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## ASSEMBLY CONVENED

The Thirteenth Assembly convened on 18 October 2016, pursuant to notice by His Honour the Administrator.

### NOTICE CALLING TOGETHER THE THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY

**The CLERK:** Honourable members and guests, the instrument appointing this meeting day states:

*Northern Territory of Australia*

Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978 *Commonwealth*

*Appointment of first session of the Thirteenth Assembly*

*I, John Laurence Hardy, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, under section 22(1) of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 Commonwealth, appoint 10 am on Tuesday 18 October 2016 as the time for holding the first session of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly.*

*Dated 22 September 2016*

*John L Hardy  
Administrator*

The Serjeant-at-Arms conducted the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Hon John Hardy, and Mrs Marie Hardy into the Chamber.

His Honour the Administrator took the Chair.

### ATTENDANCE OF HIS HONOUR THE ADMINISTRATOR TO DECLARE OPEN THE THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY

**His Honour the ADMINISTRATOR:** Members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 22 of the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* of the Commonwealth, I appointed 10am on Tuesday 18 October 2016 as the day for the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory of Australia to assemble for the dispatch of business and required all Members of the Legislative Assembly to give their attendance in the Legislative Assembly Chamber.

I declare open the first session of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to section 22 of the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978* of the Commonwealth, it is, amongst other things, enacted that every member of the Legislative Assembly shall, before taking his or her seat, make and subscribe before the Administrator, or a person authorised by the Administrator, an oath or affirmation of allegiance in the form in Schedule 2 of the *Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978*, and an oath or affirmation of office in the form in Schedule 3 of that Act.

I now ask the Clerk to lay on the table the return to writ.

### RETURN TO WRIT

The Clerk laid on the table the writ for the election of Members of the Legislative Assembly held on 27 August 2016.

### ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS AND AFFIRMATIONS

The following members named in the returns made and subscribed the oaths or affirmations required by law:

Electorate	Member
Arafura	Lawrence Costa
Araluen	Robyn Jane Lambley
Arnhem	Selena Jane Malijarri Uibo

Barkly	Gerald Francis McCarthy
Blain	Terence Kennedy Mills
Braitling	Dale Suzanne Wakefield
Brennan	Anthony John Sievers
Casuarina	Lauren Jane Moss
Daly	Gary John Higgins
Drysdale	Eva Dina Lawler
Fannie Bay	Michael Patrick Francis Gunner
Fong Lim	Jeffrey David Collins
Goyder	Kezia Dorcas Tibisay Purick
Johnston	Kenneth (Ken) Edward Vowles
Karama	Ngaree Jane Ah Kit
Katherine	Sandra Jaoa Nelson
Namatjira	Chanston James Paech
Nelson	Gerard (Gerry) Vincent Wood
Nhulunbuy	Yingiya Mark Guyula
Nightcliff	Natasha Kate Fyles
Port Darwin	Paul Andrew Kirby
Sanderson	Kate (Kathryn) Jane Worden
Spillett	Lia Emele Finocchiaro
Stuart	Scott Lindsley McConnell
Wanguri	Nicole Susan Manison

### ELECTION OF SPEAKER

**His Honour the ADMINISTRATOR:** Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is now necessary that a Speaker be chosen. You, Members of the Legislative Assembly, will now proceed to choose some proper person to be your Speaker. Following the presentation of your Speaker to me this day, I shall address the Assembly declaring the causes for calling the Assembly together.

His Honour the Administrator, escorted by the Serjeant-at-Arms, withdrew from the Chamber.

**The CLERK:** Honourable members, pursuant to Standing Order 214, I call the Chief Minister to nominate a member to be the Speaker.

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Mr Clerk, I nominate the honourable Member for Goyder, Hon Kezia Purick, to be the Speaker of this Assembly and move that the honourable Member for Goyder take the Chair as Speaker.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** I second the nomination.

**Ms PURICK (Goyder):** Mr Clerk, I accept the nomination.

**The CLERK:** Is there any further proposal? There being no further proposal, the time for proposals has expired. Does any member wish to speak to the motion?

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** I thank the Member for Goyder for accepting the nomination to be Madam Speaker. Last term Madam Speaker ran a fair Assembly, in sometimes difficult circumstances, and our team trusts her to chair a fair Assembly this term for the true welfare of all Territorians. We thank you for accepting the nomination.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Mr Clerk, I also wish to thank the Member for Goyder for accepting this nomination. I also applaud the Chief Minister for nominating an Independent Speaker. It is a precedent that has roots in the Westminster system in London, where the Speaker is elected, resigns from the party and becomes Independent. I know this is a bit different today, but it is unique and should be applauded by everyone in the Northern Territory.

The Member for Goyder, when she first took the Speaker's role, was very reluctant. Her second run at becoming the Speaker was met with relief, and today I hope she moves into the Speaker's role in a very relaxed atmosphere.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** I also stand in support of our to-be-elected Speaker. It will actually be her third reign; people might remember she lost the job for approximately three minutes in the last sittings.

**Ms Purick:** Forty minutes.

**Mr WOOD:** Forty? It felt like three minutes.

It is important that we have an Independent Speaker. It removes the perceived, or sometimes actual, political party bias, especially if the government appoints one of its own. I will allow the Speaker some movement in that independence when it comes to matters in the rural area; that should be an exception to the rule. Seriously, though, I know Madam Speaker will be a good Independent Speaker. Anyone who saw her in action in the previous sittings will know that to be the case. I support the nomination.

**The CLERK:** Does any other member wish to speak to the motion?

I therefore declare the honourable Member for Goyder elected as the Speaker.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, thank you for the honour and privilege you have bestowed upon me today. I thank the Chief Minister and the government for placing their trust in me to uphold the values and integrity of the office of Speaker. I also thank the Opposition Leader for bestowing the same honour upon me.

I take the role of presiding officer seriously, and I have worked, and will continue to work, towards a fair, independent and professional Legislative Assembly. I will work with all members over the next four years, and I wish all members the very best in all they do in this Chamber. Thank you.

#### **PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER TO ADMINISTRATOR**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I am informed that it is the intention of His Honour the Administrator to attend at the Office of the Speaker. It is my intention to present myself to him there as the choice of the Assembly as Speaker. I invite honourable members to accompany me to present myself to His Honour the Administrator.

The sitting of the Assembly is suspended until the ringing of the bells.

The Assembly suspended.

#### **COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER OATHS AND AFFIRMATIONS**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that, accompanied by honourable members, I presented myself to His Honour, Hon John Hardy, Administrator of the Northern Territory, as the choice of the Assembly for its Speaker, and His Honour was pleased to congratulate me.

I inform honourable members that I have received from His Honour the Administrator a commission to administer to honourable members the oaths or affirmations of allegiance and of office. I table the commission. The Clerk will read the commission.

**The CLERK:**

*Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 Commonwealth*

#### ***Authorisation to Administer Oaths and Affirmations***

*I, John Hardy OAM, Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, pursuant to section 13(7) of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 (Cth), authorise Kezia Dorcas Tibisay Purick to administer oaths or affirmations under section 13(6) of the Act.*

*Dated 17 October 2016.*

*John Hardy  
Administrator*

#### **ATTENDANCE OF HIS HONOUR THE ADMINISTRATOR TO ADDRESS THE ASSEMBLY**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I am pleased to inform the Assembly that His Honour the Administrator will attend the Assembly immediately to declare the causes of his calling the Assembly together.

The Serjeant-at-Arms conducted the Administrator of the Northern Territory, Hon John Hardy, and Mrs Marie Hardy into the Chamber.

His Honour the Administrator took the Chair.

### ADMINISTRATOR'S ADDRESS

**His Honour the ADMINISTRATOR:** Madam Speaker, honourable members, may I start by acknowledging the Larrakia people, on whose land this Chamber sits. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and future.

On this opening day of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory we look to the future. Across the Territory there has been a compelling vote for change, and the Australian Labor Party has been elected to office. This change has brought many new faces to this Chamber today, along with many returning members. It has brought a diversity in the make-up of the Legislative Assembly, with many different views and people from many different backgrounds, including several Independent members. This make-up reflects the diversity of Territorians, and I am confident that, in turn, it will bring a change in the way the Legislative Assembly conducts its business.

I congratulate you all on your election, and I trust you will serve the people of the Northern Territory faithfully and diligently. My government was elected on a platform of trust, accountability and integrity, and a commitment to govern for all Territorians. Territorians have placed their trust in my government, and this trust will be honoured by listening to and consulting widely with the community before making major decisions.

Open and accountable government is a core principle that runs across all areas of this government's plans and will be a feature of this term of the Legislative Assembly. This government will listen to and partner with Territorians as it develops its policies and strategies through consultation, collaboration and co-design. The government has listened closely to the concerns of Territorians about how government has operated over the last four years. That is why it will govern in a way that is open, accountable and transparent, and that is why important additions to the Northern Territory's existing public integrity framework, to restore trust and confidence in the Northern Territory's political processes, will be made.

Critical in these efforts will be the establishment of an independent commission against corruption, a body that will have the appropriate powers and functions to properly investigate allegations of corruption in the public administration of the Northern Territory. The government will also create the position of an integrity commissioner, tasked with providing advice to ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly and the public service on a range of integrity and conflict of interest matters. These two additions will ensure that there is a separation between advisory and investigative functions under the overall integrity framework.

Similar bodies already exist in other jurisdictions in Australia, and Territorians are entitled to the same protection for their public institutions. Territorians must be able to support and have confidence in the electoral system and be confident that politicians and political parties are operating in the public interest. That is why the government will establish a judicial inquiry into political donations and the way elections are funded.

My government will implement a range of further policies to increase accountability and transparency. It will ensure statutory and judicial appointments are made in a transparent manner and consider changes to electoral processes. It will initiate an inquiry into parliamentary reforms to open up parliament in the community. The government will be more open and transparent when it comes to government-held information, including disclosure about overseas ministerial travel arrangements. It will implement a digital-by-default policy when providing government services and information, and promote open government through a new public data policy. The government will introduce planning reforms to ensure that the planning system provides certainty, balances competing public interests, is simple and transparent, is driven by strategic planning and provides opportunities for meaningful community participation and appeals of decisions.

Strong and stable government is important to providing business confidence. My government will seek to restore the trust and confidence of the local business community and provide it with the certainty it needs in a time when the global economic environment is not so certain. Good economic management will require the balancing of competing objectives, such as investing in infrastructure and economic development programs to grow the economy and create jobs, and maintaining a responsible level of government spending. My government will aim to bring the Budget back to surplus by 2019-20 through robust and disciplined Budget management.

The Northern Territory is facing an economic transition following the completion of the INPEX construction phase. Global economic volatility is high and the Northern Territory population needs to be stabilised in the face of this long-term challenge. But with this economic transition there will also be opportunities, and my government is optimistic about the future. Its plan to grow jobs will focus on broadening the economic base of the Territory by investing in both our traditional strengths and new and emerging industries. It will work to expand agribusiness, the resources industry, tourism, international education, construction and Defence industries, and also invest in emerging industries, such as tropical and desert health and Aboriginal bush medicines, art, food and fashion.

Previous governments have established the focus on Asian engagement for economic development. This government will continue that work, building on the relationships with our existing partners like China and Japan, but also looking to open new doors to the emerging economic powerhouse of India. It will rebuild team NT, a group made up of government, industry, business and unions, to travel nationally and internationally, seeking to promote the Territory and attract business investment and people. This government is determined to keep the economy moving and grow jobs in the short term by investing in infrastructure, not just in Darwin but across the Northern Territory in regional and remote areas.

My government will provide certainty by maintaining the commitments of previous governments to important economic infrastructure like the shiplift and common-user facility at Darwin port, the North East Gas Interconnector pipeline project and the Northern Territory Infrastructure Development Fund.

There will be a new focus on logistics and transport infrastructure, with a transport supply chain infrastructure master plan which will set out a vision for significant investment in roads, railways, spur lines, port storage and handling needs. My government will also leverage economic infrastructure to develop regional centres. This includes a plan to develop Katherine as a major inland port and transport hub, focused on agribusiness.

Tennant Creek is a major mining service centre and Alice Springs is the home of the iconic national Indigenous art gallery and a centre for solar excellence. Additionally, the government will deliver an economic stimulus package through an investment in social infrastructure. This stimulus package will provide:

- jobs and contracts for local construction businesses while also delivering social benefits which include repairs and upgrades for every school in the Northern Territory, including homeland schools, over the next four years
- purpose-built facilities, including a fabrication lab, new library and accommodation block for Darwin Middle and High Schools to make these schools leaders in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics. Students from across the Territory will be able to access these facilities
- sporting infrastructure repairs and upgrades across the Northern Territory
- the extension of existing art galleries in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine and East Arnhem as part of the northern iconic Indigenous arts trail.

The record \$1.1bn investment in remote housing infrastructure over 10 years will provide further jobs and business opportunities for Indigenous people in regional and remote parts of the Territory. The government will provide certainty for local businesses and investors, and a long-term perspective for infrastructure development through a 10-year rolling infrastructure plan.

My government also has a strong commitment to transparency and public confidence in its infrastructure programs. It will create a public database that will publish updates on capital works projects as they are rolled out. Tied into the infrastructure investment will be a strengthening of recruitment policies to support local jobs and businesses, in particular Aboriginal jobs and businesses in remote areas, through a buy local campaign.

The government will make changes to contract planning, assessment and management processes to cut red tape and support local businesses while also maintaining transparency of the procurement policy system.

Oil and gas-related service industries will continue to play an important part in the Northern Territory economy and the government will continue to grow and support these industries to create jobs for Territorians. My government is committed to collaborating with the Commonwealth Government to

maximise opportunities for local businesses through the \$20bn investment in expanded Defence presence in the Territory as part of the Commonwealth Defence white paper.

Tourism is a key plank of the government's economic development agenda, and it will continue to provide strategic support for the tourism industry. The national iconic Indigenous arts trail will be a world-class tourism draw card which will help grow jobs across the Northern Territory. Planning will also commence in this term of government to replace the existing Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin with an iconic museum and art gallery complex fitting for the capital city of the north.

The government has committed to bringing back the Arafura Games, which will be not only a premier sporting and cultural event for Territorians but another tourist attraction and an opportunity to build economic and cultural ties with our neighbours in the Asian region. It will dedicate effort in bringing more tourists from China and India to the Territory through market research, direct flights and a grants program for businesses to make themselves Asian-market focused.

The government has also committed to the pastoral and agriculture business industries and will work closely with businesses through research and business development to access new markets and deliver greater value-add in the Territory.

My government recognises that it does not have all the answers and that Territorians deserve a say in how we shape the Northern Territory economy as it grows and develops into the future. This government will partner with the business community, non-government organisations, land councils and other Indigenous stakeholders, and the general public by holding a series of regional and sectoral economic summits, culminating in Darwin. The economic summits will provide a joint foundation for the Northern Territory economy as we move forward through this exciting transition period. We will also reintroduce business round tables as a means of engaging regular local business input on economic and regulatory matters.

My government recognises that the world and the global economy is changing and our economy will need to change too. To seize the opportunities in change it will embrace digital distribution and drive innovation by supporting new industries and technologies like ride sharing and renewable energy.

My government will place children at the heart of its agenda. They are our most valuable assets in the future of our society, and all evidence shows that the first five years are critical to shaping a child's prospects for the future. It will invest in every child's health, education and wellbeing, and will support their families to give them the best start in life. It will deliver a holistic early childhood strategic plan in 2017 that will inform high-quality, well-conditioned, locally-responsive and culturally-appropriate programs with stable long-term funding.

As a companion to the early childhood strategic plan it will develop a complementary child and adolescent health plan by 2018 to ensure an integrated approach to the health and wellbeing needs of young people in the Territory. This strategy will focus on the entire early lifespan of children, even from before birth. Children need to be healthy so they can learn and develop to their maximum potential, both at school and in their broader family and community lives.

My government will work with communities and service providers to improve antenatal and maternal healthcare services, including targeted home support for vulnerable young mothers and their families, across the Territory. Better preventative health services will be provided for young families to ensure that all children are properly immunised by improving eHealth capabilities to monitor all children under five years of age.

The government will expand the Families as First Teachers program to help parents provide an early educational base for their children. It will implement a dual pathways approach to child protection, which will provide greater early intervention and support for vulnerable children and families.

Education is a fundamental right for all Territorians and is the key to ensuring our children have the knowledge and skills for the jobs of the future. My government will invest an additional \$124m over four years in schools to boost teacher numbers, provide early intervention and tackle challenging behaviour in the classroom, provide extra disability support in schools and create a new program of school sports, arts, music and health across the Territory. Children will be prepared for the digital economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through coding training, for developing computer software, apps and websites, in primary and secondary schools.

My government will work in partnership with frontline services and peak bodies to design and deliver early intervention and support to help children and young people overcome disadvantage and avoid the dangers of alcohol, drugs and criminal behaviour.

Ensuring our children have the best possible start to life means we also need to invest in families and communities so they are healthy and strong, and can support children as they grow. Our community faces a number of serious issues that are tearing at the fabric of our families and our community, issues that are denying our children a safe, happy and healthy start in life. Chief among these issues are alcohol and drug abuse. This government will bring back the Banned Drinker Register and provide adequate funding for treatment and diversion services, including youth-specific services to tackle the multiple complex factors that contribute to alcohol and drug abuse in our community.

More work needs to be done to understand the devastating permanent effects of foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, FASD, on our children, as well as significant longer-term impacts on families and communities as affected children grow into adolescence. The government will work to develop an holistic framework aimed at identifying, assessing, managing and preventing FASD to give more Territory kids a better chance in life. Specialist services will be developed across government to support and treat individuals and families with FASD. It will work to improve other forms of preventative health and coordinated care, and seek to provide treatment as close to home as possible for people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes and renal disease.

Domestic and family violence continues to be a scourge across the Northern Territory and the violence perpetrated, particularly against women and children, is unacceptable. My government will take early action to protect women and combat domestic and family violence through an integrated response that better supports the needs of victims and their families, while working hard to stop the cycle of violence.

As part of a national strategy to combat domestic violence and keep women and children safe in their own homes, the government will introduce legislation this year to enable the automatic recognition of interstate domestic violence orders in the Northern Territory. It will introduce police body cameras to make the collection of evidence against perpetrators more effective. It will fund new women's shelters in Alice Springs and Galiwinku, and conduct an infrastructure needs analysis of all existing emergency women's shelters across the Territory to develop a five-year master plan. It will develop specialised justice responses, increase access to evidence-based behaviour change programs and grassroots programs to help change perpetrators' behaviour and break the cycle of violence.

Mental health services in the Northern Territory will receive a boost, with the government making suicide prevention a top priority. The Northern Territory has the highest suicide rates in Australia, with 14.3 people per 100 000 dying from suicide each year. These rates are even higher for Indigenous and young people. In recognition of these intolerable levels of suicide the government has set a goal to halve suicide rates over the next 10 years. The government will trial a new housing accommodation support initiative in Darwin, a partnership between government and the community sector to provide support services and stable tenancies for up to 200 people with a mental illness each year in public housing. It will work with the Australian government to secure a headspace service in Katherine for young people with early onset psychosis, which has been identified as an urgent need.

Delivering the best possible health outcomes for all Territorians is a key priority for this government. In order to do this, both government facilities and community health organisations need the best possible health infrastructure. My government will invest in this infrastructure to support Territorians into the long-term future. It will deliver the Palmerston hospital, as planned; a free multistorey car park at Royal Darwin Hospital by 2020; and detailed business planning for Royal Darwin Hospital over the long term. It will work with the Commonwealth and community stakeholders to plan more aged-care facilities.

My government recognises the urgent need to act on the issues in the youth justice system and keep young Territorians out of the criminal justice system, leading healthy and productive lives. The government will fully cooperate with the Royal Commission into child protection and youth detention systems of the government of the Northern Territory. It will work closely with the non-government sector to take immediate action both inside and outside of the youth justice system to ensure that at-risk children and young people have safe and effective support services, diversionary programs, alternatives to detention, humane treatment and better prospects for rehabilitation.

Making a prison sentence a last resort is not just important for young people; this government will also look at diversionary and rehabilitation programs to address offending behaviours and reduce incarceration and recidivism for adult prisoners.



My government believes that access to good housing is a right for all Territorians, and having adequate shelter is the cornerstone of all efforts to secure the health and wellbeing of Territory families and communities. It has committed a record \$1.1bn over 10 years to remote housing, which will include building new housing, outdoor living spaces, extra rooms and granny flats on existing properties; repairs and maintenance; and government employee housing.

The new investment package includes four key programs. The first of these is HomeBuild NT, which will focus on the delivery of new remote community housing. An additional focus on repairs and maintenance will support the amenity and condition of housing to be maintained and improved.

The Room to Breathe NT program will fast-track the building of granny flats and areas designed to provide more living space, sleeping space and shelter for remote Territorians. This includes outdoor living and cooking areas.

The fourth key component of the investment package is an expansion of the government employee housing program. Through this program, locally recruited Indigenous government employees working in remote communities will be provided with access to government employee housing. Remote community residents who have gained qualifications and want to work for the government in their communities should be given the same access to government employee housing as people from outside who move to the community to work for the government. This program is about levelling the playing field.

Working in partnership with Territorians is a fundamental principle for this government, and it will be working to ensure that community organisations and individuals are empowered and have a voice. It will provide certainty and reduce red tape for the non-government sector by streamlining funding arrangements and extending their term to five years. It will support non-government organisations and peak bodies through adequate funding and close collaboration on policy development, service delivery, capacity of building and reform. It will encourage partnerships between government, non-government organisations, the private sector and research organisations to build capacity, support Indigenous employment and foster innovation.

My government will empower Indigenous communities and will introduce a 10-year road map to return local decision-making and control over services to communities across the housing, local government, education, health, community services and justice portfolios. This will be a large and complex process which will be overseen by a local decision oversight board made up of Indigenous leaders, and will be done at a pace that local communities are comfortable with.

The Health portfolio has already witnessed the successful transfer, over many years, and the government has set a target to transfer at least one health clinic to a community's control each year.

The \$1.1bn remote housing investment will be rolled out through the frame of local decision-making. Communities will determine what their housing needs are and how they are delivered. The government will work to strengthen regional councils and local authorities so they can support this process. It will reinvigorate housing reference groups and introduce community-led schools in remote communities. In order to be successful this process will need to be supported by strong Indigenous leadership, and the government will be actively nurturing leadership across the board.

It is committed to employing 500 more Indigenous people as teachers, police officers and nurses by 2026, and it will fund tailored education and training to provide Indigenous people with the skills they need to deliver their own local services.

My government will continue to support the successful First Circles program and will bring together community and public sector leaders to further develop and mentor young Indigenous leadership. It will establish a ministerial advisory council of Indigenous women to complement the existing Indigenous men's council. It will bring back community Cabinet meetings with an emphasis on remote Territory meetings.

The Northern Territory has an abundance of natural resources, from its vast expanse of agricultural land and its fisheries, to its pristine river systems and water resources, diverse and unique ecosystems and its access to renewable energy sources like solar and tidal energy. My government recognises that in order to grow and maintain the economy we must protect these valuable assets and utilise them appropriately. We must safeguard our economy and our society locally, nationally and globally by preparing for a long-term future in which fossil fuels will play less and less of a role in meeting our energy needs. That is why my government has established a renewable energy target of 50%. Transitioning to an economy driven by renewable energy is a long and complex journey. My government will commission a new road map to

renewables report which will set out the options to achieve the target of 50% by 2030, which will be delivered in 2017.

My government will invest in design and infrastructure that supports renewable energy and energy security for all Territorians. It will provide certainty by ensuring the Power and Water Corporation, Territory Generation and Jacana Energy remain 100% publically owned. It will guarantee that any power prices are capped at the consumer price index for this term of government. It will invest in the development of Alice Springs as the centre for excellence for solar energy.

It will fund the insulation of rooftop solar to a wide range of school buildings across the Territory and provide complementary educational programs, teaching children about solar technologies. It will provide ongoing research and development funds for the Charles Darwin University in the Centre for Appropriate Technology to drive world-class tropical and desert innovation in renewable energy. It will guarantee one-for-one feed-in tariffs for homes and businesses generating solar energy while the road map to renewables plan is developed.

My government recognises there is a significant concern in the community about the potential impacts of fracking; that is why my government has introduced a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. This moratorium will provide the opportunity to undertake thorough and rigorous scientific testing and investigation to determine whether or not the practice of hydraulic fracturing should be undertaken in the Northern Territory. My government will commission a panel of scientific experts to conduct an extensive review, consult with Territorians and report back on the impacts of hydraulic fracturing. Once this process is complete the government will either ban fracturing or allow it in highly-regulated tightly-prescribed areas.

A robust, clear and simple transparent set of rules for protecting the environment will give the community confidence that development is beneficial, and provide certainty for businesses looking to invest in the Territory and create jobs.

There needs to be appropriate arm's length separation between the important functions of environmental regulation and investment attraction. To achieve this the government will transfer all environmental approval, assessment, oversight and enforcement powers to the new Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Environment Protection Authority. Environmental regulation processes will be strengthened and streamlined by consolidating them in a new Environment Protection Act, which will be consistent with national and international best practice and tailored to local needs. It will properly fund environmental enforcement and advocacy functions, strengthen compliance measures and ensure no projects fall through the cracks.

The government will increase the transparency of the environmental regulatory system while reducing red tape by making mine management plans and environmental management plans publicly available, and creating a new, user-friendly public portal for community participation in environmental decision-making.

Water is one of our most precious resources, and my government believes water allocation should be sustainable and evidence based, and all members of the community should have an equal opportunity to utilise water resources. It will establish water advisory committees, open and consultative water planning processes and a new public portal which will make all water decisions accessible.

Indigenous people have precious knowledge of the land and have an important role as custodians. My government will invest in Indigenous ranger groups to ensure they have the necessary skills and equipment and the right mechanisms to connect and share their knowledge with government, the private sector and non-government organisations in innovative ways. It will amend the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act to specifically recognise the role of Indigenous ranger groups in managing conservation across large areas of the Territory. Indigenous ranger groups will have business opportunities in the carbon economy through carbon storage and abatement projects on Indigenous land, supported by government's new Indigenous carbon unit.

The Northern Territory's coastline and marine environment is a prized asset and is critical for our tourism, commercial and recreational fishing industries. The government will develop a coastal and marine management strategy and reinstate the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee to provide a science-based and consultative approach to protecting our marine environment. It will invest in urgent research to help protect mangroves from the threat of climate change and will stop development that threatens mangrove areas.

Territorians enjoy an enviable lifestyle that is important for our community wellbeing and is a big part of our unique identity. For many Territorians fishing is a way of life. Recreational fishing is also a major driver for our tourism industry, so the right balance must be struck between investment and protection. My government's actions to strengthen environmental regulations will serve to protect our precious fishing lifestyle. Fisheries management and the setting of access and catch limits will be guided by science so that our fish stocks remain sustainable.

The government will make a major \$50m investment to improve recreational fishing infrastructure across the Territory over the next four years. It will work with Indigenous organisations and communities to develop opportunities for potential new fishing tourism investments. It will continue tourism attraction programs, such as the million-dollar barra promotion, where there are demonstrable benefits to the local economy and fishing sector.

My government is taking many more actions to guarantee and improve our great Territory lifestyle, from bringing back the Arafura Games to the construction of the national iconic art trail, upgrading sporting infrastructure and improving the cost of living.

Sport in the Territory will get a boost with infrastructure and funding for motor sports, upgrades to women's AFL facilities, a new netball stadium, the returfing of TIO Stadium, lights at Gardens Oval and the development of Warren Park as the home of rugby league.

The return of the Arafura Games will bring back a landmark cultural and sporting event for the Territory, and the government will continue to support the Darwin Festival to ensure it is a premier cultural event in the height of the Dry Season.

Our Territory lifestyle is impacted by the cost of living. If it is not affordable to live in the Northern Territory, people will vote with their feet. My government is taking action to ease the pressure of the cost of living by capping power prices in the consumer price index for this term of government. Changes to first home owner grants will make it more affordable for first home owners to get into the market in the local area of their choice, whether it is for a new or existing home. The government will also support senior Territorians with the cost of living through free bus travel, power and water concessions for seniors in retirement villages and a \$700 debit card every two years to spend as they choose. It will look to plan better housing options in retirement and provide the opportunity for seniors to continue part-time work in the public service.

My government has set out its plans to protect and nurture our children, families and communities; deliver jobs for Territorians; and protect our lifestyle, which we hold dear. Most importantly, it has outlined how it will go about its business differently. It will partner with Territorians, build trust and operate in an open and accountable manner.

While the government has laid out its plans for reform it will also face the challenge of continuing to govern and deliver services for all Territorians on a day-to-day basis. There will be many challenges in the term of government beyond those I have mentioned here today. My government will be judged on how it responds to these challenges, and recognises that it is a privilege and an honour to be elected and serve in public office.

This Legislative Assembly is a place that should allow an open and respectful contest of ideas and constructive stewardship on behalf of all Territorians. Honourable members, I urge you all to share this sense of honour and privilege and to discharge your responsibilities with honesty, integrity and dedication to the community we serve.

His Honour the Administrator was led from the Chamber by the Serjeant-at-Arms.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS ORDER**

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister) (by leave):** Madam Speaker, following the Northern Territory general election on 27 August 2016, an interim ministry for the new government was appointed on 31 August 2016. The Administrator appointed the full ministry on 12 September 2016 as follows:

Michael Patrick Francis Gunner: Chief Minister; Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Minister for Northern Australia; Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services; Minister for Trade, Business and Innovation.

Nicole Susan Manison: Minister for Children; Treasurer; Minister for Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics.

Natasha Kate Fyles: Attorney-General and Minister for Justice; Minister for Health.

Gerald Francis McCarthy: Minister for Housing and Community Development; Minister for Essential Services; Minister for Public Employment.

Kenneth Edward Vowles: Minister for Primary Industry and Resources.

Lauren Jane Moss: Minister for Environment and Natural Resources; Minister for Tourism and Culture; Minister for Corporate and Information Services.

Eva Dina Lawler: Minister for Education.

Dale Suzanne Wakefield: Minister for Territory Families.

Madam Speaker, I table a copy of the current Administrative Arrangements Order, dated 12 September 2016, reflected above.

### OPPOSITION OFFICE HOLDERS

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader) (by leave):** Madam Speaker, I table a letter to you outlining the portfolio responsibilities of the Country Liberal opposition. Those responsibilities are attached, outlining the Member for Daly's portfolios and the Member for Spillett's portfolios.

The Assembly suspended.

### ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, it is now necessary for the Assembly to appoint a member to be its Deputy Speaker. Are there any nominations?

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I propose to the Assembly for its Deputy Speaker the honourable Member for Namatjira, Chanston Paech, and move that the honourable member be appointed Deputy Speaker of the Assembly.

**Ms MANISON (Deputy Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I second the motion.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Are there any further proposals? There being no further proposals, the time has expired. I declare the honourable Member for Namatjira, Mr Paech, to be elected as the Deputy Speaker of this Assembly and offer my congratulations.

**Mr PAECH (Namatjira):** Madam Speaker and honourable members, I express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the high honour you have conferred upon me. I look forward to working with all members of the Thirteenth Assembly to ensure that the best for Territorians is decided in this place.

### MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATOR

#### Message No 1 – Assent to Laws Passed in June 2016 Sittings

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I lay on the table Message No 1 from His Honour the Administrator advising of his assent to proposed laws passed by the Twelfth Assembly during the June 2016 sittings.

### MOTION

#### Standing Committees – Appointment of Membership

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Chapter 16 of Standing Orders, requiring the immediate appointment of certain committees at the commencement of each Assembly, I move that the following committees of the Assembly are appointed:

- pursuant to Standing Order 173, a Standing Orders Committee, comprising the Member for Nightcliff as Chair, the Speakers and the Members for Port Darwin, Karama, Daly and Araluen
- pursuant to Standing Order 174, a Committee of Privileges, with the Member for Nightcliff as the Chair and the Members for Fong Lim, Wanguri, Spillett and Nelson as members

- pursuant to Standing Order 175, a House Committee, comprising the Speaker as the Chair and the Members for Namatjira, Katherine, Daly and Brennan
- pursuant to Standing Order 176, a Subordinate Legislation and Publications Committee and, pursuant to Standing Order 178, a Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee be established, with both committees comprising the Member for Fong Lim as Chair and the Members for Brennan, Arnhem, Spillett and Blain
- pursuant to Standing Order 177, a Public Accounts Committee, comprising the Member for Sanderson as Chair and the Members for Stuart, Port Darwin, Spillett, Nhulunbuy and Blain as members.

Motion agreed to.

### **MOTION** **Routine of Business**

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 59 and 60, I move that the Thirteenth Assembly conducts its business on each meeting day according to the following sessional order:

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10 am:

Prayers  
Government Business – Notices and Orders of the Day.

At 2 pm:

Notices  
Petitions  
Questions  
Government Business  
Ministerial Statements  
Papers  
Consideration of Committee Reports and Government Responses and Auditor-General's Reports  
Discussion pursuant to Standing Order 66 (Matter of Public Importance)

Wednesdays at 10 am:

Prayers  
Government business – Notices and Orders of the Day.

At 2 pm:

Notices  
Petitions  
Questions  
General Business – Notices and Orders of the day.

At 7 pm:

Government Business  
Papers

I further move that for 19 October General Business be deferred to permit the debate on the Address in Reply to conclude to the adjournment or finalisation.

**Mr WOOD (Nelson):** Madam Speaker, I am a little confused. It was raised before we sat about the positioning of Matters of Public Importance. I gather they were at around 4 pm previously. Are they being moved to the end of the day? I need some clarification on that please.

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, MPIs were always at the end of the day and they were only done on Tuesday and Thursday, leaving Wednesday with no MPIs so as not to impact on the opposition and Independents' business.

Motion agreed to.

### **ADDRESS IN REPLY**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I report that I received from His Honour the Administrator a copy of his speech.

**Mr GUNNER (Chief Minister):** Madam Speaker, I move that the following Address in Reply be agreed to:

*May it please Your Honour, we, the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, in parliament assembled, express our loyalty to the Sovereign and thank Your Honour for the speech you have been pleased to address to the Assembly.*

I thank Territorians for the trust they have placed in me to be the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, and the faith they have shown in my team to be the government of the Northern Territory. As a team we stand united and dedicated to the common cause of public service to Territorians. The interests of Territorians will always be at the heart of every decision this Labor government makes. They are the ones who have handed us the baton and the privilege to steer the Territory through the challenging times ahead.

I believe in the Northern Territory; the Northern Territory comes first. I am a proud born-and-bred fourth generation Territorian with heavy ties across all our regions. I had the privilege of being born in Alice Springs, raised in Tennant Creek, making my home in Darwin.

For the trust that Territorians have placed in this new government, I promise we will strive to bring out the full potential of this wonderful land and its people.

I pay respect to the traditional owners of all the lands of the Northern Territory and to the owners of the special and significant land on which we stand today. I pay respect to the elders past, present and future. I pay respect to the wisdom of age. I pay respect to 60 000 years of culture.

At the Territory election on 27 August we faced a question about the kind of Territory we wanted to be, and not just seen to be. We faced a question about the kind of government we wanted to represent us in this Chamber, in our community, on the national stage and in the international arena. This was a question of substance and not just image.

All in this Chamber can be rightfully proud of a Territory that:

- elected the first ever Chinese-Australian mayor, Harry Chan
- led the national debate on dying with dignity
- is home to the land rights movement, thanks to the strength of character of the Gurindji people
- is home to the Yolngu clans, who presented the first bark petition to the federal government in 1967, calling for recognition of land ownership by the Australian government
- survived bombings in World War II, and cyclones, such as Tracy in 1974, which meant we had to rebuild our capital
- established a world-class university in Charles Darwin University, and a world-class research centre in Menzies School of Health Research
- cares for our neighbours, leading humanitarian efforts when our neighbours needed us, and established the national critical care crisis centre at the Royal Darwin Hospital
- at home provided one of the first sites in Australia to ever go live with a revolutionary shared electronic health records system, which meant for the first time that people did not have to travel from remote areas to see a specialist.

The kind of Territory we will be is built on the strengths of who we are and the challenges we face. It is our job to build on these achievements, not to rest on them.

The recent CLP government we had saw us portrayed nationally and internationally more for our scandals, behavioural and policy, than for our energy to lead and innovate, to tackle our shared challenges together.

People have a right to good government; that is the challenge my government accepts with humility, energy and determination. Our agenda is clear: to grow the Territory economy; to invest in our children; to restore trust in government in the Northern Territory.

People want a government of policy, not personality, which will fight less and do more and will focus on Territorians. We are a government with a plan that puts Territorians first, with the broadest, deepest set of policies of any incoming government. We will be open and transparent, and we will restore trust in government in the Northern Territory.

We have restored funding to key community groups, like the Environment Centre NT, the Arid Lands Environment Centre and the Environmental Defenders Office, to make sure third parties can scrutinise and contribute to policy and debate.

We will implement an independent anti-corruption commission to ensure the public interest drives policy.

Trust is important on the floor of the parliament also. We will reform Question Time, providing greater scrutiny of government. We have resourced the opposition and Independents, respecting that they were elected by Territorians too. We are supporting an Independent Speaker and we will engage in respectful debate in this Chamber, as should all members.

We get to decide the parliament we will be; that is our decision as parliamentarians. We are starting, hopefully, on the right foot today. We have an opportunity this term to engage in contest, not conflict, to have mature debates in this Chamber and in the broader community. We will have differing views about how we can be the best Territory we can be, and we will be better for exploring them.

We will move to a model of government that supports community responsibility and individual responsibility, and that empowers local decision-making that moves us beyond electoral cycles, because we have moved into full partnership with the non-government sector, the private sector and locals. The world does not operate in four-year cycles.

There is a fundamental responsibility for any Territory government to ensure an equality of representation and service, to be a government for all, and not just for this generation but for the generations to come. We can do this; we must do this; we will do this.

We will invest in you, work with you and support you. My team is already doing so, from our housing policy to work with communities, where they will take the lead on the homes they build, manage and repair. We will work in the manner and pace locals want to. This is a policy for social change, employment and training, and it will be an economic driver in our regions. All this work will be underpinned by five-year service agreements with local enterprises.

Our plan for children—a whole-of-Territory plan for children developed in full partnership with the community and driven by our new, dedicated Minister for Children. All this work will be underpinned by five-year service agreements with NGOs. We have made very clear our commitment to move our peak and program funding, wherever possible, to a five-year basis to provide confidence and certainty for strategic planning, service delivery, employment.

Community-controlled health clinics and schools—meaningful decision-making and control in the hands of Territorians.

We are putting our faith in locals. We will back you; we will support you.

We are making the safest investment a government can make, putting the mantle of responsibility back with Territorians to have the care for their Territory, for Territorians.

The question about what kind of Territory we want to be can only be answered by understanding the Territory we are. Thirty per cent of our population is Aboriginal; they are the traditional owners of the Northern Territory and own 50% of the Territory land mass and 80% of our coastline.

Aboriginal Territorians' voices must be heard. Their voices are in our policies, our team and our government. We have made the groundbreaking decision to have a subcommittee of Cabinet that will feature all our bush and Indigenous members of parliament, and will feature Aboriginal Territorians, chaired by me as Chief Minister and co-chaired by the Members for Arnhem and Namatjira. It will have a clear agenda to provide advice on a treaty with our first people on land and sea. It will also audit and hold us to account as a government on implementing our local decision-making policies.

We will never know, never experience, the full potential of our Territory if we do not let all flourish, let all be heard, and let all sit at the table. This is a very important charge for our team.

We must invest in our children: nurturing, supporting, protecting and educating. To experience the full potential of the Territory we must place children at the centre of government. This is something that, frankly, my government, in our political careers, will not see the full benefit of. The children we will be investing in will grow up to lead healthier, longer and more fulfilling lives, but they will not vote for my government; they simply will not be old enough.

We have to make a decision to invest in our children that goes beyond the electoral cycle, that breaks the generational cycles and problems we have in the Northern Territory. It is not good enough that an Indigenous boy or girl born in 2012 can expect to live a decade less than their non-Indigenous counterparts, have twice the chance of dying in their infancy and only a 25% chance of finishing high school, but if they do are five times more likely to be unemployed. Going on statistics, sadly, for our Indigenous men, gaol is a surer bet. They are 24 times more likely to end up behind bars.

We are shackling some of our most vulnerable children from birth, and it has to stop now; we have to change. The children from Don Dale in Darwin and Owen Springs in Alice Springs became the public face of these damning statistics. We must do better. We must do things differently and we must do them together.

We have started with cultural change from day one, bringing the Aboriginal peak organisations and the Council of Social Service into the room. They are extending their hands and they want to be part of the solution. They are designing criminal justice alternatives for us to consider.

We made cultural change by bringing youth justice into the new Department of Territory Families by taking a coordinated strategic approach, a therapeutic approach, to how we deal with families, from youth justice to child protection to family violence—too often linked, too often the same families.

By now we all know the appalling rates of domestic violence across the Northern Territory. Women are 80 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault if they are Indigenous. Police responded to 75 000 cases of family violence in the last three years. Indigenous children are nine times more likely to be in out-of-home care. The Northern Territory has the highest rate of child protection reports in the nation. This is a Territory-wide problem. We cannot be generic in our language or response. There is more to this than indigeneity and male violence towards women. We must all say no more to violence.

Minister Wakefield will bring with her years of sector experience in taking on the responsibility for Territory Families. She has the full support of government and the goodwill and energy of the community sector. She has the full support of Natasha Fyles as Attorney-General and Health minister. She has my full support as Chief Minister and Police minister; Minister McCarthy as Housing and Community Development minister; Minister Lawler as Education minister; and my deputy as Minister for Children. I have tasked our team to assist Minister Wakefield. This is a task that binds us all.

We want to help vulnerable families before they fall over, before they trigger a notification. That is why we are funding dual pathways and support for families when we become aware of a concern. Prevention before intervention.

Generational change for all Territorians to provide the best for our children is the intent behind our plans to invest in children. We will change the Territory with our investment in family nurse partnerships, growing Families as First Teachers, through our whole-of-Territory plan with children that must start with teenagers before they are parents. We must have a care for our children which starts before their first year of classes which is inclusive of all, caters for all and means all children have their best chance to lead their best lives, giving their very best to our community.

Eight years ago I stood a metre to my left and delivered my maiden speech. I quoted Aaron Sorkin; in hindsight, I could have probably found a notable historical figure to quote, but I cannot go back eight years, and I do like the sentiment:

*If fidelity to freedom of democracy is the code of our civic religion then surely the code of our humanity is faithful service to that unwritten commandment that says we shall give our children better than we ourselves received.*

It will take more than this term, more than my term as Chief Minister, more than our time as a Labor government, but this is our agenda and this will be our legacy. We have to do better for the future of the Northern Territory when it come to our kids.



In discussing a safer community for all Territorians, I pay respect to our frontline—nurses, doctors, teachers, social workers, police and more—who all work tirelessly and often without public recognition of selfless deeds.

All Territorians deserve to live in a safe community, free from violence and crime against themselves and their property. As Police minister, I am working with the Police Commissioner on resourcing our police and on a sustainable recruitment strategy for police, not just for the next year, but for the term.

It is impossible to have the discussion on public safety without addressing the contribution of alcohol to public harm. This is something we have discussed many times in this Chamber; every term we wrestle with this policy solution. I want to support evidence-based reform to reduce alcohol demand, supply and harm. Attorney-General and Health minister, Natasha Fyles, is leading our plans to bring back the Banned Drinker Register and its link to a therapeutic courts system. We will open up our data so we can have an informed debate about what works and what does not.

This open and transparent, evidence-based approach to government policy will be led by Minister Moss, and this parliament and the broader community will benefit socially and economically as we make better-informed, data-led decisions. This will be something that can underpin everything we do if we get it right when it comes to open data, open government and being transparent with the evidence we have so we can all have informed policy debates.

To answer the question of the kind of Territory we will be, we have to understand our place in the region and our natural advantages. Darwin is the capital of northern Australia, not just the Northern Territory; we must invest in it to that end, from our infrastructure to our cultural engagement. We are outward facing; we are engaged with our Asian neighbours, and our capital is vibrant and multicultural, and has the youngest median population age in this country.

We have strong relationships with our region, built on ties of kinship and friendship. We understand that trade walks best over a bridge built on genuine cultural connection. We will align our engagement plans with our domestic multicultural strengths. It will be strategically coordinated through the Department of Trade, Business and Innovation.

My department of Trade will take the lead on the Arafura games, working with Tourism and Culture, and Sport and Multicultural Affairs. It will be part of our international engagement strategy. I have already accepted the challenge and the invitation to repair our relationship and reputation with Japan, connect with Korea and build on the positive relationship the last CLP government created with China, and Rizhao specifically.

We have a vision for Katherine to be an inland port. The Katherine and Douglas Daly region is three times more productive than the Ord. It has natural logistical advantages of rail and port access. It has massive potential.

Tennant Creek is one end of a new pipeline to the East Coast. It has been a mining services hub and can be again.

Alice is the capital of Central Australia. It provides services to a region that crosses state boundaries. We must make it a destination in its own right again, celebrate all that it has to offer culturally, economically and socially.

The remoteness that can see some communities viewed as challenges needs to be re-cast as opportunity. Necessity is the mother of invention. Our remote communities can be places of learning and discovery, of innovation. We are seeing that with technology through the Centre for Appropriate Technology based out of Alice Springs. Its affordable hot spot technology that allows people to connect remotely will be life changing and lifesaving.

The Arnhem Land Progress Association is proving remoteness is no barrier to governance, service delivery and social enterprise. ALPA constantly grows from strength to strength and is an inspiration to all Territorians about what we can achieve when we start with a positive approach and passion towards the opportunities of our remote Territory.

That is the energy and passion we want to take. That is the vision we want to test for the Territory with Territorians. It will be a key question to be answered at our economic summits and forums, which will be held across the Territory. Our summits will hear all voices of Territorians. Too often the major owners of

land in the Territory, the largest and most widespread population, are not included right at the start of conversations, and they will be. Our Indigenous leaders will be included.

It will involve our environmental and community sectors. The health of our environment is essential to a sustainable economy. The health of our population is essential to a sustainable economy. We must see the whole picture. Our summits will be inclusive; they will feature all economic sectors and the community. All Territorians will have opportunities to contribute.

We have tremendous pools of wisdom, ideas, experiences and talents that we can be tapping into, and that is the gift that comes with being a government that will speak less and listen more. Our summits and the long-term plans that will flow from them will provide confidence and certainty about our shared vision for the Territory. You will have confidence in our plans for the future because you will be a part of the process to create them—that we are working and walking together, that public investment unlocks private sector investment, that we are making decisions for all Territorians.

We have a plan to weather the phase after INPEX construction ends and before the Defence infrastructure investment kicks in. We have and we will continue to get the money flowing locally, provide certainty and restore confidence. We have a \$100m stimulus package targeted toward a pipeline of works that keeps business busy and people employed, and takes the Territory forward. Our strong buy local plans started straight away, and they gives more local businesses a fair crack. Our 30% for local content now goes across all of government work, not just construction. We will grow the Territory; a bigger Territory is a stronger Territory.

We say goodbye too often. That is the very personal reason I stood for election in 2008; I hate saying goodbye and I will do more—I will do what I can—to make our Territory even better so more people stay and call the Territory that I love their home too. We must stop the population drift from the last few years, and we have moved immediately to make it even easier for people to own their little piece of the Territory with reforms to stamp duty for homeowners.

It has never been more crucial that we work together to grow our economy, and not just because over the last four years the previous government took every opportunity to actively reject working together. Our Treasurer, the Deputy Chief Minister, has been handed the most difficult set of books any incoming government has ever received. This was known before the election; this is not breaking news. The transparency measures the Martin Labor government brought in meant that Treasury produced a pre-election fiscal outlook so every Territorian could know the state of the books. They are bad; we all know it—almost \$900m in deficit, operational deficits for the next two financial years, and a paper-thin surplus in 2019–20.

The CLP sold everything, spent it, then borrowed some more. We have accepted that economic challenge and we are excited about the future of the Territory. From offshore oil and gas to agribusiness, cattle, tourism and Defence-related industries, we have a positive economic base that we can grow and diversify.

I have taken responsibility for the Developing the North agenda at the Territory level. I have already met with the Prime Minister and Minister Canavan. The Territory government is seeking a strategic alignment of the *Defence White Paper* with the *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* and the Closing the Gap Indigenous agendas.

We have the opportunity to align them without compromising Defence strategic objectives, and without additional Commonwealth funding, through relatively minor changes to the Department of Defence's procurement approaches in northern Australia. This is what we are taking to the Australian Government, though I would like more money if they are happy to give it. The alignment would drive local partnership, industry participation and development, local jobs and population growth, while supporting local Aboriginal employment through local businesses.

I am taking responsibility for our jobs agenda, with my Treasurer, Primary Industry minister, Tourism and Culture minister and Housing minister—with the team. I will lead it. You will hear from each of these ministers our plans to grow the Territory economy. We must be a place of economic prosperity to deliver social justice—one drives the other—a Territory where people can find a job to make a meaningful, productive contribution to the Territory we all love.

As I draw to a close, I must give thanks to everyone who has contributed to the journey so far, to the broader Labor movement, members, supporters, unions and the very many people who gave up days and nights to get out and speak to Territorians on behalf of the Australian Labor Party. But the greatest thanks

goes to the Territorians who have entrusted my government with the privilege to represent each and every one of you through the challenging times ahead.

I opened this speech by saying I believe in the Territory; I believe in our people; I believe in this parliament. We will leave the Territory stronger and brighter, and, if we do our job right, we will make it a place that every individual feels they have played a part in building. Our legacy will also be their legacy.

**Mr HIGGINS (Opposition Leader):** Madam Speaker, one of my proudest moments occurred in this Chamber, almost four years ago to the day, when I delivered my first speech on behalf of the constituents of Daly. I took the opportunity, on that occasion, to thank my family, particularly my wife, Rhonda, for their support, and the people who helped with the campaign in which I was elected.

I also thanked the various communities I was elected to represent and explained the reasons I wanted to be a Country Liberal member in the parliament. It was a bit of an anomaly in that I had been preselected by the party several years before the campaign, which gave me the opportunity to build upon the already strong relations I had developed in Daly through living and working in the electorate over more than a decade.

Election night 2012 was a tremendous night, a night full of promise and hope that pointed to a new direction for the Northern Territory which put the focus on rural and regional infrastructure and a redirection of resources. As I said in that first speech:

*Darwin has more recently enjoyed much government spending at the expense of the bush. Indigenous Territorians are less empowered today than they were 10 years ago; their self-determination has been taken from them.*

In government, the Country Liberals set about to address this imbalance, and to a fair extent they were successful. The government did some good work paring back government debt; improving the workability and reliability of power and water services; putting in place measures aimed at reducing alcohol-related crime, managing the economy so the dividend was spread more broadly; maximising the benefits of the Ichthys project, and the importance of this should not be underrated; bringing a bit of fun back into the place through events like the Million Dollar Fish and the Mitchell Street Mile. But for all the good, positive initiatives we implemented, there were leaks, spats or leadership challenges that became the talking point.

In short, much of the good stuff we did was overshadowed by—and I use this term loosely—distractions. These distractions dogged us virtually from the moment we moved into the fifth floor. In fact, those same issues were prevalent on the fourth floor too in the years after the 2008 election when the party went within a whisker of taking office.

It was a self-destructive streak characterised by overwhelming self-interest that put the electorate second, behind personal ambitions and private agendas. Instead of working collaboratively under the elected leader to take government from Labor, there were factions within the party wing and the broader party organisation that focused too much on the spoils of leadership and not on the people who put them there. The interests of the voters were put on the shelf.

After we won the 2012 election it did not take long for those cracks to re-emerge. They had been papered over in the six or so months before the poll, to reappear. Too often the business of delivering sound government was overshadowed by division and deceit. Many words have been written in the past, and will continue to be written in the future, about the events of the last four years.

As I said earlier, while we as a government did some good work, we let down Territorians in a way that was totally unacceptable and has caused real damage to our political organisation and, to a certain extent, the reputation of the Northern Territory. There is no clearer indication of that than the makeup of the numbers now in this House. Four years ago the Country Liberals had 16 members; today we have two. It is difficult to imagine a more comprehensive repudiation by the electorate of our performance in government over the past four years.

It is now left to me and my colleague, the member for Spillett, to learn the lessons sent to us on 27 August, to rebuild confidence in the conservative brand of politics in the Northern Territory and begin the process of restoring public faith in the Country Liberals. To do that I will start by not only acknowledging the mistakes of the past but by offering an unequivocal, unreserved apology to Territorians for much of our performance in government between August 2012 and August 2016. Where there should have been consultation, there was belligerence. Where there should have been communication, there was spin. Where there should have

been respect, there was defiance. Where there should have been loyalty, there was disunity. For that I am sorry.

Just two seats out of 25—that was a lesson in how not to run government. As a member of the Cabinet I acknowledge my role in what happened. For that, too, I apologise. In my defence I can say that my focus was not on undermining the leadership, scoring cheap points with journalists or one-upping colleagues. My focus has been, and always will be, on trying to deliver for my electorate and the Northern Territory.

I take this opportunity to thank the candidates who had the courage, despite the very real likelihood of defeat, to nominate for office under the Country Liberals banner. One of the real disappointments for me that came out of the election result was that for the first time the Northern Territory missed out on having these talented people representing them in this House. The party will review its performance at the election and that review, when it gets under way, will also encompass the events leading up to the election, how they were able to occur and what can be done to prevent a repeat of these in the future.

We have heard very clearly the message delivered to us by the electorate on 27 August and will learn from our mistakes and work towards regaining the respect and trust of all Territorians in the future, where mine and the Member for Spillett's attention must now turn as we set about rebuilding the Country Liberals and providing voters with a conservative alternative that can take up the fight to the new Labor government.

While there has been much discussion from the non-government benches about the role of the Independents in this place, I state very firmly that I believe the Country Liberals remain the only viable opposition to the government. Unlike the Independents we are a political party and, despite having only two members, we did obtain 31 500 votes and approximately 32% of the overall vote. That makes us the alternative government in this Assembly.

Over the past few weeks I have engaged in discussions with all the Independents about resource sharing and how best we can work to bring the newly-elected government to account. It is incumbent on all of us on the non-government benches to challenge Labor and ensure the best interests of the Northern Territory are being served. For my part, as Opposition Leader, I acknowledge the mandate this government received on 27 August and that the public has given them the green light to implement the program and policies they took to the election.

The significant issues that affect the Northern Territory, the ones at the heart of the enormous disadvantage endured by a large proportion of citizens here, has tested policymakers since long before self-government. There are issues that date back to European settlement. In no particular order, these include domestic violence, alcohol-fuelled violence, remote housing and poor education outcomes. It goes without saying that it is the number one priority of everyone in this House to resolve these issues. Perhaps it is time, with some of these issues, to put adversarial politics aside and work collaboratively to find solutions.

I give you an example; in government we introduced measures to reduce the availability of alcohol through the temporary beat locations and to reduce the demand for alcohol through Alcohol Mandatory Treatment. Labor has its own plan to reinstall the Banned Drinker Register, which the Country Liberals removed within days of winning office in 2012. I take this opportunity to say to the Chief Minister that instead of tit for tat responses—"You scrapped the BDR so we will remove the TBL and AMT"—government should retain our measures as well as re-implementing its own. There is evidence, both anecdotally and statistically, that suggests the temporary beat locations have been effective in reducing alcohol-fuelled violence.

This is only the start of the story, not the end but, given the results, surely it is worth continuing. Alcohol Mandatory Treatment has had its critics and implementation problems, but providing a health-based service designed to help some of our worst drinkers overcome their addictions and providing pathways to healthier lives can only be a good thing, can't it? Perhaps the cumulative effect of the beat locations, Alcohol Mandatory Treatment and the Banned Drinker Register will take us closer to the ultimate goal of reducing the eroding impacts of alcohol on people's lives across the Territory.

Ultimately the real source of change is to come from within. As policymakers we can only do so much to improve people's lives, but while all of us are here, it is a pretty safe bet that we will not stop trying to get the policy settings right to enable that to happen.

At the heart of a successful politician is the electorate. I am fortunate that, in the years leading up to my preselection and then the 2012 election, I had already developed strong links within my community. Rhonda and I managed the mango farm at Daly for the best part of a decade, which, for want of a better

description, served as a type of riverside junction between people travelling east towards the Stuart Highway and out towards the West Daly communities of Palumpa, Peppimenarti and Wadeye. During a number of floods in the region, we were able to assist people with shelter and services, and the mango farm often served as a hub during the rescue and recovery phase after significant weather events.

The Daly electorate surrounds Darwin city and extends to the south and west of the Top End. It extends to the Fitzmaurice River in the south, incorporating Pine Creek, and includes the towns of Adelaide River, Batchelor, Berry Springs, Dundee Beach, and Wadeye to the west. From that perspective, it is an interesting mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous voters.

As I alluded to earlier in this speech, our government set about ending the fixation of delivering services just to Darwin and began spreading resources to the regions. I am extremely proud of what I have been able to deliver for Daly.

Wadeye is one of the Territory's biggest population centres, which was in real need of upgraded infrastructure when the Country Liberals were elected to office. In the space of just four years we spent \$24m upgrading the Port Keats Road and \$1.2m on lights at the footy oval. We provided buses and special needs transport to seniors and disabled members of the community. In addition to that we fulfilled our commitment to regional jobs with \$770 000 to continue the Indigenous Community Marine Ranger Program, and we spent \$28.3m on the new the multipurpose Wadeye police station and supporting accommodation. Because of our focus on improved energy outcomes, we spent \$18m developing a new gas power station at Wadeye. We built 11 new homes and budgeted \$2m for barge landing and hardstand upgrades in Wadeye.

We recognise the importance of re-establishing community linkages and the shortcomings behind Labor's restructure of local government, and we responded to community expectation by establishing the West Daly Regional Council from the existing Vic Daly Shire.

Elsewhere in the electorate there was a great degree of satisfaction that earlier this year, after 37 years, the Kenbi land claim finally reached settlement. Part of the Daly electorate, Kenbi was Australia's longest and most complex land claim under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act*, and the settlement brought welcome benefits to all stakeholders. Key elements of the agreement include 13 000 hectares of Territory freehold in the Cox Peninsula; the withdrawal of claims over a number of land parcels in the Top End; ongoing public access to the intertidal zone and beaches within the land claim area; and the granting of the old Retta Dixon house site as Crown lease in perpetuity. It is telling, I think, that this long-awaited significant agreement was reached when conservative governments were in Darwin and Canberra.

As a local member I was not just delivering the big-ticket items, which were rewarding; less high-profile actions provided just as much satisfaction. One example of that which comes to mind is that I secured more than \$24 000 funding from the Department of Education to go towards a new playground for the children at Berry Springs school. The funding I delivered supplemented the fantastic fundraising efforts of the school, which raised \$12 000. This collaboration was great for the pupils who attended the school.

Other noteworthy achievements in Daly which I helped deliver include \$24.5m to complete the sealing of the Litchfield Park Road, and construction of a high-level bridge over the Finnis River; \$5.7m to construct the Rocky Creek bridge and complete the upgrade of Fog Bay Road; \$1.4m for repairs and maintenance of the saltwater intrusion barrages in the Mary River floodplain; \$10m in Commonwealth funding for the environmental management of the Rum Jungle mine; \$1.3m to complete the upgrades in Litchfield National Park; \$1m to upgrade the Corroboree Billabong access road; \$3.98m to continue upgrades to Dundee Beach and Shady Camp boat ramps; and \$1.2m to operate the Douglas Daly and Beatrice research farms. I hope this new government does not take its eye off the ball when it comes to development across regional and remote Northern Territory, and that the Daly continues to get its fair share of spending going forward.

In closing, there are a few people I must thank who contributed to my election victory, which came despite the best efforts of Labor to regain the seat. Labor brought in the heavy artillery, including, on one occasion, flying in the Member for Lingjari; Western Australian Senator, Pat Dodson; and the new Chief Minister. This helped make my victory a little sweeter.

Of course, I want to start with my wife, Rhonda, up in the gallery, who I love beyond words and who remains, by far, the best partnership I ever formed. In the community there is Bec Johnson, Glen Byrnes, Hek and Bev Shuker, Roz Johnson, Paul and Linda Brown, Ross and Penny Field, Trev and Marg

Wardrope, Warren and Julie Wentrio, Doug Barden, Ian and Jackie Rixon, Annette Rixon, Ken James, Gary and Tony Butt, Marty and Blue Bishop, and Dick and Carol Perry.

I was very fortunate to have been able to assemble staff who are capable, knowledgeable and skilful, while also being good-humoured and calm under pressure. To them I say thanks: Brynne, Renita, John, Sean, Annelise, Dave; my chief of staff, Mike; again, I say thank you.

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**DISTINGUISHED VISITOR**  
**Fay Miller**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Mayor of Katherine, Fay Miller, who is a past member of this parliament, and Toni Tapp-Coutts. I am not sure who the other ladies are, but obviously you are all from Katherine. Please welcome the Member for Katherine.

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**Ms NELSON (Katherine):** Madam Speaker, it is a great privilege to address the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory today, and I thank you for the opportunity to do so.

I acknowledge the Larrakia people, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present. At this time I also acknowledge the Jawoyn, Wardaman and Dagoman people, the traditional owners of the land which I will be representing as Member for Katherine, and I pay my respects to their elders, past and present. I also acknowledge the keepers of my family's sacred house and law, the people of Venilale.

It has been a somewhat surreal existence since the Northern Territory Electoral Commission declared me the Member for Katherine on 12 September. I have been walking around waiting for the magnitude of what that means to sink in, waiting for that 'Oh, wow!' moment of realisation. In fact, it was only a few weeks ago when I was here to attend the Speaker's briefing for new members, during a momentary exchange with our Clerk, Mr Tatham, that it all started to become a bit more real. I walked in through these doors and asked Mr Tatham where I should sit. He looked at me, somewhat bemused, and responded, 'You will be sitting here, where a desk has been assigned to you, Member for Katherine'. This is where I am today.

After the briefing I stood at the doors again, this time in your company, Madam Speaker, and you offered me sage advice, which was, 'Oh, you will get that 'wow' moment soon enough. Enjoy it.'

And so it is I stand before you in the place where the future of the Northern Territory is debated and shaped. That moment has just arrived. It has provided clarity on what the historic result of 27 August means for me, my family and the people of Katherine.

'Historic' is a word used all too often these days, but it can, in this case, be argued that this is a moment truly befitting its use, because it is the first time in the history of the electorate of Katherine that the local member is addressing parliament as a proud part of a Territory Labor government. It is very humbling and I am honoured to have been given this opportunity.

Katherine is a seat that so many told me I could not win. They told me that a 23% margin was impossible to overcome. They told me it would never happen. It is a seat, they told me, that would never escape the grip of Country Liberal Party hands after 29 years, irrespective of how much discontent there was with the former government. My being here today proves that not only were they wrong, but the people of Katherine were no longer prepared to be treated with complacency and led by arrogance. For taking that leap of faith to implement change, my new constituents have my unwavering gratitude.

Katherine is an incredibly diverse community, carved out of a breathtaking landscape and moulded by a unique mix of passionate characters, unimagined potential and a resolute spirit. It is a melting pot of culture and shared experience, where personal and professional growth are embraced equally by those who were born there and those who came for a few weeks and remain decades later.

From a humble beginning as an outpost established with the Overland Telegraph line on the north-south transport route between Darwin and Adelaide, Katherine has grown with the development of local industries, a strategic military function in RAAF Base Tindal and as a tourism gateway to the attractions of nearby Nitmiluk National Park, particularly Katherine Gorge and its combination of spectacular scenery and timeless history.

In recent decades it has developed as a regional centre that contributes to numerous Northern Territory industries, including agriculture. It is located at the junction that links Queensland to Western Australia. Katherine is a vital gateway for every visitor who arrives in the Northern Territory by road. Katherine is an easygoing town and it does not take long for newcomers to feel welcome, although some of the old timers will tell you that you cannot call yourself a local until the second generation has planted its feet firmly in the ground.

In an unfortunate situation mirrored in many Northern Territory communities, Katherine has also been forged, in part, by a painful social inequity that transcends stereotypes and skin colour. It is time to break down those barriers, to bridge the socioeconomic divide and remove the 'them and us' language that is stopping Katherine from recognising its full potential.

Housing is the biggest issue that needs to be addressed in Katherine, and it is one I intend to champion with vigour, as I believe providing a solution to one of our most basic needs will reduce the prevalence of other issues that have marred our town, including antisocial behaviour.

The Katherinites who have been brave enough to invest significant time and resources to nurture the small businesses that are the heart of our town's economy also need immediate attention. Katherine has a number of new pop-up businesses, which gives me confidence that a more egalitarian access to business opportunities in Katherine will ensure greater government and private investment in the town. Greater investment will lead to Katherine becoming a leader in the NT economy.

If Katherinites are to be the envy of other Territorians we also need to acknowledge our obligations to those of us who need a helping hand. I am passionate about social enterprise, and, on behalf of Katherine, I will be advocating to the federal government and private enterprise for the creation of local assisted employment pathways which will allow Katherinites with physical and intellectual disabilities to find suitable, meaningful jobs without leaving their families, friends and support network.

Community spirit is one of the cornerstones of what has made Katherine home to so many people over the years, and I believe it is an asset that needs to be exploited as the town grows and evolves. The vision and trust of people are what make me proudest to be the Member for Katherine, and I would not be addressing you today were it not for the support of many, and the exceptional belief and guidance of a few, whom I will now attempt to thank in no specific order. Excuse me if I get a bit emotional.

John King, Joe Nichol, Sharon Hillen and Mick Peirce—for supporting me unconditionally and keeping Territory Labor relevant in Katherine for the past 25 years.

The staff of the Katherine Coffee Club—for keeping me awake, and knowing exactly how I take my coffee without me having to ask.

Dwayne at the Silver Screen Cafe—for making the perfect poached eggs, and for allowing a candidate flying the Territory Labor flag in a CLP stronghold to commandeer a table at the cafe every Wednesday for my coffee and conversation event while campaigning, and now as the Member for Katherine.

The morning coffee boys—the magnificent seven of Katherine.

Gary Hillen—my perpetual 'keep calm' mate and 'smile and wave' voice in my ear.

Sue Jones, Charmaine Roth, Sarah and Nick Kendall, Trish Pearce, Larry Anderson, Bruce and Gloria Francais, Lorinda Knox, Fe Fahey and her daughters, Leah Lambert from the *Katherine Times*, Natalie Angove at Reflections Hair Professionals, and the crew at Katherine Smokemart.

Billy and Cassie Harney; Rick and Jen Cullen from the Katherine Hotel—for saying yes to my request to set up my pre-polling station in your parking lot.

Dean Vlassco—for sharing in my excitement and belief, for cutting short your epic European adventure, and for saying yes.

Brian Wilkins and Patrick Honan—for your support, tenacity and courage to say no to me during the times I needed to hear no, but still did not like it.

My sisters at EMILY's List and Territory Labor women—for inspiring me, motivating me and making me proud to be your friend, colleague and sister. Thank you for the differing, yet important, roles you each played in the journey that has led me to be here today.

To the one-of-a-kind June Tapp, thank you for your unbridled honest, belief and support, and for never letting me forget why I put my hand up to run in what they told us all was an unwinnable electorate.

To Matt Wright from Wright Carpentry, Kathy and Alan Glass from ACDC Electrical, Duane and Laura McCoy from McCoy's Garden Engineering, and Jeff and Melanie Usher from Custom Cabinets Katherine, you have my eternal gratitude for not only doing an incredible job on my home renovations while I was campaigning, but also for listening and providing insight.

To my wonderful neighbours, Jim and Moragh Bitossi, who fed me dinner every Wednesday night, provided me with a safe space to be myself, advised and guided me, and whose support and encouragement was unwavering, I can never convey the depth of my thanks.

To the women of Katherine, the silent achievers—mothers, daughters, sisters, grandmothers and wives—and the men who have stayed to support you, I thank you.

Carol Randall dreamed up and created the dress I am wearing today, with the amazingly talented dressmaker, Diep Lei. I cannot thank them enough for capturing the spirit and colour of Katherine and today's occasion in a garment. This partnership of creativity and talent is but a small glimpse of the diversity we are so proud to call our very own in Katherine.

My eternal gratitude goes to the Katherine Women's Information Legal Services and in particular to Michelle Dawson and the clients. You were, and continue to be, a great source of inspiration and motivation. I hear and see you always; you are never forgotten.

To my family—my mother, Rosa; my brother, Joao Miguel; my son, Patrick; my uncle Jose; and I also pay tribute to my uncle Chico and my first son, John-Michael, who are no longer with us but whose influence is everlasting. I am who I am because of you. I often wonder what dad would say about all of this and then I look at each of you and I see his answer in your faces. Thank you for helping me carry on his legacy of speaking up for those whose voices have been silenced by circumstance or stereotype.

Lastly, thank you to my wonderful partner, Iain—my incredibly patient, mismatched-sock-wearing, generous, selfless and loving partner—for saying yes, for always loving me even when I was not lovable, for providing me some sense of normalcy during the craziest period of our lives together, for listening and for the confidence you gave me. From my heart to yours, thank you.

Madam Speaker, after thanking those who have shaped me into the woman I am today, it only seems fair that I tell you a little about the path I followed to be here. My family and I left Timor in 1975 at the height of the civil war. I was only four years old and my brother was three. We immigrated to Australia in 1977 and were granted permanent residency in 1978. Although I left my birth country at the height of the civil war, I have no traumatic memories, which is a credit to my wonderful parents.

In August of 1975 my mother, brother and I left Dili. A man named Victor Sanra, a Portuguese-Timorese man, took us from Dili and left us close to the border. We spent a few days camping by the East-West Timor border with other families. We crossed that boarder by foot, and my mother tells me that a family friend Senhor Joao De Melo, who was also fleeing with his family, helped her during those few days. He carried my brother and me on his shoulders while my mother carried suitcases.

We made it to a refugee camp, and only stayed there for a short time, but I have fond memories of that experience, eating condensed milk straight out of the can and sleeping outside with the uncles; it is a wonderful adventure in the mind of a four-year-old. We lived with several other families during that time and we all looked after each other. We worked together, ensuring that we each had sufficient to feed our families; nobody went without. If we had not have done that we would not have survived. It was at this time that my sense of what community meant began to be forged in the most unlikely of surroundings.

My connection to the NT is through Benny and Sandra Lew Fatt. In fact, I am named after Sandra. When my family and I were at the refugee camp in West Timor, Benny Lew Fatt came to visit us, bringing clothes and food, and it was with his and Sandra's help that we made it to Portugal and then on to Sydney.



Benny and my father met on a basketball court in the mid-1950s, long before I was a twinkle in my dad's eyes. Through basketball Benny and my father became lifelong friends. They played against each other throughout several basketball tournaments between Australia and Timor, and I jokingly tell people that this, quite possibly, was the start of the Arafura Games.

I am further connected to the NT and Territory Labor via John Ah Kitt—Jack—who worked with my father several times when Jack was the minister for Sport and my father was president of East Timor's Olympic committee. My connection to Labor began long before I was old enough to enrol to vote. I grew up listening to people like Laurie Brereton and Janelle Saffin—long-term advocates for an independent Timor. Their names were as familiar to me as *Play School* and Mickey Mouse were to other children.

I am a very proud member of the Australian Labor Party and have been since the age of 18. I am also a proud member of the Australian Services Union. In 1988 I joined the Federated Clerks Union, which then merged with several other unions to form the ASU. What I find ironic is that the Federated Clerks Union was, at that time, one of the most conservative organisations, yet it was so distrusted by conservatives purely because it was a union.

There are a number of industries currently fighting for good conditions in which to continue to provide quality services for the people of the Northern Territory. Unions in the Northern Territory are not just about looking after the workers; their work directly impacts all of us in positive ways. Lobbying to ensure our childhood educators are recognised with pay that reflects the importance and responsibilities of their profession is about more than just equal pay; it is about protecting quality educational outcomes for our children.

Advocating on behalf of our dedicated community service workers for better working conditions ensures that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our communities continue to have access to vital frontline services. It is only fitting right now that I acknowledge the following people: Kay Densley, secretary of CPSU; Erina Early of United Voice; Joseph Scales of Australian Services Union; and Dave 'Strawbs' Hayes and the Katherine delegates and members of the ETU. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to ensuring that Territory workers are protected and supported.

After living overseas for several years and the passing of my wonderful father, I arrived in the Northern Territory and made it my new home. Today I have a 15-year-old son, and my partner, Iain, is a general practitioner in remote Indigenous health centres across the region.

So how does a Timorese refugee go from fleeing a horrific civil war to standing here today as an elected representative of the people of Katherine? I am a mother, daughter, sister and aunt. I am a friend to many and foe to few. I am a proud member of the Australian Labor Party. I am a unionist, an advocate and an environmentalist, and I am thrilled to be here today as the Member for Katherine.

This thrill is further enhanced by the knowledge that I am also the first East Timorese-born Australian to be elected to any parliament in this great country. It also brings me an immense sense of pride in the knowledge that I am a member of a Territory Labor government of many firsts and a lot of diversity, which is representative of our great Territory.

I would like to acknowledge my colleague and very good friend, the Member for Namatjira, Chansey Paech, the first openly gay Indigenous Australian to be elected to parliament. In his honour, and all that of all same-sex couples in this great Territory, I commit to advocating and lobbying for marriage equality to become a reality.

I come from a long line of political activists and advocates. My father, Joao Carrascalao, was the founder of the Democratic Union of Timor-Leste, better known as the UDT. He spent his life outside Timor, fighting for an independent Timor. When Timor became an independent nation, he became a member of its transitional government, then a minister of the newly-formed government, and eventually East Timor's Ambassador to South Korea.

The UDT motto is one that my father lived by and that he instilled in my brother and me. It is a mantra that I live my life by both personally and professionally. It is also one I believe encompasses the principles that someone who aspires to politics should be driven by. In English it means 'from people, for people, with people'. The motto in the Timorese language of Tetun, *Husi povu; ho povu; ba povu*.

My uncle, Jose Ramos-Horta, cofounder of FRETILIN, the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996, before he became the President of East Timor in

2007. He taught me the power of compassion and collectivism, but it is through those two men that I learnt that a leader is only as strong as the weakest member of the community. These two great men and my mother mentored me and shaped me into the political person I am today.

I have had a diverse career that has included service as an active duty soldier, and work in the transportation, natural resources, health and legal sectors, as well as with the United Nations. I am passionate about social justice, community development and the environment. These are core values that are the motivation for everything I do, and will not change as the Member for Katherine.

More than anything, what inspires me to want to improve the everyday lives of the people of the community I now represent are the memories of my childhood and my parents. Every child deserves to feel secure and safe, satisfied and confident, no matter what adversity they face. In order to achieve that I will advocate tirelessly to ensure the things so many of us take for granted are available to every member of the Katherine community, irrespective of their socioeconomic status or skin colour. That means access to healthcare, education, long-term employment prospects, sustainable economic growth and a healthy environment. These are the non-negotiable elements every Katherinite needs in order for all of us to once again be able to focus on what is great about the community we live in.

I believe trust is a vital part of leadership and community engagement, which is why I am implementing processes that will improve the transparency and accountability of the representation I am giving my employers, the people of Katherine. I am excited to be presented with the opportunity to show Katherinites what inclusive representation looks like, which is why I intend to provide public access to my diary and up-to-date information about how the electorate budget is being spent.

One of my major goals as the Member for Katherine is to facilitate innovative and targeted investment in services and infrastructure by prioritising a consultative approach. In simple English, this means I want every stakeholder at the table when a decision about funding is made, so Katherinites can be sure that every dollar committed to the development and betterment of our town is being spent in a responsible, sustainable and ethical way.

To that end, one of my first official duties as the member for Katherine is to ask the Chief Minister to refocus the \$10m the previous government committed towards building a skywalk and instead investigate how that money could be better spent in Katherine, ensuring equity and sustainability.

I do not believe Katherine is in the economic position to flaunt such a funding injection of that size on creating the Territory's own Grand Canyon. We already have our own Grand Canyon. It was formed and preserved by nature and the traditional owners of the land. I will encourage and support a more holistic and eco-friendly approach that will enhance the natural beauty which can be appreciated and utilised by locals and tourists alike. It is time that Katherine was properly considered, and I will fight to ensure that Katherine is the focus of planned funding that will see real outcomes for the people of my electorate.

Katherine's rich cultural diversity is something I am incredibly proud of. It is also something that can and must be harnessed to deliver long-term viability, especially if it is captured in our existing tourism, education and agricultural sectors.

I have seen the extraordinary things people from countless backgrounds are doing to contribute to the unique fabric of Katherine, so it breaks my heart to witness the federal government's stance on asylum seekers playing out on a daily basis. It is impossible to reach our potential as a community, whether as a nation or a regional town in the Northern Territory, when we continue to base the worth of those around us on the colour of their skin, their origins and our own prejudices.

As the Member for Katherine I will use our town as an example at every opportunity that is presented to me of why embracing those of a different background is a positive that can lead to communities achieving unexpected things. Were it not for that premise, a woman of Timorese-Portuguese descent, a former refugee, would not be standing here today before the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory as the elected representative of the town a world away from the one she fled as a four-year-old.

Madam Speaker, in closing I offer my congratulations to you on your re-election as the member for Goyder. I also offer my congratulations to my Labor colleagues. To the opposition and the Independent members, I extend my congratulations. I look forward to working with you with the common goal of a prosperous Northern Territory. While we may be opponents, we are not adversaries. While political ideologies may differ, we are all here for the same reason, because we are passionate about our communities and harbour a desire to serve our constituents, irrespective of the political flags we fly.

Thank you once again for affording me the opportunity to share my story in this inspirational place today, and thank you to the people of Katherine for having the vision to join me on this incredible journey.

**Mr GUYULA (Nhulunbuy):** (The member spoke in language).

Madam Speaker, I am here from the Liya-dhalinymirr Djambarrpuyungu people of East Arnhem Land. I am Liya-dhalinymirr Djambarrpuyungu leader. I stand before this parliament here in good governance and respect.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the land that I am standing on and the Larrakia Nation's people and their ancestors past and present.

Let me begin by saying this is not something that I wanted to do. I did not want to become a politician, but we Yolngu have tried many ways of gaining recognition of Yolngu law, and none have worked. I am here as an elected member but also as a diplomat from the Yolngu Ngärra, bringing two parliaments together.

Our 1998 petition to Prime Minister John Howard read like this:

We request that the Australian government recognise:

1. *the Dhulmu-mulka Bathi (Title Deeds) which establish the legal tenure for each of our traditional clan estates. Your Westminster system calls this native title.*
2. *the jurisdiction of our Ngärra'/Traditional Parliament in the same way as we recognise your Parliament and Westminster system of government*
3. *both formally and legally recognise our Madayin system of law.*

Similar requests for rights, land ownership and our way of life and self-governance were also made in the 1963 bark petition, the 1998 Barunga statement and the 2008 petition to Kevin Rudd.

The leadership of Yolngu people has always been very public about its request for treaty. On numerous occasions this has been done by statements and petitions to the Australian Government. Perhaps our people's most well-known declaration for treaty is the song by Yothu Yindi called *Treaty*.

Today I bring a letter stick to be tabled in the parliament; this is brought on behalf of the Yolngu Nations Assembly. The subsequent message is one of the Yolngu Nations', outlining the equal standing of the *Ngarra'* institution compared with Australian parliaments. It is therefore a declaration of ongoing Yolngu sovereignty while being a diplomatic gesture of intent, and also an invitation to work towards a place of mutual acceptance between Yolngu and Australian jurisdictions.

The declaration reads like this:

*We declare that we have not been conquered.*

*We declare that to this day we are a sovereign people.*

*We declare that we are subject to our Madayin system of law constituted by the Unseen Creator of the Universe and revealed to the Givers of Law, Djang'kawu and Barama, and we continue to steward this system through our lawful authorities and government.*

*Our Madayin system of law establishes Mägayamirr—peace, order and good government; is dhapirrk consistent in all its statutes; as is assented to by all Yolngu citizens throughout the world.*

*Our Madayin system of law is guarded by the Yothu Yindi separation of powers.*

*Our Madayin system of law is a rule of law not a rule of man.*

*Our Madayin system of law is the equal of any other system of law.*

This is the most important thing I will say today; it is the reason I am here. It is the reason I stand before you.

To give you an even greater understanding of why I am here, standing before you, I will tell you about myself. I was born and raised in the bush. My father did not depend on others. He was given a job at the mission in Galiwinku, using his traditional knowledge. He used the skills he learnt from his father as a crocodile hunter, and this is what I learnt in my younger days, until I was 10. I stayed away from school; I was camping, hunting, fishing and crocodile hunting with my father, and collecting bush foods with my mother.

At 10 years old I made the decision to go to school. I could not read or write and was laughed at. I was put back in a class with younger children and quickly picked up skills. In one year I was put three levels beyond the class where I first started, where children laughed at me. Most of those kids finished school at a post-primary level. I went to Dhupuma College and then Nhulunbuy High School.

I believe that my learning on country until the age of 10 gave me a strong Yolngu identity and confidence and the ability to succeed later in life. Growing up on my mother's parents' country and my father's country, I was nurtured where the ancestors know me, where I feel strong standing on my country. Later I took up a job with Mission Aviation Fellowship in Nhulunbuy and Galiwinku as an aircraft maintenance engineer. They had a flying school in Ballarat, Victoria, and I got my unrestricted private pilot's licence to fly all over Australia.

I was learning about Balanda and getting a mixture of culture. I wanted to be on country for ceremonies and the traditional education, but I was also starting to enjoy a Balanda lifestyle. I was like a dog chasing two masters. I was picking up Balanda habits and then I had to drop that and catch up with my own culture. This is a hard time for many caught in two worlds. People say, 'Come to the mainstream' and, on the other hand, 'You need to be a leader, learn songlines and ceremonies, which work towards those things that are the law'.

I am now at the end of my full education with Yolngu knowledge. There is still a lot to learn but I am a *Djirrikaymirr*. This is a leadership title for those who have a high level of learning. I have the authority to make constitutional decisions, create and reproduce the law. I have established this knowledge since my early 20s. Over the past 35 years I have dedicated myself to learning Yolngu law, a law that has provided everything we need for thousands of years.

The issue of Yolngu law is the main reason I have been selected by my electorate to represent them in the Northern Territory parliament. I am very proud of all the grassroots support, Yolngu and Balanda together, that circled around this campaign.

I want to return to my story of a dog and two masters. This is two masters going in different directions, one going this way and one going the other way. We talk about closing the gap, but what gap are we talking about? The people of my electorate understand that this gap is the gap created when Yolngu law is not properly acknowledged. When the power of self-determination is increasingly being removed.

The gap grows when our people are starved out from the homelands and forced into major growth hub towns by the defunding of infrastructure, health facilities, roads, homeland schools et cetera. Homeland centres are not hunting and fishing camps, but are residential clan estates. They are centres of our society, foundational places of our social contract, given importance by tradition and law at the foundation of our world.

The gap grows when Yolngu children are forced into English-only schools, taught in a language they do not speak or hear in their community, like sending a Balanda child to a Yolngu language-only school in Darwin. I understand this pressure. Even as an adult learning to fly I failed written exams several times, but I was always above average in practical exams. I could navigate Victorian country almost instantly. We are capable of learning both ways but we need the strength of our first culture and language to obtain both.

The gap grows when Yolngu children on homelands do not have equal access to education—do not have qualified teachers attending every day and working with Yolngu teachers and community to develop bilingual, bi-cultural curriculum, and for the children that is created on country and taught through Yolngu language and culture, discipline, rehabilitation, educating young men and women towards being responsible, respectful parents and future leaders.

The gap grows when there is no training on country for young men and women who have finished their high school education to learn skills to gain employment that will allow them to be a part of owning their community.

The gap grows when outsiders control our economy, ignoring our corporate entities and limiting our right to negotiate terms of trade and benefit from our resources.

The gap grows with family violence. Violence is what is happening now because young men and women have not been through a traditional process of learning to be responsible and prepare for respectful relationships. Our right to maintain justice has been revoked by Balanda institutions.

The gap is growing, and the only way to fix this is with policies of self-determination, self-management, self-governance and, ultimately, a treaty.

This is not the first treaty for Yolngu people. When the Makassans first landed on the North East Arnhem Land coast they recognised Yolngu sovereignty and that a system of government already existed here. The Makassans negotiated for the right to fish certain waters with our authorities and were granted this right. In exchange for this fishery agreement, payments of cloth, tobacco, metal axes, knives and rice were made. We Yolngu of Arnhem Land also traded turtle shell, pearls and cypress pine, and some of our people were employed as trepangers.

The relationship between the Makassans and the Yolngu tribes became so intertwined that the Makassan culture became included in some of our songlines and law, songlines of ngarali tobacco and nganitiji-alcohol, stories like the great whale hunter Wuymu, the Wurramalla hunter, and culture like the use of flags.

We had a true international treaty with the Makassans of Sulawesi. They engaged us with respect and honour, and they became our kin.

When I ask for a treaty, I am thinking of three requirements: the recognition of the Madayin system of law; the recognition of an Arnhem Land or East Arnhem Land body of government; and compensation for lost revenue from the blockade of historical international trade with the Makassans. This is called *Bayarra*, meaning restitution for wrongs done.

There will be disagreements due to differences in cultures, but this will help us. It is like a good path that has become overgrown or blocked. We need to trim the tree to find the pathway again. This will hurt, but it will draw attention to areas that need to be closely examined and questioned. Only through respectful dialogue and working together can we call Australia a nation based on the principles of democracy.

A treaty will empower us, give us self-management and self-determination, bring pride and outcomes, allow us to make decisions for ourselves and put us in charge of our own destiny. A treaty will allow us to move from the oppression of dependency and have a place where we might be human.

I am here as a representative of the seat of Nhulunbuy, and I want to represent everyone, both Yolngu and Balanda. I am also here as a clan leader, and I am here as a representative of Yolngu Nations and its system of governance. I ask elected members to be part of the change that my electorate has voted for, in recognising Yolngu law and walking with us in partnership towards a treaty.

I seek leave to table this letter stick from Yolngu Nations to the parliament.

Leave granted.

**Mr PAECH (Namatjira):** Madam Speaker, *Werte, Palya*, good afternoon and welcome. Brothers, sisters, fellow Territorians, I offer and pay my respects to the traditional owners, past, present and into the future, who, as our first Australians, remain our nation's rightful custodians and owners. I pay tribute to the land, the culture, the sea and the deep connection we all have to this place, our home, the Northern Territory.

As I begin my maiden speech today, I offer a deep thanks to Phillip Miller, Creed Joseph Mocketarinja, Shirleen Campbell and my aunty, Barbara Shaw, for the cultural blessings in our first languages and words of encouragement, also providing me a safe passage into this Chamber.

I stand here today humbled by the task before me, grateful for the trust the people of Namatjira have bestowed and mindful of the sacrifices made by our ancestors and elders.

I am Chanston James Paech. I am the son of a proud Aboriginal woman and a man who was a proud product of multiculturalism, a German immigrant. I was born in Alice Springs, our nation's heart, and I have grown up in this place. I have come to understand that Central Australia is a place like no other.

I have learnt how we are all linked and connected in this place, how Central Australia is a strong place of strong people. I have grown to understand and know that this is my place; it is a part of who I am. I am a part of its uniqueness; I am a part of Central Australia—the smell of rain when it hits the hot desert dirt; the endless stars in our enormous skies; the dusty fun of camping out along the Finke Desert Race; watching the mad cowboys at bush races and rodeos like Harts Range and Santa Teresa; or laying in your swag, watching the coals glow in midnight campfires. These are our experiences. This is our home, and it is a place where everyone feels that special and unique connection to this ancient land.

I am a descendent of the Arrernte and Gurindji peoples, whose lands span from Central Australia to the Victoria River regions, a man whose family is somewhat similar to that of a dotted canvas, where no two dots are quite the same, whose heritage is seen as strength, not weakness, a man whose family has never discouraged people because of their beliefs.

Although time never stops, we must never forget our past. We must not forget the contributions of those who have laid the foundations for our future today. I pay respects to the founding pioneers of Central Australia, in particular my great-uncle, Walter Smith, and the many Afghan cameleers who have played a vital and positive role in shaping our community's social fabric. We have lived, and continue to live, harmoniously together, as one in our community. Like my family, I intend to weave the pages of history for Central Australia as a progressive politician who fought for positive change for the people of Central Australia and the Northern Territory.

Throughout my life I have been surrounded by people from all walks of life, who have grown with me, inspired me and, most importantly, taught me the meaning of life and how to overcome hard times. But no one has inspired me more than my grandmother, Barbara Ross, a proud Centralian Aboriginal woman, the daughter of Ada Wade and granddaughter of Topsy Smith. My grandmother may not have been a profiled or controversial figure, but to me she was my everything—the keeper of my stories, the linkage to my culture, my first political contact, a proud Labor supporter and unionist.

As a child growing up I was encouraged by my mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles to dream big, never to resist, never denying my imagination the opportunity to create a vision. Like my childhood, I still dream today. I dream that our people, the people from Namatjira, will have the same opportunity as people living right across this land. That dream is becoming a reality. It is starting with me standing here in front of you all today. It is one of the reasons I put my hand up to join the Australian Labor Party, to ensure that people living in regional and remote areas in the Northern Territory have a strong voice in this Chamber, a voice that will advocate for its people, a voice that will reflect its people.

Ten years ago something special happened; 10 years ago, on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was given a membership form to join a family with compassion, empathy and commitment. That family was the Australian Labor Party, a party with a long commitment to the disadvantaged of our community, which has stood with Aboriginal people in the hardest of times, when rights have been under attack and living conditions have gone backwards. I took that card and joined; I have never looked back. Sure, there are times when I have struggled, times when I have questioned why, but I have never been alone. I have always been supported, mentored and encouraged to bloom.

I want every person in the Northern Territory to bloom, to unlock their full potential, to be the people they want to be. I believe the community has a strong and real voice, and we deserve to have our voice heard. In a nutshell, I believe in Central Australia, and by working together we can create a strong future.

I want things to change, and change for the better. I do not want to just sit and hope things change. I do not want to just talk about changing things. I want to be a part of a team that will change. I want to make sure all Territorians can be part of making this change happen—change in our communities so our people are not waiting months to have a broken toilet fixed; change in the way we develop the bush so we realise its economic potential and support its development by properly resourcing roads and transport links so cattle can get to markets, families can get to town and home again, and visitors can get out and see our great regions; change in how we empower our people, acknowledging the importance of community whilst improving services and access to economic development, health care and employment; change in how policies and laws are developed so that race-based policies are a thing for the history books.

Of course, this is something that cannot be done by one person alone. It takes a community to make change. We must do it together.

I am proud and confident to be part of a government that will deliver much-needed reform to housing, health and education to ensure these foundations continue the path for my people to self-determination.

This does not mean handballing the issues. We must work with our people to build the capacity to take on the challenges ahead.

I believe the Northern Territory is at a critical crossroads; our future, the future of the Northern Territory, rests, to a large degree, on decisions that we will debate, discuss and decide in this Chamber. That is why I want to make sure the voice of Territorians is represented fully in this Chamber and all sides of each story are told and heard with respect and dignity.

I will always put the concerns of Territorians first and I will always listen, even when I may have an opposing view.

As I entered this Assembly today as a new politician, it is fitting to say that politics is in my blood. I am no stranger to politics. In 2012 I was elected by the people of Alice Springs to serve as an Alice Springs Town Councillor, a role I was extremely proud of, a role I carried out without fear or favour, and a role I am eternally grateful for.

From an early age I was exposed to politics at all levels, from local government to Territory and federal arenas, to the grassroots politics of the community-controlled sectors, in my community known as 'black politics'. The process was each year the family would gather around the dining table to discuss the upcoming elections for the community-controlled organisations, the policies being put forward and the vision people had for my people.

I am privileged to have been given the opportunity to observe, participate and shape the future for my people. My community is willing to take on the challenges, willing to defy the odds and challenge the basic of ideas. A community which, given back the local control and decision-making, will make a difference and shape the future in the best way we know possible: our way.

Of course, every campaign or journey's path to success comes at a price, a price that some accept and others refuse. I am one of those who will refuse to accept behaviours that cause harm or offence, or that humiliate our people. This Chamber will always be a place for members to explore the wonders of diversity, to represent interest groups and participate in robust discussions, but I will never allow or tolerate discrimination, homophobia or hate speech in this Assembly.

Namatjira is an electorate so big, so beautiful, so diverse—an electorate whose desire to achieve equality continues and an electorate whose diversity is celebrated, not discouraged. From each corner of the electorate comes a special form of strength. From the remote communities comes a resilience and a deep spiritual connection to this ancient land, and from the rural residents a desire to protect our natural resources, the environment, and protect our precious rural lifestyle. That means keeping the rural area rural. Our town campers bring the passion, creativity and experiences of community life to our towns. They bring a special spiritual energy. The tourism townships throughout Namatjira give light into the diversity of our global brothers and sisters.

I stand here smiling still at the opportunity to represent the Territory's most vibrant and diverse electorate, smiling at the memories and images I have instilled in my mind by the people of Namatjira.

It is my role, and everyone else's role on this side of the Assembly, as Labor members, to articulate the positive vision for a better Territory, to fight for it and reform it. I will do everything in my power to defend Territorians' interests against the self-interest of others. In part, that means I will stand by those people struggling with local issues to protect the rural areas of Alice Springs, deliver much-needed housing reform and ensure this government delivers a progressive agenda for all Territorians.

Everywhere we look there is work to be done. The Territory's economy calls for action and change, and we must act, not only to create Territory jobs but to restore a future for our next generation—our up-and-coming leaders, our children, our family, our friends.

I look forward to the day when this country will recognise my rights as equal rights, when I too can marry in my country, on my country, as a recognised first Australian. Until then I will stand proud with my Labor colleagues across our vast lands to ensure all Territorians have equality and that we reach a time when our first Australians are constitutionally recognised.

Until then, I will stand as part of a team that will build houses and roads and protect the environment, and will build a future that's bright for all Territorians. Cynics may question how and when, they may yell and scream, but I will not surrender my passion and commitment for Territorians and our future.

I entered this Chamber on a positive and excited note, and I will ensure I finish my speech in the same tone.

I am a Centralian man. I am the nation's first openly-gay Indigenous parliamentarian. I am eternally proud of who I am and where I come from. I own it and wear it with pride. I am young; I am gay; I am black, a true-blue Territorian. I am a proud face of the diversity and future of the great Australian Labor Party.

I want to personally thank the members of the Australian Labor Party, and particularly those of Central Australia. I offer the deepest of thanks to previous Labor Senators Nova Peris and Trish Crossin. I acknowledge the Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon, and his contribution.

I offer thanks to my life's mentors, who have guided me throughout my journey here today: the former member for Stuart, the honourable Karl Hampton; the former federal Member for Port Adelaide, the Hon Mark Butler; and federal Senator for the Northern Territory, Malarndirri McCarthy, for their mentorship, guidance and sound advice.

I thank Pat Turner, Eileen Hoosan, Walter Shaw, Michael Liddle and Owen Cole for developing, guiding and negotiating me through our Aboriginal politics—a tough apprenticeship for anyone.

I thank John Adams; Mandy Taylor; Emma Ringer; Sally Langton; Raelene Wilson, also known as Lala; Phillip Alice; David Doolan; James Ricciardone; Teresa Nipper; David Halliday; Joseph Scales and Jade Kurdenko for always being strong and encouraging supporters and friends. You mean the world to me.

These are just some of the people who have a special place in my heart. They are some of the people who have taught me the compassionate, committed and progressive values that have enabled me to achieve so much in my life so far.

I offer the deepest thanks, appreciation, respect and love to one of my cultural mothers, my aunty, the previous Member for Namatjira, the honourable Alison Anderson. Her generosity, cooperation, commitment and love to our people has shown throughout her time in this Assembly. It is with the greatest respect and excitement that I move forward and continue to ensure that the people of Namatjira are well represented in this place, as their new member.

I also pay homage to another dear friend of mine, Mr Neil Bell, the former Member for Macdonnell—now known as the seat of Namatjira—a man whose commitment, passion and love for our people remains firm in the hearts of our people. The language of friendship is not in words but in meanings. Mr Bell means the world to my people.

I acknowledge all my family and friends here today: my mother, Cheryl Schembri; and my aunts, Eileen Hoosan and Jodie Lall, who are in the gallery today. I thank them for believing in me from an early age and making the time to see me deliver my first speech in this Assembly.

I offer the greatest thanks to all my friends, family and supporters, particularly those in Namatjira.

Thank you to all the people who beeped and waved to me each night on the roadsides with my team. Your support and encouragement was overwhelming and it greatly assisted during the hard times.

Last, but certainly not least, I offer thanks, support and commitment to the unions of the Northern Territory. Unions are not narrow, nor are they self-interested groups. They have fought for justice and democracy. Unions, I thank you.

I particularly thank the CFMEU, a progressive union, for its guidance and encouragement during the election campaign.

It is a dream of mine that on my last day, during my last speech ever in this Chamber, I will be able to stand proud and talk about the positive difference I have made for the people of Namatjira and the greater Territory. By then my wish will be simple and my job will be done. Until then, I remain committed to the people of Namatjira and the Northern Territory to ensure the voices of all Territorians are recognised and heard, and treated with dignity and respect in this Chamber.

**Ms UIBO (Arnhem):** Madam Speaker, before I begin I would like to acknowledge the Larrakia people, who are the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on. I pay my respects to their elders, past and



present, and wish their next generation of leaders well. I also acknowledge the traditional elders who are visiting today, in the Chamber, from across our beautiful parts of the Northern Territory.

My name is Selena Jane Malijarri Uibo, and I stand before you privileged to say I am the Member for Arnhem. The recent change in the electoral distribution boundaries has seen the geographic coverage of the Arnhem electorate grow. My electorate now goes from Jabiru and Kakadu National Park, south to Mataranka, out onto the Roper Highway, across to Urapunga, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, across the sea to Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island, back up to the mainland to Balma, across to Gapuwiyak and the surrounding homelands, then across the Arnhem escarpment to Jabiru.

This large boundary also takes in several large cattle stations and communities along the Central Arnhem Road—Barunga, Beswick, Bulman and Weemol. It is a large electorate with diverse landscapes, such as gorgeous coastal country, bushlands, rocky hills, savannah plains, swamp lands, fresh water country, hot springs and stone country.

I consider myself extremely fortunate to be able to represent such a large electorate with people living in small towns, Indigenous communities, pastoral stations and homelands. I love the travel and am still in disbelief some days when I realise this is actually part of my job. I get to go to all these places and advocate for amazing people who call the places in the Arnhem electorate home.

I would like to let the House know a little about myself and how I came to this point in my life. I would like to give people a sense of who I am and my family history. I believe that my family has made me who I am today, and it is also what grounds me in life. For Indigenous people, understanding connections to other people and places is vital in establishing relationships and belonging.

I was born and bred in the Northern Territory. My mother, Didamain Uibo, is a Nunggubuyu lady from Numbulwar and comes from the Nundhirribala clan, which is well known across Arnhem Land for the Red Flag dancers.

I am so very grateful to have had my family from Numbulwar dance me into the Chamber this morning. It is a moment in my life when I feel truly blessed to have the support of my family, who travelled the 800 km, a 10-hour road trip, yesterday to share in our family history this morning. A special thanks to my cousins Grant Nundhirribala and Roland Nunhirribala for coordinating our family to sing and dance today, as they are both important song men in our region.

My mother's family also comes from Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island and are known as Wanindilyakwa people. Numbulwar, Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island are all located in southeast Arnhem Land, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, which means I am now fortunate enough to represent my own family in parliament as the Member for Arnhem.

My father, Mick Uibo, is a second generation Australian who has lived in the Territory for nearly 50 years, but still looks really young. His mother was of Irish and South African descent and born in Sydney. His father immigrated to Australia from a small country called Estonia, which is next to Russia, in Eastern Europe. My surname, Uibo, which is actually pronounced Wei-bo in Estonian, means apple tree.

I am very honoured to be standing here today in the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. I would like to share with you some more about my life growing up in the Northern Territory, my schooling experience, moving to university in Queensland, deferring my studies, travelling and working, returning to study and graduating, and my teaching experience and current aspirations.

Firstly, to do with me. My totem is Gudarrgu, or broлга. I belong to the Mundhayung moiety and my clan is the Ngalmi clan. My life growing up in the NT has been filled with good memories of people, places and experiences. I was born in the Royal Darwin Hospital, and grew up for the first 10 years in Batchelor, an hour south of Darwin, located at the gateway to the famous Litchfield National Park.

My father worked as a lecturer at Batchelor College, which is now known as the Batchelor Institute for Indigenous Tertiary Education. My mother was a homemaker, and when my sister and I were at school, she worked in the community creche and completed her teaching qualification through the college.

Batchelor was a great place to grow up. Families all knew each other, kids played around town and went home just before dark, and swimming and picnics at Litchfield were a regular occurrence.

In 1994 my parents made the decision to move from the comfortable life of Batchelor so my older sister, Jocelyn, could complete her final senior years in Darwin at St John's college. In 1995 we moved to Darwin and I attended the local primary school of Malak. I then attended Sanderson High School and completed my grades 8, 9 and 10.

I picked up a love of soccer in high school, and joined the school team and got into club soccer, which kept me busy on the weekends. I moved to Casuarina Senior College for grades 11 and 12, and in both years was selected to represent the NT at the national schoolgirls competition. One was in Gosford, New South Wales, and the other in Perth, WA.

In Year 12 I was also selected as a Northern Territory representative for the National Youth Roundtable, which was made up of 50 young people around Australia.

Whilst in my senior years of grades 10, 11 and 12, I participated in a program called the Aboriginal and Islander Tertiary Aspirations Program, better known as AITAP. This program focused on developing self-confidence, public speaking—which has come in handy—performing skills, getting over the shame-job factor, and having a go.

People like Tanyah and Joanne Nasir made us students believe in ourselves and rise up to challenges in both the program and our personal lives. Through AITAP I participated in three annual Northern Territory challenges and one Queensland AITAP challenge, and attended various development workshops. AITAP was also how I first connected to the YMCA Youth Parliament.

Teachers' support in schools was critical in making extracurricular programs a success, and the likes of Bill Rolfe, Tom McCall and Margie Anstess at Sanderson High School supported my involvement in these programs. Another great teacher, Mr Graeme Parker, supported my peers and me at Casuarina Senior College to continue to participate in Youth Parliament.

I participated in Youth Parliament for three years during my senior years. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of returning YMCA taskforce members such as Donald Young, who is here in the gallery today, each year during the program I started thinking more and more about becoming a politician and decided it would be my long-term goal to do so.

It gives me immense joy to stand here before you as an elected member of the Northern Territory parliament when my journey here started 16 years ago as a 15-year-old teenager participating in the YMCA Youth Parliament. My long-term goal is now a reality thanks to the support and encouragement of people around me. Actually, I think it might have been around that seat there; I am pretty close.

My experience at school was a positive one, and I enjoyed the diversity of subjects, creating new friendships and figuring out a little more of who I am. Looking back, as an adult, I guess one of the best parts of growing up where I did meant I was truly part of a multicultural community. At school I had friends from all types of backgrounds, colours, religions, family makeups and languages. I did not realise this was special until I moved to Brisbane to study a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education dual degree at the University of Queensland.

In my first year of university I was living on the St Lucia Campus at Duchesne College, which is an all-female residential college with the Catholic faith. This in itself was a new experience for me, as I had never been to boarding school, had always gone to public school and it was co-ed. I had made a handful of friends at college, but mostly my social life revolved around the UQ soccer club and my school mates from Darwin who had moved to Brisbane.

In my first year I joined the debating club and met some people from the Queensland Youth Parliament program. One of the debating organisers encouraged me to apply for the National Youth Parliament held in Canberra and join the Queensland team. It was a great experience and kept that little spark inside me, thinking of the possibility of a career in politics as my long-term goal. I also volunteered myself as a task force member for three Northern Territory Youth Parliaments, for two of which I was youth Speaker.

In the second year of my studies I applied to be a UQ Ambassador and was one of seven university students selected to travel to the United States and attend a program called the Renaissance Games, which was held in Kingston, Rhode Island. This program was run by the Institute for International Sport, also known as the IIS. The Renaissance Games was all about excelling in all parts of one's life, academic, sporting and arts.

By the end of my third year of university, however, my time and dedication to study had been replaced by soccer and socialising on the weekends. I failed two subjects in Semester 2 and decided I wanted to defer my studies and figure out if teaching was really what I wanted to do. Needless to say, my parents were not very happy. After all, if I graduated on time I would be teaching secondary at age 21.

I decided to move back to Darwin and work at my old senior college of Casuarina in two casual positions. One was as an Inclusion Support Assistant working with students who had learning difficulties and the other was as a Homework Centre Supervisor to assist Indigenous students with tutoring. That same year, 2006, I had the opportunity to volunteer at the World Scholar-Athlete Games, held in Rhode Island USA, which was also run by the IIS. The 10-day event was a program run every four years to promote world peace by getting young people from all around the world to participate and connect in sports, art, music, dance and recreation. I had a fantastic time and met amazing people, who I am still connected with today.

A few months after I returned to Darwin I was contacted and offered a three month internship in the USA. I spent three months living in Rhode Island, which was a unique experience. The highlight of my time in the States was being able to volunteer for the World Youth Peace Summit held in New York City at the United Nations headquarters. One of my most vivid memories was sitting at the Two UN Plaza doing admin work and looking up at the Chrysler Building at 9 pm. It was a very cool sight for a girl who grew up in little Batchelor and Darwin.

In 2007 I moved back to Brisbane and did some casual waitressing work and applied for jobs as I was still not ready to get back to full-time study. I secured a job at UQ Sport and worked with the Sport and Leisure Coordinator, providing admin support. I also gained work with UQ Sport as the Team Manager, coordinating 250 UQ athletes to attend the Australian University Games held at the Gold Coast that year.

I enjoyed both jobs and by the end of that year had been enticed by two college friends to go for a working holiday visa in Canada. Needless to say, again my parents were not too happy about me putting another year of study on hold and going half way around the world to work on the skifields of Canada. I love my parents but I decided it would be a great experience, and I even had my first and only white Christmas. After four months in Canada my friends and I decided to keep travelling. They ended up going back to Australia early and I continued, for the first time on my own overseas, across to Europe. I worked in the Republic of Ireland for three months as an au pair and in a very cold summer camp.

In August 2008 I decided that I had to come back to Australia and ended up going out to Numbulwar at the end of the school year to work as a tutor in the upper primary class. It was then that I felt like teaching was what I wanted to do, and I decided that I needed to go back to university, get my two degrees and return to teach in Numbulwar.

First I needed some money to support myself. I applied for a job working for the Community Justice Centre, the CJC, with the Department of Justice in Darwin. CJC is a division which looks at mediation as an alternate dispute resolution mechanism. I really enjoyed my work there and learnt a lot about mediation; however, I had the yearning to finish my teaching degree. After six months of work with the CJC I applied to win back my cadetship with the Department of Education and successfully regained it. I moved back to Brisbane to complete my final year-and-a-half of study and was honoured to be the valedictorian of my graduating class in 2010.

The next World Scholar-Athlete Games was planned for June 2011, and I had been corresponding with the IIS about the possibility of getting a six-month internship and working with them again. After my university graduation I moved back to Darwin and decided to wait for my US visa whilst looking for local jobs in teaching.

Unfortunately my mother became very sick; she contracted a rare blood-borne disease called Cryptococcus. This was particularly damning as my mother had renal failure in 2003, and then in 2006 received a successful kidney transplant. Despite this she became very ill. On the same day I won the teaching job at Casuarina Senior College my US teaching visa was approved. It did not take me long to decide that I needed to stay in Darwin, stay close to my mum and support my dad and sister. It was a hard few months but my mother's fighting Numburindi spirit brought her back to health—that and the amazing teams working with her, and her unique circumstances, at the Royal Darwin Hospital. I will be forever grateful to the doctors, nurses and health practitioners who displayed their professionalism in a dire situation, which in turn provided our family with hope and courage.

During my second semester of teaching in Darwin I was determined to teach at Numbulwar. After all, it was the reason I went back to finish my studies. It was not easy at first. Actually, when I moved out to

Numbulwar, in 2012, it felt harder than my first year of teaching. It was persistence and good support from some colleagues that made me stick in there and keep going.

I learnt a lot about myself from my students; I was related to every single one. But eventually we clicked into a nice rhythm and the year went smoothly. During my four years of teaching at Numbulwar I worked with students to continue the Numburindi Arts basket business, selling pandanus crafts such as baskets, mats, dilly bags and placemats, as well as seed and shell necklaces.

I also set up the Second Chance Shop, an opportunity shop at the school to assist with fundraising for excursions and special activities for the students. Some of the achievements I am most proud of are: fundraising to take students on a Melbourne Sand2Snow trip with a colleague, Sue Paul; a Brisbane and Gold Coast surf trip; taking two students to participate in the 2013 YMCA Youth Parliament in Darwin; and arranging for two senior students to participate in a two-week long volunteer trip in Cambodia.

Seeing my students, who are also related family members, rise up to meet my high expectations and take on responsibilities was a hard but fully rewarding challenge. Nothing will take away the joy I experienced seeing my Numbulwar students shine in the classroom, playground, community and new environments.

During my teaching career, I felt humbled to have won a Commonwealth Bank Foundation Teaching Award in 2013, a Northern Territory Department of Education Teaching Excellence Award in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in 2014, and last year I was privileged to be one of the recipients of the Chief Minister's Medal for outstanding and meritorious work in the public sector. My professional life in education has given me so much and has also been a large stepping stone that has led me along the path where I stand before you today.

Now to the present moment. I cannot believe I am here delivering my first speech in parliament as the Member for Arnhem. I stand on the shoulders of two past strong Labor members who held the seat: Jack (John) Ah Kit, who escorted his daughter, Ngaree Ah Kit, the member for Karama, into the Chamber this morning, and Senator Malarndirri McCarthy, who, in kinship way, I call sister.

My journey with the Labor Party began just over two years ago when I spoke on the phone to a man I had not met at the time, called Peter Wellings; we all know Wello. Peter gave me an unbiased take on joining a political party and openly shared his experiences. I decided that my values definitely aligned to the Labor Party's and made a commitment to join.

I was then fortunate enough to meet Peter in person when he travelled to Numbulwar later that year with the former Member for Nhulunbuy, Lynne Walker. Ever since, Peter and Lynne have been genuine in their support of my aspirations, and they have both become my mentors.

If it were not for Ms Walker, I would not be here today in this position. It was Lynne who encouraged me to nominate. She encouraged me to become a candidate last year, and I give her my utmost thanks for her support and belief in me to make my dream a reality.

There are some people within the Labor Party who have been instrumental to my campaign: Territory Labor Secretary Kent Rowe, whom I am sure I drove crazy on many occasions; campaign guru and director Ryan Neve, who is enjoying time with his lovely wife and children in America; the ever-supportive Anna Goode; and the kind-hearted Ella Maguire. I must also pay thanks to Jonathan Ah Kit for his support and patience as the field officer assisting the Arnhem campaign.

I also take this moment to thank the unions for their support of my campaign, in particular the MUA and the CFMEU. My membership and involvement in the Australian Education Union NT branch has taught me a lot about the importance of the union movement and workers' rights.

I also acknowledge and give my thanks to the many Labor members, volunteers and supporters for helping us make this year's Territory election a Labor landslide.

I give a special thanks to the Member for Katherine, Ms Sandra Nelson, for her generous hospitality in allowing me to stay at her home for four weeks while I made the transition from Numbulwar to Katherine, which is now where the electorate office is based.

A special mention goes to Katherine resident Jayne Nankovel, who made this gorgeous dress from a beautifully designed print from the Injalak arts centre in Gunbalanya.

I also thank my electorate officer, Brooke Brenner, for organising me better than I could ever imagine organising myself. Today was like the first day of school, and she even helped me tie my shoes. Thanks, Brooke.

I am so proud to be part of an 18-strong team to form the Labor government for the next four years. Our team brings a richness of experience and knowledge to the Legislative Assembly that displays the true diversity of the Northern Territory.

I have the utmost confidence that Chief Minister Gunner and our team will work hard to continue supporting what really matters here in the Territory: the people.

Territorians old, young and new will be at the core of Labor government decisions. I am so privileged to be entrusted with such an important job by the people of the Arnhem electorate. I even have electorate dreams. It is true. I dream about people, travel and activities in the electorate. I am grateful, however, that when I wake up from these dreams, it is a reality.

There are lots of complex issues facing the people of Arnhem. Remote housing is by far the biggest issue I talk to my constituents about in remote communities and homelands.

People in my electorate want safer roads to travel on, as well as ongoing road maintenance. I intend to see my election promises through. I spoke many times during my campaign for the townships of Alyangula, Jabiru and Mataranka, and that the people of those townships need to see their services improved.

For example, our Labor government will support early childhood development programs so children have the best start to learning in Alyangula. We will work with the community and local stakeholders of Jabiru to develop a sustainable town plan post-2020, and we will review the water allocations and licences in the Mataranka region.

I vow that I will work hard for my constituents and represent Arnhem with honesty and integrity. I do not confess to know all the answers to resolve the problems facing the people in my electorate; however, I pledge to work hard and assist people to the best of my ability as their local member.

I give thanks to those who voted for me and supported me throughout my campaign. There are too many people to thank, but I want them to know I am truly grateful to each and every person who supported me to reach this point.

To conclude, I would like to give thanks to the most special people in my life: my family. Without them I definitely would not be standing here with such a bright outlook on the next four years. Thank you to my godparents, Dr Michael Myers and Patricia Myers, for attending the opening ceremony today and staying to watch me speak.

Thanks to my partner, Corey, who I warned stubbornness was one of my worst traits when we we met five years ago, for being patient enough to stick around and find out it was true.

Thank you to my two nieces, Zelda and Chanel, for their hugs and kisses whenever I travelled through Darwin on my campaign trail. Thank you to my sister, Jocelyn, for sitting around the dining table late one evening helping me staple 1200 flyers for mailbox drops. Thank you to my mother Didamain who, although she is a patient on dialysis treatment three times a week, still came and campaigned with me on Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island.

The biggest thanks I have saved until last and that is for my father, Mick—a father and grandfather, and the most selfless person I know—the rock of our family. Although he says he is now the retired campaign manager, he still sends me emails and text messages to make sure I am up to date with the latest news on stories regarding the electorate and that I do not miss any news articles. Thank you to Mick for being the best campaign manager anyone could ask for and who joined me on the unknown, wild, rollercoaster that is the campaign trail and held my hand right until the end of the ride.

To conclude, I use the words of US President, Barack Obama, who said:

*Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.*

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**SPEAKER'S STATEMENT**  
**Photography in the Chamber**

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I take this opportunity to remind people in the gallery that photos are not permitted to be taken during maiden speeches.

**Mr COLLINS (Fong Lim):** Mr Deputy Speaker, first I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Larrakia people, and to pay my respects to elders past and present, and to the emerging community leaders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I extend my congratulations to you on your election.

Next, I would like to thank the people of Fong Lim, those people have put their trust in me to represent them in this Thirteenth Assembly. It is my sincere hope that I will be able to represent the residents of Fong Lim and their interests in a manner that honours both them and the area.

I also acknowledge and pay my respects to my opponents at the recent election; Tim Dixon, Country Liberal Party candidate; Sue Fraser-Adams, 1 Territory candidate; and Ilana Eldridge, the Independent. As I have said in other places and on other occasions, I enjoyed the campaign, and the interaction I had with each of them. In different circumstances, any one of them would have made an excellent Member for Fong Lim. I wish them all the best and I hope they continue with their interest in public service, as the Northern Territory needs good people like them.

While I am on acknowledgments, I would also like to thank those people who helped me out throughout the campaign: Matt Punch, my campaign manager and still my friend, well done Matt; Claire, his partner, who graciously allowed me to borrow him—thank you; Matt's father, Gary Punch, my former boss when he was the Minister for Defence, Science and Personnel in the Keating government—Gary came up to Darwin to help out in the last week-and-a-bit of the campaign, and his knowledge and assistance were invaluable. It took me back a little, only this time with the roles reversed, this time with Gary as the adviser.

My father-in-law, Austin Driscoll, who was deeply concerned when we advised him that my partner Greta and I had separated—he was deeply concerned that he might not be able to come up and be part of the campaign. We settled that issue fairly quickly and he spent about six weeks living with me, providing, again, immeasurable assistance, from looking after the girls to cleaning the house for me, cooking and even doorknocking, letterboxing and attending functions with me. Austin, I can truly say that I do not know what I would have done without you.

To Greta Driscoll, my former partner, thank you for keeping things on an even keel throughout the campaign, despite our difficult personal circumstances. While I am on the issue of ex-partners, I should acknowledge my first wife, Vicki Collins, who worked so well after our separation in bringing up Grant and Alyssa, who are in the gallery; they are a credit to her.

To the rest of my campaign team, Dom Gomez, Emma Farnell and Niall Connelly from Ward Keller, thank you all for your assistance and belief along the way. While on Ward Keller, I would like to thank the partners, Kevin Stephens, Leon Loganathan, Michael Grove, Ashely Heath, Teresa Hall and Greg Phelps, for their combined support throughout the period that I was the candidate.

Ward Keller is one of the great stories of the Northern Territory. It has nurtured far more than its fair share of the Northern Territory legal establishment, including members of this House, the current Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Lia Finocchiaro, and me, to name just two, as well as numerous Supreme Court justices, chief justices, Local Court magistrates and judges, and other senior judicial officers.

Other Darwin Lawyers who helped out are Matt Dean, Garrett Smith, Megan Lawton and Pam Jenki from the Law Society Northern Territory; Sarah Newman, with her shoulder to lean on, her compassionate ear and her constant concern for and support to the Territory Labor team, including Secretary Kent Rowe, Lauchie Rowe, Anna Goode, Ryan Neve, Hannah McCloud, Matt Ellis, Chrissy von Wootten and everyone else—to my colleagues in this House and to those who, unfortunately, were not successful on 27 August.

To Hovig Melkonian, Declan Williams and Emma Ross, who came up from New South Wales and Victoria to help in the last week, thank you. It was a pleasure to know you and to work with you. Your enthusiasm

was boundless. To volunteers Leslie Major and Heather Schoberg, thank you also. To those who helped out in other ways, the job could not have been done without your assistance: Paul Lawton, Markus Spazzapan, Melinda Loew, Dennis Fernandes and Geordie Muir.

To my family, who have travelled from a number of different places, many of whom are like the people you hear on the radio—you know the type, long-term listener, first-time caller. I have a number of those here, including, from the central coast, my mother, June Robb; from Sydney, my brother, Scott, my son, Grant, and his partner, Max. All except Max are first-timers to the Territory. Welcome all, we hope you appreciate that we have arranged our best build-up weather for you.

To my daughter, Alyssa, here from Brisbane—although Alyssa has been to the Territory so many times you could be excused for thinking she is a local. Also to my youngest daughters, Sophie and Eloise, who are also here and have been in the Chamber today skiving off school from Parap Primary—hopefully the honourable Member for Drysdale is not taking notes.

Who am I? I am not a born and bred Territorian, I moved here early in 2012 from Sydney with my family, and I fell comfortably in love with the place. I grew up in Western Sydney in a place called Telopea, just east of Parramatta. I came from a politically divided family. My father and my older brother, Scott, who is in the gallery, represented the conservative side, while my mother and I were the Labor voters. Do not ask about my brother Paul; his politics have always been more than a little arcane.

My earliest political memory is accompanying my mother to the local polling booth on election day for the Its Time election on 2 December 1972, the day Gough Whitlam became the first Labor Prime Minister since Ben Chifley 23 years earlier.

I have a recollection of my father saying to my mother that day that only a moron would vote Labor. Mum, to her credit, promptly trotted off to Telopea Public School and voted Labor, and from that day until this, she and I have done the same. Well done mum; two thumbs up.

While the memories are vague at best, I do remember the sense of excitement that December day and in the months that followed. Equally, I remember the sense of devastation that came with the dismissal three years later.

In honour of that time of great hope, I have an Its Time election poster, personally signed by the great man himself, framed and proudly on display in my office on the fifth floor.

In spite of those recollections and my father's comments, there has to be a little bit more that goes into making you who you are, what it is that helps shape your fundamental beliefs, because when it comes to it, I have had a relatively privileged life.

I have come to the conclusion that it is likely to have a fair bit to do with my childhood growing up in Telopea, which has a fair bit in common with Fong Lim. Both have similar sized populations. Geographically, both are roughly the same size. Fong Lim and Telopea also have a similar mix of working families, business people and professionals, and a similar mix of public and private schooling. Both have a fair amount of bush around, for suburban areas—great places for kids to explore and have fun in.

I loved growing up in Telopea, just as I now love living in Fong Lim. The people and the environment have a way of making you feel at home and very comfortable.

One thing Fong Lim has over Telopea, however, is the Bagot Community. I consider myself fortunate to have had the opportunity, over the last 12 months, to work with Helen Fejo-Frith, Marita Mummery, Valemína White, Natalie Harwood and Sabina Holmes, and all the other members of the management committee of the Bagot Community. And now I look forward to helping those people move forward under their own plan to secure the long-term future of the community.

Growing up in Telopea was formative of my political beliefs, and I think my brother's as well, although he may disagree. It would not be the first time.

Telopea was wedged between Dundas Valley on one side, literally across the railway tracks, and Carlingford on the other. Dundas Valley was a New South Wales Housing Commission estate, set up in the 1960s when the government policy was to create large-scale low-cost government housing developments, which some have unkindly referred to as ghettos.

Carlingford, on the other hand, was very different. The people who lived in Carlingford were comfortably middle-class business people and professional types. When my brother and I were growing up, our friends came from different areas. His were generally from Carlingford and mine were generally from the valley.

When I look back now, I feel this has had an understated, significant impact on me and the formation of my political views. It is not a good thing or a bad thing; there is no good side or bad side. It is just what you are exposed to when you are growing up and undergoing the formation of fundamental predispositions and the crystallisation of personal priorities. Politics, I have found, is like that, and politicians are like that. In spite of the commonly held belief that politicians are self-serving and in it for what they can get, it has been my experience that the exact opposite is in fact the case. By and large, I have found people choose to enter politics out of a desire to help their community, and that is the same, generally, for everyone.

Of course we all have different priorities and that is what makes us different—the ALP, the CLP, the Greens, the Independents. Sometimes those priorities coincide, and sometimes they do not. The times of furious disagreement make for far better copy, but this then fosters the misconception that parliament is all about being at war. It is not. Consensus is far more common than the public realises, and if our institutions are going to survive for the benefit of the community, it is important for us to start making them relevant and to start engendering public confidence in the parliament once again.

It is incumbent on this government to begin the process of restocking that lost community confidence and trust. I am confident we have the team to undertake that task—a team committed to governing well and governing for all, a team of people who will listen, consult and be transparent in the way we make decisions. I look forward to working with the new Chief Minister and my Territory Labor colleagues, but I also look forward to working with all other members of the Thirteenth Assembly: the opposition and the Independents.

In the media conference where I was announced as the Labor candidate for Fong Lim, I was asked if I was prepared for the bear pit of the Territory parliament. I responded that that was not my style, and it is not. To everyone here, you will find me accessible and open. I understand there will be times when we disagree; however, you have my commitment to continue working with you all for the best outcome for all Territorians.

As I have said, I have an inkling that my experience, growing up with the solid working-class families and friends, shaped my beliefs. I observe them struggling to meet the needs of their families. I saw them on low incomes from low-skilled jobs where often their only protection came from the union. These people, by and large, did not aspire to much more than a secure job, and if that job carried a trade certificate with it, so much the better; that was their ticket to stability. In general, they did not aspire to education; they did not see it as a right or something that was even in their realm. The families on the other side of the track and up the hill were entirely different. They saw education not so much as a right, but certainly as an expectation.

When you grow up with this fundamentally different perspective it colours your life, it changes your options and, ultimately, it limits society. In keeping with this, my older brother, Scott, left high school and, after a brief stoush with the Air Force over a recruitment issue, attended Sydney University and studied aeronautical engineering, in which he excelled, and then continued on to a long career with Qantas as a senior engineer.

I, on the other hand, was dragged out of school by my mother in Year 11 when it became apparent that it was a waste of everyone's time and effort, and I commenced an apprenticeship as an electrician.

I promptly joined the Electrical Trades Union in the first year of my apprenticeship, together with another first year apprentice I was working with at the time, John Robertson. There must have been something in the water that year, as John went on to be secretary of the ETU, then secretary of the New South Wales Labor Council, and he is currently the Member for Blacktown in the New South Wales Parliament. Also, in our TAFE class, was John Thain, another friend of mine, who has just been elected as the Mayor of Penrith in outer Western Sydney. Congratulations, John.

I have vivid recollections of mucking around a fair bit during class, but in the end we were all pretty good apprentices and became excellent tradies.

In spite of enjoying my time as an electrician, there was a downturn that hit the building industry in Sydney in the early 1980s that saw me regularly in and out of work, so I made a spur-of-the-moment decision to join the New South Wales Fire Brigades. That was one of the turning points in my life.



Working as a firefighter is great fun. Today, I still rank it as the best job in the world. You get to do exciting stuff, some of the time, but it is also an honour and a privilege to provide an important service to members of the community at those times when they are at their most vulnerable. Working as a firefighter has provided me with a unique understanding of the day-to-day stresses our emergency services workers face in carrying out their duties. It is a great honour that I have been appointed as the assistant minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. As the assistant minister I have already met with the Commissioner for Police and the Chief Executive Officer of Fire and Emergency Services, Reece Kershaw, and the Chief Fire Officer, Mark Spain. I look forward to continuing to work to support the men and women of the Northern Territory's Police, Fire and Emergency Services.

Also, I remind Chief Fire Officer Spain that I was serious when I said I was keen to have a go at the recruit firefighter physical aptitude test. I am interested to see how I go 33 years on. For what it is worth, my money is on me passing the test, mostly thanks to Kelly Giblin and her CrossFit gym at the other end of town, which I can recommend to everyone.

Working as a firefighter provides various opportunities. My opportunity was to go back to study. Having matured slightly, I decided that I would try my hand at writing. However, realising that English was probably my worst subject at school I thought I might have to do something about that. I had a plan. I was going to study a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in English and history; I also thought I would complete a Diploma of Education and perhaps do some casual teaching on my days off from the fire brigade. However, at the start of my first year, when I discovered that if I chose government and public administration for my third subject I did not have to go on Fridays, the choice was made and the dye was set; what more motivation did I need?

The upshot, however, was that I found I really enjoyed the political subjects and, instead of proceeding with the Diploma of Education, I stuck with government and did honours in that instead. I did not have much cause to think about that choice until recently, and I realise I may have made the wrong choice; however, that is life.

Studying politics opened other doors, and before long I was offered a position as an electorate officer for the then Minister for Science and Technology, Ross Free, and I left the fire brigade in 1993.

I spent some time as the chief of staff to the government Whip, Ted Grace. Then, in early 1995, Gary Punch, as I mentioned before, offered me a position as a policy adviser. I took the position and moved to Gary's office, and that brought me to the Territory for the first time. At the time I was responsible for the Defence Housing Authority, which was investing around \$750m around the country, a fair slab of which was in Darwin and Katherine. I was fortunate enough to travel up here five or six times in that period.

From about mid-way through 1995 one did not need to be a psychic to predict the result of the coming election. I decided I would head back to university and study law, so I applied and was accepted. The election was held on, I think, 2 March 1996, and I started my law degree two days later. Ultimately I ended up back in New South Wales Fire Brigades while I was studying my law degree. After completing my degree and commencing practice I stayed, and for the next 10 years worked firstly as a junior lawyer and a firefighter, then as a barrister and a firefighter, and then finally as a senior associate and a firefighter.

In 2010 I was medically retired from the fire brigade as a result of two bike accidents that had damaged my upper and lower back. Do not worry, the CrossFit Darwin thing has fixed the back so I am confident of the physical aptitude test.

In early 2012, following a sea change-type conversation with friends, I noticed an advertisement on Seek.com for a lawyer in Darwin. I sent my resume and the next thing you know, a recruiter was calling me asking me what I knew about Darwin. I said I had been here quite a few times and that I quite liked the place.

As it turned out, this recruitment firm acted for both Ward Keller and Clayton Utz, and the two firms each kicked in and brought my family and me to Darwin to have face-to-face interviews.

My first interview was at Ward Keller, where I met Kevin Stevens in the boardroom on level seven of NT House, across the road. Standing there, looking out over the magnificent view, just above the top of this building, of Darwin Harbour, Kevin said something prophetic. He said, 'You know, the Territory is the land of opportunity'.

And those words have proved true. Originally I did not take the position with Ward Keller; instead I went to Clayton Utz, which is also a great law firm. Mark Spain, Margie Michaels, Polat Siva and the rest of the team are great lawyers and really great people to work with.

Six months after moving up, I found myself elected to the council of the Law Society Northern Territory. This was not something that happened in New South Wales. Down there they run tickets, and post tens of thousands of 'how to votes', and it resembles a federal election campaign. Yet here I was, a council member.

Even more bizarrely, about 12 months later an email was circulated from the Law Society calling for expressions of interest for a new national human rights committee being set up by the Law Council of Australia. I had an interest in that but I had no experience. Flippantly, I responded to the email and said, 'Yes I am interested in that'.

The next thing you know I was on this national human rights committee with the best of Australia's human rights and social justice lawyers—Fiona McLeod, Dan O'Gorman, Steven Keim and Nick Cowdrey, among others.

The experience was eye-opening. These people were intelligent, compassionate, strident, coherent and fearless. They were also incredibly inclusive and supportive. They accepted me, taught me and encouraged me.

My work on the Law Society Northern Territory and the Law Council of Australia also brought me in contact with the Making Justice Work campaign. I recommend the Making Justice Work campaign to everyone. An abundance of great work has been undertaken by dedicated experts in the area to provide an alternative way forward, considering Aboriginal law, diversionary strategies, mandatory sentencing and other issues. I firmly believe we should be moving towards implementing the Making Justice Work recommendations.

It can be seen that I have gained a broad range of experience across my working life. I suppose if there is a saying that sums up my life, it would be a misquoting of Andy Dufresne's line in Stephen King's *The Shawshank Redemption*, my own version being, 'Get busy learning or get busy dying'.

I think this line applies to government as well. We need to learn and we need to do better.

If something does not work, the answer is not to keep doing it and hope for a different outcome or, worse, to simply do it harder. I have touched on the Making Justice Work campaign and the need for reform in our justice system, and not just our youth justice system but the entire justice system. This was the issue that piqued my interest in running for the seat of Fong Lim. The fact the Northern Territory has the highest incarceration rate in the world must be deeply embarrassing to more than just me.

I am not a criminal lawyer, so when an offer came to tour the old Berrimah gaol before it was closed, I jumped at the opportunity to broaden my knowledge, being a commercial litigator.

To say I was shocked is an understatement. My estimate was that 90% to 95% of the population there was Indigenous. Words failed me. How could we, as a society, as a community, stand by and not recognise there was some fundamental problem here?

Yet all I was hearing was the 'tough on crime' mantra. Tough on crime does not cure the problem. At best it is a band aid. It will not solve any problems; it will only exacerbate them.

I do not stand before you today, professing to have the answers. I do, however, stand before you today offering my commitment to give every effort to find a solution, and I wholeheartedly look forward to the challenge.

I mentioned my role as assistant Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services. I have also been appointed as the assistant Minister for Primary Industry and Resources, and I look forward to working with and assisting the honourable Member for Johnston in his role as the Cabinet minister. There is no doubt this will be a difficult job at times, particularly with issues such as the review of onshore gas, but I have every confidence in the member for Johnston and his staff, and I am sure we will work well together.

Perhaps my most important appointment, however, is as chair of the small business round tables. In this position I will need to lean on my personal saying, 'Get busy learning'.

This government understands and respects that small and medium enterprises form the backbone, if not the entire skeleton, of our employment in the Territory. I am not a small business person, but I am someone who is willing to be educated. I very much look forward to meeting with and listening to the small business people of the Territory, and not just Darwin. I look forward to hearing their views and their complaints, and working with them to provide long-term solutions and the necessary government support to ensure they are able to survive, prosper and maintain the Territory's workforce.

So, what do I believe in?

I believe in equality. I believe in a person's right to choose and in a person's right to choose who they love. I believe in a person's right to choose who they marry, if they are silly enough to want to get married; that is just a personal aside.

I believe that health problems should not be treated as criminal problems. I believe that a person's choice to take drugs should be a health issue and not a legal one.

I believe that our children's lives are being put at risk because of outdated views that criminal sanction can fix problems.

I believe in our judicial officers and I believe they have the intelligence, understanding and capacity to exercise appropriate discretion in sentencing convicted criminals.

I believe that mandatory sentencing is an unnecessary political tool that impedes our criminal justice system, moving away from a system of punishment and towards a system of rehabilitation.

I believe that with proper support and development we can develop appropriate diversionary methods that will have positive long-term effects on the Northern Territory justice system.

Madam Speaker, these beliefs are consistent with Territory Labor's election promises. This Thirteenth Assembly promises to produce some long-term positive outcomes for all Territorians, and I, for one, am very excited to be part of it.

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**DISTINGUISHED VISITOR**  
**Karl Hampton**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I advise of the presence in the gallery of a former minister of the Northern Territory parliament, the honourable Karl Hampton, former Member for Stuart. Welcome to Parliament House. It is good to see you here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

**VISITORS**  
**Ntaria School Students**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I also advise of the presence in the gallery of students from Ntaria School, visiting Darwin as part of the Michael Long Leadership and Learning Centre. On behalf of honourable members I welcome you to Parliament House too. I hope you enjoy your time here.

**Members:** Hear, hear!

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**Ms AH KIT (Karama):** Madam Speaker, I am humbled to rise out of my seat today as the member for Karama. I must first give thanks to the people of Malak and Karama for putting their faith and trust in me to serve them over the next four years.

My family, friends and campaign team worked extremely hard to support me in my dream to make a difference in my community, and I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for your efforts.

To my Aboriginal countrymen, the White Cockatoo Dancers, thank you for performing for me this morning. I have vivid memories of dancers from Barunga and Beswick performing in the streets and parks of

Katherine, where I grew up, for NAIDOC and other celebrations which were organised by Kalano and Mimi Arts and Crafts.

As the first Territory member of parliament with Torres Strait Islander heritage, I am intensely reminded of family from my mother's side, to which I also pay tribute. My journey could not commence properly without your involvement and the celebration of my diverse cultures. So thank you again.

I am but a visitor to this beautiful land that we call Darwin, and, as such, I pay my utmost respect to the traditional custodians of the land I live and work on today, the Larrakia people, and acknowledge their elders past and present. I thank you for your determination to protect your land, lore and culture, and your willingness to work together in sharing this beautiful country.

I acknowledge all of my fellow parliamentarians today. Thank you for walking your path to represent the interests and needs of our Territorians, who deserve the very best of what we can all offer. I look forward to working with each of you to achieve many feats both inside and outside of this Chamber.

I first entered this Chamber as a 14-year-old to witness my dad, John Ah Kit, being sworn in as the member for Arnhem in 1995. I remember having mixed emotions during the ceremony, as I sat beside my mum and brothers and stared at the empty chair that my sister, Patricia, should have been sitting in. But this was not to be, as my sister had lost her battle with Leukaemia days before my dad won his seat.

This experience taught me that you can choose to walk away when times get tough or you can choose to keep moving forward. I remember being so proud of my dad for choosing to move forward, and I admired my mum for maintaining her resilience to stand by my dad in his decision at this difficult and sad time in all our lives.

My name is Ngaree Ah Kit and I am a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman of Chinese descent. I am a Territorian; I am a woman; I am an Ah Kit. My identity is the basis of my being. It sets the scene for who I am, what I believe in and what I intend to achieve. My journey is not focused solely on me; it never was. Instead I stand before you today to acknowledge the trail that has been blazed before me, and to give my solemn vow that I will do everything in my power to move us all forward together.

I am a 35-year-old woman living in the Northern Territory of Australia in the year 2016, but I cannot help but feel that something is missing. I live in a beautiful community, I am buying my own home, I have wonderful family and friends, so what do I have to complain about? Well that is just it. I am not complaining for me; I am complaining on behalf of everyone else.

The Northern Territory continues to have the highest rates of suicide in the nation, but we have the smallest population base. Therefore, our loss and grief from these deaths resonates and reverberates throughout our communities, and often it seems that when we start to find our feet, we get knocked back down again. We need to do more.

As a community volunteer and a former worker in this space, I have come to learn that there are many amazing individuals, groups and service providers who work tirelessly to look after our most vulnerable. I take my hat off to you all, because it is not an easy job, and it can be extremely difficult to look after yourself when you are looking after others. So thank you for everything that you do.

Suicide prevention is not a space that one tends to fall into, instead those amazing people who I have been fortunate enough to meet along my journey, have faced their own tragedies and traumas. They have experienced their own depths of despair and hopelessness and found their way back to the light, often with the help of others. So in return, we pay it forward.

Thank you to my former colleagues of the Mental Health Directorate for working so tirelessly to improve the lives of Territorians in both the suicide prevention and mental health fields. I cannot express my gratitude for your commitment to the cause and for the support and assistance you afforded me as the Indigenous Suicide Prevention Project Officer.

To my fellow committee members at Suicide Prevention Australia and the Centre for Research Excellence in Suicide Prevention, thank you for promoting the need and value of lived experience in all aspects of suicide prevention. The time I spent on your committees helped me more than you know, and I look forward to following your achievements and successes way into the future.

I acknowledge the work of the Darwin Region Indigenous Suicide Prevention Network in flying the flag to make a difference at the grassroots level locally. My time on DRISPN helped me realise that as a community we can add value to the world around us. We can do something to help. We can save lives.

To Delsey Tamiano, Alexis Higlett, Uncle Anthony Ah Kit and Phil Dempster, I say thank you. We worked hard to achieve our goals together and still live by the DRISPN motto of 'Get involved. Give hope. Save a life.'

Life is full of ups and downs and we must all find a way to cope when it seems all hope is lost. If you are struggling right now and cannot find your light, please let me know and I will help you. I offer this wholeheartedly because I too have struggled to find my way back to the light at times, and it was offers like this that helped me to get through.

As a young person growing up in the Territory, life was sweet. My twenties were focused on fun, family and friendships. It was not until 2004 that everything changed for me. I was encouraged by an amazing mentor and person in general, Aunty Trish Angus, to apply for the youth round table. I remember feeling hesitant because I did not think I was good enough to be considered for this opportunity, and I almost did not apply for fear of rejection. But I did, and I am glad I did.

The youth round table provided me with the opportunity to think about more than just my life, and to consider ways that I could help to improve the lives of my family, friends and community. The program has run since 1997 and more than 300 alumni have participated to date, including the brilliant Member for Casuarina, Lauren Moss.

The Office of Youth Affairs does an amazing job to support young Territorians through the round table, and I encourage you all to view the alumni document and witness the diversity of our young people and the amazing things they have achieved so far.

I understand this year's youth round table members are nearing the end of their program, and I wish you all the very best for your final meeting in December. The youth round table changed my life for the better, and I am sure it can do the same for you.

Community engagement and individual empowerment are tools I have used as a volunteer. I have learnt from trial and error over the years that the best way to achieve a goal is to work together as a team, to encourage others to be part of the effort and to share the load, to be inclusive in your approach and to make sure you communicate clearly with all stakeholders. I have lived this approach for more than a decade now, and I intend to continue in this manner as I serve the good people of Malak and Karama.

My achievements and successes were attributed to the support and love I received from those close to me, and I must thank my amazing family and friends for all they have done, and continue to do, for me. Firstly to my mum and dad, thank you for sacrificing so much to give us, your children, the life we have been afforded. Thank you for your unwavering support of my many dreams across the years and for having my back through all the ups and downs. To my brothers, Darren and Jonathan, thank you for being my protectors and for being here for me today, and thank you for raising my beautiful nieces and nephews with the same values and respect we were raised with ourselves.

To my cousins Karlie and Joel, at the very beginning of my campaign it was just the three of us. Thank you for believing in me and supporting me until I found my feet. This was no easy task, I know, but you helped me to believe in my capability, and I cannot thank you enough for that. To my Rice girls, Katherine girls, NILYG brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, best friends, brother boys and sister girls, and to my mini campaign managers, Bella and Tyrah Lee, thank you for everything and for supporting me along the way. No matter what endeavour I have taken up over the years, you have all been there supporting the cause, but, more importantly, supporting me.

To my amazing Adam, it could not have been easy for you to listen to all my worries and doubts through my long-enduring 10-month campaign, but you did. You encouraged me to enjoy the ride and celebrate my achievements along the way. And you believed in me when I found it really hard to believe in myself, so thank you for never giving up on me.

To my big sister, Tricia, and my baby brother Bardi, thank you for teaching me to smile through all my challenges and to never give up, and also to do what I can to brighten the lives of others. I hope I make you proud.

To the people of Karama and Malak, thank you again for putting your faith in me to serve you as your local member. I look forward to working with each of you to improve our beautiful community and to make sure your children enjoy their childhood memories of our community, just like I did.

**Mr McCONNELL (Stuart):** Madam Speaker, firstly I acknowledge the traditional owners, the Larrakia people, on whose land I speak today. We also need to acknowledge here today that the outcomes we achieve for our Indigenous people are not adequate; they are not acceptable and we need to work on them. That is part of my reason for being here today.

At the top of this speech I would like to take a moment to thank many of the people who helped me during my successful campaign: Amy McArdle; Rex Granites; Robyn Granites; Grenville Turner; Lance McDonald; Conrad Ratara; Kelvin McCann; Tony Bradford, who is in the gallery; Bob Allen; Alison Anderson, former member; Karl Hampton, former member, who is also in the gallery; Clarry Robinya, a man I respect greatly and grew up with; his partner, Sharon Hayes; my wife, Kathy; and my sister, Moogie.

I would like to thank Moogie especially, as she kept her cool and helped me keep my cool during some of the more intense moments of the campaign. Moogie and I share the same father, but this was not clear to me until the day I saw Moogie McConnell advertise her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party in the newspaper. Prior to that I was aware of whispers and rumours, but after seeing that ad I decided to phone Moogie. That led me to a conversation and our first meeting, and ever since then I have known a sister that I always had. For that, and for her support, I am grateful.

When I began this rather quixotic journey to become the Member for Stuart, I relished the electorate's collection of natural habitats, from desert oaks to boabs, from sand dunes to big rivers. Of course, the electorate also contains an incredible diversity of remote communities, outstations, pastoral stations, mines and national parks. Beyond these physical characteristics, the electorate of Stuart is a place of stories, many layers of stories, on different planes of perception, creating an intriguing and sometimes intimidating place for us to understand our histories.

My own story begins in the electorate. I am very much of that place rather than this place. I am proud to be welcomed to this place, but I am very much of the electorate I come from. I was born in Alice Springs—A-town, as we like to call it, after the K-town idea—but was soon taken back to Willowra, Warlpiri country, where my parents were working. I also lived at Yuendumu for a short time and at Mongrel Downs—which has since been renamed but I prefer that name—where I helped my family build a drafting yard at Ferdies Bore.

One of my first government jobs was planting trees for the Conservation Commission at Kintore and Lajamanu, which are in the electorate, and also on some pastoral properties. Later I worked at Finke Gorge National Park and Ormiston Gorge National Park as a park ranger, which are now also in the electorate of Stuart. More recently I lived and worked at Haasts Bluff—Ikuntji community—for four years as the Outstations Coordinator and Council Clerk. I am not only proud of my long personal history in the electorate, but also that I have maintained networks and connections that I have been privileged to develop over the years.

The place within the electorate perhaps most formative to me was my childhood at Napperby Station. The 1970s were a very different time, especially in remote areas of the Northern Territory. My family worked for the station and local Aboriginal people worked for them.

Willie was the gardener at Napperby and was already a really old and culturally important man in the 1970s. Willie took care of the flowers and the vegetable garden. Often when I was supposed to be completing School of the Air lessons you could find me sitting on an upturned flour drum under the bowed shelter near the vegetable garden with Willie, drinking strong, sweet Bushells tea and eating damper made on the coals of the fire. From time to time we would have a treat of white bread with IXL plum jam off the weekly mail plane. Remember, there were no telephones and no TV. It was a completely different time.

Willie and I talked in a mix of Anmatyerre—the local language—and English, covering a range of worries and interests, everything from breaking in horses in the stock camp to fears of change and fears of the future, worrying about spending more time in town, about clouds and seasons, about why things in the physical world happened and how they are intrinsically linked to things in the spiritual world or other planes of thought.

Willie's perspective was very different from that of my family or my occasional tutors, so these talks gave me a glimpse into another way of thinking and illuminated a fundamentally different view of the world, a

view that still drives me to this day. I always remember those days, helping Willie with his work, boiling the billycan on the fire, making tea, talking and listening. This was the first time I learnt about the Coniston massacre, which took place nearby, and the Aboriginal belief systems that every accident has a consequence, some of which are known and some of which are not known.

On a hot day in August you could hear the local kids coming up the river from where they live two miles to the south. If no one was watching I could join them; if I was lucky they might have brought oranges picked from the orange trees at the school. The highlight of these afternoons was walking to Tutanabi, Split Rock, with kids of my own age. We would eat scorpions, baby budgies and native fish so small that we ate them whole, bones and all. We have no barramundi, poor buggers us bush mob down there in the desert.

Once the oranges were eaten we would hide the orange peel in the rocks and eat it as a delicacy when dried several trips later. I still remember that; dried orange peel is proper good tucker.

This tucker is not so good, but a treat from the store was a tin of Boston corned beef, best eaten after being heated up on the fire—you needed to boil the fat out of it because it was about 70% fat—smearred with Rosella tomato sauce and then shared on a piece of bark from the red river gums.

We collected bean tree seeds, or ininti, for the ladies. We spent hours searching for the bright orange or deep red and almost black ininti. Sometimes on our long walks we found dingo puppies, which later became our pets. Afternoons in Napperby Ceek were consumed with running in the hot river sand—we never wore shoes—from one shade tree to another. If the sand was too hot or it was too far to the next shade, we would stop and dig the hot sand off the top and bury our feet in the cooler damp sand.

Napperby Station always had big water trouble and there were a number of trial bores drilled in the creek. Long pieces of casing still protruded out of the creek, with caps on them. When the creeks were running we would compete, as children, by swimming out to these caps and hanging on. In one of these games I was sucked into a whirlpool behind a large tree, pulled under and tangled in debris. I was in the early stage of drowning when Gabriel swam out to rescue me. I can still see that moment in slow motion. It is like one of those iPhone moments; you can still see it.

From that event I realised that you have to be able to depend on other people, and I sincerely believe that. You have to be strong but you have to be able to work with other people. We can be independent in this world but we still need to accept help from others from time to time.

Always accident prone, I have worked through many of my nine lives, some of them with Michael, beginning when I first started walking, and I walked straight into an inch ant nest and was bitten from head to foot by inch ants, which have a poisonous sting—motorbike accidents, dehydration and various animal encounters, including a poisonous snake bite which prompted my first solo trip to Alice Springs.

I was 11 years old when I was bitten by a brown snake on the hand. We had gotten a killer that day, and Doug, my old man, was cooking rib bones on the Arga stove outside.

I was outside playing with the dog when I got a strange feeling on my hand. I looked down and realised there was a reasonably large Western Brown there. There was about six or seven steps between where I was and the house, but that day there was only one. I literally jumped up and landed inside.

My parents drove me halfway to town to meet the ambulance, as there was no night landing at the Napperby airstrip. I went the rest of the way to Alice Springs in the ambulance alone, and stayed in the hospital for a few days.

I knew nothing about the world of town. I understood a little bit of the fear Willie faced. I felt out of place. I was not familiar with the language and slang people spoke. People in town were very different to what I was used to. This experience became part of my early motivation to find out more about the wider world.

A lift from the hospital was organised back to the station with Roger Vale, another former Member for Stuart. Unfortunately I do not have an enduring recollection of that drive; I was still affected by the snake bite.

On another trip to Alice Springs I purchased some amazing bright shiny rope at the Alice Springs Show. It was the first time I had seen nylon rope. Usually we rode the local donkeys with natural hemp rope. Unfortunately while this new rope looked smart, it was slippery and made our standard knots perform differently.

Back at Napperby we soon caught our favourite donkey, and I was lucky enough to be the first to get a ride. Early in the ride the nylon rope slipped and got tighter, stirring the donkey up. I had the fingers of one hand under the rope, but as the donkey ran faster I became insecure in my seat. I decided to drop the riding brush I had and use my other hand to hold on as well.

This was a mistake because soon both my hands were caught under the rope, where they remained, even when I became dislodged from the back of the donkey. Suddenly I was being dragged along face up under the donkey with the animal opportunistically kicking me as it galloped forward—not my best moment. This time I was rescued by Clarry Robinya. Clarry and my brother pulled up alongside in our beloved orange Series 1 Land Rover, and Clarry controlled the donkey and cut the rope. He managed to control his laughter long enough until the donkey was a safe distance away.

Another time, the head stockman was working at Napperby with a contract mustering team of local Aboriginal people and me. You go to stations now and it is all backpackers, but back in my day it was all Aboriginal people. I sat on one of the quieter horses, Blackie, belonging to Rick Morley. Our job was getting the cattle out of the horse paddock. A few people went out on horseback, one or two with the bull catcher, and Tony Chisholm went out in the helicopter with a pilot. Although my horse was reliable, it was a bit slow. I followed cattle into heavy scrub, staked my water bag and ended up running low on water. I quickly got dehydrated and made bad decisions in that state.

Early on Blackie decided I did not know what I was doing, took over and started walking me home. In a semi-conscious state I leant over to open the gate and fell off the horse onto the ground. Luckily, Tony Chisholm was not far away, and soon the pilot had landed the helicopter and Tony picked me up and got me back on my feet. I then drank about 20 gallons of water, which made me incredibly sick. Do not do that if you are dehydrated.

My memories of the early days have recently been revived by others. I have been lucky enough to spend time with some very famous people, like Francis Kelly from *Bush Mechanics*. After Francis was elected to the Central Land Council executive I attended one of its meetings to talk about a national Indigenous art and culture centre. Not long after I entered the meeting there was a lot of laughter and talking in language. Francis was busy telling everyone about my lifelong passion for pushbikes and how at Yuendumu I had gotten sick of getting flat tyres so I would ride around on my bike on the rims with no tyres at all. Or, if I could find them, I would split garden hoses and use them as airless tubes. It was obviously quite a memorable and amusing sight.

Francis Kelly has now reverted to calling me Tin Truck, which is a kids' toy that everyone used to make in the day out of a milk tin and some fencing wire. I was always a little entrepreneurial so I used to make them and sell them for a profit, but that is another story.

What I most remember about this time is that it was a real period of change. Aboriginal people were fearful about the future. They did not have continuing connections to the stations and they were not sure what the future held. Up until that point the station and Aboriginal community worlds would not have been able to survive without a symbiotic relationship. But that world was changing, with welfare, more roads, mustering with helicopters and the BTEC program, the program to eradicate brucellosis and tuberculosis.

It was as dramatic as the current technological change brought about by mobile phones, Internet and Facebook. Perhaps it was most dramatic because the physical world was changing also. People like Willie were leaving the world they knew, but they were not excited about the changes because they did not know what their place in the new world would be. Perhaps this fear is still appropriate now; it is appropriate now. Station people were worried too. Land rights were at their height, driving a wedge between people who had lived and worked together for better or worse for a long time.

Government men arrived in short shorts and long socks. They stated that they understood our experience and aspirations, but they then imposed their own aspirations and requirements for a good life. Some people thought Aboriginal people should stay native. Others thought they should abandon their culture and assimilate. They did not listen when no one was looking and often still do not. That phrase about not listening when no one is looking is a very poignant point for us here today.

Remote Aboriginal people have long been optimistic and always hope the next group of visitors will listen to them. Hundreds of programs and thousands of people have come and gone through the remote communities of my childhood. It is no wonder that Aboriginal people in remote communities have become disaffected and disengaged. The low voter turnout in the recent election is indicative of how people feel about the strength of their voice at this time. This is something I am motivated to change.



If you do listen you will hear about equity of opportunity and having real choices. People talk about this all the time in remote communities, opportunities like everyone else wants—care for their families, living in secure housing, participating in sport and art and access to good education for their children. These aspirations are present now in communities and we need to catch up with them. They are ahead of us.

Poorly resourced schools and closed community police stations do not inspire faith in government. The perception of racial profiling at bottle shops erodes trust in our most important community relationship position: the police. Our focus needs to be turned towards prevention, education, innovation and support for positive change. We must not succumb to the fear that feeds the two-headed monster of intervention and incarceration. We must vigilantly ensure our laws and policies do not target people by race.

As with the intervention, Aboriginal people recognise that their whole community can be tarred with the same brush. Separate is never equal. Someone much more famous than me once pointed out that segregation is not just about geographic or physical separation, it is about who controls the economy, education and the community. We must be wary of geographic discrimination, segregation by circumstance and the politics of fear. Our government should be measured on lowering incarceration rates across the board, especially for Indigenous people, which is one of the reasons I stand here today. This will not be accomplished with dictatorial or overly punitive measures.

The reality is that across the Territory, our communities and all our language groups, we are more alike than we sometimes realise. We share the need for improved infrastructure, education and communications. Caring about improving conditions in remote communities and developing innovative methods of service delivery can be our point of difference. The future of the Territory will be defined by getting Indigenous land and labour participating in the economy with equity. To do this, remote residents need access to quality education and infrastructure. You cannot expect this economy to start from nowhere; you must create an environment for it.

The Northern Territory Land Rights Act and native title have provided good recognition of Indigenous land rights. More than 50% of the Northern Territory land mass is under Indigenous ownership. This is a point of difference, and it can be a positive point of difference. If businesses want work in the Northern Territory we can assure them they will be working with the traditional owners, the first owners of this land.

We, as a government, have a lot to learn about listening to and respecting the broader community. Sometimes people will ask for money. What are they really asking for? I think they are asking for understanding—do you see what I need? Will you acknowledge me? Do you recognise my beliefs and culture?

Beyond creating an environment for business, for all to participate in, we must also create an environment of hope. This is our biggest challenge. To do this we must ensure our legislation remains relevant and underpins the much-needed approach of equity for all, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. We as parliamentarians are charged with the responsibility of ensuring all our residents are protected, supported and enabled to have quality of life. The Northern Territory's legislation must support this.

We also need to examine how government policies as a whole affect remote communities. Too often we are trying to tackle problems in isolation and it backfires. We may have one policy driving people into regional centres—it is usually the Commonwealth doing that, but anyway—and another program using taxpayers' money to transport them back out.

We may have one policy cracking down on violence while another program creates the exact circumstances that breed anger, frustration and boredom. Remote community leaders are well-versed in these issues and need a place at the table to ensure we do not just continue on the same merry-go-round.

I am proud to be in this place with my Labor and parliamentary colleagues. I take pride in representing my electorate, and I will always be a strong voice for the electorate of Stuart.

I thank all those who have put their faith in me and helped me get here, not just in the campaign over the last year, but in my life and livelihood so far. I do not dare try to name all the individuals but I hope I have thanked them personally already. I have been lucky enough to have many mentors and many people who have given me their time and advice generously and selflessly. I hope I can honour your good deeds with some of my own.

I know the future of the electorate of Stuart is intrinsic to the future of the rest of the Northern Territory and the sooner we recognise this fact the better off we all will be.

**Mr KIRBY (Port Darwin):** Madam Speaker, it is incredibly humbling and an absolute honour to stand here today in the Chamber as the Member for Port Darwin in the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory. I would like to also acknowledge that we stand here on Larrakia land and pay my respects to the elders, past and present.

I would like to acknowledge to start with that it is fantastic to see so many friendly faces in the gallery. People I grew up with in country South Australia have been able to come. I have family and friends, some union friends who have just turned up, some Power and Water friends and some people who I have played football with. It is amazing to stand down here and see you all up there. Thank you very much.

I will share with you some reflections on how I arrived before you today as an elected representative of the Labor government led by Chief Minister Michael Gunner. My mother and father, Joan and Doug Kirby, originally hailed from England. My mum was a Londoner from a large family and dad was a Guildford lad from working-class parents. They had each faced many challenges in their upbringings. I recall my mother's stories about her and her brothers and sisters being split up and billeted out through the English countryside during the heart of World War II because of the bombings going on in London at the time. My mother's family, the Ellises, would live through the horrors of World War II and never at any stage be together in one place at one time.

In the early 1960s my mum, a seamstress, and dad, a farmer, migrated by boat to Australia with their infant daughter, Sharon, in search of a better life for their young family. After arriving and spending a short time in Adelaide they moved to country South Australia. Mum and dad quickly settled, finding work on farms and various cleaning jobs in the community. It was only a couple of years before my brother, Mark, was born, closely followed by me. Mark has been good enough to come up and is in the gallery today.

Sharon, Mark and I were brought up in a tightknit farming community, a community of like people, each wanting the best for their families. My parents instilled in each of us children the values of hard work, trust and integrity. These qualities were the foundation of everyday life and they remain with me today.

Over the years my mother and father worked many jobs to give my brother, sister and me the type of upbringing that they could only have dreamt of in England. From an early age my brother and I helped out our father on the farm, and eventually joined him to work on the farm and on other properties as well. We helped him cart thousands of bales of hay during the blistering South Australian summers, so we learnt very early the importance of reward and recognition for a hard day's work.

We both purchased our first pushbikes on the earnings of that backbreaking work. Those pushbikes were our connection with the community, our friends and social networks, and our ability to get out and explore, and sometimes get into a little bit of trouble, no doubt.

I knew at an early age that I could steel myself to work through any situation once I had worked in those trying conditions. It was not all work. Some of my earliest and fondest memories are of exploring the farm with Mark and some of our friends, getting ourselves into just the right amount of trouble that you would expect young, inquisitive boys to be able to find.

Sadly our family was rocked by a tragic accident which took Sharon from us when she was about 20 years old. It was a time that was pretty testing for us as a family, as it would be for anybody, but, thankfully, we got through that. It was not long until we faced our next challenge; it was only a couple of years later that mum was diagnosed with breast cancer and it was the 1970s, when not many people survived it. I am very thankful to say that mum is in her 80s now, in South Australia and still with us. She is not quite well enough to travel to be here with us, but she is a proud of me and is my number one supporter.

Dad passed away in the late 1990s. He also had a short battle with cancer, but he had very much instilled strong work ethics in the family by then.

My brother, Mark, grew to be a talented and dedicated young footballer, who was fortunate enough to receive several scholarships that opened doors for the country lad to play the game he loved in Adelaide. Each Sunday, mum and dad took Mark to take part in programs. It was around a 200 mile journey there and back, but something they did to give Mark the opportunity to make the most of his talents. For them it was an opportunity for their son that could not be passed up. I was also a keen footballer and cricketer, and loved being part of a team. Working together, comradery and sportsmanship was an environment I naturally thrived in.

One of my highlights was playing in A Grade football with Mark in our strong country league, something we had the pleasure of doing together for nearly 10 years. Eventually, in 1994, we won the premiership, which saw the end of a 13-year drought for our hometown, which was an amazing feeling. Never will that moment be replaced or forgotten.

In country South Australia the highest individual honour those leagues devote to their football fraternity—the individual honour is called the Mail Medal. Mark happened to win about three of those and was runner up a number of other times. Although our football abilities may have been poles apart, it served me fairly well that Mark and I looked quite similar on the footy field. So I preferred to tell people we won three Mail Medals between us. I am very sure he is happy to share that with me at the moment.

Out of school I completed my apprenticeship as a motor mechanic and worked for a small business. That was my first taste of private enterprise and the challenges faced by people who were looking to put a meal on the table for their family every night. It is a memory forged in me forever of how hard those people have to work in uncertain times.

At 20 I had an opportunity to change careers and work alongside my brother and some of our best friends. I moved from my job as a fully-qualified motor mechanic to start a linesman's apprenticeship with ETSA, the electrical supply industry in South Australia at the time. The electrical industry was vastly different from anything I had ever known. Learning the structures of a high-risk industry from people I knew and very much respected was a tremendous phase in my life, and it was an absolute honour to work with some of those people.

It was certainly a different world, working with, in and around live electricity. I definitely did not realise at the time the journey I was embarking on and where the electrical trade would take me eventually. It became obvious to me that the trust you develop in a good sports team was mirrored by the trust you have in your colleagues in a high-risk industry, and probably within Caucus as well. Some of the friends I have made through this industry will last with me forever.

It was 1997 when the community saw the effects of ETSA's privatisation agenda, resulting in large workforce reductions, with ETSA once being a prime employer in South Australia. It was heartbreaking to see so many young families without the security of long-time work having to make difficult decisions about leaving family and friends, and moving on. We were one of those families. The energy and vitality of those small country towns, decimated by families having to leave, was changed forever. They are not the same places now as they used to be then. This experience is part of the reason I will always fight against privatisation in that industry.

It was with a young family of my own that we began our journey to Darwin, seeking the opportunity for a fresh start, as many people do. Like many who travelled to the Northern Territory, we arrived not knowing how long we would stay here. That was in 1997, and I cannot see us going anywhere now. It did not take long to feel comfortable in the tropical surroundings of the northern suburbs, and it was the beginning of something new.

I began playing footy with the Banks Bulldogs at the beautiful Gardens Oval as soon as I arrived in 1997. Thankfully Mark and his family had made the journey to Darwin not long before us, so we were fortunate to renew our working and football allegiances.

One of my earliest memories is heading to the Gardens Oval for training, with the flame trees in full bloom across at the botanic gardens and, on the other side, the markets overflowing with people. It was a fantastic place to be. Speaking to teammates after training I realised that a good deal of them were from similar regions of South Australia. We knew many of the same people and quickly found we were not that far from home after all. We quickly made this our new home.

A long and proud tradition with the Banks footy club started that year in the 1997-98 season when Mark tricked the umpire into giving him a couple of 50 m penalties and kicked the winning goal in the grand final to complete the second premiership we would be fortunate to play in together, and started to cement our place in the Northern Territory. They were very fun times. Many of the people from that club and those times will always be family friends of ours.

My Territory journey also saw me begin working with Power and Water around the same time. I found the differences between ETSA and Power and Water stark, to say the least. ETSA was regimented in its safety regimes, training and standards. Power and Water probably had the poorest vehicles, equipment and

safety standards and procedures of any state-based energy provider at that time. Undoubtedly, though, we had the best people, and it is fantastic to see a bunch of them in the gallery today.

It was clear there would be some great ideas coming from many people across the organisation for improving standards, operational methods and things like that, but they needed some help tabling their concerns and working through those with management. I was elected by my peers as the Electrical Trades Union workplace delegate, entrusted to represent my colleagues and work respectfully with management to try to get some of those issues sorted over the next few years.

This was the beginning of a long-standing and close relationship with the ETU for me, a relationship I am proud to have—as I am with Unions NT. It is fantastic to see many of them in the gallery and fantastic for Kay to give so many of her staff time off to come here temporarily, or maybe permanently for some of them.

The commitment by the workers to take the lead when the worst of storms and cyclones hit the Northern Territory is second to none, and it is an honour to work in those environments, as Jeff mentioned before.

It was not unusual for members of the dedicated teams to be directed home after long and gruelling shifts because of their commitment and their want to keep working. I am proud to have taken the lead as a workplace advocate and work with others to develop and implement some fatigue procedures, which Power and Water did not have at that stage. Those procedures are still used today and they get Territorians home in a safe and timely manner, so I am proud of having been involved in that.

The ETU trained me in proactive negotiation skills, industry standards and workplace health and safety processes, and introduced me to like-minded people through the industry. But what they could not possibly train me in was how to deal with some of the horrific incidents we would face in Power and Water over the next 10 years. I take this opportunity to share a couple of them with you. They are moments that have profoundly decided who I am and defined the way I work and what continually drives me each day.

In December 2003 two young men's lives changed forever when the transformer they were working on at Mount Bunday quarry erupted into flames without warning. People who were at the scene recall the explosion and resultant flames as being like something out of a war zone.

The surrounding work crew worked feverishly to get Rowan Lee and Luke Nielson to critical first aid as soon as they possibly could. Rowan was stabilised and flown to Perth. Luke was treated in Darwin, and it was clear that these lads' lives would never be the same again.

I was invited to be part of the investigation team through my advocacy role, and we flew to Perth to interview Rowan while he continued his treatment. I met his lovely family and got an insight into the excruciating rehab he was going through every day. It was a testament to Rowan's strength and courage that he pushed himself to the brink to give himself the best opportunity of a full recovery. Thankfully both men recovered and continued their careers with Power and Water, and in recent years they have proudly started their own families.

Once Rowan was able, he used his experience to play an important role, spending time speaking with apprentices and others in the electrical industry, locally and interstate, about the real dangers of working in a high-risk industry. This is something I am certain would have been a painful reminder to continually put himself through, but he knew he wanted to do it because it would be a massive help to other people.

Getting to know the immediate families of these two young men and be involved in the investigation and subsequent explanations across the Territory was one of the most rewarding but challenging experiences of my life. It was a time that not only tested these two families but many other families that were involved. Unfortunately less than a year after that the Power and Water families were hurting again; they were extremely tested with the tragic heart attack and passing of Robert Peckham, or Bubbles, as he was affectionately known, in 2004.

Bubbles was originally from Katherine. He completed his apprenticeship and played footy for his beloved Wanderers in Darwin. At the time of the incident he was living in Alice Springs with his young family. He and his Power and Water crew were working at Wauchope, about an hour out of Tennant Creek, so there really was not a corner of the Territory that was not affected by this.

The crew administered first aid in the middle of the night once they realised Bubbles had collapsed. The next morning they, unfortunately, had to return to Alice Springs without one of their beloved crew members.

There is a plaque—if you ever get the chance to stop at the Wauchope Hotel, or the Devils Marbles Hotel, which I think it is called now—honouring this dedicated man. If you get the chance to call in please do.

I share this story with you not only to remember a great Territorian, but to highlight how, as the Northern Territory continues to grow, we continue to learn from tragedies such as this.

Bubbles had left Power and Water to work in Nhulunbuy for a short time before returning to Power and Water in Alice Springs. Soon after his passing it became apparent that Bubbles leaving Power and Water had meant he was no longer able to get back into the NTGPASS—the superannuation scheme, which some people would be familiar with. This became important because of the momentous differences in death benefit offered by NTGPASS and the AGEST scheme, which the government had recently introduced.

As an ETU delegate I mounted a campaign to fund the difference between the death benefits for the Peckham family, which was around \$250 000 at the time, for Karen to bring up three young children on her own.

Working closely with then Treasurer, Syd Stirling, to ensure an ex gratia arrangement was made, we then campaigned to ensure no family had to endure what the Peckhams had been through at that time.

Significantly, in 2007 the NT Government Death and Invalidity Scheme was introduced to cover that and other shortfalls in fund schemes. It actually covers all Northern Territory Government employees, including the very members who sit in this Chamber today. I am extremely proud of having a bit to do with making sure no other family has to go through what they did, at the worst possible time.

From there we move on to 2008. The Casuarina Zone Substation went through repeated high-level failures, plunging much of the northern suburbs into darkness for up to 24 hours at a time. The cost to Territorians and businesses was immeasurable, and the subsequent investigations proved what Power and Water workers had known for many years: that a critical level of our infrastructure, being our zone substation network that connects the generation of electricity to the suburban distribution network, had been critically underfunded and under-maintained for many decades.

Thankfully no one was injured during these testing times, but the result was a \$1bn works program that would be rolled out over subsequent years. That body of work continued over many years, although significant cuts in recent years have once again raised concerns within the industry that those lessons may not have been properly learnt.

Lastly, and more recently, one of nature's gentlemen, Ferdy Mauboy, and Kevin Grant were horrifically injured in another incident at the Casuarina Zone Substation in 2011. It was here that I had the privilege of witnessing a community, typical of the Northern Territory comradery, coming together and working with the ETU to fundraise to help the families through those horrible times. As we know, thankfully, that had a very happy ending.

It is because of collective efforts like this that I will always be a proud ETU member, and not because of the things you hear this great union doing, but, more importantly, because of the people involved and the things you often will not hear.

It was because of these key experiences that I was a passionate advocate in my workplace and in my union. I am proud to have worked with many levels of management and government departments to strive to meet varying needs.

Through my time with the ETU I have had the honour of pushing a few different things in the Territory. One of them was to push to improve the Territory-trained apprentice numbers, a lot of that being done through Power and Water and Territory Generation, as it stands now. Those battles will continue to ensure Territory apprentices have the best chances possible.

We also had the honour of improving safety regimes throughout the Territory and assisting a fantastic group of women to set up the inaugural ETU women's conference in Darwin. It is great to see a few of them in the gallery this evening.

I am extremely proud that one of these women, who recently completed her dual trade training as an electrician, was named the 2016 Northern Territory Apprentice of the Year—Ella Cavallaro, who is also in the gallery, and will now compete in the national awards and represent the Territory. Ella has worked her

way from the schoolyards of Tennant Creek and the occasional dust up, so Gerry tells me—which she fared fairly well in—to her first apprenticeship as a linesman in Alice Springs, and onward and upward to Darwin for her second apprenticeship as an electrician, which she recently completed. I struggle to think of a more fitting young woman to represent the Territory in this or any other capacity.

There is no doubt I would not be standing here today without the help of some great people dedicated to ensuring the Territory has what it needs to continue to be great. I very much thank Michael Gunner, Alf Leonardi, Kent Rowe and the entire Labor Party and Territory Labor campaign team for their guidance and assistance leading up to the election and well beyond.

Thanks and congratulations to the Labor Caucus, and congratulations to all Members of the Legislative Assembly. I am sure we are in for a fun time.

I also take this time to recognise some fantastic Territorians who were an amazing help throughout the campaign. I will name a few, and I realise I will forget a few, but the people I do not mention know me well enough to know my thanks comes from the heart. I very much thank everybody for their assistance.

Bianca Fidock, Ella Maguire, Caleigh Watson, (inaudible), Travis Dobinson, Siobhan Doogan, Patty Ring, George Zapcev, Trisha Howes, Christine Short and Hannah MacLeod—for their tireless efforts supporting the Port Darwin campaign, assisting with various tasks, often at short notice and in trying conditions. To each of you I will be eternally grateful. Thank you very much.

It is impossible to put into words my gratitude to the ETU for all its assistance over the years, but I want to mark my respect for it again.

To the previous Queensland and Northern Territory State Secretary, Dick Williams, and President Gordon Abbott, as well as the current State Secretary, Peter Simpson; Assistant Secretary, Peter Ong; and Stuart Traill, I offer my wholehearted thanks.

To my Northern Territory organiser predecessors—it is a thankless task, probably one that prepares you for a life like this because you are constantly out of your depth and behind with phone calls and emails—Alan ‘Hopper’ Paton, who has just joined us—thanks, Hopper, you are a champion—Trevor Gould, Michael Hare and current organiser for the Northern Territory, David Hayes, or the Strawbinator, as he prefers to be known, to have walked the length of this journey with each of you has been a privilege.

To Neil and Sue Philip, I am genuinely grateful for your wise guidance and advocacy, reminding me continually that the leafy streets and city lights continue to cohabitate. They were a godsend for me and a fantastic help through the campaign. To the people of Cullen Bay, Larrakeyah, Darwin city and the waterfront, I thank you very much for putting your trust in me as your representative and elected member.

Lastly, I to pay respects to the previous candidates and members for the seat of Port Darwin. It is sure to be a hugely challenging but rewarding seat, such a diverse, multicultural snapshot of the Northern Territory we all love.

I have had the opportunity to meet many long-standing Territorians already—individuals and families who have contributed greatly to our community and invested in a future which far surpasses their time. The electorate of Port Darwin is diverse in its people, culture, infrastructure and environment. I found myself regularly reminded by genuine encouragement from the electorate that Territorians had lost confidence in the direction in which the NT was heading.

It is my constituents’ concerns that I have taken forward to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, and it is these concerns that I, with my Caucus colleagues, will continue to work on and address over the coming years. I could tell that we were in for a wild ride—and this is a true story—when on the first day of doorknocking we came upon a family skinning a pig in the front yard of their unit in Darwin city. They were lovely people and assisted us on our way, but it is just one of many stories I look forward to sharing with you over the next few years in the Chamber.

I have already commenced communications with the City of Darwin, which I will be working closely with—property councils, body corporates, schools and residents right through the campaign. I am looking forward to being heavily involved in returning Darwin to being the legitimate capital of the north of Australia.

Protecting Darwin’s beautiful green belt was a key feature of my conversations with residents and visitors to our community, and an ongoing commitment that I look forward to reinforcing.

Respectfully listening to the thoughts of all stakeholders will be a key component of how we revitalise Darwin city, and it has been refreshing to have heard so many passionate views from Territorians. Our commitment to cultivate the old Darwin Hospital site into a space that recognises the traditional owners and the culture and heritage of the site, including a major museum that Territorians can be proud of, has been comprehensively supported.

I close by reiterating my gratitude to and respect for the people of Port Darwin for showing faith in me, to the trade union movement, the Australian Labor Party and its members and the committed and passionate volunteers who helped right throughout the campaign.

I would, most importantly, like to thank my fiancée, Bek, who is also in the gallery today. I think the most rewarding part of having Bek formally managing my campaign was that every part of the campaign and everything we worked through was an extension of us; it was an extension of our relationship. We got to present to people and discuss things with people in exactly the manner we liked. We had nobody to blame if it went wrong, and thankfully it went right.

I am blessed to have Bek in my life and, as a team, I know we can conquer anything that comes before us in the future. My family—Bek, Alana, Jake and Jake's partner Bree, who are in the gallery with Bek—are all beautiful people in their own right and they have been there with me all the way.

Alana, Jake and Bree all went to O'Loughlin College, as did many of their friends. It is a fantastic learning environment where family and community values are second to none. Bree finished Year 12 with the distinction of being top of the Year 12 class, whereas Jake might have just scraped through because it was more of a social exercise for him, to go and catch up with his mates.

In all seriousness, I could not be prouder of these young Territorians. They are each, in their own way, invested in the Territory. Alana is heavily involved in early learning and has a beautiful, placid nature, which makes her one of the favourites with the kids. I see that continually when we go out in the community and the young kids Alana helps look after see her. The joy they have when they see her is a compliment to her.

Jake is currently completing an apprenticeship as a fitter. He is a committed basketballer and has already travelled through China and Asia playing the game he loves, as well as winning a number of league premierships with his beloved Uni Rebels. He gives back to the game and coaches a great group of kids, and he helps develop their love of the game.

Bree has helped out with many kids' entertainment functions, and is one of the Territory's brightest up-and-coming web experts. As you can tell, I am immensely proud of all of them. If the world had more people like these great young adults in it, it would be a much better place.

We each experience many challenges, varying with the days that pass. I reflect over the last 12 months, and everything that has been thrown at us; there have been some curve balls thrown at us.

In February we lost a beautiful family friend from South Australia, Marty Hayles. Marty was a cynical political analyst and enjoyed many a red wine and many a strong debate about the rights and wrongs of politics. He would have been one of my fiercest allies and strongest critics, no doubt, coming into a role like this. He will be sorely missed.

There was a stage around the Anzac weekend when I was knocked off my beloved Harley Davidson and it had to be written off. That caused a bit of pain for the next few weeks. Bek and I did manage, in between doorknocking and a fundraiser one night, to race back to the Esplanade. I proposed and, thankfully, got the right answer. So we got engaged during the campaign.

There is one other message that I have not had the chance to share, which I will take pleasure in doing today. Bek and I are expecting a child in April next year. So with all the other curve balls the campaign threw up, and many of the quiet things you cannot share with people, that was certainly one of them. For people who I was grumpy with because we were not getting enough rest or organised in the right way, my humble apologies.

**Mr WOOD:** A point of order, Madam Speaker! I do not want to interrupt the wonderful news, but I request an extension of time for the member, pursuant to Standing Order 43.

Motion agreed to.

**Mr KIRBY:** The year 2016 will go down as one of the most remarkable years in my life thus far. I very much look forward to 2017 and representing my electorate as the Member for Port Darwin.

Debate adjourned.

### **PAPER TABLED Remuneration Tribunal Report And Determination No 2 of 2016**

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, by 31 July each year the independent Remuneration Tribunal is required to conduct an inquiry and issue a report and determination on the entitlements of Assembly members.

The Remuneration Tribunal has now conducted its annual inquiry prepared its report and determination, which, subject to a 10-sitting day disallowance period, will take affect from 1 January 2017.

I will quickly outline the key aspects of the Remuneration Tribunal Report and Determination No 2 of 2016. These are:

- a 2% increase to the basic allowance of an Assembly member, providing a salary of \$156 678 effective from January 2017
- clarification that members are entitled to childcare expenses for certain hours on weekends and public holidays
- a new travelling allowance of \$45 to cover meals and incidental expenses for members when that travel does not involve an overnight stay, but the approval of the Speaker is required to claim this allowance
- an adjustment of other travel allowance rates to a rate considered reasonable by the Australian Taxation Office.

Madam Speaker, the tribunal has recommended no increase to the electorate allowances at this time, following a review and determination of electorate allowances earlier this year resulting from the 2015 redistribution of electoral boundaries.

The Remuneration Tribunal has also incorporated its determination that the retirement entitlement for members was set by the former Chief Minister under section 5 of the Act in May 2016.

In its report the tribunal has flagged a positive alternative approach to member travel entitlements, which is known as the common allowance entitlement. This is a less proscriptive approach than the current travel entitlement regime which, if adopted, will provide a lump sum travel entitlement for members to use to serve their electorates and fulfil their parliamentary responsibilities as they see fit.

I understand that this approach was adopted in South Australia last year. An amendment would be required to the *Assembly Members and Statutory Officers (Remuneration and Other Entitlements) Act* to permit the tribunal to set an entitlement of this nature. The government is considering the tribunal's proposal and will consult with members of this House regarding the matter.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the tribunal members, Mr Michael Martin and Mr John Flynn, for their work on this inquiry and for the determination.

I table the Remuneration Tribunal Report and Determination No 2 of 2016 on the entitlements of Assembly members.

### **APPOINTMENT OF ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable members, pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 219 I hereby nominate the following members to act as Deputy Speakers—Mr Gerry Wood, Mrs Robyn Lambley, Mrs Kate Worden, Mr Jeff Collins, and Ms Selena Uibo—when requested to do so by the Speaker, given under my hand this day, 18 October 2016.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**Ms FYLES (Leader of Government Business):** Madam Speaker, I move that Assembly do now adjourn.



**Ms WAKEFIELD (Braitling):** Madam Speaker, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the Northern Territory, which includes, as we saw so beautifully this morning, so many nations, and their leaders, both past and present. I stand here today on Larrakia land, very honoured to have been elected to this Legislative Assembly and to represent the hard-working people of the Braitling electorate in Alice Springs. I promise to work hard for them and their aspirations, and for the future of Territorians as a whole.

I also congratulate my fellow members of this Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory on their successful election to represent their electorates. I acknowledge the efforts of all who participated in the campaign but did not make it. Your contribution to our great democratic process is valued, and I acknowledge Phil Walcott, who is in the gallery today.

I am proud to stand here not only as the new Member for Braitling but also as the first Labor Party Member of the Legislative Assembly representing a wholly Alice Springs electorate and the first Labor government minister from Alice Springs in a Northern Territory Government.

I am truly humbled, as a new member of this Legislative Assembly, to be appointed as the minister responsible for the Northern Territory government's policies and programs effecting families, seniors, women, men, multicultural communities, children and youth. As I stand here today in the presence of Madam Speaker and my Labor colleagues about to start an amazing new chapter, I wish to acknowledge that my journey here has not been a lonely one. In particular, I thank my wonderful partner, Gary, and my son, Jimmy, and my very talented and hardworking campaign manager who, unfortunately, could not be here today, Lawrence Ben. They inspired me and accompanied me through months of doorknocking—Jimmy is a fantastic letterboxer—phone canvassing and barbecues. They believed, before anyone else, that the impossible was possible.

I thank my parents, Heather and John Wakefield, who are here today. Indeed, my parents called me Dale—a gender-neutral name—because despite the white Australian privilege I clearly possess, they both acknowledged that in 1969, the year of my birth, being a girl could be a barrier to my success. They thought having a name not immediately identifiable as female could give me an advantage. My father, John Wakefield, a nurse educator, also worked with a woman called Dale, who he admired for being a fearsome advocate for people with disabilities. Today I am proud to stand here to deliver on the intent of my name as a member of the first majority-female Cabinet in an Australian parliament, ready to be a fearsome advocate for all the people of the Northern Territory, but especially for the people of Braitling.

I am proud to be a member of the Australian Labor Party. My parents raised both my brother and I to have a social conscience and to believe in equality, compassion, respect and fairness. These values have shaped my adult life and will now inform all I do in this role. I thank the NT branch of the Labor Party, its Alice Springs sub-branch members and the NT union movement and EMILY's List for supporting me in the opportunity to deliver on these values in such a privileged way.

In particular I thank my Caucus colleagues, the Member for Lingiari, Warren Snowdon; Alf Leonardi; Vince Jeisman; Jenny Pender; Dennis Goodwin; Anna Goode; Ryan Neve; Ella McGuire; Maya Calafi; Richard Bentley; Judy Buckley; Trish Van Dijk; Jim Ribbachi; John Adams; Bob Durnan; and the SDA and its local membership in Alice Springs.

A nod to Jaimie Walmsley and the other members of the ETU in Alice Springs; the ASU, of which I have been a proud member for eight years; and my fellow Central Australian members, the Members for Stuart and Namatjira, and your teams, for all the support.

Thank you, Lynne Walker, for all your support and encouragement; it was invaluable. I also say a special thanks to Christine Phillis for her mentorship. It is the women of the Labor Party past who we walk behind very proudly. All of you have helped so generously and effectively.

I acknowledge my ever-supportive Aunt Julie, who is here; my brother, Matthew, my sister-in-law, Suzanne; and Ashley and Sarah, who are no doubt watching on the Internet. I am blessed to have so much love and support.

I must acknowledge my dear friends Kate Csillag, Carly Ingles, Kate Francis, Cath Neville, Jane Lloyd, Sam Bowden, Vicki Ward and Katrina and Sally Bolton, who provided me with extraordinary support and comradeship.

I thank Raelene Ferguson, Sonia Lempson, Barb Shaw, Shirleen Campbell, the Gillen sisters and Rhubee Neale for all their wisdom and support.

In my childhood in suburban Melbourne, the Northern Territory loomed large as a place of adventure in all our family stories. My maternal grandfather, Thomas ‘Rollie’ Johnson, was based in Darwin as a member of the Royal Australian Artillery in World War II.

Granddad was a patient in the then brand-new hospital when it was bombed by the Japanese on 19 February 1942. Luckily he escaped with his life, but in the pride of place in his house throughout my childhood was a turtle shell, complete with spear hole. Granddad had been given the shell by Darwin Aboriginal acquaintances, who I now assume to be Larrakia people, as a thank you for one of his typical acts of kindness. Granddad talked of hunting and swimming with local families with much affection. It was the part of the war he chose to carry with him.

In my earliest Christmas memories of 1974, my maternal grandmother Edna was standing at the stove crying. I had never seen her cry before; it was an uncommon occurrence. Edna’s brother, my great-uncle Jack Tadd, and his wife, Margaret, and their three children were living in The Gardens when Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin. After a long wait that many Australian families endured, we discovered they survived but had lost everything.

Soon they were camped in Melbourne, collectively still finding time to fill my very impressionable head with scary stories of crocodiles and other typically NT tall tales. I never have imagined in my wildest dreams as a small child that I would be standing here today as a member of the parliament of that mythical place, the exotic Northern Territory, yet my story is typical of so many Territorians, coming to the Territory for what appeared to be a short-term job opportunity, a stop on the way somewhere else, but somehow finding the home and family you never knew you needed until you found it, in a place of enormous social and political challenges, and opportunities.

Life is full of momentous decisions and paths not taken, but it is difficult to find the words to emphasise enough my abiding gratitude for the events that led me to driving my 1981 Valiant into Alice Springs with all my worldly possessions in the car. Some months earlier I had answered a job ad with no real expectation of getting the job, but hoping even the act of applying would help me shift the rut I had found myself in.

Within weeks of applying I found myself being collected from Alice Springs Airport and driven for many hours through the outback to a NPY Women’s Council AGM deep in the western desert. In one of those beautiful Territory quirks it was your sister, Madam Speaker, who picked me up from the airport that day. It was lovely to have her there. But when we arrived at the camp, in what I have now discovered is perhaps an inherited directness, she handed me a swag, introduced me to the two other women who were applying for the job, and told me to go and get some firewood. Indeed I had found myself in Survivor, the Interview.

Over the next few days I was in awe of the desert experience and camping with over 200 desert women—Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara women camping together, speaking language, practising culture and governing an extraordinary women’s organisation, with microphones hooked up to car batteries, kangaroo tails searing, dust flies, arguments, carting water, repairing tyres, belly laughs and the most enormous sky keeping everything in perspective.

I, however, was stuck in my white girl ways and was waiting for the job interview. Where was the interview panel? What would the questions be? After two days I was convinced that these amazing women all thought I was a ridiculous inner city latte sipper, too green to even interview, and that I should just try to enjoy every moment of this extraordinary experience before being despatched to my grey, inner-city world.

As we were packing up on the final day and the troopies were piling up with people and swags, and everyone was pouring out of the camp area, I felt extraordinarily bereft that I had apparently been so unsuccessful in my quest for the job. Then, out of the dust, an Aboriginal woman headed, imposingly, straight towards me. She took my hand and introduced herself as Yanyi Bandicha, the NPY Chairwoman. Yanyi looked straight at me and said, ‘Dale, we have been watching you and we like the way you walk. Will you come and walk with us?’ With that I made the best decision of my life and said yes.

I want to acknowledge all the NPY women who have become such important teachers to me. Those women have grown me up in Central Australia. Their patience and wisdom to invest in yet another whitefella who could have just been passing through is so appreciated, and it sits within me every day.

I particularly acknowledge Janet Inyika, as well as some people who have passed who I think of often, remembering their wisdom—Mrs Ward; Mrs Kanari; those old men, the two Mr Bakers; Mr Peters; Mr Tjilari; and the recently deceased Mrs Wanatjura, who had an extraordinary intellect and was a leader in cross-cultural practice. I recommit today to walking with, in the way Mrs Wanatjura taught, taking what I

have learnt from the desert about respect and the importance of listening carefully to my role across the Territory.

Over the past 12 years I have been proud to live, work and create my home on Arrernte land. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Arrernte people, past and present, particularly those Arrernte leaders of the future. My son was born on Arrernte land in *ayepareny* caterpillar country on a hot and stormy February day five years ago. The first time I wrote 'Place of birth: Alice Springs' on a form for him I remember getting teary at the thought of him, throughout his life, writing this and immediately getting that tug at the thought of those stunning mountain ranges and enormous skies. It is quite a legacy.

My son has won in the lottery of life—a loving, happy, supportive family with emotional, social and financial resources, and good health. I stand here today knowing that many other babies born in that hospital in the same stormy month will not be so lucky. I know that many of Jimmy's peers have already experienced setbacks in those first five years that will impact on the course of the rest of their lives, and that on the first day of school next year there will not be an even playing field.

I believe one of the main jobs of an elected member is to stand up and ensure that in our Northern Territory the opportunity to become a valued and contributing member of our community is not an accident of birth, but rather a birthright.

Alice Springs, like the rest of the Northern Territory, has a proud history of resilience, hard work, ingenuity through necessity, good humour, mutual support, irreverence and tenacity. These are characteristics on which we must build. Alice is a remote town, and to have a strong and vibrant future we must overcome some significant challenges, such as the normalisation of violence, adverse climate change, difficult economic tests both locally and internationally, and isolation from many of the opportunities and services that are taken for granted by others.

We, the people of Braitling, are up to the challenge. The face of our town is changing, with a large and growing proportion of Alice Springs-raised residents now born overseas, and along with the people of many Central Australian Aboriginal language groups, these migrant groups help make the electorate of Braitling a truly diverse place. This diversity is a great asset for the future of Alice Springs as the town becomes the true inland capital of remote and arid Australia. Our diversity will enable us to adapt and develop.

To meet our full potential we must ensure the full participation of all in the life of the Territory. This will drive and shape our economy into being more diverse, entrepreneurial, resistant and adaptable. As leaders we must ensure all those different voices have an opportunity to participate in the creation of a shared and inclusive future, with the wellbeing and equitable development of children at the centre of our government's efforts.

This is the privilege and responsibility of government, and I look forward to playing my part in this great endeavour. Thank you for hearing me out.

**Ms LAWLER (Drysdale):** Madam Speaker, I am very humbled to be delivering my maiden speech in the 13th parliament of the Northern Territory. I, too, acknowledge the Larrakia people, on whose land this parliament is on. I also acknowledge the wonderful speakers I have heard today. It has been a pleasure to find out those things that lots of people probably did not know about you all—some lovely stories. It has been a pleasure to be here today.

I start by thanking the people of Drysdale electorate who made the decision to vote Labor, to vote for me. Looking across, there is no CLP opposition in the House, but I will continue.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Honourable member, you do not reference people being in or out of the House.

**Ms LAWLER:** Sorry. To vote for me—a person relatively unknown when I was preselected. I was not a high-profile candidate; I was not an AFL star, but I am a hard worker and I have a strong, determined streak. If I set my mind to something I will always give it more than 100%. I set about doorknocking with the goal of getting around to every home in the electorate. I did not count on the number of homes with locked gates and guard dogs, so at times my attempts to knock on the actual door were thwarted. There were notes left saying 'sorry I missed you'. But over the nine months of campaigning I got to meet and have good conversations with the majority of the Drysdale electorate.

I am committed to continuing to doorknock to continue to meet people and work hard in the Drysdale electorate. Drysdale is the heart of Palmerston; it is made up of the original suburbs of Palmerston: Gray,

Driver and Moulden; as well as the CBD and Yarrowonga. I always say that Drysdale is a microcosm of the Territory.

It has the shopping centres, the city centre with the increasing office spaces; the industrial area in Yarrowonga; the suburbs, which include the golf course; and it has five very diverse schools. As the original Palmerston, some of the public housing is ageing and is in strong need of revitalising. There are community spaces which also need to be revitalised, and this work needs to be done in partnership with council. My goal is to work in partnership with the council and community groups to improve the streetscapes and the parks in Drysdale, and to lobby hard for housing in Drysdale.

Labor made an election commitment to build a new police station in Palmerston. Very early in the campaign, team Palmerston—team Palmerston is Tony Sievers, Phil Tilbrook, Damian Hale and me, who worked very strongly as a team in Palmerston—was hearing from the community that there is a need for a quicker response from police, and a police presence more central to the growing suburbs of Palmerston that are spreading from the top. In Palmerston you talk about up top, which is the shopping centre and the CBD area. There is a need for a police station in the suburbs, away from up top.

Labor announced the commitment to build the police station and, lo and behold, about six weeks later the CLP also announced its commitment to build a police station in Palmerston. We will build that police station—Tony and I will make sure of that—and I know that the people of Palmerston will be very grateful for that.

I look forward to continuing to get to know all the constituents of Drysdale in the coming months and years, and I will be accessible to the community through mobile offices, community breakfasts and attending functions.

I will also take some time tonight to tell a bit about my story, as it will provide the understanding, like others have today, of who I am and set the foundations for the decisions and the values I hold.

Tonight I acknowledge my family and my friends, as it is these people who have always supported and encouraged me. My husband of 33 years cannot be here, but there will be more about that later in the speech. My adult children, Kirby and Lindsay—no parent could want for better children. Just like Paul Kirby said—I have a Kirby as well—I am very proud of the exceptional adults they have grown up to be. I thank them both for their unwavering support of my campaign.

We are all sportspeople in my family, so we had great fun campaigning. A campaign is like the ultimate sporting challenge; it is a bit like *The Great Race*. It brought out the competitive streak in us all. To get here and be the member for Drysdale and the Minister for Education in the 13<sup>th</sup> parliament has been a long road. I am older than most of my Caucus colleagues, although I think Gerry is a bit older than me. I have come to this position later in my life.

I am a twin, born at the old Darwin Hospital at Myilly Point, and I acknowledge the wonderful lifetime I have shared with my twin sister, Louise. We have never been too far away from each other and have always been close and shared our views and thoughts on the world. Our conversations have shaped our thinking, and Louise was also a tireless helper in my campaign. Thank you, Louise.

I am one of six children to an Italian immigrant father and an Australian mother. My father came to Australia in 1952 and moved to Darwin in the late 1950s to work at Rum Jungle uranium mine. By then he owned a truck and had started on what was to be a career of being a haulage contractor, a road contractor and a miner. He was always a small business owner, and from those beginnings I have a strong understanding of the highs and lows that small businesses experience.

As a family, we were, more often than not, struggling to make ends meet. My three brothers followed my father into the trucking business after finishing trades. My brothers own G & S Transport, a successful trucking business based in Alice Springs, but also with a workshop in Karratha, Western Australia. My younger sister is an accountant and also works for G & S Transport; a true family business. As small business owners, they too have experienced the highs and lows, but they have earned a great reputation as hard workers who can be relied upon and trusted. I talk of these things to show an understanding of the hard work and commitment to the Territory.

As children we spent most of our early years living in an old silver bullet caravan in road camps across the Territory. In the early years our father was working in Central Australia on the Plenty Highway, sealing the road to Harts Range and grading the road to Yuendumu. I have a deep love of the landscape of Central

Australia and a strong connection to Alice Springs, and I put it down to those early years walking in the spinifex and bindi-eye in Central Australia.

Having an Italian father meant getting teased in my early years of schooling. When your name was Bilato and it rhymed with tomato—there was lots of that. But we were very proud of our Italian heritage, and our father was a tall, strong man who always encouraged us to stick up for ourselves. Having six of us at school meant there was always someone to back you up and sort things out. There was never a dull moment on the bus ride from Darwin High School to Berrimah, and friendships were forged that have lasted a lifetime.

My mother came to the Territory to be a governess in Central Australia, but was then offered a job as a teacher in Darwin, at Parap Infant School. So she moved to Darwin, living in the single quarters in Mitchell Street before marrying.

As we got older, our family home was in Berrimah, and that is where I grew up. My mother still owns a home in Berrimah, and we have had connections to Berrimah for over 50 years. It is interesting that Berrimah was originally in the electorate of Drysdale.

My mother is now 87 and has dementia, and she is in Pearl nursing home, but she has been an exceptional influence on who I am today. She would have been, and probably still is, one of the most intelligent, socially-just supporters of the underdog, and a Labor voter to the core. Our conversations were always about world politics, Australian politics or travel. She was one of the first Aussies to backpack in the 1950s in Europe, way before it was a trendy thing to do. But seeing your amazing mother fade away is such a difficult thing.

I started school at Stuart Park Primary, then moved to Berrimah Primary when it opened in 1969, and then to Darwin High after Cyclone Tracy. When I look back, I realise I was fortunate to have exceptional teachers throughout my school life.

I will be forever grateful for the opportunities I had at school; I had a wonderful public education. As the Minister for Education, I want to see all Territory students get the opportunity of a great education, whether they are in an urban setting or a remote community. The opportunities I had and which my children have had should be the education story for all Territory children.

Our family survived Cyclone Tracy with a similar story to many. The six children were in the bath tub, with a mattress over our heads to protect us from the falling roof and bricks, and our parents were at either end holding the mattress down and over their heads.

We were evacuated, like most other Darwinians, to Victoria, but we returned three months later to rejoin our father, who had stayed and was working on the clean-up, as by then he had heavy machinery and trucks.

All these experiences shape who you are. The community spirit and the willingness of Darwinians to help others was clear for me to see. I matriculated in 1979 from Darwin High School. Louise and I—we are twins—were crowned the teacher's pets of Darwin High School in 1979. What an honour!

I loved school, so what better to do than become a teacher, just like my mother. I graduated from Darwin Community College in 1982 and started a career in education that spanned 30 years. I spent the first 14 years, when my children were young, as a classroom teacher and achieved Teacher of Exemplary Practice status. I was an exemplary teacher because I loved the job.

I was a teacher at Gray Primary from 1985 to 1989, and it was one of the highlights of my campaign to be met at the door by people who I had taught, or by the parents of children I had taught, and to hear the wonderful stories about their children and what they had been doing over the ensuing 30 years.

Too often we hear negative stories about the Territory education system. One of my aims as minister will be to turn that around, obviously to drive educational improvements across schools, but also to change the messaging—to tell the stories of the amazingly successful Territory students and the outstanding teachers who have contributed to their success. I think every day I see or speak to someone I went to school with or who got an education in the Territory who are doing great things as Territorians.

As has often been the case in my career, opportunity knocked and went to work in curriculum writing. It was during this time that I completed my master's studies in education. I was part of a small team that

wrote the NT curriculum framework. It was a truly amazing feat for such a small team to write a whole curriculum for the whole of the Territory. I then led a team of 24 of the very best educators in the Territory to implement the curriculum framework. I got to work in schools across the length and breadth of the Territory for a number of years, and to work with teachers from our biggest to our smallest schools.

It taught me that the federal government's model—the cookie cutter model, I used to call it—of rolling out identical programs across schools does not work in the Territory. Our regions are so diverse. If you are from the Warlpiri or Yolngu, if you are from an urban setting in Alice Springs or a homeland—I think we all realise how vastly different those regions are, yet the Australian government insists on rolling out programs that are identical, and they just do not work.

After a time working in curriculums, I knew I needed to return to a school. I firmly believe that education staff who provide professional learning should return to school regularly. I became assistant principal at Anula Primary and then principal at Jingili. I must say, the hardest job I ever did was being a principal. The role is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. The work feels like it is never done, and it is not. You are constantly reflecting on what you can do to improve the teaching and learning for the students, assist the classroom teachers and improve communication with families, plus you have the demands placed on you by the system.

I will advocate in this House, as the Minister for Education, for our Territory principals and teachers. I understand their work and their passion.

Again, opportunity knocked and I was asked to be Education adviser to Paul Henderson in 2007. What a wonderful experience, one I will be forever grateful for.

Paul Henderson will be remembered as one of the Territory's most outstanding Chief Ministers. I saw him make tough decisions, but always with the best interests of Territorians in mind. I learnt about politics and I solidified my personal values and how they aligned to the Labor Party during that time.

I also got the opportunity to learn the art of politics and the ability to develop policy from some of the best—great Labor people like Alf Leonardi and Jamie Gallacher, who have willingly given advice and support, and Mark Nelson from back in the Henderson days. These are outstanding people who have Territorians at heart. What I learnt whilst working for the Henderson government has held me in good stead in the last few weeks in this role.

I was also the Education adviser to Marion Scrymgour, the first Indigenous Education minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. Working for Marion gave me the opportunity to travel to all our remote communities and meet with Indigenous educators to work on and develop policies such as Families as First Teachers. FaFT is a program that continues to grow, and Labor is committed to growing that program. I have always been very proud of the work Marion and I did to develop that policy.

The Department of Education then appointed a new chief executive from interstate. It is often the case that we have new people come to the Territory. I was asked to return to the department as the General Manager of the Office of the Chief Executive, as I knew the stakeholders, the principals and the issues, and could assist the chief executive as he got to know the Territory education system. In this role I managed media and marketing, the department's legal team and the audit. Again, that learning is holding me in good stead in my current role.

Again, opportunity knocked and I took a great leap and moved to Alice Springs as the Executive Director of the Southern Region. This would have to be one of the best jobs I ever had in Education. Darwin was a long way away and the Berrimah line was firmly there. I was able to manage the schools in that region with a great deal of autonomy. It was an absolute pleasure to do that job.

I had a stint as General Manager with the Department of the Chief Minister for a short time. Again, that was a wonderful job which taught me many things. I was then promoted to the Deputy Chief Executive of Schools, which was a challenging but rewarding job. It taught me a lot about managing big budgets and that departments have budgets, just as governments have budgets.

In 2012 the CLP was elected, when I was the deputy chief executive, and I had three ministers and three chief executives in eight months—what not to do when you are elected. Every day my values were compromised, and there were kneejerk and irrational decisions that made the life of teachers, principals and support staff very hard and left them feeling very undervalued. I could not work in that environment, so

I made a decision to work at sport and recreation. It was there that I put my hand up to become a Labor candidate. Seeing poor governance encouraged me to think I could do better.

Another influence on my move from being a public servant to being a candidate was the treatment dished out by the then government to my husband, Tom Lawler, and to Jock McLeod. Tommy and Jock are long-term Territory firefighters with workplace injuries. They were both diagnosed with cancer, and those cancers are ones that have been identified as more prevalent in firefighters. The Australian Government recognised the presumptive legislation, so airport firefighters in the Northern Territory were recognised under it. If you worked in the airport fire brigade in Darwin your workplace injuries would be recognised, but if you were two or three kilometres down the road, at Marrara Fire Station, they were not recognised.

The NT Government would not recognise those injuries as workplace injuries. Erina Early and United Voice campaigned hard, and Michael Gunner and the opposition took every opportunity to remind the CLP how shocking and heartless its decision to not support Territory firefighters was.

I thank Erina, United Voice and Michael for their support of Territory firefighters. I hope no other firefighter or firefighter's family has to go through what Tommy and our family had to endure, not only surrounding the long health battle, but the battle against TIO and the government to have a workplace injury recognised. When all of your sick leave has been used—and that is when you have about two years of sick leave—and you virtually have to beg to access your long service leave and holiday leave just so your family can have money, you realise there is something wrong with the government of the day.

My husband cannot be here today because he has to continue to return to Perth every six weeks to seek treatment and be assessed. One of his firefighter mates is going with him as his carer, because I have been in that carer role for the last number of years.

I see Jane Carrigan in the gallery. I thank Jane and Bill Piper, two people who took up the fight with TIO and the Northern Territory Government. Jane, thank you very much for all your support of Tommy and Jock.

Those decisions, when there are terrible injustices, make people like me stand up to fight. I thank the Labor Party Palmerston branch for preselecting me, particularly Elise McLay. Once I was preselected I was overwhelmed with the support I received from friends and the offers from people I hardly knew, but I guess there were many people like me who were appalled with the government of the day, knew the Territory could not continue as it was and were willing to assist me.

I was fortunate to have wonderful people who volunteered to help. I especially thank Hylton Hayes, who was always there to assist and encourage me and always brought a coffee, especially on those early morning roadsides. As I mentioned before, I thank the Palmerston team: Tony Sievers; Damien Hale; and Phil Tilbrook; we were a great team. It was unfortunate that Damien and Phil were not successful, but it was wonderful to have those people around at all times. I think our roadsides were far too much fun, and we look forward to campaigning again.

To our field organiser, Ryan Shummacher, thank you very much for all your support. To Anna Goode and Ryan Neve, you reinforced into us that hard work wins. You made it worthwhile because that hard work did win. To all who helped with my campaign—I will not name them because some of them are public servants and can sometimes feel uncomfortable about working on political campaigns. But, to the public servants who helped me, thank you very much.

I mention Steve Nugent in particular because he assures me he cast the first vote in Drysdale, and he voted for me. He was there when the polls opened at pre-polling at Palmerston and was lined up to be the first man in.

To my children, Kirby and Lindsay, you are so very special. To Kirby's husband, Evan, thank you for your support of my campaign. I can never truly express how grateful and thankful I am to them.

To my husband Tommy—I doubt he is watching as his technology skills are not such that he would be able to get on his iPad to watch, but no doubt I will be able to print it out. He knows how grateful I am for his support. He stumbled at the end. He was helping with the barbecues and things like that, but his immune system is so low that he got a terrible flu on the last day of the election and was bedridden for a couple of weeks. That is part of the journey when you are a carer and working with somebody who is very ill.

In closing, I again thank the people of Drysdale. I thank them for putting their confidence in me to be their member. I assure them all that I will work hard for them in this term of government. Also, thank you to my peers here today.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, honourable members. It has been a good day, a big day. Congratulations to everyone on the opening day of the Thirteenth Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.