes it a crime to kill police dogs and horses. It makes a minor amendment to the *Kava Management Act*.

The area that caused us a level of discomfort was that in relation to search provisions that include searching of vehicles and other conveyances without a warrant. As legislators, we always need to be very careful and vigilant when we give to police or, indeed, other people in authority, significant powers. To search without a warrant is something that should be done judiciously. Frankly, I am torn, as a lawyer. I am not sure that many lawyers will be especially happy to see this amendment. On the other hand, I am sure police officers will. I would like to think that within the Cabinet there was pretty robust discussion about this - I would like to think that in terms of a Labor government. However, as I say, for the reasons provided in the second reading

speech, we are prepared to support it, but I make the point that it is a significant change and one that should be exercised judiciously in any civilised society.

I had prepared to go through various provisions in detail. However, with the summary I have provided at the outset, I am not sure that there is a great need to do that. I would, in essence, be repeating, rewording and redrafting much of the second reading speech.

The amendments, for the most part, are welcome. We just urge you and, in particular those who have the honour of exercising what will be new powers, to do so wisely and judiciously. The civil liberties of our fellow citizens are something all of us should take very seriously, as I know members of our fantastic police force do. There were some other very minor issues but I feel certain that, if they became a problem then I could, with confidence, speak with you about them. With those comments, we support the bill.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Speaker, I also support the bill. I just had one small question in relation to the section that covers damage caused by animals when being used by police in the course of their work. I believe the act, basically, says they are not liable for such damage. Whilst I can understand that would apply to people who they were trying to resist arrest or who were causing a commotion, I was wondering whether innocent bystanders such as car owners or shopkeepers whose property might have been damaged in that course of action would be able to ask for compensation if they were not part of the criminal proceedings that were occurring? That was just the one question I had about it all. I ask the minister if he could answer that in his summing up.

Dr BURNS (Health): Madam Speaker, I thank both the opposition and the Independents for their support for this bill today. There are quite a number of components to the bill. I can assure the member for Araluen, the Opposition Leader, that Cabinet did spend a considerable amount of time on quite a number of elements that have come up here, with a mind to preserving civil liberties, but also for the smooth operation of the police. I can tell you there was quite spirited discussion around the Cabinet table on a number of issues.

You are entirely right where you say we have to get the balance between the civil liberties of a citizen and the smooth operation of a police force. In the main, generally speaking, predominating the amendments of this bill are fairly minor amendments, but they are amendments which will go a long way in the view of police to making their job much easier and removing ambiguities around

quite a number of issues they have been confronted with before.

The searching provisions that you allude to, Leader of the Opposition, I am advised that the police already have the power to search without a warrant. I am not sure ...

Ms Carney: Yes, but there has been a change.

Dr BURNS: It is a bit like committee stage, Opposition Leader. I am advised that section 120C already exists for drugs, but it has been expanded particularly for weapons. I think ...

Ms Carney: It has been expanded; that is the point - that it was always quite specific but it has been expanded.

Dr BURNS: It has been expanded, and thank you for that correction. However, my advice is it has been expanded to encompass weapons as well as drugs.

Regarding the issue raised by the member for Nelson in relation to liability, I am advised that section 116G(2) states:

Subsection (1) does not affect any liability the Territory would, apart from that subsection, have for the act of the dog or horse.

In another words, my advice is that the Territory still has a liability. Presumably, the incidence that you raise relates to an innocent bystander or property associated with that. That is the advice that I have. I hope that satisfies your query.

In closing, it is important for us to be brief here this afternoon. The fact that we have been able to be brief in this debate really underlines the amount of consultation and thought that has gone into these particular amendments. It has taken some time. I did initially have carriage of it when I was Police minister and, subsequently the member for Fannie Bay also took further iterations of this to Cabinet. It was very much a work in progress over many months. It is testament to the work of police, particularly Chris Fry who is in the advisor's box today, who has worked very hard to develop these amendments, and has taken quite a lot of time explaining them to me. When we came to a briefing the other day, it was amazing how much of it I remembered from when I was minister. So I certainly did learn something and I found it very interesting.

Madam Speaker, I commend this bill to the House and I close debate on that note.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Dr BURNS (Health)(by leave): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

**DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE BILL
(Serial 120)**

Continued from 17 October 2007.

Ms CARNEY (Opposition Leader): Madam Speaker, the opposition both welcome and support the bill. It does have widespread – though not universal – support from many of the key organisations and individuals who work in this area.

I have been up-front from the beginning. We wanted to see mandatory reporting of domestic violence contained in the bill. I asked about it in June last year, and either at the last sittings or the sittings before that it came up as well. The then Attorney-General sought to explain why it is that there is no mandatory reporting. The government, at this stage, does not support mandatory reporting of domestic violence. I accept where he is coming from but I disagree. It is a blunt instrument but we should regard domestic violence in the same way that we regard child abuse. Accordingly, we should make every endeavour to put in place measures that will protect the victims of those offences. We believe that adults who are the victims of domestic violence should be able to enjoy the same protections as children. Mandatory reporting is one of the ways to achieve that, although nothing in this area, of course, is a silver bullet.

Earlier this year, as members will know, the Coroner recommended that mandatory reporting should be considered by government. I have said before in this Chamber, and it now seems a reasonable opportunity to do it again: if I were Chief Minister, I would make reporting of domestic violence mandatory. I have not done a lot of work on this because I have not had time but, in Queensland, I understand that there is mandatory reporting of stabbings. It is not necessarily domestic violence specific but I understand that in Queensland if you know of someone, or believe that someone has been stabbed there is a legal obligation to report that to the police. In Victoria, I understand the same applies in relation to gunshot wounds. Although they may have been, it does not seem to be specifically targeted to domestic violence.

Given that there is mandatory reporting of a stabbing or a gunshot - that is another reason to plead the case that there should be mandatory

reporting in the Territory given that so many of our domestic violence victims have been stabbed. Fortunately, gunshot wounds are not a big issue for us traditionally in the Territory. As a person who lives in Alice Springs, walking around the streets, I could count very easily on both hands the number of Aboriginal women I see with bandages whom I know have been stabbed. So it is an issue.

I will simply take this opportunity to implore government to look at it. It amounts to reasonable social policy. It amounts to reasonable women's policy. Given the tumultuous events that have engulfed the Northern Territory since the *Lateline* interviews last year, this is the time to make some really gutsy changes. Ten years ago, you probably would not have been able to make changes like this. CLP, ALP - it does not matter. Ten years ago, a government might have been criticised for being courageous, as Sir Humphrey says. I believe this is a different climate now. We do have national attention on us. Indeed, internationally, the eyes of the world are watching us. This is, I believe, a missed opportunity by government. Had government contained something in this bill about mandatory reporting, I would have issued my own media release congratulating them. I do not propose, however, to issue a media release attacking you for it. I just feel very strongly that it is a lost opportunity.

I know in women's organisations and people who work with domestic violence victims that there is not universal acceptance that mandatory reporting is worth pursuing. I understand that. I know these women; they are my friends, I talk to them. It may have been the case that five years ago I would not have said that I believe that it is worthwhile to make reporting of domestic violence mandatory, but I have moved. I will not go on about it but, if the government were to come back at any point between now and the next election with this change, I would offer the same support I offer to the Minister for Child Protection and would, metaphorically speaking, leap to the other side of the Chamber and embrace the lot of them.

Moving on, Madam Speaker. The women's movement would say, and has said for many years, that domestic violence is domestic violence. By making it 'domestic and family' - well, we wonder why it is that it is called 'domestic and family' violence. Again, two schools of thought. If people are not up with the arguments in this area, then I am sure they will not be participating in the debate. A long-standing issue: domestic violence is domestic violence and it affects every one in the family. The other one is domestic violence is a crime perpetrated against women. I note that the government has adopted a broader approach to this issue.

There is a point I make in relation to clause 5, regarding definition. I would have liked to have seen the inclusion of the words 'emotional abuse'. Clause 5 is a definitional clause, but 'emotional abuse' is not there. There are few new words: 'stalking', 'harassment' and a few others, but 'emotional abuse' is not there. I wondered why that is. I look forward to a sensible explanation as to why that is.

It is good to see the bill simplifies the process regarding domestic violence orders, and that the orders that can be sought are court orders as well as police orders. The Attorney-General advised that the police orders have worked well; that has been my advice as well - not perfect, but reasonably well. The difficulty, though, is that you as a government, and senior police officers, ensure there are police officers in the Domestic Violence Units in police stations. The problem that has been created is that as police officers are being moved from, say, being out on the beat, as it were, to inside the units - fantastic, you need lots of police in Domestic Violence Units. Do not misunderstand or twist what I am saying: yes, we do need officers there. There is a problem, however, because, as I am advised, the numbers are being shuffled. So, yes, have lots of police officers in DV Units, but ensure that there are enough police to fill in those gaps on the beat. It is an ongoing issue and I feel certain that government knows about this.

Domestic violence incidents that police attend to, tend by their nature to be very time-consuming. We all have an appreciation as to why that would be the case. Police officers regularly tell me that the time, including the paperwork requirements, just seems to be getting longer and longer. In a place like Alice Springs, if there are two patrols out on any night - and I stand to be corrected, but I believe it is the case that there are two patrols going around Alice Springs at night - if both of those patrols are called to a domestic violence incident, then both of them are tied up at the same time. As a result, we do not have enough police patrolling our town, and that has to be a priority for government.

It has to be a priority for the Chief Minister. I take this opportunity of saying, in the context of my comments, that we would encourage him to be the Police minister. We believe that there are so many issues in policing that it is appropriate, particularly given the lack of talent, with a couple of exceptions on his front bench. You could not possibly give it to the member for Sanderson; you could not possibly give it to the member for Millner; you could not possibly give it to the member for Drysdale. I will not go through the whole list but, for goodness sake, if you are going to make someone a Police minister, can you make it

someone who can string sentences together, is a bit passionate about it, and will do a good job?

I now turn to the vulnerable witness facilities. There was a reference to the vulnerable witness facilities in the second reading speech. The suggestion was that under this act the vulnerable witness facilities would be able to be used implicitly as a first time by vulnerable witnesses in domestic violence cases. I believe it is fair to say that victims in domestic violence applications have used the vulnerable witness facilities. Certainly, they have in Alice Springs before. In terms of the vulnerable witness facilities, maybe this is an opportunity for the new Chief Minister and the new Attorney-General to fix up the ongoing problems that exist in the Alice Springs Courthouse. Nevertheless, let us move on.

There are some quite interesting parts of the bill in relation to the perpetrator. They relate to - I cannot remember the expression - tenancy orders or something like that. They are designed to ensure, or to try to stop the flow that has been going on in this country for years, where, if a woman goes to court in relation to a domestic violence matter, she then goes to the women's shelter, and her partner, more often than not, is the bloke who remains in the family home. That has been, I am sure, a challenge for governments for many years in this country.

The amendments proposed by the government here are good and I am supportive of them. However, I believe you have missed an opportunity. I think you should have gone further; you should have gone a long way further. On 12 October 2004, as a result of some work I did overseas, I said the following in relation to removal of perpetrators:

Periods of removal or eviction vary, but underlying the scheme is a belief that the victims need to be protected and must have sufficient time in order to consider options. A victim may elect to move from the home, and I gather that in such circumstances, the perpetrator can return. The Dutch are attracted to this scheme because the results indicate that it has been effective and provides women and children security and allows for fast intervention, thereby reducing violence.

In the Territory, victims of violence may apply for a restraining order, but there is no provision for the police to evict the perpetrator from the home other than the ability to hold a perpetrator in custody for four hours under the Domestic Violence Act. A bold initiative such as evicting a perpetrator for a significantly longer period and enabling the police to do so without a

court order may have application in the Territory's remote communities. The mechanics of producing a scheme such as the one I have outlined would be difficult. However, decision-makers should at least try to rise to the challenge.

There is a challenge there. It would be quite difficult. I believe there has been a wasted opportunity here and the government did not rise to it.

I noticed in the then Attorney-General's second reading speech that he talked about positive obligations imposed on offenders. One of them was an obligation to undertake rehabilitation. There are several points that really have to be made about this. First, where is the evidence that rehabilitation programs achieve the results? If you look, as I did - and I reckon I am about one of six people in the Northern Territory who read the sexual abuse report into Aboriginal communities from cover to cover - there was a part in that report that referred to rehabilitation programs that exist in prisons. There was, from memory, either no evidence quoted or evidence that contradicted where the authors were going in relation to the success of the rehabilitation programs.

My point is this: it is really easy for government ministers to throw out lines about rehabilitation programs because the public really likes to hear about them; it is another matter entirely to demonstrate that they work. People accuse politicians of being cynical. This could be seen as an example of it. Where is the evidence that the rehabilitation programs actually work? If there is not that evidence, then get a new one, or do not do it. As a government, you must provide yourselves, us, and the people of the Northern Territory with evidence as to their success or otherwise.

My second point in relation to the rehabilitation programs is: what rehabilitation programs? There are few relevant programs in the Northern Territory. I ask the minister to advise, when she responds: where they are; who runs them; are there enough; are they culturally appropriate; how many are run by government; how many are run by the private sector; and what are the success rates in relation to them?

The third point in relation to this - ah, this was an interesting one. According to the Attorney-General's second reading speech and in relation to the rehabilitation orders, I nearly fell off my seat when I read that the rehabilitation order - notwithstanding the first and second points I have just made - can be made with the consent of the offender. With the consent of the offender! This raises obvious questions such as: if you are going to have fair dinkum rehabilitation programs

that work, and if you are going to have enough of them staffed by suitably qualified people, that has evidence-based information as to the success of those programs or otherwise, if you are going to have enough of them dotted throughout the Northern Territory and in remote areas, then if they are going to be that good, why would you not include in the relevant legislation a requirement that perpetrators attend rehabilitation programs?

The fact that an offender must consent to going to a rehabilitation program, I do not think speaks volumes about the rehabilitation programs. Is there a policy position from government about whether they would like perpetrators to go to the rehabilitation programs? If the collective view of government is that perpetrators should attend programs, my question is: why not include it in the legislation?

I look forward to that answer. I should indicate that I will be watching, and I will be reading the *Hansard*. I have to go and meet someone, but I really want you to answer it, minister, if you would.

Ms Lawrie: Just for clarification's sake on the extent of the answer I will be able to give you, I am actually taking carriage of this legislation and I am sure that a lot of the more detailed information will be from the new Attorney-General. I will answer it with advice from the officers present here today, but I am sure that it is an important point that you are raising which the new Attorney-General will discuss with you.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, thanks minister, I appreciate that. It may be that I write to the new Attorney-General. Probably I would, because I think they are important questions.

Ms Lawrie: They are.

Ms CARNEY: I have nearly finished. The other issue, of course, is part of the same issue of rehabilitation orders being made optional for perpetrators. Could it be manipulated by offenders? Most people would acknowledge that many offenders, many perpetrators, are manipulative. Coming straight to the point I ask: is it possible for this to be used by a defendant as a form of mitigation?

In other words, I can imagine submissions from the Bar Table to the effect that the defendant consents to participating in a rehabilitation program with the very clear intention, hope or expectation that the magistrate will accept it as a sign of remorse or otherwise, that it be taken into account when making relevant orders. This happens a lot in our court system. In fact, I do not think that it would be too much to say that this pretty much happens every day in a number of contexts around the Northern Territory. Why make

this optional? If you have the programs and they work, make it compulsory.

I have moved too, on offender programs for perpetrators. It used to be that I was not a supporter of them but, in the current climate, there is nothing to be lost by going down that path. I am very conscious of violent men appearing in court and through their lawyers saying: 'I note that there is a rehabilitation program, Your Honour', and then the lawyer saying: 'My client indicates his remorse and he wants to go on a program'. It may or may not work. It may or may not be staffed by suitably qualified people. He wants to go on the program, and the magistrate would say: 'That is good. I will take that into account when making the relevant order'. I think it falls short and it is a lost opportunity.

They are the issues, minister. I appreciate that you have not had carriage of this. I wonder whether it might be sensible for me just to send the *Hansard* to the minister's office as soon as there is a minister rather than drafting a letter given that this is where these things are meant to take place. I do not want to be put to the extra of drafting a letter.

Ms Lawrie: Through the Chair, I would actually take that on board myself given that I am taking carriage of this. It is my responsibility to alert the incoming Attorney-General, if it is me or someone else, as to the importance of responding to you and engaging you in this.

Ms CARNEY: Okay, just so that we are clear. It might be a good idea if I just do a one paragraph letter to the Attorney-General once that person has been announced, attach the *Hansard* and ask for those questions to be answered. .

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the Domestic and Family Violence Bill. It is an excellent bill. I thank the minister for the briefing that we received. From that briefing I have some questions in relation to the bill.

I support the bill as non-gender specific, which is important. I remember about 15 years ago being on the Australian Catholic Social Justice Committee in Sydney discussing domestic violence for over three years. This is a debate we had and it is important that whilst we know that many women are subjected to domestic violence, there is an element of males being subjected to it as well. It is good the legislation put forward recognises that.

Notwithstanding, when you read the second reading speech, there are some comments made that are not necessary gender neutral. I will get on to that a little later.

I believe the objectives of the bill are very important. I ask the minister if she has any idea if there would be expected to be a review on whether the objects of the act are being achieved? In other words, are we looking to see whether domestic violence is being reduced? We are presuming under the objects of this bill, especially when I talk about clause 3(1)(c) which is to reduce and prevent domestic violence, that one would review either the act or the statistics to see whether what has been put forward is actually being achieved.

In Part 2.2, clause 20 on page 12 of the bill, there is a presumption in favour of protected person with child remaining at home. Whilst I understand that that would generally be the woman, I would be interested to hear what would apply if the male was the victim? When you read the second reading speech, on page 4 it says that there will be a new presumption when making orders in favour of an applicant with children in their care remaining in the family home. This will be achieved by the grant of a premises order requiring the defendant to vacate the family home in appropriate cases. This may initially appear harsh; that government has made this deliberate decision that women should no longer be forced to flee the family home with their children and seek crisis accommodation. I do not have any problem with that, but what I am saying is there could be circumstances where the male is the victim. I am interested to know how, in practical terms, clause 20 would be applied.

I do not know anyone in this parliament who would not get a letter from Robert Kennedy but, be that as it may, he raises some issues which are relevant. Notwithstanding that, it has recently been brought to my attention by a constituent that the police, when answering complaints in the domestic violence area, have seemed to be one-sided to some extent in their application of the complaint. I will put this in fairly general terms. When his ex complained that they were on his front doorstep, when he complained about a false statement being made, that was basically dismissed. He felt that, to some extent, whilst the law as we know it does not specify who is wrong or who is right, he felt that perhaps the policy that is given to police in relation to the carrying out of these parts of the act is weighted so that there is a presumption that the woman is the victim.

I have sent him to the police. There is a special section there for complaints about police and the way they behave. He does not believe that anything has changed since then. What I am concerned about is that, although the legislation is quite clear, it is gender neutral. Are the people who carry this out given any guidance as to how it should be carried out, and does that necessarily mean that one gender is looked at slightly more

favourably than another gender in carrying out the requirements of the act? I am speaking from the case here where the person has been very distressed over what has happened to him, and I have other people who support what he has said. It has been very stressful for that person. I put that forward as one of those areas that needs looking at.

Another area is the definition of 'child'. The definition for 'child' is one who is under 18 years, and a 'young person' is defined as one who is between 15 and 18 years old. I am asking why we do not regard the 'child' as 15 years and under, or why have the definition of a 'young person' at all? I am just not sure what that definition achieves. It may be because there is a clause which says that a child cannot be cross-examined, but a young person, I believe, can be cross-examined if they are the perpetrator, if I am correct. I am wondering why a young person cannot be cross-examined if they are the victim. In other words, where they have made a vexatious complaint against their parents, if they can be cross-examined as a perpetrator, could they be cross-examined as a victim just to ensure that what they are saying is truthful as well? I can understand someone aged 15 and under being given that exemption, but I think that between 15 and 18 years a person should be able to stand some cross-examination.

I had a little concern regarding the issue the Opposition Leader raised relating to rehabilitation. On page 4 of the second reading speech, it said that this kind of order can only be made with the consent of the defendant - I am referring to rehabilitation here - and further down it says while agreeing to attend a rehabilitation program requires consent, failure to attend a program will constitute a breach of order. I had trouble understanding that. On one hand, you do not have to go to rehabilitation but, then, if you do agree to one, it will constitute a breach of order. I wondered how that would work in reality, especially as you only volunteered to do it, you were not told you had to do it. So it is just a query I had there.

My last question is related to Part 8.2, which is the change to the *Justices Act*. I am sure there is a good and proper answer for this. It refers to the section on personal violence. I wondered why that section is not included in the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*? Why is it part of the *Justice Act*? I think it is to do with a person who is not family, such as a neighbour or a child next door who could be affected by the domestic violence that is occurring in the neighbour's house. Why not put all that into the one act and not have it in another act?

The section here refers to where you are ensuring the safety and protection of persons who experience personal violence outside a domestic relationship as defined in the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*. I thought, maybe for the object of trying to keep these issues in the one act, or to understand the issues that relate to domestic and family violence, that could have been included. Maybe there needed to be an adjustment of the objects of the act included in this one act.

I thank the government for bringing forward the bill. It is an important bill. We all know that domestic violence is a major problem in the Northern Territory. It is obvious from the figures that the government puts out that it is a real problem. I still remember, from my days at Daly River, seeing a very large man standing over an Aboriginal woman with a steel bar. It is something that has never left my memory. We have far too much domestic violence. We should remember much of this domestic violence, unfortunately, is due to the excessive use of alcohol. We spoke about that yesterday. Although we are looking at ways of curbing domestic and family violence through this particular bill, we cannot look at it without looking at all the other reasons why domestic violence is occurring. I suppose also, sometimes, we have a society where we do not teach people to have any control over what they do. We do not have any boundaries.

When I was in Ohio last year, I went to West Central Correctional Facility and spoke to six or seven of the residents there. What many of them said is that the reason they are in this facility is to try to get some controls over their life. Surely, violence is a recognition that some people in society do not have the ability to control themselves. That is another aspect that is important in relation to this.

The Domestic Violence Bill, on its own, is certainly a good thing to have. We need that for people who have offended. However, we must look at some underlying issues as to why we have domestic violence. Sometimes people say it is in relation to the way people were brought up. I came from a family where I only remember once when my mother and father had an argument. It was rare, that is why I can still remember it. It was over whether they should sell their house and move to another home. Even though I was young, that actually frightened me.

There is an advertisement on television at the moment - and I do not know who runs it - where a child sees the example of their parent. It is an excellent advertisement. Again, there are issues about how well we are teaching parents to raise their children. Many children are raised by parents and, basically, do not have that love and care and

are in situations where drinking and drugs and lack of respect are occurring all the time.

I know that my children went to a school where many of the children did not have a father or a mother. The families that we were brought up with do not exist, in many cases. The example that I might have had from my parents, many other children may not have had from theirs. The only example they might have seen is that the way to solve a problem is to punch someone in the head.

We need to look at these underlying problems. We need to see why there is so much violence in our society. Alcohol, as I said, is a key reason for much of that but it is only part of the cause. If someone already has a problem with their temper, where they only know one way to solve a problem, alcohol just makes it a lot easier. It gives them the dutch courage to carry out that terrible punishment that people have received from a spouse who has lost their temper and has no respect for them.

Madam Speaker, I thank the government for the bill. It is important that we continue to look at the domestic violence in our society. We need to review it because it is no good having the objects of the act in the front of the bill if we have not gone back in time to see whether this bill has achieved the object. In conclusion, I ask the government to review the act at an appropriate time to see whether it is working.

Visitors

Madam SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the students from the Ramingining Community Education Centre together with Jacinta Chartres from the Smith Family. On behalf of all honourable members, I extended to you a very warm welcome.

Members: Hear, Hear

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I join you in welcoming the students from Ramingining and Jacinta Chartres who worked in my office. It is great to see Jacinta here.

Mrs Braham: Excuse me, Madam Speaker. Are you closing?

Ms LAWRIE: I thought everyone had spoken.

Mrs Braham: No, I hadn't spoken. Sorry.

Madam SPEAKER: I am sorry. I did not see you stand.

Mrs Braham: I was a bit slow. I was looking up at the gallery.

Madam SPEAKER: You were a bit slow when I actually said it was closing debate.

Mrs LAWRIE: No, I am happy for the member for Braiting to speak. It is an important debate.

Mrs BRAHAM (Braitling): Madam Speaker, I will not take too long. I also want to thank the officers who gave us the briefing on the domestic violence bill. It has clarified many things, in many ways. It is a very important bill that we are debating today. It is a little disappointing that there are not more contributions to it. Most of us would have come across cases of domestic violence where people have come to us for assistance and help.

As the member for Nelson said, domestic violence is often unfamiliar to many of us who live in non-violent situations. For those children and families who do, it is soul destroying and lives are often ruined. The most terrible part about it is that young children who are subject to violence often consider that to be the norm and, as they grow up, they will repeat it because they do not know any other way to behave. As a teacher, you would be suspicious of any child who started school and would suddenly sit very still and they would demonstrate this behaviour of not moving which was 'I don't want to draw attention to myself, I don't want to be seen because if I do I may get into trouble'. I have seen children, as you walk past, actually flinch because they have been so used to dodging that behaviour at home. It is a very tragic circumstance for that young child to believe that is the norm.

What we need to do is break that cycle of getting people to understand that life is not meant to be like that. Life was meant to be love and, if there is not love in your family then, perhaps, the best thing to do is to move out, to move away.

Like the member for Nelson, I too have cases where both sides of the stories are frustrating for you. You can appreciate some of the things that are happening to provoke the anger, be it male or female anger, and it is very hard to resolve. That is why it is very important that we have the right services to ensure people can apply for assistance and help before it goes too far.

That is the tragedy: people often take that step through frustration and anger without realising there are ways to resolve their problems. I realise that is not always possible with alcohol-inflamed situations, but there are other situations where alcohol is not involved. Perhaps we can assist people to come to terms with the problems within their family life.

I am very pleased that this bill has expanded the range of people able to seek protection by seeking an order and includes children even up to the ages of 15 to 18.

One of the concerns I have is the elderly people who are subjected to harassment and intimidation by some of their male relatives who take their money from them. We know that when they get intimidated in that way they have no choice but to hand over the money which is then used for grog or ganga, or something like that. It is good that you have expanded the bill to include economic abuse as a definition of domestic violence. The broadening of it will give people more understanding that they can seek help. One of the important things that also you need to do with a bill like this is to ensure that the message gets out to women and children that there is hope and help.

We bring legislation into this House and sometimes we do not pass on the message in the right way to people who should be hearing it. We really need to ensure that we have the right sort of program. It is hard, sometimes, to convince women that they should get help. This bill has not allowed for mandatory reporting. I believe that it is something the government should take seriously. I know it is a question of concern and there are people in the medical and legal profession who will argue against it. However, there are other people who will say that there is a good case for mandatory reporting of domestic violence. I realise in the bill you have a provision dealing with help for practitioners who report their suspicions to the police. Under this bill, these practitioners will be protected from any civil or criminal liability in relation to a report. If you have gone that far, why did you not go the next step and make it mandatory? You are saying, 'Yes, we will give you that civil protection if you report a case and someone then turns upon you'. You just have not taken that extra step.

I understand that people are concerned that health workers or family members in small communities may become abused if they find out that they have made a report. Confidentiality is probably a high priority in any reporting of a serious offence such as this. I know you have to weigh up whether you take that risk of allowing these people to be, in turn, abused or whether you say that the protection of the victim is your priority. It is not off the table. I will be interested to hear whether mandatory reporting is still being considered. It is something that may save children and victims. That is the most important thing – is that not the aim of this bill, to save people and to protect them?

Government has also put into the bill protection that was not there before with the provision for the

vulnerable witnesses. Certainly, the rights of children have been recognised. I believe that young children are vulnerable enough without being subjected to a lot of cross-examination, and very young children, in particular, need special attention. The premises access order has been included, where a defendant must move away from home if there is a child. It will be interesting to see whether it is implemented successfully. Too often, we know someone has an order against them, but they violate that order by going anyway because they do not care about the risks, they are drunk or whatever. So even though the intent is good, I just wonder what special provisions can be made to ensure that is not destroyed. I am thinking of a case I had where I am sure the woman had a DV order but, too often, that is violated. She is in a house with her children, but too often the offender will turn up on the doorstep. I do not how you give her any more protection than you have already given by issuing the premises access order.

We talked about many other things during the briefing. We talked about the no-drop policy. Perhaps you could clarify for me whether that is still current; whether we still have a no-drop policy. We have heard statistics bandied around the House over the last few days about how many assaults, etcetera. It would be interesting to see a break-up of how many reports to the police under the no-drop policy end up as assaults, or do they come into a different category?

I also raised during the briefing the concerns some of the police have about the amount of time they get tied up in attending to the paperwork and to ensure everything is in place when they get a report such as this. I had a comment made to me that there were two policemen and a car tied up at the hospital for hours because the victim needed medical attention but they had to stay with her until it was all processed and she was placed in a safe environment. Whether this has streamlined that process, I am not sure. I do not know how you get away from it, but I understand the frustration that police are tied up for so long protecting a victim in that way, and whether that responsibility could be given to someone else such as a service provider or something like that while medical attention is being obtained.

I believe there is now a requirement that an interpreter is to be present to ensure everything is explained clearly to the victim and to the defendant. The role of interpreters in our courts is very important and I realise that it is not always easy to get them. I have spoken to Rosie Kunoth-Monks, who does a huge amount of interpreting. That is an area that we really need to address to ensure we have a bank of people we can call upon when we need them. If we are going

to ensure everything is understood clearly, then often we need that interpreter.

The bill is comprehensive. I know we have some late amendments. My staff went through them and seemed to think there was not anything that we would query very much. The only clause I was interested in was the amendment to clause 29 to insert a new subclause after subclause (2)(c):

(d) *a DVO is not necessary for the child's protection because an order is in force for the child's protection under another Act.'*

I just wondered whether it should not read, 'a DVO is not necessary for the child's protection if an order is in force for the child's protection under another act'? It might be a bit pedantic, but it was just words and I just wondered whether that could be clarified.

Madam Speaker, obviously, I support the bill. I hope it is successful in its implementation. I ask government to ensure they get the message out there to the community, to those people who need to know what they can do, where they can go, and how they can be protected. I also ask government to ensure they have the services there for those people who are seeking assistance and who, in the past, have had to leave their community and come into town to get away from situations. Sometimes, that is not a solution if there is no safe place they can go.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I sincerely thank all the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Nelson and Brailing for their contribution to this very important debate. I also thank the Territory legal and health professions, the community sector, the service providers, past victims, and members of the community who all provided submissions, commented on the bill, and expressed their support for these important reforms.

This legislation is all about improving the safety and security of some of the most vulnerable members of our community; to protect them. Government has adopted Australian best practice in developing this new legal framework to better protect women and children from domestic and family violence. Domestic violence affects far too many Territorians and their families. As well as providing practical protections, this bill is also a clear and unequivocal statement that domestic and family violence is not tolerated in the Territory. This Assembly rejects violent behaviour in the home. You must compel perpetrators to accept responsibility for their conduct and change it. Such change is essential to break the cycle of family and domestic violence. Violence, of course,

is not simply a matter of physical attack. Violence against women, children and vulnerable members of our committee can be perpetrated in many different ways. This bill recognises this fact by including actual harm to the victim, damage to property, intimidation, stalking, and economic abuse in the definition of violence.

The bill also recognises that, in today's world, the concept of a domestic relationship goes well beyond the traditional understanding of husband, wife and children. The concept of a domestic relationship is expanded through this bill. Various family relationships are included, as are a range of intimate personal relationships. Those who can seek protection under the terms of the bill are, therefore, also broadened. It will now include: children, carers, relatives who do not live with the perpetrator, promised wives and, depending on the circumstances, those in dating relationships. This expansion was a considered decision to increase community awareness of what constitutes abusive behaviour and, in that way, work to overcome abuse and violence in all domestic relationships.

This bill is critically important, so I want to go through some of the key features again. The bill provides for the making and variation of domestic violence orders by police officers and by the Court of Summary Jurisdiction. It provides for the confirmation of domestic violence orders by the Court of Summary Jurisdiction. It provides for recognition in the Northern Territory of domestic violence orders made elsewhere in Australia or in New Zealand. It deals with the manner in which evidence may be given by vulnerable witnesses. It protects from liability health practitioners who report domestic violence. It amends the *Justices Act* so as to provide for personal violence restraining orders. It repeals the *Domestic Violence Act* and makes transitional arrangements arising from that repeal. It makes transitional arrangements concerning applications pending under the *Domestic Violence Act*, and makes consequential amendments to the *Firearms Act*, the *Justices Act* and other legislation.

The principle new features of the legislation compared to the current *Domestic Violence Act* are as follows: young persons aged over 15 and under 18 years of age can obtain domestic violence orders on their own behalf with the leave of the court, and all children can obtain domestic violence orders through an authorised adult such as a relative; domestic violence orders can be made against perpetrators of domestic and family violence who are aged over 15 and under 18 years of age; other persons in close relationships – carers, betrothals, promised wives, dating relationships – can obtain domestic violence orders where they experience violence in their relationships; the basis on which a domestic

violence order is granted is simplified to when there are reasonable grounds for the protected person to fear domestic violence by the defendant; economic abuse and intimidation are grounds for orders; and where a child witnesses family violence becomes a ground for seeking a domestic violence order on the child's behalf by a police officer or a child protection worker.

There is a presumption in favour of the victim with children remaining in the family home when a domestic violence order is made so that it is the offender who must leave the family home. The court can make domestic violence orders that an offender attend rehabilitation and treatment programs provided the offender consents to the terms of such an order. The onus is on the court to explain to the applicant and the offender in an appropriate language or appropriate terms the effect of the domestic violence order.

Publication of the details of children affected by domestic violence is prohibited. The vulnerable witness provisions akin to those in the *Evidence Act* apply to applicants and persons giving evidence when domestic violence orders are being sought. The maximum penalty for breach of a domestic violence order is increased to two years imprisonment and the offence is one of strict liability. For a breach of a domestic violence order, the court is required to impose a term of actual imprisonment for a second or subsequent offence unless it is of the opinion that such a penalty should not be imposed. However, where harm has been caused to the victim as part of the breach, a term of imprisonment must be imposed. When a young person between 15 and 18 years is sentenced for a breach of domestic violence order, these same provisions in relation to sentencing an adult apply to the extent provided by the sentencing principles in the *Youth Justice Act*.

Madam Speaker, members in this Chamber have had debate over some time now around the issue of mandatory reporting. I know the previous Attorney-General, picking up on the Coroner's recommendations, pursued quite strongly the potential of introducing mandatory reporting into the legislation we have before us today. There are pros and cons for mandatory reporting legislation and, despite much discussion over the past six months - and members' comments on the topic are very welcome - this is still a difficult and vexed question. It is a policy area that we need to get right to ensure there is no further harm to the victim, their families or, critically important in the context of the Territory, our health professionals. The reality in the Territory is that many of our health professionals are in remote communities without necessarily the protection that you would expect health professionals to have in our hospitals. So it is an area the government rightly decided requires more time, more consultation and

more discussion. We have undertaken to go back to the stakeholders and the community at large on this question of mandatory reporting. This we will do with a discussion paper being released shortly. We know it is an important, complicated issue particularly for the Territory.

I thank the members for their views and we will report on what the government intends to take on this issue. I want to say in the context of this discussion about the pros and cons of mandatory reporting that it is important to understand just how far and how seriously the government has gone in pursuing this issue. Sadly, we all know many of the victims of domestic violence appear first in our clinics and in emergency wards of our hospitals. So it is important in this debate for me to read the policy that the Health department has across the department of Health, Family and Community Services. That department has endorsed a policy approach to identify domestic and family violence in health care settings:

An executive domestic and family violence reference group has been established to oversee implementation of the domestic and family violence policy guided by strategic framework.

So it is not just a policy sitting on a shelf. It has a senior executive group pursuing its implementation. The Department of Health and Community Services' policy states, and this is important, that:

When staff assess that a client is experiencing serious and imminent threat or injury from violence they should make a report to police, despite the client's expressed wish to the contrary. Policy implementation and guidelines including a flow chart to guide staff through the assessment and reporting programs are being finalised. The Department of Health and Community Services staff training regarding domestic and family violence is a priority and will be ongoing in 2008.

Whilst we have had debate in the Chamber in regard to mandatory reporting, this is a government that is not ignoring the issue. We have extensively considered it in the last six months.

I pay tribute to the member for Nhulunbuy. He was passionate about having a significant look at the issue of mandatory reporting and whether it could be scooped up into the reforms we have before the House today. As I said, there are still pros and cons about that and, importantly, around protecting the victims and the people who make that report. There is a commitment that the government will continue to discuss this issue with

the stakeholders and we have a discussion paper going out very shortly. There is also commitment that we will report to this Assembly about the outcomes of that.

With reference to some of the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, I will preference my response to her questions by saying, under the Administrative Arrangements Order I am carrying this legislation as Leader of Government Business on behalf of the government. I do not have the portfolio as Attorney-General. I will ensure I refer to the incoming Attorney-General, to an extent, some of the details that she is seeking as appropriate. I do have some key responses to her regarding the questions she has raised, because I have sought advice during the debate.

With the definition of emotional abuse – and the Leader of the Opposition asked a question as to why that had not been included – I can advise that under section 1A of the *Criminal Code*, ‘harm’ is described as:

1. *Harm is physical harm or harm to a person’s mental health whether temporary or permanent.*
2. *Physical harm includes unconsciousness, pain, disfigurement, infection with a disease and any physical contact with a person that a person might reasonably object to in the circumstances, whether or not the person was aware of it at the time.*
3. *Harm to a person’s mental health includes significant psychological harm, but does not include mere ordinary emotional reaction such as those of only distress, grief, fear or anger.*

Harm is captured within the domestic violence reforms and so the issue of emotional abuse we saw as more appropriately being picked up in the *Criminal Code*’s definition of harm. This recognises the seriousness of domestic violence orders. It provides a threshold for courts to consider and will ensure that only matters of appropriate levels of seriousness are brought before the courts.

The Leader of the Opposition very genuinely spoke about the issue of rehabilitation and the role that those programs play for offenders. That it is very appropriate for the government to provide, if the Leader of the Opposition requires, a further briefing on where we are headed with offender rehabilitation because it is in the area of significant work being undertaken by government.

The rehabilitation orders do require the consent of the offender. The question was why we have not made that compulsory. It is because the offender has not committed an offence and no provision for punitive sanction in form of a sentence is applied. The provision is consistent with the objects of the bill which is to ensure that people who commit domestic violence accept responsibility for their conduct. That is the advice I have received regarding the opposition’s questions. The opposition is also concerned that submissions of intention to enter rehabilitation will lead to the courts treating clients more leniently. I have been advised that once a defendant has consented to a rehabilitation condition, any failure in relation to those rehabilitation conditions will constitute a breach of the domestic violence order and serious consequences then flow from this breach.

The Leader of the Opposition had queries in regard to premises orders, and they were also raised by the member for Braintree. Premises orders create a presumption in favour of the person with the child remaining in the home. This provision protects the best interests of the child and ensures minimal disruptions to the child’s life and routine and provides some relief for crisis accommodation providers who currently have sole responsibility for providing accommodation for victims who, with their children, have to flee the family home following a domestic violence incident.

For too long, it has been assumed that it must be the victim - generally a woman - who, with a child or children, must leave the family home. This assumption is still being applied by those administering the law, despite provisions allowing otherwise in the current act. This provision will balance those assumptions and reduce the disadvantage to women who find it difficult to access affordable, appropriate and long-term housing.

The member for Nelson asked if we would be reviewing the objects of the act. I can advise that this bill is a significant departure from the existing legislation. This bill has had extraordinary consultation across the legal fraternity. Government always takes into account, with new legislation and significant reforming legislation such as we have before us today, keeping in touch with how the legislation is being implemented and applied across the legal fraternity and, obviously, the interface with the police and whether they find it workable. It will not be a formal review, but we always keep pace with how reforms like these are being implemented on the ground.

I refer to the premises orders. The member for Nelson could perhaps refer to the *Hansard* because I have already responded to that.

Regarding the issues around police, and whether they are perhaps showing some bias - and I am trying to choose my words gently here, member for Nelson - towards women in complaints, it would probably be appropriate to raise those matters with the Police Commissioner or the Police minister. I am really not in a position to speak on their behalf. If you are seeing a trend or have a concern, you mentioned the police complaints process. I think it would be very appropriate for you to raise any concerns of what you see as a potential bias or a trend. I have seen individual, rare allegations on the matter. However, on the whole, the feedback I am getting, in my community, is that the police do a very thorough job and are doing it in an unbiased way. If you have seen a trend then, by all means, raise that with either the Police Commissioner directly or the Police minister.

The definition of when a child is a child, and choosing an age of less than 18 years to 15 years, the international and Australian standards define a child as someone under 18, and this legislation is consistent with those national and international standards. We have been consistent in bringing it into this legislation and it exists in other Territory law. This is the advice I have received from Justice.

Why not cross-examine a child over 15 years when they are a victim? The advice that I have received is that they are still a child, they are still a victim, and they are still requiring protection. Of course, the government will watch over the operation of the bill. We thank you for your comments. In any significant reform such as this, part of what the government does is see how those reforms are being implemented through the system, through the court system, but also through the operational police systems.

I am informed personal violence orders, member for Nelson, are to cover persons not covered by the definition of domestic violence but still suffer from violence. It is important to recognise and publicly acknowledge the damage that domestic violence does to society. The amendments to the *Justice Act* will protect people not in domestic relationships where these orders are, in terms of legislation, their secondary issue. That is the advice I have received from the Department of Justice. If you have any further queries, you want to seek a briefing, or perhaps want to do a follow up with the Attorney-General in six months time and discuss any feedback you are getting as to how the reforms are being implemented, I am sure the Attorney-General will only be too willing.

We know these are significant reforms but, as I said at the outset, they are reforms that have been supported, very broadly and very widely, across the community, our legal sector, and those people

involved in the enforcement, the police. They are very necessary reforms regarding protection. I am advised that how the legislation applies is gender neutral; that is, the protections within the legislation apply equally to men. That is the advice I have received.

It is a significant reform. I thank the member for Nhulunbuy for the passion and commitment that he has shown in bringing this legislation to the Chamber for debate. I know that all the ministers were very supportive of his desire to really improve the domestic violence law that we had in the Territory. To have a domestic family violence law here before us today which provides for contemporary practice is a very special moment for our government.

I sincerely thank members opposite, the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Nelson and Braitling, for their support. It is not rare that we get bipartisan support but, on such significant reforms, it can be quite rare. I thank all members for their support.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 6, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 7:

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 25.1. This amends clause 7 of the Domestic and Family Violence Bill to ensure that it is consistent with the drafting of the stalking provision in the model Criminal Code. Clause 7 sets out the behaviour that constitutes stalking. It will also ensure that innocent attendance at a social venue will not constitute domestic violence for the purpose of obtaining an order.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 8:

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 25.2 and 25.3. These amendment amends clauses 8(b) and (c) of the bill. These clauses set out the behaviour that constitutes economic abuse; specifically the disposal of property. The amendment adds 'unreasonably' to the beginning of each subclause. It will provide a slightly higher threshold to ensure that innocent daily activities with respect to the disposal of property are not covered by the provision. It will also discourage potentially vexatious abuse of the provision.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 28, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 29:

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 25.4 to insert clause 29(2)(d). This amendment amends clause 29(2) of the bill. This clause sets out when a police officer or child protection officer must apply for a domestic violence order for the protection of a child. The amendment provides that police and child protection workers are not obliged to apply for domestic violence orders if they reasonably believe that an order is not necessary for the child's protection, because an order is in force for the child's protection such as another act such as the Care and Protection of Children act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 29, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 30 to 144, by leave, taken together and agreed to.

Clause 145:

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 25.5. In proposed section 85 omit 'parties to the DVO', and insert 'protected person and defendant'. This amendment amends clause 145 of the bill so as to omit reference to parties to the domestic violence order and replace it with protected person and defendant. This is a minor amendment to correct an oversight in the drafting of the bill.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 145, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill reported with amendments; report adopted.

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I move that the bill be read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

TABLED PAPER Treasurer's Mid-year Report 2007-08

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, I table the Treasurer's Mid-Year Report 2007-08.

MOTION Note Paper - Treasurer's Mid-year Report 2007-08

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Madam Speaker, the mid-year report satisfies the requirements of the *Fiscal Integrity and Transparency Act* and provides updated financial information for 2007-08 through 2010-11. It also meets with the Territory's mid-year obligations under the Uniform Presentation Framework Agreement. The 2007-08 mid-year report incorporates the outcome for the 2006-07 financial year, Cabinet decisions since 2007-08 budget, revised Territory revenue estimates including updated GST and taxation revenue, and other revenue related adjustments largely due to changes in specific purpose payments from the Australian government.

In addition, this report provides updated information on both the Territory's economic and fiscal outlook. The key fiscal highlights in the report include: cash targets for all years remain unchanged; operating results surpluses are predicted from 2007-08; a further \$68m increase to the significant investments in the Territory's infrastructure bringing the total estimate to \$697m; a nett debt to revenue ratio of 39% in 2007-08, an improvement of 6% since the 2007 budget; nett debt plus employee liabilities to revenue ratio to fall to 104% by 2010-11, also a 6% improvement on that projected in May 2007; and commitment of \$286m over five years to implement initiatives associated with *Closing the Gap* of indigenous disadvantage.

Some of the major components of these initiatives include: \$79m for child protection; \$70m for education; \$23m for health care; and \$48m for public safety, alcohol and drug management. Economic indicators have also been revised for 2006-07 as well as the 2007-08 year. For 2006-07 employment growth has been revised up to 5.3% due to the strong growth in resident employment across a broad range of industries; population growth has been revised up to 2% taking into account the effect of the 2006 Census on estimated resident population; and gross state product growth has been revised to 5.6% in line with extended time lines of the Alcan G3 upgrade.

For 2007-08, the updated economic indicators highlight the positive effect of increased activity and associated confidence in the Territory's economy. Gross state product in 2007-08 is forecast to increase by 4.6% revised up from the 3.7% forecast in the May budget. Economic growth will increasingly shift from the capital and labour-intensive construction phase of large commodity-based projects to the export oriented operational phase. In 2007-08, there will be strong export growth from full production at the LNG

plant; higher alumina production from Alcan's G3 investment at Gove; increased manganese exports from the Bootu Creek Mine near Tennant Creek and the GEMCO mine at Groote Eylandt, along with iron ore exports from Frances Creek.

Construction activity, employment growth and population growth are expected to remain strong. Investment expenditure will remain near historically high levels with the Darwin Waterfront development, Bonaparte gas pipeline project and a sizeable Defence infrastructure schedule in place for 2007-08. State final demand remains at high levels with forecast growth of 1.4% in 2007-08, a stronger outcome than the negative 2.1% forecast in May 2007. The extension to the time line of the Alcan G3 extension has been a major influence on the revision to state final demand growth in 2007-08, as well as additional public expenditure associated with Defence, the Territory's *Closing the Gap* initiative and the Australian government's intervention.

Employment is forecast to increase by 5.8% in 2007, revised up from the budget forecast of 2.3%. Business investment is expected to remain at historically high levels and, combined with ongoing strength in the retail and tourism related-industries, will continue to drive strong demand for labour. Population growth is forecast to strengthen to 1.8% to December 2007, stronger than the budget forecast of 1.4%. The improvement is largely due to higher rates of overseas migration and the smaller nett outflow of migrants interstate.

The inflation outlook reported at the time of the budget was that moderating growth in housing prices and the guiding prices for crude oil and bananas, would lead to a significant fall in the Darwin inflation rate. While this broad outlook remains unchanged, the rate of growth in the Consumer Price Index over 2007 has been stronger than estimated at the time of the budget. In May 2007, year-on-year inflation to December 2007 was estimated to increase to 3%. This is revised in the mid-year report to 3.5%. While growth in housing prices is expected to continue to moderate over the year, the ongoing drought in most of Australia, tight rental conditions in the Darwin property market, and continuing tightness in the labour market, especially for skilled labour, are expected to influence the inflation rate.

I now turn to the updated 2007-08 fiscal outlook. The general government sector cash outcome for 2007-08 and the forward estimates remains unchanged from the May 2007 budget, with a balanced position projected by 2008-09, rising to a surplus of \$34m in 2010-11. While the outcome remains unchanged, both receipts and payments have varied by \$167m. In 2007-08, operating receipts are expected to increase as a result of: higher stamp duty collections of \$20m

due to increased economic activity; higher GST revenue estimates of \$51m, primarily due to rebased population estimates from the 2006 census; and increases in the estimate of the national GST pool; an increase in Specific Purpose Payments from the Australian government of \$66m due to new agreements being finalised or renegotiated, largely related to education, health and public safety; and an upward revision to mining royalties of \$27m associated with increased mining production and rises in commodity prices.

Payments for 2007-08 have increased by \$160m due to: government decisions of \$68m including commitments in 2007-08 associated with implementing *Closing the Gap* initiatives, and increased housing demand in remote areas; the carryover of expense obligations from 2006-07 of \$37m, largely related to receipts from the Australian government late in 2006-07; and, payments of \$66m related to additional Specific Purpose Payments from the Australian government.

On an accrual basis, the nett operating result has improved since the May 2007 budget by \$38m. It is now projected to be a surplus of \$66m for 2007-08, and remaining in surplus in all forward years. The fiscal balance is slightly lower than that projected in May 2007 due to the increased capital investment for *Closing the Gap*. However, the fiscal balance continues to trend towards a balanced position over the forward estimate period. This trend of improvement would indicate that the Territory's aim of a balanced position for both measures by 2012-13 remains achievable.

Estimated nett debt of the non-financial public sector for 2007-08 has reduced by \$170m to \$1523m since May 2007, with further reductions in all forward years. When measured as a ratio to revenue, the 39% estimated in 2007-08 represents an improvement of 6% since budget time, and a significant reduction on the 67% recorded in 2001-02.

Despite the major investment in infrastructure projects across the Territory and increased funding in core service provision areas of health, education and public safety in recent years, nett debt plus employee liabilities is expected to be \$4.2bn for 2007-08, which is an improvement of \$138m since budget time. This is largely a result of the contribution of \$150m in 2006-07 towards the Territory's superannuation liability. When measured as a ratio to revenue, nett debt plus employer liabilities is expected to be 107% for 2007-08, a reduction of 8% on the May 2007 prediction. This represents a significant improvement on the 134% recorded in 2001-02, a significant improvement.

In conclusion, the 2007-08 mid-year report provides further evidence of the Territory's growing economy. The improved fiscal outlook underpins the government's commitment to maintaining its strong fiscal strategy principles while promoting economic activity and growth for the Territory. By continuing to manage the Territory's finances responsibly, this government has maintained its trend towards achievement of all fiscal targets while continuing to stimulate the Territory's economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the Treasurer's 2007-08 Mid-Year Report to the House. I move that the Assembly take note of the report, and that I have leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Future Planning for Residential and Industrial Land in the Northern Territory

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the member for Nelson:

I would like to raise a matter of public importance in parliament today, 29 November. The subject of the debate would be the future planning for residential and industrial land in the Northern Territory

(Signed) Gerry Wood.

Is the proposed discussion supported? The discussion is supported. I call on the member for Nelson.

Mr Vatskalis: Make it quick.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Yes, okay. Mr Deputy Speaker, I realise it is the last day, but it is important that we deal with some of these issues because we do not sit until next February. Some of these issues cannot be left until then because it is important that the government is at least aware that there are issues out there that are of concern, at least on this side of the House.

There has been much said about residential and industrial planning in the House of late. That is one of the reasons I brought on this matter of public importance because we do not have a chance to debate these issues unless the government brings them forward. I had two minutes to respond to the report the minister gave the other day on the residential development at Bakewell and Berrimah. In fact, I did not have two minutes to respond to it because we ran out of

time. There was another question, Mr Deputy Speaker, from you to the minister regarding Glyde Point and there was no chance for debate there either.

In the last two days, we have been discussing - on one side - the issues that are really important to the future growth of Darwin. Yet, on this side we, basically, have not been able to debate them. That is the reason I brought forward this matter of public importance.

At the present time - and I will give my reasons - government is doing planning on the run. I call it five-minute planning. This has been highlighted by the fact that, after all these years of talking about Weddell, all of a sudden we are talking about Cox Peninsula. After the recent discussions that have been in the public arena about the new eastern suburb plans for Palmerston, all of a sudden we have Berrimah. After all the talk about Glyde Point, we now have Middle Arm. My dispute with the government is that the government is desperately in need of a strategic plan.

In 1990, under the previous government, we had the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan. This still, to some extent, is what we use today - but I say only to some extent. The problem with this document - and I have said this before - is that it did not involve the community enough at that time. The reason it did not involve the community is because this document was put forward as part of the Kenbi land claim. It was rushed, to some extent, because the government required a document to indicate the future planning of Darwin.

Of course, there were other things that came out at that time, one of which was the Gunn Point Peninsula Land Use Structure Plan. These are all very good documents. They might be dated - there are some things in them that would not be relevant today - but they are part of a strategic plan. There was also, in the government's time, the Litchfield Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives, a document that is still used by the Development Consent Authority. That has come out in the government's time. Earlier this year, the government brought out the NT Planning Scheme and produced things like this map which is the Darwin Region Land Use framework. In that framework, it discusses Glyde Point and Weddell; it does not discuss Cox Peninsula and Berrimah. That is the closest the government has to setting strategic planning.

I will give you a number of examples where I think the government needs to take a step back and, before it makes anymore decisions, look at developing a plan perhaps using this Darwin Regional Land Use Structure plan as a foundation.

It needs to use this plan as a basis for community consultation to produce its own regional structure plan.

I highlight that, without a plan we get this idea now of five-minute planning. Out of the blue in the last sittings came this idea that we should develop Berrimah. Berrimah is not part of the Regional Land Use framework. It seems to me that the government has decided we need some cheap and affordable land, so let us use Berrimah. What worries me is that this land is actually being developed for a different socioeconomic group of people. We do not want to have too much public housing or housing commission in Bellamack or areas down there. We do not want to have them at Lyons because no one from – well, I am not sure that many private people could buy land in Lyons. From what the minister said, I believe that they are looking at a subdivision in an area that is like a ghetto; that has no relation to any part of Darwin or Palmerston. The government said - this is in reference to Berrimah - this site also has potential for affordable housing and social housing ...

Mr McAdam: And why not?

Mr WOOD: I will tell you why not. To start with, it is not in a strategic plan for housing. Actually, under your own planning, it is down as rural. That is what it is planned under your own 2007 document.

I will give you the reasons why it is inappropriate. First of all, the zones around the area are the sort of zones you do not want to put close to a residential area. You have light industrial, general industry, the prison, and the airport approaches. You will have a six-lane highway, in theory, called Tiger Brennan Drive, and you have Hidden Valley. If anyone has been to Berrimah Farm you will know that the bottom part of the farm is a valley and that is the valley that comes right through from Hidden Valley and you will get noise. There is no doubt about that.

Also, you are putting a relatively small community in isolation to services. Are you going to build a school in a little area like this? I doubt it very much. Are you going to build a supermarket in an area that only has 1000 or so people? I doubt it very much. You are putting people in isolation from the rest of their community. Except for the rural area there, there is no other population nearby. It is an industrial area. Although it exists as a farm at the present time, to put residential land in there in the way the government is talking about, is basically sentencing people to a second-class piece of country to live in.

Government might say it is a beautiful view, it is appropriate, and it is all cleared. Yes, but look around. You need to look further than that. You need to look at the social impacts of the other development in the area and you need to see what the connection is between this and the rest. It just sits in the middle of an industrial area and it is not attached to any residential areas anywhere else.

There has not been enough thought. This is a five-minute plan that was meant to stop some of the criticism that the government had not released enough land for first homeowners, or to increase the availability of land in the housing market.

Straightaway, this block of land is not suitable. Even if the government believes it is suitable, why has it not put out a plan for community consultation? Why is it not asking people whether they think this is a good idea? I say that because for some reason when it comes to the eastern suburbs of Palmerston, they put out a document and asked for people's comments. You might say that not many people commented and you are probably right, because I was one of them and I think that PAn, the Planning Action Network, was the other. It is the way it is put out that people do not understand.

In August this year they put out a proposed planning scheme amendment for Palmerston. Why would you be worried about opening up Berrimah when you have just put out a plan for the development of the new suburbs of Mitchell, Johnston and Zuccoli? There also was a statement by Mr Rod Applegate, the CEO of the department, saying that 'based on current demographic analysis' - this was at the Estimates Committee this year - 'we would estimate that there are 15-plus years still available for in-filling in the Palmerston area'. Fifteen to 20 years is what he said. So why would we be looking at Berrimah? You put out the eastern suburbs planning scheme in August this year which I commented on. Rod Applegate is saying there is 15 to 20 years of development in Palmerston. Why would we look at Berrimah all of a sudden? If we are going to look at Berrimah, let us look at it a lot slower than we are at the moment. Let us really assess whether there is going to be future issues related to the use of Berrimah.

There are other issues that have not even been raised. There is the issue of possible pollution. Anyone who has studied what has happened at Berrimah Farm will know that much of the land on the paddock that faces the industrial area was used for herbicide trials for many years. It may not be suitable for housing. Some of the land around the Berrimah Farm has heritage sites. I know members might have been approached by Mr Rob Wesley-Smith who loaned me a book that shows significant heritage sites in and around the existing

Berrimah Farm site. Some of these things have not been looked at.

Then we throw in the issue of Weddell. Weddell is on the framework: Darwin Region Land Use Framework, Future Town of Weddell. Why are we not looking at Weddell? Why have we all of a sudden dug up Cox Peninsula? I do not have a problem with the idea of eventually building at Cox Peninsula. This book, the *Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan*, talks about Cox Peninsula. It talks about the future, a whole series of future towns – and do not forget that this was written before the Kenbi land claim. As I said, it was done as part of a response by the government to the Kenbi land claim.

They looked at putting a series of urban centres around Darwin Harbour, and one of those centres was called Christie which is exactly what the government is talking about. They had other places like Douglas, Erendale and Dawaning but they also had Weddell. You would have thought that Weddell at the present time is the most obvious site simply because it is on a highway, it has a water supply going past it, it has a railway line and it interconnects with Palmerston. If you look at the Palmerston plans you will see an arterial road coming from Palmerston to Weddell; the two towns are interconnected. That makes sense, surely. You develop Weddell after you have developed Palmerston. You do not just pull Berrimah out of the hat and say 'great idea'.

With Weddell itself, why are we not talking with some of the private landowners there? Is the government concerned that the private owners of land in that area may develop the land? I do not know. I had a recent meeting with a number of landowners who would like to develop the areas around Noonamah, which you might say is on the outskirts of Weddell. I do not know whether the government will allow them to do that. They are, basically, looking at having smaller blocks that are somewhere between rural and suburban, and that is what their concept would be. They worry that the concept of Weddell has been thrown out the window and that Cox Peninsula is now going to be the next town.

What it highlights, minister, is that the government seems to be just doing things on the run. Glyde Point, again, is on Darwin Regional Land Use framework written by the government. The government, this year, supported this. It is now off there, and they are now putting it in Middle Arm. I do not want to get into too much argument about Glyde Point; there are many issues. I disagree with the reasoning behind what the minister did. The Darwin Regional Land Structure Plan did not have Glyde Point in it, by the way. The Gunn Point Peninsula Land Use Structure Plan did not have it. What happened here was

there is supposed to be a national park all around the coast. That has not occurred.

So Glyde Point has not always been in there. What has been in there is Point Margaret, which is out on the westerly coast. That has been an option for industrial development. It highlights the fact that you take something off your own long-term plan, you got rid of Glyde Point. You are not really happy about Weddell, so that is off. You plonked in Berrimah when it is not even on there. Where is your long-term strategy for planning? The question I have asked the minister, or I interjected to the minister, once Middle Arm is full of industry, where is the industry going? Where are the big industries going to go? The government needs long-term plans. It cannot go along and say: 'Cut this out, add that in'. That is going to cause disastrous planning in the future.

The other issue, for instance, is the development of the rural area. There is adequate land in the Howard Springs area called the Howard Springs Forestry; it is zoned residential. It belongs to the government. Yet, when I have asked the minister about opening up that land for first homeowners as one hectare subdivisions, the answer is 'just not interested'. But you go and pick Berrimah. Do not ask me why. We have land here that will not cause any problems, and we can develop it right away. It is not going to have pollution, it might have a few Cyprus pines and all that sort of thing, but it is not a problem, yet we are not doing that. That residential land in the forestry is in the strategic plans. It is in the plans for Litchfield Shire. If we are not going to use that land, what land are we going to use?

All I am trying to say is that we seem to be getting a five-minute planning version from the government in response to – well, Glyde Point was the Environment Centre and AFANT. I can say now that if you ask the Environment Centre if they want any industrial development, I am not sure they can give you an answer. If you ask the Environment Centre: 'If it does not go to Glyde Point, where should it go?', I do not think they can give you an answer. I can tell you that AFANT is used as an excuse. I bet if you said to AFANT: 'We will only put a jetty out there. We will not wipe out all the mangroves on the front, we did a proper environmental impact statement', which, by the way, has not been released for Glyde Point. If we looked at some alternative ways of balancing the environment and industry, there may have been a way that AFANT would agree, but we have not had that debate.

The government has just decided, bingo, end of Glyde Point. Bingo, we are in Middle Arm. Bingo, the minister takes all the planning power away from the Planning Authority and takes it for herself.

That is not the way we should be doing planning. I will give you a classic example where this is all wrong. The minister asked for the rezoning of Glyde Point. She put a public open space rezoning after she told us how pristine and important it was from an environmental point of view. Public open space – well, you can have footy ovals on it. It is not protecting it the way that she said it should be protected. She also put a conservation zone, in theory, around the edge of Leeders Creek. Leeders Creek was already zoned. She put it over the 500 m corridor that was planned to go from south to north, and she put a conservation zone over that corridor. If there is ever any development there, we may not be able to remove that conservation zone because conservation zones are extremely hard to remove.

To me, that was all just spin. If the minister was concerned about Glyde Point, she should have put a zoning called FD, Future Development, which says we just leave it as it is for the moment, nobody can touch it until we have a bigger look at it. The disappointing thing is that, in this debate, the minister, because she is the minister for Planning, is the one who approves the zones. The minister said: 'I want PS, that is public open space at Glyde Point, and I want a conservation zone near Leeders Creek'. So it goes before the Development Consent Authority, and they all talk about it and people say they agree or disagree, and it goes back to the minister for approval. That is where you needed an EPA, because the minister has a conflict of interest. She is the one who put forward the application to rezone the land and she is the one who approves it. That is not exactly what I call a neutral way of doing things.

Getting back to the very essence of what I was saying - I believe Berrimah should be put on hold for the time being. We should continue with the development of Palmerston; that is important. According to the government, 15 to 20 years, so what is the hurry about Berrimah? We should be looking at future planning of Weddell and Cox Peninsula. I have no problem with that. However, let us not put Cox Peninsula in front of Weddell. We need land, we need to plan well, and we need to do it properly.

What I am saying is that, out of this mess, there is an opportunity for the government to put out something like this in a draft form, call public meetings in the area – Cox Peninsula, the rural area, the Darwin area – so that we can come up with a land use structure plan that is, you might say, a 2007 version. This is 17 years old. It certainly needs revitalising and it needs looking at again, because we know the Kenbi land claim has been decided. There have been changes to industry. At that time, there was no gas mentioned in this particular document. Minister, why can we not look at something similar to this? It would be a

good way for people to have a say in the future of Darwin. It would be also beneficial to the government that they could use a document that they could hang their hat on and say: 'This is something of the future. This is something that people will support as well'.

At present, things like Berrimah are just being pulled out of a hat, and that needs much more consultation before it is given the green light. I believe it is the wrong place; you will make a ghetto. You might say it is low-cost housing, but you need that closer - far closer - attached to existing suburbs of the Darwin and Palmerston area.

Mr McADAM (Housing): Mr Deputy Speaker, I speak to the matter of public importance around the future planning for a residential and industrial land in the Territory introduced by the member for Nelson. The minister for Planning will speak next, and she will attest that this government will underpin future growth and opportunity in the Territory through strategic land planning and land release. We will safeguard the lifestyle that Territorians enjoy.

This government has sparked record sustained growth in the economy. We have fostered a level of growth in jobs that is the envy of all Australia. Our population is now increasing at 2% a year, and we are attracting more and more people to work and raise their families in the Territory each year. We are bucking national trends.

This also extends to housing affordability, where the Territory maintains the second most affordable housing of all jurisdictions. This is no accident; this has been planned by this government. We have worked hard. We have a strong economy emerging, regional economies, and a growing jobs market. Similarly, we have a robust plan to secure housing affordability. This takes in home purchase assistance through HomeNorth, generous stamp duty concessions, the First Home Owners Grant, and a targeted social housing safety net. HomeNorth has helped put 1018 Territory families into their homes. We have invested over \$194m in those loans and shared equity purchases since 1 July 2004.

This government is planning for the future and we have helped many young Territorians to build their lives in the Territory. I am pleased to report that 65% of homebuyers who have used HomeNorth as a stepping stone were under the age of 35, and 93% of HomeNorth clients have a gross household income of less than \$1100 per week. Many of these young households - 90% in fact - would not have been able to purchase their homes without the government providing support of shared equity. HomeNorth has, without a doubt, proven to be the most effective shared

equity home purchase assistance scheme in Australia.

Earlier this year, I visited the newly purchased home of Cameron Jackson, 20 years old, a very nice young man and his partner, Heidi Geiger, to mark the milestone of the 1000th HomeNorth loan. Cameron and Heidi made it clear how important HomeNorth is as a stepping stone for young homebuyers. They purchased a unit with a HomeNorth loan and also took advantage of the \$10 000 interest-free loan to buy whitegoods and other essentials. They also made use of our shared equity scheme, because paying 100% of the property would have put the home out of their reach.

Recent reforms have strengthened HomeNorth and this government will ensure that it stays in line with the property market. The beginning of the 2007-08 financial year has seen the strongest uptake of the First Home Owners Grant for six years. For the first few months of this year, the number of new grants paid through Treasury increased on the previous year by nearly 30% from 180 to 232. Also, as part of Budget 2007, this government provided a boost to first homebuyers by slashing stamp duties. We increased the concessions from \$225 000 to \$350 000. This put an extra \$8000 extra in the pockets of first homebuyers. As I have stated the Territory has the second most affordable ...

Ms CARNEY: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I refer you to Standing Order 67, Digression from Subject. I know the minister is reading a prepared speech but what I have heard to date has relatively little - in fact, in some respects, absolutely nothing - to do with the motion before the House. I urge you to have a look at that standing order and direct him accordingly.

Ms LAWRIE: Speaking to the point of order, the issues around housing affordability are critically linked to the issues around planning for the residential requirements of the Territory.

Mr WOOD: Speaking to the point of order, I agree with the Opposition Leader. The minister is obviously reading a prepared statement. I gave a statement regarding future planning of land in the Darwin region. I was not here to debate whether housing was affordable. I may have mentioned it in about 1% of my talk. The rest of it was about future planning for residential and industrial land. The emphasis was about trying to get the government to produce long-term strategies in relation to planning. I am happy to have a debate about housing affordability. This was not about that.

Ms LAWRIE: Speaking to the point of order, you cannot divorce the issues of whether you have

a very clear eye on the ball as a government on the issues of affordability when you are dealing with the issues of planning for residential land release. They are inextricably linked. In every debate and discussion we have had in this Chamber on this issue, it has always included the issues of housing affordability, and the cost of housing. I am sure the member for Blain will touch on this subject as well in his contribution, just as you, member for Nelson, admitted that you also touched on it. The weight that you give it does not mean it is not very much a part of the debate. Are you trying to gag debate?

Ms CARNEY: Speaking to the point of order, Standing Order 67 is quite specific. It says:

No Member shall digress from the subject matter of any question under discussion:

And there are three exceptions as outlined in subparagraphs (a), (b), and (c). I put it to you that what the minister has talked about to date does not fall within any of those quite specific exceptions listed and provided for in Standing Order 67.

Ms LAWRIE: Speaking further to the point of order, Madam Speaker, the matter of public importance is about planning residential and industrial land release. No government can plan appropriate residential land release without understanding the economic environment in which they are doing it, without also understanding the affordability aspects of entering into the housing market. If you plan residential land release in a vacuum to what is happening in the housing market and the economy, you will get your planning wrong.

It is critical that the Minister for Housing deals with these issues which the government deals with in understanding its pace of residential land release. It is absolutely part of this debate. If the opposition thinks it is not, they are way off the track. The issues are around economics - supply and demand. When you are looking at planning for residential and industrial land release, you have to look at the economic continuum of supply and demand.

Madam SPEAKER: Just resume your seat.

Mr WOOD: Madam Speaker, I think the proof is in the pudding. I gave a speech which was done from notes. The minister had a completely typed speech. I would have thought he would not know what I was going to say ...

A member interjecting.

Mr WOOD: Excuse me!

Madam SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr WOOD: He would not know what I was to say, unless he is a very quick typist, until he heard from me. So he is reading from a prepared speech. It is not related to what I was trying to put forward in my matter of public importance.

Madam SPEAKER: I will take no more comments on this. I will just read what I received as a matter of public importance. It says:

I would like to raise a matter of public importance in parliament today, 29 November. The subject of the debate would be the future planning for residential and industrial land in the Northern Territory.

It is signed by Gerry Wood, MLA.

It is my view that this is a very general topic and that, from this, what the member for Nelson might be speaking about would be so broad that the minister can speak on anything in relation to that. The matters that you raised in the point of order earlier are not in the MPI whatsoever. If there were only specific things you wished to raise in the MPI then you should have stated them in here, member for Nelson. I will allow the minister to continue the debate.

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker, a different point of order this time! The minister is clearly reading from a speech, everyone knows it. I ask that he table the speech so at least we can read it along with him. You recall you ruled on numerous occasions that this ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! I am sorry I cannot hear. I am sorry I was unable to hear that.

Ms CARNEY: You ruled on numerous occasions that when someone is talking directly from the notes, that they be tabled. We ask that the same thing occur today.

Ms LAWRIE: Speaking to the point of order, Madam Speaker. It is not a statement. They are notes. He is speaking from notes.

Ms CARNEY: They have been tabled before. Table what you are reading.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of Government Business, please resume your seat. Leader of the Opposition, please cease interjecting.

Minister, the notes that you are reading from, is it a prepared statement or does it have personal notes on it? Is it something you are comfortable to table?

Mr McAdam: They are prepared notes, personal notes.

Madam SPEAKER: Personal notes; therefore, there is no reason for you to table it.

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Personal notes are not matters which ...

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker, he is clearly reading from a speech. He has just misled the parliament.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, you will withdraw those comments unless you are doing so by way of substantive motion.

Ms CARNEY: Madam Speaker, he has hoodwinked the parliament.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, resume your seat. Minister, please continue.

Mr McADAM: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said previously ...

Ms Carney: See if he can do it without reading.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McADAM: Just hold on, Leader of the Opposition. As I have said previously throughout the course of the speech, in the September quarter, Territorians were paying an average of 22.4% of their household income to home loan repayments. This was up by about 0.1% for the last quarter. The average household income in respect of the national level was around about 33.6%, and this figure comes on the back of a 0.7% increase since the last quarter. Clearly, the Northern Territory is doing very well in this regard.

The Territory government has also been very strong and aggressive in providing an environment of confidence for Territorians to be able to invest in their own homes. Through the HomeNorth loan and strategic land releases, we have created an opportunity for Territorians to achieve the great Australian dream.

The Minister for Planning and Lands will make it very clear that our strategic land releases are central to our plans for housing affordability. Over the next few years, more than 2500 residential blocks will be available to the public. The Bellamack development ...

Ms CARNEY: A point of order, Madam Speaker! It is abundantly clear that the minister is reading from a speech. He represented to you ...

Members interjecting.

Ms CARNEY: If I may finish, Leader of Government Business.

Mr McAdam: I said 'prepared notes'.

Madam SPEAKER: Minister, resume your seat. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This minister did hoodwink parliament. He is clearly reading from a speech. He said to you, Madam Speaker, that they were speaking notes. I press again and ask that he table the document from which he is reading.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, I will not be asking the minister to table the document. It may well be that the minister has personal notes on the document, which means that ...

A member: Well, let us have a look at it.

Ms CARNEY: We have objected on that basis before, Madam Speaker. Why is it one rule for them and one for the other?

Madam SPEAKER: Excuse me, Leader of the Opposition, would you mind not leaving while I am speaking. It is against the standing orders.

Ms CARNEY: I apologise for that.

Madam SPEAKER: Would you resume your seat please?

Ms CARNEY: You are just a liar.

Ms LAWRIE: Madam Speaker!

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, withdraw that please.

Ms CARNEY: I withdraw the word 'liar' in relation to the minister, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: In relation to documents which are tabled that are those of a minister, the question the Speaker has to ask is: are they matters which you are willing to table? Do they contain matters which are of a personal nature, or do they have personal notes on them? If they do, then the minister is entitled to not table the documents, or indicate to me that he does not wish to table the documents. He has indicated to me that there are matters in the documents and that he does not wish to table these documents. I, therefore, accept that.

Ms CARNEY: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam SPEAKER: Thank you. Please continue, minister.

Mr McADAM: Madam Speaker, as I indicated previously, the Bellamack development will deliver around 7000 lots. Fifteen percent of these will be set aside for public housing and, of course, affordable housing. This government will also ensure that, in the Berrimah Estate, there will be a further 700 housing blocks released onto the market. As most members will be aware, this is between Darwin and the Palmerston CBD, and will also cater for and give people an opportunity who are trying to break into the home market.

The same holds true in respect of the Larapinta development in Alice Springs where government has earmarked a portion of land lots for affordable housing and for public housing. Two hundred and fifty-three home buyers in Alice Springs have already taken up the HomeNorth Scheme. I know that we will increase these figures in the New Year, when 60 allotments priced for first time homebuyers come onto the market at Larapinta. We will also call on the Defence Housing Authority to provide affordable housing options as part of the new land development.

The other matter which is very important, is that, as you indicated clearly, this is a very broad subject. This is also very much linked to the capacity of people having the opportunity of home affordability and this government has to be very strategic with the land releases. This is a matter which is of immense importance right across the Northern Territory.

Whilst I am very much aware that the member for Nelson clearly is referring to this particular region up here, I can assure him that there are also the same issues, the same matters, which are under consideration in other areas of the Northern Territory other than those areas that clearly are in the interest of the member in question ...

Mr Wood: I agree with you.

Mr McADAM: So, you agree with what I am saying?

Mr Wood: I agree with what you said about there being other areas which need strategic plans.

Ms Lawrie: Show him some courtesy.

Mr McADAM: Would you like to hear some more?

Mr Wood: I was not being discourteous, I agreed with the minister.

Mr McADAM: As I said to you, I believe it is a very important issue right across the Northern Territory. I can refer to places like Borroloola, Elliott, Tennant Creek, Ti Tree, Mataranka, Timber Creek ...

Mr Wood: I only had 20 minutes, give me two hours. I cannot cover the whole Territory.

Mr McADAM: It is an important subject and I am entitled to put a position ...

Mr Wood: I am supporting you!

Mr McADAM: ... as it relates to the Northern Territory.

Housing affordability and residential land release in the areas that I have just mentioned are the challenges for government, I believe, over the next few years. Obviously, many of these places have become residential centres such as the ones that I referred to, particularly Ti Tree, where you have a clinic, a school on a major highway, and potentially a labour market in the horticultural industry. The challenge for government will always be to try to provide housing in those areas. That is why I believe it is very important that, as a government, we work very hard over the next few years to negotiate equitable deals with the traditional landowners and the respective land councils.

Through leases under section 19 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act* there are real opportunities here for public housing. However, more important, is the capacity of those people who move into those houses to be able to become first homebuyers. The figures across Australia for indigenous home ownership, if I remember correctly, are probably the lowest in the Northern Territory. I believe it is around 3%. I stand to be corrected on that. However, it is something that we, as a government, should take up as a challenge. I urge the member for Nelson to come on board and support that position as we go forward, as he has already indicated.

It is also important to note that we have had a change of government. We now have a new federal Labor government. The issues around residential land releases and first homebuyers is something that was absolutely ignored by the previous government, particularly in the context of their capacity to be innovative and creative in trying to provide a real market for the first homebuyer, and being more cooperative with the Northern Territory government by being able to release some of the Defence Force land. It is for that reason, I believe, that this government will be in a far better position to work with the Commonwealth government on the issues of residential land release and, more importantly,

giving young people, first homebuyers, the capacity to get into the first home market.

As we release extra residential land, the package proposed by the Rudd government is a very attractive one. It will provide a real focus for people to get into the first home market. It will, I believe – there is absolutely no doubt into the future – make land cheaper. If I can, Madam Speaker ...

Mr Wood: You own land; you have a lot of it yourself.

Mr McADAM: That is the Commonwealth government ...

Mr Wood: No, you have a lot of land – us.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr McADAM: Just to remind the member for Nelson, the key elements of the Rudd, now Prime Minister Rudd, plan are an annual \$6000 federal tax incentive for up to 10 years to investors who construct affordable rental housing, and a direct or in-kind support of \$2000 per annum from state and territory governments to investors who access the tax incentive. The scheme is geared to attract institutional investors such as superannuation funds. That, in itself, is a real opportunity. Over the last few years, I have had the opportunity to speak to some of the equity funds and superannuation funds and I know they are very interested and keen to engage governments in the development of residential land, to look at affordable home options. By creating that environment for the business sector provides a real opportunity for some of these big players, particularly the superannuation funds, which are looking at long-term investments and returns for their members.

It is for that reason that I believe the package proposed by the Commonwealth Labor government is a very good one. It will assist first homebuyers and, at the same time, you will get a level of competition that was not there in the past regarding some of the tax incentives for the residential land releases.

Despite what the Leader of the Opposition might say, effectively they are linked, they cannot be separated, they are an integral part of the equation. To suggest otherwise is foolish.

Kevin Rudd, when he was in opposition, announced that there would be a total of over \$603m directed into the schemes which I have described. It will provide accommodation to the private sector renters at something like 20% below the market rate. It will create demand for strategic

residential land and, at the same time, get people into the marketplace.

In essence, I commend the member for Nelson for introducing this important topic into the House. It is an issue which has been around for a long time. Quite frankly, as I have said to you previously, I do not think governments have been able to address these sorts of issues. However, what I am convinced of is that there will be a more strategic land release program into the future. The most important thing is that you cannot release land unless you are in a position to be able to provide a strategic home affordability package. That is what it is all about.

I commend the comments by the member for Nelson.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Madam Speaker, my understanding, and I am sure any member of this Chamber would agree with me, is that this is an unusual portion of our capacity as parliamentarians to raise matters. It does not have a resolution. It provides an opportunity for the focus on a matter of genuine public importance. The person bringing that on, carries that matter, with some notice to the House, and describes it. The terms of that description are circulated. The initial speech sets the parameters for the discussion, and from that debate then our focus is brought to bear upon this matter of public importance ...

Members interjecting.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Mr MILLS: Do not be too offended, I am not having a go at anyone. I am setting the scene for a continued response to what I understand this matter of public importance to be ...

Mr Conlan: You actually listened to what he said, Terry.

Mr MILLS: That is correct. The subject of this debate, and the subject of my comments, will be shaped by what is placed before this Chamber, and the comments of the member who brought this matter.

The debate is focused on, as my comments will be, the future planning for residential and industrial land in the Northern Territory. It is factors related to planning - planning ahead. The core message that was delivered by the member for Nelson was couched in terms of a number of questions. Those questions cannot be satisfactorily answered unless we have an agreed framework upon which a plan is based. We are talking about something which is ahead of us, that is strategic, and higher than many of the reactive comments we receive.

Government, with their siege mentality, appear to think this is about them, is a criticism directly of them, and they take it personally. You can deny this, but my hunch is that you knew there was an MPI, you knew what it was about, and someone up there on the fifth floor, or out in a department, wrote a speech which would have fitted into 20 minutes. Really, it was an attempt to present something which was reactive, thinking that it was about them, and so they must defend themselves. So, they wrote a speech which was couched in defensive terms; and is reactive. If you are going to establish a strategic plan, that is, by contrast, proactive.

There are some serious problems. There is a growing cloud of questions and confusion about the future of the urban, rural, industrial land access, a plan into the future. They are genuine questions and, if government is going to take this personally and react in a snarly way and think it is about them, they are really barking up the wrong tree. It is not about you. It is about those who are to come. We have a responsibility to set a strategic plan in place.

As a resident of Palmerston - and I have been in that city for 18 years - as an aside, I am not really qualified to be a part of any of the community consultation activities or receive any recognition for the contribution for the years that I have lived there. I do have a contribution, I have been there for 18 years and I will say that Palmerston itself - and heavens, I am going to actually refer to plans that emanated from a previous government. It is not about the government or the people. It is about the plan. Palmerston, used as an example, had a great opportunity to develop a very good plan. As the members for Brennan and Drysdale would have picked up on a number of those community consultations, there are some serious concerns about the nature of how the plan, which was not a very good plan, has left us with serious problems that are almost impossible to fix today.

Like the CBD of Palmerston, it is a problem. You have roads in place today as a result of inferior planning yesterday. It has nothing to do with you guys by the way. It was a former CLP government so you can breathe easy on that one. But it happened before and that clearly illustrates that by having an inadequate plan you inherit problems today that are incredibly difficult to solve. That is what this MPI is about.

Having lived in Palmerston for 18 years - just by the way, I am not tied to Palmerston, this is for illustrative purposes only. I am not forgetting Alice Springs, Elliott or Borroloola, and I have been to Borroloola and I do have ...

Members interjecting.

Mr MILLS: No, honestly. I need to say this because it does help anchor this debate back to where it should be. That being we need to lift it up and start to consider where we are now and where we can be. If we do not think about it in those terms, we react today and make decisions today. We put this here and put that there, respond to this pressure that is arising today. We make a decision tomorrow and we stave off the pressure momentarily. Then you move on and we are left with what we have with Palmerston, to use as an illustration: some immensely difficult problems to solve. For example, in the CBD, everyone knows a supermarket is in the wrong spot; we cannot do anything about it. That is the way it is. Could it have been different? Yes. How? By having a different plan. That is what this is about.

How is it that we have made a decision concerning where industrial development should be? On what basis was that decision made? These are the deeper questions to which we do not have effective answers. There is a very big difference between being reactive, which is what we are witnessing at the moment. The message that was bellowed out in the first term of this government was 'get out there, get out there, and have a listen'. Honestly, get out there and have a listen. There are some people becoming increasingly anxious that there is no clearly defined or understood plan that we can work to. In recent times, a number of decisions have been made that do not seem to reinforce or encourage the view that there is a strategic plan.

A strategic plan should exist outside of and above the day-to-day deliberations of government. If you do not have a strategic plan you become reactive. We have seen it in the Chamber here where there has been pressure brought to bear because, as the previous speaker, the member for Barkly, was describing, household affordability is a problem. That issue is being spoken of, government then defends their position and then decides they need to change that position so, then, the whole argument changes.

Sitting behind that are much deeper issues than having to respond politically. That is called being reactive. If you are not reacting in a context of a deeper framework of principles that are solid and we all understand, we end up with decisions we will regret, or problems impossible to solve easily, and then you move on. The big difference between being reactive is you are self-centred and you are looking at yourself, you are trying to solve a problem today, and you are the centre of that. Being proactive, the issues are outside, and you are striking a path that is external to the current environment.

That is what we need, something outside of that. For example, there has been a consensus of

view, formed by consistent dialogue regarding Weddell, whether it is from government officials, planners, environmentalists, or people who have had a similar view or interest in what lies over the horizon. I have been in school council meetings where we were planning ahead. This was about 15 or 16 years ago. The notion of another development occurring was already in existence then, and these organisations were thinking ahead and starting to plan. Now, almost overnight, that plan has disappeared. That results in some confusion, and I am using this, once again, as an illustration.

What I want to see is a higher order plan, a strategic vision. If you do not have a vision, if you cannot see where you are going, you get lost. If you are in the bush, and you start to get panicky because you are not quite sure which way you should go, where you left the four-wheel drive, you start to make decisions that are drawn out of fear and you react. It is not until you climb up a tree and get some major landmarks that are further from you that you can start to plot your course. This issue is, we do not have the course, we cannot see exactly where we are, so you need a strategic plan.

How do you go about a strategic plan? Basic principles - a strategic plan requires a strategic analysis of exactly where we are now. I am certainly not encouraged by what I have just heard. That was a reactive response to a higher order issue that has been placed for us to consider, as parliamentarians, about the future of the Territory, the future of development. It has social implications. It has economic implications. It takes some vision, it takes imagination. First of all, you must be able to analyse where we are currently, and you should not be looking at that in political terms.

Of course, we are living in a society where people have their own particular interests, and we are required to draw upon the obligation of leadership and analyse that in a manner which is fair and balanced. Once that analysis has been made - and the term that is often used and, sadly sullied in recent times, is community consultation; genuinely asking a person what they think, not having an idea and endeavouring to sell it to them. That is not consultation. That is a bit like - and all due respect to an Amway salesman - forging social relationships for the purpose of selling Amway. It is like you have an idea and you recruit a master salesman and you consult people by forcing your idea on them. That is not consultation. Have you ever been in the position where you have actually asked someone else how they feel, or what they think, and wait for them to answer? Or, what did you do during the holidays, for example, and you are only asking them

because you want to tell them about where you went for holidays.

There is a big difference. Consultation is asking someone the question, and listening to what they say. That allows you to form strategic analysis. You ask that of the stakeholder, the young family, the senior citizens, the Chamber of Commerce, and recreational groups. Ask them the question. Let them tell you, then craft it. That is strategic analysis. Set a position, then you set a strategic direction based upon that clean analysis. An analysis is done in the best long-term interests of the entire community. If you are mature enough, you are able to extract yourself from that; you are not at the centre of it. You are doing it for others. Then, ultimately, you set an action plan so you know where you are going.

Then the message is clear; people understand what we are doing. The school council that is thinking over the horizon can start to talk about the school developing and start to make some provision in their forward plans about where the next city or the next town may be. They think ahead. If you do not have that, you have confusion. You have a reactive tone that starts to develop within the culture of the Territory, and people become fragmented and there is a lack of coordination of effort and an inefficiency that grows from that.

That is what I understand this discussion is about; it is about strategic planning. I say the future belongs to the political party, the community leaders going up to the next Territory election, who can describe this in terms which inspires people and that they can understand. I have not been inspired by the actions of this government in recent times. It is particularly confusing when we have a minister who has two competing and contesting positions - one planning, the other environment. That is confusing to start with. I do not think that is an appropriate foundation to build upon if we are going to talk about genuine strategic planning. I support the statement; I think it is a ripper.

Ms LAWRIE (Planning and Lands):
Mr Deputy Speaker, I sincerely commend the member for Nelson for raising this MPI. I know he is genuine in wanting to ensure that there is a robust planning process. He takes an extremely keen interest in planning. Member for Nelson, there is a genuine acceptance and acknowledgement of where you are coming from on this. I guess it is one of those things. There is a lot of work that government does within government and with key industry stakeholders. We do not necessarily get out there and communicate that work. Much of what is at the heart of what you are saying we should be doing, we genuinely are doing.

You continue to make reference to the Darwin Regional Land Use Structure Plan of 1990. The reality is, in February of this year, I introduced the Northern Territory Planning Scheme. It has replaced the many planning documents in the Regional Land Use Structure Plan. The Planning Scheme - and I said it at the time - will be a dynamic document.

I have been meeting with councils across the Territory to say that amendments will be made to the scheme from time to time. I genuinely want to hear from councils about what their future land use needs are and how they see those needs emerging. For example, I was in Batchelor last week meeting with the Coomalie Council. Batchelor, as we know, is thriving with the resources boom there. It is fantastic to see. They are under real pressure for increased residential land. There is a subdivision proposal on public exhibition at the moment. I have said to Coomalie - and it is genuine: have a look at the land in your region and tell me where you see your priorities for residential land release. Quite a lot of the land there is freehold so it presents opportunities. I have put a lot of effort into trying to engage and get back into solid discussions with the Northern Land Council to provide for some considered planning around land release for both residential and industrial in our regional centres. Those discussions have been happening in Darwin to do with Darwin, Palmerston, and the rural area, but they have also been happening Territory-wide.

Recently, I was in Alice Springs and I spoke to the members of my agency about the process we are embarking on in Alice Springs to plan those long-term plans for land release strategies for Alice Springs and engaging the community in genuine consultation about that. I have already written to the Alice Springs Town Council's Mayor, Fran Kilgariff, to say this is the process we are embarking on; we want council, as part of a reference group, to work with us. We are getting some information finalised and then we are going to council with that. We will work with council on those plans, and we will go out to the public with those plans early next year. So it is a process not unlike the process I have already undertaken in Darwin in regards to the CBD, which I will talk about further.

I agree that we need to have strategic, long-term plans about land release. The opposition member wants to use a bit of a political beat up but, quite frankly, the moment I became the Minister for Planning and Lands, I asked my agency: 'When is Bellamack scheduled for release?' and I brought those plans forward. Bellamack has come forward by about 12 months. The moment I became minister, I ensured that occurred. Why? Because the Territory's economy

is moving ahead in leaps and bounds, our population is growing, businesses are expanding and employment has risen by 6%

A growing population, and an economy, puts pressure on land availability - land for people to live and land for businesses to develop. While property prices have risen in recent years, Darwin still remains the second most affordable capital city behind Canberra, and the Territory has the highest percentage of first homebuyers in the property market.

Yesterday, I reported to the Assembly on the government's land release strategies. Appropriate land release strategies are an important aspect of the property market. Thirteen expressions of interest were received for the development of the new suburb of Bellamack in Palmerston. This development will provide approximately 700 blocks, with 15% being reserved for first homebuyers, and affordable and public housing. More than 20% of the total area of the suburb will be retained as open space.

Bellamack was not just rushed out the door. Bellamack was well thought out and well planned. It provides for a neighbourhood village - something that the planners from the past had walked away from under the CLP. In relation to the further expansion of Palmerston, there are plans for the future development to the east of Palmerston. We are also looking to the west of Palmerston, towards Darwin. Plans for the future development for the east of Palmerston have been on public exhibition. We are trying to engage the community, to say tell us what you think about this. To try to say that we are not looking strategically, as the member for Blain would have us think, is quite wrong. The member for Nelson at least attends DCA hearings and understands what is going on.

Planning is already well under way for the future eastern suburbs of Palmerston. This community consultation and the series of public meetings have been led by the local members for Brennan and Drysdale. They are engaging in the public consultation process for Palmerston East. Importantly, people need to know where Palmerston is going to grow to, what that growth will look like, how we are going to take care of Mitchell Creek - important issues such as where the green belts and the recreations centres will be.

I recently amended the Northern Territory Planning Scheme to introduce planning principles and area plans to cover those future eastern suburbs of Mitchell, Johnston and Zuccoli. It is estimated that the Palmerston eastern suburbs will provide for another 4000 homes. Last month, the government announced the majority of the land at Berrimah Farm will be redeveloped for residential

and industrial uses. Preliminary concept plans have been prepared for this area, which is ideally situated between Darwin and Palmerston. Approximately 20 ha of this land will be available for light industry on a range of lot sizes. Approximately 80 ha is available for residential development with a mix of single dwellings and medium density unit-type housing, expected to provide around 700 residential dwellings.

The response from the community to this announcement has been fantastic. Many people have contacted my office, and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, supporting the decision, and wanting to put their names down for future blocks ...

Mr Wood: Did you give them the other side of the argument?

Ms LAWRIE: The TCA, the HIA and the Real Estate Industry have also supported this announcement ...

Mr Wood: Yes, but they sell land, they don't plan it.

Ms LAWRIE: Graham Kemp from HIA said, and I quote:

I am delighted to see that the government released this land.

Craig O'Halloran from the TCA was pleased to hear it and would like to see it fast-tracked beside Bellamack. Ryan O'Halloran of the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory said:

The development was welcome news, the future looks bright for Darwin and this, with the Bellamack development, is fantastic.

Mr Wood: How many planners did you ask?

Ms LAWRIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Nelson is interjecting. I understand the odd interjection is fine, but he talks to me constantly ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Nelson, please give the minister a chance to speak.

Mr Mills: You do it a fair bit.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Blain, please.

Ms LAWRIE: The member for Nelson has been keen to see the residential ...

Mr Mills: These people raise children.

Ms LAWRIE: I beg your pardon?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is all right, minister.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The members for Nelson, Blain and Greatorex have been continually agitating. We listened to you all contribute ...

Mr Conlan: They are just laughing because it is funny.

Ms SCRYMGOUR: Member for Greatorex, I have a point of order. Can you please give a bit of respect to the minister and her reply? The MPI was brought on and she is responding. Can you please ask those three members to sit and listen, and they might learn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. I ask the members on the opposite side of the House to please give the minister the chance to speak, and courtesy, particularly as we are coming up to Christmas.

Mr MILLS: Mr Deputy Speaker, a point of order! I am happy to comply. However, you are obviously aware that precisely the same occurred whilst I was speaking. That was not an offence to you, but I will let that go.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms LAWRIE: The member for Nelson is arguing that people would rather move further away from Darwin to Weddell. While Weddell is identified for future residential development, it makes planning sense to look at infill developments closer to Darwin when there are the opportunities, and when they arise. This provides for efficient infrastructure development and, importantly, for ease of extension and access to community services and public transport.

While development continues in the new suburbs of Palmerston, and Lyons at Lee Point in Darwin, the Litchfield Shire is also not missing out. In the last 12 months, 50 subdivisions have been approved in Litchfield Shire which provides around 360 blocks for people wanting to live in a rural environment. At the current rate of land sales in the shire, this provides sufficient supply for at least two years.

Following the release of the September 2007 quarter HIA *Northern Territory Outlook* publication, the HIA NT branch manager commented:

The Northern Territory is certainly out performing Australia as a whole on the home building front. Housing starts increased by 4% in 2006-07 at the same

time as they were flat for Australia as a whole ...

Mr Wood: The people are living in tents?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Nelson!

Ms LAWRIE: *We expect this healthy performance to continue in the Top End.*

I know the member for Nelson does not like it when industry is speaking and giving its unbiased view on what is occurring in the Territory ...

Mr Wood: Talk to Somerville about people who do not have a home.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, member for Nelson, and members of the House. Can I please have some silence. I remind you of Standing Order 51:

No member may converse aloud, or make any noise or disturbance which in the opinion of the Speaker is designed to interrupt, or has the effect of interrupting a member speaking.

Please continue, Leader of Government Business.

Ms LAWRIE: We are also continuing to look after our first homebuyers to ensure they can access the real estate market. As I mentioned earlier, 15% of the Bellamack land will be reserved for first homebuyers, affordable and public housing. Tell me when that has been done before by a government in the Territory.

It is expected that Berrimah Farm will also provide land for first homebuyers. The recent sale of the Larapinta subdivision in Alice Springs will provide six blocks for first homebuyers through the HomeNorth Scheme. The HomeNorth Scheme has been significantly improved for families with children, the income threshold has been lifted to \$70 000. The stamp duty threshold has also been lifted to \$350 000. That means 85% of first homebuyers will not pay stamp duty. The property value limit is now 85% of the average priced house. HomeNorth has enabled more than 1000 people to buy their own home since 2004 ...

Mr MILLS: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I draw to your attention that the comments that have been made over the last period of time by the honourable member bear no direct relationship at all to the matter of public importance.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Ms LAWRIE: What a lot of rot! This is the most generous scheme in Australia and you say the comments ...

Mr Mills: It has nothing to do with it.

Ms LAWRIE: Nothing to do with it. Well, you have to get out, you have to talk to planners more often. I have attended a national summit, and the whole issue is, if a government just looks at demand separate to supply, you will make the wrong decisions. You have to have the demand and supply equation in your decision-making.

This year we have also seen the highest uptake of first homeowner grants for six years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this government has instituted regular forums with stakeholders, including the Real Estate Institute, the Housing Industry Association, the Property Council and the Territory Construction Association to discuss residential and industrial land release strategies - we have been doing exactly what the MPI is calling for, for the last year.

There are so many actions this government has taken. We are creating an excellent environment for first homebuyers, business and families to purchase land in the future. We should be excited about economic opportunity, because economic opportunity provides the future of development of land in our greater Darwin area and our whole Territory ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Discussion concluded.

TABLED PAPER
**Schedule – Travel, Motor Vehicle,
Communications, Postage, and Childcare
Entitlements for Members of the Legislative
Assembly of the Northern Territory**

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, it was hard for me to hear you give me the call then. The members continue interjecting but they might find they will not have an electorate office and entitlement to staff. So let me at least do the RTD administrative orders.

In consultation with the Opposition Whip, I have certainly apologised for the late notice of this. I have only just received it, but it is to ensure that we have RTD entitlements continue through.

I present a Schedule of Administrative Arrangements for Travel, Motor Vehicle, Communications, Postage, and Childcare

Entitlements for Members of the Legislative Assembly, and I make a tabling statement.

When tabling the Remuneration Tribunal's 2007 report and Determination of Tuesday this week, I am seeking leave to table Administrative Arrangements for the Provision of Motor Vehicle, Communications, and Travel Related Entitlements for the Members of the Assembly. The arrangements are, essentially, those which appear in the Tribunal's 2006 Determination, but for which recent legal advice has confirmed they are outside the power of the Tribunal to determine.

Accordingly, the Tribunal has not included these entitlements in the 2007 Determination for MLAs. It is necessary to prescribe these entitlements by way of an Administrative Arrangement. I note these Administrative Arrangements are in addition to those tabled in the February 2007 sittings in respect of Office Space, Staff, and Equipment entitlements of MLAs.

The Schedule of Benefits and Facilities for Members is accompanied by a brief statement setting out the scope of the schedule and how entitlements may be amended. As mentioned earlier this week, the government will be considering options for the ongoing administration of these capacity-type entitlements in the longer term. I table those Administrative Arrangements for the House.

I move that the Assembly take note of the report and that I have leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

Debate adjourned.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Ms LAWRIE (Leader of Government Business): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, 12 February 2008 at 10 am in Parliament House or such other time and/or date as may be advised by the Speaker pursuant to Sessional Order.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr Deputy Speaker, this evening I wish everyone a very safe and a very festive season. It has been a tumultuous year. We have seen many changes this year heading up to Christmas. There was the incoming Rudd government in Canberra, so I guess, for me, 2008 is a year of great promise

and hope, but also the standing down of our Chief Minister and of our Deputy Chief Minister.

I place on the record tonight my sincere thanks for the hard work of the members for Fannie Bay and Nhulunbuy, in everything they did to secure a Labor government in 2001, and the sheer, enormous effort and commitment they have shown before and since that day and right through. They have been an incredibly inspiring leadership team to work for. I was always astounded at the amount of time the Chief Minister was able to find to put into the job. She worked around the clock and through the weekend, and she struck a pace of work that the rest of us could only aspire to.

My personal thanks to the members for Fannie Bay and Nhulunbuy. Their enormous effort and wisdom, and incredible skill and talent has taken us through over the years.

I thank my electorate officer, Dawn. She has been holding the fort for me while I have been busy as a minister. I get out to my office often on a weekly basis. I live in my electorate, I move around my community and I talk a lot, and many people have many good things to say about Dawn in that office. Usefully, she is a Justice of the Peace, so she gets many people coming in for that important community service as well. I wholeheartedly thank Dawn for the effort she has put into the smooth functioning of the Karama electorate office. I really do thank her for all of the support that she gives me, which enables me to quite necessarily focus on my responsibilities and duties as a minister whilst not ever failing to meet the needs of my constituents who come in that electorate office door. She is an absolute terrier for following up on their issues. I really enjoy my days out there, sitting down with my constituents and dealing directly with them on their issues. I have to say there is not a moment that I am in the Karama Shopping Centre, even as a mum shopping on the weekend, that I am not being made very aware of the issues occurring around the area.

In relation to being a mum, I thank my children. They are my Jhenne, aged 12 – it was her birthday yesterday, my Bronte, 11 – her birthday a couple of weeks ago, and my little man, Zac, who turned three at the start of November - my three November babies. They have the life of a politician's child, and I know that life well. It was my life from when I was five to 17. They give up the time they would otherwise have with their mother. They give their mother up to the community, and they have to learn at a very young age - in my son's case, from birth – that they do not always have the call on their mum that they would want. I could not do the job I do without their support. The girls are fantastic. They are mini-mothers for our very energetic Zac, and they

are doing well at school as well. It is a real barometer for me to ensure that those report cards are coming through strong. They are managing to be kids, as kids are, and have fun and play with their friends and do all those things, but they are great, responsible, wonderful children.

I thank them for the support they show me, and for the encouragement they give me in continuing to do this job, because I would not be doing it otherwise. It is tough. There are times when they want me home, when they know I am in Alice Springs, or in a remote community, or interstate for work or, even in the case of this year not so long ago, overseas for work. It is tough for kids to be that far away from their mum. However, they are absolute troopers and champions and they give me enormous support. I thank them. It will be my first Christmas this Christmas without them, because they will head south to see their dad. It will be the empty nest for a moment, but my little possums will be returning home and I look forward to a good year for next year.

To Greg Wills, you just never ceases to amaze me with your dedication and commitment to the Labor Party. Thank you, Greg. Your campaigning for Solomon was exceptional. The effort you make in our local area with our branch, as our branch secretary, is exceptional. I love the Sanderson/Karama Branch. We have a great collection and diversity of people. They have robust discussions. They are always full of very interesting and bright ideas, and they continue to inspire me as a local member. To all of those branch members, I look forward to having a Christmas drink with you and celebrating the Rudd win and looking forward to the continued efforts of the Labor government here in the Territory under Chief Minister Henderson.

To my parliamentary colleagues, I say thank you. Thank you for being great team players. Thank you for your support. I look forward to next year and working with each and every one of you. Everyday we go to work we give it our best and we have a mountain of work out there in the Territory to achieve. We still have far too many Territorians in poverty and it is certainly my hope that we are able to work very closely with the Rudd government to turn that around. I know that we have done a lot and that there is so much more to do.

To my sister, Diane, and to my niece, Hannah, thank you. You bring me joy and love and entertainment. I appreciate that. To Arphila, who is like a niece to me, thank you for all those times of babysitting. I could not have got by with those functions for work without you, darling. She has proven that you can rise out of adversity as a child, out of a tough life, subject to abuse - you can rise out of that and really make a go of your life with

the right support and encouragement and help. So good on you, Arphila, we are incredibly proud of you.

To all of my staff in my office here in Parliament House, I know I am only as good as the support and advice around me. I have a fantastic team of staff. To all of you, thank you for putting in such an enormous effort through the year. I value and appreciate your contribution and you know I am enormously loyal to you. You are fantastic. They give me professional support but we have also strong friendships as a result of just how many hours we work together and rely on each other.

To the departments, to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and all of the staff there, I wish them a very merry and very safe Christmas. They have worked incredibly hard on significant reforms, both legislative and structural reforms, and getting our massive infrastructure spend out there. Thank you and I appreciate your effort.

To the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, I have been getting to know you guys well over the past month. I certainly have felt privileged to work with you and to understand the work that you do as I get around and meet you. They are a fantastic team of people in NRETA as well.

To the team at the Port of Darwin, thank you. It is just amazing the work that the Port of Darwin is doing and it is coming on in leaps and bounds. We have a strong leadership team there and the reforms that we have been seeing down at the port are reforms that will hold our trade route in enormous stead in the future.

To the parliamentary staff: to Hansard, thank you for your efforts. Every year you have to put up with the debates in here, bless you, and you do an amazing job at it. To the Clerk and all of his staff and the support they provide, we really do appreciate it. I wonder how Gaddy manages to sit in that Table Office for endless hours. I have enormous admiration for him and for the Sarj. They are true professionals. Of course, to our Clerk and to our Deputy Clerk, I look forward to working with them in my capacity as Leader of Government Business as I value their advice and support.

So, a very merry Christmas to everyone. I am Jewish so I do not have a particular Christmas thing but I do like seeing the way everyone else enjoys the festive season, and that part of it I thoroughly enjoy. For all of you in whichever way you celebrate, may you celebrate safely and in loving your families, enjoying this very special family time, that we all have a pause in our

working lives on that special day and just love our families.

Mrs MILLER (Katherine): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I would like to continue my adjournment of last night paying tribute to a very much loved and respected lady, Valerie Iris Utley, who died suddenly on 12 November at her station property, Yeltu Park, south of Katherine where she lived with her husband, Barry.

As I said last night, Val touched many lives in her 71 years and that was evident by the large number of people who attended her funeral service in Katherine on Thursday last week. I think that last night I said Val's funeral was on Friday. I wish to correct that; it was actually on Thursday.

Mitch Fialkowski of Frontier Services conducted the service, and pallbearers were Tom Stockwell, Keith Holzwart, Kerrin Holzwart, Shane Ransome, Robert McDougall Junior and Russell Holzwart. Chloe Holzwart read the 23rd Psalm at the end of the service.

I will now continue from where I left last night, halfway through the eulogy from Nola Sweetman.

It was right at this point that I met Val, she had enrolled Shane into St John's College in Darwin and we enrolled our son David soon after. They became friends as I did with Val. In Val, I saw a kind, honest, genuine, salt of the earth person, she didn't need to impress, she was just perfect the way she was - and as often as I saw her, she has never changed, nor has Barry.

Val took an interest in everyone, their family and their extended family and was always there to lend an ear when they needed it. She was so kind and patient, she always saw the best in everyone and would always give them the benefit of the doubt.

Val loved birds, she loved native plants, she loved gardening and she loved dogs. There are currently six dogs at Yeltu Park with Barry who were on death row before being rescued by Val.

Two years ago, Roxie asked Val what she would like for Christmas. Val thought a nice new towel would be good and one for Barry too. The following day Val rang Roxie and said one towel between them would be fine, to give two would be far too extravagant. Roxie gave them both two. Val has always thought more about the wellbeing of her family and her beloved extended family than of her own needs.

She took the pivotal role in the family. She was the communicator, the one who related all the news of one family to the others. She recently updated her method of communication after being given a computer. She didn't leave it sitting in the box as so many women who have never had anything to do with computers would do. Val went out and did a basic computer course and began sending emails.

She was so proud of Barry and of the girls, and Shane, and what they have all achieved. She was a loving mother-in-law and a loving grandma who delighted in the company of her grandchildren.

Finally, Val was not a person to back away from any issue that arose either. As recently as this year Val showed the strength of her character as she fielded questions from journalists throughout Australia over the possibility they may be forced to have a nuclear waste disposal dump installed literally at their back door. As yet, this is still unresolved.

In closing, the girls told me that their parents have been role models, that from them they have learned that marriage is forever. They believe they have been given a wonderful legacy. All the girls are still happily married to their original partners. Roxie told me that her husband said recently, 'you're so like your mother.' Roxie took that as a compliment.

Val will be sorely missed by us all.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to have the remainder of the service for Val included in Hansard.

Leave granted.

For Mum:

Good morning everyone and thank you for being here. Mum would have loved to see you all.

It is impossible to find the words to describe the pain and anguish we have felt over the past days, especially knowing that nothing we do or say can make our world right again.

Mum was the hub around which our family revolved. I'm sure she knew how much we loved her and relied on her but I'm not sure she realised exactly how much influence she had on us and our values and how proud we are to have had her for a Mum.

Mum was a very special person, but we all know that. What you may not know is how very special you all were to Mum. She was devoted to her family and she loved her friends.

One of Mum's very special qualities was that wherever she went she made friends. In fact it became something of a family joke about her friends. Whether she was at work, or on the road, facing a challenge, or sharing an interest - Mum made friends. Business people, or the lady at the Woolies checkout, sometimes even a wrong phone number resulted in lifelong friendships. Her unique quality was not that she made so many friends but that she kept them. Everyone had a special place in her heart. Mum really cared.

However, to put it into the words of Peta and Brian, Mum only ever had one 'best friend', and that person was Dad. Dad was her soul mate, her one true love. They were two halves of a whole. Whenever you saw Mum you could bet Dad wasn't far away, and if Dad was around Mum was there too. They stood side by side and tackled whatever fate threw at them. It got them through the tough times and there were plenty of those. As kids we grew up knowing they shared a great love. They had a special look they often shared that was pure adoration.

Mum was also an adoring Grandmother. To her, every grandchild was a shining star, a wonderful gift. She took a keen interest in everything they did and was extremely proud of every achievement. Mum was a regular visitor at School of the Air and knew half the teachers. She attended as many get togethers as she could and some of the other parents began calling her 'Mum' too. She was just as proud of their kids as she was of her own grandchildren. What Mum probably didn't know was that the grandchildren were equally proud of Grandma. It was like they'd had the choice of a box of Chocolates and in Grandma had got the best one.

I'd like to share with you today a poem written for Grandma by my son, Dean. He wrote this poem last year while on School of the Air. The job description was to write about someone special to you and Dean said 'of course' he was writing about Grandma. Here is the poem:

The little things matter to grandma.

*The little things matter to grandma,
The things like birdcalls so sweet
The little things matter to grandma,
Like people she meets in the street.*

*While life is flashing before our eyes,
With war and hate and flame.
The little things matter to grandma,
Who loves the world just the same.*

*While the government has its scandals,
And the people to trust are few,
And when the guiding light in the
Darkness, never guides you through.*

*With all the confusion in our lives,
If only most people knew,
The little things matter to grandma,
The person who cares for you.*

*When light and warmth have vanished,
And darkness grips with despair,
You can always count on Grandma,
To be the one who will care.*

*From gentle patter of rainfall,
To radiance of sunshine so clear,
Grandma is there to absorb it, and
To encourage and clap and to cheer.*

*And though she grows old in her body,
Her mind and her heart are still young.
Because the little things matter to Grandma
The person who's as bright as the sun.*

Dean Holzwart 2006

*For Grandma
From Megan*

*I'm sure my Grandma wasn't perfect, but
neither are her grandchildren. But she
thought we were.
She loved us unconditionally.
She was always proud of us.
She believed in us.
And most of all she let us know this. It's
amazing how much it matters and helps,
knowing that someone, somewhere thinks
that of you.
So I would just like to say to her today,
Grandma, I believe in you.
I am so proud of you.
I love you very much.
And to me you are perfect.*

For Grandma from Kathryn

Grandma ...

*Not one word could sum her up. She was
an inspiration to me as I'm sure she was to
many others.*

*I will always remember pulling up at
Grandmas and her pulling out photo albums
and showing us her photos of 'back then'
and of us – her grandchildren. She would
keep every letter we'd give to her, every
painting, every drawing. She just
appreciated the little things we'd do for her.*

*The days will continue to pass on by and
our tears will soon find happy memories.*

*We miss you more than any words could
say. You will be in our hearts forever.*

Never Met Another Woman

*I've never met another woman who could
work just so damn hard,
Whether cropping, raising poultry or
building cattle yards.
Packing pork or ripe tomatoes, bagging
mungs or stacking hay
Then back in to do the housework and the
meals at end of day.*

*I've never met another woman who could
smile so easily
At spoken words, or even a small plain
brown bird in a tree.
At seeing friends in Woolies, or out on a
new fenceline,
And always, even lately – 'thanks, I'm
feeling really fine'.*

*I've never met another woman who would
gladly make more time
To study grandkids paintings and re-read
the favourite rhyme,
Attend their plays and sports days, and their
parties down the track,
Or have a go at backyard cricket despite
the creaky back.*

*I've never met another woman who made
better camp oven bread,
Even if, when times were tough there
wasn't much to spread.
The first time I ever saw that smile, it was
o'er a cooking pot,
On a campfire at Costello Yards – please
have some mate, there's lots.*

*I've never met another woman better with a pair of pliers,
I reckon that those hands have tied five thousand mile of wire.
But better than with pliers was her skill with secateurs.
For random cuttings from the footpath they were kept right in her purse.*

*I've never met another woman who was better on the phone,
With the help of just one daughter, phones went flat 'all on their own'.
An efficient family switchboard keeping everyone one in touch.
'Oh Barry - do stop whingeing – it doesn't cost too much'.*

*I've never met another woman who made every chore a joy,
Found a way to make it fun for all, as if it was a toy.
She'd found a certain peaceful space - found joy in little things
And banished any black spots that life's trials often bring.*

*I've never met another woman who had more special friends,
Once met, each one was special, to be stuck to 'til the end.
A chance conversation would lead to a lifetime expose.
60 years - a Kiwi pen pal still writes up to today.*

*No I've never met a woman who could do things quite like Val,
... Nor any blasted man who could do them near as well!*

*But I know a mob of women who have known all this for years,
You just need to read their messages signed with unashamed tears.
'Kind ways, gentle demeanour' and a 'selfless cheerful way'
'An honour to have known her' – 'A sad loss for us today'.*

*And even little children had it right and made bells ring,
When with clarity they outlined Grandma's love of little things.
While we blokes are spinning madly looking out for grander plans,
Time and space for folk and friends was the way for Grandma's clan.*

*I've never met another woman whose body bore a greater load,
Of work and talk and thought and deed, it had hoed a heavy row.*

*She said that she was coming good and really feeling good again,
Though the diary entry told us of her ongoing life of pain.*

*So she doesn't have to worry now if the sun beats her out of bed,
Or if it's not rained, or rained too much, or if the bills are read.
Someone else will have to step up and keep the family all in touch,
For Val's girls to grab a telephone - it doesn't take too much.*

*I've never met a woman who was quite the same as Valerie ,
But there's four I know who come real close, and more down the family tree.
And it seems the bush is full of girls – that share Val's qualities.
The future's looking pretty bright with women such as these.*

*And I've never met a young girl like grandma's youngest - Claire.
When turning up at Yeltu and told that 'Grandma won't be there'
That maternal line of DNA – this one surely doesn't lack,
With hand on hips she stated –'We'll just wait till she gets back!'*

*But Val will never leave us and Grandma will still be there,
When blushes first the daylight, or the smell of rain is in the air.
When we take the time for friends and kin and the pleasure that it brings,
And we admit what really matters are the many little things.*

Stockwhip 22/11/07

Mrs MILLER: Thank you.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like, on the last night of parliamentary sittings for 2007, to acknowledge people who have helped me throughout the year so much, both personally and professionally in the electorate of Katherine.

I first of all want to thank my husband, Mike, who has been such a fantastic support to me again. Let us face it, he has done a whole heap more for me in this last 12 months since I had the car accident than he has ever had to do before. I certainly appreciate his support. Without it, it would be pretty much impossible for me.

Last year, the member for Johnston thanked his dog. I have forgotten, for the moment, his dog's name, but I also thank our two beautiful canine friends, Labradors Jed and Kizzie, and I

want to do that again this year. You can have the most woeful of days and have experienced a lot of negativity one way or the other. You drive into your driveway and, without fail, there are two beautiful, wagging tails so damn happy to see you. Jed and Kizzie are not the least judgmental, so I always receive a fantastic welcome home from Jed, Kizzie and, of course, Mike.

A huge thank you to my electorate officer, Pat Witte, who has been fantastic support to me this past 12 months. I have appreciated her total loyalty and I wish her a fabulous Christmas and a New Year break in Brisbane with her daughter, Louise and her granddaughters. To my branch chairman, Brian Hill and the executive, thank you so much for your support this year. It has been a very busy one and you have put in a lot of energy.

To my colleagues, the Leader of the Opposition, Jodeen Carney, the member for Blain, Terry Mills, the new member for Greatorex, Matt Conlan, and the former member for Greatorex, Richard Lim, now so happily retired, my very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. To the Leader of the Opposition's staff, James Lantry, Kylie Silvey, Greg Charter, John Elferink and Rebecca McAlear, thank you so much for all of your fantastic support that you have given me so willingly throughout the year. I very much appreciate all that you do.

To Madam Speaker, thank you so much for looking after my nutritional needs during each evening meal during sittings. The evening meals have been delicious and I have really appreciated the privilege of a healthy dinner and the social interaction.

Merry Christmas also to Ian McNeill, David Horton, Vicki Long, Jane Gunner, Brian Cook, Annette Post, Graham Gadd, Annette Brown, Mary-Anne Almond and all the Legislative Assembly staff. To the staff in committees, Terry Hanley, Pat Hancock, Maria, Tony, Joanne and Kim, thank you so much for all the hard-working committees during this last year and for all the friendships that we have formed over that time.

To Helen Allmich and all in Hansard who have had to wade through the millions of words during the year, spell all the names correctly of the hundreds of people mentioned in Assembly, and have the copies printed to us so promptly, thank you so much. To Tony Hibberd, Samantha Day-Johnston, Esther Pesti and all the security staff, the drivers, the cleaners, the maintenance and grounds people, and to all others I may inadvertently missed, have a wonderful Christmas break and a happy New Year.

To all the government members on the other side of the House, my very best wishes to you and

your families for a very safe and happy Christmas and new year. I hope you have truly a blessed and a happy time, and a restful time. I hope that everybody arrives back here safely next year. I look forward to seeing you all back here in February.

Mr VATSKALIS (Casuarina): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, today I would like to say farewell to Dr Graham Kirby who, after 43 years in public service, has decided to take a well-earned retirement. Graham came from a pastoral family in Western Queensland, and attended the University of New England in the country town of Armidale, studying Rural Sciences.

He joined the Commonwealth Public Service in 1964 in the Northern Territory as an Animal Husbandry Officer and worked on a number of wide-ranging projects. One of Graham's key contributions was the research and promotion of improved beef cattle genetics across the tropics. In 1976, Graham became the Principal Animal Production Officer in charge of a section of over 70 staff across six research stations.

In 1991, Graham changed career focus and moved into the role of Chief Economist in the Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries. The Economics Unit provides extensive information and advice on the detailed economic performance and outlook of the primary industry sectors and the commodity and enterprise opportunities for ongoing economic development. The opportunities investigated were diverse, ranging from mud crab licences, to heliconias, to fruit fly impacts, and to cattle husbandry, and broadened to include tropical savannahs, recreational fishing and water catchments. The Economics Unit was transferred to the new Office of Resource Development in 1999, and the unit continued to provide economic services to Primary Industry and Fisheries.

When the new Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development, DBIRD, was formed in August 2001, the Economics Unit moved there to provide strategic economic development information and advice across all industry sectors.

Although relocating to Queensland, Graham will be retaining close ties with the Territory, especially as Darwin is home to his two children and two grandchildren. I am sure you will join me in wishing Graham all the best for the future.

I also share with you the achievements and work of one of my favourite young constituents. Simone Liddy of Nakara was recently named the NAIDOC 2007 Youth of the Year, and also recently the Northern Territory Young Australian of the Year for 2008.

Simone is the daughter of my electorate officer and good friend, Debbie Rowland, and well-known Territory sportsman, Ted Liddy. Her sister is Candice.

Simone is an inspiring 20-year-old who has achieved much in her short life. Simone has two loves - sport and her family. She has selected a career pathway that keeps her close to both and makes a broader contribution to the health of the indigenous community in the Northern Territory.

Simone is studying at CDU for a degree in Pharmacy. When she graduates from Charles Darwin University, she will be the first indigenous graduate with a Bachelor of Pharmacy. I know she has given the Indigenous Academic Support Unit a standing offer of mentoring any future indigenous students who choose to follow her path.

Some of Simone's most recent achievements include:

- won the Northern Territory Board of Studies Junior Student Award in 2002;
- awarded Achievements Awards in Chemistry, Mathematics and Year 12 Indonesian Language in 2003;
- represented the Northern Territory at the Future Leaders Forum in 2003;
- Northern Territory Board of Studies, Indigenous Student of the Year at Dripstone High School in 2004;
- completed Year 12 at Dripstone High School in 2006, attaining a TER of 87.9;
- NAIDOC Youth of the Year in 2007; and
- Northern Territory Young Australian of the Year in 2008.

As I mentioned before, Simone is a very good sportswoman. She was an NTIS scholarship holder in 2003 to 2006. Among her other sporting achievements, she has represented the NT in hockey since 1998. She was captain of the victorious Dripstone High Under 16 hockey team in 2003 at the Northern Territory championships; captain of the victorious St Mary's Under 16 hockey team in 2003; and won the Most Improved Player for the season in 2003 for St Mary's Women's A Grade hockey team; a member of the Northern Territory Institute of Sport's hockey team in 2004 and 2005; represented the Northern Territory in the Under 21 team, and was co-captain of the Under 18 team at the Arafura Games in 2005; co-captain of the Northern Territory

Under 21 team; and rookie member of the Northern Territory Pearls in 2006 and 2007.

Simone is not only a very good sportswoman and studies at university, but she has a hidden talent as an artist. In 2002, she won an art competition to design a new logo for the Northern Territory Public Service Indigenous Employment and Career Strategy. What more can I say about Simone? Simone is a fantastic and wonderful person, and is a role model for indigenous young men and women. In fact, she is a role model for all Territorians, whatever their ethnic background.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight is the last sittings of the year, and I wish you and your young son, and your family, a very merry Christmas. I also wish a merry Christmas to Madam Speaker and her family. I also wish a merry Christmas to the Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, and his family. To all my colleagues and their families, merry Christmas to you all and to your families. I am looking forward to working with you again next year. I know some of you will be spending Christmas in the Territory, and some of you will go south to do the round of rellies. Have a safe trip, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Best wishes also to the Independents on the other side of the House, and to the members of the opposition. Irrespective of our differences, this time of the year we discover our good hearts and behaviours, and discover the good side of ourselves. It is with great pleasure that I wish you all a merry Christmas.

To all the staff of the Legislative Assembly, thank you very much for your assistance, tolerance and patience during the year. Special thanks to Vicki Long, a person I will always turn to if there is a problem in our electorate office. Thank you very much, Vicki, and to all the people who support you. Also to Helen Allmich. The Hansard staff, headed by Helen, work very hard for all of you, but they work even harder for me sometimes to interpret my speech. I make sure I keep all this to give to them so they can decipher my speech, and understand my accent.

Special thanks and best wishes to Ian McNeill, Clerk of the Assembly, and to his deputy, Captain Horton - merry Christmas to you and your families. To all of the people I have not mentioned, I appreciate your assistance.

To the drivers who take us here, there and everywhere, thank you very much for your passenger experience and merry Christmas and happy New Year.

A special merry Christmas to my good friend, Gianni Dinoris, or John Dinoris. In his own

language, Καλά Χριστούγεννα, Yanni. Helen, I am going to give it to you written in Greek so you can incorporate it in the *Parliamentary Record*.

To all my wonderful constituents in the electorate of Casuarina, I wish you all a happy, safe, and joyous festive season. If you go down south, please have a safe trip and come back and I look forward to meeting you when you return.

I want to say special thanks, merry Christmas and happy New Year to Superintendent Jo Foley, and the new Officer-in-Charge, Shaun Bennett, and police officers from the Casuarina Police Station. Your efforts in Casuarina are greatly appreciated.

To Craig Osborne, staff and tenants of Casuarina Shopping Square; Tony Miaoudis, staff and tenants of Casuarina Village Shopping Centre; Chris Voudouris, staff and tenants of Casuarina Convenience Centre, and all the small business owners, staff, and operators in the Casuarina shopping precinct, I wish you all a prosperous and happy festive season.

To my department: Richard Galton, the CEO, Gareth James who does an exceptional job with Defence Support, and Steve Rossingh at the Department of Sport and Recreation and your staff, a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you all.

To Andrew Macrides and all the staff at Power and Water who keep the lights on, the water running, and everything else, a very merry Christmas and I wish you not a busy Christmas. I hope you have time to spend with your families without the fruit bats, storms, and power interruption.

To my wonderful support and ministerial staff - Ryan Neve, Kellie Sharp, Nikola Lekias, Carole Frost, Sue Shearer, Kirk Whelan, Kate Worden, Sarah Morris, Erin Grace - I would not be able to do what I do without your help, guidance and support. It is wonderful to work with you and I am looking forward to working with you in the new year.

A special merry Christmas to my electorate office, Debbie Rowland, who is absolutely fantastic and wonderful, and to Ted Liddy, her husband, and her daughters, Simone and Candice. The whole family supports Debbie who, in turn, supports me. I really thank you and appreciate your support.

To all the Labor Party ALP branch members and helpers, your assistance at the Casuarina Branch helping me, and Paul Henderson and Chris Burns is fantastic and much appreciated. Special thanks for your help and support during

the recent elections. I reckon the election of the Rudd Labor government in Canberra was one of the best Christmas presents I have received.

Special thanks to my very good friend and supporter, Andrew Fyles, his wife, Sarah, and daughter, Natasha. To Ron Greaves and Eunice de Ramos, to John and Dianne Knight, to Gary and Marilyn Hawthorne, your assistance during this election was appreciated, and your support throughout the year is very much appreciated.

To my family, my wife, Margaret, and my sons, Alexander and Michael; Michael is 15½ and Alexander is turning 18 on 6 December. Alexander has grown up to be a fine young man and is moving to Perth next year to study Biomedical Science at Curtin University, being the third generation member of our family to study at Curtin University. I sometimes feel extremely sorry that I am not there for Michael; when I entered parliament, in 2001, he was a very young man, 7 years old, and he is the one who comes out with classic sayings like: 'I am glad you are on television so that I know what you look like'. It shows how much he misses you. My friend, Delia Lawrie, member for Karama, was absolutely right, these kids are unfortunate because they are children of a politician and do not often see their parents.

To my wonderful wife, Margaret, without her support and guidance, I do not know what I would have done. She has been mother and father to our sons and is a very strong supporter. All my love and a merry Christmas and happy New Year. I look forward to taking you on holidays in January.

I would like to close with a few words for the former Chief Minister, Clare Martin, the member for Fannie Bay, and Deputy Chief Minister, Syd Stirling, the member for Nhulunbuy. I have known Clare since 1994 when she first stood for the seat of Casuarina. We developed a very strong relationship and an even stronger one during the pre-election period of 2000-01. Clare is the person who gave the Labor Party victory in 2001, breaking the 27-year rule of the CLP. She is a great person, a great politician, a great supporter and a great friend. I thank her very much for her support. Clare was the person who asked me to stand for Casuarina. At the time she told me, she knocked every single door in 1994 and she knew that I could win Casuarina. I thank her very much for her encouragement. I could say that I am sorry I listened to you, but I am very pleased I listened to you because together we won this election. Together, you, Syd Stirling, Paul Henderson, Delia Lawrie and all the other from the class of 2001, and that was repeated in 2005. We see new faces now around us; new colleagues, dear colleagues and we work together.

I enjoy Syd Stirling's humour, his guidance, and his friendship. He is one of the best Treasurers in Australia, even if he did not wear Armani suits like the Treasurer whom we all know in Canberra.

They are great politicians. Their experience is valued. They will always be remembered as the people who brought the Labor Party victory in 2001.

Merry Christmas to all of you who are here, and to the people with us in the past year. Despite our differences it is a time for joy, it is a time for families, and it is a time to discover the good side of ourselves. Have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Mr WOOD (Nelson): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I concur with the member for Casuarina, even though I differ in many opinions of the former Chief Minister, Clare Martin, and former Treasurer, Syd Stirling. I appreciate much of the advice they have given me. It was probably due to the Chief Minister's encouragement that I did stand for parliament. I had a lot to do with the Chief Minister when she was the opposition spokesperson for Planning. So if you sometimes wonder where my passion for planning comes, maybe you can blame the ex-Chief Minister. I visited her office in Fannie Bay many times, and that is how I got to know Alf Leonardi as well. We discussed many of those matters in relation to planning. I thank her for encouraging me to stand for parliament.

Regardless of political differences, I believe the former Chief Minister has done a remarkable job. As the member for Casuarina said, the CLP was in power for around about 25 to 27 years and, for the Chief Minister to win that election against all odds was, from an historical point of view, a fairly amazing event. I know people have all their theories about why the Chief Minister left and I have not asked her. After her time in opposition and also having six years in government, part of which was to establish a government, it would have taken a lot of energy and been a very tiring job. As you know, she had so much to do and she had to pull a government together. She had to develop strategies for her party and, at the same time, she had a family that needed looking after as well. I thank the Chief Minister regardless of my differences of opinion on certain matters. I thank her for her contributions to the Northern Territory.

Syd Stirling has also given me some good advice as a long-standing politician in this House. When I used to complain about all this politics in this House he used to say that is exactly what this House is all about. I thank him also for his encouragement. No matter how much argy-bargy occurs on the floor of this House, how much you might disagree from one side or the other, Syd will

say hello to you as soon as you step outside this Chamber. I appreciate that from the ex-Treasurer.

It has been a very busy year. I did not expect it to be this busy, but it has been the busiest year I have had since I entered parliament. There have been some major issues in relation to local government. I, obviously, would accept that the government is sick and tired of me talking about local government. I can say that once I have recharged - thank you, member for Goyder - my batteries over Easter I will be back because there are some important issues and some important principles that need to apply for the establishment of local government. I will continue to push for those things to occur.

Planning is another important issue, the environment is another issue. They are all issues that constantly need attention in the Northern Territory. They are some of the areas I would like to continue with.

I would like to do a lot more work on establishing the rural area as a place where families can live. Unfortunately, at the moment, land is at such a price today that it is very difficult for young people to buy land in the rural area. No matter what people might say, when land is around \$270 00 to \$300 000 a block in the rural area, that it is practically impossible for young people to buy and to get into that rural land and housing that we need if we want our rural area to keep thriving.

I thank all the people who have helped me through the year, especially my secretary, Jennifer Hillier, who wonders where we are going sometimes because I do have a habit of heading off in several directions at once. If you have ever been to my office you would probably recognise that having chooks and paper everywhere is probably symbolic of the way I operate. That is one of those things that I cannot do much about because it is the way I work.

I thank Caroline Cavanagh, my research officer, whom I share with Loraine Braham. She does a fantastic amount of work for us. She goes through all the bills and analyses them, and she gives us an idea of what bills are important, what sections of the bills are important. She contributes tremendously to helping me and Loraine Braham in being able to contribute to parliament. I thank her for all the hard work. Like Jennifer Hillier, she has to put up with a lot from me. Being the messy bloke that I am it must make them wonder where we are going sometimes. In the end they realise that there is much work to be done. You might say one of the disadvantages of being an Independent is that you have to take on a lot of extra work because you have to read lots more legislation and, sometimes, people come to you who do not

want to come along to discuss things because you are not a member of a party.

I thank the two ladies who help out – my sister, Trish Butler, who works on Fridays – she is the Friday lady - and Kim who helps out when anyone cannot turn up for work.

I thank all the staff in Parliament House. As usual, the Hansard people are magnificent people. They are able to turn my verbal discussions in parliament into written English. They should get an award for that. Perhaps next year I can work out an award to give them. I thank them very much for the efforts they make. I also thank all the staff in the Chamber. I can see Jo over there and Gaddy, and all these people in the Chamber - thank you very much for all the work you do. The Legislative Assembly could not operate without you.

I thank all my parliamentary colleagues; no matter whether we disagree and we have our barnies every now and then, we respect one another. We try to do our job as best we can. Sometimes it can get very passionate. I am not making excuses for that because I do not think I would have wanted to be in parliament if I was just sitting here twiddling my thumbs. I do get a passion for some things, and it can be hard when you are not a member of the government – you do feel like you are banging your head against a brick wall, but even brick walls collapse sometimes. So, it is worth the effort and sometimes, hopefully, the government will listen to at least part of what you say. Even if they do not tell you, they might take those things on board in their own good time.

I am trying to think if I have forgotten anyone else. Oh, of course I have. I have forgotten my wife. I thank Imelda for putting up with me again. Like any other year, I think she sees me for about 1% of the 365 days. I also have my daughter and my grandchildren at home. I know they also give me support, but it is a difficult life, especially if you think you are going to be home for some family life, but it does not always happen as much as it should. I thank them for their contributions and support.

Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I wish everybody a happy Christmas and a wonderful New Year. I will see you all back next year, fighting fit.

Mr WARREN (Goyder): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, I would like to say a few words about Clare Martin and Syd Stirling; I had the honour of being part of their team. It has been an utmost pleasure being part of their team. I have the highest regard and respect for those two great members of parliament. They historically brought the Labor Party to government after 27 years in

the wilderness. I believe every member in this House, not just the Labor members, but the members of the opposition and Independent members, owe them a great debt of gratitude for reinvigorating this whole place.

After many years of one government being in power, it really does refresh the place when another government comes in. It is part of a cycle – a long-term cycle; I understand that - but I am very proud to have been a member of their team because I have learned so much under their tutorship. I know they are going to stay on until the next election. I wish them all the best after that, and that they enjoy the rest of their time here in parliament.

On behalf of the Assembly, I offer my sincere condolences to Alan and Angie Smith and their family on the tragic loss of their son, Roger Smith. Roger was well known and respected in the rural area. In his younger days, he was a very talented Aussie Rules and Rugby League player and all-round athlete. Roger was very popular and respected by players and supporters of Southern Districts Football Club. In 1995, he married Sue, and they had four children, Allira, Yantse, Aryka and Makaylee. Roger certainly touched the hearts of many people during his life. Sincere condolences to the Smith family.

Last sittings I spoke about the bushfire volunteers in my great electorate of Goyder. Tonight I would like to advise the House on some great things happening in some of the schools in my electorate.

I will start off with Taminmin High School and some of the great young achievers. Terry Lim, a Year 10 information technology student, was recently awarded a first place prize for his design of a website which conveyed a consumer message about money and finance. The title of his website was 'Plastic Debt - User Guide To Avoiding Credit Card Debt'. The Territory-wide competition was run by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission and the theme was managing money. The 'Moola Matters' entries were judged on their creativity and how well the message was communicated. Terry received \$200, a T-shirt, and \$1000 for his school. Well done, Terry!

Graeme Talbot was nominated by Taminmin High School as their nominee for the Best School-based Apprentice/Trainee of the Year Award. He was awarded a certificate of recognition in September. Graeme was undertaking his Certificate II in Conservation Land Management and working with Parks and Wildlife at Fogg Dam. Graeme has also worked at Cape Hotham doing a flora and fauna survey for his

employer. Congratulations go to Graeme on a job well done.

Upgrading of the farm tractors at Taminmin has been a big highlight of recent times. Taminmin received a very welcome boost of equipment funding towards a replacement of their ageing farm plant and equipment. The Department of Employment, Education and Training has made \$100 000 available towards the purchase of two new tractors through the department's Employment Training Division. With the current school farm expansion currently under way, this will allow school students to properly compete competencies in the use and maintenance of farm tractors. The two new tractors will, undoubtedly, be an invaluable asset to the school which now has the largest VET program in the Territory.

During Term 3, three more certificate courses have been added to the Taminmin High School RTO program. These are Certificate II in Rural Operations, and Certificate I and II in Horse Racing, the latter being provision of formal stable hand qualifications. These courses were added to the school's VET program in response to relevant industry feedback and the need to train young people in these areas. As part of the resources required, the school has added four thoroughbred mares to the farm. Two of the mares are currently in foal to a registered quarter horse, while the other two mares have recently been joined to a registered Australian stock horse stallion. This means the resulting offspring will be registered in the relevant stock books and can be shown on the show circuit. The horses and their offspring will be used in training students in horse care, breeding and management. A small stable, round yard and wash-down area will also be erected to accommodate the animals' needs.

The school would like to thank Trudie Clarke for all her help and guidance in this important project. Trudie sourced the school's horses and arranged for the mares to be serviced and transported to the school. Trudie has wide experience in working with horses in the Northern Territory. She was employed by the school to deliver the qualification, both to the school's students and also the general community who are looking to gain these qualifications.

Several more courses have, at the present time, been sent to the education auditors to be evaluated and, hopefully, they will soon be added to the school's VET program. This will include Certificate II in Automotive, Certificate I in Manufacturing Pathways, and Certificate I in Business. Once again, these qualifications resulted from industry feedback, and will give the Taminmin High School students great variety when they are looking at subject selection in the future.

As I said, Taminmin High School is the largest school provider of VET qualifications in the Northern Territory, and they aim to be at the forefront working with industry and giving their students the very best opportunities in vocational training.

World Teachers Day was celebrated on 26 October with an announcement of the NT Teacher of the Year. I am very proud to report to the House that a teacher at a school in my electorate of Goyder was selected for this important accolade. The school was Bees Creek School and the teacher was Gayle Purdue, who teaches Year 6/7 at the school. On announcing the winner, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Paul Henderson, said:

With her more than 10 years teaching experience, Ms Purdue is a leading teacher in Bees Creek Primary School and is described by her colleagues as a supportive and committed teacher who uses innovative programs to keep her students engaged.

The principal of the school, Mr John Tate, has described Gayle as a leading teacher who is recognised as a mentor and a leading light in the Bees Creek School community. He said:

One of the biggest impacts Gayle has had on the school has been the development of three very successful engagement programs, which are some of the most innovative programs I have seen in 30 years of teaching.

John also praised her outstanding commitment to teaching and in modelling best practice teaching. He said that she has promoted the development of curriculum understanding, moderation, and positive relationships at all levels of the school community. Gayle has also been the driving force for other teachers to be involved in program initiatives.

Parents from Bees Creek School community have described Gayle as being the single most important teacher for their children, and that she has been able to turn reticent learners into leading learners. What a great achievement and a well-deserved accolade from parents.

Colleagues of Gayle say that she has inspired them to challenge their own teaching practice and to embrace new models of teaching and learning. She unites teachers around her as an invaluable member of a professional, dynamic team who support each other in the areas of teaching and learning. The principal said:

Gayle did a tremendous amount of preparation for these programs and

continually offered support to other teachers involved in implementing the programs into the classrooms. These excellent programs provided a learning environment that challenges the students and has them engaged continuously throughout the duration of each program. Gayle encourages the students to take responsibility for their learning and maintains clear and consistent expectations for students as learners.

Gayle has also planned, implemented and evaluated middle years engagement programs in the school. She has been responsible for introducing the three scenario-based learning programs known as Community Careers, Gold Rush, and Hopeville. Each program was designed to engage students by placing them in roles and gradually revealing a scenario which requires problem solving and application of previously taught skills. The programs are taught collaboratively using a team of four classroom teachers in the upper primary middle years, and involves the collaboration of community members to build the skill sets of the students. These programs have engaged students, but also ensure that high expectations are met at the same time.

The results Gayle has achieved are significant. John Tate advises that Gayle's class is run with a very strict behaviour management style and yet the children love being there. Her classes have high attendance rates and students thrive in the authentic and interesting environment she provides, which is underpinned by thorough and meticulous planning at a whole class and individual student level.

The day after the announcement of Gayle's award as NT Teacher of the Year, her students were euphoric, meeting her in the car park as she arrived and showering her with flowers and chocolates. The school principal, John Tate, said:

Gayle was very humbled by the whole process and just wanted to get back to what she does best and that is teaching in the classroom. However, the day in her classroom was a little more festive than usual as I genuinely think her students felt they had also been rewarded for the hard work because 'their teacher' had won the best teacher award. It is very pleasing to report that many flowers and best wishes arrived from parents and colleagues during the day.

The parent community has been delighted by the award and the parental pride in their school has been enhanced and reaffirmed even more by Gayle's success. The school council formally

acknowledged Gayle's achievement at their very next meeting

Gayle's success will have a long-lasting, positive effect on the school community as the teaching staff have just completed a review of several programs that promote positive learning communities at Bees Creek school. These programs and Gayle's award have been an affirmation to the Bees Creek school that their initiatives and drive are being recognised and delivering positive results.

Mr Acting Deputy Speaker, I make mention and thank the many people who helped the Labor Party at the recent 2007 federal election and ensured the success of Warren Snowdon, Trish Crossin and Damien Hale. Michael Kempster helped set up at the Bees Creek booth in the early hours of Saturday morning and gave up a great day of fishing. Thanks, Michael. June D'Rozario worked all day Saturday giving up her afternoon and evening to help with HTVs and then stayed on well into the evening to scrutineer the count at the Bees Creek booth. Thanks, June. Thanks also to Jack Crosby and Sue Roman who looked after the Taminmin booth. They had great support from Alan Smith who assisted with the set up in the early morning and then handed out how-to-vote cards at Taminmin for much of that day. Sue was a tireless supporter who moved from booth to booth as needed and then stayed on to help scrutineer with Jack at Taminmin.

Thanks to John Gotts, a first-time helper who spent most of the day at Taminmin High School. Thank you, John. Also to Rob Birch who again supported the Labor Party with his help as he does every time there is federal election. Thanks also to Bob Henness and his lovely partner, Alice, who along with Andrea Adlam, helped at Bees Creek during the hottest part of the day. And what a hot day it was too, may I remind members. Maree Hasewski helped at Bees Creek, getting lunches and driving other helpers home – Labor supporters such as my great Labor conscience and friend, Curly Nixon. Thanks, Maree. Curly did several stints at the Bees Creek booth on the day as well as giving a hand on a couple of afternoons at the Humpty Doo pre-poll where he shared some great coffee with Renate Hubel, which sustained them both. Thanks again, Curly.

Renate Hubel is another strong Labor supporter. She spent the morning at Bees Creek before moving to the Berry Springs booth for the afternoon. Renate also helped me on the preceding Wednesday and Thursday's mobile polling at Litchfield, Adelaide River and Acacia. She also joined Curly Nixon at the Humpty Doo pre-poll during the week before election day. Renate is a true Labor stalwart. Thanks, Renate.

On Saturday morning I worked at the Berry Springs booth, which Helen and David Bond, with the help of Sandy Griffin, set up. They stayed all day, despite having to stand in the baking sun to greet voters. Sandy also helped at Bees Creek in the afternoon where her cheery and well-known face was welcomed by many voters. Thanks Helen, Dave, and Sandy.

My mate, Phil Adams, was another tireless helper who travelled with me from Wagait Beach on Saturday morning and then spent the entire day at Berry Springs setting up and then handing out how-to-vote cards with his great laughing smile. Thanks, Phil.

Thanks also to Dennis and Cecily Bree who managed the Howard Springs booth as they have done in the past elections. These two Labor stalwarts are almost fixtures at the Howard Springs election booth.

Sean Bowden is another busy person who travels a lot but made sure he was back in Darwin to help with the HTVs and scrutineering at Howard Springs. Thanks, Sean.

Thanks to Wolf Loenneker, Kenneth Bennett, Kerry Gardiner, and Rob Picton, together with Tom and Eva Lawler, who all helped at Howard Springs during the day.

A special thanks must go to Barbara Crane who put in a magnificent effort during the election, spending many hours at the Humpty Doo pre-poll in the wind and rain and still found the time to help all morning on polling day at the Howard Springs booth.

To anyone I have inadvertently missed, a big thank you.

Recently, I travelled to Brisbane to attend my father, Ted Warren Senior's 85th birthday. Dad is a great Labor stalwart, and a life member of the Queensland Labor Party. More than that, he is a fabulous bloke and I wanted to make a quick mention of him.

In conclusion, I wish Christmas greetings to all my parliamentary colleagues and their families; the staff of the Legislative Assembly, and particularly the Secretariat of the Environment and Sustainable Development Committee; the electorate officers throughout the Territory; all our ALP branch members; to my support part-time electorate officer, Sharon Burke, who has done a fabulous job and gets on very well with my electorate officer, Clare Hasewski. Clare, whom I owe so much to, does not like being mentioned, she does not even like being recorded, but I cannot let this opportunity go without mentioning her.

To all those people, everyone here in the Legislative Assembly, and to everyone I have had contact with during the year, my constituents and everyone else, I wish a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

Mr MILLS (Blain): Mr Deputy Speaker, I remember, and it seems like not long ago, that I rose to give my first final adjournment for the year.

That was in 1999 and I had only been in parliament for a short time. At that time, I was sitting where the member for Brennan now sits, as a backbencher in government. In those years, I have seen Chief Ministers come and go, and I have seen significant change. I started out as a backbencher in government, and today I make these contributions as the Deputy Opposition Leader. Much has happened in the Territory in a short time. I predict that, in the time ahead, much also is likely to occur, matters which we cannot predict, but we know for sure there are some very interesting times ahead.

To take us to the place where we are today, we have had the support of many people around us. On a personal note, I recognise before all of you the contribution and support of my wife, Ros. Ros and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary this year, and there have been some challenging times as well as some good times raising two children. However, the times in politics have been the most challenging. I acknowledge the pressure which has been placed upon Ros in her busy work as a teacher, and I admire the quality of her work as a teacher. For a time I was her principal and she has continued to work diligently and has put in many hours of hard work. I am looking forward to next year. In our 26th year together, Ros will be leaving teaching and standing beside me. I am looking forward to when we will be together walking this adventure.

I want to make mention of my two children. My daughter, Kristin, is in her first year of marriage. It has been tremendous to see her mature into a young married woman, but maintain those connections and contact. I remember as a kid she was helping me set up booths when I was a branch worker. My son has been through a challenging year as a head stockman on a cattle station in Far North Queensland, and is now harvesting wheat in Western Australia helping my cousin.

Tasma McCall has been with me as an electorate officer for eight years. Her bearing and sensitive support, both to me and to members of our community, more importantly, have been consistent and well respected, and I appreciate that support. I offer my thanks on behalf of members of the community who have been the beneficiaries of that caring and consistent support.

I mention Tony, her husband, three children, Adam, Chris and Daniel. Each person mentioned has their own life. I know that this has been a challenging year for Tas and Tony.

I acknowledge the party. Our party has been through some very challenging years. I once sat where the member for Brennan is, to where I sit and stand today. The party has been through some very difficult times. It is an organisation of people with aspirations, dreams and memories. At this time, I acknowledge our president, Rick, our branch chair, Kezia, and the party members, who are working together in the best interests of the Territory.

To Dave Tollner and his family, we all know the pressures that public life brings to bear upon families. At this point, I put on the record my admiration of Dave Tollner. He is a good man and a good friend, and Christmas wishes, blessings to Dave, Alicia and the boys.

For all those community groups that have spent their time in my office, and those that operate in and around Palmerston that I have been involved in - it is good to see the community working together, and being able to play a part with the local member in advancing the interests of different community groups.

Those who are in this building, in our busyness, and perhaps the importance of our role, sometimes we may forget those who support us in these roles. I know that we really do not. For fear of missing some out, because I have some names written here, but as I am standing, I recognise that I am going to miss a couple because some other names have come to mind. To those who work in the Chamber here, the Table Office, thank you for the prompt and courteous support you have provided us. For those in Hansard, thank you for your cheer, your patience and your knack at turning convoluted sentences into something a little more straightforward. I acknowledge that it must be challenging at times to capture what is being said and place it on the record. Thank you for your support.

For those who have worked in the committees. The committees have been one of the highlights, not for just this year, but for me as a member of parliament. This year has been the most edifying, particularly the Substance Abuse committee as I have already placed on the record, in that ability to go into communities where there is need, to understand that need as best I possibly can and to craft some response.

For the Sport and Youth Committee, it has been wonderful to be able to have access to different groups across the Territory and hear their

stories, and to know that we have a part to play in advancing their interests and concerns.

In the Public Accounts Committee, we look at the public account and how we work to manage those resources, and to also advance the interests at the social resource level.

This year has been, for me, a most significant year. Members may recall that I gave a speech at the end of this year that captured a moment when I felt that I needed to question what is really our role. I, as a citizen who has been given great responsibility, had become disillusioned with politics - politics as I see it played out, not because the position of my party is less than it once was; that is irrelevant. It is not because I am not in a more important position - it is not that. It is having meaning in the role that you play. It was after one debate in this Chamber that I came to a crisis point where I thought expending energies in this Chamber was verging on pointlessness.

It was not until I went home and weighed that concern, that grief that I felt, after looking into that, and thinking in many respects it was practically pointless in the face of all the things that I have seen in the community and all the experience that I have managed to accrue in 49 years. It seemed to be a waste of effort. However, it was because of that pain that I felt at that time that I decided that, despite all the wonderful things that I feel I could do out of this Chamber, and because of those feelings that I felt, that I decided to stay. I mark this year as the year that I have decided to stay, for those reasons. I do not want those things that have caused me disappointment, disillusionment and grief to remain as they are. Therefore, I will bring whatever difference I can upon my role and on the roles and challenge, perhaps, to others but, more importantly to myself, so that we can make a difference and we can rise up to the challenges that are presented through the activities of politics. This was an important year for me.

It is also an interesting occasion and with some significance that I am able to pass on sincere congratulations to Paul Henderson. The member for Wanguri and I entered this parliament at precisely the same time. It was at a Christmas function in 1999 that we toasted and acknowledged the short journey from canvassing in the streets into this parliament. Today, I am standing in opposition. At that time, I was a backbencher in government. I am now standing as Deputy Opposition Leader – formerly an Opposition Leader - looking at the member for Wanguri as the Chief Minister. I congratulate him. To Marion Scrymgour, congratulations on your elevation. I acknowledge the responsibilities and the weight of that responsibility that falls upon your

shoulders, aside from all the games that are played, which I have already referred to.

I also acknowledge, after having enough time to understand the pressures of office, particularly Shane Stone and Denis Burke. Knowing the stories behind the scenes, we can make our superficial judgments, but they are people who have carried responsibilities. People can mask it well and play games to ensure that their presentation does not reveal how things are brought to bear upon them as people.

With that in mind, I acknowledge the contribution of Clare Martin. I know it has been difficult. I know that there are some achievements that you will be able to carry with you as a contribution that you have made to the Northern Territory. To Syd Stirling, there are times that I have been most irritated, but there were many times when I felt honoured being part of the dialogue, and I wish you all the very best. I acknowledge the bloke you are, the contribution you made, the passion and the earnestness that you have brought to issues. I have enjoyed sparring with you, and I wish you all the very best.

I believe that 2008 will contain an election. I would like to be here this time next year and say that that is not the case, but I believe that next year is going to unleash an extraordinary dynamic into the Northern Territory. There has been colossal change, federally, that is going to have some implications for the Territory government, which is adjusting to a very significant change in leadership now. There is going to be every likelihood, in my view, that there will be a very strong temptation for the Chief Minister to call an early election. If that be the case, this time next year, it may well be a very different occasion.

An election is going to bring, if it does occur next year - and I will state at this point that I am now more convinced than ever that there must be fixed parliamentary terms. Already the ball is in play, the idea is out there that there may well be, it is possible, an early election. That shows the amount of energy that is going to be consumed with that question. That takes energy away from the place that it could be and should be applied; that being the focus on delivering services to the Territory community. That speculation could be removed if there was a set term - a date and time that no politician could play with.

I hope we can move the community to that place where the date is set outside the realm of the politician, and placed there as a measure which would reflect community interest at a defined point in time. Nonetheless, I suspect there may be an election next year. I am looking forward to being in parliament at this time next

year making another contribution. Who knows where I will stand.

Mr BURKE (Brennan): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I thank and congratulate many people. First, I want to thank my wife, Sharon, for her continued support and understanding. A life in politics really means the entire family is in politics. Without Sharon, I could not hope to maintain an even keel. She keeps things at home together far more than I can hope, and she does all this whilst maintaining her own working life. I cannot put into words the depth of gratitude I feel, and I thank her very much.

I send a special greeting to my father who I know reads the parliamentary contributions on the Internet. I hope he has a great Christmas. As usual, my cards are going out late and may not reach him until after the event, so I apologise publicly for that. I hope to speak to him soon on the telephone, and I hope all is going well.

I take the opportunity to thank my electorate officer, Joanne Flesfader. Jo recently gave birth to her and Dan's first child, little baby Zoe, although at over three kilos, I am not sure how little she can claim to be. She certainly weighs a bit more than that now, and is a delightful and beautiful baby. I thank Jo for organising some photos to be sent to me. I am sure Jo and Dan will have a Christmas this year like no other previously, and I am extremely happy for them. I thank Tracey Rainger for the time she worked in my office filling in whilst Jo is on maternity leave.

I now have Karen Turner working with me, and she has been invaluable keeping order in my office. I can give no higher praise to Karen but to say that Joanne would be extremely satisfied with the sense of order she has returned to my office. Thank you, Karen, first, for agreeing to take on the job and, second, for all your hard work on my behalf and the people of Palmerston. I have said before that electorate officers are like a second member of parliament for the electorate, and Karen is integral to the operations of the Brennan electorate office. I thank her and her family very much for the time away from them that she has to take on occasions, including last weekend to assist with my duties as one of the local members.

Today, I had pleasure in attending the presentation ceremony at Palmerston High School. Mary Cunnington and Brendan Ingham did a great job assisting John Baldock as the MC. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Ms Sarah Friend. I have got to know her over the last couple of years since being elected. Sarah is a lovely, bubbly, young lady who gives her time to community groups and, as I found today, excelling at school. She was awarded the Year 12 prize for

Excellence in Mathematics this year. A fantastic achievement; congratulations Sarah.

Taylor Opie was the Most Outstanding Year 8 Student. He was also the joint winner of the Palmerston High School Chess Trophy, and as something of a struggling chess player myself, I can really appreciate that challenge. I may have to decline playing him because it could be a bit embarrassing losing! Congratulations to him.

Tegan Gusling was the Most Outstanding Year 9 Student. The 2007 Territory Board of Studies Award to the Most Outstanding Year 10 Student went to Amy McCaw. Sherronna Schaefer won the Achievement Award from the Committee and Members of the Vietnam Veterans Association Rural Sub-Branch. Amy McCaw, Scott Jackson and Nicole Trevena won the Australian Defence Forces Leadership and Teamwork Awards. Scott Jackson won the Most Outstanding Year 11 Student, and Daniel Fawcett won the NT Board of Studies Award for the Most Outstanding Year 12 Student. Kerrina Tamiano won the Most Outstanding Year 12 Indigenous Student, and the Most Outstanding Disability Student in Senior School went to Christopher Brandis. I congratulate all of them.

There were also a number of other students who received a variety of merit awards. I seek leave to have those names and awards incorporated into *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Australia Day Council Student Citizen Award - Sarah Watkins

Rotary Community Service Award - Kaitlyn Goodger

Chubb Security Year 10 Community Spirit Award - Tegan Gusling

Oasis Betta Electrical Year 12 Outstanding Leadership Award - William Greer

Caltex Best All-Rounder Award - Rebecca Gallagher

The Palmerston City Mayoral Citizenship Award - Laura Scoggins

Presentation to Exchange Student – Rafiatul Pua Upa

Sporting Awards

AFL - Curtly Reid, Dean Staunton, Chris Alchin, Rohan Lawson

Touch Football - Rohan Lawson

Boxing - Joshua Thompson

Callisthenics - Tegan Gusling

Cricket - Matthew Hanna, David Parrington, Mathew Wall

Gymnastics - Amy McCaw, Marie Cunningham, Patricia Cunningham

Rugby League - Brett Boucher, Matthew Johnson

Rugby Union - Robert Cotter, Jesse Villiers, Jai Wyles-Kelly

Shooting - Yvonne Foster

Softball - Jessica Forrest, Darryl Hayes, Casey Reynolds

Soccer - Kristy-Lee Friend

Swimming - Stacey Carvolth, Jocelyn Ryder

Tang Soo Do - Holly Ingram

Year 8

Paige Cotton - English Merit Award

Cowen Pennell - English Merit Award

Kyle Coughlan - Academic Excellence in Mathematics

Kelly Graebner - Mathematics Merit Award

Neta Henderson - Mathematics Merit Award

Shoma Moreau - Academic Excellence in Science

Rowan Smith - Academic Excellence in Science

Kiall Clement - Science Merit Award

Jamie Vick - Science Merit Award

Bianca Scott - SOSE Merit Award

Gaby Matthewson - Physical Education Merit Award

Joyce Teuati - Excellence in Art

Kareana Tamaotai - Excellence in Art

Brian Norris - Art Merit Award

Courtney Jones - Technical Studies Merit Award

Eddie Kranz - Excellence in Music

Vaughn Kraus - Home Economics Merit Award

Mark Little - Excellence in Drama

Anthony Castro - Excellence in Drama

Shenae Crosby - Drama Merit Award

Blake Matthews - Excellent effort at VET and Work Experience

Zack Dowling - Accelerated Literacy Merit Award

Jarrold Fleming - Accelerated Literacy Merit Award

Emily Cook - SOSE Merit Award; Music Merit Award

Melanie Smith - SOSE Merit Award; Excellence in Home Economics

Joseph Thomas - Excellence in Japanese; Excellence in Technical Studies; Computing Merit Award

Taylor East - Academic Excellence in English; Excellence in Physical Education; Excellence in Technical Studies; Excellence in Computing

Taylor Opie - Academic Excellence in Mathematics; Academic Excellence in SOSE

Year 9

Rikkii Clarke - Academic Excellence in Mathematics

Amelia Weber - Mathematics Merit Award

Cassandra Plain - Academic Excellence in Science

Mitchell Fieldhouse - Science Merit Award

Melissa Overell - SOSE Merit Award

Reuben Castro - Physical Education Merit Award

Hannah Marsh - Technical Studies Merit Award

Caitlin Uren - Excellence in Music Award

Cody Riedel - Excellence in Drama

Billy-Ray Roberts - Excellence in Drama

Kristy-Lee Friend - Drama Merit Award

Dallas Hope - Accelerated Literacy Merit Award

Luke Hore - Accelerated Literacy Merit Award

Jessica Butler - Excellence in Japanese

Jessy Norman - Art Merit Award

Nga Tran - Excellence in Home Economics

Aiden Harding - Home Economics Merit Award

Dion Carthew - Outstanding Effort

Danielle Carmichael - Academic Excellence in Mathematics; SOSE Merit Award

Josephine Baker - Mathematics Merit Award; Accelerated Literacy Merit Award

Steven Duffield - Academic Excellence in SOSE; Computing Merit Award

Alois Sykora - Excellence in Technical Studies; Excellence in Computing

Kirby Chin - Academic Excellence in English; Academic Excellence in Science; Technical Studies Merit Award

Jessica Forrest - English Merit Award; Science Merit Award; Excellence in Physical Education

Tegan Gusling - Academic Excellence in English; Academic Excellence in SOSE; Music Merit Award; Excellence in Art

Year 10

Kelvin Roberts - English Merit Award

Tracy Sainsbury - Academic Excellence in Mathematics

Mahala Hughes - Mathematics Merit Award

Amanda Walker - Mathematics Merit Award

Jeremy Hall - Science Merit Award

Sabrina Dowling - SOSE Merit Award

Sherronna Schaeffe - SOSE Merit Award

Stacey Carvolth - Excellence in Physical Education

Rohanna May - Physical Education Merit Award

Anika Haenen - Excellence in Art

Otto Lowmow - Art Merit Award

James Hay - Excellence in Computing

Jordan Fleming - Music Merit Award

Amanda Hutton - Outstanding Work Experience

Cindy Williams - Improved Independence

Jessica Beumer - Academic Excellence in English; Academic Excellence in Science

Courtney Blake - English Merit Award; SOSE Merit Award

Belinda Bleeze - Academic Excellence in Science; Excellence in Home Economics

Lee Bosworth - Academic Excellence in SOSE; Computing Merit Award

Steven Weigand - Outstanding Aust School-based Apprentice

Jessie East - Science Merit Award; Excellence in Music

Amy McCaw - Academic Excellence in Mathematics; Academic Excellence in SOSE; Excellence in Home Economics

Year 11

Hannah Sheppard - Workready Excellence Award

Jack Kypreos - Physical Education Merit Award

Craig Bleeker - Computing Merit Award

Kelsey May - Excellence in SOSE Award (Stage 2)

Cara Fitzgibbon - Excellence in Home Economics

Jatta Virolainen - Art Merit Award

Wayne Dowling - Mathematics Merit Award

Kathryn Acampora - English Merit Award; Academic Excellence in Art

Brett Boucher - Academic Excellence in Mathematics; Academic Excellence in Science

Daniel Anderson - Excellence in Physical Education; Excellence in Computing

Brett Noakes - Outstanding VET Student; Indigenous Achiever Award

April-Kaye Robinson - English Merit Award; Mathematics Merit Award; Home Economics Merit Award

Scott Jackson - Academic Excellence in English; Academic Excellence in Mathematics; Academic Excellence in Science

Australian Technical College Awards

Douglas Beyer - Best All Rounder

Thomas Franklin - Outstanding Aust School-based Apprentice

Micah Kupfer - Outstanding Work Placement Reports

Group Training NT Awards

Nicole Jong - Workready Merit Award; Outstanding Aust School-based Apprentice

Year 12

William Greer - English Merit Award

Sarah Friend - Excellence in Mathematics

Jessica Work - Mathematics Merit Award

Sarah Watkins - Excellence in Biology Award

Bethany Campbell - Excellence in Chemistry Award

Melissa McArthur - Contemporary Issues in Science Merit Award

Rachael Hallett - Excellence in Home Economics

Joe Graebner - Outstanding School-based Apprentice

Yvonne Foster - Outstanding School-based Apprentice

Scott Hawkes - Excellence in Physics Award; Computing Merit Award

*Kerrie Duffield - Excellence in Computing;
Home Economics Merit Award*

*Daniel Fawcett - Academic Excellence in
English; Excellence in Psychology Award*

Mr BURKE: Still on Palmerston High, I acknowledge Mr Jamie Adams of Chubb Security. Chubb has sponsored awards at the school for some years. I similarly thank Oasis Betta Electrical for their support of the school, and there are a variety of other businesses which have also supported awards. Palmerston City Council continues its support of the school and I thank them for that support. Rob Macleod, the current Mayor, was there and it has been traditional for the Mayor of Palmerston to attend these functions. I thank him for continuing the tradition set by his predecessors.

The federal election was a great win for Labor. Congratulations to Kevin Rudd and the whole team. I have been waiting for the confirmation that Damien Hale will be the representative for Solomon. Congratulations to Warren Snowdon on his appointment into Cabinet. It is great to see, once again, a Territorian in the Cabinet. This House and the members of this House congratulated Nigel Scullion when he went into Cabinet, as I believe it did previously when Bob Collins went into Cabinet, so it is great that, once again, we have a Territorian in the national Cabinet. Well done, Warren.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr BURKE: There are many people across the Territory who all contributed to the win and to the great campaign in the Territory. I thank those who assisted in Palmerston, those I know about on the Bakewell booth, and also the Moulden Park booth. Simon Hall is a real stalwart, a great volunteer, and is very generous with his time. Another massive effort was also given by Shad McDonald and Michelle Parker. My stepdaughter, Leesa, also helped out on the day. She proved a pure natural for handing out how-to-votes, so there is one hint for what could be coming at the next NT election. It must be the skills that she has picked up in retail. We all sat back and watched as she managed to get even the people who did not want one to take one from her and look at it. They may not have followed it, but they took it. That was a great effort.

Bridget Gregory and Trevor White, thank you also for the time you put in at the Bakewell School. Brendan Cabry and his father, Pat, I thank you for your help at Moulden Park Primary. I apologise to the others at Moulden Park, but I do not have a full list of all those who were there. Merv, thanks for looking after the booth at Kormilda School for us,

another great servant of the Palmerston Branch of the ALP.

I also thank Rebecca Want, Bryan Wilkins, Mel and all the other volunteers who worked over the entire federal election on the Your Rights At Work campaign. They put in a wonderful effort. Many nights they were at the Palmerston markets. Their chicken is famous, and I think it really spooked Dave after a while, being stalked by a giant chicken. So congratulations to everyone there.

Irene Monro and her partner, John Martin are, sadly, leaving the Territory for the less green pastures of Queensland. I first met Irene when I worked at the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union and she arrived as the new Northern Territory secretary. I very much enjoyed working with you, Irene, and I have learned a fair bit from you. All of us greatly enjoyed the barbecues with you and John. I still rank your story about John putting together the barbecue as one of the best construction stories I have heard. I wish you, John and Jacob all the best and hope we can continue to stay in touch.

I thank all the staff at the Legislative Assembly for all their assistance through the year, especially Parliamentary Library staff who have done some research for me through the year. It has always been of extremely high quality, always on time, when I have wanted it – often much quicker than I expected to receive it – so thank you to them.

Mr Terry Hanley, thank you for the great support you give me as chair of the PAC and other committees. I have really appreciated that support. Also, of course, the other people in the committees area. It is unwise to pick out individuals. I have found that in such an institution as the Legislative Assembly, everyone works extremely hard and puts in a great effort and makes the place seem as if it runs seamlessly, like clockwork, with never a problem anywhere. I know that must not be the case, but that is certainly the impression that we are all left with, so thank you all for your hard efforts.

It was with very mixed feelings that I heard today that Laurene Hull was leaving her position on the fifth floor to take up a position outside of parliament but, thankfully, still here in Darwin. A great opportunity for you, Laurene, and one for which you are well qualified and suited. It is very much our loss, but good luck with that. Thanks to all those who have worked on the fifth floor this year and will remain to do so. We will have some new faces, I am sure, but I always appreciate the support that people afford me as a member of the government team. I thank them for their assistance and the respect with which they deal with me.

I also recognise a former Darwin High School student. Kelly Sporn moved to London in 2002, and decided at the age of 30 to commence a law degree through the University of London. That, in itself, deserves special praise. She graduated with Honours in July this year and was recently advised that she has won the University of London Academic Award for her year for the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. She has achieved these results whilst working part-time and has now secured a training contract with the prestigious law firm and one of the largest in the world, Linklaters, commencing in 2008-09. Well done, Kelly.

And a quick thank you to Frank McGuinness, the Auditor-General.

Mr HENDERSON (Wanguri): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, it is this time of year again. It is December, then it will be Christmas, and the year will be soon gone – and what an amazing year it has been. It has been a hectic year, chock full with events and action. I am really looking forward to Christmas and spending some time with my family.

As we are nearing the end of the school year, the schools of Leanyer and Wanguri have filled my diary with graduations, concerts and presentation evenings. Having spent most of the year being the minister for Education, there have been many great instances where I have been able to combine my local school visits with the role of government initiatives and programs. Every one of our teachers across the Northern Territory work hard to give our kids an education. I thank all of the teachers in my electorate and throughout the Territory for the amazing work they have put in.

Both my and the member for Casuarina's sons have been part of the first group of students to go to Dripstone Middle School. It has been fantastic to watch our children transition from primary through to middle school. I congratulate the schools in my electorate on another fantastic year. To Dripstone Middle School and the principal, Lyn Elphinstone, and all the staff, well done on becoming a great middle school. I wish all your students who are leaving to go on to high school all the best next year.

To Wanguri Primary School and our principal, Jenny Robinson and all the staff, thanks so much for your support throughout the year. A big thank you to Michael Duffy and the rest of the school council for ensuring Wanguri school maintains its reputation as a great school. Wanguri school recently celebrated its 30th birthday. An ex-student of Wanguri school is the member for Brennan and he came along to that assembly. I donated a gift to them of a painting done by the Wangurri people at East Arnhem Land. From this painting, the

school council has formed a strong relationship with one of the school in East Arnhem Land, called Dhalinbuy. This friendship culminated in the welcome to country festival held in September. The school had a live link-up with Dhalinbuy, and some of the tribal elders came to Wanguri for the evening. I take this chance to again thank the school and its council for all the hard work they have put to make this important friendship happen, and it will be ongoing now.

To Henry Gray and all the staff at Leanyer Primary, you make it a pleasure to visit Leanyer to see how everything is going. Leanyer Primary is the cornerstone of our community. It really is at the heart of the Leanyer community. Henry Gray and all the staff are very well respected, and the school just keeps getting better. My thanks also go to Grant Hatcher and the rest of the school council for your contribution this year.

Talking about Leanyer school, a student from Leanyer has been awarded the Administrator's Medal this year for the Northern Suburbs Cluster. Congratulations to Rachel Fegan. Rachel joins a long list of recipients from Leanyer school. Students from Leanyer have received the Administrator's Medal for three of the last four years. Congratulations also to Edith Kirlew and Diana Tam who will be receiving the Board of Studies Award for Years 6 and 7 respectively.

Thank you to Bernadette Morris and her staff at Holy Spirit Primary School. Bernadette has only been at Holy Spirit for a year, but she has settled in really well and the school is going from strength to strength.

To Tom Leach and the staff at St Andrew Lutheran School, thank you for your hard work and support. I have had a few occasions to go to St Andrew's over the year, and it is always been fun and an interesting time. I especially enjoyed going into Ms Munroe's class to talk about parliament and government. The kids were more interested in the security surrounding Parliament House and the Mace, and it was something that will stay with me for a long time.

To Michael Jones and all the staff and students at Henbury School, I thank you for your wonderful contributions this year. Henbury is very much a special school in my electorate and I have great admiration for Michael and all the teaching staff. I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

I wish all members of the Timorese Chinese Association and the Hakka Association – I am patron of both groups – a very merry Christmas and I look forward to all the Chinese New Year parties in 2008.

Also Casuarina Soccer Club, of which I am a patron - what a fantastic year this year. We won the treble. The first time in the history, I think, of soccer in the Territory, that one club has won all three trophies. It is going to be a hard act to follow next year. I look forward to my strong association with Casuarina Soccer Club.

I thank Darwin Golf Club for again asking me to be patron for 2008. I will be very happy to accept that. I am going to flag my New Year's resolution. I am really going to try to get some lessons this year and spend a bit of time on the golf course. There you are, it is on the public record, I had better make sure I do it.

To all the seniors at Leanyer Seniors Village, thank you for your wonderful support and good wishes. My special thanks go to Coral Brown, Hazel Glencross and John and Nali Smith who really are at the heart of that community.

It has been wonderful to watch the new suburb of Lyons grow into a fully functioning community. Residents began to move in, and it is good to see people using the wonderful play equipment there. To Lyons director, Geoff Smith and sales manager, Sharon Feist and all the other staff there at Lyons, I wish you a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. The team at Lyons has been fantastic, easy to work with. I am sorry I missed your new residents' drinks but hope to catch up soon.

With the Lyons development comes the gradual upgrade of the Tracy Village Club. The new car park and sports field are great to see. The lighting around the field has been installed. I was proud this year when our election commitment for lighting for the baseball and softball was put up. Congratulations and thanks again to president, Garry Ross, and his committee, as well as club manager, John Quinlan, and all his staff who have done a fantastic job this year. I wish you all a merry Christmas.

I have to thank the wonderful Casuarina Branch of the Labor Party. The members for Johnston and Casuarina and I are well served by the Casuarina Branch of our party. I know I have competition from other members of this House who are in other branches, but I am going to say that I think the Casuarina Branch is the best branch of the Labor Party in the Northern Territory. They are a wonderful bunch of people and my sincere thanks must go to president, Russell Wilson, and all of the other people on the executive. Thank you for running such a tight ship, and for doing such a great job.

To the fantastic Team Wanguri who worked so hard on a great election campaign this year, thank you for your help and support. You are always

there for Morgan and me whenever you are needed, and your kind words and encouragement mean more to me than you could know. To George, Costa, Roberto, Kent, Christine and Erin, thank you all so much. We are a great team and I love your company.

Sadly, we are losing one of our Team Wanguri members this week; Kent Rowe is on the move. He is heading to Adelaide to start a new life as an organiser for the STA. It is sad to see Kent go, but I know he will be back. Kent, thank you for all your great support.

In my Christmas best wishes I want to thank my office staff: Mark Nelson, Laurene, Pompea, Rebecca, Kylie, Lil, Tom, Natasha, Eva, and Peter. I have wonderful staff. I could not possibly do this job without you, and it is an absolute pleasure to work with you. You are all such great professionals and we work hard, but we also have a lot of fun. As the member for Brennan said, Laurene is off to a well-earned new position. She has served me and this government tremendously well. Thank you, and all the best in your new career.

Mark Nelson has been an absolute legend and a pleasure to work with for so many years now in opposition and government. Mark, Carolyn and their children are taking the opportunity to start a new life in Canberra, but we are certainly going to stay strong friends. I wish you all the best in your studies next year, and thank you for your huge contribution to the Northern Territory Labor Party, and your support for me over the years. Mark, whatever you do, I wish you well.

To my CEO in Education; Margaret Banks, it has been a pleasure to work with you this year. Yet again, you have proven yourself to be inspirational leader for our educators across the Territory, and our departmental staff. You are highly thought of and I wish you and all the executive at DEET, a very happy and safe Christmas.

Thanks to Maree Tetlow, CEO at Tourism NT. They do an amazing job promoting our beautiful Territory, and certainly the proof of Maree's talents is there to see in growing tourism numbers. To Maree and everyone at Tourism NT, merry Christmas.

Ken Simpson, the Commissioner for Public Employment, has a huge job with 17 000 staff across the Northern Territory, and all of the EBAs which have to be managed. It has been a pleasure working with you and your team this year, Ken. Have a great Christmas.

For everyone who works for the Department of the Legislative Assembly, yet again another very

busy year where you have kept this place running beautifully. It is a magnificent job, and as the former Leader for Government Business until this week, I thank you for all your very professional efforts this year.

My best wishes also go to our ministerial drivers who do a fabulous job making sure we get to appointments on time. You are absolutely professional, Gary, Hardy, George, Tor, and Ben, and I wish you a very merry Christmas.

To my electorate officer, Morgan: it has been a fantastic year. You have settled in really well and you are doing a wonderful job looking after my electorate when I am so busy on ministerial, and now Chief Ministerial, responsibilities. I could not do it without you, Morgan; you are doing a wonderful job. Have a great Christmas.

Finally, I have to say thank you to my wonderful wife, Stacey, and children, Alasdair, Liam and Isabel. What a year it has been. I thank you so much for your love and support; without you I could not possibly do this. To my parliamentary colleagues, particularly on our side of the House, it is a pleasure working alongside each and every one of you. You make an enormous contribution to this great Territory of ours and we have an exciting year next year and I am really looking forward to working with you all.

To other the members of the Assembly, even though we have had some heated debates and a lot of argy-bargy, at the end of the day we are all here because we have been elected by our constituents. I respect the contribution that you make. I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

Dr BURNS (Johnston): Madam Acting Deputy Speaker, tonight I acknowledge the contribution of a couple of outgoing chairs of school councils in my electorate. I truly appreciate the tremendous role the school council committees play in our education system and the guidance they give to ensure the smooth running of the schools for the benefit of those students and staff.

First of all I would like to mention the effort of Kelly Anstey, who is the outgoing Chair of the Jingili School Community Council. Kelly has been involved with the Jingili Primary School council since 2004. Kelly, together with another former chair, Ian Johnstone, and former principal, Eva Lawler, were heavily involved in a number of significant achievements in the last few years.

They include the completion of the operational guidelines for the Jingili Kindergarten, a non-profit childcare centre. The centre has now been fully integrated into the primary school. The integration was the final stage in a decade-long process in the creation of the facility in Jingili offering integrated

childcare and education for children ranging from six months of age, right through to those in their final year of primary school. The number of hours spent by Kelly, Ian and Eva on this project cannot be underestimated.

There also has been a turnaround in enrolment numbers following a decline in the 1990s. This is particularly reassuring as high attendance figures and achieving national benchmarks remain a priority at Jingili Primary School.

In addition, there has also been a commitment to an active school council focusing on maintaining and further developing facilities at the school. The school is enjoying a growing and well-deserved reputation as one of Darwin's best.

Finally, in recent years we have seen the establishment of a strong executive leadership group at the school, plus this year's appointment of Jodie Green as principal leaving the school well positioned to continued success.

Kelly was Chair of the Jingili School Council in 2005 and again stepped into the breach this year following the elected chair's sudden resignation. Kelly has served the community council for over four years and has done a fantastic job. She has been untiring in her efforts to make Jingili such a great and growing school, and I take my hat off to her performance. She is certainly held in high regard by her council colleagues, the staff at the school, and the school community and particularly by me. Thank you, Kelly.

Another dedicated parent who has spent an enormous amount of time doing committee work at the school is Sita Harrison. Sita took on this challenging role of Chair of the Moil School Council over the last couple of years. Sita spent countless hours going around the community seeking sponsorship for school events. I must say I always found her approaches pretty persuasive. She is an inspiration, always smiling and happy and is so committed to her cause that it was impossible to refuse her requests. Unfortunately, Sita and her family are leaving Darwin for Canberra shortly as a result of a Defence posting. Her departure will be a great loss to our community. I wish Sita and her family all the best for the future and hope that one day they can return to Darwin.

I now turn to the efforts of some of our school students. I congratulate William Carroll, Kenny Lee and Vaanathy Kandiah of Moil Primary School who won first place in the Language Teachers Association of the Northern Territory Speaking Competition. This event was held on 10 November. The teams involved in the competition had to present short plays. The team of Steven Polychrone, Eliza Morse, Eloise

Bruekers, who stepped in the last moment, won second place, and for good measure, Rachel Simmonds, Eliza Morse and Jo Newbery came third. What a terrific team effort for Moil Primary School. Kieran Caraher also entered the competition in the Japanese section and came first. Well done, Kieran. Congratulations to all those accomplished students, and also to Janine Sutter who put in such an enormous effort to help prepare and encourage this wonderful group of students.

I will now reflect on some recent significant achievements within the Health department. Over the past couple of months, a number of groups and individual staff from the Department of Health and Community Services have been acknowledged for their outstanding contributions and have been honoured with awards at the state and national levels.

On 19 October this year, Mary Williams, General Manager/Nursing Director of Tennant Creek Hospital, won the IBM Community and Government Award and went on to be named Northern Territory Telstra Business Woman for 2007. Mary represented the Northern Territory in Melbourne on 10 November 2007, competing for the national award.

Mary commenced working as a Regional Nurse in the Tennant Creek Hospital in January 1990, and very soon afterwards took on the role of Nurse Manager. Mary is highly regarded by not only the staff of Tennant Creek Hospital, but the people of the Barkly for her nursing skills and her ability to respond quickly and logically in any situation.

Mary distinguished herself at the site of a shocking bus accident in Egypt in January 2006 while travelling with her son. She was travelling in the second bus when the lead bus crashed. Mary took charge of the scene, triaging and identifying people to be transported to hospital. Her role in this situation was widely reported in the international media. Mary took on the role of General Manager, Director of Nursing for Tennant Creek Hospital in 2006 and, during that year, Mary was named the NT Acute Care Nurse for the year and NT Nurse of the Year. I congratulate Mary, and I am very glad that she is at the helm of the Tennant Creek Hospital with her skills, talents and dedication providing acute health care to the people of Barkly.

Bernadette Shields was awarded the Individual Contribution Award in last weekend's Inaugural 2007 National Excellence Awards in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health. These prestigious awards celebrate the achievements of individuals and organisations in promoting quality, innovation, leadership and excellence in health care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

Bernie is an outstanding individual and her contribution to Aboriginal health over the last 40 years is immeasurable.

Bernadette started as an Aboriginal Health Worker at East Arm Leprosarium, and is currently Aboriginal Health Promotion Officer with the Preventable Chronic Disease Program. I congratulate Bernadette and say how fortunate we are to have her working with us, sharing her knowledge and skills to build a better health system for Aboriginal Territorians.

Tonight I would like to speak about Simone Liddy. Simone is an indigenous cadet with the department who was recently named the NT's Young Australian of the Year 2008. This is Simone's second major award this year. In the August sittings, I acknowledged Simone's achievements in being awarded the 2007 National NAIDOC Youth of the Year for her academic achievement, athletic prowess, and mentoring of indigenous students. Simone is currently in her third year of studies of a Bachelor of Pharmacy degree at Charles Darwin University, and undertakes the 12 weeks each year of work placements at the Royal Darwin Hospital's Pharmacy Unit. Simone is also a valuable player in the Territory Pearls hockey team and captain of the NT Under 21 Women's hockey team. Simone is another Territorian of whom we are justifiably proud and an excellent role model for young Territorians.

Peter Whelan is the Senior Medical Entomologist with the Department of Health and Community Services. He was awarded NT Local Hero for his work on mosquito control and entomology over the past 33 years. Peter's work includes protecting the Territory against exotic mosquitoes, eliminating mosquito breeding sites in urban areas and control mosquito spraying, including averting mosquito outbreaks after flooding. Peter's community-based approach also led to the eradication of the dengue mosquito in Tennant Creek in 2006. As a recognised expert, Peter advises on similar programs elsewhere, including Queensland and East Timor.

I also flag now that, in future sittings, I will be talking about a recent trip I had to East Timor, where Peter is leading an AusAID project to support the East Timorese people to eradicate dengue fever and also do some malaria work there. This is very important work going on with Peter Whelan and the Health department in partnership with the Timorese people.

I would also like to talk about the NT Renal Service Clinical Reference Group. On 22 November, the NT Renal Service Clinical Reference Group was awarded a commendation by the Institute of Public Administration - Prime

Minister's Award for Excellence for their leading work in fighting renal disease. The members of the reference group are: Dr Paul Lawton, Ms Gill Gorham, Ms Denby Kitchener, Ms Elaine Bowen, Dr Christine Connors, Mr Peter Campos, Mrs Meri Fletcher, Mrs Julie Barnes, Dr Cherian Sajiv, Ms Jane Harris, Ms Vicki Taylor of the Department of Health and Community Services, and Ms Sarah Brown of AMSANT. The group should be extremely proud of their achievements. They are contributing to huge improvements in the survival rates of people with renal disease, and the Territory's approach to this area of care is now seen as leading the nation.

The department's Interactive Communications and Development Unit was awarded a commendation at the NT Information and Communications Technology Awards for *The Hospital Story*. *The Hospital Story* is an educational DVD that includes presentations in three different languages – Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri and broken English. It aims to give indigenous patients an understanding of the hospital system and the environment, enabling them to make informed decisions about their medical treatment, and communicate effectively as consumers of health care services. Staff involved in this extremely worthwhile initiative are: Jaysin Jones, Nathaniel Peek, Jess Egan, Jules Lim, and Alice Springs Hospital staff, Vicki Taylor, Paul Nieuwenhoven, Loraine Parsons, Melissa Brown and Dr Tim Henderson, Lynne Little, Louise Dennis, Maxine Austin, Eileen Van Iersel, and Terry King.

The Aboriginal Health Worker Apprenticeship Scheme was awarded a commendation in the Regional Category of the Northern Territory Commissioner for Public Employment Awards for Equity and Diversity. The staff involved were Professor Shane Houston, Peter Boyce, Tanya McGregor, Douglas Josif, Peter Pangquee and Vera Whitehouse. AMSANT also played a role in this project.

Madam Speaker, it is the festive season. I thank you, all my parliamentary colleagues, all the people within Parliament House, and my family, my wife Elizabeth, daughter Amy, and my sons, David and Daniel. They give me great support, as does Bruiser and our new dog – well, some of us call her Bella, but my daughter calls her Yittles. She is a beautiful dog and is great company for Bruiser. He is very happy that he has female company. She is just a bit young yet, but they get along very well.

In my electorate office, Judy Herring and in my ministerial office, Fred McCue, Andrea Adlam, Charlie Phillips, Deirdre Logie, Vera McMahan but, particularly, Jade Carroll and Vanessa McCall, who also do a fantastic job and support us.

I wish everyone in the department a very merry Christmas – David Ashbridge and the CEO, Dr Len Notaras, head of the hospital. They are fantastic, very dedicated people and it is fantastic working with them.

It has been a great year. The last week has been a big week in anyone's book, but we close the year.

I thank, on a very personal note, Clare Martin and Syd Stirling. They have been mentors to me. They have made a great contribution to this Territory. They have made great contributions in this parliament. As colleagues and friends, they have certainly shown me a great example of graciousness this week and their commitment to the ideals of the Australia Labor Party and their colleagues. I thank them very much for their commitment. Also, I am very glad that Paul Henderson is our Chief Minister. We will move on in 2008, I think, in a mighty way, building on the past and looking to the future.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.