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NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly  
Second Session

# **Parliamentary Record**

Tuesday 4 June 1985  
Wednesday 5 June 1985  
Thursday 6 June 1985

Part I—Debates  
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# **NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Fourth Assembly

Second Session

Speaker	Roger Michael Steele
Chief Minister and Treasurer	Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Opposition Leader	Bob Collins
Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Industry, Small Business and Tourism	Nicholas Manuel Dondas
Attorney-General and Minister for Mines and Energy	Marshall Bruce Perron
Minister for Health and Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs	James Murray Robertson
Minister for Education	Tom Harris
Minister for Transport and Works and Housing	Daryl William Manzie
Minister for Lands, Minister for Primary Production, Minister for Ports and Fisheries and Minister for Conservation	Stephen Paul Hatton
Minister for Community Development and Minister for Correctional Services	Barry Francis Coulter

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Barkly	Ian Lindsay Tuxworth
Berrimah	Barry Francis Coulter
Braitling	Roger William Stanley Vale
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Jingili	Richard Alfred Setter
Koolpinyah	Cecilia Noel Padgham-Purich
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Mr Tuxworth

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Mr Dale  
Mr Ede  
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Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Lanhupuy

PART I

DEBATES

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## DEBATES

Tuesday 4 June 1985

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

### MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following message from His Honour the Administrator:

*I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, in pursuance of section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to make interim provision for the appropriation of moneys out of the consolidated fund for the service of the year ending 30 June 1986.*

*Dated this fourth day of June 1985.*

*E.E. Johnston  
Administrator*

### PETITIONS

#### Pornographic Material

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 59 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. The petition is in identical terms to a number of petitions presented earlier this year.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 160 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 17 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. It has identical wording to a number of other petitions tabled in this Assembly. I do not propose to move that the petition be read.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 27 citizens of the Northern Territory. It has identical wording to petitions presented earlier this year. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

### STATEMENT BY SPEAKER

#### Filming of Proceedings

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, this morning, tomorrow and, if necessary, on Thursday the proceedings of the Assembly will be filmed for the purpose of making an educational film for use in schools. I hope members will not be inconvenienced by this.

### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr I.M.D. Cameron MHR, Alderman H.L. Maley JP, OAM

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of visitors from Queensland, Mr and Mrs Cameron and Mr Maley. Mr Cameron is the member for Maranoa in the federal parliament and Mr Maley is presently an alderman of the Holroyd Municipal Council which is in the western suburbs of Sydney. On your behalf, I welcome our visitors to the Northern Territory.

Members: Hear, hear!

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Mini-budget

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, following the harsh treatment meted out to Territorians in both the Commonwealth mini-budget and at the Premiers Conference last week, the government has been forced to take a series of difficult decisions on both its expenditure and its revenue raising for the 1985-86 financial year. Before outlining these, I wish to inform the Assembly of the arrangements for Commonwealth financial assistance to the Northern Territory for the year 1985-86.

The Grants Commission's Tax Sharing Relativities Report, published in April this year, showed that the Northern Territory was overfunded in 1984-85 in line with the Memorandum of Understanding. At the time, I indicated that the Territory accepted the Grants Commission's conclusions and acknowledged that the Territory's funding should be based on the Grants Commission's assessments. Following that, I wrote to the Prime Minister suggesting changes to our tax sharing arrangements for 1985-86 and the subsequent 2 years.

Mr Speaker, I made 4 fundamental points to the Prime Minister: firstly, that the financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory should continue to be governed basically by the Memorandum of Understanding; secondly, that the Northern Territory should be excluded from the states' tax sharing arrangements as recommended by the Grants Commission; thirdly, that the Northern Territory should continue to have access to the Grants Commission to seek a special assistance grant; and, fourthly, that the Northern Territory acknowledged the Grants Commission's conclusions that its 1984-85 funding exceeded its needs by \$15m.

Mr Speaker, I suggested that the Territory grants for 1985-86 should be determined by a modification of the formula in the Memorandum of Understanding. The change was designed to ensure that the Territory's tax sharing grant grew roughly in line with increases in the Territory's needs. The Commonwealth accepted this proposal generally. I also suggested that the existing specific purpose payment for debt charges assistance be absorbed into the tax sharing grant thereby reducing the Territory's overfunding by approximately \$5m per annum. I further suggested some technical changes relating to the division between the current and capital funds accepted at the time of self-government. I argued to Mr Hawke that the position that I put was fair and equitable to both sides and fitted the climate of economic restraint.

Regrettably, Mr Hawke and his government have seen fit to go much further in dealing with the Northern Territory. First, they have deducted \$12.6m from the Territory's 1984-85 tax sharing grant. This amount was identified

by the Grants Commission as the Territory's overfunding for 1982-83. The Commonwealth's action is a clear and determined breach of clause 33 of the Memorandum of Understanding. This clause provided that the Northern Territory should receive in the financial year 1984-85 the greater of the additional assistance grants specified in the memorandum - which is \$5m for this financial year - and any special assistance determined by the Grants Commission for the same year, which is minus \$12.6m. Mr Speaker, any schoolchild could work out that the greater of these 2 numbers is \$5m. If we had known that the rules were to be changed, we would have acted immediately to withdraw the special assistance application for 1982-83. This unilateral action by the Commonwealth is a blatant breach of the Memorandum of Understanding and should be deplored by this Assembly.

Moving to 1985-86, Mr Speaker, the Commonwealth has further reduced the 1984-85 base for that grant by \$15m, arguing that this represents the overfunding identified by the Grants Commission. As already explained, the Territory proposed that this overfunding should be dealt with through the absorption of debt charges assistance in the tax sharing grant - a suggestion which was adopted by the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth action therefore represents double-dipping in the Northern Territory.

Mr Smith: Can you explain that?

Mr TUXWORTH: For the benefit of the honourable member, I will be happy to explain that in more detail when we come to the debate on the budget papers. His whole ambition in life seems to be to continue to apologise for the federal government's actions instead of deploring them. He will be the loser in the argument.

As already explained, the Commonwealth action therefore represents double-dipping, and the fact that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not understand that is to be deplored.

I met privately with the Treasurer, Mr Keating, during the conference to seek to have these additional burdens on the Territory removed or reduced. I alerted him particularly to the breaking of the memorandum in relation to 1984-85 but, unfortunately, he would not budge on the issue. Mr Keating has used some sleight of hand to suggest that the Territory is receiving a 3.4% real increase in its tax-sharing grant in 1985-86. In fact, compared to the base figures on which we had been operating until the Premiers Conference, the increase in real terms is minus 1%.

Turning to our semi-government borrowing requirements, the Territory submitted a bid for \$87m as its voluntary global limit for 1985-86. In fact, as Mr Keating must approve all borrowings for the Northern Territory, the limit is far from voluntary when it is applied to the Northern Territory. This bid included \$27m in borrowings for Channel Island in 1985-86 and, as well, I sought an additional \$15m a year to allow at least part of the deficit for NTEC to be capitalised. Once the pipeline and gas-fired power-station are in place, NTEC's operating position will gradually improve and, with careful management, a surplus should begin to emerge around the mid-1990s.

Mr Speaker, honourable members will recall that in May the Commonwealth decided that it would halve the subsidy by spreading the next 2 payments over 4 years and only funding 40% of the cost of the gas-fired power-station in spite of its much lower capital cost compared to the coal-fired power-station. The Minister for Mines and Energy will make a fuller statement later on NTEC's position. The Territory also sought \$45m in new borrowings for

statutory authorities and town councils. In the event, the Commonwealth has agreed to a limit of \$75m for Northern Territory loan borrowings rather than \$87m. This will further suppress our capacity to maintain our capital works programs at desired levels.

Mr Speaker, at least there is one piece of good news. The Commonwealth has agreed to provide the full \$15m sought to cushion NTEC's projected operating deficit. Mr Keating has agreed to support further requests to finance NTEC's operating deficits in future years as long as the Territory maintains a reasonable electricity tariff effort relative to the states.

The sum of these decisions, together with our best estimate of the Commonwealth's funding decisions yet to be made and announced in some specific areas, leave the Territory facing a very large deficit. The Territory's current estimate of expenditure required to maintain existing services in 1985-86 is \$1224.6m. Our revenue estimates from all sources total only \$1165.5m, leaving a deficit for Territorians of \$59.1m. I point out, Mr Speaker, that these figures exclude NTEC.

The measures that I propose are based on 2 fundamental issues: that the Commonwealth government will not further interfere with the Territory's level of funding and that I am not prepared to enter into deficit budgeting. I intend that there will be no further increases in the August budget and the main activity then will be to appropriate funds and not to raise more taxes and charges. However, our determination to achieve this objective will be controlled by the Commonwealth.

I now move on to the Territory's proposals to deal with this situation, and first will cover additional revenue measures. The increases which are outlined below obviously will have implications for a significant number of people in the community. However, the government has made or retained concessions where possible to reduce the burden on those with a lesser capacity to pay. In making these changes, the Territory has given consideration to the range of revenue measures introduced by the states. This is the marker adopted by the Commonwealth Grants Commission when determining the Territory's tax sharing entitlement. These measures are summarised in attachment 1.

Over the years, the government has endeavoured to avoid increasing the payroll tax rate in order to encourage the development of a sound commercial and industrial base in the Northern Territory. The rate is now out of step with the rates in the states. The government has decided to increase the payroll tax rate to 5% for payrolls under \$1m and, at the same time, a 1% surcharge has been added to those payrolls which are in excess of \$1m. The effective rate on those payrolls will be 6%. The government realises that this will have a significant impact on a number of businesses operating in the Territory. However, the new rate is at a similar level to that already imposed in Victoria and New South Wales. The impact on small businesses will be offset by an increase in the threshold, from \$150 000 to \$300 000 per annum. The same arrangement for the reduction of the concession on a 2 for 3 basis will be maintained. Therefore, the concession will decrease over the range of payrolls between \$300 000 and \$750 000 with companies having in excess of \$750 000 being required to pay the full 5% rate. The increases will take effect from 1 July 1985. Mr Speaker, it is expected that this measure will raise an additional \$3.5m in the next financial year.

Mr Speaker, there is a real concern in the Territory and the states about the detrimental effect of smoking. Consequently, the government considers that tobacco tax should continue to bear a substantial share of the additional revenue-raising effort and has decided to raise the tobacco licensing fee to

the same level as that imposed in Western Australia and Tasmania. The new rate will be 35% and it will take effect immediately. This increase will add approximately 16¢ to the price of an average packet of 20 cigarettes and produce some \$2.1m in additional revenue in 1985-86.

The continued rise in our road toll, largely related to the consumption of liquor, gives evidence of the need to encourage a change in drinking patterns. Therefore, the government has adopted a 2-fold strategy in an effort to reduce alcohol-related offences and encourage a more responsible attitude towards the consumption of liquor. There will be a 2% rise in the fees for all grades of licences in so far as they reflect sales of those beers, spirits and wines with a high alcohol content. This increase will not apply to those beers with an alcohol content of less than 2.5%. In addition to this increase, there will be a further 2% increase in the tax on all liquor sold through takeaway outlets. The new fees arrangements will come into effect at the end of July 1985. It is expected that additional revenue of some \$0.65m will be received in 1985-86.

The Territory has not adopted the national Companies Code. As a consequence, for a number of years, companies registered in the Territory have enjoyed the benefit of very low company office fees not available to companies in the states. It is proposed to review the scale of fees under the Companies Act immediately with a view to moving closer to the level of fees adopted by all states under the national Companies Code. The review is expected to raise additional revenue in the order of \$0.2m in the 1985-86 financial year.

It is no longer possible to sustain the level of stamp duty under some heads where states have moved significantly to increase their rates. The rate of conveyancing duty has not changed since August 1981. A new rates scale will be introduced to bring Territory rates to a level similar to that in New South Wales and Victoria. Details of the new scale are contained in legislation to be introduced in the Assembly. Additional revenue of some \$1.6m should be achieved by this change in 1985-86. First home buyers will still receive a considerable concession as the present level is not to be changed. This means that the first \$80 000 of the cost of a first home in the Territory will be exempt from duty in the same manner as at present. The stamp duty concession on mortgages for first home purchases has not been changed. These 2 concessions will continue to provide relief to those people who are making the Territory their home.

Insurance policies on buildings and contents will be dutiable in the same manner as other insurance contracts at the rate of 5% of the premium value from the date of this announcement.

The stamp duty which is paid on the issue and transfer of motor vehicle registration certificates is to be raised from 1.5% to 2%. In addition, the maximum amount which is to be paid will be raised from \$500 to \$1000. The new Territory rate of 2% is equal to that of Queensland and New South Wales but is still lower than rates in other states. As with other stamp duty amendments, the new rate will apply from the date of this announcement. \$0.85m in additional revenue should be collected in 1985-86 as a result of this move.

There will be computer banking tax and credit duties. Since the introduction of electronic banking facilities in the Northern Territory, and indeed in Australia, there has been a decline in the use of forms such as cheques which previously formed the basis of our payment of duty. The result

has been a loss in revenue which the government cannot afford to sustain. It is therefore proposed to introduce 2 complementary measures to help recoup some of that revenue which has been lost. First, it is intended to introduce a computer banking transaction tax which will be imposed on debit transactions carried out through electronic teller machines including those remote terminals installed at various commercial business houses. Where a debit transaction is carried out by electronic means, a duty of 10¢ per transaction will be imposed, and this will also apply to building societies and credit unions. As is usual practice in states levying this form of taxation, the tax will apply to all but the first relevant transaction in each month. It is not intended that transactions carried out across the counter will attract this duty.

To supplement the transactions arrangements outlined above, a duty will be introduced on credit card transactions. This will be related to the use of credit facilities and will be similar to that introduced recently in Tasmania. These measures will be introduced during the 1985-86 financial year, and it is estimated that they will result in revenue of \$0.35m in that year.

As a new measure, a levy is to be imposed on the consumption of fuel and diesel oil. This levy is intended to encourage conservation of these scarce resources and it is expected that it will be introduced in the new year. Concessions will be available for domestic and small-volume users.

Fees for water and sewerage have not been increased for the past 3 years. The government announced some time ago that it was intended that there would be a move to increase charges for water and sewerage to offset some of the costs of supplying these services in the Territory. A review of water and sewerage charges has been conducted and, as an initial measure, it is proposed to increase charges to equate with those imposed in the states. From 1 July 1985, water charges will increase by 23% and sewerage charges by 50%. These increases are expected to raise \$2m in 1985-86.

Darwin bus fares have fallen significantly behind the levels charged in the states. The government wishes to keep the cost of public transport within the reach of the entire population and offers major concessions to those with limited capacity to pay. A series of changes designed to raise \$0.9m in 1985-86 has been decided on. As examples, the minimum fare will rise from 30¢ to 50¢ while the fares from the city to a Palmerston suburb will rise from 90¢ to \$1.20. Existing concessional arrangements will remain in place and details are shown at attachment 2.

As from the next school term, all school bus travel will attract a fare of 30¢ per trip. The charge will not apply to compulsory bussing. The fare will be paid in advance through the purchase of a concession card from the school. Special arrangements will operate for needy families and it is expected that additional revenue of \$400 000 will be raised.

Mr Speaker, at present, people living in Aboriginal communities do not pay for any essential services. As part of the process of raising revenue and, at the same time, encouraging economies in the use of resources, it is proposed to introduce a simplified charging system for power, water and sewerage as from next year. As a measure of the cost of services, the charge will be based on the volume of fuel used to generate electricity in the community. The charge will be designed to recover \$1m in 1985-86. Each community will be charged according to its fuel use. The resulting revenue will be deducted from the community's town management and public utilities



grant. The onus will be on the community to raise those funds from within the community if standards of service are to be maintained. No recovery is contemplated from government facilities as a substantial government subsidy remains despite the proposed charges. This level of charges is still thought to be well below equivalent charges in established centres of the Northern Territory. However, it reflects the fact that the majority of residents in the Aboriginal communities have limited means and would be eligible for rebates if standard charges were imposed.

I will now cover expenditure measures for 1985-86. The figures indicated below are deductions from Treasury's latest preliminary budget allocations for 1985-86. Following the Commonwealth's mini-budget, the Territory's Treasury had already reduced departmental allocations to a minimum. They have now been reduced further.

In respect of capital works, following a review of the proposed program for capital works in Palmerston next year, cash expenditure amounting to \$3.5m will be deferred. The demand for residential allotments will continue to be satisfied from within the revised program limits. A \$1.5m reduction in the allocation to the Darwin Institute of Technology is proposed. Despite this cut, the institute should be able to continue operations at much the same level as this year. However, some proposed course expansions will have to be curtailed unless savings can be generated from within existing programs. There will be a decrease in administrative staffing in the Department of Education. A departmental review is under way which will result in the abolition of at least 50 administrative positions. It is expected that there will be some reductions in standards of service but every effort will be made to rationalise staffing in such a way that duplication both within the Territory and interstate is minimised. These cuts will be additional to the general departmental cuts proposed later in the statement.

On the subject of housing, there is a reduction in the funding for the Northern Territory's Home Loans Scheme. An \$8m saving has been identified. This results primarily from a reduction in demand for Housing Commission finance flowing from last year's changes to the Home Loans Scheme. It does not reflect any change in policy to that announced in the latter half of last year. Nevertheless, in part it reflects the results of those changes as borrowers have made greater use of traditional sources of finance, particularly the banks, consistent with practice in the states.

Approximately 60% of the Housing Commission's repairs and maintenance bill is attributable to 2000 houses. It is proposed to sell about 100 vacant high-maintenance dwellings per year. In the first year of operation, the net effect on the budget is likely to be a saving of \$2m which is made up of estimated receipts of \$5m and additional lending under the Northern Territory Home Loans Scheme of a little under \$3m. Savings from the repairs and maintenance program are expected to be about \$150 000 in 1985-86 but will increase each year as more old stock is sold. The Minister for Housing will determine the number of houses to be sold each year in the light of the circumstances at the time.

Dollar-for-dollar grants to local government are to be abolished. Traditionally, grants to local government in the Northern Territory have been higher than similar payments in the states. It is clear that councils incur costs and revenue disabilities in much the same way as the Northern Territory government does itself and that payments to councils from the government will always be greater than comparable payments in the states. Nevertheless, in view of the substantial reductions in funds flowing to the

Territory from the Commonwealth, grants to local government from the Northern Territory government must be reduced. Accordingly, the government has decided to abolish dollar-for-dollar grants. This decision is in keeping with the policy of greater emphasis on untied grants rather than tied funds. These funds also tend to be used for one-off projects rather than the ordinary ongoing operations of councils and hence should be easier to absorb. Savings of \$400 000 will result.

As a result of reduced Commonwealth assistance for B-TEC, the Northern Territory's matching element will also be reduced. The Northern Territory regrets taking this action but feels it would be inappropriate not to match the fall in this jointly-funded program.

The Sales Tax Freight Scheme will be abolished. In 1981, the Northern Territory government introduced a scheme which reimbursed wholesalers for the sales tax they incurred on freight. The purpose of the scheme was to place Northern Territory wholesalers in an equally competitive position to that of southern wholesalers and it was introduced after many complaints about the inequity of the then Commonwealth system. The current Commonwealth government undertook to do something about sales tax on freight but to date nothing has happened. The Northern Territory is now in a position where it cannot afford to bear all the burden. Soft drink wholesalers will be affected most. I should add that soft drinks are now manufactured in the Territory and the Northern Territory scheme was acting to improve the competitive position of interstate manufacturers relative to the local producer. The abolition of the scheme will save about \$200 000 per annum.

Financial assistance available from NTDC will be reduced. The Northern Territory Development Corporation currently provides quite substantial direct financial assistance to industry in the Territory. It is intended that the development corporation's activity be reduced by \$3m and potential borrowers be encouraged to make greater use of private sector sources of finance.

To implement service-wide expenditure cuts, increases in non-salary costs will be reduced. It is proposed to restrict departmental and authority allocations for non-salary costs by discounting by \$9m the inflationary increase currently proposed which is a cut of about 1%. The effect of this decision will be to force managers in departments and authorities to make marginal adjustments to expenditures in their control to effect the savings. Care will be taken to minimise the cuts in areas with significant operational expenditures such as health services and power supplies to remote communities. Nevertheless, standards of services must be expected to fall.

There will be a freeze on the Territory allowance. The Territory government considers that the Territory allowance should be frozen following last year's Arbitration Commission decision to freeze the corresponding private sector arrangement. As some public sector employees have the Territory allowance included in their awards, the government intends to apply to the Arbitration Commission to vary the relevant awards to freeze the allowance. The decision will be applied to the remainder of the public sector. In the meantime, the increase due in July will be deferred.

Leave fares will be restricted to the Adelaide fare. Under current arrangements, employees are entitled to an air fare every 2 years to a capital city of their choice. It is intended to restrict this entitlement to the same money value as an air fare to Adelaide. As some people will have made plans already on the assumption that their full fare to a capital city other than Adelaide will be fully reimbursed, it is intended that this new policy

apply after the next use of this entitlement. Savings of up to \$1.2m in a full year are expected but no savings in the current financial year. Attachment 3 summarises these reductions.

In addition to the program-oriented expenditure cuts already proposed, a preliminary assessment has been made of departments and authorities to further assess both the capacity and the priority of existing appropriations. On the basis of these broad assessments, it has been concluded that an additional \$16.15m will need to be cut from the existing planned ongoing budget. As these reductions are in addition to the cuts already identified, they will result in a reduction in standards of services which all residents of the Territory will feel in one form or another. The precise means by which these cuts are to be effected have yet to be resolved and will be considered and finalised at the Cabinet meeting next week on the budget. It is hoped that departments and authorities will be able to effect economies without significantly affecting standards of service but, in view of the magnitude of the reductions, there is little doubt that standards of service will fall. The expenditure reductions in each department and authority are set out in attachment 4.

Mr Speaker, the measures that I have outlined today will reduce government expenditure by \$45m and increase government revenue by \$16m in the 1985-86 financial year. This will convert the potential deficit of \$59m I referred to earlier to a modest potential surplus of \$3m. This leaves very limited capacity for any new government initiatives for 1985-86. I wish to reassure honourable members that, unless there are further unexpected changes to the budget position, I am hopeful that no further expenditure cuts or revenue increases will be required in the August budget. I conclude by saying that the Minister for Mines and Energy will be making a comprehensive statement tomorrow for the benefit of the Assembly and the community on the impact of the federal government's moves against NTEC's subsidy. Members of the community will find tomorrow's revelations to be very unfortunate on top of today's. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr HATTON (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, this is one of the least pleasant debates I have had the opportunity to speak in. There is no doubt that the assault on the Northern Territory will bite deeply into the community. As can be seen from the measures that have been outlined, every effort has been made by the government to balance and limit the effects on the community. It gives the lie to the rabid ravings of some of the members of the federal House that the Northern Territory government has been excessively overfunded. I refer particularly to some of the strange comments made by Senator Walsh in recent times when he was trying to create a community climate to support the federal government's hatchet job on the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, there are a couple of aspects in relation to my portfolio areas that I would like to refer to.

Firstly, as the Chief Minister mentioned, the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign has had a reduction in the Northern Territory government's allocation of \$700 000. As that is a matching-funds reduction, it represents almost a 10% reduction in funding that will be available for that program. Inevitably, that will result in some adjustment to the timetabling of the program. Fortunately, because of the reorientation of the activity of B-TEC this year and the review of all destocking programs to minimise the need to destock wherever possible, we believe that we will be able to cope this year. I must note that inevitably it will mean that the programming of B-TEC will be slowed down. Also it will be more important than ever for the federal government to rethink its approach to the restrictions that it has imposed, particularly on type D loan funds under the scheme, to ensure

that there is more flexibility in the application of those funds so that we are in a better position to address realistically the eradication program in the top end of the Northern Territory with its very complex problems in a way that will not lead to long-term damage and destruction of significant sections of the industry.

In relation to the Conservation Commission, there is a reduction of \$1.5m. That is approximately a 5% cut in addition to the other generalised reductions that have been announced. That will mean that we will have to undertake a very serious analysis of some of the ongoing programs that have been conducted by the commission. Programs that have benefited the community significantly over the last several years will have to be curtailed or slowed down. In addition, the Conservation Commission has been engaged on a major review of its functions and activities to tighten and reorientate its programs. It has had increasing workloads as a consequence of the introduction of the Environmental Assessment Act which requires a significant increase in man hours to be applied to assessing and processing development applications ranging from industrial activities and land subdivisions right through to mining development proposals, including the gas pipelines. In addition to that, there have been developments over the last few years with the declaration and growth of parks in the Northern Territory. All of these things have strained the resources of the Conservation Commission and its administrative support systems in terms of the development of plans of management and assessment. We need to address those problems and, in doing so, some other programs may have to suffer in the course of the restructuring and reorientation of the work of that commission. There is nothing that we can do about it. We must live within our budget.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the Department of Lands. There is a further reduction of \$1.5m in indicative funding for lands. That is in addition to the decision to slow down or defer the development of additional subdivisions in the Palmerston area and means a reduction in capital expenditure of \$3.5m programmed for the coming financial year. We are currently working through the budget for the Department of Lands to find where we can cut the other \$1.5m but it must be noted that it will impact on development and areas such as survey and mapping of the Northern Territory. It is likely to lead to increasing difficulties in developing and promoting an efficient level of service from that department to meet the demands of the community. Given the restrictions under which we are placed, I must ask that the community bear with the department. It is a department that is responsive to demands. The staff in the department will have to work under more difficult circumstances than in the past. It may take a little longer for some things to be resolved than was previously the case.

Mr Speaker, with those restrictions and limitations, it will be more important than ever for the Department of Lands to encourage private industry to spend its own money to provide for development in the Northern Territory to counteract some of the effects of this budget slash. Over the last several weeks, I have been able to announce a number of initiatives proposed by the Northern Territory government. It will be more important than ever that we direct our attention towards the promotion and implementation of private enterprise development in the Northern Territory rather than the expenditure of government funds. I will be directing my attention towards that objective as I have been in the last 6 months. It is essential to be as flexible and responsive as possible and to assist industries to spend private funds in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to my other 2 departments: the Department of

Primary Production and the Department of Ports and Fisheries. Neither of those departments has had additional reductions imposed on its expenditure. The Department of Ports and Fisheries is a new and relatively unformed department which has a major review under way on the promotion and development of the fishing industry. We are still determining the organisational structure for the fisheries side of the department. It is more important than ever that we reassess carefully what is available to us and how we can direct those resources to promote the development of this most promising industry in the Northern Territory and provide a stimulus for private enterprise investment.

The Department of Primary Production has the very difficult problem of administering B-TEC and is involved also in the quite spectacular growth that is occurring in our agricultural and horticultural industries in the Northern Territory. It is true that the latter are relatively small at the moment but the growth rates of these new industries are significant. It is recognised by the department that it must redirect its efforts to take into account the needs of agriculture and horticulture both in the Top End and in central Australia so that development will not be stymied by these slashes in our budget. We are undertaking a major review of all research and departmental activities to reallocate resources to try to meet those needs as best we can.

It should not be thought that those departments are having it easy over this. They will have to spread their limited resources over a wider range of activities. The departments are very conscious of that and are working very strenuously to try to achieve that result. I might point out a particularly major problem on which I am determined to take some action this year, if it is at all possible, and that is the spread of noxious weeds in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, the reports that are coming through show quite extensive developments in a wide range of noxious weeds like mimosa and parkinsonia across the Northern Territory and we must devote considerably more resources if we hope even to bring that under control until such time as biological control methods can be brought into play. That means that we will have to find some money from somewhere within our existing budgetary resources to direct towards that. That will then mean that other areas of activity will have to be withdrawn or deferred. Those actions are being reviewed and, as the Chief Minister said, when we start to put the final budget together, we will be in a position to determine how the departments will operate within their quite limited and restricted allocations.

Mr Speaker, it is a sad day for the Territory. It is a sad day on which to stand up here and see the assaults that have been made on intergovernmental agreements and understandings. We had the audacity to believe that a federal government of Australia would think in a national context. We had the audacity to believe that it would honour its agreements. Quite obviously, we cannot trust this federal government to honour anything it says or does.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, it is perhaps as good a point as any with which to start to say that, in fact, the financial difficulties that we are experiencing in the Northern Territory are occurring largely because a Commonwealth Labor government is acting, in many ways, more along the lines of a Commonwealth Liberal government. In other words, the Commonwealth Labor government has determined that its first priority is to reduce significantly the budget deficit that it inherited from the Fraser government 3 or 4 years ago. As a result of that, it has found it necessary to take quite severe action across the board through the whole of Australia to cut back that deficit.

Secondly, it is doing that to provide for what every good Liberal government in Australia has consistently said it wants to provide for, and that is room in the economy for private investment. I do not think anyone can deny that the intentions of the federal government are good. But as the opposition has said previously in this Assembly and elsewhere, it is extremely unfortunate that the Northern Territory seems to be bearing more than its fair share of the results of those good intentions.

As a result of that, for the first time we have a Northern Territory government under some financial pressure. Today we have the first chance to assess the effectiveness of the Northern Territory government when it has to make tough decisions. It is unfortunate that the government has insisted on bringing this very important debate on straight away and has not given the normal courtesies to the opposition by allowing it a period of 24 hours or so to study effectively the document that has been presented to us and to come up with a comprehensive argument. Mr Speaker, as a consequence, my response at this stage will obviously not be as complete as I would have wished and we hope that other members of the opposition will be given more time to prepare a comprehensive response.

Mr Speaker, let us just talk about the ability of the present government to assess the implications of Grants Commission funding and Grants Commission movements over the last 3 or 4 years. If it were a competent economic manager, the Northern Territory government would have been and should have been aware quite early that the Grants Commission would make negative funding reports this year. In November, the draft calculations of the Grants Commission, resulting from its review of tax sharing entitlements Australia-wide, indicated that the Northern Territory might have to lose up to \$100m in tax sharing. As we all now know, when the final report came out, the Grants Commission found that we were overfunded by an amount of \$15m. Mr Speaker, as the honourable Treasurer would know, the \$15m figure could only be achieved by the most optimistic treatment of the figures. As the Treasurer well knows, another interpretation of the figures that were presented by the Grants Commission could have given us a negative funding figure of \$20m to \$25m.

Mr Speaker, the report of the Grants Commission in the relativities review section covers the same period as that to which the commission's second report - that report concerning the \$12.6m at claimancy review - applies. We are dealing with 2 separate reports - a claimancy report on 1982-83, which was always expected in 1984-85, and the relativities review which related to the 3 years: 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84. The Commonwealth government has reduced the 1984-85 grant by \$12.6m, as the Chief Minister informed us today.

Mr Tuxworth: It broke the Memorandum of Understanding.

Mr SMITH: Getting to the question of the Memorandum of Understanding, the Chief Minister has made much use of clause 33 of the Memorandum of Understanding. That quite clearly says that the Territory will receive whichever is the greater of the additional assistance grant or the special grant. I do not particularly want to defend the Commonwealth government in this matter because the interpretation of the Northern Territory government is a sensible one. But I put it to you, Mr Speaker ...

Mr Tuxworth: It is the only one.

Mr SMITH: Hang on. I put it to you, Mr Speaker, that, when that memorandum was drawn up and when clause 33 was inserted, there was no feeling

either on the Commonwealth side or the Northern Territory side that in fact the Grants Commission in 1982-83 was going to come up with a negative funding finding. That is what the Grants Commission has in fact come up with. So we have a decision of the Commonwealth government which was based on a recommendation from the Grants Commission, which in turn was based on evidence supplied to it by the Northern Territory government. That raises the following very real question: why was the Northern Territory government not able to put up a better case, so that the Northern Territory taxpayers did not lose ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, we have a situation where a federal government - and I do not care what political complexion it has - based on the best advice that it could get, was expected to pay out to the Northern Territory not only \$12.6m that the Grants Commission said it was not entitled to but another \$5m that the Grants Commission said it was not entitled to. Consider the political realities - if you were that government, what would you do, in that situation?

Mr Tuxworth: We would meet the agreement.

Mr SMITH: Thank God, you will not be in the situation where you will have the chance to do that.

Mr Speaker, we do not get any particular joy out of funding cuts. However, the people of the Northern Territory deserve an honest statement from the government about what is happening. It is interesting that it was only this morning that we heard from the Chief Minister that the figure of \$12.6m resulted from a Grants Commission finding. Nowhere in all the publicity in the newspapers last week and in all the Chief Minister's TV appearances was the fact that that was a result of a Grants Commission finding mentioned at all. As much as he might dislike that, it is still an important fact.

Mr Speaker, on Territory Extra this morning, the Chief Minister compared the decision to cut \$12.6m from the Territory's budget with a similar decision to reduce the Queensland budget by \$63m. I fail to see the relevance of that comparison. The 2 amounts arise from completely separate reports and in the proper processes of federal state relations the cuts would apply in our case to 1984-85 and in the Queensland case to 1985-86. This is an example of the Chief Minister failing to tell the Northern Territory the full truth on these particular matters.

Mr Speaker, turning to the details of the paper presented this morning by the Chief Minister, we find that many of his comments are prefaced by these sorts of statements: 'Over the years government has endeavoured to avoid increasing the rate'; 'the new rate is at a similar level to that already imposed in New South Wales and Victoria'; the new rate is 'the same level as that imposed in Western Australia and Tasmania'; we 'have enjoyed the benefit of very low company office fees not available to companies in other states'; 'a new rates scale will be introduced to bring Territory rates to a level similar to that in New South Wales and Victoria'; and, 'this sort of rate has been introduced in Tasmania'. That is the general range of comments made to justify the increases in rates and charges that have been proposed - and I have no objection to that.

However, I want to point out one thing that the Chief Minister did not say. It goes back to a comment made by the Grants Commission in 1981-82 when it referred to the old casino tax: 'The revenue collected by the Territory from the casino licences has been regarded as a result of an above standard revenue-raising effort'. Mr Speaker, that was the one good thing this government had going for it in terms of raising revenue in the eyes of the Grants Commission, and by its actions this year it has thrown that out of the window and made it very difficult for it to justify itself. I am one of the fortunate people who rely on taxis quite a bit in this town. It is fortunate because we all know that taxi drivers have a pretty good grip on what is going on in the town and what people are saying. The taxi driver's comment to me this morning when I came to the Assembly was: 'The government should have been getting most of these extra taxes and charges from a properly-imposed casino tax'. Like it or not, this is what people out there are saying. When you think that, even at the rate that Federals were paying at, we are forgoing \$3m this year in casino taxes, this government has a very difficult job indeed to explain to the population why it has to face such dramatic increases in water, sewerage and other charges when the casino operator is getting away with paying no taxes this year.

As well as that, the government has also been caught by its largesse of recent years. I will just give one example that we have mentioned before in this Assembly. The government pays \$15m in the Northern Territory for all its accommodation outside Yulara. At Yulara, the government pays \$5m to \$6m for a very small amount of accommodation indeed. Again, in a period when the government had a lot of money, it entered into these agreements which are now proving very difficult indeed. The people of the Territory will not be very happy when they realise that they are propping up the Yulara investment artificially and they are paying for it through extra taxes and extra charges. There are other examples which I will not go into now.

I turn now to page 6. I am pleased to say that the Chief Minister has given us some good news, even if it is in a bad environment. That news concerns his statement that the Commonwealth has agreed to provide \$15m to cushion NTEC's projected operating deficit.

Mr Robertson: That is a loan.

Mr SMITH: I realise that. However, as part of the confusion, probably purposeful, that there has been on this issue, I want to quote a small piece from the NT News of Thursday 30 May 1985. It is under an article written by Peter Wilson:

*Mr Tuxworth has also been told that the Territory will be denied \$15m in loan funds and his request for an additional \$15m to cushion the effect of the elimination of the NTEC subsidy has been rejected out of hand.*

I would like the Chief Minister to explain why this story in the Northern Territory News, which obviously was supplied to that paper by this government, is completely different from the story that we have heard from the Chief Minister today. I would like confirmation from him that the story that he has given us on page 6 is the real one.

I will go through some of the taxing proposals. I am pleased that the government has accepted the opposition's suggestions and raised the threshold on payroll tax. I think that is going to be particularly significant. Unfortunately, it will be counterbalanced to some extent by raising the 4.5%



to 5% in terms of the tax collection. It is my understanding that most of the companies in the Northern Territory are relatively small in terms of the number of people they employ. I am sure that the government has worked out the rate of payroll tax for those companies very carefully. Although we have not had time to go through the figures, I would suspect that, on average, the small companies in the Northern Territory will not be worse off than they have been. That is to be commended.

In terms of the franchise tax on tobacco, I think the government has taken a determined step to save people's health. We have no problem with that. However, I fail to see that the decision to increase liquor licence fees will have much effect on the road toll. To put that in as a justification for increasing the tax in its various forms is a lot of nonsense.

When we come to the water charges and the sewerage charges we start to have real reservations about what the government has done. The government has taken the easy way out. It has not conducted an efficiency review or said that it will conduct such a review. It has simply taken figures and increased the water charges and the sewerage charges by those amounts. In our view, there is a very real need for a thorough efficiency review in the water and sewerage areas. We are sure that, if such a review were carried out, quite substantial savings would result which would lessen the burden on the public. I invite the Chief Minister to respond to that suggestion. I take the opportunity to say that, since we have increases in charges for water, sewerage and electricity, it is time for another - and I accept that the government has done it before - education campaign. There is a surprising amount of ignorance in the community about the simple things that can be done to reduce bills, particularly electricity bills. I believe it to be most appropriate that such a thing be attempted at this time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not wish to comment on the Aboriginal essential services because other members on my side obviously have a greater interest than I do in those areas.

The question arises as to why the government has not addressed itself to some of these areas of expenditure before. The ease with which the government has been able to move in these areas indicates that some of the arguments about excessive spending ....

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that an extension of time be granted to the honourable member so that he can finish his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, as I was saying, some of the decisions that the government has made reflect a basic criticism that I have been making in this Assembly for the last couple of years: when it must make decisions across the board, it does not really get down to the basics of what good government is about. That is because we do not have an effective budgetary system. As I have pointed out before, we do not have a budgetary system which enables us to go right back to the roots of what the budget is about and where the money is going. We do not have a budgetary system which enables us to determine the effectiveness of the amount of money that we have spent and to determine whether savings can be made in one area or whether more money should be spent in another area. What we have instead is a general

indication that, in a good year, we will have a 5% to 10% increase across the board but, when things are going badly as they seem to be at present, we will increase taxes and charges by 5% to 10%. I ask the government once again to look at a zero budget concept because it provides the opportunity to examine all areas of government thoroughly and enables decisions to be made on a more rational basis.

In terms of what are likely to be controversial areas - the decisions on the Territory allowance and leave fares - and without commenting on the appropriateness of those particular matters, I must say that the government could not have handled this in a more ham-fisted way. If it wanted to alienate public servants, it has gone about it in a very good way indeed. It should have learnt its lesson about these things. There is a need to consult with public servants when you are looking at altering their conditions of service. The government will reap what it has sown.

Mr B. Collins: They always complain about the federal government not doing it. It does not apply to them.

Mr SMITH: That is right. Underneath it all, the Territory government is very much like the federal government in the way that it consults with different interest groups.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I conclude my comments on the particulars of the budget by making a special reference to Palmerston. I notice that some \$3.5m has been sliced off the budget for Palmerston. I am not clear exactly what that is for. I guess it could be for 2 things. One is that the number of people going there has slowed down.

Mr Coulter: New subdivisions.

Mr SMITH: I would be concerned, having read the comments of the honourable member for Berrimah in the press, that the \$3.5m should not be saved by a reduction in services to the existing areas because, as I understand it, services there are under pressure. It would be most unfortunate if savings were to be made there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to refer also to the consumption tax on fuel and seek clarification from the government as to exactly what it means. If in fact this is a consumption tax on people at the bowser, fuel oil for heating in the southern part of the Territory and fuel oil for power generation outside the main centres, that would be most unfortunate. We seek clarification from the government on that particular issue. I would be very surprised if the government had imposed a tax in that area because of the strong statements it has made and the strong representations it has made to both the Fraser and the Hawke governments on this particular issue. Certainly, it is not clear exactly what the consumption tax will offer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this government has found itself faced with difficult decisions, the full impact of which I cannot comment on at this stage, but I want to say that it has made it more difficult for itself to handle these decisions by its profligate spending in the past. Without that profligate spending, particularly without what now appear to be absurd concessions to the casino operators, this government would have been in a much better position to handle the situation that it has in front of it and, more importantly, the people of the Northern Territory would not have faced such an economic burden as has been imposed on them through this mini-budget.

Mr HANRAHAN (Flynn): Mr Deputy Speaker, I consider that reply from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition an insult to the intelligence of the people of the Northern Territory. He glossed over the Memorandum of Understanding completely. He wiped it. Just recently, it was shredded on the floor of the Cabinet room in Canberra. Quite freely he stood up and said: 'We had nothing to do with it'. I would like to suggest to the members of this Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory that the members opposite have acted in collusion with their federal counterparts to ensure that the economic base of the Northern Territory is further destroyed.

Let us just go back over a few of the issues that compound the effects of the razor cuts that the federal government has inflicted on the Northern Territory as a result of the recent breaking of the Memorandum of Understanding and the resultant destruction of the Territory's economic base. Where were honourable members opposite during 1983 when the federal troops, their Labor Party colleagues, trotted through the Northern Territory and spoke about all the development that was to take place and made all those election promises that really were so important to the economic development of the Northern Territory and the expansion of our economic base? Let us look at the developments for Kakadu. They were trotted out, promoted Territory-wide and used in a vote-catching exercise. What has happened to date? The installation of barbecue plates in Kakadu has been the full expenditure. The honourable members opposite do not seem to have anything to say about the loss of jobs and the loss of development that would have improved the economic standing of everybody in the Northern Territory.

What about the railway line? Are the members present prepared to stand up and say that they do not believe that that project would have helped the economic base of the Northern Territory? What about the Darwin Airport? Surely, we can expect some logic and some reasoning from the members opposite. Are they going to trot off to Canberra and help to fight for that development? They seem to be reasonably silent on all the issues that have been promised. They have accused the Northern Territory government continually of total irresponsibility. They have glossed over the fact that the federal government has spent something like \$20m on the development of the Darwin Airport to date and at this stage it appears to be prepared to walk away from it. That represents the loss of another \$96m of development that would have created jobs.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order! I will not remind honourable members again that members on their feet will be heard in silence. The honourable Leader of the Opposition and members on both sides will cease their continual interjections.

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, it is obvious to me that the members opposite are not going to rise to their feet and address the issues that need to be addressed.

Mr B. Collins: We cannot until you sit down.

Mr HANRAHAN: You will have your chance shortly.

Another point that I think damages the opposition's credibility is its policy on uranium mining. We have seen a rather farcical development in Australia over recent years: Roxby Downs has been permitted to be developed but 2 mines in the Northern Territory cannot be developed. Why? Where

do members opposite sit with the philosophy of that policy? Wouldn't it create jobs? Wouldn't it create revenue? What do members opposite have to say about the cuts relevant to the Northern Territory in contrast to a bill that went through the federal parliament the other day which provided for the federal Labor government to pay something like \$32m to Ranger as the price of the uranium that was contracted to France? It is forecast that another \$50m will be provided to buy back the uranium. That is Australian taxpayer's money. It is a gross injustice that Territory taxpayers' money, to the tune of some \$80m-odd, can be expended while the Territory people are suffering cuts of some 8% or 10% towards the total federal deficit.

Other issues that members might like to address are the lost contracts and the funding that was promised for the Stuart Highway between Alice Springs and Darwin. We have heard nothing more about that and we are still fighting for our money. It appears very unlikely that we will get any of it.

What I am saying is that, apart from the cuts, the destruction of the Memorandum of Understanding and the revenue raising and expenditure items that the Northern Territory government has had to address, there were all those promises that were so important to the Northern Territory in order to expand its economic base, to keep people employed and to gain further revenue through taxation and royalties. They have been broken over a period of 2 years. I suggest that some honourable members present have had a great deal to do with that, if not directly then certainly through the auspices of the former Labor member of the House of Representatives and the existing Labor senator. What would have created jobs in the Northern Territory and helped us to grow? Kakadu would bring a great improvement if we could develop it. It would be even better if the control of national parks could be handed over to the Northern Territory so that we could employ the services of the Conservation Commission which has established a fine record in the past and would do a much better job than the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Undeniably, the Hill Report on the railway line was no more than a farcical con. Look at the jobs and the contracts lost on Darwin Airport. Look at the tourism infrastructure in this town and the provision of some 1200 rooms through high-class hotels that are being constructed and which are orientated totally towards the development of the Darwin Airport. We know what has happened with the Alice Springs Airport. We are being virtually forced into a situation of ALOP. There are lost jobs and lost revenue. Really, it is a freezing of the possibility for the economic base in the Territory to expand.

The situation with uranium mining is farcical. I would love honourable members opposite to stand up and state their position on it. Then there is the Stuart Highway, not to mention the poor treatment we have received on Channel Island, which I am sure the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy will address fully tomorrow. I do not expect much good news. However, once again I invite honourable members present to stand up and say exactly what representation they will make and what action they will take to ensure that these projects, which are so important, proceed. In fact, they are even more important to the development of the Territory at the moment because of the revenue-raising exercise and expenditure cuts that we have gone through today. What representations are they going to make to their federal counterparts in Canberra to ensure that the economic base in the Territory can expand in the way that it can throughout the rest of Australia? Unfortunately, we have been singled out for some rather drastic treatment which no other state, with the possible exception of Queensland, has had to suffer and will endure for the next 12 months.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, quite honestly I was not expecting to have to speak at this stage, given that the honourable member was in such full flight. I thought that his peroration left something to be desired and I have been caught somewhat off guard because he taunted the opposition quite deliberately by suggesting that it would be somehow reluctant to make a contribution to this debate. For the benefit of the honourable member for Flynn and for his colleagues on the front and backbenches, I am quite sure that, if they listen to me in silence and with due attention, they will be convinced that hitherto their reaction to this particular statement by the honourable Chief Minister has been somewhat hysterical.

By way of introduction, let me say that, like everybody in this room, I am an Australian and my fundamental loyalty is to this country. Nowhere in the contributions of either the Chief Minister or his colleague, the honourable member for Flynn, have we heard any comment about the responsibility that this Assembly might have to the country as a whole. Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that is deplorable. Here we have a 29-page document and nowhere in it do we have from the Treasurer of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory any suggestion that any fiscal responsibility should be exercised by him beyond the borders of the Northern Territory. There is no suggestion from him that somehow the Treasurers in the respective states of the Commonwealth and the Treasurer of the Commonwealth itself should act as a team to provide the best general living standard for Australians throughout the country, no matter where they live - whether they live in the teeming cities of the south or in the wide open spaces of the north. We see no suggestion of any breadth of vision from the honourable Treasurer in respect of his responsibilities to the country as a whole. We certainly heard nothing of it in the idiot ramblings of the honourable member for Flynn.

Mr Dale: Get up above the belt. Come on.

Mr BELL: 'Get up above the belt', I hear from the honourable member for Wanguri. I wonder whether the honourable member will contribute to this debate because honestly I do not think he has the brains to do so. Goodness me, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you were quite satisfied that I was speaking in reasonable tones. What I said might have struck a nerve with the honourable members opposite. Since they complained so fulsomely about being interjected against, I expected that they would extend to me slightly more tolerance than they are demonstrating at the moment.

Let me return to a general theme that was addressed obliquely by the honourable member for Flynn: capital works programs. As part of the fairly scant substance of his offering, he made reference to federal government capital works programs. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that the honourable member for Flynn made rather greater reference, some several paragraphs, to federal government capital works programs as they affect the Northern Territory. I am sure that you were struck, as I was, by the comparison with the very scant reference made by the honourable Treasurer and Chief Minister in his comments about capital works in the Northern Territory. I refer honourable members to page 17 under the heading 'capital works'. Really, it does not read very well. There is one heading of 'capital works' and another heading 'capital works in Palmerston'. The comments here refer to: 'A review of the proposed program for capital works in Palmerston next year. Cash expenditure amounting to \$3.5m will be deferred'. In another sentence, we see that 'the demand for residential allotments will continue to be satisfied within the revised program limits'. I presume that all of that paragraph refers to capital works in Palmerston.

Incidentally I would be interested in the possible effects that might be felt with respect to land development in Alice Springs. It is mentioned here that the revised program limits will apply with respect to the demand for residential allotments in Palmerston. Mr Deputy Speaker, you would be as aware as I am of the extraordinarily strong demand for residential accommodation and serviced land in Alice Springs, and I trust that that will not be affected by this particular program. I could speak at length about problems in that regard, as I am sure that you could, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think that if there were any regrettable lacunae in the offering of the member for Flynn that was certainly one of them. We have a recently elevated member of the government frontbench who is from central Australia but appears unable to address crucial issues in this regard. Probably it is not unreasonable for me to mention in the context of this debate that I have received representations from many areas of industry involved with the development of land in the Centre saying that they are deeply concerned about the lack of availability of serviced land. These representations have come from consumers, potential consumers and from people involved as developers or in marketing the products of developers.

On the theme of capital works, Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought it regrettable that neither the member for Flynn nor the Treasurer mentioned capital works from the 1984-85 capital works program in the Northern Territory that had been deferred already. I refer, for example, to the school at Harts Range in my electorate. Deferral of the particular program will save the government \$0.25m but no mention is made of that here. I presume that the Minister for Transport and Works will make a sensible contribution to this debate and explain to us exactly which parts of the 1984-85 capital works program have been deferred. If he does not do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, that will be irresponsible to say the least.

In a debate during the last sittings, he made some comments in response to my queries about roadworks in my electorate. Whilst you are aware of it, Mr Deputy Speaker, I suppose some other members of this Assembly may not realise that my electorate includes the bottom corner of the Territory which contains a very extensive road network to enable people to move around that very large area. No doubt you will recall the comments I made during the last sittings about various roadworks, yet here we have one worth \$0.5m. I refer to the Impadna-Idracowra-Horshoe Bend Road announced in last year's budget. That represents \$0.5m that has not been spent yet. The Minister for Transport and Works made the fairly cryptic comment during the last sittings that, in respect of this particular road, 'Tenders may have to be deferred as all uncommitted roadworks are currently subject to review in keeping with the projected decrease in road funding'. That is a fairly interesting comment. I see that the Minister for Transport and Works, to his credit, is scribbling furiously. I will just repeat it. I will say it slowly for him. What he said was: 'Tenders may have to be deferred as all uncommitted roadworks are currently subject to review in keeping with the projected decrease in road funding'.

A large number of questions arise from that. Which tenders have been deferred? Which uncommitted roadworks were subject to review? What is this 'projected decrease' in road funding? Possibly there is to be a decrease in road funding within the context of the Territory's expenditure for 1984-85. Of course, there have been federal government reductions in that regard. I am particularly interested to hear a balanced statement and not just federal government bashing in this regard.

In respect of the general point that seems to obsess members opposite, let me reiterate that I have been concerned and dissatisfied with the

peremptory fashion in which the federal government has evidently taken its decisions. I refer here particularly to the comments and actions of the Minister for Finance who has taken a rather perverse delight in reducing funding to the Territory. I do not think that does the federal Minister for Finance any credit whatsoever. If any members over there imagine that I am some fulsome supporter of the federal government, I urge them to think again.

There is one further issue that I hope I have time to make reference to in the context of this debate. There are several more but I fear that I will run out of time. I would like particularly to make reference to Yulara Tourist Village which, of course, is in my electorate. Reference was made to it by the shadow treasurer, the honourable member for Millner. It is of some concern that this issue be addressed in the context of this debate by the Treasurer when he responds. My comments relate to funding of the Yulara Tourist Village. I would like to float an idea. I float it constructively. Physically, Yulara is a highly successful feature but some concerns have been expressed about the financial structure of the project. I wonder whether the Northern Territory government might be able to refinance the Yulara development somehow. I appreciate that there may be contractual problems in this regard. The Northern Territory government may be bound in such a way that refinancing may not be possible. However, I would say that refinancing of Federal Hotels casinos did not present much of a problem in spite of contractual obligation.

I do not think it is asking too much of the Northern Territory government, and the Chief Minister in particular, in view of the success of the Yulara venture, to investigate the possibility of refinancing it. As the member for Millner mentioned, considerable cost is incurred by the Northern Territory government to the tune of \$5m or \$6m in respect of government accommodation. That is entirely separate from the Sheraton, the Four Seasons, the Ayers Rock Lodge, the camping ground and those sorts of facilities. He referred to the fact that 25% of the cost of accommodation to the Northern Territory government was incurred at Yulara. That is a fairly astounding figure. I believe that it would be fiscally responsible for the Treasurer to investigate some financial process whereby that large amount of money might be saved. I trust that, in his response to that particular suggestion, I will not have abuse poured on my head. If there are problems with it, I am quite happy to hear them but I trust that that particular and constructive suggestion will not be buried under another mountain of Canberra bashing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those were the main comments I wished to make in the context of this debate. I have a couple of minutes left so I will comment briefly on 2 further points. One relates to the consumption levy on fuel and diesel oil that was mentioned in the Treasurer's statement. I am somewhat concerned that no figures were given in that particular section of the Treasurer's statement. Members will be aware that the recent increases in the costs of fuel engendered by federal government actions will seriously affect people in the remote areas of the Territory but particularly in central Australia where the indexed increase of 4¢ per litre will be felt severely. Mr Deputy Speaker, because this is an area in which you take keen interest, you would be better aware of the figures than I am. I understand that we can expect an 8¢ per litre increase in central Australia, but not such a great increase in the Top End. I would like the Treasurer to tell us how the proposed consumption levy will affect us on top of the already serious increases that have been imposed on the Northern Territory.

Debate adjourned.

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 4 financial bills - the Taxation Administration Amendment Bill (Serial 124), the Stamp Duty Amendment Bill (Serial 125), the Payroll Tax Amendment Bill (Serial 126) and the Business Franchise (Tobacco) Amendment Bill (Serial 127) - (a) being presented without notice; (b) being read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages and the third readings of the bills together; (c) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole; and (d) passing through all stages at this sittings.

Motion agreed to.

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Supply Bill 1985-86 passing through all stages at this sittings.

Motion agreed to.

#### TAXATION ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 124)

#### STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 125)

#### PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 126)

#### BUSINESS FRANCHISE (TOBACCO) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 127)

Bills presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

The purpose of these bills is to amend the relevant acts to introduce new rates of tax or fees. The proposed amendments to the Taxation Administration Act are complementary to amendments in the Stamp Duty Act which extend liability for stamp duty to insurance contracts related to buildings and contents. The amendment to the Taxation Administration Act will ensure that, where insurances are taken out in relation to property in the Territory, the duty imposed is paid to the Territory.

As already mentioned, it is proposed to amend the Stamp Duty Act to remove the concession for insurance policies on buildings and contents. It is also proposed that the rate of duty covering conveyances of land and interests in land be changed by introducing new marginal rates of ad valorem duty; that is, the duty will be related to the full value or consideration for the land or interest in the land which is conveyed. The government has decided to retain the present level of concessions for persons who are buying their first home in the Territory.

The level of stamp duty imposed on the transfer or issue of certificates of motor vehicle registration has remained unchanged since 1981. It is



proposed to increase the rate of duty under this head from 1.5% to 2%. At the same time, the maximum amount of duty to be paid will be raised from \$500 to \$1000.

The amendment to the Payroll Tax Act introduces 2 rates of tax, one at 5% for payrolls less than \$1m per annum and one at 6% for payrolls that exceed \$1m per annum. This new rate structure is similar to that which exists in New South Wales and Victoria. The government has recognised that the general exemption or threshold below which no tax is paid required adjustment to reduce the burden on many small businesses that have been caught by the rise in wages due to inflation. As a consequence, it has been decided to increase the threshold from the present level of \$150 000 to \$300 000. Many small businesses will therefore no longer be required to pay the tax. As the same tapering provisions will still apply, full tax will not be paid until the annual payroll exceeds \$750 000.

Mr Speaker, the final amendment which I wish to address is that introduced by the bill amending the Business Franchise (Tobacco) Act. The amendment raises the licence fee imposed under section 23 of the act from 25% to 35%. This brings the fee to the same level as in Western Australia and Tasmania. The increased fee will take effect immediately and will be reflected in August licences. A transitional period has been provided in clause 5 to avoid any retrospective charge.

In all of the above amendments, the government has been conscious of the need to continue to make a reasonable revenue effort viz a viz the states as well as the need to consider Territory circumstances. I believe that we have been able to achieve a balance which will not unduly affect Territory development. Mr Speaker, I commend the bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

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

Motion agreed to: the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

PETITION  
Mining in Territory Parks and Reserves

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 536 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to mineral exploration and mining in Territory parks and reserves. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms to the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

*To the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of the undersigned citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully shows that a national park is a relatively large area set aside for its features of predominantly unspoiled natural landscape, flora and fauna permanently dedicated for public enjoyment, education and inspiration and protected from all interference other than essential management practices so that its natural attributes are preserved. The petition shows that mineral exploration and mining operations are not essential management practices. The proposals to amend the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to facilitate mining and exploration in Territory parks and reserves should not proceed and that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly should move to exclude any mineral exploration or mining operation from Northern Territory parks and reserves. Your petitioners therefore humbly pray that the Speaker and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly give due consideration to the above, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.*

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Hon J.H. Warner MLA, A. Woodward ARMIT and J. Sharpe MHR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the Hon John Warner, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, together with Mr Alan Woodward, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and Mr John Sharpe, federal member for Gilmore. On behalf of honourable members, I extend a warm welcome to our visitors.

Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Phasing out of Commonwealth Electricity Subsidy to the NT

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the office of Minister for Finance, Senator Peter Walsh, was recently quoted as saying the senator was contemplating using a machine-gun to depopulate the north. Senator Walsh appears to be working vigorously towards his objective by using the electricity subsidy as just one weapon in his arsenal. The Northern Territory inherited not only an extremely high-cost electricity generating operation from the Commonwealth in the form of Stokes Hill Power-station but was also disadvantaged by the fact that we did not have any of our own fuel resources needed to produce electricity. In order to offset the resultant very high costs of electricity generation, the Commonwealth agreed to provide the Northern Territory with an operating subsidy. The purpose and the effect of this agreement was to enable electricity to be supplied without users making an unreasonably high revenue effort, which is one

of the basic tenets of fiscal equalisation. The transfer of the electricity function to the Northern Territory at the time of self-government was conditional upon these arrangements being in place.

Up until Mr Keating's mini-budget, the agreement provided for an electricity subsidy of approximately 50% of NTEC's operating costs, indexed to CPI, to continue until at least 1986-87 when it was due to be reviewed. Consistent with the principle of reasonable revenue effort, it was expected that the subsidy would continue to ensure Territory consumers were not overly burdened with high electricity prices. The Northern Territory government was certainly under no illusion about the subsidy arrangements. It was obvious that they could not continue ad infinitum. However, we did expect that progressive reductions would not occur until after the new powerhouse had been built and electricity generating costs were eventually contained.

Fuel used in the generation of electricity was NTEC's biggest current item of expenditure and accounted for 43% of its total operating expenditure in the 1983-84 financial year. To give honourable members some idea of the costs in Darwin alone, Stokes Hill Power-station burns an average of 500 t of heavy fuel a day. Currently, this fuel costs in the vicinity of \$262 a tonne. In other words, Stokes Hill Power-station burns more than \$130 000 worth of fuel per day. Electricity in the Northern Territory costs more to produce on a kilowatt-hour basis than anywhere in Australia. In 1983-84, the cost of producing and distributing each kilowatt-hour in the Territory was 19¢. The next most costly area in Australia was Western Australia where expenditure on each kilowatt-hour sold in 1983-84 was 11¢. Attachments A and B to this statement will give honourable members a clearer picture of our unfortunate situation in regard to kilowatt-hours. The average cents return on kilowatt-hours sold in 1983-84 in the Territory was 9¢.

Clearly, if we were going to reduce costs and bring NTEC closer to viability, there were 2 things that needed to be done: a more efficient power-station needed to be built and fuel costs had to be reduced or at least contained. In 1981, this government looked at the feasibility of using Amadeus Basin natural gas for Territory power generation, but the level of proven reserves and pipeline costs at that time ruled this option out until pipeline economies improved and more gas was found.

In early 1984, with estimates of gas reserves in the Amadeus Basin substantially upgraded and the advent of new technology in pipeline construction, the gas proposal became a real possibility. A consortium was formed to study the feasibility of building a 1500 km pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin. The consortium completed its study late in August 1984 and negotiations stemming from that report have been progressing since that time and will be concluded with formal signings this month. While this proposal was under consideration, a hold was placed on plans at that time to construct a new and more efficient coal-fired power-station on Channel Island to replace Stokes Hill Power-station. In December 1984, the Channel Island Power-station project was committed to gas fuel and coal considerations were formally abandoned.

The Commonwealth had agreed to provide a \$150m capital grant, being 40% of the \$370m capital costs of a 180 MW coal-fired power-station at Channel Island. As a result of the Northern Territory government's decision to go gas and the Commonwealth's decision to pay 40% of the capital costs of a gas-fired power-station - that is, the new \$52m maximum grant plus \$13m paid to date - the Northern Territory has made substantial savings for the Commonwealth. The gas decision will save the Commonwealth nearly \$85m in capital grants, a consideration one would have thought it might have given us a point for instead

of the arbitrary, premature termination of the subsidy. Reports prepared for the Territory government by consultants indicated that capital costs of the pipeline, coupled with a known fixed price for delivery of gas to Channel Island, would result in electricity production costs falling to an extent that, by 1994, they could be covered by a realistic level of tariffs.

Mr Speaker, I will restate the position we were in prior to the Commonwealth's mini-budget this year. We had a Commonwealth subsidy equal to 50% of our operating costs due to be renewed following 1986-87. We had finalised negotiations which would provide us with an indigenous fuel source with known and foreseeable future price increases. We had committed Channel Island to gas using a combination of open cycle and combined cycle turbines. We had converted the Alice Springs Power-station to use natural gas and, while tariffs in the Northern Territory were at the highest levels in Australia, we had for the future a sound economic scenario which would put the Territory's electricity supply on a cost efficient basis in less than 10 years. We had saved the Commonwealth \$85m that it had agreed to pay us. The one thing we had not planned for was the federal Minister for Finance's astounding attitude towards Australians living in the Territory. The fact that our development would not be jeopardised obviously irked Senator Walsh as it was incompatible with his plans for depopulation.

What the Northern Territory government was seeking from the Commonwealth was a continuation of the existing subsidy until 1993-94 when no subsidy would be required. In his mini-budget, the Treasurer, Paul Keating, announced the electricity subsidy would be slashed by \$38m in the 1985-86 financial year and the Commonwealth would only provide \$40m per year for the next 4 years after which the subsidy would cease.

Mr Speaker, the immediate impact of the Commonwealth's decision is clear. NTEC's operating deficit in 1985-86 will be \$72m before the subsidy of \$40m is taken into consideration and this deficit will increase to \$173m by 1995-96. These estimates are based on the continuation of a 2% per quarter tariff increase and include a program of borrowings to offset shortfalls. Attachment C to the statement is a summary of projections under the existing 2% per quarter tariff. I stress that the figures shown in this attachment and indeed other attachments are for indicative purposes. Further work on them by NTEC and the Territory Treasury is continuing.

The Leader of the Opposition has responded to the Commonwealth's tearing up of the electricity subsidy agreement by telling us that Territorians 'do not have too much to complain about'. He was quoted as saying that \$5 a week would cover it. I point out to the honourable member that, even if we increased every consumer's account by \$5 a week every year for 10 years, NTEC's accumulated debt would be in excess of \$800m at the end of that period. The Leader of the Opposition clearly does not comprehend or does not want to comprehend the effects of the Commonwealth's decision.

It must be clearly understood that the investment in natural gas development is a long-term investment and there are many factors that will result in a significant increase in the costs of production of electricity in the early years of our use of gas in Darwin. Some of these factors are as follows. Construction of the pipeline is a massive project and it would be folly to size that pipeline on our present requirements for gas. The pipeline must be sized to cater for long-term future requirements and this means that, in the early years, we will have, and will have to pay for, an oversized pipe. The actual cost of gas in the early years of the project will be relatively high in that gas producers must see a reasonable financial return on investment

necessary to produce the gas even in the early years when NTEC's requirements will be very much less than in later years. Although the capital cost of gas turbines will be less than for equivalent coal-fired generating capacity, NTEC will still carry the impact of further requirements to service substantial capital payments for the Channel Island Power-station and its infrastructure. There will be a changeover period when both Channel Island Power-station and Stokes Hill Power-station will be supplying power to Darwin. Operation and maintenance costs of 2 power-stations operating in this mode will be higher than when Channel Island is fully commissioned to supply all of the load, at which time Stokes Hill Power-station will be closed.

Mr Speaker, the Commonwealth has not taken, or has chosen not to take, these matters into account. It simply said: 'You are making savings by switching to gas so we have halved your subsidy for the next year and we will extend it for an extra couple of years'. That decision immediately placed NTEC in the position of having to undertake a major review of its planned expenditure in the years to come. NTEC had planned for operating expenditure of \$155m in 1985-86. This was to have been funded from an operating subsidy of \$78m and revenue from electricity tariffs of \$77m. If the \$155m operating expenditure were to be maintained, it would have to be funded now from an operating subsidy of \$40m, while revenue from electricity tariffs would have to rise by the \$38m shortfall, representing a tariff rise of 50%.

I believe a number of items will have to be cut from NTEC's program if we are to contain electricity tariff increases. If tariff increases are too large a magnitude, the effects are likely to be twofold, neither of which is desirable. There will be hardship caused to some sectors of the community, particularly low-income families, and the higher cost of electricity could lead to reduced demand. Any reduction in usage will delay economies of scale.

In 1982, NTEC appointed a consultant to conduct a comprehensive study into Darwin's future demand and energy growths. The Darwin model was updated in 1984 and forecasts were reviewed. Prior to the Commonwealth's decision to cut and abolish the electricity subsidy, the load growth forecast on a Territory-wide basis was a healthy 5% per annum. Using the same econometric equations, there are indications that tariff increases necessary to make up for the loss of the Commonwealth subsidy could reduce load growth to less than 1% over the next 16 years and, in the short term, load growth could become negative. NTEC is confident of being able to continue to reduce its own expenditure. However, most of these cuts can only be achieved by deferral of works and expenditure which will have to be incurred at a later date and will result in some reduction in the reliability of the present electricity supply system.

Preliminary investigations by NTEC indicate the possibility of reducing operating expenditure in 1985-86 by \$3m. This can be achieved through a reduction in manpower by natural attrition and a 10% reduction in other operational expenses such as transport, travel, consultancy fees etc. Investigations also show the possibility of reducing capital expenditure by \$8m in 1985-86 through the delay or cancellation of several major projects such as planned interconnections with Aboriginal communities at Oenpelli and Hermannsburg, deferral of the Roe Creek power-station at Alice Springs, postponement of planned extensions at Tennant Creek and so on.

Mr Speaker, given the facts that I have outlined, there would appear to be only 3 real options open to us. Firstly, we could increase tariffs to cover the full loss of the subsidy. As mentioned previously, the 50% reduction in the subsidy could be recovered by a 50% increase in revenue through tariffs. Through budget cuts and use of some internal funds currently available, this

increase could be reduced to around 20% to 30% in 1985-86 and also 1988-89, as the subsidy drops to \$40m and nil respectively. In the intervening and following years, tariff increases of about 10% to 15% could be expected and, by the mid-1990s, NTEC should be operating as a financially autonomous commercial operation independent of government monetary support. The obvious problem of this approach is that the 20% to 30% rise in any particular year represents a very significant burden both on the business community and domestic consumers. It is expected, as I previously mentioned, that such increases would result in reduced growth in electricity consumption, thereby preventing economies of operation in NTEC which could be anticipated.

Secondly, we could provide NTEC with a Northern Territory government subsidy. There is an argument for the Territory government to take up the burden created by the Commonwealth subsidy cuts by a grant from consolidated revenue at the expense of other government programs. Initial figures indicate that a subsidy in the order of \$40m per annum for 10 years would be required. The Territory government rejects this option on the grounds that many Territory taxpayers do not use electricity supplied by NTEC and should not therefore suffer government expenditure reductions of this magnitude to subsidise NTEC. Of equal importance, the Commonwealth disregard for signed financial agreements with this government were not limited to NTEC and the government is faced with belt-tightening which will hurt, even without paying tens of millions of dollars to subsidise electricity.

The third option is to increase borrowings by government to reduce the levels of tariff increases to consumers. While the government could increase borrowings to cover the full effect of the subsidy reduction, thereby minimising tariff increases to CPI or slightly above, this presents its own problems. Such a course of action shifts the burden arising from the subsidy cut from today's consumers to future consumers. It also produces a very high level of debt. Initial estimates put this as rising to in excess of \$1000m within 10 years. Given the Commonwealth's attitude on global loan raising limits, it would be difficult to raise that level of funding, especially considering that the present revenue of NTEC is less than \$100m per annum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, obviously none of those 3 options in itself represents a satisfactory solution for the government or the people of the Northern Territory. The government is looking at some combination of loan borrowings and increased tariffs. Attachments D, E and F demonstrate the effects of some tariff options that are available. I point out again that, in making 20-year projections, many assumptions have to be made such as inflation, interest and load growth. All of these can vary substantially as the years go by. However, the schedules are indicative of the magnitude of the problem that faces us. I would be happy to arrange for NTEC officers to brief any members who seek further interpretation of the schedule.

Also directly related to these options is the question of whether NTEC's present tariff structure needs to be altered to reflect more adequately the costs of power generation in the Territory. The Territory's present tariff structures are still similar to those in north Queensland which results in a reduced average price as consumption increases. In order to provide more appropriate tariffs for the Territory, NTEC is proposing the introduction of a fixed charge plus flat rate for energy for both domestic and commercial consumers at the time of the next tariff increases. Perhaps I could explain that a little better. NTEC is looking at a system whereby there is a flat charge for all consumers, whether or not they consume electricity, and thereafter a flat charge for units consumed. The system would be somewhat similar to the charges for sewerage whereby, if your block is serviced and

connected to electricity, you pay a flat fee. There would be a small fee whether or not one consumed electricity.

Clearly, the Commonwealth has dealt the Territory a devastating blow. The Territory government is now examining options available to cushion this effect and will be making final decisions as a matter of urgency. I expect to announce a decision next week on new tariffs to apply on 1 July. In the meantime, I trust that this statement and the attachments will assist honourable members in fully understanding the effects the Commonwealth's decision has on the Northern Territory. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that we have a massive problem on our hands. What I find disturbing is that I talked to members opposite about this problem 6 months ago at least. It was common knowledge in Canberra that we had a problem on our hands and a battle that we had to fight. At that stage, they were talking about knocking off the whole subsidy. I know that the members opposite and members on this side of the Assembly went into bat over it. We managed to bring it back to the same gross amount, but over 4 years. What disturbs me is that it is not just 6 months after the rumour started but weeks after the actual decision was made. We now have a statement that provides figures but all the options are too hard: 'We could do this and we could do that and the minister hopes to make a decision next week'. This government says: 'We have massive problems but we cannot work out what to do about them'. It is not doing the Territory any good at all.

Did the minister elaborate on the various issues involved in the particular subsidy that was cut? The fact is that it is a certain amount in dollar terms which we will now receive over 4 years instead of 2 years. We have a problem relating back to the other capital expenditure, the development of the gas pipeline and the power-station etc but we are talking about a particular operational subsidy which was cut in half for the first 2 years and the other half to be paid over the following years. In relation to that particular part of the subsidy, we made the very simple point that, if we have deficit funding for 2 years, the cost of the deferral of half of the money for another 2 years would not be anything like the \$17 a week that was mentioned by acting Chief Minister no 1 and I think acting Chief Minister no 2 had another figure a couple of days later. Acting Chief Minister no 3, the Minister for Mines and Energy, did not know what the question was all about and said: 'We are not having the next generation paying for this generation's power'. That would be fair enough if we were talking about a deferral for 10 or 20 years.

We were simply making the point that, if we have a massive hiccup in the system that will occur over the next 2 to 4 years, a case can be made for wearing the costs of deferring half of the operational deficit for an average period of 2 years. The cost of that in itself would be something in the vicinity of \$5m per year. If that was the only part of the problem, that is what we should do. I acknowledge that the problem goes much deeper than that. However, it is no good trying to confuse the whole issue by saying it simply relates back to the subsidy because it does not. The subsidy related only to a particular part of our problem. Our problem goes back to matters such as total capital expenditure, the fact that we have a very low demand...

Mr Palmer: What about excise on fuel?

Mr EDE: Did I hear a dollar a tonne the other day? Is that the excise you are talking about? A different one?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Honourable members will address their remarks through the Chair.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a problem with the way that we want to develop the capital structure of the electricity industry in the Top End. I have done some econometric modelling myself on it and I have not had the advantage of the massive IBM computer that they have over the other side. The capital expenditure is being included and I do not know why. I prefer to treat capital expenditure as different from the actual deficits when you are working out your ability to fund a development program. Capital expenditure by its nature should be treated as being amortised over a particular period and you accept that as being part of the development path that you follow. You treat your actual recurrent deficits differently; you cannot work them into a 20-year deficit repayment pattern. You work out how you can minimise them over a period of something like 4 to 5 years and, within that period, you try to work out how you will even the bumps out.

If we worked it out in the way I have mentioned, with no change in demand, if we raised the total amount that we need to meet not just the 50% reduction in the subsidy but also the 60% of the cost of the new power-station, we would have the debt build up to something around \$135m before it became square again in the late 1990s. That is a massive problem. We have to work out what level of tariff increase we can have without stifling demand and running the danger of ending up in a downward spiral. There are many elements to it which are not immediately apparent. On the facts available to me, I am not sure how significant it would be to put a few different demand sensitisors into it and see whether, if we had a 2% or 3% increase in demand, that would bring this out early enough to justify a possible subsidy from the general budget of the NT government into NTEC. I would also like to look further into the possibility of running the line down to Katherine. On the face of it, a fairly massive capital cost would be involved to run that line down. We could say, as the government has done, that we have brought capital into our equations. We may talk about deferral of that. On the other hand, if we do that, what effect would that have on the total demand and the most economic level of power generation out of the station that we have developed? If we do not have Katherine and the new Tindal base, it may be that we will not have a strong enough build up in demand to be able to more than justify the capital expenditure and also assist in reducing recurrent deficit.

On the same line but in a different place, I can see that there is a possibility of a justification for Katherine. I find it very hard to understand how the minister can justify the running of a line 20 km from Tennant Creek back down to Ali Curung. The power needs of that small community of 800 people were more than adequately satisfied by the plant that was there.

Mr Manzie: At what cost?

Mr EDE: A person from the community was trained to run the place and it was then decided that that would be closed down and a line run from Tennant Creek.

In answer to the interjection, I am certain that it was expensive. However, I am not convinced and I would ask members opposite to tell me what is the decrease in the per kilowatt-hour caused by the increase in consumption by the 800 people at Ali Curung and how many years it would take for that marginal increase in efficiency out of the Tennant Creek powerhouse to pay off a 200 km powerline to Ali Curung. I would be interested to obtain some authoritative figures on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, there could be a case for the government saying that it will give some short-term assistance to NTEC. We have



not been given any conclusions in this paper. It mentions a whole list of added problems but I do not think that the government ought simply to wipe out these ideas like internal cross-matching subsidies and say: 'That is outside our philosophy. We will not do it'. It ought to say: 'If we have a downward spiral in demand which causes more inefficiencies because of reduced economies of scale, it may be that a subsidy of \$10m to \$15m per year over a period of 4 to 5 years may end up being far better for us in the long term than the blind adherence to our principle of no deficits in any year'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that, if Nhulunbuy were to come in on the gas pipeline, we would achieve various economies in that particular part of the operation which would assist in offsetting some of the cost build-ups in other areas. I applaud the actions of the government in its efforts to negotiate with Nabalco. I have heard that it is not a particularly easy group to work with and I do not think there is anything new in that. The gnomes of Zurich have built themselves up a bit of a reputation in that regard. I talked to one of the honourable ministers yesterday about a possible alternative to the \$1 per tonne which related back to the renegotiation of the agreement which will come up in the near future. I think that possibly we can talk a bit further on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is a disappointment that we have gone this far down the road and still we have no answer on what we will do. It is a disappointment to find that, having come here expecting to hear what decisions have been taken over the structure, we are to leave knowing there are none. I hope that this will not continue. I am certain that people who are thinking of coming to the Territory and relocating here are not rushing their decision when the whole matter is up in the air and we do not have any answers.

When reading through the attachments while the minister was speaking, I was a bit disturbed to see that gross cents return per kilowatt-hour sold has been used. In making these comparisons between the states, there is no sense in putting a case which, very obviously, can be knocked by the average Joe Blow who comes in off the street. There is a big hole in these figures because we know that, in many states, deals are done with various big users of power leading to situations such as the recent one in Victoria where I think the charge was 1c per kilowatt-hour. Such deals change the whole picture that we have here and those things need to be taken out of the picture before the computation of 2 rates - the domestic rate and the commercial rate. By doing that, a genuine comparison between the states can be obtained. That comparison should be made without the special deals and without grossing the whole thing together as has been done here because, if indeed we are starting to climb above the other states, we will certainly do our best to assist the government to put to our federal counterparts that it is just not on to raise a behind-the-door tax on the people of the Northern Territory by pushing up the cost of electricity to them far beyond what anybody else in Australia has to pay. We will support the government in moves in that direction but, to do so, we need genuine figures and not these other things which are irrelevant to the particular case that we are making here. 'Distort' is the word that I am looking for, Mr Deputy Speaker. These factors in the figures distort the averages and do not allow a genuinely comparative figure to be obtained between the Territory and the states.

The main point I was hoping to make was that it is disappointing that we have known for 6 months that we would have something whacked at us, it is about a month since we received the bad news yet still we have no decision. We are told we will hear something next week. I hope that the government will get its act together, stop trying to chase around overseas to look at things over there and work out the sums and tell the people of the Northern Territory just where they stand.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will pick up one point that the honourable member made earlier about taking power from Darwin down to Katherine, a distance of some 300 km. As anyone who knows about the distribution of electricity would be aware, that would require raising it to a very high voltage through transformers in Darwin, its transmission at a high voltage to reduce the energy losses in that line and the availability of expensive equipment to transform it back down to Katherine. It would be similar to the operation at Ali Curung. What would be the point of bringing the gas past Katherine to Darwin, generating the electricity here and taking it back down?

Mr Ede: You tell me.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I will tell you. Gas turbines are very mobile instruments. They could be put in at Katherine. In fact, from my understanding of gas turbines, I believe that, rather than putting them together in one particular power-station, they should be dotted around the northern suburbs in Darwin and located conveniently in relation to the gas pipeline itself. In Alice Springs, there has been talk of locating a new power-station in the Brewer Plain.

Mr Ede: Roe Creek.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Yes, Roe Creek. But the point is that we have a perfectly good station in Alice Springs. We can add gas turbines to that as the town's requirements for power increase. Gas turbines can be installed at Roe Creek for the industrial area as they are needed. They are self-contained units and that would save the extra cost of transforming the generating voltage of 1100 volts up to high voltage necessary to take it any distance. The suggestion to bring gas through to Darwin and then take high voltage lines back to Katherine is nonsense. The honourable member should check into a few of these things.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in January, the minister announced increases in electricity charges and we had many mumbles and grumbles from people opposite. I do not suppose that we were happy either. But, in the last day or 2, we have had them turn the cheek the other way and say that we should have seen that this subsidy would be cut in some way and we should have made some contingency arrangements. That is exactly what the Minister for Mines and Energy did.

Mr Ede: Is that what you were doing?

Mr D.W. COLLINS: We cannot tell exactly what Canberra will do and neither can you. Those increases were proposed to try to cushion the blow if it fell and, of course, his predictions have come true.

The greatest load of nonsense I have heard for a long time came from the honourable member early in his speech. In my book, he likened Canberra's actions in this matter to those of Soviet Russia. There are many stories about the heavy-handed actions of people in Soviet Russia. People have been given 20-year sentences for some assumed crime and, when they have been put in jail, their sentences have been reduced to 10 years and the people involved and their friends and relations are supposed to feel very grateful for the fact that the sentences have been reduced. The very fact that they were not guilty in the first place has nothing to do with it. That is the sort of nonsense we have had put over this morning: it was well known around Canberra that the whole subsidy would go and we should be grateful for the fact that we got half of the subsidy. What a load of tripe! It is absolute tripe and we were definitely not guilty.

The Memorandum of Understanding has been ripped up and spat upon because the Territory had the gall to return a CLP member to Canberra. The beauty of this is that it is very clear that the federal government in Canberra is on the skids and it will not be very long before we get rid of it.

It is very clear to me and to everybody in the Territory that we have had a savage setback to Territory development. There will be a reduction in the amount of power used and hence the economies of scale will be lost. It will be much harder for us to become independent of Canberra in the matter of power generation. I have said to this Assembly and to the electorate on many occasions that the gas pipeline will not necessarily make our power cheaper but we hope that, in time, we can become totally independent of Canberra. We want to stand on our own feet but what we have here will make that a darned sight harder.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Deputy Speaker, of all the things that the federal government has done to the Northern Territory in the last 6 months, we would all agree that the actions taken in relation to electricity have the most serious ramifications. The Minister for Mines and Energy has demonstrated once again that, when he puts his mind to it, he is capable of putting to this Assembly a competent and reasonably factual account of what will happen. However, in so doing, he has left a few unanswered questions and I would invite him to address himself to those. Secondly, I suspect that what he has done is to present - and, justifiably, because the public deserve it - a worst possible case. I would ask him to address himself to page 6 of the Chief Minister's mini-budget speech yesterday which says:

*The Commonwealth has agreed to provide the full \$15m sought to cushion NTEC's predicted operating deficit. Mr Keating has agreed to support further requests to finance NTEC's operating deficits in future years, as long as the Territory maintains a reasonable electricity tariff relative to the states.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, I referred to this point in my speech yesterday and I think that the public of the Northern Territory and this Assembly deserve some elaboration of that particular point. What is a reasonable electricity tariff relative to the states? Do we have a figure? Do we have a federal government statement which provides us with an indication of what a reasonable electricity tariff relative to the states is? If we do not have it yet, why don't we have it? What efforts is the Northern Territory government making to obtain such a statement? Most importantly, what impact will that statement have, if we do get it, on the projections that the Minister for Mines and Energy has given us today?

A second question that arises out of that paragraph is: why did the Northern Territory government, in its submission to federal government, restrict itself to a \$15m loan request? I think that I have no rational explanation for this. My colleague, the shadow minister, knows of no reason why the request was restricted to \$15m. After the initial confusion created by the Chief Minister in the media last week, it appears that we have been granted this \$15m. The logical conclusion that the public will reach is that, assuming we will receive the \$15m, if we had the foresight to put in a request for a larger loan, we might have received that too. We deserve reassurance that that is not the case. That reassurance certainly has not been supplied to us yet.

Another question that arises as a result of the statement of the minister concerns the projections that have been supplied by his department on the gas pipeline. Certainly, I appreciate the offer that he has made to members of this

Assembly for a briefing. I can assure him I and other members of the opposition will be taking up this offer. However, from reading the statement, it would appear that there are some significant differences between the projections provided in papers from his department and the statement itself. I had a very clear impression that, by 1993 or 1994, under the projections that have been provided to the opposition, the unit price of electricity using the gas would be very similar to the existing unit price. I had the distinct impression from the minister's speech that he was backing away from that and was making it quite clear that the unit price in 1994-95 for electricity will be substantially higher than the existing unit price. That is certainly one of the matters that I intend to pursue with NTEC officers when the briefing takes place.

This is a perfect demonstration of the inability of this government to deal with the federal government. In 1983, when this government was re-elected with its present majority of 19 to 6, the slogan which the government very successfully used was 'Stand up for the Territory'. Obviously, Northern Territorians at that time believed that, if they re-elected the CLP government, that CLP government would do its best to ensure that the Northern Territory was given a fair deal. Those people would be gravely disappointed, particularly with the change of Chief Minister. I would invite you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to consider the different response we would have had to this particular issue if the previous Chief Minister were the Chief Minister at this time. The Northern Territory government would not have laid down and copped it like it seems to be doing now. We would have had a much bigger fuss and a much more determined effort to go to the federal government and to convince the federal government and the people of Australia that the people of the Northern Territory deserved a better deal.

What have we had? We have had some whingeing in the newspaper. We have had no attempt to involve the people of the Northern Territory or the opposition of the Northern Territory in an approach to Canberra. We have had a weak-kneed response to the federal government. It is clear that, under the stewardship of the present Chief Minister, this government is not in the same league as the federal government and it is certainly not in the same league and does not have the same pull as the government under the previous Chief Minister. It is clear that people in this community are getting a little bit tired of the efforts of the Chief Minister. For the sake of Territorians, it is time that he lifted his game and put some real meaning behind the words 'Stand up for the Territory'.

Mr Tuxworth: Who were the guys telling everybody that we were getting too much money?

Mr SMITH: 'Stand up for the Territory', Mr Deputy Speaker! It is easy enough...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Millner will be heard in silence.

Mr SMITH: It is easy enough for members opposite to make comments in here but they are remarkably silent and remarkably ineffective in making comments where it counts: at the federal government level.

Debate adjourned.

#### SUPPLY BILL (Serial 121)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Authority to spend moneys under the 1984-85 Appropriation Act lapses on 30 June 1985. Therefore, legislation is necessary before that date to provide for expenditure between then and the passage of the 1985-86 Appropriation Bill. The Supply Bill provides for expenditure during the first 5 months of the financial year, with sufficient funds being provided to ensure the continuation of capital works programs, roadworks and normal services of government. It does not foreshadow the budget for 1985-86, although the manner of calculations of provisions made in the Supply Bill must of course have regard to the estimated cost of ongoing services in the first 5 months. The bill provides for a total expenditure of \$453.171m allocated by division and subdivision to the various departments and authorities.

The significant items include: capital works sponsored by the departments - \$51m; repairs and maintenance, including roads, highways and buildings - \$14.3m; the construction and loan programs of the Housing Commission - \$30m; education, including colleges - \$75.8m; and health - \$51.8m. In addition, the bill contains an appropriation of \$20m entitled 'Advance to the Treasurer' from which the Treasurer may allocate funds for purposes specified in the bill, including provision for the cost of inflation.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members and would just remind them that we authorised the passage of this bill through all stages at this sittings.

Debate adjourned.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 124)

STAMP DUTY AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 125)

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 126)

BUSINESS FRANCHISE (TOBACCO) AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 127)

Continued from 4 June 1985.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, as I have said before, the federal government has made it very difficult for the Northern Territory by the recent actions that it has taken. I have also said, and I do not resile from it either, that the Northern Territory government has handled the matter and responded to questions raised by the opposition on how it has handled the matter in a less than perfect manner. We have an unfortunate situation in that, for the first time in all of the Territory's history since self-government, the Northern Territory government is faced with making some difficult decisions. The bills that we have in front of us are concerned mainly with implications arising out of changes made by the federal government to the tax-sharing arrangements. I do not propose at this stage to talk about electricity subsidies or anything else outside of the tax-sharing arrangements.

I want to make one quick reference to a comment made yesterday by the Chief Minister. He said that it was his view - obviously provided on advice -

that, in terms of the tax-sharing agreements, we had lost in real terms 1% for 1985-86 over 1984-85. I would appreciate an explanation of how that loss occurs. The understanding of the opposition on the tax-sharing arrangements for 1985-86 is that, together with the states, the Northern Territory has been limited to a 7% CPI increase in its tax-sharing funding plus a population component consisting of the difference between the population increase in the Northern Territory in the last 12-month period, whenever that started and finished, and the population increase in Australia during that same period. On the figures that we have been able to produce, and I am the first to admit that they are elementary figures and there may well be something wrong, that is sufficient to give us real income growth, albeit small income growth. I stress again that I am talking about the tax-sharing arrangements only. It is our understanding that, as the states also have been limited to this 7% growth and as their population growth is significantly less than that in the Northern Territory, an argument can be put forward that, in the tax-sharing grants area, we have done better than the states in terms of real growth and real percentages. I am seeking information because, on the figures we have been able to come up with, that is the situation. I would like to be corrected if I am wrong.

Mr Speaker, in considering the bills that we have before us, I guess a government that wants to increase taxes or charges must look at 2 or 3 basic principles. First, particularly in the situation that Australia is in where we have had a significant unemployment problem for quite some time, a basic principle ought to be that any taxes or charges imposed do not offer significant disincentives to employment. Secondly, we would all accept the principle that, where taxes and charges must be imposed, no section of the community should be singled out. Thirdly, I suspect that we would all agree that, at a time when we are increasing the burden on people who are paying their regular fair and proper share of taxes, we want to be very certain indeed that everybody who should be paying tax is paying tax. I offer a classic example outside the scope of the Northern Territory government. It concerns workers' compensation. Both the Victorian and the Northern Territory reports into workers' compensation quite clearly indicated that there was a significant percentage of firms or employers who were not paying workers' compensation and that was increasing the cost of total workers' compensation to the other employers. In fact, somebody said that, in the Northern Territory, we were only collecting between 50% and 60% of what we should be collecting.

A matter within the control of the Northern Territory government is payroll tax collection. I am first to acknowledge that, in the last couple of years, the Commissioner of Taxes has been able to employ additional staff and has been able to chase up payroll tax. The results of that have been evident in the sums that have been collected under that heading in the last 19 months or so. Again, without having the information before me, I would suspect that there is still a significant underpayment of payroll tax in the community. It is more important than ever that all efforts be made to ensure that all those who should be paying payroll tax are paying payroll tax. One of the most significant areas that needs to be looked at in that context is the building industry and the relationships that occur between builders and their so-called subcontractors. I know the Australian Taxation Office has been paying very close attention to that area. I am sure that the Northern Territory Commissioner of Taxes also has been showing interest in that area. It is important that that interest continue because I am certain that there are still a large number of people who are evading the paying of proper payroll tax.

There are other little things that occur from time to time. One of them that has been in the press recently is the alleged abuse of the NTEC pensioner

concession scheme. It behoves the government at this time of belt-tightening to ensure that such abuses are wiped out. The government has the full support of this opposition to ensure that everybody pays his full and proper share of the taxes and charges imposed in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, to look at the question of payroll tax again for a moment, I said yesterday that we welcome the government taking an initiative proposed by myself and the member for Braitling that the threshold of payroll tax be increased. Of the charges that necessarily are placed on employers by the government, the one they resent the most is payroll tax. We all accept that, in a perfect world, it would not make sense that you tax people for employing people. We would all be much better off if we could go back 50 or 60 years, or whenever that tax was first imposed, and vigorously oppose it. We seem to be stuck with it.

Mr Speaker, the point is that we have to be very sure we do not structure a payroll tax system that unnecessarily places these additional burdens on industry in the Northern Territory. They have additional burdens in other areas because of proposals announced by the government, particularly in relation to electricity costs. I ask that, if it becomes clear that the payroll tax changes are imposing an additional burden over and beyond what is expected, the government will be flexible enough to have another look at it. In terms of disincentives to employment, I think employers consider that to be fairly important. If there is a proper case put to it by employers that, despite the best intentions of the government with the raising of the threshold, that has been overcompensated by the increase from 4.5% to 5%, the government should be prepared to have another look at that.

Mr Speaker, turning to the tobacco and liquor taxes, we had one of several statements from the Chief Minister which I found to be quite peculiar in their context. Quite obviously, the primary reason for introducing all these taxes and charges is the need to raise money because of changes made by the federal government yet we have had social reasons advanced by the Chief Minister on a number of occasions for these increased charges. If the reasons are primarily social ones, why weren't they advanced earlier? However, I am not going to advance that line of argument because, for some reason of his own that I do not fully understand, the Chief Minister is trying to dress up some of these.

I would like to quote one sentence from his speech: 'The continued rise in our road toll, largely related to the consumption of liquor, gives evidence of the need to encourage a change in drinking patterns'. He then went on to say that there would be increases in licence fees. I understand that it will cost 1¢ more for a can of beer in a hotel and 2¢ a can more to take away from a hotel or other licensed outlet. If that is correct, it would seem that that will have the reverse effect to what this government has been attempting to do with the support of the opposition. If I am correct, the changes would tend to encourage people to drink more in the hotel and to take less away from the takeaway outlet because an additional burden has been placed on them if they buy from a takeaway outlet. It is a minor point but it just does not make sense. Certainly, it is inconsistent with the first sentence of the Chief Minister's remarks about liquor licensing fees.

Mr Speaker, one of the most controversial aspects of the Chief Minister's speech yesterday in terms of extra revenue he hopes to raise is in the matter of stamp duty. The changes proposed by the government to stamp duty will raise an additional \$1.6m. It has been pointed out to me several times already by members of the public that, although \$1.6m is not a very large sum and will not be large for each individual transaction, \$1m was forgone by the Northern

Territory government within the last 12 months when it failed to impose stamp duty in respect of the takeover of the casinos. I think people will be very suspicious indeed that that \$1m was forgone. Obviously, that was not a precedent and other big deals in the Northern Territory have been expedited by the granting of stamp duty concessions. Nevertheless, the ordinary person in the Northern Territory will be expected to cough up a bit more for each transaction involving stamp duty. It behoves the government to make a very clear statement in this debate that no future stamp duty concessions will be granted, that everybody, big or small, in the Northern Territory will pay his fair share under this proposed legislative change.

Mr Speaker, one of the problems that the Northern Territory has is that it has a very limited base on which it can impose taxation. Obviously, that is a significant handicap in putting together any taxation package. I want to flag something for consideration. Because of the reception it received when it was flagged previously, I want to make it very clear that there is no Labor Party commitment to it. However, I think this is an appropriate time for a public discussion to take place on the possible implementation of a bed tax to apply to hotels, motels and other places of accommodation in the Northern Territory. It is not a unique proposal. Singapore, which is one of the biggest tourist destinations in the world, imposes a bed tax. If a bed tax of \$1 per night were imposed on all accommodation in the Northern Territory and if, at a conservative estimate, there were 1.5 million bed nights per year in the Northern Territory, \$1.5m would be raised. The argument for it is that it will not add a large additional burden onto the cost of accommodation in the Northern Territory and, in its small way, it would relieve some of the burden of taxpayers in the Northern Territory who are faced with these additional taxes and charges. As I said, we do not have a commitment to it but we believe it is one possible area in which the government may expand its taxation base. Certainly, we would invite comment on it, both today and outside the Assembly.

Mr Speaker, one of the things that concern us and which illustrates a basic problem we have with the government's approach on this whole matter is that the whole package with which we are confronted has been put together in a rush. We have a situation where quite significant cuts in government expenditure are to be made. Nevertheless, we had a clear statement from the Chief Minister in question time this morning that the government is not able to tell us where those cuts are to be made and, particularly, who will be affected and what jobs will be affected until Cabinet deliberations in respect of the next financial year are completed. Reading between the lines, I would expect that we will not find out the details of those Cabinet deliberations until the budget sittings in this Assembly in 2 months time.

I would submit that it is terribly unfair to people in the Department of Education, where we know that 50-plus jobs are to be shed, and to other people in government departments; for example, the Department of Lands, where it is said that there will be savings in salaries and administrative costs, and in NTDC also. I repeat that it is unfair that they will have to wait, on the Chief Minister's words, 2 months until they know whether they have a job or not. That will lead to a reduction in morale and an increase in uncertainty in the public service in general.

Mr Speaker, the government could have done it in a much better way. It has become quite clear that the government has seized this time to put forward its mini-budget in an attempt to sheet home as much of the blame as possible to the federal government whereas it could quite easily have left most of these decisions until the August budget sittings. At that time, it could have put forward a comprehensive case with all the questions and answers sorted out, instead of the hodge-podge of information and misinformation that we have had.



Mr Speaker, I would appreciate a comment from the Chief Minister as to whether work on the proposed parliament house, the children's hospital and the Roe Creek power-station has been ceased. I know from both the written media and the radio and television that definite statements have been attributed to the Chief Minister's mini-budget speech indicating that work on those proposals had ceased, and yet nothing at all was contained in the mini-budget speech on those 3 projects.

In connection with the children's hospital, I expect that the government would be very pleased to find a way out of its quite foolish election commitment to build a children's hospital in Darwin. As the previous Minister for Health would know, it was quite clear that all the medical opinion in Darwin was opposed to the construction of a children's hospital. I am not going to condemn the government for breaking an election promise on this particular occasion because it was a ridiculous promise to make. I am glad that the government has broken its election promise on this particular issue because it made no sense at all.

Mr Speaker, to come back to the principles that I started with, I think that the government has attempted to come up with a series of taxes and charges that are widely based and that no particular section of the community has been singled out. Our objection is to the level that has been imposed and, of course, that objection relates back to the inept way in which this government has handled these financial matters.

I conclude by saying that the government needs to demonstrate to the public of the Northern Territory that it has cut as much fat as it can out of the system. There are considerable reservations in the Northern Territory as to whether, in fact, that is the case. The government had better be very sure that that is the case because the Northern Territory public, which is faced with these very significant increases in taxes and charges, will be less than happy if some of the extravagant practices of this government continue.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Millner referred to the government's actions as cutting the fat out of the Northern Territory budget. It is not a matter of cutting the fat out of our budget; it is a matter of putting off until tomorrow or some other time projects and programs that are vital to the continuing development of the Northern Territory.

We have heard reference to the Northern Territory being bashed around the ears. Yesterday, the member for MacDonnell suggested that maybe we ought to discontinue this Canberra bashing but, when we are talking about bashing, I would liken the recent actions of Senator Walsh to those of the schoolyard bully boy using his bag of marbles to bash the Territory around the ears. However, it is not just a matter of being bashed around the ears. By virtue of his government's policies on development, or lack of policies in some cases, it is a bit like being bashed around the ears with one hand tied behind your back. What really hurts me is that, not only are we being bashed around the ears by this schoolyard bully but people are sitting around the schoolyard watching the whole action going on - people like Walsh's federal compatriots and, of course, our own Senator Ted Robertson. Not only has Ted Robertson stood around the schoolyard watching us being bashed about but he has aided and abetted it. What vigorous action have the people opposite taken to ensure that the Northern Territory government received at least a fair deal from their federal government counterparts? Yesterday, while the Chief Minister was putting forward his mini-budget, we noticed with a great deal of interest the cackling from the benches opposite. It sounded like a mob of giggling school girls standing by watching this bully boy putting the boot in.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to talk not only about the breaking of the Memorandum of Understanding but about what is fair and equitable for the people of Australia and, in particular, the Northern Territory. The distribution of the tax dollars needs to be on the basis of fairness. Consideration should be given to the fact that we are a territory as opposed to the long-established states. The Northern Territory does not have the infrastructure or facilities in place that the states have. We have special circumstances. We have isolated communities wherein a significant percentage of our population, by virtue of circumstances, is virtually non-productive and has very little income. We need to spend Territory dollars to provide services for such communities and that is a great financial burden.

We need also to consider the dollars that have been spent on building the states' infrastructures. The Australian taxpayer has paid for projects like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electricity Scheme and various ports and railways. These have all been paid for out of the total Australian tax dollar. In his outbursts last week about parasites on the Australian economy, when he was referring to his state's need to get a fair share of the total purse, Premier Cain forgot to mention what his state has coped indirectly in terms of protection from federal governments over the years. For decades, his state has had its pitiful manufacturing industry supported by the Australian taxpayers' dollar. I would like to illustrate that by referring to the last issue of the Bureau of Statistics' bulletin. The motor vehicle industry alone has been helped by a total effective contribution of somewhere between \$3000m and \$4000m. Look at the facts. The Northern Territory has one of the highest rates per capita for the purchase of motor vehicles. That is for very obvious reasons: our isolation and large distances between centres. Our new purchases in the last year were 4.7 per thousand head of population compared to Victoria with 3.8. Who is carrying more of the burden? It is not Premier Cain's state. A subsidy of something like \$35 per year per Australian citizen is paid to prop up one of Victoria's uneconomic industries. Therefore, it is necessary for us to look at the fair overall distribution of the Australian dollar.

When we are talking about distribution of Australian dollars, we need to look more clearly at who earns them. Where does the Australian income dollar come from? The value of exports per head of population in the Territory is the highest in Australia. That is principally because of our natural resources, primary industries, tourism and all sorts of things. Principally, it is because of our natural resources. The value is almost 4 times that of Premier Cain's Victoria. It amounts to \$4700 per head of population which includes the 24% of our population that is non-productive. The figure for Victoria is only \$1400 per head of population. Of course, our figure could be substantially higher if the federal government allowed free and sensible development of some of our natural resources, if it were not for the breaking of specific commitments and agreements such as the railway and the Memorandum of Understanding and if we had the ability to implement sensible legislation relating to land rights to allow mining exploration to continue. All of these things have the hands of the Northern Territory tied behind its back.

What defence have members opposite given for their federal comrades' recent actions? Perhaps we will hear some productive argument later but, to date, we have heard reference once again to the casinos being a waste of funds. I do not agree because time will tell just how effective that move was. We are talking about trivia. If we want to talk about waste of taxpayers' dollars, we need look no further than the federal government itself - \$100m pay-off on uranium and an increase in bureaucracy beyond what it has ever been in Australia. If we want to talk about waste, let's be specific. Let's not keep harping on one argument time after time. Do you want to include the honourable member for

Millner's reference to somebody in NTEC ripping off money? We are talking about chickenfeed in those areas. Certainly, I am the first to agree that we should ensure that bureaucracies are trimmed to their minimum and that private enterprise be encouraged to help to develop the Northern Territory and Australia generally. But when we talk about waste, let's keep it in perspective.

It was said that we should have introduced some of these increases earlier. Is the opposition saying that all of these policies relating to charges and increases are justified but we should have done it earlier? One justification for the increases is that we should be catching up to the states. Parity with the states' rates and charges is not what we would like to see happen. We would like to have charges contained to ensure the continuing development of the Northern Territory. However, the upper boundary might very well be a comparison with something else and what other benchmark could one use but charges in the states? That is not a justification; it is a comparison.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have seen what came from last week's Premiers Conference and from the federal government's mini-budget. I would like to sidetrack on what this meant for many of the disadvantaged. If you want to earmark the policies that adversely affect the aged, you will see that there are no less than half a dozen directed once again at those who can least afford to handle what a big bully boy federal government metes out to them. I will not take up this Assembly's time highlighting some of those aspects but they will be worth referring to at a later time. Nursing home benefits, pharmaceutical costs, repatriation pensions, grants for facilities for the aged etc hit those who can least afford it.

What I would like to direct my attention to are the factors that affect the long-term economic health of the Northern Territory. On top of those measures that this government has had to take to meet last week's kick in the middle, we see that the federal government is setting about saving \$60m out of a roads program. Roads mean communications and transportation between centres. Money is being cut from the bicentennial roads program and there is a reluctance at this stage to acknowledge the continuation of the accelerated Stuart Highway program which is of interest to all honourable members, not just those from the Centre. People in the Centre have their railway halfway, but transportation to the Top End will depend vitally on the \$9.6m for next year being granted. What word have we had about that? Zero!

Decisions were taken in the mini-budget relating to broader issues of research funding and assistance to industries, particularly those in the export and tourism area which affect the Northern Territory more than any other area in Australia. One item that caused a fair bit of discussion in recent times is the Darwin airport. When reference was made yesterday to the waste of \$20m on the northern side, the Leader of the Opposition interjected that it was only \$11m. I am not sure if he was implying that it is all right to waste \$11m but, in my book, what is important is not so much the wasted money but the interference that the discontinuation of that project will mean to the health and well-being of the Territory's economy. We have spent some time debating that point and I am sure that, if the federal government could climb down off its horse for a moment and consider the matter, it would realise that expenditure of only a small amount more would provide a very necessary and vital infrastructural component: the terminal building itself. We could then start developing tourism which would benefit not only the Northern Territory but the nation as a whole.

I cannot help being cynical when I look at the original program. It contained an extremely flash terminal building that has been referred to by many

as the 'gold knobs treatment'. That was a decision made by the federal government not by the Northern Territory. But that flash terminal building represented only \$28m out of the \$95m job, all of the extras being the little frills that the federal government thought that it could slip in to extend its bureaucratic services at the airport. I am quite hopeful that proposals being put forward at the moment to resurrect that program will be fruitful.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that this government had failed to stand up to the federal government and that we had laid down and copped it. Where were they? During the last election campaign, they stated that they were the people who had the ear of Bob Hawke.

Mr Smith: I think there is one condition on that, Fred: that we were in government.

Mr FINCH: That is exactly what I meant, Mr Deputy Speaker, about being cynical. The condition laid down by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition was that they won the federal seat. Are we talking about a federal government which makes its decisions not on what is in the best interests of the Northern Territory or of Australia as a whole, but on who votes for which party? Is that the basis of rational decision making? Where were they, aside from Ted Robertson who stood up in the House the other day with his dorothy dixer? My goodness! Shame on him and shame on those who have also worked towards the razor cuts made by the federal government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the current actions that have been taken by the federal government to cut back the Territory's budget and disrupt the sensible progress which would have led to economic stability and economic independence might provide a bit of a hiccup but it certainly will not beat us. Australia needs to shake off the burden of those ineffective industries in the south. It needs to get the industrial scene into shape generally. It needs to identify and develop those natural resources which are contained within the north and get on with the job of developing Australia in what is becoming an extremely competitive world. We may have our hands tied behind our backs and it may be a little difficult at this moment, but I am quite sure that the Australian population, who are rapidly becoming aware of the dangers and difficulties of having an ALP government in power, will assist us at the next federal election in giving the federal ALP the good kick in the groin that it deserves.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Deputy Speaker, I must express some degree of personal disappointment that the Territory's case was put so badly by my political representative in the Legislative Assembly, the member for Wagaman. The honourable member's speech encapsulated the traditional, self-interest, self-satisfied statements that are made by Northern Territory politicians, and have been made for years, which so unfairly give this place a stinking reputation - not a bad reputation - a stinking reputation among our fellow Australians in terms of their perceptions of our economic responsibility.

Mr D.W. Collins: Absolute nonsense.

Mr B. COLLINS: In reference to the peanut brain on the backbench opposite, he will have his turn in a minute.

Mr D.W. Collins: I will indeed.

Mr B. COLLINS: And I dare say that he will go over the same ground that has just been gone over. Have a look at some of the things that the honourable member just said.

He talked about manufacturing industry being subsidised in Victoria. I share the same reservations about protectionism and subsidisation of industry as he does, and as the former Chief Minister did, but I simply point out to the self-satisfied members opposite that none of us, either on the opposition benches or the government benches in the Northern Territory, is in any position to point a finger or raise any criticism in respect of protectionism or subsidisation. It is a cold hard fact that we have the most socialistic government in this country, bar none. It is a matter that has been raised in this Assembly again and again. We are in no position to criticise federal funding for subsidising white goods industries in South Australia or car manufacturing industries in Victoria because they provide jobs to hundreds of thousands of other Australians. I remember another self-satisfied CLP member standing in the Legislative Assembly, a bloke by the name of Everingham, and saying in respect of the federal government's budgeting of \$300m for employment programs distributed around Australia that it was a disgrace because that was our railway money. He said that \$300m was ours and no one who did not have a job, no one who was out of work in Australia was entitled to one dollar of it.

We just listened to the same self-interested, self-satisfied statements. Have a look at some of the things the honourable member said: 'We have to keep waste in perspective'. What he meant with his reference to the casino was that, when you keep waste in perspective in the Northern Territory, that means you talk about everyone else's waste and not ours. It is all right to target the federal government, as it should be targeted for the attacks it has made on the Territory and its waste of money at the airport, but when you talk about the self-evident waste by this government, it is a diversion. That is what the Chief Minister said. We cannot talk about that. That is keeping waste in perspective. We can talk about everyone else's waste but our own. We are sacred cows; we are sacrosanct. We cannot be criticised.

He made a most extraordinary statement about the enormous contribution the Territory makes with our primary industry exports. Perhaps he might like to talk to the Minister for Primary Production. I do not mind spending \$1m of public money per farm on the Douglas-Daly to get that going. I do not mind seriously proposing, as this government did, that we ask the federal government for \$65m to subsidise the Douglas-Daly scheme - that was the original proposal - but let us not have any criticism about socialism in this Legislative Assembly because the members opposite would have to be the greatest socialists in this country. In terms of the casino deal, it is a fact that what they did to Federal Hotels, the socialist left in Victoria would not have done on its worst day. That is a fact. They sit there with smug looks all over their faces and talk about subsidies and protectionism but no one in the Northern Territory, not a single one of us, particularly those who represent us in government, should have the unmitigated hide to stand up and tip buckets on federal money that has been used to prop up those jobs in the states.

He talked about the member for Millner's references to stamp duty and so on as 'chickenfeed'. He again echoed the sentiments of our former Treasurer, the current Minister for Mines and Energy, in respect of the casino fiasco. He said not to worry about an ex gratia payment of \$2.5m which was taken out of the Treasury. 'It is chickenfeed', he said a couple of weeks ago. 'The casino is not a milk cow', he said. 'Do not worry about things like that'.

In respect of a \$12.6m cut in this budget, an ex gratia payment of \$2.5m to one set of operators of a casino and the waiving of gaming taxes to the tune of \$3m, which adds up to \$5m, makes the \$12.6m look a lot healthier than it is at the moment. That is in respect of a single operation in the Northern Territory. When all those people in business are paying additional sums of money in stamp duty,

I suggest that they go to the Registrar-General's Office to look at the paperwork on the transfer of the casino to the new operators because stamped all over it is: 'Northern Territory stamp duty waived'. I will tell you how much money we threw away in that little deal: \$1m. That is how much that was worth. It was given away to half a dozen people - Henry and Walker and the rest of the good friends of the Northern Territory government. It is a very selective use of Northern Territory Treasury funds. These people opposite seem to consider it a matter of no account. Whilst there are a great many people in the Northern Territory who will be forced to pay additional dollars into the Treasury, there is a small group of people in the Northern Territory which has an extraordinary ability not to put money into the Northern Territory Treasury but to take it out. In the face of that track record of the bunch of financial geniuses opposite, we are supposed to sit here and say nothing about it otherwise we will be accused of treachery to the Northern Territory. We cannot dare to criticise this sacrosanct government for its own incompetence and financial inability. That is a fact. The member for Wagaman said that it was dreadful that the Darwin airport terminal is not being built. I agree. If I had to single out an action of the federal government that I am personally upset about more than any other, it would be that airport terminal. However, we all sat here and listened to the government members praising the airport terminal. We all went outside and had a look at the models, photographs and drawings that everyone opposite was praising. 'You can't blame us', said the honourable member, 'for the extravagance of that building because that was entirely the fault of the federal government'. When it is taking it away, that is its fault and we cannot be blamed for it here. When it is giving it to us, if it costs too much, then it is its fault too and we had nothing to do with that either. These are the kinds of arguments that give this Northern Territory undeservedly and unnecessarily such a rotten name in the eyes of the people who in the main have to foot the bills - other Australians. 'Keep waste in perspective', he said!

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is one thing I would like to say about advancing the Territory's case and this is really getting up my nose: the behaviour of the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. At the moment, we are under attack by the federal government. There is no getting away from that. At the moment, it is essential that our representatives and our advocates make the best case possible for the Northern Territory. I understand that the Chief Minister has a National Press Club engagement shortly at which he will put the Territory's case.

Mr Tuxworth: It will be well put.

Mr B. COLLINS: Will it be well put? I wonder. Perhaps he should wait 2 minutes before he makes too hasty a decision about that.

At question time this morning, I asked a question of the Chief Minister which, unfortunately, he walked straight into, as he tends to do. He has been doing it for the last few weeks and certainly for the last few days. It related to the Grants Commission's treatment of the Northern Territory. I am getting sick of this line from the Chief Minister. I wish he would get his story straight because, at the moment, the Northern Territory needs the strongest case, not the weakest case, put forward. I will outline the case the Northern Territory's Chief Minister is putting on behalf of the Northern Territory in the face of this onslaught from the federal government and Mad Dog Walsh, with the statements that he is making. That is hardly anything new coming from me. I have said it a dozen times over the last 2 months to him personally and to everybody here. Listen to what the Chief Minister said about the Grants Commission. I asked: 'Does he understand how the Grants Commission operates?' I suggest that the yobbo opposite be quiet for just 10 more seconds.

Mr Robertson: Close.

Mr B. COLLINS: Very close.

That question was very deliberate. Does he know? He says he does. I suggest that he does not. I suggest that he has not even read the Grants Commission report on the Northern Territory. What he has done is to sit down with whatever brief has been prepared for him and delivered a script in the Assembly. He has done no homework himself at all. He walked off to the Premiers Conference having done no homework.

Over the last week or so, the Chief Minister has been saying, to my utter surprise, that the Grants Commission recommended a \$12.6m cut for the Northern Territory. It is obvious from the expression on his face that he still believes it to be true. It is not the federal Treasurer who has been touting around publicly that the Grants Commission has recommended a \$12.6m cut for the Territory. Nobody in the federal government has been claiming that; it has been the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. This morning on ABC radio, in a debate with myself, and later in question time, he said that \$12.6m has been cut out of our budget as a result of a Grants Commission recommendation. 'The memorandum said that the Territory would get \$5m'. He said 'the memorandum', and not 'the Grants Commission'. He said that the memorandum required that we would get \$5m additional assistance this year irrespective of what the Grants Commission recommended. That is nothing new from the Chief Minister. I have been listening to this for a week wondering when he was going to wake up. Frankly, I just cannot stomach it any longer.

Far be it from me to give away political points to those opposite. In fact, there are some people in my office, and I say this quite honestly, who said to me this morning: 'Shut up about it. Don't tell the idiot. If he wants to carry on, why should we make the Labor government look any worse than it is by telling him how to do his job?' I am a Territorian, Mr Deputy Speaker. I cannot stand to hear this nonsense pushed again and again. Since we heard this nonsense again this morning from the Chief Minister, I could not care less about making the government in Canberra look any worse than it is. I must at least ensure that our case is not weakened any further by the nonsense he is spouting. Again and again, he said that the Grants Commission recommended that we have \$12.6m lopped out of our budget. That finding of the Grants Commission is now well known. While everyone opposite was hugging and laughing his head off at the silly question being asked by the Leader of the Opposition, in he walked again. Come in spinner! The trouble is that, if he goes off to the National Press Club and spouts it, Keating will be the one laughing.

That finding is only well known because the Chief Minister has been spouting it for weeks. Can I just point out what the Grants Commission recommended? I refer him to the Commonwealth Grants Commission 5th Report 1985 on Special Assistance for the Northern Territory.

I suggest to that yawning member on the backbench that, if he thinks this is a matter of small moment for the Northern Territory, he should get out of here as well.

Mr D.W. Collins: I call you a 'small moment'.

Mr B. COLLINS: It is in the last paragraph of the report in the section outlined 'recommendations'. Those are the recommendations which, according to the Chief Minister, said we should have \$12.6m cut from the Northern Territory's allocation. It is on page 19:

*Recommendation 2.28: The additional assistance grant of \$5m for 1984-85, which is provided by clause 28 of the Memorandum of Understanding, is greater than the assessed special assistance grant. In accordance with the provisions of clause 9 of the Memorandum of Understanding, therefore, the Northern Territory is entitled to an additional assistance grant of \$5m in 1984-85.*

That is the penultimate recommendation of the Grants Commission 1985 report on the Northern Territory. Therefore, whatever else the Chief Minister is saying, would he please at long last clean up his act and realise the kindergarten basis on which our claim is being based and correctly quote the Grants Commission recommendation? If he wants a copy of it, he can have mine. I have another one in my office.

It is a fact that, quite apart from recommending a \$12.6m cut in our budget, the Grants Commission specifically and firmly, in its final recommendation on the last page of its report, recommended that we should be given a \$5m top up. Despite the fact that its findings were that the Northern Territory has been overfunded by \$12.6m in a previous section of the report, its recommendation was that we should receive an additional \$5m. To make it clear to the clods who cannot understand it, it then went on to attach as an appendix to its report the entire Memorandum of Understanding between the Commonwealth government and the Northern Territory, pointing out the sections of the Memorandum of Understanding that it recommended be implemented on the Territory's behalf.

I would ask the Chief Minister, if he wants to do the right thing by the Northern Territory when he goes down there to speak on our behalf, not to repeat the statements he made at question time this morning. Could he please not repeat the statements he made on ABC radio this morning? Despite what he has said 15 or 20 times in the last 2 weeks, it is not true that the Grants Commission recommended a cut of \$12.6m.

I will refer back to the recommendations. There are only 3 paragraphs which, obviously, he did not bother to read. The first one is 2.26: 'Because the total of assessed needs of the Northern Territory in respect of the year of review, 1982-83, is less than the amount available to meet those needs' - that is the year it found we had been overfunded by \$12.6m - 'by way of other Commonwealth assistance, the commission recommends that no grant of special assistance be made to the Northern Territory in respect of that year'. It is not a recommendation even to cut it out; it is simply a note that, in 1982-83, that was the finding of the Grants Commission. However, it then went on to say 2 paragraphs later that, despite the finding of that overfunding, its recommendation was that we should have received an additional \$5m in this budget. Stop misquoting this report.

It is a fact that we do not need to quote only the Memorandum of Understanding to support our case. We can quote the Grants Commission recommendations in support of it as well and not stand around decrying the commission. I refer members to question time this morning. The Chief Minister said that, despite what the Grants Commission said, our memorandum says that we should have received another \$5m. The Grants Commission recommendations carry some weight in the electorate. People who are interested in this debate recognise it as being a non-political body of experts which determines what everybody should get. When you have the Northern Territory's Chief Minister running around saying that the Grants Commission has recommended that we should lose \$12.6m, people are saying: 'If the Grants Commission says it, that seems to



support the federal government's case'. When it is in black and white in the recommendations section at the end of the report that we should have received an additional \$5m, I have found it extremely frustrating that this nonsense is continued to be put by the Chief Minister. I plead with the Chief Minister to start quoting what the Grants Commission says and not what it does not say, and to use the recommendations of the Grants Commission in support of the Territory's protests and objections at the way in which we are currently being treated by Senator Walsh and the federal government.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am now more convinced than ever that the opposition is absolutely paranoid about casinos. We hear from time to time that it does not want to raise the matter again yet, time and time again, it raises it. I do not know what it would have done without the casinos. We have given it something to talk about because I have not heard it talking about anything else of any substance. I use as an example the Western Australian casino which has just gone public. Before the shares had even reached the eastern seaboard, they were bought up entirely by Western Australians.

Mr B. Collins: Where is our public subscription?

Mr COULTER: It will come and it will be in the hands of Territorians, not Tasmanians. We will have some say in the quality of service which is given in our casinos. They will not be used to top up the Tasmanian casinos or other casinos elsewhere in Australia. They will be blue chip shares and, when they hit the market, they will be gobbled up. I have no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition will probably be the major shareholder because he has become so paranoid about the whole matter. I do not want to tell him which shares to buy but, if he would like to invest a few dollars, I am sure he will reap the benefits of having such shares.

I noted the Leader of the Opposition did not once speak to the bills before the Assembly. It seems to be traditional that the fellow who is having a few beers and a smoke is always the fellow hardest hit at budget time. I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to a cost comparison between Canberra and the Northern Territory when it comes to cigarettes. In Canberra, you can buy most cigarettes for about \$1.60 a packet; in the Territory, they cost \$2.

The Minister for Mines and Energy has brought to our attention just how perilous a position we are in with regard to electricity charges. This information comes from a dissertation compiled by a Darwin academic who is doing a masters degree. He has done some cost comparisons between Darwin and Canberra. In fact, Canberra has the lowest-priced electricity in Australia. If you read last week's Sunday Territorian, you would have seen an article wherein Frank Alcorta commented on the rapid growth of the public service in Canberra. In Canberra, you can do whatever you like and the rest of Australia must pay the price. In fact, I wonder how much every Australian pays to enable the people of Canberra to live the life that they do, with the guaranteed employment that they have and with the facilities that are available to them.

I would like to speak also about the cuts and how they will affect the Department of Community Development. As Minister for Community Development, I am concerned that the quality of life and the services offered by the Department of Community Development must not be downgraded by these cuts. I will refer to the slowing down of certain programs to enable us to continue with our programs. The Leader of the Opposition has called us socialists and indeed we do have concessions for pensioners etc. I intend to maintain them, in particular the child-care concessions. As I said today, only the Northern Territory and New

South Wales offer a 20% concession to child-care facilities. I believe that we should maintain those particular concessions to ensure that the quality of life in the Northern Territory is maintained.

However, there will be some cuts in the \$1-for-\$1 grants to the local government, as has been mentioned by the Chief Minister. This is in keeping with the declared NT government policy that local governments should be made responsible for raising a reasonable contribution towards the provision of services within their own areas. We will be heading in that direction in the Local Government Amendment Bill which we will be debating at this sittings. The overall philosophy of that bill is to provide local governments with a greater degree of responsibility and to allow them to raise funds for the provision of services within their own municipalities.

I might add that the Northern Territory government tops up the 2% personal income tax sharing scheme which was under some threat recently. At a Local Government Ministers Conference I attended in Melbourne, there was talk that the PITS money might be cut out altogether. The Northern Territory government tops up the money that we receive from the federal government by some \$2m. We intend to continue that for the time being to ensure that municipal services are not downgraded but kept at the high level to which we have become accustomed.

We intend to address the problem of the outstation movement. Since 1975, we have asked the federal government to take an active role in relation to this particular movement. It is very costly in that people are moving back into homeland areas and expecting services to follow them. In Victoria, for example, people living in country districts move into country towns and provincial cities and then to major cities and capital cities in search of services and facilities which are not available to them in the country areas. In the Northern Territory, we have the opposite: people are moving back out to homeland areas and then they require services such as power, water, roads and airstrips to follow them. This is a very costly exercise.

We will be addressing this particular problem because we will have to wind back some of the programs for which this government has undertaken the full burden of financing. We will be entering into negotiations and bilateral arrangements with the federal government on the whole matter of the funding for Aboriginal development programs right across the Territory. The terms of reference have been set and, in July this year, we intend to enter into negotiations with the federal government. I hope that the federal government will recognise the homeland movement for what it is and will offer its support which the Northern Territory has taken the full burden of until now.

Emergency financial relief which the Department of Community Development provides to people is also a matter for concern. 99% of people requiring emergency financial relief are on some form of federal pension or concession. The reason they come to us is simply because they cannot afford to live on the pension or the concession that is provided to them by the federal government. At a recent conference of social welfare ministers in Sydney, it was unanimous that, if we were in for hard financial times, that would be the first thing that the states would take off their books. It would be directed back squarely to where it belongs. The federal government needs to address the problem that its pensions and concessions are not meeting the requirements and the needs of people in stress or in emergency situations. We do not intend to abolish it entirely but there will be a severe winding back of the amount of money that is available for this.

The Department of Community Development's Corporate Services Division will also undergo cuts in an effort to cut back expenditure. Vehicle turnover

will be something that we will be looking at also. We will be bringing vehicles back out of the bush and running them in the municipal areas such as Katherine, Tennant Creek, Darwin and Alice Springs in an attempt to get a greater life span out of some of them. There are a number of other matters which still have to be addressed in an attempt to wind back expenditure and, at the same time, ensure that services are maintained.

The charging for services in rural areas or in outstation areas where power is being generated at the moment will also need to be addressed by the Department of Community Development. Many communities have already started addressing this. For example, the north and south camps at Elliott already have a fund where they put in \$1 a week for the provision of services. That is commendable because they have realised the responsibility that they have to pay for power. Mr Deputy Speaker, in your electorate, Daly Waters has a chuck-in fund as well. People right across the Territory will have to realise that, where there are services provided, there is a need for them to make some form of contribution towards the cost of those services. Of course, I do not refer to the cost of nurses and teachers provided in those particular areas. I think this is a bold move to bring about some sort of responsibility in these areas which have gone unchecked for far too long.

The matter of local government has been raised from time to time. Mataranka has a proposal which we hope to put before the Assembly at this sittings. Borroloola has certain administrative arrangements at the moment in an attempt to provide some form of local government. These people will be addressing the issue of taxes and charges to ensure that the cost of quite substantial services in terms of town maintenance and public utilities are contributed to by the people who live in these areas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other issues that need to be examined. There are 41 Aboriginal communities that are designated as major and the total budget allocation for them is \$35m. We will be looking at programs in these areas to see where savings can be achieved. We will be interested particularly in promoting areas that are developing industry and enterprise. We will be making sure that those people do not suffer as a result of their endeavours to pay their way. Mr Deputy Speaker, I have had the privilege of visiting several of these establishments in your own electorate where cattle properties and other facilities are being developed to ensure that they are paying their way. Some of these are fine enterprises indeed and the people should be commended for their efforts.

In summary, local governments will see the end of their \$1-for-\$1 subsidies and will have to seek their own funding. Because the Territory government can no longer shoulder the burden, the outstation movement will be slowed down by the removal of a large percentage of the grants which have been available to it in the past. We need a recognition from the federal government that this movement is a fact of life. If it wants the homelands movement to continue, we need a hand to bear the financial burdens. The minor communities will also be under close scrutiny to find means to reduce expenditure. NTCAP, a group of departmental heads, is looking at community profiles in an attempt to examine the status of major communities and where this \$35m is being spent. As a result of those community profiles, we will be able to develop maintenance programs or provide services and facilities where they are most needed. This is long overdue and we believe it will be beneficial to everybody in the Territory in that it will ensure a fair and equitable share of the money that is available.

Another area where cost savings are being considered relates to travel. That is quite extensive, as you will appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker. People have to get around all these various areas to meet needs.

Mr Ede: Canada.

Mr COULTER: Might I just take up the interjection from the member for Stuart. There is an increasing need for us to travel overseas to attract private dollars into the Northern Territory. Now that we have been abandoned by the federal government, there is more need than ever to bring private dollars to the Northern Territory in the way that the Minister for Industry and Small Business, the Chief Minister and I have done with the introduction of Saichong Marine and Seanorth, the 6 stern trawlers and the 6 gill-netters. Might I remind people opposite that, true to form, Senator Ted Robertson, their colleague, their man in Canberra, has been the big knocker of the development of joint ventures. He said that it is not on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we need people in the Territory who are prepared to take risks and seek venture capital, not people who are prepared to sit on the backbenches and rubbish other people for their efforts - and fine efforts they have been indeed. I refer to my own trip to Taiwan to assist the development of the aquaculture industry in the Northern Territory. Already \$1m has been spent as a result of that trip. If we all did that type of thing, what a place we would have in the Northern Territory. That option is open to us. We cannot all stand out on East Point with our arms open and expect them to come flocking to us. We have actively to seek corporate dollars to make up for the funds which the federal government has denied us. I need not go on about the federal government; it need not necessarily be a Labor government although we would all be aware that it is the most vindictive federal government that this Northern Territory has had to deal with.

The Territory has had 70 years of neglect from federal governments not realising the potential of the Northern Territory. We became involved in uranium mining and found all our resources. The federal government said: 'You cannot have them. We do not want you to start being productive because we need you for a social playground so that we can play with various policies such as national parks or land rights. You cannot have that type of production'. The Northern Territory has been held back for years by federal governments and, in particular, by this Hawke Labor government that the Northern Territory has to deal with at the moment.

Let there be no more said about overseas trips because I for one advocate that we should be out there every day seeking every bit of corporate venture capital that we can get because, if we do not, Canada, Japan and America will take it from us. The opportunity is there for us as a young emerging state to seek this joint venture capital. I bring honourable member's attention to the fact that Texas was developed by the British because they went out and sought that particular type of capital. The honourable member for Stuart might well sit there and say that travel is an extravagance that we cannot afford. It is essential that we seek joint ventures and that his man in Canberra realise that very soon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not speak for much longer on the cutbacks but I would just like to assure all Territorians that, wherever possible, the services provided by the Department of Community Development will be maintained. In relation to museums and art galleries, there will be a further reduction of \$300 000. We are anxious to see that the displays and the tutorial and research roles of the museum are not slowed down to the detriment of the Northern Territory but it is really a stalling process until we can get on our feet and get going again. We will be seeking research fellows from other places in the world to do work here so that we can maintain the momentum that has been set up within this department. I reiterate that, wherever possible, the services, the

concessions and the pension privileges which the Northern Territory government has developed and promoted to ensure that the quality of life is maintained in the Northern Territory will be kept at the level to which Territorians have become accustomed.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, honourable members opposite will have no argument from me about the very savage nature of the cuts which we have had imposed upon us by Canberra. The opposition has spent considerable time trying to work on people down south to try to have some limitations on these cuts. You never quite know how successful you are on these things but I hope that, if we can get the government to smarten up its act, we might be able to limit what is coming through in the next round.

Statements such as those made yesterday by the member for Flynn that we connived with the Labor government in Canberra to organise these cuts are absolute hogwash. How could he honestly make a statement of that nature, given the amount of work that we have done on this? Sometimes it is no great fun to be an opposition member in the Northern Territory because, when we go down to Canberra to try to get some limitations on the cuts, they turn around and say: 'Your mob up there, your Northern Territory government' - and then they run off their whole litany of things such as the casino, the waste, the corruption, the size of the Chief Minister's office in the Chan Building etc. We end up copping this guilt by association because we sit in the same Assembly. Then, the mob opposite give us a hard time by saying that we connived with the people down there just because they happen to be members of the same party in a completely different government.

I spent a week down there recently. It is no joke. We tried to get them to lay off a bit and not be so savage in their cuts. We tried to convince them that Territorians have very real needs. Initially, they mentioned the per capita grant. I refuted that absolutely. The level of per capita grant to the Northern Territory can be justified and is justified every time the Grants Commission looks at it. As soon as we get away from that particular problem, they say: 'But what about the casinos? What about the \$2.5m gift, the interest-free loans, the stamp duty waivers, the tax holiday, land, property etc?'

Mr Hatton: The half-built airport.

Mr EDE: It is no good talking about the half-built airport and what they are doing to us. We must get our own act together so that we can make out the case that we are running a competent and firm government which does not have flab around the edges and does not have extra money available to divert into other things like the one I just instanced, a government that does not take pump priming to a ridiculous extent by providing guaranteed returns to big business and does not give big pay rises to politicians. There is an aura of incompetence, not to mention corruption, that hangs over this government. It is like a grey cloak that just descended on it. It just will not go away.

When the people down there finished talking about the things that the government has done, we said: 'Look, we have gone through that period. We are talking about next year's money. How about giving us a fair deal on that?' They said: 'What! You ask us to give you money when you are talking about building a new parliament house costing \$30m'. Notwithstanding the fact that we do need some work done on things like the parliamentary library, the idea of spending \$30m on a new parliament house was somewhat ridiculous given the current economic climate, the lack of housing for the people out bush and the fact that the Minister for Community Development talked about the savage cuts he will make in outstation funding. Given all that, we allowed people in the

Northern Territory to hear, and word to get out around Australia, that we were contemplating spending all that money on a parliament house. Mr Deputy Speaker, do you think for one moment that people down there did not say: 'If they have money for a new parliament house, I reckon we can knock a bit off them because...

Mr Dondas: What about money for uranium contracts, Brian?

Mr Hanrahan: \$550m for the new federal parliament house in this year's budget.

Mr EDE: Blame the Fraser government. If I were down there, I would criticise that as much as I would criticise the idea of our having one up here. But at least they meet for a bit longer than 20-odd days a year. Have we reached even 20? I do not think we have.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I noted some disturbing references in the Minister for Conservation's statement the other day regarding the costs of an environmental impact study. This worried me, and I hope that he is not signalling to us that he intends to use the financial system as a means of weakening further the provisions in that bill.

However, to go on to the payroll tax, I compliment the government on raising the threshold. The last time a bill came before us, I made the point in my second-reading speech that that should have been raised. However, I would ask why the government did not review the levels in relation to food and accommodation. As I pointed out, those were at ridiculously low levels. It is quite obvious that, once again, the government has decided to maintain its assistance to the very large companies which provide food and accommodation as a substitute for wages to employees. From memory, I think that allocation is a matter of a couple of dollars per week counted towards the payroll for the purposes of payroll tax. If that had been brought back to a realistic level, we would have had a fairer system for taxing the payrolls of the larger companies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we heard also from the minister about essential services out bush. I have said on a number of occasions that I believe that, in those Aboriginal communities, people should pay for their power, water and sewerage services but on the same basis as everybody else pays. I do not like this half-baked scheme that has been put up. If people are to pay for them, the government must put the water and electricity meters in, provide the subsidies which people receive if they are on pensions etc in towns and do it on strictly the same basis. This plan says that services will not be provided individually. The government will put a blanket charge on the community concerned. Then it says: 'You go around and try to collect that back off the people in the electorate. When you start collecting that money, do not go near public servants'. That is what we have just heard. People will be consuming the power and water etc out there, but they are not to be charged. I think that some rationality should be brought into the system out bush and we should put it on the same basis as for people in the rest of the Territory.

The minister went on to discuss the cuts that the Minister for Community Development has spoken about making in relation to outstation funding. He really worried me because, from recollection of going through his budgets last year, the only funding that the Northern Territory government puts into outstations which have a specific status is for water supply. Is that what we are talking about today? Is he going to cut back on the provision of a basic water supply to those communities? Isn't he going to spend the outstanding \$600 000 from that special grant from the federal government, which I assisted

him to procure? Is he going to divert that into other areas? If he is considering doing that, it is an extremely short-sighted view of the whole cost-cutting area.

As I have pointed out before, the biggest health problems that we have here in the Northern Territory relate back to environmental health. I believe that, if we were to...

Mr Dondas: Just speak to the bills.

Mr EDE: If we were to fix up the environmental...

Mr Dondas: This is agony.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, when the Deputy Chief Minister has his go...

Mr Dondas: I am going to have my go, but please hurry!

Mr EDE: ... he can probably explain to us why he does not believe a potential cut of \$30m in the allocation for the provision of health and hospital services in the Northern Territory does not have anything to do with the budget bills. Is \$30m capable of being forgotten about? Obviously, it is a very good thing for the Territory that he is not the Treasurer.

As I said, there are very significant economic advantages to be obtained by developing environmental health standards in rural communities. Having taken up the point made by the Minister for Community Development regarding water for outstations, I would like to move on a bit further. He said that \$1-for-\$1 subsidies for local government would cease and that there would be other, unspecified cuts in relation to Aboriginal affairs funding. However, he said that the full burden for outstations falls on the current Northern Territory government and that he would have to try to get the federal government to take up some of the slack there. I do not know if this is an indication of his lack of knowledge but, in fact, outstation funding, apart from the water supplies that I mentioned earlier, is a function of the federal government and not of the Territory government. It is funded through the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Those funds go into outstation resource centres which then provide the services to outstations generally. There is not an outstation resource centre that I know of, and certainly there are none in the southern part of the Territory, that is funded by the Department of Community Development.

The cutback to emergency relief is fairly hard to take. Once again, the whole idea is that, on the one hand, they are not hurting their mates in big business in relation to the accommodation and the food that they provide to employees but, on the other hand, they hurt the person who is trying to get a little bit of emergency relief. I feel that it is rather a sad indication of the priorities of this government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of other areas. The first relates to health. I would like the honourable Minister for Health, when he speaks in this debate, to advise me what has become of a facility for mental health which was supposed to have been built this year at the Alice Springs Hospital. I did not find any notification in the speech that that had actually been cut. However, on the other hand, I have not been able to find anything being done on the ground to provide that service.

Finally, I turn to education. I heard that the team which made the departmental review was supposed to put its recommendations to a working party

which would report to Cabinet. From the negotiations between the review team and the working party, the government was to determine what was to be done. Instead, the government has leapt in and said: 'We are going to wipe out these 50 positions anyway'. A point that ought to be made is that those positions are generally not administrative positions, as we have been told. Generally, they are professional people in the curriculum development and professional services areas. I have some sympathy for the idea of getting teachers back into classrooms if the particular program they were working on was over. However, I would like the minister to tell me about a rumour that, at the same time as he is wiping out these 2 divisions, he will be setting up a propaganda unit within his own department. Now we are to have an education public relations unit. Certainly, I agree that the minister himself needs a bit of propaganda to try to improve his weak image, but I do not think that he should be doing it with departmental funds at a time when we all have to accept cuts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think that the information that has been given to us about the specific areas to be cut within each department is adequate for us to perform our review function. In many departments, people are saying that they do not know the extent of the cuts; they do not know where the axe will fall. When people become nervous, morale drops and they start looking around for other jobs. Unfortunately, the people who are most likely to get other jobs are the best public servants, the ones whom we can least afford to lose. This is particularly relevant when we come back to the Darwin Institute of Technology. Obviously, the minister will talk on this. I have heard that the morale has fallen to an all-time low and that this has been compounded by the cuts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as I said, the amount of information that we have been given by the various ministers today specifying where, within their departments, the axe will fall is just not good enough. Apparently, it will be one of these things that do not come before the Assembly until it is all over. It is unfortunate that the largest cut comes out of the Department of Community Development. I feel that the minister responsible for that area should probably fight a bit harder to safeguard his department.

I hope that the Minister for Transport and Works or whoever is representing him will explain to us about the number of deferrals of roads that have been taking place in the southern area.

Mr Dondas: He'll be back tomorrow.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, the people opposite adjourned this Assembly yesterday at 2.05 pm instead of bringing on government business so that we would have time to debate it.

The members on this side of the Assembly will continue to do everything they can in Canberra and here to try to influence the federal government to limit the savage cuts that it has made. I have recognised them as particularly savage and we will be making that point to our federal colleagues. Certainly, I wish the government well in its further negotiations. I hope that the Chief Minister will take up the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition regarding his negotiating tactics so that, in the next round, we might end up doing a little bit better.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I think we need to draw to attention the reason for the 4 bills that are before us. It is certain that we would not be discussing them today if it were not for the very drastic cuts we have had from the federal government. Perhaps there is a need to look at some of these areas and to upgrade them. It has been a while since there have



been any major increases in any of these 4 areas. They need to be reviewed from time to time and brought up to scratch. But, along with a number of other charges and costs to Territorians, they were brought to attention because of the attitude of the federal government and particularly the Minister for Finance. It has been bandied around that the federal government is vindictive. I am convinced that certain members of the federal government are vindictive and do not easily forget the times when they lost battles.

Recently, I had the opportunity to go to Canberra with the Chief Minister and I was involved in discussions with some federal ministers. Among those ministers was the Minister for Transport. I was appalled by the treatment that the Minister for Transport gave to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory. We were waiting in his office when he arrived. He said: 'Well?' The Chief Minister told him that we were there to talk about airports and various other transport matters. He looked across and said: 'You do not want to fight?' The Chief Minister said: 'No, we are not here to fight. We are here to talk to you about these matters'. The Minister for Transport replied: 'That is a bit of a turn around'. That went on for about 10 minutes. Every now and again, we would get an interruption: 'You are really not here to fight?' We would say: 'No, we are not here to fight'. Even as we were going out the door, the minister said: 'Of course, if you want to change your mind and have a fight, I am ready for you'. I thought that was very schoolboyish and certainly an indication of the attitude of some ministers in Canberra.

A couple of matters were raised by the Minister for Community Development with regard to the decrease in funding for outstations and the charging of Aboriginal communities for services. These things are part of charges and taxes that are necessary because of the decreases in funding. A major cost saving has been made in the area of outstation funding and community development funding generally. The outstation movement is to be applauded; I really support it. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provides minimal things - a bit of shelter, a few hand tools etc. It does not do anything else which means that the outstations become a burden on the Territory. The Territory must support those people. Certainly, over a period of time, we want to support these people in those communities which are showing a desire to support themselves.

I have had the opportunity to travel around a number of the outstations, and not only in my own electorate. I have seen various levels of development in those communities. Some communities really do set out to do something for themselves and others do not. I think we ought to be funding those areas where people are showing the ability to do something for themselves. In some communities, I have seen new tractors, new ploughs, and other new equipment lying around yet not one piece of earth has been turned over. That to me is more than disappointing; it is very bad. It illustrates the waste that has occurred in the past. This equipment has been funded either by ABTA or DAA. It has not been used yet it is there to be used.

This morning on Territory Extra, the Leader of the Opposition surprised me by saying that he wondered why the government had taken so long to cut fat out of the Territory budget. He forgets the fact that the reason that we have maintained taxes and charges at as low a level as possible is because of the freight charges, housing costs and other things that really make the Territory a fairly costly place in which to live.

On the subject of essential services in Aboriginal communities, the Minister for Community Development indicated that some communities were already collecting funds for services. This is happening at Daly River. Every resident in a house - Aboriginal or employed staff - is charged \$7.50 per week for

services. I noticed that the charges being imposed here are only \$1.50 per week. I was pleased to hear the member for Stuart supporting the idea of charging for services in Aboriginal communities. I think that it is something that we should all be supporting. I believe that Aboriginal people would see the justice of it. Unfortunately, I understand that land councils have made it difficult for the Territory to collect direct charges in the past. It is difficult to charge for power on Aboriginal land. I believe there is some problem there but I am not exactly sure what it is. But metering will come in time and Aboriginal people will pay for their services just like everybody else. I understand that, for some communities, land councils have fought the desire of the government to charge for services. I think it is something that must be addressed. That is one reason why it would be easier at this stage to bulk charge.

I support the bills only because they are necessary and certainly not because I would want to see extra charges placed on anybody right now in the Northern Territory. They are only part of a number of charges that have been brought forward to make up the shortfall this year and are the only measures that really require this sort of legislative action to enable them to be carried out.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a few comments on these bills. I believe that it is incumbent upon me to raise certain concerns. Let me reiterate the opposition's position with respect to the rather strident comments that have been coming from the government benches in this regard. I think it needs to be put on record again because it is quite clear that government members are evidently quite reluctant to accept the truth of the fact that their strident bashing of the federal government is not doing government in the Northern Territory any good. I do not propose to dwell on that; I merely state it as a fact.

I am not convinced that the tenor of the government's remarks in seeking to blame every problem that the Territory is currently facing on the federal government is entirely reasonable. As other opposition speakers have said, some of the blame can clearly be laid at the doorstep of the federal government but I do not believe that all the problems can be laid entirely at the doorstep of federal government. I was heartened to see that, for a change, that worthy journal, the Northern Territory News, shares the opposition's view in that respect. I believe that should be placed on record, particularly since the Treasurer and all government members who have spoken have chosen to say that all our problems are the federal government's fault. The editorial writer in today's Northern Territory News adopts exactly the same position as the opposition: 'The Territory did get a tough deal from Canberra. Even Blind Freddy could see that coming. But Mr Tuxworth's highly political response does not explain the lack of good housekeeping which should have had us much better prepared'.

I think that pretty well says it all. If the Northern Territory News, which is not well renowned for being anything but a wholehearted supporter of the Northern Territory government, seeks to criticise the CLP government in those terms, there must be something wrong. The final sentence in this editorial says it all: 'Common sense is the ingredient most lacking in the present climate of fed-bashing'. I need scarcely add another syllable.

Let me turn to a couple of issues that have been raised this afternoon. One related particularly to the funding of outstations. I will read very closely and with considerable interest the comments made by the Minister for Community Development. I will be deeply concerned if the present financial

straits mean that chronically underserved places are the first to suffer the chill winds of cutbacks. It ought to be placed on record here that it is a particular level of service that should be the yardstick. We have had comments in the Assembly today during question time about the problems with the water supply at Atitjere and an excision or sublease at Harts Range from Mount Riddock for the people who are currently living there under what I describe quite accurately as third-world conditions. Certainly, very few of the people who are represented by government members in this Assembly have to walk half a mile to get a drink of water.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Some people in the rural area do.

Mr BELL: I hear the honourable member for Koolpinyah interjecting and I doubt that even the rural pioneers have to go that far for a glass of water.

I would hate to see the approach of this government to be that it will draw back from the outstations and the Aboriginal communities and just have concern for the towns: 'We will cut the funding there because there are far too many Labor voters out there anyway'. I adjure the Chief Minister and his Cabinet colleagues to bear in mind that the principle that should be adopted is the provision of a reasonable, basic level of services for all those communities.

A second issue, a far more contentious one, has been licking round the edges of this debate: uranium mining. I really find it difficult to sit here and time after time have mindless government backbenchers say: 'What about uranium mining? What about digging it up and we would have lots of jobs and lots of money and things would be hunky-dory?' Mr Deputy Speaker, I have fairly strong feelings about that. As I have said in this Assembly before, the disposal of nuclear waste is a problem for mankind as a whole. I have no doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it would make you shiver as it makes me shiver when I hear about 44-gallon drums of nuclear waste being dumped in the Pacific from nuclear reactors in Japan. As a citizen of the world, that frightens me.

I suggest that, before another government backbencher leaps to his feet and says to me, 'What about uranium mining? Why don't you mob support us in getting these mines going?', he should ask himself a question. The honourable member for Flynn should ask himself the question: 'Would any of my constituents be happy to live next door to nuclear waste dumps?' How about the farm area south of the Gap? Would they be happy to have nuclear waste there? What about the honourable member for Braitling? Perhaps there is that corner of the schoolyard at Braitling. What about the member for Koolpinyah? I am sure a few of the rural pioneers would not mind giving us a 5-acre block. The honourable member for Sadadeen has a bit of spare space; I am sure that he would be happy. Leanyer dump would be fine for nuclear waste, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do not know Wanguri so well but I am sure we could find a bit of space there or at Wagaman. Victoria River has loads of space. The honourable member for Victoria River has been remarkably silent in this debate because he has Rum Jungle in his electorate; he probably understands better than most the difficulties in this regard. I am not sure about Jingili; there is probably a bit of space there somewhere. I recall the honourable member for Ludmilla having loads of fun with a little bit of a leaky drain somewhere in his electorate. By golly, he could actually go off his brain if he got a bit of nuclear waste in his electorate. I am sure that would be a real vote catcher when people found out he was endorsing that. Nightcliff has loads of space.

Mr Dondas: It is next to Terry's place.

Mr BELL: The honourable member for Millner has no responsibilities in this game.

What I am trying to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, is that these wholehearted supporters of uranium mining should have the guts to say that they will have the waste in their electorates. I notice the Chief Minister interjecting. He is the member for Barkly which has loads of space. Let's see the Chief Minister put his faith where his mouth is and get a petition from a few of his constituents to say that they would be happy to have nuclear waste dumped next door to them because I know that not one of them would sign it. Let's have no more of that nonsense. Uranium mining and the whole nuclear energy cycle in a power hungry world is a problem, so it deserves a little more thought. It is about as mindless as the federal government bashing we have heard already from this crowd.

To move a little bit closer to home and into the bailiwick of the Minister for Education, I intend to mention briefly a few problems in my electorate where I am deeply worried that the expenditure of government dollars may be threatened. The first example I wish to bring to the attention of honourable members is the circumstances at Hermannsburg school. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will have seen articles on this matter in the Centralian Advocate and you may have received representations yourself. Hermannsburg is in my electorate and there have been considerable negotiations that have resulted basically in 2 forms of organisation for the delivery of educational services at Hermannsburg school.

The pre-existing Finke River Mission family-based schooling system has been augmented after representations from family groups, particularly from Mr Gus Williams and his family. Those services were augmented by a Department of Education service at the beginning of this year that has been attended by a large number of people. Two teachers, Mr and Mrs Marchman, have been appointed to the staff there. I would like to place on record my belief that the students are particularly privileged to have teachers of the experience and competence of Mr and Mrs Marchman. Certainly, the attendance of students at that school bears out their ability. However, far more than the 50 students who were originally envisaged as attending the school are now attending it. I understand that 2 teachers are teaching a minimum of 70 and as many as 90 kids each day. Mr Deputy Speaker, I am quite sure that you would be moved to compassion for somebody confronting a classroom of 45 children who range in ability from kids who have little ability to read and write to students whose ability is up to the expectation of their age.

The reason why I have given a lengthy preamble in that regard is that there needs to be some sort of review. I understand that representations have been made to the Minister for Education in respect of the school for Ntaria. I would like to get some answers, in the context of this debate, from the Minister for Education. I have before me a telex sent to Mr Warren Williams of the Hermannsburg School Council from the honourable minister. I will not take up the Assembly's time and read it all out but I will read into Hansard 2 particularly salient paragraphs from this document.

Mr Harris: Incorporate the whole lot and then just read the paragraphs you want.

Mr BELL: I will just read the 2 paragraphs because it is not really in a form to be incorporated in Hansard. Mr Deputy Speaker, the 2 paragraphs to which I refer say:

*I expect that the arrangements being put forward by Gus Williams will be the establishment of government schools in the area and moves to have the Department of Education provide a 2-teacher school to accommodate 50 children on a trial basis from the start of the 1985*

*school year. It was also made clear at the time that the school would open to all and not just 1 family group. The government commitments have been kept.*

*I have already indicated that, while I was prepared to consider the possibility of expanding the school in the future, I cannot do this until an assessment of the present trial has been carried out as advised in my previous letter. No assessment of this present trial can be made before May.*

I draw the attention of the honourable minister particularly to that last sentence: 'No assessment of this present trial can be made before May'. I would very much like to hear, as would my constituents who have a deep interest in quality education for their kids, whether that assessment has been made, what the results of it are and whether the further urgently required services will be provided for them.

There are other programs that I am deeply worried about and that are sorely needed in my electorate. I have mentioned these previously and I want to mention them very briefly in passing because I would like to hear from the relevant ministers the fate of these programs. In addition to the Hermannsburg school, 2 of them relate to the portfolio of the Minister for Education. One is the replacement of the Docker River school. As I mentioned yesterday, an allocation of \$250 000 was made in the 1984-85 budget for a school at Harts Range. That has not yet materialised. That is of some concern to us. Within the bailiwick of the Chief Minister, as minister responsible for police - and I am sorry that he has left the Chamber - I have made representations about the manning of the police station at Santa Teresa on a permanent basis. I do not think I need to fulminate on the importance to good order in that community of some more satisfactory policing arrangements than those that apply at the moment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have given the honourable member a fair degree of latitude and I think he has ranged far and wide. I ask him now to confine his remarks to the bills before the Assembly.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, indeed you have been more than kind in that regard. Allow me to perorate, but not at length. Of course, I will raise these issues in appropriate contexts at some other stage and I will not take any more of the Assembly's time in that regard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the appropriate place to close off is where I started and to reinforce the point made by the opposition that, generally speaking, Northern Territory government members have shown far less than an astute regard for the political and the financial interests of people in the Northern Territory. I trust they will give due consideration to the comments made by the member for Millner, the shadow treasurer, and mend their ways in future.

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business and Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, in this afternoon's adjournment debate, because that is clearly what it has been, not one of the members opposite has spoken to any of the bills before us. The antics of the Leader of the Opposition clearly indicated that he was looking to win an Oscar award or nomination. The member for Stuart's contribution was less than dismal. In fact, all he could talk about were his trips to Canberra to put the Territory's case forward to get some further funding to assist us. All he could speak about down there were new parliament houses, casinos and other matters. What he did not say to his federal counterparts was that the runs are on the board. He did not talk about the number of new schools opened since 1978. He did not tell them about the additional roads or the additional houses

that have been built in the Territory since 1978. He did not talk about the number of additional jobs created in the Northern Territory since 1978. He did not talk about the population increase in the Northern Territory since 1978. I was wondering why he went down there at all. He certainly did not put the case for the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let us examine why we have these bills before us. Of course, many members this afternoon have spoken about many things but not one has mentioned the real reason for the bills. It has to do with ANL, the Australian National Line. The cancellation of the eastern seaboard service was when the rot started. As soon as the Labor Party moved into power in Canberra, the first thing it did was to take away our eastern seaboard service. That increased freight rates because it gave the road transport operators a monopoly into this area. Nobody has said anything about that this afternoon. Another reason why we are talking about these 4 bills is the failure of the Labor government to fulfil a promise on the north-south rail link. Of course, we have discussed this before. It is all part of the reason.

Let us get a bit more up to date with what has happened. We had the Keating mini-budget in May, the reductions in road funding, the electricity subsidy and the fuel tax impositions. What did all that mean? It meant that the confidence of the Territory that there would be confirmed financial assistance from the Commonwealth was finished. We were cut off at the knees. Then we had the Premiers Conference. There were further reductions for the 1984-85 financial year. The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the Chief Minister and his understanding of the Grants Commission. What he did not say was that the Chief Minister put a case forward for the Territory so that the level of funding could be maintained for 1984-85. If there were to be any changes, why couldn't they be for the 1985-86 financial year? Mr Deputy Speaker, we still have the August federal budget to come. What will the federal government do to us and the rest of Australia then?

The cuts for the Northern Territory in the mini-budget and the reductions as far as the Grants Commission's recommendations are concerned will certainly have an impact on the Northern Territory. We realised that there would be some financial constraints on progress in the Northern Territory. In fact, the Chief Minister made an announcement in March-April of this year that he would curb the spending of government departments. He was not going to allow wasteful expenditures towards the end of the financial year. He directed that departments were only able to spend the average monthly expenditure of the first 9 months of the financial year per month for the last 3 months. We knew that these cuts would come. The Leader of the Opposition said this afternoon that this government did not take any steps to try to overcome the problems that would arise. We did that in March or April. There was no support from the other side.

The bills before us are very important. The Payroll Tax Amendment Bill will certainly be a fund raiser for the Northern Territory. More importantly, by lifting the threshold from \$150 000 to \$300 000, it will certainly help our small businesses expand.

The Business Franchise (Tobacco) Amendment Bill provides several avenues to raise funds. From a very close reading of the bill, I can tell that it will bring us into line with legislation in most of the states, with the possible exception of Queensland.

The Stamp Duty Amendment Bill is another important one. What the members opposite did not say this afternoon, and maybe they are not aware of it, is

that the stamp duty has not been increased since 1981. It is about time that we reviewed the level of stamp duty.

Some mention has been made about the increase in liquor fees. We do not have a bill before us because the liquor fees will be raised by regulation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this afternoon, we have heard quite a bit of nonsense in relation to the financial affairs of this government. Of course, the opposition has continually brought the casinos back into the debate and mentioned the \$2.5m from Territory finances towards the purchase of the casinos. But what it did not say was that, if it was not for Treasurer Keating's withholding of FIRB approval in November 1984, we might not have been in the mess which necessitated our paying the \$2.5m. It did not talk about that. I remind it that it was its own federal Treasurer who sat back on his haunches and would not let that FIRB approval go through for the transfer of the assets. Consequently, it cost the Territory an extra \$2.5m. We said that we would get it back, and we certainly will get it back.

As far as the level of support that the Northern Territory government receives is concerned, I would like to remind members that Tasmania, which has a slightly larger population of 400 000 to the Territory's 140 000, has received a very significant level of support from all Commonwealth governments. However, the area that it has to administer is far smaller than the 650 000 square miles that we have. It does not have vast remote areas. The member for Stuart wants water for his vast electorate and the member for MacDonnell wants schools and so on. What the opposition did not say is that the Tasmanian government, with a similar level of assistance for its 400 000 population, has always been getting a fair share. As with the other states, it has had its infrastructure since federation in 1901. What has not been said in this Assembly is that our infrastructure did not start to be put into place until 1978. It will cost the Australian taxpayer money for us to make up for the last 70 years of neglect by all federal governments of all persuasions. We are 70 years behind. However, because the Northern Territory government has been getting the runs on the board in the last 7 years and has been kicking the goals, the states started to become jealous. They started to sit up and take notice of what is going on up here. That is not because we are an incompetent government, as suggested by the member for Stuart. It is because we are getting the Territory known, not only at the national level but also at the international level.

I am not going to say much about uranium. However, the member for MacDonnell fails to realise that uranium is being mined in other parts of the world. Uranium in the Northern Territory is no good yet the uranium at Roxby Downs in South Australia is all right. But they will not be able to mine that for another couple of years. Maybe it is a ploy of the federal government. Maybe it knows it will not be there in 1987 or 1988 and it might not have to make the decision to allow that mine to sell uranium. It is certainly holding back the contracts in the Northern Territory. It is certainly denying us the royalties that we would be entitled to. Nobody said that on the other side. These impositions are being placed on us just because we are self-governing. At the same time, the member for Millner is happy to sit there and say that we can take it like a state. There are special circumstances in the Northern Territory. There are special needs of Territorians that must be fulfilled through this parliament. Unless we get a reasonable go from the Commonwealth government, then we will be behind the 8-ball.

Let us consider the effects on small business because of the reduced spending. The \$50m that has been cut back by the federal government will certainly have an impact on our economy and the small business area. The

opposition spokesman for small business has not said anything about that this afternoon. He has not said one word about the effect on the small businesses. Certainly, there will be an effect. I most certainly hope that we are able to overcome that with our 1985-86 budget. Surely, there will be cuts in various areas.

The Northern Territory Development Corporation has had \$3m taken from it to try to help the Treasurer balance the books because of the cutbacks by the federal government. That \$3m could have been used to finance some new businesses and to keep jobs. That money that we gave back was collected in the last 4 or 5 months. It was earmarked to help other people get into Territory enterprise. Because of the federal government's action, some Territory enterprises will miss out.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the balloon has gone up for the Labor government. That is the reason for the line of debate this afternoon. It came in on the crest of a Liberal government wave. For 12 months, everything was rosy. It talked about the mythical deficit of \$11 000m. I remember Howard saying that the deficit could be \$6500m to \$7000m. Other members have taken licence this afternoon. The point that I am trying to make is that the federal Labor government is in trouble. I agree that some of the measures that it is taking must be good for the country. Why take it all from the Northern Territory? Why kick the Territory around just because it lost the federal seat? Why kick the Territory around because we are starting to go places and starting to make ourselves known at the national and international levels? We have had tourism promotion and industrial development. Later on, I will be speaking about our trade zone and the future in that regard.

As far as I am concerned, over the last few months, the part that has been played by members opposite with their federal colleagues has been absolutely disgusting and disgraceful. It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition, in his pious and big-bodied manner, to stick his chest out, bang the desk and say: 'Those guys sitting over there do not have the Territory's interests at heart'. What a load of bunkum! The people on this side of the Assembly are working 17 and 18 hours a day to make sure that the Territory functions. I will not sit here and listen to the honourable members opposite denigrate the efforts of this particular side of the Assembly because, if it were not for us, the Territory would still be in the 1960s where the opposition left it.

Mr PERRON (Mines and Energy): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to start in this debate by referring to some comments by the member for Stuart who gave us an interesting insight into some of the activities of members opposite which I long suspected but had never had confirmed before. Apparently, they do hold confidential discussions with some of their colleagues in Canberra about what is likely to happen to the Northern Territory. I have long suspected that it happens and I am not surprised that it happens. But it appears that, judging by what is facing the Northern Territory at present, they certainly have not been doing too well in trying to present a reasonable case for the Northern Territory. As has been mentioned many times in the Assembly, the problem with members opposite trying to put a case for the Northern Territory is that they find it almost beyond themselves to say that anything positive has ever happened in the Northern Territory. Their entire record in this Assembly is one of negative, carping criticism. We have never heard any of them really put forward a view in the Assembly about something that was done well. If they think about it, I am sure they will find plenty of things.

It seems that the member for Stuart went down there and was beaten around the ears with a few shallow comments about activities that we are proposing to



undertake or that we have undertaken. He felt terribly guilty about it all and ran out of arguments very quickly. I guess he cannot bring himself to put up a decent argument on our behalf. The first thing that he should have said to them is that, back in 1978 whilst they were all in opposition, the Northern Territory was granted a degree of self-government and a degree of self-determination. That was supposed to mean that those areas that were transferred to the Northern Territory, and there were very many of them, were left for us to run largely as if we were a state. We were to be pretty autonomous in regard to finance, the public service, taxation powers, legislative powers, education and health. Quite a degree of responsibility was transferred to us. Self-government was all about standing on our own feet and doing it our own way. I do not think anyone thought that we would not make a mistake from time to time. You will not find a government that has not made mistakes from time to time and the current federal government would be a pretty good example of that. We believe that, under the self-government powers, we have the right to make mistakes and suffer the consequences, learn by them and do better things.

What is presented to us here today is that, unless our actions and our achievements are in line with what federal ministers concur with, we should all feel terribly guilty and we will have the rope pulled in fairly sharply. That has been done. We are not supposed to be running a government that requires the concurrence of federal ministers for everything we do. I think that is a principle that the opposition could well work on their colleagues about and try to have that accepted for a start. We will make enormous strides ahead if they could just do that.

It was also said that surely the Northern Territory Treasurer and state Treasurers ought to get together and develop sympathy with the federal government for the plight of the country's financial standing at present. It was said that the Territory should really take a view that goes well beyond its borders and not be so parochial in its attitudes. If the Northern Territory government does not stand up and very determinedly defend what happens in the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth government is unlikely to do much. None of the states is likely to go out of its way to look after our interests. If the federal government would like to have some willing partners among state Treasurers and state governments for its belt-tightening exercise on behalf of the whole country, the first thing it has to do is introduce a degree of integrity and fair play into its own dealings with the states and the Northern Territory because that is what is lacking.

I will give a few examples of the types of things which make the Territory and state politicians very cynical about any genuine attempt by the federal government to do the right thing as a nation and treat people equally. The Roxby Downs decision was purely political. It was taken to save the South Australian government. There is no other excuse for it. Plenty of other reasons have been put forward but it was done at the expense of mines in the Northern Territory. Those sorts of things are not missed. The recent bail out of the Western Australian government over the North-West Shelf project is another example. I am not saying that the federal government should not have assisted Western Australia in that matter, but the federal government has been quite generous to colleagues of its own political persuasion. The situation would have been very difficult - and most people recognise that - if Western Australia had not had a Labor government.

The FIRB freezing which the federal Treasurer imposed at a time we were trying to obtain some equity in our casinos was a blatant political move. The federal Treasurer did not want more information even though that was the argument he put forward when he imposed the freeze. He lifted it a week or 2

later even though not one skerrick of further information had been provided. It was lifted because the federal Treasurer was satisfied by certain parties down south that the squeeze had been put on and it may have been partly successful.

In its recent mini-budget of the federal government, 1% of the population of Australia, Territorians, bore something like 8% of the costs of the reduction in the Commonwealth deficit. Is that fair and equitable? Is that treating all Australians the same? It is spending something like \$50m at the moment - and this is expected to grow to about \$160m eventually - of taxpayers' funds to stockpile uranium because it was destined for France. At the same time, the federal government pleads poor and says that it must tax us a little bit harder. Is that fair and equitable? It is probably even doing France a favour by not forcing it to take what today would be very high priced uranium under the contracts that were signed at that time. I have a feeling that the French companies who were contractually obliged to take that uranium are probably rubbing their hands together and laughing their way to the bank while Australian taxpayers suffer.

Every state in Australia which lost money under the Grants Commission's relativities calculation - and honourable members will be aware that some states were to receive more funds and other states were to have very substantial cuts in their funds - received a cushion from the federal government to ease the burden of those very substantial cuts - that is, every state except Queensland. Queensland had upset the Prime Minister very greatly by taking out an advertisement prior to the Premiers Conference about how Canberra was treating Queenslanders. The penalty that Queensland had for that advertisement was an absolute refusal to get 1% of cushioning for the reductions that it would receive under the Grants Commission's relativities review. Even Tasmania got \$45m to help cushion the blow because the Grants Commission's decision was very severe on it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, those are a few examples of the sorts of things where Australians see inequity in treatment of the states by the federal government. It is no wonder people become cynical about these things and it does not augur well for the federal government trying to engender a common view among Australian Treasurers to cop it sweet when the federal government wants to tighten the belt really hard in Australia's interests.

The Leader of the Opposition threw his usual tantrum, including clutching his heart, about how any difficulty the Territory is experiencing is really deserved because we installed new owners and operators in our casinos. One day he will find some new prop for his stage shows in the Assembly because everyone is becoming awfully tired of the casino issue and how he uses it in his props. At the last sittings, he pleaded with us to believe that he had personally resolved before the sittings that he would not raise the matter of the casinos. He took an oath on bended knee, but he did not have the strength to go through with it. When he did break eventually and spewed casinos all over everyone, it was like an enormous weight was being taken from his back. Mind you, he is still carrying plenty of weight despite the relief that he got at that time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it behoves us to think for a moment who started the rot in our financial relationships with the federal government in the first place. Our attention was first drawn to speeches being made in federal parliament condemning this government's actions and alleging that some sort of financial frolic was under way in the Territory. All of this was started a couple of years ago by none other than the then federal member, John Reeves, or 'John Who?' as he was known. It was like a chorus, although a small one. It was a very

vocal chorus and the opposition here joined in. Some infamous statements were put down in Hansard and carved pretty indelibly, like the Leader of the Opposition admitting that he was embarrassed about the level of funding that the Northern Territory received. His deputy was not far behind him in making the claim that the Northern Territory received handouts from the federal government and not entitlements. He did not say that the federal government was fulfilling its responsibilities under the memorandum and other agreements. They were handouts - gifts that could be given or withheld absolutely at a whim, depending on whether the taker was doing the right thing or not.

That was the view that was put again and again. Over the past 18 months, Hansard has been full of references to the Northern Territory being overfunded according to these gentlemen. They said that the party had to end at some time - and that was a phrase regularly used - 'the party is just about over', 'the writing is on the wall'. We heard that the writing was on the wall today. One of the members opposite mentioned that we should have been better prepared for the electricity decision that came down to us because the writing has been on the wall for ages. If he had known something, perhaps he should have told us. We learnt of the decisions on electricity from the media, at the time of the mini-budget. That was when we knew how much the grant for the powerhouse would be and the future of the electricity subsidy. We had provided lots of information to the federal government in the preceding months but not 1 word of its actual decision did we receive until the mini-budget and then it was through media statements.

If the honourable member knew in advance that we were to get the axe, perhaps he could have slipped us an anonymous note and told us. There seemed to me to be some sort of campaign being run to try to denigrate the Northern Territory government and, unfortunately, to denigrate it in the federal parliament because I think that that is where the trouble we are in today really started. The points drawn repeatedly to the attention of federal ministers were that the Northern Territory had money to burn, was throwing it all over the place and it really needed to have its wings clipped. These statements were made by people representing the Northern Territory - elected politicians. I guess the federal government, which was looking for areas to cut, could not resist seizing opportunities put right before its eyes. Certainly, the excuses being put forward - and they are excuses, not reasons - by the current federal Minister for Finance and the federal Treasurer as to why we are getting the chop are really those very ones that have been promoted by members opposite and their colleagues for about 2 years. I must say that, although I am not really surprised, I am very disappointed. I have spoken many times in this Assembly about the naivety of members opposite in some of the things they say about the Northern Territory in so far as the federal government is concerned.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my own departments will find it difficult, as other ministers' departments will, to take on board the cuts proposed by the Treasurer and the government for the coming financial year. Despite the increased revenue which will be raised as a result of the bills before the Assembly, we will all need to prune departments. This will go beyond house-cleaning-type pruning such as making people turn lights off a bit more regularly, and clamping down on the use of telephones, vehicles and interstate trips. I think it will go beyond that; we will need to cut into the actual services provided to the public. That is a fact of life which really cannot be avoided. It will mean reduced personnel and that will mean reduced services. Hopefully, such measures can be effected with a minimum of forced reductions in the system by simply not filling vacant positions.

Water resources, industrial safety, machinery inspection and the encouragement of mineral development are all very important to the development

of the Northern Territory. As has been mentioned, mining is the biggest revenue earner for the Territory and it holds enormous potential. We have only just scratched the surface of our potential productivity. However, government departments dealing with these matters will have to provide a little less service than they have in the past. We have managed to be very responsive to companies seeking information about the Territory in order for them to explore but, obviously, everything will take a little longer if we do not have the hands to provide that service. However, I accept that as part of what budget tightening involves and my departments will come in line there as will others.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, I make a plea to members opposite that, if they have any influence with their colleagues down south and if there are any more opportunities to make a plea, they make it for the Darwin Airport. Obviously, governments can do whatever they must do as far as tightening belts are concerned and the Northern Territory will survive the Minister for Finance, Mr Walsh. We will survive him and his current onslaught. However, the thing that will most harm the future of the Northern Territory in the next few years is not having a new Darwin Airport. I believe that the decision to defer that was based more on political grounds than on financial ones and I say that because the Chief Minister and Treasurer proposed very clearly to the Minister for Finance the option of having an airport terminal built for perhaps \$30m to \$40m. He even offered to go so far as to take responsibility for building, provided that the federal government undertook to provide us with funds over a period of years. We could construct a satisfactory terminal for Darwin for between \$30m and \$40m. Certainly, that would save the federal Minister for Transport a lot of heartache in trying to come to grips with the \$100m program he has on his plate at present and on which he has spent possibly up to \$20m already. However, instead of welcoming that proposal with open arms and seeing us as a responsible Territory government trying to come to grips with the problem to help the Commonwealth out of a difficult area - and the Commonwealth would get all the kudos - we have been told: 'We note your submission on the airport project and it will be considered at the end of the 6-months freeze that has been instituted to enable a review of the current project'. To freeze the project for 6 months for a review is a nonsense in itself. It is simply a method of delaying federal commitment to the project. The 6-months review period will be up at Christmas time and a report will go to federal government to be considered. The earliest possible time for funding to recommence the project would be in the August 1986 federal budget. It will be quite a big project which will take 2 or 3 years to complete. We are looking quite a long way down the track for the new airport terminal in Darwin. That is a terrible shame because the lack of a suitable terminal will do most harm physically to the Northern Territory through its effects on the tourist industry. If honourable members have any pull with their political colleagues, the project that I would ask them to put in a word for is the Darwin Airport.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, for the sake of Hansard and the public record, I indicate that the opposition will support these money bills. We have never opposed money bills in this Assembly as we believe it is the government's right to manage its budgets as it sees fit. However, we offer criticism where necessary and that seems to have caused the former Treasurer, the present Minister for Mines and Energy, some difficulty. His opinion has remained consistent: if you offer criticism of the Northern Territory government, that constitutes almost an act of treason. As I have said before in this Assembly, I do not believe what the minister is saying and I will continue to offer criticism where I see fit.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Minister for Community Development raised several points about the problems that he has in addressing the proposed budget cuts in

his department. Certainly, they have been savage and they have been applied more severely to the Northern Territory than other areas of Australia. He made a plea for some degree of equality in the distribution of the burden that Australians must bear. I would remind him that my electorate of Nhulunbuy would also appreciate the application of the principle of equality in the distribution of the burden. In fact, we receive nothing from the 2% from personal income tax that is given to the Territory government. We have never received a peso of that, let alone the top up that he talks about. We get nothing of that and our rates in that community are terrifying. If people think that rates are high in Alice Springs, Darwin and Tennant Creek, let them come to Nhulunbuy and pay rates. It would make them go white overnight.

Mr Deputy Speaker, whilst it certainly is an impost on the Territory and will cost the Territory and all members of the Territory community very dearly, the reduction in the NTEC subsidy will not cost residents of Nhulunbuy dearly because we have never copped the NTEC subsidy. We have never received a peso, a razoo, a brass farthing out of that particular Commonwealth item. Once again, that means very little to Nhulunbuy. There is one matter that was alluded to, one initiative that the government will have to take, which will affect Nhulunbuy and that is the proposed \$1 oil levy. Of course, that will have some effect on our electricity prices. As yet, I have been unable to assess what that will mean in terms of extra costs to my constituents so I am unable to tell the Assembly the extent of that effect.

Mr Deputy Speaker, while there have been many calls from many persons around the Assembly, ministers and backbenchers, for an equitable distribution of burden throughout the Australian community, Nhulunbuy, that distant place that does not mean too much because it is not on the Stuart Highway, has been forgotten about by this government ever since self-government. It would appear to make very little difference whether a government or an opposition member represents it in here. Indeed, my predecessor was a member of the CLP and he was equally forgotten and lost in this Assembly.

Those are the only specific comments that I would like to make on these bills. As I say, we will not oppose them. However, like the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I have difficulty in coming to terms with the government's stated aim in providing this increase in liquor licensing fees. It would seem inconsistent to have takeaway outlets selling beer at a dearer price than it is sold over the bar. It would seem more logical that takeaway beer should be cheaper than keg beer. In some way, that may assist people in making a decision not to drink and drive. There is also another matter of course. I note that the 2% increase will not apply to beers or liquors that have less than 2.5% alcohol content. I am a person who has been known to indulge occasionally in a cool beverage. I partake of light ale now. I am afraid that I cannot afford to lose my licence and all I drink is LA. Unfortunately, the retailers sell it at precisely the same price as the regular beer. If the increase in tax is not going to be applied to low-alcohol beer, there should be some way of ensuring that the saving will flow through to the consumer and perhaps we could lower the carnage on our Territory roads which undoubtedly is caused by the horrendous practice of drinking to excess and then driving.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, a great deal of what has been said over the last couple of hours - and, regrettably, a fair amount of it came from the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues - can be regarded only as bilge water. I think it is important for me to put into perspective the Northern Territory's position in relation to the rest of the Australian community. Times are tough in the Australian community. We are in our 4th or 5th year of budget deficits of over \$4000m. The fact that our dollar is at its

lowest point in history in relation to the American dollar is an indication of how other people in the world regard the state of our economy. We have to put our house in order or we will get a going-over from the international community like we have never seen before. Our economy is faltering and that will be compounded - and I do not say this with any satisfaction - by an impending drought. Already the impact of the drought has been felt in the federal Treasury because it is \$1000m short on income it thought it would get. The Treasurer is out on the campaign trail saying that the farmers are milking the system.

The taxation debate in this country is long overdue because the system that we have is ruining individual effort and that is another factor that is contributing to our downfall. The government is in a measure of disarray and I do not get any satisfaction from seeing that because that impacts on the state of the economy like everything else. For the Northern Territory, there is no future in our being in an environment where Australia is weak as a nation. We do well when the country does well because, for a long time to come, we will be in an emerging state of development and we will rely on the goodwill of other Australians to develop in the way the other states have developed. I am conscious of that and, in the period that I have been in this job, I have gone out of my way to present the Northern Territory's position in a reasonable way, given the constraints the federal government has on it in the present economic circumstances.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in the various comments that were made today, my approach and the Northern Territory government's approach to the federal government have been criticised fairly roundly. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that I have been soft and I should have kicked harder and that, if my predecessor were here, everybody's nose would be bleeding. The member for MacDonnell said yesterday that, in all the discussion that we have had so far, nobody has spoken like an Australian. We have all spoken like a lot of self-centred, greedy myalls. And the Leader of the Opposition said this afternoon that the contribution by members continued to reflect the greedy 'as of right' attitude that Territorians are renowned for down south.

I reject totally the proposition that the Territory government in recent months has been banging and kicking at the federal door, demanding things because we believe we ought to have them or because we had them in the past. We have been cognisant of the difficulties in the country today and we have been prepared to be reasonable in our approach. I think our approach has been fair to both parties. I think our approach has been responsible in acknowledging the economic circumstances of the country. We have shown a great deal of understanding to everybody in the community whom we have had to deal with in financial terms because the impact is not just on us as the Northern Territory government; it is on business, it is on local government councils, land councils, community groups and individuals. It is right through the community and any actions of ours impact on all of those groups tremendously. Further, we have shown that we have been prepared to negotiate. Just as a matter of interest, I would like to table some documents that have been exchanged between myself and the Prime Minister dated 1 May, another to the Minister for Transport, Peter Morris, and one to the Prime Minister dated 21 May, which indicate that the Northern Territory's position is reasonable. We are not biting and scratching and demanding things like a lot of selfish people. We understand that others have problems and we are trying to work with them to overcome them.

We further accepted that, in whatever measures the Commonwealth had to take to try to rectify the country's problems, we were prepared to accept our share.

The great complaint that we have is that we are required to bear more than our share and we find it hard to get an explanation to why we should have the level of disadvantage that we have under the mini-budget. I will say it again: the community in this Territory, which consists of 1% of the nation's population, shouldered 8% of the nation's cuts. Where is the equity in that? Why should the Territory's population have to bear a load like that, given our state of development? It really escapes understanding.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we accept that we have to carry our share of the load. There is no doubt about that. What we are arguing, sometimes vociferously but strongly and reasonably, is that we do not want to accept more than our share and place ourselves at a disadvantage with a lack of financial strength that will put our whole community at risk. For those members opposite who believe that the attack on the federal government has been political, too heavy or too enthusiastic, let me say that, in the light of the Northern Territory's approach in the last 6 months, which has been reasonable, you do not have many places to go when you keep turning the other cheek and they keep on socking it. There comes a point when you have to take your gloves off, get out your sticks, put on your hard-nailed boots and get into it. If that is the point we are at, so be it. We did not create the environment that put us there. We believe that we have gone about our negotiations with the Commonwealth in the government-to-government way that it should be done.

Funding of the Northern Territory is different from that of the states. There is no doubt about that. It has always been different and it will be for some time to come. Because of those differences, we have set up systems between governments that have enabled us to conduct the affairs of government in a reasonable way without great dislocation to ourselves and without unnecessary cost to the Commonwealth. There is provision in our agreements for the financial arrangements to change. They change by negotiation and discussion, not by arbitrary action on either government's part. We both have responsibilities to each other. There is protection in the Memorandum of Understanding for the Northern Territory against bureaucratic interference or unwarranted political manipulation. That was built in there quite deliberately when the people who negotiated the memorandum put it together just in case reasonable men disappeared from the scene. Protection should be there to safeguard the community against the assaults of people like Senator Walsh. In 1978, who would have ever believed that someone like Senator Walsh would be left in charge of the nation's finances? Is it likely that it will ever happen again? I would say not, Mr Deputy Speaker, but that is why we have protections in the memorandum against people like that who just happen to appear and disappear off the stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, our financial agreement with the Commonwealth is about to terminate and it is up for renegotiation. Under the terms of the agreement, if we had wanted to dig our heels in, we could have said: 'We are entitled to a 19% increase on what we had last year under the terms of the agreement'. However, at a time when all states and the federal government are trying to hold their expenditures at levels that will enable the economy to get up some steam, for the Northern Territory to go out and make a request of that nature would be unreasonable. In the approaches that I have made and the correspondence that I have just circulated - and there is no secret about them; they are public documents - the approach has been based on what is fair and reasonable for both parties, given that government must continue. I can accept that governments, for political reasons, from time to time decide to put airports, dams or railways in those places where people support them strongly or they may choose not to put them in places where people do not support them. That is a political decision and that is what government is about. But for a government, whether

it is the federal government dealing with us or the Northern Territory government dealing with the Alice Springs Town Council, to carve off slices of the budget arbitrarily in a vindictive way and leave the community in a position where it cannot recover from the crisis, is not the way the Australian system operates and neither should it operate in that way in the Northern Territory. If the Northern Territory had 12 senators, there is no way that we would have received the treatment that we have had in the last 6 weeks. It just could not have happened.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to cover the issues broadly, the facts are that the Northern Territory's budget is down 1% in real terms on last year. All the states had some small increase on last year, but we are down 1%. We are not up 3.4% as has been suggested by the Treasurer's papers because, to show a 3.4% increase in the Northern Territory's budget is really to fiddle the figures, which is what the federal Treasurer has done to achieve that end. The fact is that we are down 1% in real terms on what we got last year and, with our small base and our far-flung community, the impost on the community will be hard. There is no need for me to go over that ground again.

I would like to refer to 1 further issue, and it relates to the Leader of the Opposition. We had another one of his dramatic star performances this afternoon in playing with words. Over the years, the Leader of the Opposition has lifted a sentence from here and a paragraph from there and matched them up and said: 'See how you contradict yourself. See how you tell lies. See how you do this or that'. He is really the master of the pea and thimble trick in that regard and this afternoon's performance was another of those episodes. I would like to take a few minutes to go through a range of documents. I will quote from them all in order to deal with the Leader of the Opposition's outrageous proposition. It shows that he has not done any homework and he does not really know what he is on about but he is prepared to try to put down others who are working to resolve the problem. On page 16 of the Commonwealth Grants Commission's fifth report, which related to special assistance to the Northern Territory, there is a table 27. The second bottom line of that table reads: 'Assessed special grant for the Northern Territory - minus \$12.612m'. That is the assessment the Grants Commission made for the Northern Territory in the 1982-83 year. Because of the terms of reference of the Grants Commission, it cannot make a recommendation relating to the Territory. I will read the recommendations:

*Recommendation 2.26: Because the total of assessed needs of the Northern Territory in respect of the year of review, 1982-83, is less than the amount available to meet those needs by way of other Commonwealth assistance, the commission recommends that no grant of special assistance be made to the Northern Territory in respect of that year.*

*Recommendation 2.27: This assessment has been made without regard to the additional assistance grant of \$15m which was paid to the Territory during 1982-83 under clauses 9 and 28 of the Memorandum of Understanding and in respect of the financial arrangements between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory as clause 32 of that memorandum requires.*

*Recommendation 2.28: The additional assistance grant of \$5m for 1984-85, which is provided by clause 28 of the Memorandum of Understanding, is greater than the assessed special assistance grant. In accordance with the provisions of clause 9 of the memorandum, therefore, the Northern Territory is entitled to an additional assistance grant of \$5m in 1984-85.*



That, Mr Deputy Speaker, is pretty clear. I now turn to the message from the Treasurer, Mr Paul Keating, to the Premiers. I refer to Commonwealth proposals for new revenue grants arrangements and for borrowing programs for 1985-86, page 8, second paragraph.

*The Grants Commission has assessed that, in respect of 1982-83, the Territory has been overfunded by \$12.6m even after disregarding the additional assistance grant of \$15m already paid to the Territory in that year. Consistent with that assessment, an amount of \$12.6m will be deducted from the tax-sharing grant that would otherwise be payable to the Territory in the remainder of 1984-85.*

The Grants Commission assessed that the Territory has been overfunded. It concluded by saying that that amount would be deducted from the tax-sharing grant that would be payable otherwise to the Territory in the remainder of 1984-85. If ever in the history of the Grants Commission there has been an exercise where a government has taken the words of the commission and used them for political manipulation, that was it. Has there ever been a period in the history of this country when that sort of treatment was dished out to a state? No, there has not. The recommendation of the Grants Commission was that the Northern Territory would have a nil finding for the period 1982-83 and it went on to say that it believed we are entitled, in accordance with the provisions of the memorandum, to receive the \$5m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I move now to the statement I made in the mini-budget speech so that this paragraph can be put in next to the others because they all make interesting reading when you stack them side by side and do not lift out words and sentences here and there. Halfway down page 3 of the statement is the following:

*Regrettably, Mr Hawke and his government have seen fit to go much further. First, they have deducted \$12.6m from the Territory's 1984-85 tax-sharing grant. This amount was identified by the Grants Commission as the Territory's overfunding for 1982-83.*

There is no conflict; that is a statement of fact. I could have gone on to say that the Grants Commission also acknowledged in recommendation 2.28 that, in accordance with the provisions of clause 9 of the memorandum, the Territory is entitled to an additional assistance grant of \$5m.

In response to a question this morning from the Leader of the Opposition, I said:

*Mr Speaker, 1984-85 is covered in the memorandum as that year where we will receive at least \$5m. The Grants Commission recommended a reduction of \$12.6m. Mr Speaker, you and I know that \$5m is more than minus \$12.6m. Under the terms of clause 33 of the memorandum, we would be entitled to \$5m in 1984-85, and that is what we build our budget around.*

Mr Speaker, the Grants Commission's terms of reference require it to make a recommendation of special grants if it is greater than the additional assistance grant. In the light of clause 33, the commission can only recommend a zero grant. In its report, the table on the summary of needs, it clearly shows an assessed grant of minus \$12.6m. It is semantics, nonsense and huff and puff to argue that it is not the formal recommendation. What is important is that the commission did not fully accept the Territory's arguments and that the Commonwealth has used the report's findings as justification for a 1984-85

reduction in funds. I would say to the Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite that they can play with words, they can blame other people and they accuse whom they like but the facts are that the Labor Party in Canberra has done a job on us that it would not have had the hide to do on any of the states.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BILL  
(Serial 116)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL  
(Serial 115)

Continued from 24 April 1985.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the government has made a decision to present these 2 bills as cognate bills although there would seem to be no clear reason why they should be presented as cognate bills. The first is an interim bill dealing with the rating system. It gives the councils a choice of determining general rates on the basis of either a uniform rate or differential rates between areas. Currently, only a uniform rate can be struck. This is a step towards a new rating system to be introduced in the local government legislation which is designed to come into effect on 1 July 1986. The interim step contained in the first bill is to come into effect on 1 July 1985.

Mr Speaker, the opposition does not oppose this amendment bill, which is in line with the added flexibility being sought by councils, nor do we object to the new Local Government Bill. However, we are concerned at the rush to pass such a major piece of legislation during this week - only 6 weeks after it was first presented. The opposition is aware of, and gives full credit to the government and the Minister for Mines and Energy, for the wide consultation that has taken place with respect to this legislation. However, it is obvious from discussions with the Department of Community Development that the latter stages of drafting and the like have been done in a bit of a rush.

Mr Speaker, certain information which should have been available to a department about to draft detailed and complex regulations has yet to be available. This has not yet been possible because of the haste to have the bill ready for passage this week. As I have already stated, the opposition supports this bill. However, we appreciate what a significant piece of legislation it is. The fact is that the final draft of the bill was presented to this Assembly a mere 6 weeks ago. Surely such an important bill requires a little more respect. It is not unreasonable to expect it to lie on the table for more than 6 weeks, particularly when it is not due to come into effect for another 12 months.

It requires lengthy consideration and a decent opportunity should be given for that to occur, yet it has been made cognate with a bill that must be passed this week. There is no real reason for doing so other than to rush them through together. This is hardly a reasonable approach. The working party report was released only last October. As the minister himself stated, that report recommended sweeping changes. This bill, based on those recommendations, has had to be discussed, reviewed, consulted on and then drafted all within what

must be acknowledged as a short time for such a major bill. We would ask the government to separate these bills so that the new legislation can be duly considered by the whole community. This would give the government the opportunity to undertake the necessary examinations and procedures which would ensure that the bill as drafted would not have to face the many corrections which so often necessitate amendment bills where this government has rushed through legislation before it has been thoroughly considered and checked. The extensive amendment schedule which has been circulated is an excellent illustration of what I am saying.

Under this legislation, the local councils will be given greater flexibility in the exercise of their powers. Overall, they will be less circumscribed and have more responsibility than under the current legislation. However, there are balancing provisions to ensure that councils are answerable to their communities. Provision is made for disgruntled members of the community to raise their disputes before a local government tribunal. Provision is also made for the appointment of both a management and advisory committee. Councils are empowered to appoint any person or persons whom they see fit. It is hoped that councils will use this opportunity to involve members of the communities where appropriate. In addition, councils will be required to conduct their meetings in public except when dealing with prescribed matters. There is some doubt as to what constitutes a prescribed matter. However, this should ensure the opportunity for scrutiny by the community.

I do not wish to go through the bill clause by clause. Suffice it to say that the opposition concurs with the approach of giving councils more independence in their areas of responsibility. However, I would sound a note of caution on the potential for a council's initiative to be at variance with this or any government's declared policy. This conflict could arise in the area of development where a council pursues a rating option which could affect development programs.

I have a few other small concerns with the bill that I would like to raise. Firstly, I draw attention to clause 9 which relates to an application by a council or a group of electors to have the boundaries altered. The application goes to the minister who can decline to proceed. Unfortunately, there is no requirement for the minister to give reasons for so declining. Since such an application should only be declined on legitimate grounds, it is reasonable to assume that there should be no basis for concealing those grounds, given that it is surely in the interests of this government that the minister furnish those reasons for his decision. I would ask the government to consider a requirement for the minister to give reasons for his decision not to allow the alteration of council boundaries.

Another point I would like to raise relates to clause 15. Subclause (1) sets out the qualifications for holding the position of mayor or alderman. Paragraph 15(1)(g) covers the situation of someone with rates and charges outstanding. The thing that concerns me is that it only relates to situations where the person in question owes rates as an individual. It does not cover a situation where that person is the principal of a business or company which owes rates. In my view, this requires some attention.

The final point I would like to raise is that clause 65 only sets out a minimum notification of 3 days for an ordinary meeting of the council. If councils are to hold public meetings, couldn't that be extended to a full year's program? Three days would seem a fairly limited time for a notice to be circulated throughout the community. I appreciate that these are only minor matters. As I have already stated, the opposition concurs with the general

spirit of this legislation. However, I must reiterate my earlier comments that the bill is too important to be rushed through. It should be on the table until the next sittings.

I would like now to raise a plea for local government in my electorate of Nhulunbuy. There is a community of some size on the most north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory, a community which is still perhaps the third largest in the Northern Territory. However, we have no local government. We are obliged to accept a system of community management which the present Minister for Community Development was proposing in relation to Palmerston. The community is simply administered by an appointed person. The residents of Nhulunbuy certainly find that most difficult to accept. I hope that, in the not too distant future, certainly before my death, that community will enjoy local government.

That concludes my remarks on this bill. There are some aspects of it with which I have some personal difficulty. However, the general spirit on the bill certainly reflects the wishes of councils throughout the Northern Territory. The minister and his department have certainly consulted very widely and I congratulate them for that. I hope that we are not faced with another barrage of amendments in 12 months time as a result of this major piece of legislation being rushed through the Assembly.

Mr DALE (Wanguri): Mr Speaker, as 1 of 4 members of this Assembly who has had the honour to serve at a local government level, I thought that I ought to contribute to this debate. The rumours are not true that I will confine my comments to clause 22 of the bill which relates to giving the Deputy Lord Mayor a special allowance. Unfortunately, I had to suffer for 4 years without a special allowance as Deputy Lord Mayor. I am very pleased indeed to see it there, although I am rather sad that it is not retrospective.

Mr Speaker, I believe that local government in the Northern Territory, and particularly in Darwin, has been very much maligned in recent years, particularly since self-government. Some cynics advocate that local government should be disbanded. That view is held by people who are rather ignorant of the role of local government and it is certainly not one that I share. The debate on that issue probably would have been timely some 25 years ago but it is certainly not a viable option at this stage. I do not doubt that the council itself contributed to its poor reputation, probably more by a great deal of procrastination on the part of elected members than by any other factor. However, procrastination by the council can be attributed to other factors.

The Darwin City Council is extremely close to the seat of government. In fact, it is so close it could be said that, on occasions, it has been sat upon. Decisions by council in the Northern Territory come under more pressure than probably anywhere else in Australia. Every decision of any significance immediately comes under government scrutiny. Members of both local government and this Assembly are very much accessible to mutual constituents who apply pressure to whichever sphere of government will best support their point of view at the time. The East Point Reserve issue is a classic example.

Mr Speaker, there are other examples which illustrate how councils could be seen to be not taking decisions after long debate on issues. Car-parking expiation fees have been discussed by council over many months if not years. It wanted to increase the fines and or go to a multi-ticketing system. The parking fine of \$5 was contained in the Local Government Act and not under a council bylaw so its decision could not be implemented until such time as the Local Government Act was amended. Funds derived from the car-parking expiation fee

were to be a vital part of the overall city car-parking strategy and, moreover, a vital factor in assessing a formula on which all fees and charges relative to the funding of the multi-storey car-park could be made.

Members of the council have, in recent years, come in for a great deal of criticism over the rating system. They wanted to introduce such things as the minimum rate but were unable to do so because that required an amendment to the Local Government Act also. I concede that ministers responsible were acting in the best long-term interests of all when they refused to make piecemeal changes to the act while a total review was taking place. I would have thought that the member for Nhulunbuy was stretching the point a bit by referring to this particular bill as being rushed through. I think I can recall its being discussed by the community at large for about the last 6 years. It might have been more. How the word 'rush' could be applied to this particular bill is really beyond me.

I believe that the Darwin City Council in fact has kept pace and cooperated with the Northern Territory government in implementing policies which have seen this city develop at a rate second to none. I cite achievements such as the multi-storey car-park, which it wisely decided not to build in conjunction with the Workers Club, the Performing Arts Centre, the Darwin City Mall, which is the best in Australia, comprehensive child-minding facilities, its management of facilities such as Gardens Oval and the Botanical Gardens, and the provision of various recreation parks and foreshore development. Its City Beautification Program has been outstanding. I offer a note of concern here with the abolition of the \$1-for-\$1 grants. I believe that the City Beautification Program in fact has been partly funded by that scheme.

I believe that one of the fundamental reasons for frustration on the part of local government has been that, since self-government, some elected members in the 2 spheres I have referred to have found it difficult to identify their own area of responsibility. This bill will remove many of the current restrictions on the ability of a local government to carry out its functions and conduct its affairs. It provides a framework which is unequalled in Australia for a local government to fulfil its claim to be the sphere of government closest to the people and therefore most responsible to the people. The aspirations of the most ardent members of local government have the potential to be realised in the list of functions at schedule 2 which may be devolved in accordance with clause 87. The bill of itself does not require a council to take on a function. However, once a function is devolved, a council's power to carry out that function will be largely unfettered.

Mr Speaker, I am particularly pleased with clause 86 which provides for the statutory incorporation of the Northern Territory Local Government Association. The association will now be able to pursue matters more actively and represent the interests of various councils by putting forward their collective points of view. The overall status of the association will therefore be enhanced and its continued involvement with the local government industry training committee will no doubt further increase the efficiency of local government.

During his second-reading speech, the Minister for Community Development said: 'The bill is based on the philosophy of providing greater independence to local government'. I agree that the basic thrust of the bill is based on that philosophy. However, I believe it deviates from its course in a couple of areas. The bill provides a base on which the structure of local government legislation will be developed principally through the use of regulations. However, a tendency in the bill to overregulate the activities of a council may well impede the philosophy expressed by the minister. There are many proposals

contained in the bill that prescription shall be by regulation whereas it would be more satisfactory to councils, and perhaps a little less patronising, if such prescription was by way of either bylaw or by policy of a council. Regulations, of course, are formulated by government whereas bylaws are made by individual councils. Examples of my concern are in clauses 68 and 69 where a bylaw or policy would be more appropriate than regulations in relation to meeting procedures and confidentiality. In relation to clause 68, it seems to me that, if it is the intention of the bill to give councils plenary powers, then it is an anomaly that the internal procedures of councils need to be prescribed in regulation when the same end could be achieved by permitting councils to prepare their own standing orders on meeting procedures in the form either of bylaws or policies.

Clause 69 proposes that the only circumstances in which a council meeting can be closed to the public is when a prescribed matter is being considered and voted upon. My concern is that council would have no hesitation if a matter which was not prescribed needed the confidentiality of a closed meeting. It has been said that, if a council needs to discuss a matter confidentially, the meeting should be adjourned and the council resolve itself into a committee of the whole to consider the matter. Whilst this may close the council to the public for the purposes of debate, the decision, in order to be ratified by the council, must be presented to open council. It is not possible to cover all occasions where confidentiality may be required. For example, it may be a matter referred by government for the purpose of consultation with the council in a situation in which the council needs to take a position but it is not yet a proposal satisfactory for public release for any number of reasons. The council will have no discretion in this matter and it would merely mean that the matter either became public knowledge or the government would take a position of no further consultation with the council. The situation is simply not acceptable to either party.

Mr Speaker, I know that there have been extended discussions and cooperation between councils and government officers to reach a situation where the regulations will be as acceptable as possible. This Local Government Bill is probably the most complicated piece of legislation ever enacted in the Territory. Undoubtedly, some minor problems will be encountered when it becomes operational. The reactions to those problems by this government will be positive and I look forward to the continued development of local government in the Northern Territory, a sphere of government which is near and dear to my heart. I applaud this bill and the efforts of many officers and ministers over the years to bring it to fruition.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to commence by making a few general comments and I am not sure I share the sentiments of the member for Wanguri in suggesting that it is the most complex piece of legislation ever to come before this Assembly. By comparison with the Criminal Code, it almost pales into insignificance. Be that as it may, I have no doubt that this is extremely important legislation for setting the framework for the third tier of government. Given that Alice Springs is in the centre of my electorate and my particular interest is in the affairs of central Australia, it is sometimes a source of wry amusement to me that the supposedly more junior third tier of government has representatives who are elected in Alice Springs by far more people than individual members of this particular Assembly. The electorates of Flynn, Braitling, Sadadeen and Araluen are all far smaller areas than the local government area in which polling is carried out for the Alice Springs Town Council. I cannot help feeling that that rather places this Assembly in its relationship to the town council in a quite extraordinary position by comparison with relationships between the second and the third

tiers of government anywhere else in Australia. Somebody may be able to leap to his feet and say that I am wrong but I am not aware of such places.

That brings me to my next point, Mr Deputy Speaker. Representing as I do the southern quarter of the Northern Territory, it strikes me that, unlike in the more developed areas of this great land, there are no continuous local government areas. Areas beyond Alice Springs do not have local government in any form under the present act. I am very pleased that part VIII of the bill retains the community government council provisions that were introduced into the Local Government Act in my time in this Assembly.

It is probably worth spending a minute or two to ruminate on the fortunes or otherwise of community government councils. For the benefit of honourable members who are confined to town electorates that are less extensive than the wonderful scenic electorate of MacDonnell, I indicate that there are no community government councils within my electorate. Provisions for such councils were introduced into the Local Government Act in 1981 in an attempt to provide a less rigid framework within which some form of local government might become possible in Aboriginal communities. At least 3 years have elapsed since the enactment of those amendments and I think I owe some explanation to honourable members about why such community government councils have not been formed under the Local Government Act. I think the answer to that question can be found in what we understand by the term 'community'. I venture to say that, for many of my Aboriginal constituents, their idea of community is very different from the one that you and I carry around in our heads, Mr Deputy Speaker.

We would regard small communities of 1000 or fewer people as a small country town. Many people are born, grow up and shuffle off this mortal coil in one small rural community. I would suggest that that sort of idea of remote communities as small towns is not entirely appropriate in this case because the people who live in those communities really see themselves as belonging to an extended family. They may live in a number of so-called communities and, for various reasons - for example, the death of a relative - may move from one so-called community to another.

I can think of one particular example where a man who is well known to me moved out of a community in my electorate because of deaths of his 2 children under very sad circumstances. He was a community leader and, under some circumstances, men such as he may have been the nucleus of a community government council under this legislation. That man has lived in places ranging over a distance of some 300 or 400 miles and has relatives in places from Alice Springs to Warburton in Western Australia and has responsibilities in respect of various families, various rituals and various country. Whereas we would perceive him as being a man capable of being a nucleus for a community government council, there are realities of Aboriginal life for that particular man that mean that a community government council could not easily get off the ground.

I extol the virtues of those amendments and, by my previous comments, I mean nowise to suggest that there will be no purpose for them in future. As I have said in this Assembly before, Aboriginal aspirations are very varied. It is quite clear that there is a range of aspirations in the Aboriginal community in regard to local government forms that will encompass the forms that are set out in the community government council provisions.

The 3 further points I wish to make in respect of this bill relate to the conduct of elections. I note that clause 53 spells out new arrangements for

the conduct of elections. Future local government elections will be carried out, with some minor variations, in the terms of the Northern Territory Electoral Act. I believe that will make elections for local government councils essentially more democratic because it will permit an exhaustive preferential voting system. At the moment, the voting system that pertains under the Local Government Act is not a preferential system. Although preferences are counted, it is possible for somebody's vote never to be counted for a winner of the election. I will not expatiate on that but I believe that the preferential voting that will pertain as a result of the enactment of this legislation will be an improvement.

My second point has already been touched on by the member for Wanguri when he referred to clauses 68 and 69 relating to closed sessions of councils. My somewhat cursory scanning of the current act suggests - and I think it will be corroborated by the member for Wanguri - that a local government council is able to move itself into a closed session for whatever reason on its own motion. This legislation will circumscribe severely its ability to do that. The member for Wanguri suggested that there are circumstances where consultation between the Territory government and a local council really needs to be conducted behind closed doors. I do seem to recall the erstwhile Minister for Lands doing exactly that with the Alice Springs Town Council last year over planning issues. That is a subject I do not choose to canvass this evening. Other examples where such closed sessions might be necessary are circumstances where a concession may be necessary on a rating of a property that is owned by, for example, a pensioner or somebody who makes application to the council for a rate concession because of hardship. Quite obviously, in a fairly small community, it is desirable that the privacy of such applicants should be preserved by the conduct of such deliberations in a closed session. I hope that the Minister for Community Development will take those particular considerations on board and perhaps explain exactly how a prescription will be made for closed meetings.

The third point I wish to make relates to clause 157 which deals with the creation of fund reserves. My understanding is that the current act allows considerably greater discretion to local government councils in respect of creating reserves; for example, for the replacement of plant and equipment. This has been somewhat more circumscribed in clause 157. In talking with people involved in local government, I have had concern expressed to me that the functions of local government may very well be inhibited because councils may not be able to build up reserves under circumstances where they may feel it to be desirable. I hope that the Minister for Community Development, in his summing up, will answer concerns in that regard.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I also had the privilege to serve in local government for a considerable number of years as an elected member in this city of Darwin. Obviously, I support the introduction of these cognate bills. I would like to add a few words to those of the member for Wanguri in relation to the number of years that this proposition for change to the Local Government Act was before us and go one step further in saying that, not only was the proposition before the councils for a considerable number of years but, for a considerable number of years, the councils worked together with the Department of Community Development to ensure that the legislation met their requirements.

The Local Government Bill (Serial 116), the primary bill, has the philosophical basis that local government should be able to operate effectively as a third sphere of government. That is addressed in clause 87. Clause 87 provides for the notification of powers and functions of the council of a municipality. The functions which it is possible to provide to councils



are listed in schedule 2, a most comprehensive list, which has the approval of the Northern Territory Local Government Association. The clause embodies a major advance by providing, in subclause (3), a general competence power to local government. Once the function is given to a council, it will be charged with the peace, order and good government of its community in relation to that function. This should remove difficulties which currently arise where there are restrictions placed on functions granted to councils requiring them to operate within specific fields of activity. This old restrictive system has led it at times to ridiculous faults where, say, a council power with respect to stray animals may not have been exercisable in respect of other than horses, dogs, cats and cattle. This legislation will free local government from many of the constraints which pertain under the current act. It will largely remove the requirement that local governments continually refer and defer to the Territory government.

The current act is cluttered with many matters of administrative detail. The bill provides for these matters to be prescribed by regulation. With the bill providing the framework and the regulations dealing with matters of detail, the legislation as a whole should be more easily followed and understood by local government practitioners. A major feature of the bill is the degree of flexibility it provides to councils in the raising of revenue through to rates. I intend to address this matter in some detail.

From now on, a council will be able to determine from a wide range of options the most appropriate and equitable rating method for its particular municipality. In respect of rates, which will be the most sensitive area for discussion by most councils and ratepayers, there is provision for the widest possible number of choices for councils to adopt. Councils will be able to select the type of land valuation which suits their purposes. These are unimproved capital value, improved capital value and annual rental. The rate to be applied to the value selected may then be applied uniformly across the municipality or differentially to the various parts of the municipality as required. Further flexibility is provided by the ability to declare a minimum amount which will be payable on each block of land. I will address these clauses individually as I have had a long interest in the various methods of rating.

Clause 114 requires a council to declare, in each financial year, the amount it intends to raise by rates and a general rate. A general rate may be based on a uniform rating system under clause 116 or a differential rating system under clause 117. For either system, the council may declare the minimum amount payable. For either system, the council will be able to use the assessed value as provided in clause 115. In either case, the general rate is land based. In addition, the council may declare a local rate under clause 119, an urban farm land rate and charges payable for services under clause 120. All of these rates and charges must be declared at the one meeting which must occur after 10 days of the publication of the estimates and before 30 September in each financial year.

Clause 115 allows the councils to have the discretion to adopt a method of determining the assessed value of land based on unimproved capital; that is, the value placed on the land - the unimproved capital value - the value placed on the land and the buildings on that land - the improved capital value - or the annual value - the amount which may be obtained by the rental of the property - or a combination of any 2 of these. All of these values will appear on the valuation roll prepared pursuant to the Valuation of Land Act. Where a council adopts a method of assessing value, it will be required to continue to use that method for 3 years. The choice of the method of determining

assessed value will be a matter for the decision of each council. Councils therefore will have the power and a very clear responsibility to assess and decide which method is the most equitable for their particular municipality.

In clause 116, the adoption of the uniform rating system will require a council to declare a percentage which will then be applied by multiplying the assessed value of each parcel of land in the municipality by that percentage. This process will provide for each parcel of land the amount payable for rates. The rating system currently in use in Northern Territory municipalities is a uniform rating system.

Clause 117 permits the adoption of a differential rating system which will allow a council to apply different percentages to the assessed value of land in identifiable parts of its municipality. These include wards, towns and zones. The differential rating system will allow councils to strike a rate which takes into proper account the load on services provided by particular land in an identifiable area. The application of a differential rate will give the council the ability to spread the rate burden in a more equitable way than might be available with the uniform rate system.

Clause 118 provides that, where the operation of either the uniform or differential rating system on the assessed value of land provides an amount less than the declared minimum, that minimum amount will be payable. This facility is designed to increase further the flexibility of councils in making decisions about the methods that they will use in raising revenue through rates. This flexibility is consistent with the philosophy that councils should have both the power to set their rates in the most equitable way and the responsibility for their decisions.

Clause 119 allows for the provision of the declaration of the local rate. The local rate so declared by a council will provide the council with the ability to defray expenses, recover costs or repay loans in relation to the performance of a function in respect of, or of benefit to, a particular part of its municipality. Local rates may be determined otherwise than on the assessed value of land. Where a council declares a local rate, it will be required to specify in that declaration the part of the municipality or class of owner or occupiers to which the rate will apply, the funds to which the amount raised will be applied, the manner of assessment and the manner by which appeals may be made. A local rate may be used, for instance, to pay for such improvements as a swimming pool or recreation centre which is of particular benefit only to residents of a particular area.

In summary, the degree of choice available to councils will allow them to ensure that the rate burden is carried in the most equitable way possible. It will mean that councils would no longer be restricted to uniform rating on unimproved capital value which does not allow councils any means to obtain rate returns from land in proportion to the services which are provided to that land. The alternative, which is to restrict the options available to councils but still require them to be responsible, is clearly inconsistent with the overall philosophy of the bill. The major bill will come into effect on 1 July 1986. The Local Government Amendment Bill (Serial 115) is intended to allow the major councils to take the opportunity immediately to address the matter of rating as I have just discussed and to allow them to introduce their new method as soon as possible, and certainly before July 1986. I commend both these bills to members.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, in rising to expatiate on the subject before us, I point out that I rise not to bury the honourable minister this

time but to praise him. He is moving in the direction which, when he gets its right, will give us the best local government system in Australia. I say 'when he gets it right' advisedly because, as was mentioned by the member for Nhulunbuy, I think there are still a number of problems that could arise in the administration of this bill if it were to become an act now. It would be advisable if he were to take note of our comments and possibly withdraw it at this stage and introduce it again at the August sittings. As was pointed out, the legislation will not come into force anyway until mid-1986. It would be simple to allow the other bill to go through and work on this one for the next couple of months. In August, we would have probably the best local government legislation in Australia.

As I go through the legislation, I will try to note the clauses I am referring to so that the minister will be able more easily to chase them up. For example, I am beginning with clause 9 which allows electors in a municipality to apply to the minister so that he can then request the Administrator to exercise his powers regarding the constitution of the municipality. This is an excellent concept which I heartily endorse. However, I wonder if the minister realises that there is a basic anomaly in the clause. I refer to the situation where people live in a municipality and some of those people wish to have the electorate reconstituted into a number of wards. There has been considerable discussion about the whole concept of wards - whether there should be a ward of the whole town or a ward for each alderman or multi-member wards. There are arguments for the different systems. I myself am a believer in the in-between situation of a multi-member ward which still allows aldermen to represent fewer people than in our constituencies of the Northern Territory legislature.

The problem that we have with this particular clause is that, if we have a ward of the whole town and 20% of that particular ward has to be contacted to be able to trigger this mechanism in clause 9, that is obviously a far more difficult thing than if it were 20% of a single-member ward in a town the size of Alice Springs. I am not sure whether the minister is aware that the system will mean that it is easier to get a meeting of a smaller group where there is a single-member ward as against where it is the total area of the town. It is an anomaly. It would not take a great deal of amendment. Maybe it could be put in another subclause.

Mr Speaker, where people want to put up a proposal for a ward system, not only must they define their own ward and its boundaries but also the boundaries of all the wards in the municipality. That would require a fairly high degree of accuracy which is probably a bit unfair to ask of a group of electors, given also the demographic data that would be required to work out where those wards should be in the final analysis. It is asking the people to do something which we will have to turn around and do ourselves later. I am a little worried about the amount of time that will elapse before this clause can be applied. The period is about 13½ months before it reaches the inquiry stage. I do not know how long it would take after that.

I am also concerned that the minister can decline to proceed any further. There is no requirement for him to give his reasons for declining. I feel that, where people have gone to the effort of meeting, especially if they must survey these wards, they should be given some reason by the minister. That should be a requirement.

There appears to be another anomaly. I am not sure that I am right here. I cannot get it quite right in my own mind. Under subclauses 9(6) and 9(8) the minister may decline to proceed any further but subclause 9(11) does not

actually provide that option. It says that, after he has had the application, the submissions, the inquiries etc, he may at his discretion request the Administrator to do 1 of 2 things. I am not sure whether this particular discretion is to do nothing or is related back to 1 of the particular courses of action specified in the bill.

Mr Speaker, paragraph 15(1)(g) disqualifies an alderman or mayor from office if he has not paid rates or charges which have been due and payable for 6 months. Technically, a person is supposed to pay the rates and then go to the tribunal. If he wins, he gets them back. Unfortunately, some people might not have the ready cash to enable them to do that. They might prefer to leave their rates unpaid and battle through the tribunal. However, if a person is an alderman, he cannot remain an alderman unless he operates as a company. An ordinary citizen who keeps his land in his own name and pays his rates on his own personal account cannot remain an alderman whereas somebody who has some fancy company arrangement can happily not pay rates and remain an alderman.

In going through the provisions regarding the election of mayor, it became obvious to me that this bill allows only 1 system. It is a curious system. It is a strange mixture of the presidential and the Westminster styles of government. Aldermen are elected individually from their particular wards and they then represent those wards in the council. The mayor, however, is elected on the presidential system by the whole municipality. However, having elected him under the presidential system, we then do not have the checks and balances which are required in the presidential system. The mayor is not the head of the executive and there is no distinction between the powers of the executive and the powers of the legislature which is an essential part of the presidential system. On the other hand, the mayor is not responsible to the aldermen. The aldermen did not put him there; he was put there by the people of the whole town. I realise that this has grown up in Australia but it is, to my mind, a possible breeding ground for disputes in that the relationship between the mayor and the aldermen does not fit into the particular system of election which leads to responsible government. I do not like it. I am not saying that everybody should adopt the system that I prefer but I believe that there should be an option available for people to use the traditional Westminster system or this particular concoction that is in the bill.

Clause 19 contains the requirement for periodic review of electoral representation by the council. I am disturbed by the lack of detail in the bill as to what that review will entail. It would appear that, under the bill, there could be a 5-minute debate with a resolution that states: 'We have decided that everything is the best of all possible worlds and we can ignore that growing demand out there in the municipality for a change to the structure of our wards'. I would not be so worried if I did not have some lingering doubts regarding the powers of the minister. It says that, if the council does not hold this review, the minister can order it. What if the council carries out a 5-minute review and then claims that it has complied with the request? Do we then go the whole way and suddenly cut its money off or can we make it clearer in the regulations exactly what a review comprises?

Mr Speaker, the division relating to the interests of members needs more work. I do not think that it adequately covers trustees or artificial contrivances such as where a person transfers a company to a friend on paper but in fact holds signed, undated transfer shares back to himself. He exercises control over the company because of his possession of those undated share certificates which he could register at any time. To all intents and

purposes, he is not the owner of the company. In that situation, that person could be the mayor or an alderman and would not need to comply with the interests of members provisions. I am still not completely satisfied that a person who is an ordinary shareholder in a bank portfolio investment could not come under that. It does seem to me that it covers many areas but there are some situations that should be covered that are not covered.

Mr Speaker, my concerns are not reason enough not to support the bill in general. They are, however, possible problem areas and it would be better if we cleared them up before we got into trouble over them. I have a simple query about clause 26 which provides for the disqualification of a member. If a person in the community had reason to believe that an alderman should not continue to hold office and the person initiates tribunal proceedings, he should be able to cancel the action. It may be that this can be written into the tribunal's own rules of court. I am not sure. It could be that the person, having initiated action, may simply say: 'I cannot afford it because I have to pay these costs. I am not going to continue with the action'.

Mr Speaker, in relation to a by-election, I would have preferred to have seen a requirement on the returning officer to hold a by-election not later than 3 months after the event that triggered the need for it. The legislation says that a by-election shall be held but it does not say when. In effect, it could be 2 years down the road.

I notice that we are linking elections back to the Northern Territory Electoral Act. However, I wonder if it has sunk home that, under the Northern Territory act, we do not have multiple-member constituencies. In determining the successful candidate in a multiple-member constituency, we would be using a system which is designed for single-member constituencies. In Alice Springs, it is possible for a group of candidates to have only 51% of support in the town and actually gain 100% of the seats. That is because of the multiple member variation on the first-past-the-post system that we have down there. It seems to me that there is nothing in this bill which would change that so that we can get a fairer means of representation.

Mr D.W. Collins: What do you mean? You are talking party politics.

Mr EDE: Go back to sleep.

Mr Speaker, turning to the notice of meetings, I agree with my colleague regarding the number of days. I feel that 3 days notice of a meeting is completely inadequate and 4 hours notice, in the case of a special meeting, is ridiculously inadequate. When we are talking about something being posted to a person, unfortunately our mail system is not quite up to providing 3 clear days. However, it appears that the bill says 'served on' a member where it is posted to him'. It is not clear to me where the 'where' means when and when the 'where' means where, but I presume that 'on a member where it is posted to him' means when it is posted to him for the purposes of determining the period of notice.

Mr Speaker, the next point I want to make is on the quorum. Quorum provisions are extremely important in these types of organisations because, under the system that we have developed here, there is the possibility that a group of people who may want to get something through that they know has not the full backing of the council can get together at a time when there is no quorum, and they can postpone the meeting to a date, time and place within the municipality that the clerk, the mayor or the chairman thinks fit. I can see instances when that could be utilised to enable a minority viewpoint to take over the council. There is an alternative to this which should be

considered: to have something written into the legislation to provide that the failure of a quorum will mean that there will be another meeting at the same time and place in 7 days time, say, and that the people who are there will constitute a quorum. This would overcome the problem of people preventing the attendance of a sufficient number to constitute a quorum and preventing the council from operating.

Mr Speaker, regarding the open or closed meeting, I agree with some of the things which were said earlier. I can see the problem of having all the meetings open. In the best of all possible worlds, you might want to run it that way but there are things of a private nature which mean that it would have to be closed. However, I believe that it is not right that a vote should be closed. If they need to have discussions in private because of particularly confidential information or private information that people want to get off their chest, that is fair enough but the vote itself should be public so that the public can know who is voting which way. I know that, at various times, some members opposite would have liked to have had a closed show here so that they could dive over this way.

Mr Speaker, the next matter that worries me relates to these people called 'authorised persons'. An authorised person is required to have a passport-sized photo identification card so that, if he wants to obtain a person's name and address or if he wants to perform his functions under the act, he can prove that he is an authorised person under the act. However, it seems to me that, the way that this is structured, if a person does not have his card with him, he still has all the powers to do the things that he may do as an authorised person. If you say, 'I do not think you are an authorised person', you may be liable for a \$500 fine. I think that the person should be prohibited from exercising his powers unless he has a card. The card is required under the bill. The person should go and pick up his card so that he can prove that he is who he says he is.

Mr Speaker, the performance of the functions of a council outside of its own municipality is possibly something which the honourable member of Koolpinyah would like to take up. I do not know if she has read the particular clause to realise the ability ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Which one?

Mr EDE: Clause 89 - to allow the Palmerston council, when that is established, to perform the functions of a municipality in the Darwin rural area. I will leave that one there.

Mr Speaker, going on to clause 98, I am glad to see that this government holds on to an idea when it gets one. This is compulsory acquisition of property. Someone should put the word out to the casinos that they are not safe yet.

Mr Speaker, going on to clause 115, assessed value as a basis of valuation, I note in passing that 'annual value' is not defined in the bill. Possibly, honourable members will know what that concept relates to. It means the rental value of the property. The rates can be worked out on that basis rather than on the annual improved or unimproved capital value.

Mr Hanrahan: What do you want to know then?

Mr EDE: I want the court to take judicial notice of it when it comes in.

Mr Speaker, the last one that I have time for is hearsay evidence which may be submitted to the tribunal. Fair enough, we are moving towards that. What I object to is that I can be fined if I refuse to provide hearsay evidence.

MR SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr HARRIS (Port Darwin): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the 2 cognate bills that we have before us and, like some other members of this Assembly, I am a great advocate of local government. I think that it is wonderful that we have a system of government which relates to the people in a particular area. I am sure that honourable members of this Assembly have had to address matters which really relate to local government issues on many occasions. Our offices are flooded with complaints about holes in footpaths, street lighting - you name it. A large percentage of Hansard is taken up with debates on local government issues and many of the matters that have sparked off fiery debates in the Assembly have been local government issues. Issues such as dogs and swimming pools really start to set the Assembly on fire.

Mr Speaker, I wish only to indicate some concern about a provision in the bill which enables the councils to set the formulas on which to calculate rates. I refer to the improved or unimproved capital value of properties and I relate my remarks specifically to the Darwin area. I agree that there should be provision to broaden the rate base. There have been many inequities in relation to rating in the Darwin area for a number of years and it is a problem that had to be addressed. There were some people in the Darwin area who were paying next to nothing and other people and companies were paying large amounts of money. Those issues needed to be addressed and the council needed to come to grips with them.

Power to set the rate is something that must be used in a responsible manner and I hope that the councils will not see this as a windfall and a means by which they can penalise a vital section of the community, particularly in Darwin. I refer specifically to the central business district. It is all very well to say that, if the council sets high rates and its constituents are not happy with them, they can vote it out of power. You will find, Mr Speaker, that there are not many votes in the central business district and the councils will, in fact, bear in mind the large numbers in the northern suburbs and other residential areas and look at penalising the central business district. I would remind members that 25% of the rate in Darwin comes from the peninsula area.

Some members have said that probably I am overreacting to the provisions that have been laid down in this bill. I will refer to remarks that have been made by some aldermen that have raised my concern. Several aldermen have said to me that it is not I who will have to pay. I declare an interest here because I happen to own a property in the Mall. They say: 'You will not have to pay. You can pass on the cost to your tenants by increasing the rent'. If that is the attitude of some people, then I really am concerned. If I do not pay and the shopkeeper does not pay, the consumers will pay. This argument was raised when we were talking about buying the car-park: 'You do not have to worry. Just pass on the cost in rent'. There are many businesses in this town that are finding it difficult to survive anyway. It is important that that receives consideration by the council when it is looking at introducing different rating systems. If the rents are increased, the cost will have to be passed on to the consumer and, in many cases, those businesses will go to the wall.

The honourable member for Nhulunbuy pointed out that a situation could arise where a council could be in conflict with government policy. This is a concern. I refer specifically to the power to impose a differential rate. I have always been against differential rating because I believe that it is a disincentive to development: the more you develop, the more you have to pay. I believe that development has created the Territory. It brings jobs and people and money is circulated. I believe that development should be encouraged and we should ensure that businesses are not penalised to the extent where they just do not develop. That is a possibility with differential rating. The government has spent a great deal of effort on creating a climate for development in the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin and Alice Springs. The climate has been established and some companies have come here because of the various systems that we have in operation. However, I am sure that, if they knew that they would be penalised or rated according to the amount of money that they had spent on a particular development, they would think twice about coming to the Northern Territory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want my comments to be construed as opposition to the devolution of powers to the city council. I have been a supporter of the 3-tier government system and I believe that the people best able to have a say in relation to local areas are those who live in those particular areas. The Local Government Act has been under review for a considerable period. I remember that, when Mr Perkins was a member of the Assembly, he raised on a number of occasions the need to amend the Local Government Act to enable councils to be able to work. It has been on the go for many years.

Seeing the honourable member for Koolpinyah walking in has jogged my memory about the rural area. That is another concern of mine and it has been for some time. The communities around Darwin must realise that, at some stage, they will have to pay rates. I might say that it is far better that the local people have a say in how those systems are to operate. The sooner there is some form of local government out in that particular area, the better it will be for all people concerned. Then they would not have a rating system or some other system foisted on them by the Territory government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bills but I stress the need for councils to take on in a responsible manner the powers that they have fought hard for.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to talk for very long on these bills. In fact, that has been done very well today by members on this side of the Assembly, particularly those who have past experience of local government. They have highlighted the many improvements that have been made. I want to say a few words on that part of the bill which relates to community government, which is a form of local government that affects a number of communities in my electorate. It is a form of local government in Aboriginal communities and other small communities in these remote areas in the Territory that I believe will be a great thing in the future for them. I have seen it in operation in a number of Aboriginal communities. The member for MacDonnell mentioned that he thought there was some reluctance in Aboriginal communities to take on this form of community government because they did not have the same conception of local government that we have. I would say to him that the community government scheme will work wherever there is an Aboriginal council operating currently. It will work to better effect. It will provide them with the ability to make bylaws for themselves, to make laws that affect only them and to give the full effect of Territory law to the laws that they make within their community. That is a pretty great power to have.



There have not been many major changes in the proposed Local Government Act that were not in existence before. The only 2 major changes are those relating to the employment of a clerk. Previously, the act said that the community council would appoint a clerk. It did not go on to say that that clerk should be competent etc. I have seen the effects on communities who have employed people such as the local truck driver. He may have been a beaut bloke but he did not have any experience in running a council. This change to the community government section of the act will ensure the employment of a clerk who has some competence in that area or who has the approval of the minister that he is a competent manager.

The other major change relates to the raising of revenue by community governments. In the past, community governments have not had that power and I have often wondered why they did not have that power. In my own town of Batchelor, a fear of the people is that, if we have a community government imposed on us, we will have to pay rates. That is not the reason that rates would have to be paid. They are inevitable anyway for the electorate of Koolpinyah and for a number of towns in the Victoria River electorate. I do not think that we can deny that. I think that the majority of people in those areas realise that, in time, this must come. We must have a user pays system; we cannot get along without it. People I have spoken to in Batchelor who might oppose having to pay rates realise that they will come. If I am to be honest, I should say I support the view that we should be paying. There is provision to raise rates in community government areas and I support that. I think it is important that they have that right. Of course, they do not have to impose the same rate as Darwin or Alice Springs or anywhere else. They will have the power to raise a rate and that is a tremendous improvement.

There is not a great deal more that I can say about the community government scheme because the changes are fairly limited. There have been only the 2 areas of major change. The community government scheme that has existed since 1982 is a good scheme. Communities throughout the Territory should look at it very closely and work towards that sort of operation within their areas. It does not necessarily have to be associated with a town. It could be a number of towns or an area. They should be looking at that sort of thing because it will give them much greater power. It is not much good complaining about the things that do not get done or the things that ought to be done if we do not take some part in the action ourselves. If communities proceed to community government, they will have the power to make decisions on how money is spent and how things are controlled in their communities. They will have the power to make bylaws. There is no way in the world that the Minister for Community Development and his department can be really aware of the needs in remote towns and communities throughout the Territory. The people who know the needs are the people who live there. They are the people who, under this legislation, can make the rules, work out where they will spend their money and develop their communities under their own steam. I support the bills.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, unlike other members who rose to speak in this debate today, I will not confine my remarks to a few words. More than any other legislation that has been passed by this Assembly, this inevitably will affect people in my electorate. It will affect most if not all the people in my electorate, including the Minister for Community Development who is one of my valued constituents. All other members have some form of local government or local councils in their electorates. I did a quick calculation and I would probably be the only member who does not have any form of local government in the electorate. The Minister for Community Development was on a committee that prepared a report on the Darwin rural area.

Based on a survey of the people in the rural area, that report stated that approximately 80% of the people wanted to maintain the status quo of no local government representation. I do not know whether one could call it a back-handed compliment or a left-handed compliment but I am quite satisfied that the people in the rural area feel that I am doing my job in representing them. The other 20% said they would opt for an independent council if that were offered. There is a big difference between 80% and 20% which shows overwhelmingly that the people in the rural area wish to maintain the status quo.

Some members would say I have spoken ad nauseam about this in the past. Whilst I recognise the inevitability of it at some time in the future, nevertheless I will not go down without a fight. In speaking in this debate, one could say that I am on the horns of a dilemma. I cannot give this legislation my unqualified support. I support it in some ways but, for it to apply to the rural area, it should first receive the approval of people in the rural area, much the same as legislation regarding local government for Aboriginal communities must receive the approval of the people in those Aboriginal communities. The people in the rural area outside Darwin are mostly white while the people in Aboriginal communities are mostly Aboriginal. I do not think that the white people in the rural area are any less important than the Aboriginal people in the Aboriginal communities. When government is considered for Aboriginal communities, whether it is community government or local council government, the government bends over backwards to consult with the people - what they want, what they expect, what they are used to, what they are willing to work towards and how it will affect the community.

This legislation will be passed because of the numbers in the Assembly. Will the consultation be as great with the people in the rural area as it is with every Aboriginal community when local government is considered? I do have some knowledge of this, having previously represented the electorate of Tiwi in which one settlement, Milakapiti, opted for local government under Northern Territory legislation. I know about all the consultation that took place before local government was granted to the area. I have been told by officers of the local government section of the Department of Community Development that consultation will take place with the people in the rural area. I hope that this does occur. I hope that the will is not taken for the deed in considering this local government.

Mr Speaker, considering the population of the Northern Territory and the level of local government, Legislative Assembly and other representation, both existing and what we could have in the future, I would like to quote a few figures. I stand to be corrected on the complete accuracy of these figures but they are near enough for the purposes of my argument. I have been told that the population of the Northern Territory is 170 847 people. We have 3 representatives in Canberra, 25 representatives in the Legislative Assembly and 38 local government councillors in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs. I am not even considering the representation on the 3 land councils which is 150. I am not even considering the representation of the Aboriginal communities which have opted for local government and the unofficial local government area. I also exclude Yulara. I am considering the people who will be elected in Palmerston and the people who have been elected at Jabiru. With Palmerston and Jabiru, the total is 81. I am considering the total population of the Northern Territory, black as well as white. The white population of the Northern Territory on last count was 138 900. If we do our arithmetic, we see that each elected representative represents under 2000 people.

If we consider that movements are afoot to make us a state, the representation will be 1 person for every 1500 people. That does not include

Aboriginal representation. On Bathurst and Melville Islands, there are 3 local councils and the Tiwi Land Council. Those 3 local councils have at least 12 members each. It is nearer 20 but I will say 12 for the sake of this argument. There are certainly more than 12 people on the Tiwi Land Council. Therefore, we have about 50 people, representing about 2000 people on 2 islands alone. We have 1 person representing 40 people. Coupled with the figures that I have given, I would consider that to be over-representation. The people who are paying our salaries might jack up. Perhaps some of us may not be re-elected next time. Somewhere along the line, something must give because, on those figures, the Northern Territory is over-represented. I do not have any figures for the states but I think my assertion would still hold.

Mr Speaker, I said that an overwhelming majority of the people in the rural area rejected local government. I can speak only on the results of that survey and the representations of the people to me. Under clause 6 of this legislation, by a decision of the Administrator, we can have local government imposed upon us willy-nilly, whether we like it or not. One could say that the Administrator must have good reason. The way it really works is that public servants in the local government section of the Department of Community Development will talk about it. If they think it is a good idea, they will put it to their minister who will tell them to go ahead with it. He will put it to Cabinet. If Cabinet thinks it is a good idea because it might rake in a few more dollars - I personally doubt this - then it will go to the Executive Council which is chaired by the Administrator. He has the power to reject propositions put to him but it is my experience that he very rarely rejects anything. That is the way it works.

Clause 9 of this legislation says that not less than 20% of people may sign a petition to have local government in an area. This will be ignored in providing local government to the rural area because at least 1600 people would have to sign the petition to reject or accept local government. I feel that that will not happen.

The member for Stuart mentioned clause 89 which gives the minister the power to grant the city council the right to spread out to the rural area. I was a bit concerned when the previous Lord Mayor was in office. The current Lord Mayor has said that he does not have any ideas of grandeur in that way. If that did happen, to say there would be a riot in the rural area is putting it mildly. Having regard to the fact that the Minister for Community Development also lives in the rural area, I would not like his chances going down Virginia Road.

Mr Coulter: Intimidation will get you nowhere.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, while I am on the subject of the Darwin City Council, whilst it does not want to come into the rural area to take control, rate us and give us the benefits of city living, nevertheless it does want to dump its rubbish there. I do not know whether it has decided on a new rubbish dump for the municipality but I know for a fact that it was looking at an area just inside my electorate next to the electorate of Berrimah. When its cemetery fills up in McMillans Road, it will want to bury its dead people in my electorate. At the moment, if somebody in the rural area dies and somebody wants that person buried in the city area, that person must pay about twice the amount of money that city dwellers would have to pay. Somewhere along the line, there must be a quid pro quo about this.

On the subject of possible rates for the rural area, the Darwin Rural Advisory Committee report put forward an annual figure of approximately \$140.

One might say that anybody can pay that. In Palmerston, which is in the electorate of the Minister for Community Development, and having regard to the fact that most of the people who live there are public servants who would not know what paying rates is, the average rate paid by a person on an average block is \$200. The people in Berrimah pay about \$217. I have always said that those people in Berrimah get the rough end of the pineapple. I see that they are still being rated far in excess of any services that have been offered or even promised to them. When you compare the rates that were mooted for the rural area with the rates that the people in Palmerston pay, there is no comparison at all. It seems to me that the people who live in Palmerston are a little like the golden-haired boy who can do no wrong in the eyes of the government. The drainage is adequate now that the drainage from the Palmerston bypass has been completed, but there are still extensive drainage works taking place. It is costing something of the order of \$19 500 which is completely unnecessary. I did not see it in the Government Gazette until after the tenders were granted. It is not only that. When I turn onto the Palmerston bypass to go to Howard Springs, I see extensive tree plantings. I have nothing against tree plantings but those are extravagant tree plantings. There was nothing wrong with the sides of the highway as they were. It is all in the area of Palmerston. For years and years, I pressed for some lighting at the corner of Howard Springs Road and the Stuart Highway but it was not until that particular area became the boundary of the proposed City of Palmerston that street lights were installed. When you consider all the advantages offered to the people of Palmerston, and that all they pay on an average-sized block is \$200, and compare that to the lack of services in the rural area and the mooted rates of \$140, the comparison does not hold at all.

I am being perfectly honest about what was said to me by officers of the Department of Community Development. Before Palmerston was handed over to the people there, everything had to be ship shape so that they did not have any expensive costs in the beginning. I do not see anything like that happening in the rural area. We still have the road grading that we have had for years. Admittedly, we have 3 reserves but they are not used solely by the people in the rural area. They are used by people outside the rural area. Admittedly, we have 3 rubbish dumps. While I am on the subject of rubbish dumps, I asked for figures to help me in my speech this afternoon. I could have saved my breath to cool my porridge because I did not get them. The only figure I was given by the officers from the Department of Community Development was that the rubbish dumps cost \$100 000 in fuel to operate. Admittedly, I did not know that. I thank them for their figures. But I also know that it costs about \$60 000 in wages to operate these dumps.

The Minister for Community Development said the roads cost about \$1m. On the subject of roads, he has touched a very tender spot with people in the rural area. He is okay; he is living on a bitumen road. One could say I am okay because I am living on a bitumen road. But 99.9% of the people in the rural area do not live on bitumen roads. Those people who live on roads which are used by loaded sand and gravel trucks live a very unfortunate life. Their roads are completely ripped up. They have a dust hazard on those roads. Probably, we will have local government foisted on us. When you consider that local government means paying rates, is it fair and equitable that the people living along these roads should have to pay for the damage done by the people engaged in the extractive minerals industry? I have nothing against mining. I have nothing against these people personally. To my knowledge, there is only one chap living in the rural area who operates sand and gravel trucks. None of them live in the rural area; they just reap the benefits. Why should the people in the rural area bear the brunt of the discomfort and all the attendant disabilities of living on those roads and still have to pay their rates to have them repaired, which they will have to do?

There are not many other things to say about this legislation. I have not spoken in detail about it. I have spoken on it only as it affects the people in the rural area. As I said earlier, whilst I do not give it my unqualified support, nevertheless, I recognise a certain inevitability in the introduction of local government for the people living in the rural area. I have been told that consultation will take place with responsible groups of people to ascertain their views. The people in the rural area are not dumb. They want to know if they will have to pay rates. They want to know what their hard-won dollars will pay for. They want to know how much it will cost the government to provide services in the rural area. They want facts and figures and, to date, nobody has even supplied me with any facts to give to people. I want to know the exact current credit and debit situation of the services supplied or not supplied to the rural area. By not paying rates, I want to know how much we disadvantage the Northern Territory government in relation to the Grants Commission deliberations. If we do pay rates, how much of the federal tax kitty will come to us as a third tier of government. Until these facts and figures are supplied, I do not think the people in the rural area will give much of an ear to people who try to convince them it is a good thing.

It is all very well for the government to say that it will tax the people in the rural area. At the back of this, there is a sneaking feeling that we have escaped the system of rating. We have escaped out into the rural area and nobody is big enough to say to us: 'Good luck to you mate, you can stay there provided you are prepared to accept a certain standard of services'. Somebody must keep trying to get us into the fold. We are not lost sheep. We decided to get out from the sheep farm. I have heard recently that people are still spying on us, namely, people from the Building Board. That is a digression.

Mr Speaker, before we pay any rates or taxes in the rural area, the Chief Minister has said that consideration will be given to making Aboriginal people and Aboriginal settlements pay for the services extended to them. These are the questions that are being asked of me by my constituents. None of us is more equal or less equal than other people in the community. It is not very usual for people to speak about black and white in this Assembly. It is not usual for people to speak about black versus white or white versus black but, the rating of people in the rural area and people on Aboriginal settlements must be equalised. I have personal knowledge of how much money was spent on Bathurst and Melville Islands, let alone in the rest of the Territory. That money was not spent only by the Northern Territory government but also by the federal government. Fair is fair. I do not mind people having money spent on them if it is to their betterment in regard to hygiene, health and ordinary living standards that other people enjoy in towns in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I have seen waste in other parts of the Northern Territory of hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money. I have seen rolls of fencing wire and barbed wire not used. I have seen star pickets rusting away. There were 3 boats that were bought for a fishing venture in Arnhem Land. I think they were for Maningrida or Mililingimbi. They have not been used to my knowledge or they have had only minimal use. I have seen buildings not maintained. All this is in the name of progress. If people in Aboriginal communities have services supplied to them, somewhere along the line that must be accounted for. It is all very well talking about rights but somebody must also talk about responsibilities. Until everybody is considered equal in the Northern Territory in this rating situation with local government and in having a say in local affairs ...

Mr Bell: What about mentioning the poor, Noel? Try mentioning the poor for a change.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Don't you come the raw prawn with me and talk about the poor. I know how many people are employed by the Northern Land Council for a start and I am not talking about Aborigines. I am talking about people who get their money from Aborigines. You cannot call them poor.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will confine her remarks to the legislation.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: Mr Speaker, as I said earlier, I regard the introduction of the legislation as inevitable. Nevertheless, I would like to be assured by the Minister for Community Development that justice will not only be seen to be done but that justice will be done to the people in the rural area.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I would like the opportunity to address some of the questions which the member for Koolpinyah has raised but time will not permit me to do so this evening. However, I can assure the member for Koolpinyah that the issues which she has raised are being addressed at the moment. People have been assigned the responsibility of working out the costs of providing services to the people in the rural area. It seems to me that people in the rural area are demanding more and more services, including olympic swimming pools etc. The cost at the moment is about \$1m a year to operate municipal-type services in that particular area. Somebody must pay. We have heard the discussions in this Legislative Assembly during this sittings. To provide these facilities which cost almost \$1m a year, somebody must pay.

The national inquiry on local government funding has had representatives in the Northern Territory over the last couple of weeks under the chairmanship of Professor Peter Self. It has been brought to his attention that the third most populous area in the Northern Territory - namely the Darwin rural area - does not contribute towards the provision of municipal-type services. If we are talking of a figure of about \$140 a year, we are talking about \$3 a week. That is to have the roads graded, the use of facilities like Fred's Pass Reserve, Berry Springs Reserve, Humpty Doo Reserve and to carry out services such as the Howard Springs tip, the Humpty Doo tip and the Berry Springs tip. If you can tell me that every person out in that area would not be prepared to contribute \$3 a week towards those types of services, then I am not the Minister for Community Development and you would have to believe in the tooth fairy.

I could speak at some length. For example, the honourable member spoke about the people in the extractive minerals industry. One of the largest operators in that industry in the Northern Territory has his depot 500 m from the honourable member's office and she talks about the people not operating in the area.

The point is simply that, if we do not act now and try to implement some form of local government, the whole of the Northern Territory will be at risk in terms of its grant funding. Professor Peter Self could come down in August and say: 'This is the local government that you will have in the rural area and there will be no self-determination'. The system will simply be imposed on us and the whole of our funding will be at risk if we are not seen to be addressing this problem. However, I share the concerns of the honourable member. The question which she has raised are being addressed currently and I will be advising this Assembly of the findings of the Department of Community Development Local Government Division. I might point out that the survey that

the honourable member talked about was an attitudinal survey. Who would not agree that people should not pay rates if they had that opportunity provided to them? The simple fact is that somebody must pay.

The member for Victoria River has discussed the matter of community government in part XX. I would like to bring to the attention of honourable members some of the meetings that we have attended in places like Elliott and Borroloola recently. People in those areas turned out in full force to give it their whole support so that they could have a say in the running of their towns and they could be closer to the decision-making process. The member for Koolpinyah will be aware of the problems of being governed by a centralist control mechanism such as the Planning Authority which she has made great play of in the last couple of weeks. The simple fact is that those closest to the action know what is happening. This can only support the movement towards allowing people to control their own destiny. The member for Victoria River was present in Elliott when the town turned out in force. Some 180 people, both Aboriginal and Europeans, gave their wholehearted support. In fact, they will be moving towards some form of local government in the area within the very near future. Tomorrow, I intend to present a paper in relation to local government for Mataranka. They also realise that, to control your own destiny, you must be able to have a say in what you want in your particular locality.

The member for Stuart said that he supported the bill, gave halfhearted congratulations and then went on to talk about everything that was negative about local government. As he went through the bill, I do not think he mentioned one thing that was good. He is fond of rhetoric. We all talk about devolving powers to local areas but, when they look as though they are in a position to make a decision, we rip the paper out from under them. We must make a decision. We want devolution of power to the third tier of government. If we are not prepared to do that, then we might as well get out of the business altogether. We must make decisions and make them responsibly. That is the whole philosophy behind this legislation.

We talk about length of time that the legislation has taken and we are told that we should not move too fast. As a department, we have been working on it for 3 years and everybody knows how fast the Department of Community Development works. That would give you some idea how long it would take if any other department had had this piece of legislation to prepare. In fact, Ella Stack first started talking about this 8 years ago. The sheer size and complexity of the legislation is second only to the Criminal Code, as the member for MacDonnell said. Another major reason for the delay has been the consultative process that has taken place. There have been more working parties and more people looking at this particular legislation than people looking at peep shows in Kings Cross.

The value of the consultation is reflected in a number of ways. First, we have had working parties and local government seminars and everybody has had the opportunity to express his concern or support. Secondly, the community has had ample opportunity to have an input during the development of the proposals. There has been no community opposition to the final draft of the bill. Thirdly, the process of submissions and discussions has meant that the range of questions and points which might be raised have been given full consideration. No point has been raised in this debate which has not been dealt with previously in the appropriate fashion. As late as 2 weeks ago, the Lord Mayor of Darwin came to my office with the Town Clerk to discuss some issues. I must admit that they went away quite happy with the explanations that were offered to them.

Obviously, there are provisions in the bill which some people believe do not go far enough and which others may feel go too far. In this regard, it is

necessary to strike a proper balance between the various interests. The bill will give councils largely unfettered power to carry out the functions which are devolved on them. The provision of such power is necessary to remove the need for local councils to refer constantly to the Territory government for decisions. The government has been aware in the development and production of this bill that the legislation must provide a structure and power which will allow another sphere of government to operate effectively for the good of the community and for the good of the Territory.

With such power, however, must come responsibility. The bill will ensure that councils, in the exercise of their power, will be accountable for their actions. Clause 24 will provide for the registration of interests of members. Clause 68 will allow for the prescription of basic meeting procedures to ensure that democratic debate occurs in council meetings. Clause 69, which has been talked about by several members, will provide that, unless matters which are prescribed as confidential are being discussed, all meetings will be open. Councils will be required to make available for their electors minutes of meetings, financial estimates and statements. Avenues of appeal against decisions of councils will be available to an appeal tribunal. In this way, electors should be able to ensure that councils are properly accountable in the exercise of their power.

The Territory government also has a responsibility to ensure that councils abide by the law and conduct themselves in a proper manner. They should be above reproach. Inspectors may be appointed under part V to inspect the accounts and records of councils. An inquiry may be ordered under division 6 of part II of the bill. Clause 43 allows for the dismissal of a council. That has raised some concern amongst the councils and amongst some members but we must have accountable local government. I could draw honourable member's attention to such city councils as the Melbourne City Council that has been sacked and an administrator appointed. There are many other examples where this has happened throughout Australia in recent years. Clause 167 provides for withholding of the Territory grants and subsidies where a council fails to perform a duty required by an act. This level of accountability is vital. Councils must be, and be clearly seen to be, above reproach. Local government, in the exercise of the powers provided under this bill, is being treated as a responsible sphere of government and it should and must be held accountable accordingly.

This bill has been under preparation for a long time. Since the production of the final report of the working party in October last year, the pace of development has increased. A draft bill was prepared on the basis of that report. The consultations and submissions on the draft led to the development of the bill now before the Assembly. It was necessary to bring the bill to this sittings notwithstanding its commencement date in 12 months time. This is an essential part of the overall process of the introduction of major changes to such a significant sphere of government. A considerable amount of work has still to be done.

Essentially, the bill provides a framework. Matters of administrative detail are to be prescribed by regulation and proposals for necessary regulations will be developed by a number of working groups. I advise honourable members that there has already been a commitment on behalf of the councils to provide their town clerks on an exchange basis to develop the regulations for this legislation. I commend the councils, as I have throughout the development of this bill, for their efforts in consulting with the department to ensure one of the best acts ever to be put in place within Australia in terms of local government administration is the result. That is exactly what this particular bill is.



Matters of administration therefore will be worked out by these working groups over a period. Representatives of local councils and officers from the various Northern Territory government departments with particular interest and expertise will be invited to join these working parties. This process is essential but it will take some time and, to be effective, it is necessary that it takes place in the context of legislation which has passed through this Assembly. They have to know where they are in order to know where they are going.

Councils will also need to change in the light of this bill to avoid a sudden disruptive change. The process began with the introduction of local government accounting regulations which came into force on 1 July 1984. A further stage in the process as far as councils are concerned will be the development of bylaws which take advantage of the new powers provided in the bill. Work has commenced on the development of pro forma bylaws. Once again, this is a first for Australia. This has been talked about for the last 4 years. It now looks like becoming a reality. This process of change, which is necessary for a smooth introduction, will realistically only take place where there is certainty of the commencement of the new legislation on 1 July 1986.

The Local Government Amendment Bill which is to be commenced on 1 July 1985 raised some criticism from members of the opposition that it should not be a cognate bill. It will give councils immediately some of the flexibility they need to strike their rates and share the rate burden for the municipalities in the most equitable way. The introduction of the complete package now will remove any conjecture in the community about the rating options which will be available to councils. Electors will have the opportunity during the next 12 months to consider the options available and make their views known to their elected council representatives.

Mr Speaker, I will move through some of the individual concerns which were expressed. Clause 9 was mentioned by several members. The petition method of declaring a municipality also had some problems and caused considerable frustration with many residents attempting to be properly represented on local councils. It is still an issue at the moment. We have the Darwin City Council looking at extending its boundaries to the 1945 acquisition line. Public meetings have been held in the rural area and they have made their feelings quite clear that they do not want to be joined to the municipality of Darwin. This is a good example of municipal boundary change. It would not take the minister or a tribunal very long to ascertain whether or not the municipality could absorb a particular area.

The honourable member for Stuart mentioned clause 9(11) and said that the minister had the option and should make known his decision. That is just one of the benefits of being in government. When the honourable member for Stuart is in government, heaven forbid, he will be able to make those decisions. It is the prerogative of the government to decide on those particular issues.

A point was raised about clause 15 relating to outstanding rates. Only a mayor or an alderman can be dismissed. A company cannot be a mayor or an alderman.

Clause 19 relates to boundaries. The minister may appoint someone to conduct a review if the council does not. Every 5 years, the council is required to undertake a review to see whether the existing number of aldermen provides a fair and equitable representation or whether the existing ward boundaries are equitable or whether the municipality should be divided into wards. That will occur every 5 years and I do not have to tell honourable

members in this Assembly of the rapid growth which is taking place in the Northern Territory and the need to review such things. We have seen the development of Palmerston. I declared the Municipality of Palmerston on 1 April this year. Developments have been talked about in Alice Springs in the White Gums area and the Larapinta area. Rapid developments are taking place of which I am sure the member for MacDonnell would be most supportive. The member for Stuart pointed out that he had some considerations that should go into clause 26 which relates to the ability of a person to withdraw. This is a matter most appropriate for the rules of the tribunal and it will also be discussed and considered in the development of the regulations.

The member for MacDonnell said that clause 53 was the one that he was concerned about, in particular the Chief Electoral Officer being the nominated returning officer. I made it quite clear in the second-reading speech that that was the government's intention. There have been several cases in the Northern Territory where validating legislation had to be brought in because of local government elections. It seems to me that the people with the most expertise in that particular area should be given the opportunity to carry out those elections to avoid duplication and to rationalise government expenditure. It is interesting to note that, on 22 June, the Northern Territory Electoral Office will be conducting elections in Palmerston and Mataranka.

Whilst I am on that point, for the first time in Australia - and the states have been talking about this for years and I suggest that they will go on talking about it for years - we will have a common roll which will cover Territory elections, local government elections and also federal elections. I believe this is a tremendous step forward in simplifying the electoral process. I believe that the Northern Territory once again has set the pace for the rest of Australia to follow, and follow it will because the Local Government Bill is one of the best pieces of legislation in terms of local government administration that has ever been before any legislature. I do not say that lightly, Mr Speaker. The effort that has gone into this legislation has been tremendous and it has been commended by everybody concerned within the community and even by some members of the opposition. That will give you some idea of just how good it is.

Clause 65 was mentioned by the member for Nhulunbuy. He said that 3 days notice was not enough. Once again, if we want them to be responsible, they must act as soon as possible on any particular issue. There are telephones, cars or many other means that can be used, including beer cans with pieces of string tied to them, to ensure that the aldermen do communicate with one another and that the message can be put across and these meetings can be called to address particular problems. I believe that 3 days is ample time for the public to be made aware of the issues and come along to those meetings where it is necessary.

I am not sure which honourable member mentioned this. I think it may have been the member for MacDonnell. Subclause 66(2) simply provides a way of declaring a quorum. There are many ways of declaring a quorum. The town clerks have been unanimous that a quorum should be constituted as laid out in clause 66 which is that the majority of members must be in office. This requirement has been inserted to ensure that vacancies in council membership will not affect the ability of a council to operate. I believe that that is important. They must be voted back in and be accountable for their decisions.

Clauses 68 and 69 were raised by the members for Wanguri and Stuart. The clauses contain a requirement that meetings of councils be open except where matters prescribed as confidential are being discussed. We were given the example of the old-age pensioner. In the extensive consultations conducted on

the new bill, the view was put by some councils that the requirement may affect their methods of activity. The view is taken in the bill that councils must be, and be seen to be, above reproach. One method of achieving and maintaining the status of local government is to ensure, where practical, that meetings will be open. This will allow public knowledge and provide for accountability of councils. There are matters with which councils clearly should not be forced to deal at open meetings. The clause provides for the prescription of these matters in the regulations. Proposals for regulations will be developed by a working party on which all local councils will be able to be represented. In addition, councils will still have the right to go into committee while a matter which the council sees as confidential is being discussed. This is a device widely used by councils in some states where they are required to hold meetings in public.

Clause 87 was mentioned by the member for Ludmilla. The clause provides for the notification of powers and functions of the council of a municipality. The functions which it is possible to provide to councils are listed in schedule 2. There is a whole range of issues which councils can be involved in. Currently, we are negotiating with the councils to devolve on them responsibility for such things as the homemaker services, hawkers, health workers and a number of other services. Councils could take on zoos and planning and a number of other functions provided that they can demonstrate to the community that they are above reproach, they are accountable and they are responsible. I believe that clause 87 will be developed as local government itself develops in the Northern Territory.

There was some concern about clause 89. Councils would be able to control facilities outside their municipalities. Things like dog pounds and cemeteries may be outside the municipality. That is the main reason for that particular clause.

Reserve funds were mentioned by the member for MacDonnell. Councils have the power to create statutory reserves but not hidden slush funds for future use at the expense of the current ratepayers. The procedure is in line with Australian accounting standards. I believe that they need that flexibility to establish such accounts. In fact, they can have general fund accounts, trading funds and trust funds. He mentioned that under clause 157. If he refers to clause 141, he will see the wisdom of that particular clause.

During the committee stage, I will be moving a number of amendments to take care of some of the drafting errors which have been discovered since the bill was introduced at the last sittings. None of these involve a substantive change. I am pleased to again make the point which I made in my second-reading speech: this bill represents a major step forward for an important sphere of government, a sphere which has long been neglected throughout Australia. The Northern Territory government will again lead Australia with progressive, realistic legislation. I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Local Government Bill (Serial 116):

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 24 agreed to.

Clause 25:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.2.

This is to insert after 'council' the words 'or a committee'.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.3.

This is to insert after 'as a member' the words 'of the council or committee'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 25, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 26:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.4.

This is to omit from subclause (3) 'clerk of the tribunal' and insert in its stead 'registrar of the tribunal'.

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, we would appreciate an explanation of the reason for this proposed change.

Mr COULTER: It is simply a matter of defining the tribunal and moving away from the terminology which refers to the Town Clerk to prevent any sort of duplication in that area. It is considered that 'registrar of the tribunal' is more appropriate terminology in this particular case.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.5.

This amendment is to omit from subclause (3) 'of the municipality'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 26, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 27 to 38 agreed to.

Clause 39:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.6.

I will give an explanation for the honourable member for Millner. The amendment will omit from subclause (1)(b) 'heard' and insert in its stead 'held'. That is self-explanatory in this case.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 39, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 40 to 49 agreed to.

Clause 50:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.7.

This amendment will omit from subclause (1) 'subsection (2) and section 44(1)' and insert in its stead 'section 44(1) and subsection (2)'. This is a formal drafting matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 50, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 99 agreed to.

Clause 100:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.8.

This will omit 'other than' and insert in its stead 'but may not rate the following'. This amendment will place beyond doubt that land used for the purposes listed at paragraphs (a) to (g) of subclause (101) is not to be rated. Clearly, land used for the purposes listed should not be subject to rates. The uses listed all involve public or charitable purposes. As it stands, the clause could give councils the discretion to rate lands used for the purposes listed. This discretion is inappropriate and would lead to uncertainty for the users of such land.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 100, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 101 to 116 agreed to.

Clause 117:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.9.

This will add at the end of subclause (1)(a) the word 'and'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 117, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 118 and 119 agreed to.

New clause 119A:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.10.

After clause 119, the following is to be added: '119A Urban Farm Land Rate. Where, under section 114(2)(b), a council declares an urban farm land rate, it shall declare a proportion by which the amount, otherwise payable by the

application of the uniform rate or a differential rate, in relation to those parcels of rateable land at the time shown in the rate book as urban farm land, shall be reduced'. This amendment will correct an anomaly in the bill. The new clause will provide for the declaration of the proportion by which uniform or differential rates will be reduced to achieve the urban farm land rate.

New clause 119A agreed to.

Clauses 120 to 123 agreed to.

Clause 124:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.11.

This will omit from the end of subclause (6)(c) 'and' and insert 'or' in its stead.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 124, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 125 to 132 agreed to.

Clause 133:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.12.

This is to omit from subclause (3)(b) 'he' and insert 'the ratepayer' in its stead. That is self-explanatory.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 133, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 134 to 210 agreed to.

Clause 211:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.13.

This is to omit from subclause (2) 'or a particular part' and insert in its stead ', or separately to the part or parts,'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 211, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 212 to 216 agreed to.

Clause 217:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I invite defeat of clause 217.

This clause is a duplication of rights created at clauses 200 and 222.

Clause negatived.

Clauses 218 to 229 agreed to.

Clause 230:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.14.

This is to omit ', as the case may be,'.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 230, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 231 to 236 agreed to.

Clause 237:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.15.

This is to omit the penalty provision from the foot of subclause (4) and insert in its stead the following: 'Penalty: \$100 and \$50 for each day during which the offence continues.'. This is a formal drafting matter. The clause as it stands does not provide a penalty for the offence other than the daily penalty.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 237, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 238 to 251 agreed to.

Clause 252:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.16.

This is also a formal drafting amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 252, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 253 to 285 agreed to.

Clause 286:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.17.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 286, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 287 to 291 agreed to.

Clause 292:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.18.

This is a formal drafting matter.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 292, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 293 and 294 agreed to.

Clause 295:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.19.

This is a formal drafting amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 295, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 296 to 331 agreed to.

Clause 332:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.20.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 332, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 333 to 341 agreed to.

Clause 342:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.21.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 342, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 343 to 349 agreed to.

Clause 350:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.22.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 350, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 1:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 30.23.

This is to add at the end the following: 'Local Government Amendment Act 1985'.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed to.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, perhaps the Clerk could give advice on this, but we have just passed an amendment to a schedule in a bill which has not even been passed. I wonder what the procedure is on that. I wonder if the Clerk could



perhaps advise whether, given that no Local Government Amendment Bill of 1985 has yet been passed by this Assembly, we can in fact amend something that does not exist.

Mr CHAIRMAN: My advice is that, if we were not to pass the Local Government Amendment Bill, the Clerk would use standing order 171 and not include it in the bill.

Remainder of the bill agreed to.

Local Government Amendment Bill (Serial 115):

Bill taken as a whole and agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 31.3.

This amendment will add at the end of proposed section 159B(a)(a) the word 'and'.

Amendment agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bills reported; report adopted.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I wish to make a couple of very brief comments. One is that we have just spent half an hour correcting mainly what could be called drafting errors. It is very surprising and, in fact, disappointing, on the government's word as expressed by a number of its members this afternoon, that the bill has been around for 5 years. You would think, Mr Speaker, that with such a gestation period...

Mr Coulter: That is not true.

Mr SMITH: Now we hear that that is not true.

Mr Coulter: We have been working on it for 5 years. It has not been around for 5 years.

Mr SMITH: With such a gestation period, more care could have been taken so that we would not have had to waste our time at this hour of the night.

Mr Tuxworth: If it is a waste of time, go home. You do not have to be here.

Mr SMITH: If you have nothing better to do than correct technical errors in bills, you can enjoy it. I do not enjoy it. I have other things that I could be doing.

Mr Speaker, the second comment I want to make now that I am fired up is to remark on the rather strange performance of the minister in his reply. In fact, for the first half of his speech, I was in some sort of time warp and thought he was moving the second reading itself. It is rather peculiar in this Assembly for a minister to read his reply speech. I guess I am a little bit more aware of that sort of thing after having had the privilege of seeing the House of Commons in action. It is fair to say that you, Sir, and your predecessor, allow

members in this Assembly great freedom in terms of the reading of material and certainly a freedom that they would not get away with in the House of Commons. To extend it, Mr Speaker, to the reply speech is taking it a bit too far and, if nothing else, it leaves the Assembly under the impression that the honourable minister is not on top of his bill. Certainly, I do not think that that could be said of the minister in this instance. However, that could be the impression one is left with. I would respectfully request that the honourable minister stick a little bit closer to the proprieties that have been established in this Assembly over a period of time when he makes speeches in reply in future.

Mr EDE (Stuart): The honourable member for Millner has made part of the point I was going to make. I was not satisfied with all the answers which I received to the queries that I raised during the second-reading debate. I find it very unfortunate that we had to pass a dozen amendments. That indicates to me that there are possibly still quite a number of problems with it. As the honourable minister said, it is a very complex piece of legislation and I am disappointed that he did not take up our offer and hold it over until August.

Many other points could have been made. As you know, Mr Speaker, I ran out of time during my second-reading speech. I would have liked to have raised a couple of other points, one concerning the powers of local government under this bill. In fact, it allows a very major extension to the normal powers that are given to local government. That has not been addressed. With modern drafting of bills of this nature, the normal powers have been that, subject to the act, the council has the power to do all things necessary, convenient, in connection with and incidental to the purpose of performing its functions. In this bill, however, we have an extension of that to the effect that it 'may do anything which is not otherwise unlawful for'. It is unfortunate that I did not have the chance to raise this during the second-reading debate because I would have liked the opportunity to ask the minister what powers he will give to local government in the Northern Territory which are not covered by clause 90(a) but will be covered by clause 90(b). I would be very interested to find that out.

I was also most disappointed that I was unable to bring home to him the need to have the functions of the tribunal and the appeals tribunals cross-referenced and provided to members because, as they are, they are scattered throughout the bill. We had an amendment which demonstrated that some parts were duplicated by other parts. I think that cross-referencing would have been of real benefit, not just to ourselves in trying to debate the bill but also to his own officers and to members of the public who would hope possibly to have some input in the drafting of the regulations.

Apart from that, I will finish as I started. I think that the government is going in the right direction with this bill. I am a bit disappointed that, having devolved these enormous powers, it is now obvious from other debates that we have had today that there will not be any money to go with them. We are giving the councils great powers and then taking away the money so they cannot actually use them.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I would like to draw to the attention of honourable members that the Department of Community Development has gone out of its way to contact honourable members of the opposition to allow them to sit down with officers of the department. In fact, as recently as last Monday, we had a member of the staff of the Leader of the Opposition over in an eleventh hour bid to come to grips with some of the issues that were in the bill. I know that the honourable member for Nhulunbuy was contacted also. Honourable members have had this legislation for 6 weeks and in that time could have brought our attention to any concerns that they might have had but that has

not been done. There have been many chances and opportunities for them to address this particular issue and they chose not to take up their right to contact the Local Government Division of the Department of Community Development. The consultative process that has taken place throughout the preparation of this bill, through community input, local government input in terms of the town clerks and the working parties etc, has been enormous. It has had more work done on it than any other bill that I know of. I do not accept the criticism that the bill has been rushed. I do not think that the formal drafting amendments made to the bill detract from the purpose or philosophy behind the bill. There have been some minor amendments and I believe that every avenue has been available to honourable members of the opposition to address those particular issues.

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT ZONE BILL  
(Serial 101)

Continued from 24 April 1985.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I rise to indicate the opposition's full support for this excellent piece of legislation and I do so without reservation. However, I wish to address some comments to it. Mr Speaker, as we all know, this legislation proposes to establish at East Arm a trade development zone and the government hopes, as does the opposition, that this zone will attract a number of industries that might not otherwise be attracted to the Darwin area. The sorts of incentives that are proposed to be offered under this legislation include the following, and these are the main ones: relief from customs duties and tariffs where goods are imported, added to in some way or assembled, and then exported out of the country; bonded warehousing facilities which enable customs duties on goods to be sold in Australia to be deferred much closer to the point of sale; and government assistance in cutting through red tape both at federal and Territory levels. An example at the Territory level is the proposal for the Northern Territory government to impose one charge to cover all taxes and charges payable in the Northern Territory. An example at the federal level is that the development trade zone authority will establish, as I understand it, a revolving drawback fund, from which companies with no export track record can draw to pay a duty.

Mr Speaker, as I have said, the opposition supports the objectives outlined in the bill. Since the bill was introduced, I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to see a couple of similar but not identical areas in operation. My main conclusion is that it will take a concerted effort on the part of the proposed trade development zone authority and the government of the Northern Territory to get this thing off the ground. It will be no easy matter and it will not happen by itself. I am pleased to say that that note of realism is shared by the Northern Territory government officers whom I have spoken to and the Northern Territory government itself.

Mr Perron: Someone will have to travel overseas though.

Mr SMITH: I have been. I know.

Mr Speaker, I can demonstrate this by the examples I was able to see overseas. As I said, they are quite conflicting examples. The honourable minister sponsoring the bill has been to one of them but he has not been to the other and I would not suggest that he go there. The first one is at a place called Corby in England. Corby was the centre of a prosperous steelworks area

and, at one fell swoop, the steelworks was closed down and 12 000 jobs were lost. You can imagine the dramatic effect that that had on the local economy. The British government has a policy of declaring disadvantaged areas in England as special economic areas and offering them some types of special assistance, which I will not go into here, to enable them to attract industry and create jobs. Corby is acknowledged as being very successful. In fact, in the 4 or 5 years that that particular operation has been going, they have created 7500 jobs, which is a pretty impressive achievement indeed. An incredibly wide range of firms and industries has been attracted to the town. It is quite possible that any Commodore 64 computers that members might own were made at Corby. There are some parts of aircraft that we all fly in that were also made at Corby, and it produces a range of perfumes and light industrial products. A very wide range of industry has been set up there.

Mr Speaker, Corby has been so successful that, within 12 to 18 months, it will lose its special economic status and will have to compete in the open market without special economic benefits. The parallels with Darwin are not absolute as Corby is not in the re-export business. The products there are sold primarily in the English market and in the EEC which is almost the same thing these days with the removal of tariff barriers within the EEC. As well as that, it has a supplementary market in the rest of the world. However, its prime market is within the EEC bloc.

Mr Speaker, in my view, Corby has worked for 2 reasons which are important and have to be borne in mind in the Northern Territory. It has worked because it is in an excellent geographical position. It is almost in the centre of England. It has an excellent transport network and, within 1 or 2 hours by train or road, it has a population of 90 million people...

Mr Vale: There are only 50 million.

Mr D.W. Collins: Plus Europe.

Mr SMITH: Thank you. It has this huge market in close proximity and that is an obvious advantage to Corby and one of the reasons why it has been one of the most successful projects in England.

Secondly, it has been blessed in my view with people with a high level of entrepreneurial ability on its authority's staff. The staff of the authority have had considerable success in selling Corby because they discovered techniques for selling the place. I cannot stress too strongly that most of the success of this trade development zone will depend on the quality of the people we get on the trade development zone authority. Those initial decisions on whom we appoint will be very important because, if we get duds, for whatever reason at all, the trade development zone will find it almost impossible to get off the ground. If we get good people, and I am sure we will because there are good people around, we will be off to a flying start. That is the very basic lesson that I learnt from Corby.

The second place that I visited was the Isle of Man which, like many other places, has attempted to set up a free trade zone. It was a fairly depressing sight. It has had the land allocated for 2 or 3 years. A private firm has been engaged in trying to attract industry to the Isle of Man free trade zone. All it has to show for it 2 or 3 years later is a big sign in a very empty paddock. There is no confidence on the Isle of Man that it will be able to establish a successful free trade zone. I would attribute that to 2 factors. First, there is a lack of entrepreneurial skills. Secondly, it is now commonly acknowledged that the geographical position of the Isle of Man is unsuitable.

People and industries are not attracted to the Isle of Man because it does not provide easy access to the large markets of the European Economic Community. Consequently, it has not worked. We must remember that the Isle of Man, as we all know because of a few prominent tax exiles who have taken up residence there, has very liberal tax laws. It offers quite considerable tax incentives to firms and individuals to establish themselves there. The point I want to make is that, if things are not done properly, we will not attract people to the trade development zone and the Isle of Man is a perfect demonstration of that. It has these very liberal tax laws but, because of those other factors, it has not been successful in attracting industry into its free trade zone.

Mr Speaker, as I understand it, the government has plans for activities in 2 main areas. One is for activity where firms import goods from overseas, add on to and assemble in some way those goods and then export them to Asia. It would seem to me that the firms wanting to enter the trade development zone for this particular purpose will be of 2 main kinds. Obviously, first will be established Australian firms, probably established in the south, who want to get into the Asian market and who can be persuaded or attracted to Darwin. I think that there is a pretty logical argument for saying: 'You want to get into the Asian market. You can stay on Australian soil. You can use the Australian labour force. You can operate under conditions that you are experienced with and you can be much closer to the Asian market than you are at present. If you are importing your goods from the Asian area or Europe and you are re-exporting them into Asia, obviously it makes much more geographical sense to be based in Darwin than to be based further south'. In my view, that is the obvious market to start with. Coming back to the Corby experience, they found that it was much easier to attract the local firms and, once it was shown to be a viable activity, the international firms then had more confidence that the place was a goer and were prepared to invest their money.

Mr Speaker, secondly, the government hopes to attract investment in the trade development zone from overseas firms which, for reasons of political stability, lifestyle, and in some cases costs, see Darwin as an attractive proposition. In my view, that is a much harder task. That is where the entrepreneurial skills of the people in the trade development zone will really be tested. I do not think that there are the same logical benefits for overseas firms to bypass Asia to come to Darwin to assemble the products and then send them back to Asia. It will take some really fine entrepreneurial skills to achieve that. I think it is achievable but it will not be as easy as attracting existing Australian firms into the trade development zone.

I want to make one final point on that general subject. There is no point in offering artificial subsidies which, at some later stage, will be withdrawn. I place it on record now that, if there are to be particular attractions offered to initial firms to get them into the trade development zone which will not be offered to firms later on and if there are to be attractions offered to particular firms for a limited period of time, I think that is the wrong approach. We must be able to go out to these firms and say: 'We are offering you a chance to establish a viable business in the Northern Territory under these sets of conditions. We are not offering you artificial subsidies and we are not offering to prop you up for a number of years. We want a viable business that can stand on its feet under the concessions that will be offered to everyone without time restrictions in that trade development zone'. That is very important because we cannot afford to have people attracted by these artificial short-term subsidies and, when those props are withdrawn from them, collapsing and casting aspersions on the whole value of the trade development zone.

Mr Speaker, the second broad area in which I would anticipate industries being attracted to the trade development zone is in the area of bonded warehousing. Obviously, this has considerable potential where a large wholesaler may wish to use Darwin as his entry point into Australia and then fan out to his retailers over the rest of Australia.

Mr Dondas: It is called manipulation.

Mr SMITH: I take the honourable minister's word for that. I can see that there is a valuable role there for the Darwin trade development zone in that area. It depends on a regular and reliable shipping service to Darwin and good roads to ensure that the materials get out of Darwin to the retailing areas. In terms of the sea routes, I think it is about time we had a statement from the government on where it is going in terms of attracting shipping to the Port of Darwin. I know that there have been discussions between users of the port, unions at the port and the Darwin Port Authority. I understand that those discussions have been reasonably fruitful and reasonably positive and certainly are ongoing discussions. I think everyone in this Assembly would be interested in where those discussions are going. Certainly, it would remove one of the major problems that I can foresee with this proposal if the Minister for Ports and Fisheries is able to tell this Assembly that moves are proceeding to streamline the functions of the port and, as a result, additional shipping services can be expected.

In one sense, it is almost a chicken and an egg argument. We want additional shipping services to service the trade development zone and the extra shipping services will not come until the trade development zone is up and running and they have a reliable supply. I would like the minister to indicate whether the government has any strategies for overcoming that problem of what comes first - the shipping links or the trade development zone - and whether in fact the government has contemplated some sort of support to the shipping lines in the early years until the trade development zone gets off the ground.

People of the Northern Territory should not expect that, even if this trade development zone takes off, it will be a dramatic new employer of labour. It is quite clear that the nature of the industries that we are likely to attract to the trade development zone will not be labour intensive. They will be high capital and low labour intensive industries because of their very nature. We will not be looking at a dramatic expansion of the Darwin labour force in the next 10 to 15 years.

Another point that I wish to make is something that I have not heard mentioned elsewhere. It was mentioned to me by an importer/exporter in Singapore. One of his major criticisms about doing business with Australia in general was the banking system. In his view, the banking system in Australia is not geared to deal with the quick turnaround of finance that people in the import/export business need. I would take his word on that and I ask the government to see if the banking services which can be provided to industries in this trade development zone are sufficient or whether they need some sort of polishing up. In fact, now that the federal government has announced 16 new licences for overseas banks, we have the perfect way of hurrying up banks in Australia. I think we have already seen an example of the domestic banks lifting their game because of the expected increase in competition.

Mr Speaker, I conclude by saying that the trade development zone has exciting potential. Hopefully, we can all say in 10 to 15 years that it has been one of the most farsighted things that this government has introduced. I conclude, as I began, on a note of warning which I think everybody shares: it

will not happen on its own but will only happen with hard work on the part of all those concerned.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I intend to be fairly brief tonight. The idea of a development zone - a free trade zone, an enterprise zone or a trade development zone - has been considered for Darwin for quite a few years. Having been a supporter of that concept during that time, obviously I am an ardent supporter of the legislation which will now enable it to happen in the Northern Territory. Trade zones with special exemptions are not new. The United States commenced the practice of free trade zones some 20 years ago. As at the end of 1982, there were 74 approved trade zones with an annual estimated throughput of approximately \$5500m and employing more than 14 000 people.

The trade development zone concept developed in Ireland when the Shannon Airport suffered major downtrends with the introduction of long-range aircraft on the transatlantic route and there was no longer a need for refuelling to take place between the United States and Europe. To counter this massive downturn in trade, a free trade zone was set up to attract manufacturing and warehousing activities, particularly for companies to move their products by air for international trading. Further incentives were added by creating a package which included taxation and customs duties relief. The scheme succeeded to the extent that now the Shannon Airport industrial free zone has more than 100 companies in place, employing more than 8000 people and exporting in excess of \$US250m per annum.

Mr Speaker, in the United Kingdom, the government legislated for enterprise zones in 1980. They were set up particularly to rejuvenate cities and areas which were economically depressed. Whilst they are not particularly focused on international trade, nonetheless they succeeded in creating over a dozen zones with the attendant increase in jobs and trade. Zones have also been set up in Asian countries, predominantly in South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia.

The ingredients for success in operating a trade development zone are the availability of a suitable site situated on or near international trade routes, proximity to international markets and within an area that has political and economic stability. Infrastructure support such as good port facilities and road and air transport seem to be of great importance. Whilst we have good port and road support, we need to press on with all speed to ensure that the airport is upgraded to attract greater use of air transport into the area if the trade development zone is to succeed at the desired speed and to have the greatest chance of success.

Mr Speaker, I turn now to the way in which a trade development zone works. The major component of the incentive package which makes trade zones attractive is the removal or the virtual elimination of the miles of paperwork and restrictions, checks and controls usually placed on export-oriented businesses. I was reminded of this when I viewed a photograph of the opening of a centre to which the member for Millner just referred when he talked about his visit to the United Kingdom recently. That photograph showed a ribbon at the opening ceremony being cut by the person opening that ceremony. It had 'the last piece of red tape in Corby' on it.

Businesses within the zone can expect priority handling with the minimum amount of regulatory paperwork, exemptions from stamp duties and payroll taxes and the best advice from customs, corporate and marketing affairs people, and would likely only make single payments to the zone authority for service charges. Trade development zones are particularly attractive to businesses who re-export assembled and distributed products as no customs duty applies on

articles re-exported from the zone. Thus, we have the potential to attract companies who assemble saleable articles, using component parts from all over the world. Some of those industries might be computer and electronic aids industries. Medical equipment, sporting goods where assembly is required, automotive products with specialist designs for the Asian, Indonesian and Pacific basin markets, industrial equipment and household appliances are but a few of the types of businesses that could be attracted to the zone. I know of one particular company which is vitally interested in producing a specialised motor vehicle for the Asian and Indonesian markets and intends to import parts from many parts of the world for assembly and sales from the Darwin zone. It is gearing up to be involved as soon as the infrastructure of our zone is complete.

Mr Speaker, in travelling around Australia during the last year and discussing the potential of the trade development zone, I have encountered a great deal of interest. I am also assured that an opal cutting and gem setting company, currently based in the south, is determined to take advantage of this area as soon as it is able.

I do not expect the returns to the Territory or the growth of the zone to be fast. As the honourable member for Millner said, the experience of overseas zones indicates that there is a very slow initial response. But I am firmly of the view that, as time goes by and if our marketing of the zone is properly directed and managed, we will be assisting in one of our long-term goals for broadening our economic base beyond the mining, pastoral and administrative areas. If it is successful to the point of creating numbers of new companies, it may even have the spin-off effect of creating a climate for local investment which could, in the long term, give rise to the setting up of a second board market exchange which could be run in conjunction with a major southern state stock exchange, a development in which I have a keen interest. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise this evening to support the bill to enable the setting up of a trade development zone. The Northern Territory government has a proven record of innovation and in the past has introduced many visionary projects. It has always had a vision for the future and bases its concept for development on innovative ideas, requiring initiative and investment from the private sector as well as government. The trade development zone is such a project. It allows for the establishment of an 'in transit' industrial estate at East Arm. This estate will be segregated from the community and all manufactured goods from within the zone will be held in bond. While products remain within the zone, they are duty free and remain so until they are released from bond into the Australian business community or exported. The concept is that private enterprise will establish factories within the zone and import raw materials and or components which will be manufactured into finished products. These will be exported again or sold to the Australian business community.

The advantages of such a zone, the first in Australia I might add, are: products for export can be manufactured on Australian soil without the need to pay heavy duty or tariffs; Australian labour and services, such as electricity, roads and sewerage, are supplied; and, in some cases, Australian raw materials are incorporated into the finished products. In the long term, considerable advantages will flow to the Northern Territory business community and work force.

Mr Speaker, this bill allows the establishment of an authority to administer, control and encourage the development of a trade development zone in the Territory, to attract industry to that zone and for other related purposes.



The authority shall consist of at least 3 members appointed by the minister by notice in the Gazette of whom 1 shall be appointed as chairman and another as deputy chairman. The members of the authority shall hold office for 3 years.

The functions of the authority are: to promote and manage the trade zone; to make arrangements for the provision of facilities and services to meet the requirements of persons carrying on business in the trade zone; to advise persons carrying on business or proposing to carry on business in the trade zone on matters relating to the provision of services and facilities and privileges available, or which will be available, to them in relation to those businesses or proposed businesses, and to provide general assistance to facilitate the establishment and conduct of those businesses as it thinks fit; to advise the minister and such other persons and authorities as the minister directs or the authority thinks fit on the development and encouragement of the use of the trade zone for manufacturing, entrepot and associated industries, and the needs of and the provision of government and other services to persons carrying on businesses in the trade zone; and such other functions as are imposed on it by or under this or any other act. Customs approvals will be encouraged. It is essential that the authority work with the Australian Customs Service. It is intended to develop a close working relationship with that service to ensure that the requirement and guidelines of customs law are complied with in relation to activities taking place within the zone.

The passage of this bill will facilitate the installation of the necessary infrastructure mentioned earlier. This serviced land will be available in time for the first business wishing to establish. The bill allows for priority to be given by authorities for applications to establish in the trade zone. Each minister, statutory corporation and municipal council shall ensure that, as far as practical, priority is given to the consideration by him or it - in the case of a minister, by officers within government departments responsible to him, and, in the case of a statutory corporation or municipal council, by officers employed by it - of all applications and requests made by the authority on behalf of a person carrying on business or proposing to carry on business in a trade zone or otherwise. The authority shall report to the minister all delays resulting from what, in its opinion, is a failure to comply with subclause (1) of the bill.

Mr Speaker, the benefits flowing from such a zone will include increased employment and increased trade. This will result in greater utilisation of our infrastructure, encourage industrial diversity and promote new sources of revenue. Existing Territory industry will obtain direct benefit from the zone in terms of the increased demand for goods and services created by the new zone industries. It is important that the authority develop a close working relationship with the Northern Territory Development Corporation because their guidelines and goals are very similar.

The government is commencing a marketing program to promote opportunities within the zone to Australian and overseas companies. The passage of this legislation is tangible proof of the Territory government's commitment to develop manufacturing industry in the Northern Territory. Mr Speaker, I commend this bill to honourable members.

Mr DONDAS (Industry and Small Business): Mr Speaker, I thank all members for their support of this legislation. I will talk a little bit about the concept of the trade development zone and my feelings. When this legislation was first introduced and I made my second-reading speech, I fully believed everything that I said. Then, I was convinced by the Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation that I should undertake a fleeting visit to

examine the workings of some of the trade zones that exist in many parts of the world. When he suggested that I should visit something like 14 or 15 trade zones in 6 different countries in 16 days, I thought it amounted to lunacy. I really was not very happy with the proposal. The Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation stuck to his guns and convinced me that I should visit the various zones around the world so that I would have a better knowledge and understanding of how these trade and economic zones work.

I suppose there is one thing that I can honestly say after visiting those trade zones and that is that I have graduated from thinking in kindergarten terms to thinking in high school terms. I really did learn quite a bit about the functioning of the various zones. Members this evening have mentioned the purpose of a trade development zone. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke about manufacturing. Manufacturing is only one facet. I interjected at one stage when he was talking about bonded warehouses. I said that the term that is used overseas is 'manipulation'. It means that people can bring duty free goods into an area, hold them in bond and then redistribute them to other parts of the country or to other parts of the world. In fact, that is happening quite a lot in Miami. Many goods are imported into its trade zone and finish up in the Caribbean ring.

The bonding of duty free goods is another use for the zone. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition alluded to this. However, he did not explain why we would have a big operation here, perhaps apart from international shipping. It can also be used by international aircraft to restock with duty free goods which can be sold to passengers in transit between the various ports. There is an enormous potential for bonded stored goods in the Northern Territory.

The other important thing that we learnt related to our physical location. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition referred to location as being a very important ingredient of a trade zone. I will talk about Corby in a few moments and I will talk about Penang and about Shannon. After flying around the world, I am quite convinced that our location in the Northern Territory certainly has a great deal to offer those people coming into the zone. As the member for Jingili said, this is the first of its kind in Australia. Victoria is investigating the possibility of setting up a zone but we are more advanced. We have the legislation before us and, hopefully, it will pass through all the stages this evening. The location is very important. It will enable the people who come into the zone not only to trade within the Asian and South-east Asian regions but also to open up even to the Pacific ring. Last year's trade in the Pacific ring was worth \$1100m. We should be able to grasp a percentage of that trade.

Another most important facet in the zone was alluded to by the Minister for Ports and Fisheries earlier today in his answer to a question. One could consider the concept of providing a duty free outlet for the provision of fuel to fishing vessels. They would come into the trade zone to buy their fuel. Whilst they were there, they would unload their cargo which would be then processed in the zone and re-exported to the countries where they are based. That would have a tremendous potential. We must work very closely with the customs people and the Commonwealth government to try to achieve that goal. In the United States, the Australian Trade Commissioner and other people told me that the United States would buy any amount of fish that could be exported from Australia. As we all know, we do have quite a fishing zone to the north of us and there are 300 or 400 vessels operating within the fishing zone. If we could provide duty free fuel, bunkering and let them discharge their cargo, that potential would be very exciting.

The trade zones in Penang, Corby and Shannon were set up for specific reasons. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition alluded to the downturn of the steel industry. The steel industry collapsed overnight and there were 12 000 people out of work. The British government stepped in pretty quickly and allowed it to set up an industrial zone. Some 6 or 7 years later, it employs 7500 people. Within the next 2 or 3 years, it expects to employ at least 12 000 people which would replace the jobs lost in the steel industry.

What happened in Penang was very interesting. In 1971, the Malaysian government withdrew the free port status from Penang. It relied very heavily on tourism and the duty free sales for its economy. In 1971, the Malaysian government moved towards setting up a free trade zone. I believe that is the only real trade zone for manufacturing and manipulation of all the zones that we visited. In Penang, all the industries and businesses are fenced off and are easily identified by the number of people who are employed in that zone. In 1971, there were 2500 people employed by the Penang Development Zone Authority. In 1985, there are some 58 000 people working behind fences in that area. The trade zone has been very effective for it and for its economy.

As the member for Ludmilla said, Shannon used to be a staging place for refuelling aircraft flying between the United States and the United Kingdom. Darwin used to be a refuelling depot between the United Kingdom and Melbourne and Sydney. When more modern aircraft were developed, Shannon was bypassed. It did something about it; it set up a trade zone. In fact, Shannon was where the first duty free port was established. Consequently, today it is employing many people and the economy in that area is buoyant.

Those 3 free trade zones were set up to replace something else. We are not doing that. We are doing it to add to our tourist development, our mining, our pastoral industry and our fishing industry. At the same time, I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that the people whom we secure to promote the zone are most important. Without good entrepreneurs, we might as well call it a day. Many people have tried to get free trade zones going and have failed so we could be just wasting our time. But there are many reasons why particular zones have failed. We believe that the location that we have certainly will be very important. It will be the first zone in Australia. We must work very closely with customs and the Commonwealth government. The cooperation of both those organisations is very important. In our discussions with people in other areas, we have come up with a particular solution that may enable us to work in close cooperation with customs. Once the zone is set up, we may provide information that would go on computer which could be relayed from the zone to a computer in the customs headquarters whether it be in Canberra or Sydney. That is very important if we are to eliminate red tape in relation to moving products in and out of the zone. The important thing is that we can develop international trade links in the Northern Territory by encouraging our southern manufacturers to base themselves here. At some time in the future, Darwin will become an international trading port. We will get that Darwin to Alice Springs rail link one day and our land bridge concept that we spoke about several years ago will become a reality.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said we need to strengthen outward shipping so that we can get our trade zone operating. We are 10 minutes from the port of Darwin and 10 minutes from the international airport. At the moment, we do have shipping coming in but much of it bypasses Darwin. We think about the barge operation between Singapore and Darwin but we forget about those car carriers that come here 2 or 3 times a month with several hundred cars on board. They can be used to carry freight.

Of course, for any of this to happen, we must have professional promotion. I foreshadow a small amendment to the bill. Once the authority is set up, I am quite sure that it will be able to select a zone manager or a general manager for that purpose. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that it might be much easier for us to encourage our southern manufacturers to the trade zone in the initial stage. We will be doing that. In fact, arrangements have been made to correspond with every major manufacturer in southern capitals to tell them that the legislation has passed and our promotion will start.

In the last 2 or 3 weeks, we have appointed a consultant in Hong Kong by the name of K.K. Yung, who is well known in the region, to try to stimulate some interest in this region among the Hong Kong business people. We now know that 1997 will be the trouble time for Hong Kong businessmen when China takes over the new territories of the colony. In 1997, they will be very nervous and we are quite sure that we will be able to attract some of those people into our trade zone because we will be able to offer them business migration. That particular facility is still available.

We tried to compete with Canada and America for investment 2 years ago when the run was really on in Hong Kong. We spoke to the Hong Kong Chinese Chamber of Manufacturers and to the Hong Kong Chamber of Industry. The general feeling there is that Darwin is well located, is politically stable and does have much to offer. We hope that Mr Yung will be able to obtain some business for us.

We visited a city in China called Shen Zhen. One must go to Shen Zhen to believe what is going on there. The place looks like a third world war rebuilding program. The general feeling is that, once Shen Zhen is completed as an industrial zone, the Chinese border will be moved back to leave Shen Zhen as an open free port. The belief is that that tactic will be followed by the Chinese because they have put \$4000m into it and they will have to recoup their money some way.

Another place that we visited is a place in China called Chui Hoi. Chui Hoi is very similar to the Northern Territory. It is a very small place. It is very young and it depends on tourism. The authorities are putting in considerable tourist infrastructure. It is becoming a free trade zone, the fourth in China. Whilst I was having discussions with the Deputy Mayor of Chui Hoi, we actually investigated the feasibility of a sister city relationship between Darwin and Chui Hoi because it is young, it is emerging and it is relying on tourist and trade zone developments. We may be able to follow that up in the future. I inspected one of the facilities in the zone and saw some manufacturing taking place. It was actually using Australian wool in the knitting mill. I understand that it uses about 1000 bales of Australian wool a year.

Of course, in talking about trade zones, we must pick up the point made by the member for Ludmilla about red tape. We must streamline those operations if we are to encourage people into the zone. We must eliminate some of the bureaucracy. The passing of this bill will allow the new authority to work on the incentives on a more formal basis. Payroll tax is one of them. I accept the point that we should not rush into something that will only be there for 2 or 3 years. We want stability. We have been warned about Japanese companies perhaps coming in. This is very important to some discussions that will take place over the next week or so. It would only be short term because the technology that they are putting into place will be superseded in 2 or 3 years time anyway. The whole trip was very worth while, and in more ways than one.

Setting up the zone authority will take some time. Advertisements will be placed in the press almost immediately. The selection of the zone manager will

take its course. The Chairman of the NTDC was able to carry out a couple of interviews with people who had expressed an interest in applying for the job. The other very important ingredient will be a strong Northern Territory government commitment. It will be a slow process but we are learning. We are evaluating offsets for those organisations that tendered for the construction of turbines for our power-station. In the tender documents, we have asked them to indicate what they might put into our trade zone. Another very interesting fact came to light. There are overseas companies operating in Australia that have an excess, if I can use that term, of \$300m of offsets that they have not been able to use because we are not exporting that amount. Westinghouse at Shannon was the company that put us on to that particular trail. In its operations in Australia, it should provide some offsets but it has not been able to because it has never had the infrastructure or the real need to. However, once our trade zone is in operation, we feel that we will be able to push some of these international companies really hard to provide the offsets that they should be providing. At the moment, I understand that about \$300m worth of offsets a year are going to waste.

That zone establishment will allow many southern companies to establish in a region closer to that with which they are trading and, of course, that should reduce their costs. One of the most important things that was pointed out to us was that, as our trade zone grows, eventually we will need to provide some kind of training facilities. We know that, in some instances, we do not have the special skills in the Northern Territory and, if a company is to come into the zone, it will need to bring skilled people with it to enable training to occur. Through the NTDC, we have an avenue for the provision of industry housing. I can see us relying heavily on industry housing until we can have those training facilities in operation. But it will be a flow-on.

I do not see 20 000 people working in a zone next year but I can certainly see some infrastructure going into the zone by this time next year and production towards Christmas 1986. That is the timetable I have in mind. Whether we will be able to accomplish that or not, I do not know. However, there must be some infrastructure. The way they started at Corby was by building 10 000 square feet of space, dividing it up into smaller warehouses and setting the first 2 or 3 in operation. The people who went in first have now moved out into bigger premises of their own. The same principle was followed in Penang. We might have to do that in our zone. However, what I am thinking at the moment is that, with the offset for the power-station, we might say to the company that wins that contract: 'We would like you to build 10 000 or 50 000 square feet of space which we would rent from you for \$1 a week so that we can encourage some small organisations to come in'.

In the United States, federal legislation is tending to regulate forms of federal assistance, including tax concessions to the various economic zones. The United States has seized upon the value of the trading zones. In 1970, there were only 10 zones in the United States. In 1985, there are 155 free trade and sub-trade zones in the United States. It is amending its legislation to provide more comfort in the areas of taxation and customs to encourage more productivity. Miami is a very important zone because it is now opening up what is called the Caribbean ring. It is hoping that everything from many other parts of the country will come through Miami, be broken down and be re-exported. In fact, the Miami trade zone is a very large complex in its own right. There are display areas where the manufacturers can display goods. Customers come in from the Caribbean ring - we could do a similar thing in Darwin - see the samples, put their orders in, go back home and a week later the goods follow them back to their countries. There is a very large area containing 30 or 40 different displays within the trade zone. Oddly enough, that is run by a

private company. I would say that most of the trade zones in the United States are run by private companies. The one that we went to in Pittsburg was run by a private company under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce. At Oakland, the city council had the licence and it gave it to private enterprise to run. There are over 400 international free trade zones throughout the world. With our political stability and our geographic location, we feel, as do some of the experts whom we spoke to, that we have the ingredients for a successful operation.

If I may take a couple more minutes of the Assembly's time, I will provide some important figures. I will just bypass Penang for a moment. The projected impact of the free trade zone on total international trade for 1982 was \$2.1 trillion dollars. The percentage of merchandise processed through the zones was 10% and they forecast that, in 1990, it will double to 20%. In Penang, as I said earlier, there were 2000-odd jobs in 1972 and now there are well in excess of 60 000. In Shen Zhen in 1979, when it started its industrial zone, there were 8400 and, in 1984, there were 60 000. In Corby, in 1970, there were 4000 and, in 1981, there were 8500. I have no figures for Pittsburg but it was another zone that resulted from the downfall of the steel industry. It was lucky and picked up a very large foreign automobile assembly manufacturer, Volkswagon, which really created many jobs. That was very fortunate but that has also been done by private enterprise. Miami is much the same with its focus on the Caribbean ring. Darwin's focus will be on the Pacific and the South-east Asian rings. I think that there will be a tremendous amount of interest in our promotion of the zone as we move a bit closer to its operation.

With those few words, Mr Deputy Speaker, I would thank all members for their support for what I believe to be most exciting legislation. I would like to place on record my thanks to the Chairman of the Northern Territory Development Corporation and his officers who, for the last 12 months, have been preparing this legislation and for their assistance with promotional material for our around-the-world trip. I will leave it at that. I have foreshadowed to honourable members an amendment to clause 5. Clause 5 refers to '3 members'. I would like to make a simple amendment to 'not less than 3 members' which will give me the flexibility to appoint a fourth or fifth person. It was not our intention in the first place to have a big board. We thought we would keep it to 3 but, after moving around to these places, the general feeling that I have is that a fourth and fifth person might be necessary.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for amendment to clause 5 agreed to without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, tonight I wish to make a few remarks on a topic which I feel strongly about, and an innovative topic at that. This Assembly would be well aware that I have spoken before about airships. My interest in them goes back to August 1982 when, in England, I learnt about the British airship industry's new airships. Since that time, the Bond Corporation has injected a great amount of funds into that industry and is now a major shareholder. Recently, at my request, the Executive Assistant of the Bond Corporation, Mr Ray Durant, sent information to the Northern Territory

government which I believe is being evaluated for the great potential that this particular vessel has. As I have said before, its key use relates to coastal surveillance, particularly as the airship could act as an elevated platform for radar. The importance is that radar, except for exotic types, is a line-of-sight instrument. The higher it is positioned, the greater is the range in which the radar is effective and the wider is its field of vision.

I will indicate some potential uses as far as the Northern Territory is concerned and this is by no means an exhaustive list. An airship has the capacity to detect drug runners or bird smugglers with its radar whether in aircraft or passenger vessels. It has the capacity to detect boat people. We know how often the boat people have come very close to landing on Australian soil and, in a few cases, they had actually landed on Australian soil before they were detected. We all have a fear of foot-and-mouth disease and, if these people could be picked up earlier, we could well save Australia from potential disaster.

We have a 200-mile fishing zone around the coast of the Territory in which we hold the international rights to fish. However, patrolling such a big zone is a demanding job. An elevated airship could cover this with its radar far more easily than any surface vessel. As I have said before, the cruising speed of the airship 600 is about 110 km/h which is quite a reasonable speed. It is not inhibited by having to go around land as a ship would be.

It could also be used in the detection of illegal activity, maybe illegal immigration. Recently, some people were detected who had been dropped on the Australian shore in Queensland and had mingled in with the Australian population. They had been dropped by boat. There is also subversive activity. I hope there are no subversives coming on to Australian soil but, frankly, I do not believe that we would know whether there are or not. Norforce is only about 140-men strong with a very big area to try to cover. It would be very much a potential user of an airship with the capacity to go across swampy ground and lower men down, bring in supplies, lift people out etc. In future, with BP going ahead with the Jabiru oilfield, it will be looking to patrol the area so that shipping does not stray into that oilfield and cause a great deal of damage. These are areas in which I see the airship having the potential to do a great job for us.

Recently, I was informed by Mr Durant that the company was to bring an airship to Australia about Christmas time last year. However, the US coastguard service asked to have a look at it and has given the company an 8-month contract during which time it will train its own pilots. Interestingly, it will be using the airship armed with machine guns and radar in a drive against drug runners on the Florida coast. This is really a testing time. It is great to have potential but you must prove that any new invention really has the capacity to do its job. If it not only can detect drug runners but can prove that it can actually apprehend them, then its potential will be realised.

Recently, a second one was bought by a Japanese firm. It had only just got it inflated and operational when it was struck by an extremely severe storm. The vessel came through unscathed in spite of the severe buffeting which it received. Many people have asked what they would be like in bad weather. Most of the possible uses that I have suggested here really would relate to the federal government: coastal surveillance, Norforce etc. The federal government should seek a report from the US coastguard service on its evaluation of this vessel. I am sure that that would spark up interest if it is considered to be a useful addition for the purposes of coastguard operations. Search and rescue is another possibility. These airships have motors that swivel so that it is

very easy to bring them down near the surface of the water. One technique is to drop a boat from underneath that can be used to pick up people or people could be winched up to the airship as is done with helicopters.

Later on this year, the company hopes to have the first airship brought to Australia. I hope that our federal government will take the opportunity to evaluate its potential. One key advantage with it is its low cost of operation. It works on the good old Archimedes' principle. You do not have to expend energy to keep it in the air because it can float there. Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not think you need a physics lesson on Archimedes' principle. The airship has the capacity to go almost anywhere.

Honourable members will know that the other day a Navy patrol boat ran aground in the Bass Strait area. It was worth a mere \$10m. An evaluation report published in the Australian a couple of days ago indicated that Bass Strait becomes pretty rough and these vessels are not quite big enough for the job of patrolling there. I see a potential there for the airships. If the task is to warn shipping away from the rigs in Bass Strait, with their radar and capacity to travel at 60-odd knots, that would be another potential use for the airships which would be pretty cost-effective. I can see that the airship would be a rather more pleasant vessel to travel in than being bucked up and down in the rather severe seas that occur in Bass Strait.

Recently, this Assembly had a visit from a CPA delegation from 4 of the island nations of the Pacific. I spoke about the airship to these people. I have known for some time that they have been extremely interested in the fishing zones that they have around their islands. Whilst they can improve their economies by tourism, that is somewhat limited. However, a big resource that they have is fish. We heard the Deputy Chief Minister say today that the US market would take any fish that we can supply. These island nations do not have the capacity to patrol and keep other uninvited nations out of their fishing zones. Foreign fishing vessels sneak into their zones and dash out again and their potential livelihood is being pillaged. I know that they have asked Australia to provide patrol boats. If patrol boats had a 50-mile range with their radar, it would be fairly easy for a fishing vessel to have its own radar and pick up the ship that was trying to catch up with it and duck out of the zone. That would be a cat-and-mouse operation and the foreign fishing vessels would have it all their own way.

I spoke to them about the possibility of airships which could be provided by Australia. I would like to think that Australia would seek to assist these nations. Then, foreign vessels could be detected inside the 200-mile zone. One of the beauties of the airship is that, because of the nature of the material it is made from, it is not easily detected by radar. The microwaves which are sent out by the radar of some other vessel tend to pass through it. There is very little reflection and it makes them pretty hard to detect.

I can envisage these vessels sneaking up on foreign fishing vessels. If, as I hope the US coastguard experience will show, they have the capacity to apprehend the culprits, we might see some of these vessels being confiscated and becoming a nucleus of a fishing fleet for the islands themselves. As far as I am concerned, that would be international justice. It would help these people stand on their own 2 feet. One gentleman in the group told me that the Russians are trying to make inroads there and they are thinking about entering into a fishing venture with them. He was not too sure about it all. He could see some advantages but, whether it is the Russians, Australians, the Americans or the French, the ideal thing for these islanders would be for them to learn the skills, obtain fishing vessels and be able to set up under their own steam. The



use of airships in the future may enable the capture of a few illegal fishing vessels to become a nucleus for the fishing fleets of these islands.

That is the current state of play. It is an exciting time. It is now in the proving stage. No doubt, it will undergo some pretty rugged tests before it is considered acceptable. Last Sunday, in the Adelaide Sunday Mail, to my surprise there was a picture of one of the airships and my ugly mug under the headline: 'Airships will patrol the drug runners'. They got the story a little wrong. They said it would happen in the Northern Territory waters as though it was a fait accompli. The story I told them was what I have just related about the US coastguard service. I hope that in a few years it will become a reality in the Territory.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, tonight I wish to provide the Assembly with a report on my recent trip and I am prompted by the remarks of the honourable member for Sadadeen to start on a frivolous note. I am sure that the rest of my colleagues will not be frivolous. When I was doing my tourist bit, on behalf of my family, I went down to Buckingham Palace to observe the changing of the guard. It was spoilt for me by seeing this airship circling overhead advertising Swan Lager. Mr Bond was making his presence felt very strongly in his home country. As a visitor to the country, it took away some of the grandeur of the occasion.

As other people have said who have had the fortune to go on Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conferences, they are very worth while indeed. I want to start by saying that the CPA and the Commonwealth itself are both quite amazing institutions. All these countries have in common is that, at one stage or another, they were part of the British empire. From that common starting point, they have changed quite considerably and now have quite different forms of government. For example, at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference that I attended, there were representatives of one-party states like Malawi. There were representatives from multi-party states and representatives from states which have a similar system of government to that which we enjoy in the Northern Territory. There were also quite significant differences in the sizes of the countries represented, ranging from the biggest, being Australia, followed closely by Canada and down to very small places. I must admit that I did not know where some of the places are except in a very general sense. For example, St Kitts and Bermuda...

Mr Dondas: Bermuda?

Mr SMITH: Yes, Bermuda. It surprised me where Bermuda is. You've been there have you?

Mr Dondas: No, but it is just the other side of Miami.

Mr SMITH: Yes. Excuse my ignorance but I thought it was much further down in the West Indies. There you are.

Mr Speaker, I found it amazing and reassuring that people from such diverse backgrounds still felt that they had sufficient in common to be able to meet and learn from each other. I guess that discussion was at 2 levels. Obviously, one was at the political level. It was a very useful opportunity to be able to discuss political systems and political ideas and to learn how things work in particular countries.

I want to make one point now that the Minister for Mines and Energy is present because it relates to something that we continually raise and he

continually pours scorn on: a public accounts committee. Somewhat to my amazement, I found that every little parliament in the Commonwealth, except for the Northern Territory, has a public accounts committee. We were the subject of quite some surprise when I revealed that the Northern Territory does not have a public accounts committee. All other places seem to have one no matter what their size.

Mr Palmer: Queensland does not have one.

Mr SMITH: I am not talking about Queensland. I am talking about the countries represented at this conference.

Mr Bell: Democratic countries.

Mr SMITH: Yes, democratic countries. A surprising number of them had something that not even we have been prepared to put forward in this Assembly: the committee is chaired by a member of the opposition. Of course, the history of the establishment of public accounts committees is that that is where they started. The first ones were chaired by members of the opposition. I can see good reasons why that practice is not universal but I would say again that it is a universal practice to have a public accounts committee. I am reaffirmed in my belief that we ought to have one here. I serve notice that we will persist until we get one.

Mr Vale: It will be the tenth time.

Mr SMITH: Yes, the tenth time. Some of you people are slow learners. That is the trouble.

Mr Speaker, the other important discussions at these gatherings are about world issues. Two major world political issues dominated the discussions at our conference. The first was Cyprus. To us, Cyprus is a long way away. I know we have many Cypriots in this community and, obviously, they have a personal interest in what is happening there. To most of us, Cyprus is just an island near Greece. There is a very important struggle going on in Cyprus. Certainly, I do not want to take sides on it. It is an issue that is of burning importance to people in that area.

The second issue, which was not surprising because there were so many representatives from Africa there, is the question of South Africa. I must take this opportunity to state that the representatives from the African countries completely reaffirmed my complete abhorrence of the system of apartheid that is practised in South Africa. The sooner that that system is replaced by a democratic government which reflects the wishes of the majority of the people of South Africa, the better off the world will be. I want to put on record my personal repugnance at the decision of some Australian cricketers to go to South Africa to play cricket.

Mr Perron: If they were a bunch of accountants, you wouldn't even hear about it.

Mr SMITH: If they were a bunch of accountants, it would be a different matter. What really sells it from my point of view is the fact that people in South Africa are prepared to pay those cricketers \$200 000 which is more than they can get playing cricket anywhere else in the world. That very clearly demonstrates to me that those cricketers are being used by South Africa as political pawns.

Mr Dale: Mark Ella received \$100 000 in Sydney to play for the rest of the season.

Mr SMITH: Mark Ella is an exceptional footballer. He is not an also-ran or a second-rater at the end of his career. He is one of the best rugby union players this world has seen. Those people are paying for the security of their families; I can understand that as a motive. In the process, they are being used as political pawns by a government that none of us would accept as representing the wishes of the majority of the population of South Africa.

Mr Speaker, one of the things that impressed me in my visit was the way that the House of Commons and the House of Lords have managed to remain flexible, viable and changing institutions. Having only read about the history of both those places, I was quite surprised at their informality and the ability of both houses to be open to the public. We must remember that there have been security scares there. In fact, one member of parliament was killed coming out of the car-park. But they do something there that not even we do in the federal houses of parliament: every morning, before the sittings starts at 2 o'clock, they have guided tours, not only of the precincts of the building but actually through the chambers. Thousands of people go through those houses of parliament every day. I think that really is a sign of democracy in action. If I were in the federal house, that is something that I would be recommending. Obviously, we do not have quite the same facilities here, and are not likely to, for guided tours. Certainly, I was very impressed by that.

I was impressed by their ability to consider new things. The House of Lords is being televised and that has been a great hit in Britain. People like seeing 90-year-old Harold MacMillan, who is now Lord somebody, standing up to speak. There is a Labor Lord, Lord Shinwell, who is 100. He makes significant contributions to debate in the House of Lords. It has been an outstanding success. Consideration is being given to televising the House of Commons. There has not been a decision on that as yet.

The other thing that we could learn from the practice of the House of Commons is that members are frowned upon if they speak beyond 10 or 15 minutes. There is a lot of pressure to keep speeches as short as possible in the House of Commons. Obviously, that is a reflection of the fact that there are 640 members. Whilst I was there, one of the government members got so carried away that he spoke for 40 minutes. The result was that the opposition filibustered the whole debate. It should have concluded at 11 o'clock but it went through to 2 o'clock. That was a direct result of one of the newer members not obeying one of the unwritten rules about how long members should speak on particular issues. That too was very interesting.

On a more touristy note concerning London, it is really a fascinating place because there is history all around. Wherever we went in England, there was history just around the corner or just across the road. From that point of view, it is a fascinating place indeed.

I must at this stage place on record my thanks for the assistance given to our group by the CPA staff in the UK. Any of us who had the advantage of that organisation and its hospitality would realise that it does an exceptional job. I want to make a particular reference to James Batten who is an expert on London. He was able to point out things about London and increase my appreciation of London far beyond what I would have achieved as a tourist no matter how many times I went there. It was superb. Could I also congratulate the staff here who assisted me in the organisation of the trip. Nothing that they organised went wrong. It is no small tribute to the staff here for the

efforts they made to arrange contacts for me in London that it all went very well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of other things that I wanted to speak about but I will do that at another time.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will be as brief as I possibly can, given the lateness of the hour. I regret that I have a large number of issues that I wish to raise but the adjournment debate is the only time I have for doing that.

Before mentioning the 5 issues that I wish to raise, I want to give my support to the comments made in relation to South Africa by the member for Millner. I notice that it did not strike any chords but it brought a reaction from the government benches. I share the sentiments of the member for Millner. I noticed recently an editorial in the Northern Territory News being critical of opponents of the proposed cricket tour to South Africa. Mr Deputy Speaker, you know how much I enjoy the game of cricket. I would love to see the tour go ahead. However, the basic thing is that, if South Africa wants to be regarded as a western country and wants to be regarded as a democratic country, it must give the people who live there a vote. I have said it before and it is worth saying again. We have an obligation to put pressure on that country in whatever way we can. No Australian should be giving such an oppressive regime any sort of succour. People say: 'What about oppression in other countries?' I come back to my original point. If South Africa wants to be regarded as a western country, it should preserve the same freedoms for the people who live there, black or white, as are available in every other western country.

There are 5 subjects I want to address very briefly, Mr Deputy Speaker. The first subject I want to address relates to the portfolio of the Minister for Education. Basically, I want him to lay a rumour to rest. Mr Deputy Speaker, as you would be aware, Yirara College provides the only avenue for secondary education for traditionally-oriented Aborigines. It was set up under a recommendation of the Watts Gallacher Report which hit the deck in 1966. Yirara College itself was opened in 1975 and since then, in spite of the vicissitudes that it has suffered, which I have mentioned on previous occasions in this Assembly, it has provided the only avenue for secondary education for traditionally-oriented Aborigines in central Australia. I understand that, under the auspices of the Department of Education, a task force has been set up to change in some way the role of that college. I would be very interested to hear about that. Perhaps he might prefer to talk to me privately about this matter. He may prefer to make some announcement in the Assembly about that. I would be very interested, as would my constituents, to find out exactly what is going on with Yirara College.

The second issue I wish to raise relates to a Northern Territory News article of 8 August 1983. It is almost old news, Mr Deputy Speaker, but an erstwhile Minister for Health, Mr Nick Dondas, made an announcement on 8 August 1983 that was reported in the Northern Territory News about an application to the Australian Bicentennial Authority for the funding of a 4-year project which was aimed at saving traditional Aboriginal medicine from extinction. I have received representations from various people who are concerned about this particular question and it has been suggested to me that there has not been adequate consultation with the people whose medicine is to be saved from extinction. I understand, for example, that, without any regard for the wishes of the Aboriginal community concerned, a Chinese artist has been enlisted to be involved presumably with some sort of artwork associated with this project. Again, this information has been circulated by means of rumour and I am sorry

that the honourable Minister for Health is not here to speak about it. I will be interested to hear at some stage from him about the success or otherwise of the consultation involved with that particular program.

The third issue that I wish to raise relates to the question of the so-called designated housing. As all honourable members would be aware, many Aboriginal families are living in Housing Commission accommodation in Alice Springs. Specific houses referred to as 'designated houses' have been built for some extended Aboriginal families around Alice Springs. I am not entirely put off by the baleful stare of the Minister for Housing who, regrettably, is not here. I have received persistent representations from some Aboriginal families who have been on the Housing Commission list for several years who have been unable to obtain designated housing. With normal Housing Commission accommodation, the waiting period varies somewhere between 15 and 18 months. This particular family has been waiting for some 3 years because of the shortage of this particular style of designated housing. I am concerned at the shortage of those houses and I would appreciate some investigation into the availability of those by the Minister for Housing.

The fourth issue I wish to address is one of considerable interest to the honourable member for Braitling. I am aware that he has taken considerable interest in the question of the operation of a renal dialysis machine. My understanding is that it takes the place of kidneys and cleanses the blood by machine in the same way as actual living tissue would. The problem at the moment is that that machine must be used in Adelaide. Many of my constituents are separated from family and friends because they are forced to be near this renal dialysis machine.

I am aware that the Minister for Health has taken an interest in this. His predecessor wrote to me about it and said that there was no problem with the actual purchase of the machine. I do not think the machine itself is a particularly expensive one. From memory, I think the figure is something like \$6000.

Mr Robertson: A lot more than that.

Mr BELL: I may have that figure wrong. It may be more expensive. However, as I understand it, the problem was not the purchase of the equipment itself but the training of qualified staff actually to use it in central Australia. I had an undertaking from the honourable minister's predecessor some time ago that...

Mr Robertson: \$244 000.

Mr BELL: \$244 000. Goodness me, my \$6000 was somewhat short of the mark.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would be very interested to hear what progress has been made in finding suitably qualified staff to take over that. As I said, it is of interest to a considerable number of constituents in my electorate who are forced to be so far from family and friends to avail themselves of that particular machine.

The final subject that I want to refer to is the bureaucratic relocation of the Water Resources Division from the Department of Transport and Works to the Department of Mines and Energy. I have had representations from people who have asked why it has been felt necessary to move the Water Resources Division from the Department of Transport and Works to the Department of Mines and Energy. I understand that there are people who are not particularly happy with the change and I think that it is worthy of some explanation from the honourable minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have done it in 10 minutes and I am sure that these honourable members who are still awake will be entirely grateful.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a number of things that I would like to raise in the adjournment debate tonight and I will attempt to do the same as the member for MacDonnell by keeping my speech fairly brief although certainly I cannot agree with him on all points. The first issue is one that I had not intended to talk on: the recent and much-discussed South African trip by Australian cricketers. I take exception to a number of points. The first was made by the member for Millner when he said the cricketers were over the hill. Mr Deputy Speaker, 2 of those cricketers, Steven Smith, a batsman from New South Wales, and Terry Alderman, a medium pace bowler from Western Australia, are only just starting to emerge as top A-grade cricketers in Australia and they are far from being over the hill. I take objection because I believe that many other Australian sportsmen, particularly those in prominent sports such as cricket and rugby, are being singled out and penalised for wishing to visit, play and compete in South Africa.

For years, our squash players, surfers and other sportsmen have been going to South Africa, competing and making money. Why should a small group of Australian sportsmen, who are at their peak and earning top dollars, be told that they cannot go there? That is their business and it provides their income yet the rest of the Australian business world can continue to trade with South Africa to the value of around \$240m a year. We are being hypocritical as we were hypocritical several years ago when we told our Olympic competitors that they were not to go to Russia. Although I certainly do not condone the Russian invasion of Afghanistan or apartheid necessarily, as the honourable member for Fannie Bay said, we are practising apartheid on a large scale in Australia and, indeed, on a large scale in the Northern Territory. The member for MacDonnell raised it himself: Yirara College. Jobs are being advertised in the newspapers day after day: 'People of Aboriginal descent only need apply'. There is a permit system to visit Aboriginal communities. There is no permit system for Aboriginals to come into ours. In the Northern Territory, we are practising a policy of separatism or apartheid. I take strong objection to the Prime Minister, to the member for Millner and to the member for MacDonnell saying that our sportsmen and women shall not go to South Africa.

Mr Bell: If a minority group wants to stay separate, that is not apartheid. Get your facts right.

Mr VALE: I heard the honourable member for MacDonnell in almost total silence and I ask him to do the same for me. He and I will not agree on many issues. Australian businessmen and women can trade with South Africa to the value of \$240m and our surfers, our squash players and other leading sportsmen can continue to travel freely to South Africa without any demonstrations. The rent-a-crowd cannot disrupt that type of sport whereas they can get into the MCG with mirrors and shine them in the faces of the batsmen and bowlers and they can disrupt the rugby matches. Let me point out that I am not out of kilter with the Australian public. I go back to 1972 when a rent-a-crowd mob disrupted the Springbok tour Australia-wide, with the exception of one state - Queensland. A state of emergency was declared and everyone in Canberra packed their bags and went home and thought 'Joh's done it again'. But anyone in Queensland who wanted to watch that South African rugby tour, watched it and watched it in peace. Two weeks after the South African team left Queensland, there were by-elections for 2 blue-ribbon Labor seats in that state that neither the National nor the Liberal Party had ever won. The National Party won with a landslide in a blue-ribbon Labor area. I would suggest that the member for MacDonnell, the member for Millner and the Prime Minister are out of kilter with the thoughts of the Australian public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, as long as Australia is raising top class sportsmen and sportswomen, I believe that they should be free to travel anywhere in the world, in the Eastern or the Western blocs, to compete. We do not blackball the Russian ballet and the Russian circus when they come here. We did not support the invasion of Afghanistan or the Russian invasion of other Eastern bloc countries in recent years. I think it is about time that some of the silent majority in the Australian community stood up and were counted.

There are 2 other points that I would like to raise. A federal Labor minister in Canberra made some remarks on the AM program several weeks ago about Northern Territorians' habits of spending too much time under showers and too much time sitting in air-conditioning. I took great offence at the tone that Senator Walsh used when he said that the trouble with the Northern Territorians was that they spent too much time under the shower and, if they were not under the shower, they were sitting under air-conditioning and the only way to stop them doing that was to force the price of electricity up and convince them to turn off their showers and their air-conditioning.

I issue 2 challenges to Senator Walsh to visit central Australia at 2 particular times of the year. The first is in the middle of our hot weather, and I mean our hot hot weather when it is about 45° in the water bag. I will provide him with a house. I will pay the rent for 1 month but I will tear the air-conditioning out of it and there will not be an electric fridge and there will not be a shower. If he survives that summer in central Australia, I then challenge him to come back in the middle of our winter and I will tear the hot water service out. I will see at the end of the month whether Senator Walsh or Paranoid Peter is that keen or so demented that he will continue to insult the intelligence of Northern Territorians who utilise facilities such as air-conditioning and showers, not as luxuries but as essential items for their convenience, be they Darwin or Alice Springs residents. They are not luxuries; they are basic essentials. Certainly, our pioneers in the Northern Territory many years ago existed without those facilities but that is no reason for Territorians to continue to live in the Dark Ages.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is one last point that I would like to raise tonight and it concerns a favourite topic of mine. I have already talked about cricket. It is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's attitude to inland Australia. Whilst I am fully prepared to admit that a number of people in this Assembly are not cricket fans to the same degree that I am, I still believe there are many many thousands of Territorians who would dearly love to watch live on television the forthcoming ashes series which will commence at Headingly on 13 June.

Mr Deputy Speaker, several months ago, I wrote to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and I have sought the support of everyone I have seen in the last few months, including a federal member of parliament who is in the gallery tonight. I wrote to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation asking whether it would broadcast the ashes live via television this year. Traditionally, the ABC has broadcast that series but I found out only several weeks ago that the corporation had missed out on the bid for the series and it had been bought by the Channel 9 marketing group. However, it has made available to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation an offer at no charge for transmission into areas of Australia not serviced by commercial television.

Being something of an arbitrator, I then put that offer to the ABC hoping that we could convince it to accept. Keeping in mind that the ABC went out to buy the series and missed out so it saved a squillion dollars and that, if it had bought it, it would have taken all of its other programs off Australia-wide,

the ABC then had the cheek to say: 'We will not take up the Channel 9 offer for 2 reasons: it is too expensive and it will disrupt our programs'. As I have already said, it has saved a squillion dollars because Channel 9's offer involved no charge. I then sent another telex to the Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Mr Geoffrey Whitehead, who, I am led to believe, when he hears about a telex coming from Alice Springs, packs his swag and heads out into the scrub. At the same time, I sent telexes all the way up the track to the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation, to the member for Barkly, to the member for Elsey and to the mayors of the 3 major Territory towns, seeking their cooperation in a similar approach to the ABC in an attempt to convince it to change its stance on the broadcasting of this series. Most of the recipients of those telexes have already acted on them and, by phone, telegram, telex or letter, have contacted the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. I am sorry to report that, this afternoon, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation telexed a reply to my telex of last week saying that, for technical reasons, and again for cost factors, it was unable to bring to the inland people of Australia the ashes series. That is an out and out lie because many of us will remember that the America's Cup transmission came in from overseas and was then retransmitted to inland Australia. There is no technical bar to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation accepting this most generous offer from the Channel 9 organisation and bringing the cricket to all residents of the Northern Territory and over 750 000 people in inland Australia serviced by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, who do not receive commercial television. I believe that the ABC has a moral responsibility, if no other reason, to bring this cricket to us. It will not disrupt normal programs because we are quite happy to wait until about 10 o'clock when the rest of the art lovers of the western world go to bed and we good old Aussies can sit down and watch a good cricket series.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I am standing and I thank you for giving me the call. There is one point I would like to clarify. I would ask the member for Braitling whether he phoned George Brown and told him that I mowed his park into a cricket pitch. No answer?

I intended to speak on this subject earlier today, Mr Deputy Speaker, but time ran out in that particular debate. However, I do not want to let the day go by without expressing my views on the subject of the mini-budget. I would like to tell you of my disgust at the way the federal Treasurer, Keating, together with his Mr Consensus Prime Minister Hawke and the financial puppet master, Senator Walsh...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is raising in the adjournment a matter that was debated earlier in the sittings.

Mr SETTER: My apologies, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have 2 matters on which I would like to speak. They are equally important from my point of view. One refers to situations in my electorate and the other to a wider issue on which I asked a question of the Minister for Primary Production yesterday morning. I asked the minister what effect the action of the militant meat industry unionists had on the abattoirs that they were picketing. In his answer, he elaborated on the damage they were doing to the meat industry and he mentioned that the employees were quite happy to go back to work. The only people who would not cross the picket line were the federal meat inspectors who probably work for the Department of Primary Production.

A situation which is to be greatly deprecated was brought to my attention this afternoon. I will relate the facts as they were told to me. This



particular incident has been happening and is still happening on a gravel road 1 km from the turn-off from the Arnhem Highway on the way to Mudginberri abattoir. At that point, a roadblock has been set up by unionists. They have a picket line across the road there and, to accommodate themselves, they have set up their tents. They have other erections around them there and, to accommodate themselves, they have cut down certain flora in the vicinity. Now you might say: 'So what? It is on the side of the road'. It is on the side of the road, Mr Deputy Speaker, and it is across that road. One important point that these people do not seem to realise, and neither do the officers working for the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, is that that particular part of the ground that they are occupying with a picket line is, to the best of my understanding, part of Kakadu Stage 2.

Mr Deputy Speaker, about 3 or 4 years ago, that area was in the electorate of Tiwi. I remember that a family camped in their caravan at the side of the Arnhem Highway and you should have heard the hoo-ha from the ANPWS people. It was as though those people had committed a criminal offence. They had only camped in their caravan there because they could not find reasonable accommodation in Jabiru. It was practically a federal matter to have these people moved. Finally, they moved and they obtained accommodation. Now there is a picket line operated by union members. It has been brought to the attention of the officers of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and they are doing sweet nothing about it. They are just letting these people stay there in Kakadu Stage 2.

I also remember that, a couple of years ago, an unfortunate motorist happened to go off one of the main roads in Kakadu and the ANPWS ranger saw him. I was very surprised to hear about it because it was my understanding that most of them spent their time enjoying the air-conditioned comfort of ANPWS headquarters near Jabiru. The motorist was brought before the court and was fined something of the order of \$250 because he went off the normal road where the ANPWS officers did not think that traffic should go. Here we have a picket line set up in Kakadu National Park Stage 2 and nobody is doing a darned thing about it.

The second matter that I would like to talk about has arisen in my electorate recently and I hope that it will be laid to rest pretty soon because it has been rearing its ugly head since about 1980. I refer to the matter of subdivisions in the rural area. All of us went out into the rural area to enjoy a certain lifestyle and the last thing we want now is smaller and smaller subdivisions brought about by city people who think they would like to live in a rural environment and that things will go easily. After a while, they realise that it is hard yakka to get things to grow and to keep the weeds down on a 5-acre block and they want to subdivide it. We have had developers who want to subdivide big areas to below 5 acres. You might say: 'So what?' The 'so what' may continue so that areas would be subdivided down to about 2 acres and then down to about 1 acre. It is the thin edge of the wedge and, this year or next year, we would have city allotments out in the rural area, and people do not want that. The environmentalists and all those trendy people are very keen on talking about the quality of life as it affects them. They are very keen to point out that things like uranium mining affect their quality of life. Our quality of life in the rural area is seriously affected by the people who want to come out and live on these small blocks. Since 1980, when I think I attended the first public meeting - I might even have called it - regarding the subdivisions, it has been a very vexed question. One large subdivision has been approved in which blocks are below 5 acres. Recently, I called a public meeting - and it was very well attended - regarding a certain subdivision planned for the area. I was left in no doubt that the majority of people reject

completely the idea of blocks of land under 5 acres in the rural area. This has been blocked by the Rural Planning Authority on which there are representatives from the rural area who rightly read the wishes of the people there. However, this decision is going to appeal. I do not know what will happen. I hope it will be rejected again or that it will go to the minister and he will reject it.

There are 2 more subdivisions in the rural area. In both cases, the subdividers hope to offer blocks under 5 acres. In representing the views of the people who live in the area, I wholeheartedly support them. I agree personally with the fact that we cannot have smaller and smaller subdivisions or we will defeat the purpose for which we moved to the rural area. It has been put to me that there should be a place for people if they want to live on small blocks. I agree, as does everyone else. Let them live in the Humpty Doo village centre or in the Berry Springs village centre when it is properly delineated and subdivided. One thing that the planners will not do is subdivide land when people want it. They are great on doing things that people do not want in the rural area. I assume that it was somebody in the Department of Lands who put what I consider to be undesirable people next to Taminmin High School on a block when the high school farm needed the land for expansion. However, one thing that the planners have not done is to subdivide the approximately 640 acres that comprise the village centre. They have not made available to the general public blocks smaller than 5 acres for which I believe there would be a market. That must be the only place in the rural area for blocks like that, with very few exceptions, and those would really be hard exceptions. I would call to mind perhaps blocks around police stations or fire stations for service personnel. Those would be the only exceptions that I would see, without giving it very much thought. It is time the planners listened to what the people want and did a bit of subdividing in the 2 village areas to make available smaller blocks of land for those people who want them. However, those must be the only places in the rural area where such smaller subdivisions are permitted.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Steele took the Chair at 10 am.

#### DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

B. Cowan MHR and I. Robinson MHR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of the members of the delegation of the National Party of Australia, Mr Bruce Cowan MP, member for Lyne, New South Wales, in the House of Representatives, Mrs Cowan, Mr Ian Robinson MP, member for Page, New South Wales, in the House of Representatives and Mrs Robinson. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I welcome our visitors to the Northern Territory and hope that their stay is a pleasant one.

Hear, hear!

#### PETITION

Pornographic Material

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 43 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. It is in identical terms to a number of petitions presented to the Assembly earlier this year. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders.

#### PETITION

Pornographic Material

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 30 citizens of the Northern Territory relating to pornographic material. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate and it conforms with the requirements of standing orders, and it is in identical terms to a number of other petitions that have been presented.

#### TABLED PAPERS

Report of Standing Orders Committee and Proposed  
Standing Orders

Mr SPEAKER: I lay on the table the Report of the Standing Orders Committee and the proposed standing orders.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the report be adopted.

Mr Speaker, during 1983 the then Standing Orders Committee directed the Clerk to review the provisional standing orders of the Legislative Assembly and to report to the committee on any amendments to those standing orders which he thought would be appropriate. In April 1984, the Clerk gave to the committee a comprehensive and voluminous report. Since that time, the committee has sat on a number of occasions and has undertaken a thorough review of both the provisional standing orders and the Clerk's report. As stated in its report to the Assembly, the purposes of the committee's review were: the establishment of procedures appropriate to the needs of the Assembly; to ensure that the standing orders did not conflict in any way with Northern Territory law;

the omission of obsolete provisions; the definition of established practice not stated in existing orders; to ensure equitable treatment between government and opposition members of the Assembly; and the amendment of orders which do not clearly express their purpose or which do not equate with the practice of the Assembly.

The provisional standing orders under which the Legislative Assembly now operates were based, to a large extent, on House of Representatives' practice and on practices which were appropriate to the Legislative Council. In reviewing these standing orders, the committee has, amongst other suggestions, made recommendations which it believes would make the practices of the Legislative Assembly more in keeping with a small Chamber which has both a deliberative and a reviewing function. Therefore, Mr Speaker, it has recommended a number of changes to the speech time provisions in the committee's stage of considering a bill and it has recommended that the second speaker to any motion be given equal time with the mover of the motion for the sake of even-handedness in the Chamber.

Also, it has recommended the adoption of standing orders covering procedures to be followed when an address to the Administrator, to the Governor-General or to Her Majesty the Queen is considered necessary. In the days of the Legislative Council, the Administrator presided over the Chamber and it was not considered necessary to spell out such procedures.

Honourable members will note other such recommendations throughout the report. Amongst the major recommendations which the committee has made are: first, the deletion of financial procedures which are applicable to the House of Representatives but which, in the committee's view, are not applicable to the Legislative Assembly, since the operations of the House of Representatives are governed by the Australian Constitution whereas the operations of the Legislative Assembly are governed by the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act; and, secondly, a procedure whereby leave is not required for ministers to make statements at any time when other business is not before the Assembly. The committee has also recommended that a motion to take note of such a statement may be moved without leave. To the committee, this seems a sensible proposal but it is an innovation in Australian parliamentary practice.

Another recommendation is the omission of the terms 'questions on notice' and 'questions without notice' from the standing orders wherever appearing, and the use of the words 'questions' and 'written questions' in their place. This is also a departure from normal Australian parliamentary practice. The committee has agreed that the provisional standing orders, based as they are on a House of Representatives practice, are outmoded, as questions on notice are not asked and replied to in the Assembly. The committee considers that these changes bring the terminology of the standing orders into line with Assembly practice.

There has been a total revision of the chapter 'proposed laws return'. The committee believes that the standing orders relating to the way in which amendments recommended either by the Administrator or the Governor-General are to be dealt with by the Legislative Assembly have been based on a wrong legal interpretation and has recommended consequent changes to those standing orders. The changes accord with the provisions of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act and make it clear that, if the Administrator or the Governor-General recommends amendments to proposed laws, the Assembly will consider the amendments but it will not again consider the whole proposed law.

In all, the committee has undertaken a most comprehensive review of the standing orders which, if the report is adopted, will assist the Legislative Assembly to function more smoothly and efficiently. Mr Speaker, I commend the adoption of the report of the committee, which will bring into force the revised standing orders which are contained in appendix B of the report.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Clerk and his officers for the time they have taken in the preparation of the Clerk's initial report, for the assistance given to the committee in its deliberations and for the hours spent in helping the committee to bring its review of standing orders to fruition.

Debate adjourned.

#### SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until 10 am on Tuesday 20 August 1985 or such other time and date as set by Mr Speaker pursuant to standing orders.

Motion agreed to.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Minister for Transport and Works

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for this day be granted to the honourable Minister for Transport and Works on the grounds of ill health.

Leave granted.

#### TABLED PAPER

Commissioner of Motor Vehicle Dealers, Annual Report 1984

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicle Dealers for the year ended 31 December 1984. I move that (1) this Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of the Legislative Assembly (Power and Privileges) Act, authorises the publication of the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Motor Vehicle Dealers for the year ended 31 December 1984, and (2) the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

#### TABLED PAPER

Commissioner for Consumer Affairs, Annual Report 1983-84

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs for the year ended 30 June 1984. I move that (1) this Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act, authorises the publication of the Annual Report of the Commissioner for Consumer Affairs for the year ended 30 June 1984, and (2) the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER  
Mataranka Community Government Scheme

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the Community Development Scheme for Mataranka Community.

TABLED PAPER  
Report and Findings of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I lay on the table the report and findings of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT  
Report of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime

Mr COULTER (Community Development)(by leave): Mr Speaker, honourable members, particularly those within the Darwin-based electorates, would be acutely aware that community opinion is running high about the incidence of juvenile crime. There has been, and still is, a public perception that juvenile crime is rampant in the community and that the hand of authority should slap down hard on the problem. It was in this climate that the government moved late last year to examine the whole complicated matter of juvenile crime, the extent of it, whether it was increasing, and the causes and remedies.

The Task Force on Juvenile Crime was duly established and met for the first time on 20 February this year. The job confronting the task force was complex and demanding and the time allowed to complete its report to the government was limited. Therefore, I am pleased to report that the Report of the Task Force on Juvenile Crime was completed on time and I am also pleased to report that it is remarkably comprehensive and should prove to be of great value to the government and the community. Much credit is due to the task force members who devoted their time and attention willingly to their difficult deliberations, and particular credit is due to the task force chairman, Dr Brian Richardson, for his unstinting efforts and his considerable coordinating skills.

For the benefit of honourable members, I will outline the summary of the report. The task force has identified certain key problems relevant to the question of juvenile crime, and these include: (1) that there is a relatively small group of persistent offenders who account for a large proportion of the offences committed; (2) that there are often problems within the families of juvenile offenders; (3) that many young people, particularly low academic achievers, experience problems in the education system and in the transition into the work force; (4) that there is a high level of involvement in juvenile crime by young Aboriginal people; (5) that certain remote communities, especially Port Keats and Groote Eylandt, have excessive levels of juvenile crime; (6) that the Territory is having problems in the operation of its juvenile justice system; and (7) that the community services for young people, including recreational facilities, are less than adequate.

The task force has made a number of recommendations addressing these problems. Perhaps surprisingly, it has found that there is no strong link between drug and alcohol abuse and juvenile crime in Darwin. The question of whether an additional detention centre is needed in the Territory has been examined and the conclusion is that Giles House in Alice Springs should be replaced, when necessary, with a new facility in the Top End. The task force has looked closely at additional sentencing options for the juvenile court

to fill the gap between probation and detention and it considers that these options will remove the need for an immediate expansion of detention facilities.

Mr Speaker, the task force has examined police statistics since 1981 and its conclusion is that there is no overall trend of increasing juvenile crime. Those statistics showed that there was a brief upsurge in reported offences of unlawful entry between October last year and February this year but a significant drop in March and April this year. I find it somewhat significant that an apparent decrease in juvenile crime activities coincided with the extensive public interest generated with the formation and the work of the task force itself.

Statistics show that the majority of juveniles who offend do so only once and that about 30 offenders were responsible for almost half the stealing and unlawful entry incidents in the second half of 1984. In other words, half of the offences are being committed by a hard core and relatively small group. Unfortunately, 20% of all offences committed by juveniles in the second half of 1984 were by young people from 2 remote communities: Port Keats and Groote Eylandt. It is a sad fact that currently juveniles from these 2 communities account for 40% of juveniles in detention.

In dealing with the report's major recommendations, I have already covered briefly the matter of the detention facilities. A range of recommendations deal with the community-based alternatives for the juvenile court. These include: a weekend residential program in Darwin; a community-care program targeted at juveniles whose family circumstances are a major contributing factor in offences and who are at risk of being sentenced to detention - these juveniles would be placed in an intensive fostering situation; and a critical examination of the community service order program by the Juvenile Justice Review Committee, which will be meeting in Alice Springs on 3 July next month. The task force has recommended against fining parents or ordering restitution by parents of juvenile offenders.

Other associated recommendations include provisions of a mentor program in which juvenile offenders would be matched with other members of the community and a residential post release program to provide for the transition of juveniles detained in Giles House back into the community.

In dealing with the problems highlighted in remote communities, the task force has recommended that a range of preventative programs and community-based options for the juvenile court be implemented in Port Keats and Groote Eylandt. Task force members put much emphasis on a series of recommendations dealing with preventative programs generally. These recommendations focus on families, the education system, the transition to the work force and youth recreation. These include: coordination and development of a parental skills training program; expansion of family counselling services; a media advertising campaign to encourage parents to be aware of the activities and the whereabouts of their children; an endorsement on the extension of the police liaison officer scheme; action to ensure suitable Aboriginal people are appointed as school-home liaison officers in Darwin; an alternative stream for Year 9 students for whom the core curriculum may not be relevant; actions to ensure there are more definite avenues to employment for early school leavers; and actions on provisions for youth recreation in Darwin.

The task force has expressed concern about aspects of the Juvenile Justice Act and it has referred a number of issues to the Juvenile Justice

Review Committee for further consideration. These include: the age at which a person should be considered a juvenile; delays in the juvenile justice system; records of convictions; publication of proceedings; predictability of penalties; and collection of data necessary for the evaluation and development of juvenile justice policies.

Mr Speaker, the task force recommends finally that it be reconvened in mid-1986 to re-examine the juvenile crime problem at that time and to consider and review its recommendations. The government will be seeking a complete range of public comment on the report and its recommendations. Following that process, the government will be in a position to decide on the recommendations and their impact on the community.

I thank the task force members and support staff for the task they have tackled with enthusiasm and application and I commend the report to honourable members and move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Debate adjourned.

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

##### Impact of the Sealing of the Stuart Highway

Mr DONDAS (Tourism) (by leave): Mr Speaker, since the initiative was taken by this government to establish the Northern Territory Tourist Commission in January 1980, the Territory has benefited from a number of significant developments which have seen tourism emerge as the Territory's major growth industry. Members are well aware of those developments to which I refer and the impact they have on our tourist industry's reputation in both the national and international arenas.

For its ultimate success, tourism is essentially concerned with a mass movement of people. In this regard, the Northern Territory stands poised to achieve further impetus towards that goal when the sealing of the South Australian section of the Stuart Highway is completed in December 1986.

Mr Speaker, you are aware of a number of statements from various sources in recent months which generally refer to the benefits accruing to the Territory from the sealing of the highway. However, following the report of a survey commissioned by the Northern Territory Development Corporation, I am pleased now to be in a position to quantify the extent of those benefits. The survey of future accommodation needs in the Northern Territory took particular account of the projected increase in visitor numbers arising from the sealing of the highway. I will also outline the measures being initiated by the Tourist Commission and the development corporation to ensure maximum advantage is gained by the Territory.

For the information of members, construction is currently in progress on 2 sections of the highway totalling 177 km. They are from Mirikata to Coober Pedy south, which is expected to be completed in November 1985, and Mount Willoughby to Marla Bore which is to be completed in October 1985. This leaves 2 remaining sections to be completed: Pootnoura Creek to Mount Willoughby - 59 km; and Marla, De Rose Hill to the Northern Territory border - 156 km. The De Rose Hill to the Territory border section is expected to commence shortly while the Marla to De Rose Hill section is about to have a tender let. The project is on target for completion in December 1986 to coincide with South Australia's sesquicentenary.

Although there currently exists a paucity of available data on vehicle and



business numbers using the Stuart Highway to enter or leave the Territory, the survey consultants, Pannell Kerr Foster, have provided an educated analysis of the magnitude of the likely increase in demand after the highway is sealed. In the high growth scenario provided by the consultants, the number of travellers using the Stuart Highway is expected to peak in 1987 at 153 000 - a 62% increase on the 94 000 visitors who are estimated to have used the road in 1984. That figure is expected to stabilise in 1989 to 144 000 - a 52% increase over the 1984 base figure.

Clearly, growth indicators of this magnitude will place immense pressure and demand for additional accommodation capacity along the length of the highway, particularly on the more isolated outposts. I understand that the South Australian government is now considering extending the Pannell Kerr Foster study to include an assessment of tourism needs in that state, resulting from the sealing of the highway. It is apparent from their recent inspections of the facilities within South Australia that considerable upgrading of current facilities is essential to meet the expected demand.

In addition, I am pleased to report that the South Australian Department of Tourism has already indicated its willingness to participate in any promotional campaign initiated by the Northern Territory. We are hopeful that a similar cooperative approach by both Queensland and Western Australian tourism authorities will eventuate and enable the Territory to gain further advantage on the improved accessibility to use the sealing of the Stuart Highway as a central theme to promote half-round Australian tours from both the eastern and western seaboard.

Mr Speaker, the front-running efforts of this government demonstrate our commitment to the growth of tourism in the Northern Territory. I mention in particular the efforts of the member for Braitling, Mr Roger Vale, who has spearheaded the campaign for the sealing of the highway since 1976. It is patently obvious that the sealing of the Stuart Highway will cause a large increase in visitor movement to and from the Northern Territory. This government, through negotiations with the Queensland, Western Australian and South Australian governments, is seeking to ensure that the Territory achieves the maximum benefit from what has been a long and frustrating delay in providing a genuine link to the Northern Territory through Australia's national highway system.

The significantly improved visitor mobility, virtually unrestricted by time constraints, will produce ramifications for established facilities such as Yulara and the proposed resort development for Kings Canyon. It is expected this increased mobility will substantially vary distribution patterns resulting in a much wider movement of visitors throughout the Northern Territory. The development of circuit roads such as that proposed between Yulara, Kings Canyon and Alice Springs and the construction of an all-weather capability of the Kakadu Highway linking Pine Creek, Kakadu National Park and Darwin are designed to cater for this need.

The Northern Territory Development Corporation is currently assessing the results of the Pannell Kerr Foster report and, in cooperation with the Development and Regions Division of the South Australian Department of Tourism, is pursuing proposals for the provision of additional quality accommodation and support facilities capable of meeting the expected demands. The South Australian Department of Tourism is seeking to ensure that no indiscriminate or undesirable infrastructure is developed along the highway, a sentiment which is actively supported by the Northern Territory. The

Pannell Kerr Foster report identifies a strong demand for good-standard, self-contained motel facilities and the level of private developer interests already expressed in fulfilling that need is extremely encouraging.

However, in Darwin particularly, the government is aware of the need for additional budget accommodation and is currently assessing the means by which this can be achieved. In this regard, I understand facilities provided at Marla Bore stand as a testament to what can be achieved by individual commitment, dedication and initiative in the more remote regions. Negotiations for a series of cooperative promotional campaigns are presently taking place between the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the South Australian Department of Tourism. In addition, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission is also seeking an active involvement in the function of a proposed tourist industry centre to be constructed at Port Augusta as a bicentenary project.

Mr Speaker, in summary, it is clear that Northern Territory tourism will be a major beneficiary of the sealing of the Stuart Highway. The challenge is firmly before the government, the industry and indeed the people of the Northern Territory to ensure the needs of these new visitors are met with the typical Territorian flair, enterprise and friendliness. I would like to advise the Assembly that the Chief Minister, myself and the mayors of the various regional town centres will be driving down the South Road in early July. There will be several functions at Coober Pedy, Port Augusta and Adelaide as an initial promotion of the sealing of the Stuart Highway. Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, if it were anyone else other than the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister, one would be tempted to say they are about to embark on the world's longest pub crawl. However, knowing their temperate habits, I would not suspect their motives.

It is clear that the sealing of the Stuart Highway will provide an important boost to domestic tourism, which merely strengthens the point that I have been making consistently and that is that the bread and butter of tourism in the Northern Territory is domestic tourism; that is, tourism from people within Australia. The cream on the top, if you like, is the international tourism. Certainly, with the sealing of the South Road, the bread and butter tourism will be even more important and, as the honourable Deputy Chief Minister has said, we are looking at a 62% increase in travel by tourists up and down the South Road. Of course, it poses some infrastructure problems within the Territory to cater for that accelerated demand in a very short time. It is interesting to see that there have been quite dramatic changes in the ownership of motels up and down the track. Obviously, that is connected with the expected increased demand.

However, there are problems which reiterate the short-sighted nature of the decision not to include medium-priced motel-type accommodation at Yulara. I still do not understand that decision on the Yulara project. As it stands at present, there is nothing between bunkhouse-type accommodation and the Four Seasons and Sheraton accommodation. That has always appeared to me to be a very significant gap and it will be exacerbated by the sealing of the South Road. I know that the next stage of the Yulara project includes plans to put in this motel-type accommodation, and I only hope that it is done with sufficient speed so that that accommodation is on the ground before the South Road is sealed, otherwise we will have a lot of disappointed tourists. At this stage in our development, we cannot afford to have tourists arriving at Yulara who do not want to stay in a bunkhouse and the only other accommodation available will cost them \$70 or \$80 a night. Nothing is more

certain than that, faced with that price, they will be very concerned indeed.

The Deputy Chief Minister mentioned also the government's activities in creating ring routes so that tourists do not have to backtrack. We are all aware of the 2 major ring roads proposed. The road linking Jabiru and Pine Creek is an essential element in the north ring road and that seems to be proceeding. But I am concerned that, after an initial flurry of activity earlier this year on the Kings Canyon proposal, over the last 2 or 3 months we have heard nothing from the government on its plans for that area. It is at least 3 months ago since I and my colleagues, the honourable members for MacDonnell and Stuart, went through that area. After that, we asked some questions in this Assembly and outside of it and we were assured that the government was on the point of making a decision about the developer for the Kings Canyon area and some reasonably definite plans for the road. I would ask that, during the course of this sittings, someone provide us with an explanation of what has happened, particularly to the development plans, because obviously they have slipped quite significantly.

Mr Speaker, getting back to the accommodation aspect, it seems that we shall have a problem with the standards of accommodation up and down the track for quite a while. I want to refer briefly to what has been happening in England in that respect. An exciting project has almost been completed in England, which will enable people to travel from the south to the north and bypass all the major cities without experiencing one traffic light. I think that that is a pretty incredible achievement. Obviously, people can go up the South Road too without experiencing one traffic light and avoid all the major towns. However, I think that it is interesting that coordinated franchised traffic stops have been established which provide all of the people's needs. They have been let out to private development which was told: 'Here is an area of land. On this area of land we want you to put in accommodation, petrol, meals and make provision for proper mechanical repairs'. These private developments have been franchised and are very effective and very well-regarded stopping places indeed. In fact, we are probably all aware of the traditional stories of the coffee you get in roadside cafes in England, but I am reliably informed - without having tasted the coffee - that these franchised places have lifted the standard of coffee quite considerably. That is just an example of the impact and the effect that they have had on motorists in England.

We need to look at something similar here and keep a very close eye indeed on the types of developments that we allow at roadside stops. The government should consider a licensing system. Perhaps we do not need to go to that extent but certainly we need to keep an eye on it because, again, at this early stage in our tourist development, we cannot afford to have people turned off by low-standard accommodation and bad service.

Mr Speaker, there is one other element that has concerned me. The roadside inns that we have had in the Northern Territory in the past have had a reputation of being very rednecked indeed and of adopting a very unsatisfactory attitude, particularly to Aborigines. Like it or not, one of the major attractions that we have in the Northern Territory is our Aborigines and their lifestyle. When talking to various people overseas about the tourist potential of the Northern Territory, it was put to me that one of the most staggering things that people who come to the Northern Territory experience is the attitude of so many people living in the Northern Territory towards our Aboriginal population. The people I spoke to found that extremely off-putting and extremely detrimental to our continued tourist effort.

Through the efforts of the Tourist Commission, we sell the Aboriginal nature of the Northern Territory. It is an attraction to so many people overseas who have an interest in different cultures and societies. They want to come to Australia to have a look at Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal society. It is a positive point we have going for us. It is run down by so many Northern Territorians who come into contact with tourists. We have reached a stage where we must change the attitudes of Territory residents on this particular issue or we will seriously hamper our tourist effort. Overseas tourists with an interest in different cultures will not come to a place like the Northern Territory if the majority of the Northern Territory population shows clearly that it does not have that same interest and that same degree of respect for that particular culture. I suspect that that will become an increasingly important issue and one that we will need to address.

I am glad that the Deputy Chief Minister referred to budget accommodation. We often forget that budget accommodation is very important. I have a copy of the Youth Hostels of Australia annual report for the Northern Territory...

Mr Dondas: It is doing a good job too.

Mr SMITH: It is doing an excellent job. Frankly, I was staggered by the number of people who go through the youth hostels in the Northern Territory. They spend well over 100 000 nights in both Darwin and Alice Springs. That is a staggering figure. The only thing that is holding it back is the lack of accommodation. When the Northern Territory government is talking about budget accommodation, it would do well to liaise with the youth hostel people and see if it is able to meet their needs. I have been told that, if the Youth Hostels Association was able to obtain a more central location than Berrimah, its activities would increase dramatically.

We all know that, because of land costs and building costs, it is very expensive to build accommodation of any sort these days. It is almost impossible to build new budget accommodation. I think that point has been made by one of the ministers opposite. In that sense, it does not make much sense at all to demolish Larrakeyah Lodge. Now that the original plans for Myilly Point have ended up as a doorstop in one of the NTDC offices, we have had the opportunity to re-examine what we can provide at Myilly Point. I would hope that the government is trying to leave Larrakeyah Lodge there because we all know it has been a great success story. It has an occupancy rate of 80% to 90% all year round. It is not possible to replace it in Darwin with another existing building and provide the same number of beds. I doubt if it is possible to build a new facility because of the costs that I have been talking about. If we remove Larrakeyah Lodge, we will lose, and are not likely to get back, a significant amount of budget accommodation which has proved very popular indeed.

Mr Speaker, with those comments, I reiterate the opposition's support for the activities of this government, the South Australian government and the Commonwealth government which has provided the funding for the upgrading of the Stuart Highway.

Mr VALE (Braitling): Mr Speaker, I would also like to speak in support of the ministerial statement concerning the impact of the South Road on tourism in the Northern Territory. Indeed, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on this particular topic because I have followed it for many years. I would like to start by briefly outlining the history of the sealing of that South Road.

It should be noted that, in 1979, the then federal Minister for Transport, Ralph Hunt, came to an agreement with the South Australian Tonkin government that the South Road would be sealed within 7 years; that is, it would be completed during 1986 to fit in with the South Australian 150-year birthday celebrations in that year. In paying tribute to those 2 federal and state ministers, I also pay tribute to the former Minister for Transport and Works, Mr Geoffrey Virgo, for his assistance with various lobby groups over the years and the current Minister for Transport, Roy Abbott, who has been exceptionally helpful to myself and other people in central Australia in keeping us up to date on the current status of the sealing operation and also making a determined effort to keep the unsealed section at a fairly reasonable standard for the travelling public.

The total length of the project is 807 km and, to date, 415 km have been sealed which is approximately 51% of the total project and not, incidentally, the 60% as claimed recently by Senator Ted Robertson. The roadworks certainly have not been speeded up by additional funding. As I said before, the initial target date when work commenced in 1979 was December 1986. In case anyone reads any of the progress report maps and thinks that the 807 km figure is misleading, he should not add the total of the distance in kilometres from Pimba to the Northern Territory border. He should add that total to a 50 km section between Mount Gunson and Bookaloo further south which was in fact included in this entire project.

Whilst 415 km have been sealed, there remains 392 km to be sealed. Of this, an additional 177 km will be completed by November this year, leaving just under 215 km of which all but 59 km will be sealed by October 1986. The 59 km section between Pootnoura Creek and Mt Willoughby is to be completed by December 1986. With the exception of these 2 sections - the 79 km section between Marla and De Rose Hill and the 59 km section just mentioned - work has been completed or is under way. The tender for the Marla to De Rose Hill section is scheduled to be announced this week. Once that starts, contracts have to be let for the 59 km section. The total cost of the entire project in 1984-85 dollars is \$142.5m. The entire funding for this is coming out of the bicentennial road levy. That cost includes several rail and river bridges.

Mr Speaker, having briefly covered the statistics side of this massive project, I would like to turn to the important role this road will play both in the continuing development of our and South Australia's mid and far north tourist industries. It is quite obvious that, with the completion of this road, any publicity must be done on a joint basis with South Australia. After all, it is its project. I have already written to the Minister for Tourism suggesting that by far the largest section of our traffic, the tourist visitors who will utilise this road, will come from the average family motorists in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. I would suggest that, at an early date, we need to set up and man promotional stands at the royal shows because that is where those uncommitted travellers will be coerced into visiting the great outback.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to note that, up until recently, maps actively cautioned against travel on the Stuart Highway. Most members would remember reading them and learning that it was unwise to travel on that section of the Stuart Highway and, indeed, in parts of central Australia, from about October through to March of any given year due to rainfalls and the intense heat in that part of the country. It is quite obvious we have to reverse that negative approach and encourage our map publication companies to promote actively travel on the Northern Territory and South Australia sections of the Stuart Highway.

Whilst South Australia's section will be finished by 1986, it will create some problems in the Northern Territory because the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory is lagging way behind. Some of those narrow sections within the Territory will create difficulties for interstate motorists, who are towing caravans, when they meet up with some of our big road trains. Obviously, those motorists would not be aware of the problem.

Mr Ede: Talk to your so-called federal member.

Mr VALE: Mr Speaker, I suggest that the member for Stuart talk to the federal Minister for Transport who promised additional funding to speed up completion of this road.

It is interesting to note that, Western Australia, on the completion of the Eyre Highway, experienced a 50% increase in overall traffic and a 75% increase in tourist traffic during the first year. I believe that our figures will be even greater given the facts that we are closer to the eastern seaboard and we are a major tourist destination. I have some figures supplied by the South Australian Minister for Transport, Mr Abbott, concerning actual counts and count projections on the Stuart Highway from Port Augusta to our border. Whilst I have great respect for these traffic counts, I believe that, in this particular instance, they are of little use because the full potential of this road will not be realised until it is completely sealed and the promotional activities of both the Northern Territory and South Australian governments fit into the tourist markets that I mentioned. For example, north of Granite Downs on the Stuart Highway, the farthest point north at which a traffic count was conducted, in 1979 some 100 motorists per day came across. Of course, not all of them would have ended up in the Northern Territory. Some of them would have gone to points east and west. However, the projections are that, by the year 2006, over 520 motorists will be utilising that section daily. In fact, I believe that that estimate will prove to have been very conservative.

In addition to the tremendous importance of this road to our tourist industry, at long last it will also allow Northern Territorians to motor out on comparatively cheap holidays, from Darwin right through to Adelaide instead of facing the day-to-day unknown conditions of the South Road and ending up at Port Augusta with a bucket full of bolts. When a young family with a couple of children pay for air fares south, or train fares and take their car on the train, it is exceptionally expensive. For example, 2 people in Alice Springs with 2 children can take a return economy fare to Melbourne and back for \$1500. Once this South Road is sealed, \$1500 will buy a great deal of petrol, hamburgers and caravan stops and I believe they will still have some change left when they return to the Territory. Apart from that, Territorians will be able to drive out for long weekends, over the Easter break and so on whereas, at present, they are forced to stay home because of the condition of the South Road.

Mr Speaker, to go back to the tourist potential of this South Road, a Centralian Advocate article that I clipped several weeks ago showed how rapid this growth rate was and what potential we were facing in central Australia. This is from the Centralian Advocate of Wednesday 15 March 1985. It is from the regular column, '20 years ago'. I will read the entire article, but please bear in mind that it is taken from an article from 13 May 1965:

*Ayers Rock Revenue up Last Month.*

*Tourist figures at Ayers Rock for April 1965 showed a sharp increase in the visitors over the same period last year. Secretary of the Reserves Board, Tom Hare, said yesterday that, for April 1964, 451 visitors had passed through the reserve gates or arrived by air. By comparison, the 1965 figures shot up to 771.*

Mr Speaker, in April 1965, Ayers Rock was visited by 771 people. In the same month, 20 years later, 8796 people visited there.

If my recollection is right, Lindsay Ellis was editor in 1965. The editor's note on that article said:

*If this forecast can be accepted as an indication of the value of tourism to Alice Springs, it can also be taken as one of the very sound reasons why the headquarters of the Northern Territory Tourist Bureau, complete with staff, should be shifted to Alice Springs without delay.*

We are delighted to record that that occurred back in 1980-81.

Mr Speaker, I believe the completion of the South Road will be as important to the Northern Territory as was the completion of the standard-gauge line into Alice Springs and any opening ceremony should be on a par with the ceremony that Alice Springs witnessed when the standard-gauge line arrived from Tarcoola. I would like nothing better than to see Princess Alexandra invited out to open the line. Whilst I accept that a ceremony and any date for it is very much the prerogative of the South Australian government, I believe it would welcome an approach from the Northern Territory government to participate in both that and any promotional activities surrounding the celebration ceremony.

I might point out here, and I will go back to the figures that I used before, that, by October next year, all bar 59 km of the road will be sealed and that last section will be completed by December. December in central Australia is far too hot for an opening ceremony. I would suggest that the Northern Territory government and the South Australian government make a joint approach to the federal government to speed up availability of funding committed by 8 weeks so that that 59 km section between Pootnoura Creek and Mt Willoughby can be completed by October which will be a much more pleasant time of the year for an opening ceremony. It might well be that the Northern Territory would need to offer engineers to South Australia to assist in the supervision of that section. However, given the downturn in federal funding to our side of the border, I would assume that we would have some engineers available for that type of work.

The minister mentioned facilities, and there are 2 that stand out to my mind, having recently travelled the road. One is Marla Bore, an incredible facility given the fact that there were just wide open spaces there several years ago. There are demountables, lawns, a permanent building and services provided on a 24-hour basis by the proprietors. Nothing would make me happier than to see another facility bulldozed aside. I refer to Spud Murphy's at Pimba. I think that Spud Murphy's is known Australia-wide to all travellers. He has an incredible collection of demountables. In fact, I would suggest it is a world famous collection. When an old demountable falls down, he leaves that and moves into another one in front of it. When the floor rots and the roof falls in, he shuts that one down and moves into another. I think

he is trying to do 1 of 2 things: let everyone know that he is there and establish a small village or get closer to the road.

When the South Australian government made its announcement that the road was to proceed, I lobbied hard to try to divert the highway at least 20 km south of Spud Murphy's at Pimba because it is a disgraceful place. It does little or nothing to encourage tourists. The prices are exorbitant. If you have not been to Spud Murphy's, you have not seen anything yet; it really is the pits. Having spent much of my time in recent years in lobbying to get the South Road sealed, I would suggest that, for old time's sake, we should talk to the South Australian government about a 20 km diversion unsealed just for the old timers who would like to drive down such a road occasionally and remember what it was like 10, 15, 20 years ago. I emphasise that it should be a diversion.

This is the last unsealed highway linking 2 capitals directly, Adelaide and Darwin, and it is one of the largest continuous road projects undertaken since the Second World War, the other being the Eyre Highway. In summary, the Northern Territory is about to witness a tourist goldmine which is rapidly nearing completion and we must ensure that the infrastructure, within the Northern Territory and South Australia, is ready and able to cope and is at a level which will encourage motorists to visit the Territory not only once but many times.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, in speaking to the Deputy Chief Minister's statement on the South Road, there are a number of comments I would like to make. I make them first of all as a representative of a large rural electorate. Members would be well aware that I have spoken often in this Assembly on roads in that electorate. Secondly, as the shadow minister for transport and works, I am intimately interested in the transport and communications networks that are available in the Territory. I am very happy to welcome the sealing of the South Road.

I suppose I also should speak personally. Over a few years, I have had experience driving up and down the South Road. As other members who have shared the experience with me will be quite happy to attest, it has not been entirely a pleasant one because of the roughness of the road. I suppose my clearest recollection of that was returning with my 6 children back to Alice Springs some 6 or 7 years ago towing a trailer that had been securely welded down south. I got past Pimba and Kingoonya and, halfway between there and Coober Pedy, I happened to glance in the rear-vision mirror to be greeted by a spectacular spray of rubber. The guard over one of the wheels of the trailer had fatigued away on that particularly rough section south of Pimba. The mudguard had dug into the tyre and that was the end of a tyre and tube. I can remember stopping and gazing dazedly at this wheel when a chap in a ute pulled up and said: 'Listen mate, you haven't lost anything off the back of that trailer have you?' I told him I did not know. He said: 'There is a whole lot of kitchen gear back about 20 miles down the road'. I can say quite honestly that every utensil that the Bell family owned at that stage decorated the South Road somewhere in that hundred mile stretch north of Kingoonya. To my knowledge, it is still buried there. From a personal point of view, I am more than happy to see the South Road being sealed in this way. I would like to pass on my congratulations to the honourable member for Braitling for his ebullience and the zestful manner in which he has prosecuted this matter and advised the citizenry of Alice Springs and the Northern Territory that, because of negotiations between the South Australian government and the federal government, this bituminising of the South Road is to go ahead.



On a more serious note, I should say that this will have considerable impact on the tourist facilities and tourist numbers in my electorate. That impact will be a very positive one in terms of increased business activity. There is one caveat that I should place on record which has been mentioned to me by authorities in this area. Travellers in isolated parts of Australia, where there are no bitumen roads, become accustomed to taking a jerrycan of water, a spade and some tucker in case they are stranded. I am advised that, where there has been bituminising of rough roads elsewhere, travellers are unaware of the needs for travel in isolated places and ignore the need to carry water and food in case of breakdown or else they become complacent and imagine that that sort of thing cannot happen. Of course, there is passing traffic but I am advised that authorities can expect an increased number of travellers who are not prepared for misadventure when there is not a service station round the nearest corner. People automatically assume that, because the bitumen road is going in, there must be a service station round the corner. That will not be the case any more than it was with the old track. There will be some increase in the number of stops along the way but I still think it is important to note that concern. People will still need to be prepared for travelling in isolated places in that way.

I would like to commend the interest taken by the Minister for Tourism and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker. I look forward to the improvements, both personal and commercial, that are going to flow to Territorians as a result of the sealing of the South Road.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak to the statement made by my colleague, the Minister for Tourism, because I believe that the sealing of the South Road is one of the most significant landmarks that the country will see in the next 20 years. In about 1975 or 1976, I had the opportunity as the executive member responsible for tourism to attend the Australian Tourist Ministers Council in Adelaide. At that time, the Western Australian and South Australian tourist ministers gave a report on the benefits that were flowing to their states as a result of the sealing of the Perth to Adelaide highway. In short, some interesting facts came out then that may well have been overtaken with the effluxion of time. At that stage, the traffic on the highway had increased to a car a minute each way. That sort of traffic level was so far above anybody's expectations that both the ministers for Western Australia and South Australia were beside themselves with delight. The reality was that, at the end of a road of that length and which handled a car a minute each way, there needed to be a town or a community of 20 000 people to be able to provide the services that vehicles travelling at that rate would need. That was pretty significant for South Australia and Western Australia. I believe that it will be equally significant for the Northern Territory when our road is sealed to Adelaide.

The other very interesting fact that came out at that time was that only 48% of the people in this country used aeroplanes to go on leave or do their business. Territorians would find that difficult to conceive. For Territorians it is very hard to imagine that only 48% of the people in the country use aeroplanes. That is what we do every time we want to go somewhere and, because we do it, we assume that the rest of the Australian community takes its leave and goes about its business by aeroplane. The fact is that there are about 7.5 million Australian people who have not been in an aeroplane or only travel on one rarely. They are a potential market as visitors to the Northern Territory because they conduct all their activities, holidays, business or whatever in cars and buses. As members said in earlier statements, the one thing that has restrained and discouraged people from coming to the

Northern Territory by road has been the fact that the damage to vehicles has been so great that it was just not worth the effort. All that will change.

I believe the sealing of the South Road will lead to a tourist boom such as we have never seen before. My colleague and his department, by virtue of the study that has been carried out, is now starting to identify those things that we need to do to be able to absorb the additional traffic. I think it is also important that people who live north of Alice Springs realise that this will have a major impact on them, whether they believe in tourism or not, because people will come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my colleague, the Deputy Chief Minister, mentioned that we would be making a trip down the South Road from Alice Springs to Adelaide in July and that will be another exercise in promoting the Northern Territory's access to other Australians by virtue of our road being sealed. I have invited the Territory mayors and other people on this trip because a couple of people in local government have said to me: 'What does it matter to people living in Katherine or Darwin? It does not impact on us'. The truth is that it will impact on them and that is why people from the Top End have been invited to join this trip to Adelaide so that they can see what is likely to happen and what needs to be done. As a community, whether you are the Territory government, the Darwin City Council, the Katherine Town Council or the Confederation of Industry and Commerce, people need to be awakened to the fact that there are things that have to be done before the tourists arrive and we have not yet realised the great potential that is in front of us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a great deal of pleasure in supporting my colleague's statement.

Mr DONDAS (Tourism): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions today in regard to the statement on the sealing of the South Road. I would like to pick up a couple of points raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. He asked what was occurring at Kings Canyon. We made an announcement some time ago that we were examining some proposals with regard to the development of Kings Canyon. At this stage, I would not like to say more other than that the proposals put before government are still under consideration. There has been a delay because, about 5 weeks ago, the Chief Minister and I had some discussions with the Central Land Council which has an involvement in the Kings Canyon area as part of an equity participation in the project. We are allowing the Central Land Council more time to develop its proposal. I hope that the member for MacDonnell will draw the attention of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who is not in the Assembly at the moment, to what I have said this afternoon. It is a matter of allowing the parties concerned to consolidate their views and put a final proposal to government for consideration.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition also spoke about the need for budget accommodation. I was the minister responsible in those days for encouraging the YMCA and the YWCA to take up the offer the government had extended to many of the community organisations to take over the old nurses quarters for tourist accommodation while we evaluated what we were going to do with Myilly Terrace. The Darwin Hospital was moved out to Casuarina about 2½ to 3 years ago and the government was not in a hurry to make any commitment with regard to the Myilly Terrace site other than to advertise for some private hospital entrepreneur to use the site. That was quite unsuccessful and we are all aware of the government's initiative now to develop the site as a hotel and motel development. Those plans will be forthcoming in the very

near future, as I mentioned in question time this morning.

The important fact is that they have only a short-term lease on that site. The location is needed for the future development of the site. I am quite sure that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is unaware that, to keep the YY providing budget accommodation is costing the Northern Territory government in excess of \$140 000 a year for the provision of power. There is very little revenue for the Northern Territory government from that facility. In fact, we receive \$1 per occupied bed night so, in other words, if there are only 50 people in there for the night, we get \$50. Full occupancy is 150 beds. Therefore, even with full occupancy for every day of the year, we would receive only \$50 000. We are not really making any money out of it.

However, to accommodate the YY and its enterprises, and for the government to secure a very valuable property within the central business district, it is well known that we have acquired the old Qantas site. The intention is to allow the YY to operate on that site on a 2-yearly basis. It might be on a year-to-year basis. That will be until such time as the government is able to find a developer in the mid-1990s for that very valuable city site. So we have found a home for YY.

I would like to have further discussions with the Minister for Housing because there is a proposal from the occupiers of the old Commonwealth Hostel to upgrade that particular property on a longer-term basis than the short-term period of 18 months. That property would then be used for budget accommodation for tourists. We are very aware of the need to provide budget accommodation. There are proposals. Entrepreneurs are putting in place holiday accommodation units for people who will be driving up to Darwin.

I agree with what has been said this morning. In fact, I support the Chief Minister in what he said just a few moments ago. I do not think that the people of Alice Springs and the people up the track have any idea of what is going to happen to them in 1987 and 1988. There will be a tremendous increase in traffic. I have a fair idea of what is going to happen because I was floating around Western Australia when that road from Port Augusta to the Western Australian border was opened. The increase in traffic on that road was tremendous. I can see the same thing happening here some 20 years later.

The limited work that has been done in the past few years on that road has increased the coach traffic. Imagine 30 coaches a day with 40 people in each. That is an extra 1200 people walking through a town and spending money. In the 6-month period ending 25 March, the coach traffic was up 15%. Therefore, not only are we looking at people who are driving their own cars from the south but the coach traffic will certainly increase because the present coach operators were reluctant in the past to drive their \$50 000 and \$80 000 vehicles on that bone-jarring road. The coach operators never wanted to sell central Australia because of the road system. As each day passes and there is less and less bone-jarring road to drive on, more and more brochures on the Territory are appearing. In fact, TAA has produced a brochure on the Northern Territory which consists of 101 pages. That is the first time ever. It has always been a 30-page brochure or a 40-page brochure. I think the best that an airline has done is about 60 pages. This year it was 101 pages on the Northern Territory tourist industry. The same thing is happening with those coach operators but on a much smaller scale. But at least many more coach operators are providing a service from the southern ports into the Alice Springs region. Hopefully, that will extend to Darwin.

Another item that I flagged at a recent tourist seminar in Darwin was the need for the government to provide ring routes not only in the Kings Canyon area and the Ayers Rock area but also in the northern area. At the moment, people are reluctant to drive 1800 km up the road and then back another 1800 km to Alice Springs. I have been promoting the view - and I would hope that in time it would gain some momentum - that we provide an alternative route for our motor vehicle tourists. Discussions must take place with the various Aboriginal communities. One is the community at Yuendumu. I would like to see the road from the Stuart Highway to Yuendumu sealed. From Yuendumu to the Western Australian border, it could be a good beef road, then up to Halls Creek, back to Kununurra and the Victoria Highway and then on to Katherine. People could then drive to Pine Creek, on to Kakadu and then back down the Arnhem Highway to Darwin. After that, they could go back down through the Centre. I would hope that, in years to come, a scenic route will eventuate and break the boredom of travelling up and down the Stuart Highway.

In one respect, we have already started this on the eastern seaboard side. About 6 years ago, the government took a decision to provide some funding for the Plenty Highway. Each year we have been putting in dribs and drabs to the Plenty Highway. If a decision had been made to seal the Plenty Highway in 1978-79 at a cost \$40m or \$50m, there would not have been any support for it. So we changed our tack. I was the Minister for Transport and Works in those days. I convinced my Cabinet colleagues that we should seal 10 km or 15 km each year until such time as we reached the Queensland border. We have done quite a bit of work in that area. It will probably be finished in another 4 or 5 years time. It will open the road to traffic from Queensland through to Alice Springs and consequently up north. There will then be many ring roads for vehicular traffic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I certainly thank members for their contributions. I hope that the trip that the Chief Minister and I are making early in July will be a successful one.

Motion agreed to.

#### TABLED PAPER

##### Report of the Select Committee on Communications Technology

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I lay on the table the report of the Select Committee on Communications Technology. I move that the report be printed.

Motion agreed to.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report. I advise members that, because of time constraints, it has not been possible to print copies of the report for distribution to members today. It is anticipated that printed copies of the report will be available next week. In the interim, for the information of honourable members, and at the request of the committee, I have had copies of the summary of conclusions and recommendations printed. They will be distributed today. I seek leave of the Assembly to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Management and Control of Uluru-Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park

Mr HATTON (Conservation)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, following discussions in April 1976 between the relevant Commonwealth ministers and members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, it was agreed that particular parks and reserves in the Northern Territory, which are of major national and international significance, should be declared under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. It was subsequently agreed that the then Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park was of national and international significance and should be proclaimed under the act and that the preparation of the plan of management be the responsibility of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with the then Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, whilst the day-to-day management would be carried out by the then Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission. That is a direct quotation from the section entitled 'Government Policy' contained within the Uluru-Ayers Rock-Mount Olga National Park plan of management. Of course, as we all know, the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission has become the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

Before I proceed further, I would like to outline for honourable members just what a plan of management is supposed to incorporate and the steps that are taken in determining a plan of management for national parks declared under the Commonwealth's National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. The preparation of a plan of management is a requirement of the act. A plan of management prescribes a management program for a park for a specified period of time. Its basic components are: the legal and policy planning considerations relevant to the plan; a current description of the natural and cultural resources; a statement of the long-term objectives for the park and the management objectives for the period of the plan; and the program for the implementation of the management prescriptions.

The plan of management enables management to proceed in an orderly way. It helps to reconcile competing interests, identifies priorities for the allocation of the available resources, and facilitates public understanding and comment. The procedures to be followed in the preparation of the plan of management are clearly defined under the act. In preparing the Uluru Plan of Management, these procedures were followed and the plan currently in force was prepared by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with the then Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission. In addition, a number of other organisations were consulted during the preparation of the plan. These included CSIRO, the Bureau of Meteorology, the NT Department of Mines and Energy, Water Division, the Central Land Council, the Sacred Sites Protection Authority, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Liaison Unit and a number of others. Section 12 of the act outlines the further steps to be taken to have the prepared plan ratified and implemented. Section 12(1) states: 'The minister shall, as soon as practicable after a plan of management has been accepted under section 11, cause it to be laid before both Houses of Parliament'. Section 12(2) provides that: 'Either House of the Parliament, within 20 sitting days of that House after the plan of management has been laid before that House, may in pursuance of a motion upon notice, pass a resolution disallowing the plan of management'. If neither House of Parliament passes such a resolution, the plan of management comes into operation on the day immediately following the last day upon which such a resolution could have been passed by either House.

The plan of management for Uluru National Park was tabled in both Houses of Parliament by the Hawke government and, in accordance with the provisions

of the federal National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, came into effect on 22 September 1983, and shall continue to have effect until 30 April 1987 unless amended by both Houses of Parliament through the same procedures as its original preparation and declaration. It is the view of the Northern Territory government that the agreement outlined in a section entitled 'Government Policy' in the Uluru National Park plan of management has received the endorsement of both Houses of the federal Parliament. You will note that the agreement provides that the day-to-day management for Uluru National Park would be carried out by the then Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission, now the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

The Conservation Commission has since received a letter from the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service which advises that:

*As part of the management arrangements, the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will have 3 officers stationed in the park. One will be the senior officer of the park and will have overall responsibility for the administration of and operations of the park. The second will have the training of Aboriginal rangers as his principal duty. The third will assist the senior officer in all aspects of his work and will have particular responsibility for filming and related activities, for liaison regarding capital works projects, and for the provision of secretariat services for the Uluru board to be set up under legislation.*

The letter goes on to talk about new management arrangements and stresses the importance to the new arrangements for Conservation Commission staff to work under the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service's senior officer. If implemented, I submit that this proposal would be a clear breach of the 1976 agreement between the Commonwealth and members of this Assembly and the plan of management which has been endorsed by both Houses of the federal Parliament. Section 45.2.1 of the Uluru plan of management states:

*Under an agreement with the Northern Territory government, the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory will carry out day-to-day management of the park in accordance with the general provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 as amended, its regulations and this plan of management. Day-to-day management will encompass routine activities necessary for the protection of the resources of the park, park visitors and staff, the maintenance of park facilities, services and equipment, visitor control, operation of interpretative programs and normal daily administration including the supervision of lessee operations and the provision of agreed services for the lessees.*

This has been effectively abrogated, I must say, and frustrated by the failure of the Commonwealth government to enter into an agreement with the Northern Territory government or even to commence negotiations for such an agreement despite requests from the previous Chief Minister and myself as responsible minister this year. Not only would these proposed arrangements be a breach of the plan of management but they would be in breach of numerous assurances given by Prime Ministers and by federal Cabinet that Commonwealth officers would not be involved in the day-to-day management of Territory parks and that parks would be managed by Territory staff in accordance with jointly prepared plans of management. Further to this, the Conservation Commission is not aware of the details of the proposed new management details. It has

not been consulted nor has it been involved in discussions proposing management arrangements. I might add that it is a requirement of section 45.2.2 of the Uluru plan of management that:

*Where park management matters arise which require further clarification or decision, the Director of Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service will consult with Uluru Aboriginal Advisory Committee, the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory and, as necessary, the Central Land Council.*

Consultation has not taken place. The Uluru Aboriginal Advisory Committee has never been set up by the Director of Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Section 31 of the Uluru plan of management requires the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service to cooperate with the Northern Territory government and its agencies in the management and administration of the park. Section 16.4 of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975 requires:

*In relation to the performance of his functions in the exercise of his powers with respect to a park, reserve or a conservation zone wholly or partly within the Northern Territory, the director shall, from time to time, consult with, and have regard to the views of, the Territory commission and, if the park, reserve or conservation zone is also wholly or partly within an area for which an Aboriginal land council has been established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, the chairman of the council.*

The Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has not consulted with, nor has he had regard to, the views of the Territory commission in respect of management arrangements he now proposes for Uluru National Park. The Council of Nature Conservation Ministers, or CONCOM, is a council of ministers responsible for conservation drawn from all states in the Commonwealth. Resolution 91, passed by CONCOM in 1978 and reinforced in 1979 and 1980, stated:

- 1. The ANPWS will be required to conform to the role defined and agreed by the council at its November 1976 meeting.*
- 2. The necessary amendment to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act be encouraged.*
- 3. The ANPWS withdraw from all land-holding activities and all parks at present under its control be returned to the appropriate state or territory government.*
- 4. The ANPWS refrain from negotiations with Aboriginal peoples without the full knowledge, consent and involvement of the relevant state or territory government.*

That CONCOM meeting was held in Darwin on 10 August 1978.

In July 1981, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory asked the then Minister for Home Affairs and Environment to direct the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service to delegate to the Chairman of the Conservation Commission, under relevant sections of the Australian National

Parks and Wildlife Act, all his powers and functions within the Uluru National Park. On 12 October 1981, the Commonwealth Minister for Home Affairs and Environment advised the Chief Minister that he had no difficulty with moving towards formalisation of arrangements for management of Uluru and accepted that 'delegation arrangements under the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act may be the most appropriate way of proceeding'.

In October 1981, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Conservation recommended that a Memorandum of Understanding be agreed between the Commonwealth government and the Northern Territory government which would delegate management responsibilities of the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for Uluru National Park to the Chairman of the Northern Territory Conservation Commission. These delegations have never been issued. They would cover routine responsibilities of the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service such as the issuing of overnight permits to bushwalkers, approval of fireplaces and so on.

On 9 May this year, the Commonwealth introduced proposed amendments to the Commonwealth National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976. The amendments are supposed to be for the stated purpose of transferring title of Uluru National Park to the Aboriginal traditional owners. Despite an assurance from the Prime Minister to the Chief Minister in a telex of 11 November 1983, the proposals and amendments have been prepared and negotiated with the Aboriginal traditional owners and their advisers without consultation with the Northern Territory government.

ANPWS officers have met over the past 18 months with Aboriginals from the Mutitjulu Aboriginal community at Ayers Rock and their advisers to discuss proposals for the transfer of title and to discuss management arrangements for Uluru National Park. These negotiations have taken place without the official knowledge, consent or involvement of the Territory government. It is the Mutitjulu Aboriginal community and its advisers who advised the Conservation Commission when the negotiations took place not the ANPWS.

There is one further section of the Commonwealth's National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to which I would particularly draw the attention of members. Section 14(1) of the act states: 'While the plan of management is in force, the director shall perform his functions and exercise his powers in relation to the park or reserve to which the plan relates in accordance with that plan and not otherwise'. That is a requirement of the Commonwealth's own act. The requirement for the Director of the ANPWS to act in accordance with the plan of management, and not otherwise, is explicitly stated. If the director does not comply with this requirement, he is in breach of the act and, in my view, in contempt of the parliament. Similarly, if the government of the day fails to follow its plan or acts in contravention of it, in my opinion, the government is also acting in contempt of the parliament and deserves to be censured.

The saga does not end there. The Conservation Commission has been hampered in the effectiveness of its day-to-day management of Uluru National Park by the lack of suitable delegations under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, the regulations and the Uluru National Park plan of management. At the 12th meeting of CONCOM in Alice Springs in 1983, the Minister for Home Affairs and Environment, Mr Cohen, in response to statements made by the then Director of the Conservation Commission, Dr Letts, in regard to ANPWS involvement in the Northern Territory, said:



*I would like to take up a point that Dr Letts raised, the question of what is the Commonwealth's role with regard to national parks. That is something that we will be working on. I hope at the next meeting, or perhaps even before that, I will be able to give to you a clear picture as to what we see as our role in that area. I do not want to flag what my thinking is but I am sympathetic to your views on this matter. I have had some discussions with Paul Everginham. We would like to clarify the mishmash that has grown up over the last few years about our existing role and our future in these areas, which I hope will be satisfactory to the states in the future.*

The records of the 13th meeting of CONCOM indicate that the Commonwealth was silent on the issue of clarification of its role with regard to national parks. I might say also that I raised that at the CONCOM meeting at Norfolk Island last week and the minister was again silent on the issue. Hampered by the lack of suitable delegations and, within the constraints imposed by available funding, the Conservation Commission has discharged these responsibilities to the best of its ability. In fact, the Northern Territory government has significantly subsidised operations for the management of both the Uluru National Park and the motel leases within the park on behalf of the Commonwealth.

The funds provided by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service to the Conservation Commission have not covered the commission's expenses in relation to the payment of salaries for rangers based in the park and overheads in operational expenses associated with managing the park. For example, there is still an outstanding reimbursement awaited from ANPWS for \$86 000 worth of expenditure incurred by the commission on urgent repairs to bitumen roads within the park following heavy rains in March 1984. The ANPWS makes no contribution to the commission's overheads including salaries of executive staff, of administrative staff who process payments on behalf of Uluru or of technical staff who supervise capital works programs at Uluru and their associated operational expenses. Specialist advice and assistance in relation to botanical research and surveys, wildlife research and surveys, fire research and management, soil conservation and environmental rehabilitation within the park have been provided at the expense of the Northern Territory government. The commission has not been able to negotiate with the ANPWS a financial agreement which provides even a notional percentage on-cost to cover these other costs.

Section 6 of the plan of management is entitled 'Management Implementation'. It outlines a number of programs designed to implement prescriptions outlined in the plan. Activities in this program are assigned priorities as follows:

- (a) activities which are already commenced and or are of an ongoing nature;
- (b) activities which need to be commenced early in the period of the plan; and
- (c) activities to be implemented subject to availability of resources.

In the first category, there are a large number of activities, most of which are in various stages of completion. A number of them, however, have been undertaken at Northern Territory government expense and a few, either by design or neglect, have never been implemented. For example, because the Uluru Aboriginal Advisory Committee has not been constituted, no regulation regarding hunting and food gathering by Aborigines has been introduced as required by sections 39 and 45 of the plan. Restriction of entry of dogs to the park has not occurred, both because the Uluru Aboriginal Advisory Committee has not been formed and because Conservation Commission staff do not have the necessary

delegations to control access of dogs accompanying visitors. No formal program for the conservation of art sites has yet been implemented.

In category (b) - that is, activities which need to be commenced early in the period of plan - there are a further 50 items. We are now only a month or so from being halfway through the period of the current plan. The ANPWS or the federal government would be hard pressed to maintain that these items should not yet have commenced since the plan provides that these activities need to be commenced early in the plan. Fully one-third of these activities have not yet been commenced, let alone completed. These include, one would have thought, such relatively simple tasks as approving a list of suitable herbicides, a list of suitable pesticides, the implementation of a continuing program of survey and design of walking tracks etc.

The stated objection of the amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act and to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act that have been introduced to the federal parliament provide control and ownership of Uluru National Park to the traditional Aboriginal owners. The real effect of the legislation before parliament will be to perpetuate Canberra control. Amendments to section 11, in particular the inclusion of proposed sections 11B and 11E, effectively will give total control to the minister and or the director. These amendments state:

*11B. Where the minister is advised under subsection (11A) of a disagreement between the director and the board, the minister shall take such steps as the minister considers appropriate to resolve the disagreement.*

*11E. Where the minister receives a report and a recommendation under subsection (11D), the minister shall give such directions as the minister thinks appropriate to the director and the board, together with a statement of the minister's reasons for giving the directions and a copy of the report and recommendations given to the minister under subsection (11D).*

*11F. The director and the board shall comply with any direction given by the minister under subsection (11E).*

Mr Deputy Speaker, the proposed amendment 14A(1)(b) goes on to state that, where the director is of the opinion that (1) the implementation of a decision of the board is likely to be substantially detrimental to the good management of that park or reserve or (2) a decision of the board is contrary to the plan of management in respect of that park or reserve, the director shall advise the minister accordingly. Subsection (5) goes on to say that the minister shall give such direction as the minister thinks appropriate to the director and the board. Subsection (6) goes on to say that the director and the board shall comply with any directions by the minister under subsection (11F).

While the amendments provide for the board to have some input in the preparation of the plan of management, even though they are still subject to the directions of the minister, I have demonstrated to members the importance the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service has placed on compliance with the existing plan of management. The effective role of the board of management ceases after the term of management of Uluru National Park has been approved. All power remains with the Director of ANPWS, particularly if he continues to refuse to provide delegations under the act and the regulations to

either the board or to the management authority responsible for the day-to-day management of the park.

The amendments provide that the functions of the board established for a park or reserve are:

*(a) to prepare, in conjunction with the director, plans of management in respect to that park or reserve; (b) to make decisions, being decisions that are consistent with the plan of management in respect of that park or reserve, in relation to the management of that park or reserve; (c) to monitor, in conjunction with the director, the management of that park or reserve; and (d) to give advice, in conjunction with the director, to the minister on all aspects of the future development of that park or reserve.*

Section 16 of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act quite clearly states that the functions of the director are to administer, manage and control parks, reserves and conservation zones. The line of control proposed by the Commonwealth for the Uluru National Park will be from the Commonwealth minister to the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service directly to the senior ANPWS ranger on the park. The Uluru National Park Management Board, comprised of a majority of Aboriginal traditional owners, in my view, will be little more than an advisory board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I recommend that members compare this proposal with the provisions made by the Northern Territory for Aboriginal involvement in the Cobourg Peninsula Aboriginal Land and Sanctuary Act. Section 24 of that act states that the functions of the Cobourg board of management are:

*(a) to prepare plans of management for the control and management of the sanctuary; (b) to protect and enforce the right of the group to use and occupy the sanctuary; (c) to determine, in accordance with the plan of management, the rights of access to parts of the sanctuary to persons who are not members of the group; (d) to ensure adequate protection of sites on the sanctuary of spiritual or other importance to the Aboriginal tradition; and (e) such other functions in and in relation to the sanctuary as are imposed on it by or under the plan of management.*

The act specifically prescribes the functions of the commission in relation to Cobourg under section 25 which states:

*(1) The functions of the commission in relation to the sanctuary include on behalf of and subject to the directions of the board: (a) the preparation of the plans of management; and (b) control and management of the sanctuary.*

The act goes on to state:

*For the avoidance of doubt, where in the preparation of the plan of management, or in the control and management of the sanctuary, a difference of opinion between the commission and the board arises, the difference shall be resolved by a resolution of the board and the commission shall prepare the plan of management and control and manage the sanctuary, as the case may be, in accordance with that resolution.*

The Aboriginal traditional owners have a majority on the Cobourg board of management. I point out that the principal legal adviser of the Mutitjulu community recently expressed similar sentiments to those I have outlined today in regard to the control of Uluru. In an article distributed to all major newspapers throughout the country by the national news agency, Australian Associated Press, Mr Philip Toyne said:

*The legislation has caused us a lot of heartburn in terms of getting the thing into presentable form... There has been a clear attempt on the part of the Commonwealth to keep as much power as possible in the hands of the national parks director.*

That is precisely what I said at the recent CONCOM meeting and in the media. Mr Toyne also stated:

*The legislation is in a form that is acceptable to the traditional owners although they would certainly have done it differently if they had had it their way.*

One wonders how the Aboriginal traditional owners of Uluru would have done it. I would suggest that they take the time between now and the August sittings of the federal parliament to take a long close look at the Cobourg model which is all about real rather than perceived Aboriginal self-determination.

I was heartened to hear Mr Toyne suggest on Territory radio last week that this government developed a competent relationship with the Aboriginal owners, perhaps with a view to the lease of the park being transferred to a Northern Territory national parks organisation in the future. Our door has always been open on this issue and will remain so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I hereby table copies of Mr Cohen's second-reading speech to federal parliament on the proposed amendments to the relevant Commonwealth legislation and I think it would be of particular interest to members to point out that he describes Yulara, which would never have been developed had it not been for this government's commitment, as a world-class resort. I table also copies of briefings from the Conservation Commission to me on the consultative arrangements between the Director of ANPWS and the Director of the Conservation Commission, delegations and appointments, provisions for the appointment of the Uluru Aboriginal Advisory Committee, specific items in the plan of management requiring consent of the Director of ANPWS, the exercise of powers by the Director of ANPWS under the Uluru plan of management, the status of programs identified in that plan of management, and also a series of correspondence which provides documented evidence of meetings held between Mr Cohen, the Director of ANPWS and other officers of the ANPWS with the Aboriginals at Ayers Rock in the absence of any representation from the NT Conservation Commission. Arrangements will be made for copies to be available and circulated to all honourable members. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, let me at the outset say that I want to place on the record of this Assembly my dissatisfaction with the way this statement has been presented. We are on the last day of 3 days of sittings. On Tuesday afternoon, we did absolutely nothing. The government had a full notice paper and could have spent a whole day at it but decided to do nothing. The minister ought to know by now that statements of such great import - and this statement is in relation to the management of one of the prime tourist attractions in the Northern Territory - deserves to be circulated to

all members a little beforehand if he expects them to be given the respect that they deserve and require. I am not at all happy. I do not think that any members should be happy with the way this has been presented and the time it has been presented.

Having said that, I will present a bouquet to the minister. I will place on the record that, generally speaking, the Minister for Conservation has been open and has attempted to get the best possible lines of communication with people involved with this issue. I place on record that I think his comments in relation to the Mutitjula community and their legal officers represent a significant improvement over and above any previous comments coming from ministers of this government in their dealings with Aborigines and Aboriginal groups than I have ever heard before. By golly, if a few of you blokes opposite were to take a leaf out of the book of the Minister for Conservation, development in the Northern Territory, both economic and human, would be going ahead in leaps and bounds and not at the crawling pace it is at the moment.

That is the only bouquet I am giving to the minister. I trust members will complement my objectivity and sincerity in that regard. One other bouquet I do have to give out is to the rangers of the Conservation Commission who work at Ayers Rock. Perhaps the minister has taken a leaf out of their book because their relationships, particularly with the Aboriginal people on the ground, have been productive.

Mr Tuxworth: Good people.

Mr BELL: I hear the Chief Minister say they are good people. Perhaps he should do what his colleague does and listen for a change to a few of the people who are working for him.

I turn to the statement itself. From here on, it is all downhill. Basically, let me just summarise the 2 arguments put forward by the Minister for Conservation. The first proposition is that national parks in the Territory ought to be under Territory control as they are in the states. The second argument is that the plan of management that was approved in September 1983 by the federal government has not been adhered to. Let us just examine those propositions. The minister has put forward the claim that national parks in the Northern Territory ought to be under Territory control. He says that we have the same responsibilities as the states so far as health and education, the administration of justice etc are concerned so why can't we control national parks in the Territory? Mr Deputy Speaker, let me tell you precisely why the Commonwealth government that represents the 15 million other people in this country would not trust this gang of thieves and robbers with national parks. The reason is obvious enough for even Blind Freddy to see. Nowhere in this statement do we see any reference to other legislation before this Assembly. I draw the attention of members to the series of cognate bills on the notice paper. Everyone of you blokes knows exactly what is in those bills.

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will resume his seat. Honourable members, there is far too much discussion and remarks going to and fro across the Chamber. The honourable member deserves to be heard in silence. The honourable member will direct his comments through the Chair and try not to be so provocative. The honourable member for MacDonnell.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I appreciate that, with some members of the government, this is an extraordinarily emotive issue and, when I point out facts and logicalities, that might inspire them to deep feeling. I will indeed follow the standing orders of this Assembly and direct my comments only through you. Quite obviously, I seem to be upsetting people by what I have to say. I trust that they will pay good heed and listen. Obviously, they cannot be listening to such cogent argument if they are continually interjecting.

There is no reason why the Minister for Conservation has a right to believe that the Commonwealth government should entrust title to Ayers Rock in the Territory when this government has legislation before this Assembly to allow it to mine the very park that it wants control of. I recall hearing the Leader of the Opposition saying that a particular proponent of the uranium mining industry suggested that it would be a good idea to put holes in the top of Ayers Rock so that we could put uranium waste there. I do not recall that government members of this Assembly responded to the idea with anything like alacrity.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the second argument was that there are problems with the plan of management for Ayers Rock. Let us face the fact that that was a substantial part of the minister's statement. I have not had the opportunity nor the time to look precisely at problems that may be occurring with the plan of management at Ayers Rock. But I find it coincidental in the extreme that the minister, who has been more than 6 months in his portfolio, only brings to the public's attention now, or to the attention of the federal minister by way of correspondence, these matters that are of such great concern that they warrant a 25-page statement in this Assembly. I know what is going on. Mr Deputy Speaker, I presume you know what is going on. This is a continuing campaign in order to prevent Aboriginal groups, who rightly should obtain title to Ayers Rock, from doing so. These arguments just do not wash. I clearly established today that they just do not wash. If there are problems with this plan of management, I will look forward to going through this statement. It is the first clear statement that I have had from the minister. I did appreciate the minister drawing this to my attention privately and I have already said that today. I think that is highly commendable. If there are difficulties in managing visitor impact on Ayers Rock because the plan of management is not being met, I will follow that issue up as much as I possibly can as the member for MacDonnell. Ayers Rock is within my electorate.

However, I bitterly object to the timing of these comments about the plan of management. The plan of management has been in place since September 1983. Why has it taken nearly 2 years? Why did not the member for Koolpinyah in her term as Minister for Conservation do something about it? They are the questions that the minister must answer in this Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is time for a little history lesson for the minister. In opening his statement, he said that, following discussions in April 1976, it was agreed that particular parks and reserves in the Northern Territory which are of major national and international significance should be declared under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975. Let me draw to his attention one of the things that really sticks in my craw and really sticks in the collective craw of many Aboriginal people in my community: Ayers Rock was removed from the Ayers Rock land claim in 1979. Why was that? Why was the area containing Uluru and Kutatjuta taken out of the claim in 1979 when this had happened in 1976? Let me just remind the minister of the comments of the editorial writer of The Age in 1979. I have mentioned them before in this Assembly, maybe before the honourable minister took up his seat here. In 1978,

3 years after Ayers Rock and Mount Olga had been alienated, the editorial writer in The Age said of the then Fraser government: 'It appears to have acted at least with stealth'. Nobody knew about it in 1976. The minister should have no doubts about the reason why the Mutitjulu community deeply distrust conservative governments in this country, deeply distrust the Northern Territory government and deeply distrusted Malcolm Fraser and his government. That is precisely the reason.

The further point I wanted to raise relates to schizophrenia. When I say 'schizophrenia', I mean 'schizophrenia' - split personality. Somebody told me 'schizophrenia' means you have to be split into more than 2. That is probably the other reason why the minister waited till he heard I was going before he brought this in. I may be accused of being paranoid if I follow that line too carefully. However, there is a degree of schizophrenia about giving Aborigines title at Ayers Rock. First of all, we had Paul Everingham on 11 November 1983 referring to title at Ayers Rock. I see that the minister coyly makes reference to 11 November 1983. I imagine that, on 11 November 1983, when he saw the Northern Territory News front page, and he heard that Paul Everingham had called his election, he rubbed his hands together and said: 'Well, we are going to win on this one'.

I am delighted that, to some extent, he has changed his mind on that. A press release of 29 May said: 'Mr Hatton said he wanted to make it perfectly clear the Northern Territory government did not object to the Commonwealth government's intention to transfer title to Ayers Rock to the Mutitjulu community'. Those are laudable sentiments on the part of the Minister for Conservation. Unfortunately, he had not been talking to the Deputy Chief Minister who I think had probably been talking to his mate in federal parliament who seems to be more interested in feathering his bed on the frontbench of the Liberal Party than anything to do with the Northern Territory. That is by the way. Whereas on one hand the Minister for Conservation did not object to the intention to transfer title to Ayers Rock to the Mutitjulu community, the Deputy Chief Minister said in a press release when he was Acting Chief Minister: 'The Territory is totally opposed to legislative amendments introduced in federal parliament allowing freehold title to Uluru National Park to be handed to Aborigines for lease back to the Commonwealth'. If that is not a conflict that deserves some sort of explanation today, I am blown if I know what is. This is a put-up job and it deserves to be shown as the put-up job that it is.

Debate adjourned.

#### PETROLEUM PRODUCTS SUBSIDY AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 122)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HARRIS (Education) (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This government is often accused of trying to make life harder for the government in Canberra. On the contrary, this bill will make life a little easier for at least one federal minister. Let me explain. The present Petroleum Products Subsidy Act requires that the minister operating the scheme personally authorise payment under the scheme; that is, he cannot at present delegate the power to approve payments. The requirement is administrative and should not necessitate the personal involvement of the minister. This bill

corrects this situation and allows the minister to delegate his powers both to approve payments and to appoint persons to be authorised officers for the purpose of the act.

The bill also amends the definition of 'federal minister' which is currently restrictive. It also removes 'power kerosene' from the definition of 'eligible products' since this product was removed from the subsidy scheme by the federal government in 1983. There were a number of payments made prior to 19 January 1983 which did not have the minister's personal authorisation. This bill validates those payments to the extent that they would have been valid had the minister authorised them. I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

#### MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 123)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HARRIS (Education)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to introduce into the Motor Vehicles Act specific provisions to allow photographic drivers' licences in the Territory. Victoria has had these licences since November last year and they are likely to be introduced in New South Wales in the near future. Specifically, the new provisions will allow the registrar to require the applicant for licence to provide a suitable photograph or have one taken. This photograph shall be included on the licence if granted.

The police have expressed concern for some time that people who have had their licences cancelled or who have never obtained a licence have used borrowed or stolen licences to avoid prosecution. The extent of this problem has been difficult to evaluate. There is also a problem of under-aged drinkers using older persons' licences to prove that they are over 18 to barmen. Introduction of photographs on licences will help prevent this type of misuse. The present administrative requirements that young persons produce birth certificates and that 16-year-olds have parents present to obtain a learner's permit will continue, although a photograph will not be required on a learner's permit licence at this stage.

The bill makes provision for the application forms to have the status of a statutory declaration. This will put the onus on people to ensure that information provided is correct as the penalties for not doing so will be quite severe. It is intended that a single photograph will be taken at Motor Vehicle Registry Offices and at remote locality police stations. There will also be scope for people to submit suitable photographs with their application. The registrar will, however, have power to exempt people temporarily from the requirement where this is warranted. No copy of the photograph will be retained with the licence record. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

#### FISH AND FISHERIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 87)

Continued from 27 February 1985.



Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the main purpose of this bill is to insert a proposed new section 10A to empower the minister to gazette notices declaring dates of fishing seasons and variations in fishing boundaries. The opposition has no difficulty with any of these amendments. We feel that the minister should be given these powers because fishing in the Northern Territory is not only important commercially but it also attracts a great number of tourists.

The amendment requires a boat owner whose registration is cancelled or suspended to remove registration markings. I believe there has been some difficulty in that area in the past. Persons who had their licences or their registrations cancelled or suspended have in fact continued using their vessels as though they were registered.

The bill removes the requirement for a licence for an assistant fisherman. Instead, there will now be a requirement on a fisherman to give prior notice to the Director of Fisheries that he intends to employ a named assistant, unless the proposed assistant is already licensed as a fisherman. Records of assistants must also be logged. That is fairly self-explanatory. It must be cumbersome for fishermen to take out a licence for every assistant they put on their boats.

This bill also amends the prohibition provision on gill-nets since it has been found that the offence section is too wide and makes convictions difficult to obtain. The proposed new section prohibits anyone possessing a gill-net other than appropriately-licensed fishermen, makers or sellers of nets or someone exempted in writing by the Director of Fisheries; for example, somebody transporting a net from maker to user. There is also a new offence for selling a gill-net to someone other than an appropriately-licensed fisherman.

Mr Speaker, the bill also increases some penalties. It is a matter that I have taken up with the minister privately. There seems to be some difficulty with the consistency of penalties provided. It is not just in this legislation but it is in all types of legislation. In some places, the penalty provided is a \$2000 fine or 6 months imprisonment. In other places, it is a \$2000 fine or 12 months imprisonment. There may be some reason for it. I would certainly like to know the reason for it if there is one. Perhaps the matter could be redressed in its entirety when the act is reviewed, as I am assured by the minister that that is about to be done.

With those few comments, I would indicate the opposition's support for the bill.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I am sure I do not need to remind members of my interest in the area of fishing and what I believe to be the potential of the fishing industry in the Northern Territory both in a commercial sense and in the sense of attracting tourists. As the member for Nhulunbuy pointed out, there are a number of provisions in this bill which deal with purely administrative aspects such as updating penalties in relation to illegal gill-nets and the licensing of assistant fishermen.

Perhaps the most important part of this bill is contained within proposed new section 10A headed 'General Powers of the Minister'. It gives the minister powers in relation to such things as the opening and closure of seasons, the declaration of closed fishing areas or fishing areas and the type, construction, design and so forth of the gear that can be used in a particular fishery, whether relating to the area of the fishery or the type of fishery.

Mr Speaker, fisheries are a finite resource, but they are largely undefinable. Although a fishery is finite, the only way we can really tell if its resource is reaching a state of overexploitation is when we see dramatic decreases in the catch taken from the fishery. The intent of this legislation is to allow the minister a rapid reaction time to bring into place various controls relating to a fishery so that the fishery, unlike the northern prawn fishery which has been raped over the years, can be protected for the benefit and the future of the Northern Territory. With those few words, I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr HATTON (Ports and Fisheries)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Bill (a) being presented without notice and (b) passing through all stages at this sittings.

Motion agreed to.

### PUBLIC SERVICE AND STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 128)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, following the federal mini-budget and the recent Premiers Conference, the Territory has been obliged to review a number of areas of activity. Even beyond the direct financial means that we have introduced, there is a need to look closely at the efficiency and effectiveness of our administrative structures. Where we can do better and achieve greater efficiency, then we must make changes. These changes include the most effective possible deployment of the manpower at the government's disposal. As the Public Service Act and certain other acts constituting statutory authorities now stand, there are impediments to efficiency which must be addressed. Therefore, the government has decided to introduce an appropriate and necessary element of flexibility into the legislation covering the public service as a first step towards achieving greater efficiency. These changes will serve to enhance the government's ability to develop a public service which is responsive and properly attuned to the needs of the government of the day. Accordingly, the following amendments are proposed.

First, the bill amends the Public Service Act to provide that the minister may direct the transfer of employees between departments and statutory authorities. Amendments are also made to acts governing certain statutory authorities to ensure that the new transfer provisions of the Public Service Act will apply to them, including of course the heads of those authorities. Authorities concerned are: the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Protection Authority, the Darwin Port Authority, the Northern Territory Electricity Commission, the Jabiru Town Development Authority and the Liquor Commission.

The amendments proposed will place the staff and heads of these authorities on an equal footing with the public service generally and with most other authorities. As such, they will help to promote efficiency through greater responsiveness in these areas of the public service. Of course, not all authorities can be brought within the ambit of these amendments appropriately. The Office of the Ombudsman, for instance, must continue to be clearly independent. Similarly, the Territory Insurance Office is necessarily a commercial operation, in competition with private companies, and must therefore be administered under private sector arrangements.

Secondly, it is proposed that the Public Service Act be amended in another area to achieve greater flexibility. Section 14 of the Public Service Act provides currently that the Public Service Commissioner is responsible for the internal audit and equal opportunities functions of the public service. The requirements for departments and authorities to be fully accountable in their dealings with public money is of paramount importance. So too, of course, is the requirement for efficiency in the use of funds. Similarly, the requirement in the legislation that there be no discrimination in the employment of persons in the public service must be met and the government must be diligent in promoting and implementing equal opportunities within its own work force. I have emphasised that proper administration requires flexibility of approach. This need must be reflected, where appropriate, in legislation. The government believes there is now a need to provide for greater flexibility in the Public Service Act in these 2 areas. With this in mind, the bill further amends the Public Service Act to allow the minister to transfer the responsibility which is currently vested in the Public Service Commissioner to oversight the functions of internal audit and equal opportunity to other areas of the public service as the government sees fit.

The bill amends the Public Service Act and relevant acts constituting statutory authorities to provide the government with discretion to terminate the appointments of departmental heads and chief executive officers of statutory bodies. Where an appointment is so terminated, the minister would be able to transfer the officer concerned to other duties or place the officer in an unattached position, if that were appropriate to the overall requirements of the service. In the case of a statutory authority where the chief executive officer was not a public servant and it was decided not to transfer him to the public service, the normal separation payments, depending on the particular contractual arrangements entered into, would be made.

The transfer of a departmental head to another position is not an uncommon occurrence and, indeed, is often essential to promote continued vigour and vitality within the public service. At times, it is also the most appropriate way for the government to ensure that the public service is able to respond to changes in circumstances and priorities. I wish to make it clear to all honourable members that this particular amendment does nothing more than formalise the situation which, for all practical purposes, has existed for a number of years. It is appropriate to take the opportunity to amend the act so that it reflects the true position properly.

A further amendment to the act deals with the particular situation which exists in respect of the Public Service Commissioner. The commissioner is not subject to the amendments in respect of transfer because of the particular status of this office in respect of the Public Service Act. However, it is equally appropriate that this very important position should fall within the overall requirements for flexibility and responsiveness. The government has decided, therefore, to amend the provisions governing the removal from office of the

Public Service Commissioner and, accordingly, the bill deletes sections 10 and 11 of the current act, which lay down the very narrow grounds for removal of the commissioner from office, and amends section 6 of the act, which deals with the appointment of the commissioner, to empower the government to terminate his appointment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I make no apology for this amendment. The office of the Public Service Commissioner is extremely important in the implementation of government policies. Members will appreciate that the cost of maintaining the public service in the Northern Territory is an extremely large element of our budget. It is imperative that the government be able to ensure that the public service is at all times efficient and responsive. This is in the interests of the entire Territory community. The minister must have the power to ensure that this is so.

Finally, the opportunity is taken to correct certain portions of schedule 2 of the Public Service Act which are out of date. The amendments are: the deletion of references to the Port Authority and the Ports Act; the replacement of the reference to the Lotteries and Gaming Act with the new Racing and Betting Act; and the deletion of the references to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission and the Territory Parks and Wildlife Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Territory has been dealt a series of very damaging financial blows over recent weeks by a Commonwealth government which clearly has no regard for the well-being of the Territory community. In these circumstances, there is no alternative but to promote the closest possible coordination of major financial and public service manpower issues. I have already pointed to the heavy financial impact of the Territory's public service. Therefore, I have decided that, as Chief Minister and Treasurer, it is now necessary for me to take ministerial responsibility for the public service so that coordination to achieve the maximum possible efficiency can be facilitated. Therefore, I should advise the Assembly that I propose to make amendments to the Administrative Arrangements Orders at the end of this month that will relocate the responsibility for the Office of the Public Service Commissioner within the portfolio of the Chief Minister. To ensure that there is no misunderstanding, and particularly to ensure there is no speculation which is motivated out of a sense of mischief, I want to make it perfectly clear that changes to the Administrative Arrangements Orders will not be accompanied by any ministerial changes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these amendments are designed to enhance the government's scope to introduce flexibility in important areas of the service and thereby promote greater efficiency and responsiveness. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr B. Collins: Are you ready to do it?

Mr TUXWORTH: I am going to put it through now.

Mr B. Collins: Oh, you bastard!

Mr Smith: What about later in the day?

Mr B. Collins: You bastard!

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that remark.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): I will withdraw that remark, Mr Deputy Speaker, but, in doing so, I must say that, of all the things I have seen shoved through the Legislative Assembly with no notice whatsoever...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw his remark unreservedly.

Mr B. COLLINS: I will withdraw it unreservedly, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I must say the government is doing itself no credit this afternoon by shoving something like this through in 10 minutes.

I must say that the Northern Territory's new Chief Minister is probably one of the least distinguished occupants of this particular position the Territory could ever have been cursed with. It is with a great deal of reluctance and unhappiness that I make that statement because I managed to catch about 5 minutes of this speech. I was upstairs working on a statement which I had proposed to deliver later this afternoon on another matter occupying the Assembly's attention which was due for debate. I only managed to catch about 5 minutes of what I must now speak about.

I must say that, even the former Chief Minister, who had something of a reputation for being a bit of a bull in a china shop, at least was prepared to give this Assembly the courtesy of 24-hours notice in order to prevent, if possible, the passage of ill-considered legislation.

As we all know, the standing orders of this Assembly require that, under normal circumstances, legislation should sit before the Legislative Assembly for one month so that we are not reduced to the status of a Country Liberal Party club - some sort of kangaroo court - and so that legislation of import - and this is indeed legislation of import - can be given careful consideration.

On all occasions in the past when we have cooperated with the government to pass urgent legislation, we have at best been given the scant courtesy of 24-hours notice so that we could look at it overnight. Without the slightest doubt, it is unprecedented in this Assembly to have such disgraceful behaviour from somebody who has the hide to call himself the head of government and to have the Assembly, the people of the Northern Territory and the public service of the Northern Territory treated in this way. What kind of mess is this government in? What kind of a rabbit warren is it running in Block 8 that would allow this bill to be dropped on the Assembly on the last day of a one-week sittings? Is the Chief Minister going to tell me that he is running such a total shambles of a government that something as far-reaching as this piece of legislation was not ready to be introduced on Tuesday or at least on Wednesday so that this Assembly would have a chance to operate in the way that it is supposed to in a democratic state and not the banana republic to which we have been reduced over the last 12 months in the Northern Territory?

We have a Northern Territory Chief Minister and Treasurer who considers that he has the unilateral ability to walk into the Northern Territory Treasury and relieve it of substantial amounts of money - up to \$15m - and give it to a small group of privileged people without telling anybody in the Assembly. He has already done that. We had him confirm in the Legislative Assembly that he was Treasurer when he did it. What kind of laughing stock government have we been reduced to in the Northern Territory? We heard a comment this morning from the honourable Minister for Education, supposedly put forward on behalf of the government, that certain things were not going to be done because the government had given an undertaking to consult with its

own public service. Mr Speaker, these people are not fit to run a public service. They are not fit to run a government. What a shame it is that the next election of the Northern Territory is 2 years off because, my goodness, if there were an election next week, the result would be very interesting indeed.

With all the misgivings I had with the previous Everingham administration, it at least managed to get its act together a bit better than this mob. The Chief Minister introduced a mini-budget which was shoved together in 72 hours at Treasury and which proposed drastic cuts in the budget of the Northern Territory. When the government should have been prepared to do it, 3 months ago, we had Nero fiddling in Korea while Rome was burning down around our ears because of the pressure that was being put on us by the federal government, a matter which seemingly is of no account to those opposite. In the face of the most serious cut in the Territory's budget, the electricity subsidy, we had 3 Chief Ministers of the Northern Territory in the space of one week. It is an absolute disgrace that, with a parliament the size of ours and a government the size of ours, it cannot organise its business better than that. It is the kind of slapdash, hillbilly, easy-as-she-goes kind of operation that is being run opposite that lets it think that it can continually get away with murder. It can make up for its inefficiency, its incompetence and its lack of ability by the simple fact that it has 19 members in the Legislative Assembly and it can do what it likes.

We had a statement this morning from one of the members of the frontbench, whom I do in fact respect, the Minister for Education, that certain things could not be done in respect of the Northern Territory Public Service because this government had an obligation and an agreement to consult with it before any matters of consequence were carried out by this government in respect of the public service. I must say that the sense of responsibility and the sense of government which attaches to the Minister for Education is certainly not carried through to the head of the government in this Legislative Assembly. It is breathtaking that legislation could be introduced that will allow the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, who has the most disgraceful record of any member of this Assembly in terms of direct political interference in the public service, to arm himself now with legislation, which we did not know existed 10 minutes ago, to sack people out of hand and to get rid of people from statutory authorities. At the same time, he is putting himself forward as the head of a government that is supposed to consult with people before it puts legislation through the Legislative Assembly. It really is breathtaking stuff. He did not even give this parliament the courtesy of 10-minutes notice.

Mr Speaker, with all his faults and failings, Paul Everingham, on his worst day, would not have dared to do something like this. Paul Everingham at least had one shred of principle left. He had some respect for running a decent and competent government which this Chief Minister has just comprehensively legislated himself against. The public service of the Northern Territory would be entitled to go out on strike tomorrow and to stay out on strike until the CLP wakes up to itself and kicks out this incompetent bumbler and puts somebody in who at least has his act together so that the people of the Northern Territory can have confidence in a rational government which at least knows what it is doing.

I am not a supporter of industrial action. I get into trouble within my own party because of my well-known conservative stance on all kinds of issues, but for a government to treat its own public service with the level of contempt

that is being shown by the current Chief Minister just beggars the imagination. In my 8 years in this Assembly, I do not think I have even been provoked into using - and I apologise unreservedly for it - the type of bad language that I used here this afternoon. It was the considerable disgust and dismay at the hands into which my Northern Territory has fallen which provoked me into using language like that. I have a considerable degree of respect for the conventions of parliament and respect for the principles upon which parliaments should be based. This government has none.

This Chief Minister has a besmirched reputation in respect of his involvement with the public service and who is appointed and who is not, indeed to the point of it ending up in the Northern Territory's courts. One of the people he attacked took the matter to court. Our Chief Minister, then Minister for Mines and Energy, lost comprehensively. However, that did not stop him hounding his victim out of a job 6 months later. I can remember discussing it with Jon Isaacs. We said: 'Brave man. He may have won a court victory but Mr Tuxworth will get him in the end'. He only lasted 6 months before the heat that was put on him by our current Chief Minister was so great that he had to resign in disgust. I can assure members that that talented and qualified man left the Territory determined never to come back because of the way in which he had been treated at the hands of this man. We now find that he has put himself in a position of unlimited power that is almost breathtaking in relation to the Northern Territory Public Service.

I was working on the statement I was to deliver this afternoon on the opposition's proposals in relation to electricity increases in the Northern Territory - reasonable proposals that would keep those increases in some sort of check and balance - when this was dropped on us. The Chief Minister is perpetrating a fraud by saying that this outrageous piece of legislation, which is being shoved through this Assembly and is reducing this Assembly to a kangaroo court, is necessary because of budget restrictions by the federal government. It will not wash.

If that bunch opposite really does want to get carried away with the 19:6 syndrome that it is continually carried away with, then it will have its comeuppance in a fairly substantial way shortly. People out there in the streets are not prepared to cop the non-stop incompetence of this bunch much longer. That will be sheeted home, I imagine, to a few backbenchers in the government by what will be said to them by their constituents.

There is no way in the world that this outrageous piece of work here this afternoon can be sheeted home to anything but the predilection of the Chief Minister himself to run the kind of public service he only too badly wants to run. We had an insult to our intelligence perpetrated on us the other day in the mini-budget of the Chief Minister with his carping nonsense all the way through it about how tobacco prices would rise in order to stop people from smoking and fuel prices would rise to encourage conservation. I might add he decried those same sentiments when they were expressed by Peter Walsh in respect of the Northern Territory electricity subsidy only a few weeks before. There were pages and pages of that cant, and I am very pleased to say that it did not get past the media. Quite rightly, it received its comeuppance in the press because not everybody is an idiot and not everybody is a complete mug to the extent that the Chief Minister would like people to be.

If the Northern Territory's Chief Minister thinks that, on top of everything else that has been pulled this week in the Assembly, the Northern Territory Public Service will simply sit back and cop this bit of outrageous nonsense,

then he has another think coming. I must say in respect of that Meiklejohn affair: thank God the court system does not operate 19:6. It operates on the facts. This government is so totally carried away with the fact that, whatever happens in here, irrespective of its justice, irrespective of its merit, it will simply go its way because of the 19:6 majority. It has taken that to a point where the Northern Territory must wait 2 more years before it can exercise the particular feeling that is abroad at the moment in the electorate.

What is the purpose of this exercise? Is it a diversionary tactic? I notice that this matter is of enough moment to have the President of the CLP here in the public gallery, but I dare say that the President of the CLP had a little more warning about this matter than the opposition had because I do not imagine he is here by accident. Is the CLP a bit concerned now? I think it is. Is it a bit worried that perhaps the public reaction to the nonsense in the mini-budget has not quite clicked in the electorate? Are there some people out there who are outrageous enough to think that, when they are being asked to put their hands in their pockets and put more money into the Northern Territory Treasury, as far as this government is concerned, there is a small privileged group of people who not only do not have to put money into the Northern Territory Treasury but who also have a unique capacity for taking it out instead? Is the CLP a bit worried about that? Does it think it must provide some massive diversionary tactic - which, doubtless, this is - to take people's attention away from the electricity rises and the stamp duty rises?

As I said the other day, it is an interesting exercise that \$6m of Territory money is being ploughed into a project in the centre of Australia, supposedly for rent, when the rental bill for the entire Territory Public Service is \$15m. It expects that no one will pick that up. It has increased stamp duty. If anyone would like to go to the Registrar-General's office and view the mortgage files and transfer papers on the casino, he will find stamped across them evidence that this government threw away \$1m in stamp duty. A certain privileged group of people did not have to pay that at all, let alone the increases.

This week we had a number of imposts put on people by this government, and a great many of them on the public service. Public servants are not at all happy about that. What will be the result? In respect of any murmurings in the public service, will the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory simply exercise his powers under this legislation and sack people out of hand?

Mr Speaker, there would be no precedent for legislation like this in this country. It may well be that there is some merit attached to it. It may well be that there is some strength to this legislation. Perhaps there are some parts of it that the Assembly should be supporting but we have not been given an opportunity to find out. This afternoon, the Assembly might as well not be sitting. I do not know why the government does not shift the Assembly across the road to Block 8 because this afternoon this is nothing but a kangaroo court. This is the lowest level to which this Assembly has ever been dragged by the CLP, certainly in the 8 years I have been here. Even when the Chief Minister was on his feet, he did not pay us the courtesy of mentioning in his second-reading speech the manner in which this legislation was to be put through the Assembly. It took an interjection from me to have a comment tossed across his shoulder as he was walking back to his desk that it would go through right now sight unseen.

Mr Robertson: That is not so. It was made in respect of the motion to suspend standing orders.



Mr B. COLLINS: If it is not so, perhaps the honourable minister himself would explain and defend the government's procedures on this particular occasion. The minister who just interjected never, in all the time he was Leader of Government Business in this Assembly, on the many urgent bills we processed, did what is happening today. At least the Assembly was given a scant 24 hours to consider those bills.

I must say that the government and the Chief Minister do themselves no credit whatsoever this afternoon. I profusely apologise to this Assembly that I am forced in this debate to take up the cudgels with the government for the way in which it is doing this rather than debating the content of the legislation. As Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly, I am still in a position of being almost completely ignorant. All I know about the bill is what I heard on the speakers as I was coming down the stairs. I heard enough to horrify me. We are now told that, if he indulges us enough to get a few more speeches through this afternoon, before we rise this afternoon, barring the signature which I dare say will be slapped on it tomorrow, this will be a law of the Northern Territory.

I must say that, like the casino compulsory acquisition legislation, which we opposed and the new Chief Minister was smart enough not to implement, this particular piece of legislation will come back to haunt this government. As a Territorian of 20-years standing, it is with a considerable degree of misgiving that I now know beyond any doubt that we are in the hands of a totally incompetent and totally unprincipled government.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, it is an indication of the sad and sorry state that we have that there is no one on the government side prepared to get up and defend the Chief Minister who has brought upon this Assembly its darkest day, certainly in my time and probably in the time of the Assembly since it became a fully-elected body way back in 1974. What the Chief Minister has succeeded in doing in the last 15 minutes is to bring the parliament to a new low. He has demonstrated in a most public way possible that he has no confidence at all in the ability of his deputy who previously was responsible for the public service. He has unceremoniously and probably without consultation had the public service ripped off him. He has completely and utterly destroyed the trust, if he had any left, with the public service.

I have not experienced such rudeness from a minister of the government in my time in office. Even when the government intends to push something through in one sittings, it is normal that we at least get 24 hours notice. In this particular case, we were not given even 5 minutes notice that a bill of this import would be introduced. Let us not fiddle around with it; it is a bill of some import. It gives the Chief Minister considerable powers over the public service that were not there before.

Mr Speaker, as far as I can understand from the time that I have had available, the bill transfers the responsibility from the now demoted Deputy Chief Minister to the Chief Minister. It provides the Chief Minister with powers that probably no other ministerial head of a public service has in the rest of Australia. It provides him with the power to sack heads of statutory authorities at his whim. That is bad enough but then he has the gall to justify it on the grounds that the federal government budgetary cuts have made it necessary. Everyone can see that has as much logic as the justification put forward for increasing tobacco taxes and for increasing liquor licensing fees. There is no justification at all. The opportunity is being taken by the Chief Minister to revert to his power-hungry, power-grabbing ways and his desire

to get complete control of the public service and politicise it. He has attempted to do it on so many occasions.

It is a very black day for the Northern Territory. He has launched a vendetta against public servants in the Northern Territory. As the Leader of the Opposition said, those chickens will come home to roost. Public servants are proud of the non-political nature of the public service that has developed in Australia. This government, both under its present leader and its previous leader, went further than any other government in Australia in changing that non-political nature and politicising the public service. We now have the Chief Minister going even further and making it an even more political body. We have senior public servants in statutory authorities which, for good reason, were established as statutory authorities. It was to divorce them from the day-to-day pressures of the government so that they would not have that immediate pressure on them. From now on, permanent heads will be afraid that, if they do not please the minister on his every little whim - and this minister has demonstrated that he has lots of whims, not too many of which are logical - then they are out. He is extending this to heads of statutory authorities. For good reasons, this very government made them heads of statutory authorities which the government established. It is a very black day indeed that we are faced with.

Perhaps it is unfair to place all the blame on the Chief Minister because we are supposed to have a cabinet system. Why has the Cabinet allowed this to happen?

Mr Collins: Because it did not know about it.

Mr SMITH: That is probably the answer. It probably did not know about it. Cabinet members were not advised and I think that in itself is a condemnation of the Cabinet. What sort of Cabinet is it that can allow the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory to take a step such as this? What sort of Cabinet is it that did not stand up and voice its horror, its shock and its dismay at the illogicality of the decisions that were taken and the abuse of the Assembly and everybody in this community today? Let me tell the Cabinet and the backbench that, collectively, they are going to get the blame for this. Collectively, they will bear the brunt of the public furore that is obviously going to take place over this dreadful decision.

I am advised by my colleagues who have had some time to look at the bill that, in fact, it is worse. It is not only directed at heads of public departments. In fact, proposed new section 16A of the bill says:

*Performance of Certain Duties by Direction*

*(1) The minister may, in writing, direct an employee to take any action or step that the commissioner may take by virtue of section 14(2) or (3) and, on being so directed, the employee shall take that action or step in accordance with the direction and has, in relation thereto, all the powers and obligations of the commissioner under sections 15 and 16, and the power of the commissioner under section 60(10) to give directions, as if he were the commissioner.*

That is a simple indication of the enormous powers that the minister has given himself under this bill. I ask why? It is certainly not for the reasons that he has given. What does this have to do with the mini-budget? What is the urgency that has necessitated his bringing it down in the dying hours of

this sittings? Why has it become so urgent today when it was not urgent yesterday and it was not urgent on Tuesday? There can only be one possible reason and that is that the Chief Minister was not game to put this up to the scrutiny of this Assembly and the Northern Territory public in general for even 24 hours let alone the normal one month between sittings that normal legislation takes to process. There is no reason why this should be given even the normal urgency that the opposition is happy to provide when it is justified. On most occasions, the opposition has felt it was justified. In this case, there has been no reason given to us whatsoever for urgency. It is a disgraceful day and the opposition opposes this piece of disgraceful legislation.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): I was hoping that some member opposite would actually leap to his feet in an attempt to defend his leader. I was not disappointed. I suspected that nobody would be able to get to his feet and defend his Chief Minister. I doubt very much that even a few members on the government benches have seen the legislation. The Leader of Government Business has normally kept me informed of most of the government's legislative program. Unfortunately, it has not always run smoothly but at least I have been informed. I have tried to keep him in touch with what opposition attitudes on certain things may or may not be. However, he did not tell me about this. I would suspect that the only reason he did not tell me was because he could not tell me and the only reason he could not tell me was because he did not know. I expect that there are very few people on the government benches who have even now read this bill which is before the Assembly.

I have had a very limited opportunity to skip through it and to try to match it up with the act, which is what we are supposed to do in this Assembly. I have not had time to ascertain what effects this bill will have on the act and on various public servants. Quite frankly, I was not capable of doing that in the few minutes that I have had. I am extremely reluctant to believe anything the Chief Minister says to me, let alone in a second-reading speech in this Assembly. But from what I can pick out of the legislation, the Chief Minister may as well completely do away with the Public Service Commissioner and his entire office. He has the same power. Why have a Public Service Commissioner at all? Why even have a Public Service Act? There is no rationale in it. There is no sanity in it. I cannot understand why the Chief Minister, on this extremely important matter that affects the lives of many Territorians, has been unable to put it before this Assembly before now. I can only assume that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition fairly and squarely hit the nail on the head: he was not game. I suppose members of Cabinet did not know about it and, if they did, more shame to them. He was not game to put this in front of the Assembly even this morning.

I refuse to believe that such an important piece of legislation was not printed yesterday and that it could not have been delivered to the Assembly this morning. In the dying hours of this sittings of the Assembly, 3 months away from the next sittings of the Assembly, we have this major piece of legislation dropped on our desks and we are expected to pass it after a degree of consideration. Frankly, Mr Speaker, I find it quite impossible. There may be some geniuses on the government benches who have read this, who have analysed it and who can defend their Chief Minister. I doubt that there is one there who has even seen it. It is an absolutely appalling example of blind ignorance and a ridiculous leader.

I have not been in this Assembly as long as some members. I would like any member who has been in this Assembly longer than I have to tell me when he has seen an example of this bull-in-the-china-shop approach before in this

Assembly, particularly with such important legislation. I have never seen such an example and I doubt that anybody in this Assembly has ever seen one. I would doubt that there has ever been a similar approach perpetrated in any parliament in Australia. It is beyond belief. We are supposed to have intelligent debate on important matters and yet we are confronted with the offerings of Captain Rabbit - a well-deserved name. Quite frankly, the rest of the crew who are prepared to follow him down whichever warren he wants to lead them are equally contemptible.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, there is still no one on the opposite side who is prepared to stand up and make even an attempt to defend the actions of the Chief Minister in this regard, and I am not surprised. I wish that they had shown a bit more guts a couple of hours ago when they may have had some opportunity to tell him: 'Enough is enough. You are not to proceed with this imposition of a dictatorship on the people of the Northern Territory'. I use that word very advisedly, Mr Speaker, because I am about to demonstrate that that is exactly the road that we are heading down.

Mr Speaker, I am a bit more fortunate than my colleagues in that I have had a few minutes more to have a glance through the bill. I am still completely unaware of many of its ramifications because, when you are analysing legislation, you need to examine it in conjunction with the principal act to determine the effect of the amendments. It removes the basic public service building blocks - the concepts that have been built up, not just in this country but in countries right around the world over 100 years - the checks and the balances that make the whole Westminster system work and the power structure that people have fought and died to preserve and that ordinary people felt gave them some semblance of security from the ability of, say, a dictatorial Chief Minister to have completely unfettered exercise of power. They will not even debate it. They do not even have the guts to attempt to defend it. Because of some of the things that I have seen before in this Assembly, I bet that there will be very few of them who will have the guts to cross the floor on this issue. We will divide on it and it will end up with 19 of them on that side and the opposition on this side. That is a pathetic indication of the depths to which this particular government has sunk, not just collectively but individually.

Mr Speaker, why has he taken over this act from his deputy? Is it because the Deputy Chief Minister refused to go along with it? Perhaps he said: 'If you are going to do something which breaks down all the principles that have been built up, not just in the Northern Territory, not just in Australia, but in Westminster systems and presidential systems around the whole world, if you are going to tear them to pieces and not even allow a semblance of debate in the Assembly, I am not going to have a bar of it'. Is that it? Or is it even worse - that he went along with it? Perhaps the Chief Minister said: 'This is too much power that I am putting in the hands of the minister responsible for the public service. You are not going to have it because I am'.

Let us have a look at a few points. There is an outside possibility that these amendments could be reasonable but we have had no chance to make up our minds on that. Should we really place such blind trust in a Chief Minister who, in his previous ministerial positions, built up a reputation for his dealings with his various departmental heads, and for his interference in the public service? When I questioned him at the last sittings about the appointment without due process of his ex-ministerial officer to a fairly important position in Tennant Creek, he said: 'We had previously been through the process and we did not think that we would go through the process again'. What are these processes for?

Clause 3 means that the staff of a prescribed statutory authority will become ordinary public servants. There are very good reasons why the differentiation has been made in the total government scene between statutory authorities and departments. If he is to wipe that out, they may as well just be staff of a department.

By clause 4, the Administrator may terminate at any time the appointment of the commissioner. When we talk about the Administrator, we are referring to the Administrator acting under the instructions of the Executive Council and this means that he no longer has any independent powers whatsoever over the public service of which he is supposed to be the head. His appointment can be terminated at any time because of some perceived slight or perceived holding to a moral position on a particular point. If that was not clear enough for members opposite, I will attempt to state what this does do. Proposed new subsection 16A(1) says: 'The minister may, in writing, direct an employee to take any action or step that the commissioner may take by virtue of section 14(2) or (3)'. Subsection 14(2) states: 'The commissioner shall take such action as he thinks necessary to ensure that all transactions by each department or prescribed authority involving public moneys are accountably made within the budget approved for the department or prescribed authority by the Legislative Assembly out of moneys appropriated or out of moneys that the Legislative Assembly estimates will be appropriated for the purpose of the government of the Territory'. Subsection (3) states: 'The commissioner shall take steps and may by general orders give directions to chief executive officers and prescribed authorities for that purpose, to ensure that there is no discrimination in the employment in the public service of any person on the ground of that person's race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, creed, sex, marital status, political belief or security record except where reasonably or justifiably required for the effective performance of the work to be undertaken in that employment'.

I am sure that is all very clear. It certainly is not to me. As I said earlier, he has wiped out that fundamental check and balance in respect of the position of the Public Service Commissioner. He may as well not exist. Even if he retains some semblance of autonomy and says that he does not want to carry out an action and the minister needs it to happen quickly and he does not have time to get the Administrator to terminate him, the minister can direct some other employee in the public service to carry it out. That means that the line of authority is no longer through the executive down to the Public Service Commissioner who then, under his act, makes instructions. It means that that can be completely avoided and the minister - in this case the Chief Minister - can simply go to another person in the public service and say: 'Look, the commissioner over there will not do it. I am going to work on getting him sacked but I am ordering you in writing to go and do it'.

It is a little difficult to understand the ramifications of this for the rest of the acts that the bill talks about. Actually, it does make it clear, Mr Speaker, concerning the prescribed authorities that will be changed by this bill. In relation to these prescribed authorities, the minister responsible for the administration of this legislation - that is, the Chief Minister - is responsible for all the other acts mentioned. He has not simply wiped out the authority of the deputy leader by taking over this act but he has taken away the power that ministers had over their statutory authorities. It is no longer the minister responsible for the statutory authority who can sack his authority heads. The Chief Minister does not think they are good enough at it. He is the one who is best at sacking them so he is going to do it all himself.

The other day, the Minister for Lands stated that he was in the process of having discussions with the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority on its act and amendments that should be made to it. That reassured me. I have watched the minister in action in some of his negotiations and I felt that, given the standards that we had seen in the past, he would make a very real attempt to consult over those changes. However, that was not good enough for the Chief Minister. He has put through another amendment to the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, and in the dying hours of this sittings. He was not game to negotiate it. What powers does the amendment change? We do not know. We have not had a chance to look at it.

It is quite obvious that these statutory authorities are no longer statutory authorities to the extent they were before this bill. They have been brought back far closer to the public service. There may be some arguments in favour of that. But no one on the other side of the Assembly was confident of his ability to debate those changes and they would not allow us the time to consider them. It is obvious that the government does not believe they are debatable enough to be willing to debate them.

I would like to examine some of the authorities over which the Chief Minister has given himself these powers. In respect of the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority, the minister may at any time terminate the appointment of the director. The principal act has been amended so that the minister has the primary responsibility over these prescribed authorities. The minister has the primary responsibility for the administration of the act. The minister now has authority over the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority, the Conservation Commission and the Darwin Port Authority. NTEC still comes under the Administrator who may at any time terminate an appointment to the authority. Possibly, NTEC has more status than the other authorities. However, it is not so with the Chairman of the Housing Commission or the Chairman of the Jabiru Town Development Authority. As I say, it is very difficult on the spot to try to work out what this bill does say when we were not given any notice. The Racing and Betting Act is still with the Administrator. The Territory Development Act is amended by this bill. The Territory Insurance Office is affected. Both acts are the responsibility of the minister.

These amendments are not just amendments to the Public Service Act. They affect several acts. We were not permitted time to debate them properly. Have a look at them: the Public Service Act, the Racing and Betting Act, the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, the Conservation Commission Act, the Housing Act, the Jabiru Town Development Act and the Liquor Act. All these acts are being amended and we have been given no notice. We received these amendments right at the last moment and there was no notice. We have not been provided with briefing notes. He has not even distributed a copy of his second-reading speech so that we can attempt to work out what he was rabbiting on about.

From the points that I heard, he did not provide the fundamental reason for these amendments. I suspect the reason is the one I offered right at the start: we are heading down the road towards a dictatorship. The Chief Minister is trying to get all the power into his own hands because he no longer believes in the Westminster system of government. He is in such a mess that the only way that he can attempt to get himself out of it is to take all the power back into his own hands and then take the people of the Northern Territory down some weird road that his new-age thinking is shining the light on. Mr Speaker, I oppose the bill.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, so much for the rhetoric. I would like to deal with a few points relating to the facts of the matter. This bill refers only to the heads of the statutory authorities that are named.

Mr B. Collins: Rubbish!

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, it is not rubbish. In our public service at the moment, the government has authority over most heads of departmental authorities in the Northern Territory. In this case, the departmental authorities that have been named in this bill have been brought into exactly the same line.

Mr B. Collins: Why don't you join all your mates and sit down and shut up.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, let me repeat it for the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition: this bill brings those public service heads into line with all the others. I would like to reaffirm for the benefit of honourable members that this bill does not relate to anybody but public service heads. That is a fact. It does not relate to any other public servants in the Northern Territory. It is the prerogative of government to appoint its public service heads and that is exactly what we are doing. We are not interfering with the public service. We are not doing anything that has not been done anywhere else.

Mr Speaker, the government is bringing into line the administrative arrangements for those authorities that I have outlined. It is not as outrageous as members would have you believe, Mr Speaker, with their moans and their groans and their carry-on this afternoon. It defies logic to say that you have 26 people in the public service who are treated in one way and 6 treated in another. The 6 who have been outlined in this bill are being moved into line with the rest of them.

Mr Speaker, I do not think there is a great deal of merit in going over all the drivel that some of these people have been talking this afternoon. I commend the bill to honourable members.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 18

Noes 5

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Robertson  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale

Mr B. Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

## SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the question that the bill be now read a third time being put.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 18

Noes 5

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Robertson  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale

Mr B. Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, not only all backbenchers of the government but, I would suspect, all members of the Cabinet are as totally ignorant of the provisions of this legislation as we are. I have not yet had a chance to go through the entire bill but I have gone through enough of it. If there is anybody in this Assembly or outside who has any lingering doubts that we now have the Chief Minister, Ian Tuxworth, personally placed in charge of the public service, let those doubts linger no longer. It is a palpable falsehood to suggest that it applies just in respect of statutory authority heads or that it is at department heads that this bill strikes. Under the principal act, in appointing the Public Service Commissioner, under section 6(4) of that act, there is provision for a 7-year term of appointment. That has been struck out by this legislation and the term, in fact, could be 24 hours or even less at the pleasure of the Northern Territory's Chief Minister.

That is a clear and unmistakable warning to anybody who will take the place of our Public Service Commissioner who, I dare say, will not be long in departing now that this legislation has gone through. It will be a clear and unmistakable warning, if he does not get a CLP hat to start with, as he is likely to, that he better toe the political line and be an extremely political Public Service Commissioner indeed because, if he does not, he will get his walking ticket the day after he starts. Let us not be in any doubt about that. There is no longer a 7-year term left for the Public Service Commissioner. That has gone. As we all know, under the conventions of our parliamentary system - although those opposite are profoundly ignorant of them - the



Administrator acts on the advice of the Chief Minister so 'Chief Minister' can be read wherever you see 'Administrator'. No term is now provided for the Public Service Commissioner. He can be sacked in 24 hours; he can be sacked in 5 minutes and he will know that when he takes on the job. Any true liberal opposite who is trying to hang on to some shred of principle and who has any doubt about it, should read the legislation. It sounds a clear and unmistakable warning. If you do not have a CLP hat and if you are not prepared simply to do with our public service as instructed, you will get your marching orders the same day.

In respect of the effect on individual public servants, we need go no further than clause 7 of this bill which amends section 32 of the principal act. Section 32 of the principal act involves transfers. I know of one occasion already when a number of public servants who were working for NTEC were transferred because they were kicking up a stink about people ghost-payrolling and putting themselves down for 8 hours they had not worked. They were transferred - not sacked - but are working quite a number of miles away in lousy jobs. I understand that one of them has resigned already; so let us have no doubts about the power of so-called transfers.

Currently, section 32, as it should, refers to transfers of individual public servants. Let us not have any more nonsense about this only affecting heads of departments. The Public Service Commissioner may, after consulting the Chief Executive Officer, transfer an employee. In one fell swoop, that has been amended to say that the commissioner shall transfer the public servant if directed by the minister. Can you find that somewhere else, Mr Speaker - anywhere else? The Public Service Commissioner is now under the direct, legislative, political control of the Northern Territory's Chief Minister and every single public servant is under the same direct political control. As I said they had better all go out and get themselves CLP tickets tomorrow. Of course, as the member for Sadadeen said, with a great smirk on his dial: 'We don't need them to get CLP tickets'. Probably, they are so intimidated already that it is not necessary. But now we have an outrageous situation where, not only is the commissioner coming into the Territory under instant dismissal notice if he does not toe the CLP line but any individual public servant can be transferred to any job anywhere in the Northern Territory at the direction of the political head of the government and not the public service.

Mr Speaker, in terms of probably the most disgraceful transgression of the demarcation lines that convention demands exist between the executive of parliament and the public service, this has been destroyed in one fell swoop. Many public servants in the Northern Territory will be wondering just exactly what jobs Ian Tuxworth, the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, under section 32 of the Public Service Act, will now be able to transfer them to because he now has complete, direct legislative control. There is no need for him even to muck around going through a pretence of it any more. He can simply direct the Public Service Commissioner to transfer an employee.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, order! The honourable Leader of the Opposition's time has expired.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, it used to be a joke in the public service that, if you upset the government, you would get a transfer to Mongrel Downs, but it is no longer a joke. That is the point of this whole exercise. It is no longer a joke because now public servants are faced with the very real prospect of transfer if they upset the minister in charge of the public

service, and what a minister he is - he already has a proven track record of making political decisions about public servants and expecting public servants to follow political directions. If public servants upset the minister, they may well finish up at Mongrel Downs or other places like Mongrel Downs in the Northern Territory, and we know we have many of them. That is the point of this exercise. It is clear through its actions today and in the last 48 hours that the government has declared war on public servants in the Northern Territory, and for its own reasons which I do not pretend to understand. It is all-out war with the public service.

In the mini-budget, the government reduced air fare entitlements but it could not do it for one-third of the public service because of prescribed legislation. But that did not stop him announcing it and upsetting one-third of the public service as well as the other two-thirds. Yet, this same government has the hide to condemn the Commonwealth government for its so-called breaking of the Memorandum of Understanding. We all know that a Memorandum of Understanding does not have legislative backing like the piece of legislation that those public servants had to protect their air fare entitlements or like the piece of legislation that the heads of the statutory authorities had when they made a decision to uproot themselves from an established lifestyle in the south to come to the Northern Territory. They came up here with the backing of a piece of legislation which has just been removed. It is like the piece of legislation that 13 000 public servants had in the Northern Territory that said that it is an apolitical public service and that, if there were to be transfers and promotions in the public service, they would be done by an established public service procedure, not at the whim of the minister, and particularly not at the whim of this minister who has such a proven track record of interfering in the public service.

That is what it is all about. It is disgraceful that the Chief Minister has not been defended by one member of his Cabinet or by one member of his backbench. It is obvious that they have not even been consulted about it. I feel sorry for those members of the Assembly on the CLP side who are going to have to live with this legislation because, if I were them, I would take a long holiday and hope that the flak dies down. Even though public servants are traditionally conservative, it has been revealed right through Australia's history that there is a point beyond which they will not let the government interfere with the non-political nature of the public service. This government has transgressed that point most clearly with this piece of legislation.

Mr Speaker, what the government has done to the position of permanent heads of statutory authorities has made their life more uncomfortable indeed. All of them can be affected by this clause that says: 'The minister may at any time terminate the appointment of the chairman'. I can only reiterate the point that has been made consistently on this side: what sort of security does that give to a head of a statutory authority which was established by this government? All the statutory authorities were established by this government for good reasons. It wanted a distance between the normal public service and the operations of statutory authorities because it was felt to be a good thing. To pick up one example, there is the Territory Insurance Office. At least one good thing has come out of this. The minister will not be able to hide behind the camouflage that he has put across before: that the TIO is completely independent. That has gone by the board. It is quite clear now that, next time we have a negative result in motor accident compensation insurance, it will be the direct responsibility of the minister because he can now sack the chairman at will if he wants to. But what a price to pay for that sort of responsibility. The price to pay is the politicisation of the public service, and it is a dark day in the Territory's history.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that he would have thought that the ministers and, indeed, all members of the CLP would go for a long holiday. I would suspect that the ministers particularly would be absolutely terrified of going for any holidays, not even having an hour off, knowing their portfolios were potentially in the hands of the Chief Minister. After seeing what he has done today to the Deputy Chief Minister's portfolio, supposedly in charge of the Public Service Commissioner, I would be absolutely terrified to leave the man alone with a chook yard, quite frankly, let alone a government department. Any departmental officer who dared to give him an honest opinion about something, rather than follow his fantasies and his whims, would be sacked or else transferred to almost anywhere in the Territory. I cannot understand how this Cabinet could even allow something approaching that to happen. They are supposed to be working hard at developing the public service, at developing confident officers who will give honest advice rather than service the whims of Captain Rabbit. How could they allow that to happen? Either they have very small minds or absolutely no integrity and no interest in governing or managing their departments. Certainly, they do not have the interests of their employees at heart. I would doubt that they even have integrity.

I suppose that the members opposite have had the opportunity to examine clause 7. It clearly says that the commissioner shall accept the direction of the Chief Minister. I am left wondering why we should have a Public Service Act. There is no point. It is a farce. It is a facade. The entire public service may as well quietly pack up their bags and go away because to be in the hands of that man is to be in the absolute pits. Quite frankly, I wonder when my electorate staff are to be transferred by that man. They are employed as public servants. When will the staff of the Leader of the Opposition be transferred by that man, at his whim? When will any of the ministers' personal staff be transferred by that man, at his whim, simply because those officers offered honest advice?

Quite frankly, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, his track record in these matters has been consistent. He has not a shred, not even the merest iota, of respect for individuals, for honesty and proper protocol in matters which happen within the public service. At least he has been consistent. How members of Cabinet could possibly leave that man with that much power is absolutely beyond understanding.

Mr Perron: That is the longest he has spoken in 3 years.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, we get little enough time to debate anything in the Assembly with the way they carry on at the moment without the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy taking up time. This government has just proceeded to gut the public service. It has gutted it of all the checks and balances which it requires to perform its functions effectively. Mr Speaker, 11 acts are amended by this bill and we have been given no time to have a look at it properly. They did not even allow a committee stage. We have had no government speakers on this except for some half-hearted interjections. They sat there like stunned mullets with gloomy looks all over their faces as they countenanced the evil that has been perpetrated by the Chief Minister. It allows compulsory transfer of anyone, anywhere, at any time. This is the most confrontationalist act that any government has ever made anywhere this side of the machine gun. The government will reap the results of this out there.

Mr Dale: Is that Walsh's?

Mr Dondas: Who wants to depopulate the north?

Mr EDE: We have not had the chance to debate. Come on, get up and talk! Get up and talk!

Mr Dondas: We have been talking all day. We're trying to hear you.

Mr EDE: Get up and talk! You are hopeless!

Mr Speaker, sections 10 and 11 will be wiped out by this bill. Sections 10 and 11 provided the grounds upon which the Public Service Commissioner could be removed. They had to be put before this Assembly where they lay for 7 days on the Table so that we had time to examine the grounds upon which they were trying to remove him from office. We do not have those provisions any more. They have just been repealed. The Chief Minister now has the ability simply to sack him, and with no notice at all.

This bill removes the essential check that we had on the powers of the executive. I call upon the members opposite. If they have no love for the public service, then they should have some love for the Assembly that they sit in. The power of this Assembly is being seriously eroded, quite apart from the normal checks and balances that are supposed to exist within a total government system. It is disgusting.

Let us have a look at the other part because there were some doubts. Some people were saying that it does not mean that anybody could be transferred anywhere at any time. It is quite obvious that nobody has read this bill with the exception of the Chief Minister. Whether it was dumped on them at the same time that it was dumped on us, we do not know. Certainly, from the remarks we have had thrown across the floor, it would appear so. It gives the minister responsible for this act, and not the minister responsible for the department, the power under proposed new section 32(1) to transfer an employee in a department or unit of administration to another department or to the service of a prescribed authority. It also gives the power to transfer, into another unit or into the service of another prescribed authority, an employee in the service of a prescribed authority or an employee of a department. He has covered all the departments and all the prescribed authorities which are listed here. There are 11 bills amended by this amendment.

This bill has been thrust on us with no notice. We do not have the ability to debate it through the committee stage. We have not heard from anyone on the government side except for the Chief Minister who is pursuing a dictatorial takeover of all the powers which normally would reside in a parliament or in a Public Service Commissioner or in a departmental head or another minister. Several ministers have all caved in in the face not of some great statesman but of this idiot.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I retract that statement - of this honourable Chief Minister.

Mr Speaker, it is disgusting. There are other situations that we have not even covered. He has transferred the equal opportunities board or done something with that. We have not even had a chance to work out where it has gone or what he is up to with that. He does not know. He cannot tell us where it has gone but he has got rid of it somewhere. Has it just disappeared

into limbo or has it been taken under his personal command so that he will now decide what are the limitations?

Mr SPEAKER: Order, order! The honourable member's time has expired. Would honourable members please try to maintain some decorum.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I would like to reinforce my statement because the honourable members opposite have not been prepared to listen to it, and I will say it again. So far as I am concerned the Northern Territory Public Service is an apolitical service. It has been, it is and it will continue to be. Mr Speaker, I say to you and to honourable members that there is no doubt that it is the prerogative of government to appoint its senior officers - its chief executive officers. This bill applies to chief executive officers. So far as I am concerned, it does not apply to any other members of the service and there is no way that it will be used...

Mr Ede: You are out to get Pope and Bob Ellis. That is what you are after.

Mr SPEAKER: Order, order! Will the honourable Chief Minister resume his seat.

Honourable members I think the lack of decorum has gone far enough. The members of the opposition have expressed their views across the floor by way of interjection which has now become very repetitious. If there is one more interjection, I shall name the members of the opposition.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 19

Noes 5

Mr D.W. Collins  
Mr Coulter  
Mr Dale  
Mr Dondas  
Mr Finch  
Mr Firmin  
Mr Hanrahan  
Mr Harris  
Mr Hatton  
Mr McCarthy  
Mrs Padgham-Purich  
Mr Palmer  
Mr Perron  
Mr Robertson  
Mr Setter  
Mr Steele  
Mr Tuxworth  
Mr Vale

Mr B. Collins  
Mr Ede  
Mr Lanhupuy  
Mr Leo  
Mr Smith

Bill read a third time.

PALMERSTON DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY ACT  
REPEAL BILL  
(Serial 117)

Continued from 24 April 1985.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I did not intend speaking on this bill but I find myself forced to my feet in view of the proximity of Palmerston to the rural area and what I consider to be comparisons that have been drawn between Palmerston and people in the rural area, and especially the legislation that was passed yesterday. I am also concerned with comparisons of the standards of future services between Palmerston city and the rural area and also with services already in Palmerston compared to those in the rural area.

I would like to go back a little to the planning. I am sorry to have a go at the planners again. Some of them are not too bad. I see some of them in the public gallery. I am aware of several gross errors in the planning of Palmerston. One was to locate that office block building by the rather unusual and architecturally-striking water tower. The water tower by itself is quite striking but to locate that office block next to it was a boo boo of gross proportions. Obviously, there was a little boy doing a man's job in the planning section and he did not quite pull it off.

The next mistake from the point of view of the people in the rural area is siting of the fire station. That is not an adverse comment on the competence of the men who work in it. I am commenting on what I see as gross detriment to the people in the rural area at some time in the future when Palmerston becomes more inhabited. At the moment, the fire station is smack bang in the middle of some suburb in the middle of Palmerston. Access to the highway is not by a straight track. It requires a bit of a tour to get to the highway before the firemen can respond to a call to the rural area. From experience with fires in the vicinity of our place, the firemen from Palmerston have attended very quickly. I thanked them at the time and now thank them publicly. When there is a fire, you want them there immediately.

However, I am rather concerned by the increasing population in Palmerston. I think a figure of 50 000 was mentioned. Because of the location of the fire station, the firemen will not be able to get out and attend fires with the alacrity that is expected of them in that function. Down south I understand that the call-out time is about 5 or 10 minutes to a fire at the very most. I will defy any fire engine to get to a fire from the middle of Palmerston with a population of 50 000. There will be many more vehicles on the roads and the fire engine will not get a straight run through. Whilst there are volunteer fire brigades in the rural area who do a good job, the brunt of call-outs falls on the firemen at Palmerston.

There is another situation which I think will work to the detriment of the people in the rural area. It may only be rumour; I have not been able to verify it. It concerns the operation of the police office. At Fred's Pass Reserve, there are 3 men on duty. However, most of the time they are out delivering summonses and doing other things that policemen do. In consequence, often the office is not manned and any calls are directed to the Darwin station. Whilst that is better than nothing, it is not what I call a first-rate service. Again, that is not a reflection on the policemen who work there but rather on the level of finance provided to enable the office to be manned more often. When you need a policeman, you need one urgently.

I think one of the reasons why there are no true figures published on crimes in the rural area is because people do not report them to the police office at Fred's Pass. They have developed the attitude that there is little point in ringing the police when they cannot do anything about it and often they are not there. Many people have expressed that view to me. I know that petty theft is not reported very often. Real statistics are not available

because of the lack of personnel at Fred's Pass Police Office.

The concern I have in that regard is the rumour that the Fred's Pass Police Office is to be closed and the police office at Palmerston is to undergo some aggrandisement and become the police station for the rural area. From the point of view of keeping the peace in the rural area, this would make matters even more difficult. Not only must our firemen come from Palmerston to look after us but the police would come from there too. I am wondering how much further this will go.

Yesterday, in my capacity as the member for the rural area, I said that the city of Palmerston is like the golden-haired boy who can do no wrong and who gets everything he wants. Considering the rates that are paid on an average block in Palmerston and the \$200 that it is rumoured people in the rural area will face, there is no comparison. When you compare the services that are offered in Palmerston and the services that are not offered in the rural area, there is no comparison, and that is apart from the fact that the people in the rural area do not want a council similar to the one being created in Palmerston.

There is another problem which is getting worse. I have had personal experience of this one. I have dealt with it and I will continue to deal with it. Our small property is a couple of miles from Palmerston as the crow flies. We have owned it since the very early 1960s and have lived there since mid-1960s. For some time now, I have been losing stock because of dogs and or dingoes. I have taken action and I have been partially successful. I have a pretty fair idea where these dogs come from. I have an idea that the dogs in very poor condition come from Palmerston. The well-fed dogs that I have seen on our property do not come from the neighbouring blocks in our road. I have a pretty fair idea that they also come from Palmerston. The municipal officers work as well as they can and, again, I am not knocking them. I am just pointing out the increasing detriment because of the location of Palmerston to the people living in the rural area.

Another matter that has been brought to my attention is the enlargement of Palmerston and the effect on certain blocks that adjoin its western and southern boundaries. These areas have nothing to do with us. We live on the other side of Palmerston. It has been brought to my attention that Palmerston could extend its boundaries in the future. I have not ascertained which people own the land in that area but it was put to me that the land would be acquired from certain landholders for the enlargement of Palmerston. Whether this is true or not, I cannot say. There is another piece of land in the rural area which, I understand, has been considered as an area for closer settlement. That is owned by other people.

I will put a hypothetical question: will the people who own the land in the second situation also have to undergo compulsory acquisition as the people in the first situation may have to? The reason put to me was that the people in the first instance probably would not have the capital to subdivide their property to the standard required for the extension of Palmerston. In the interests of free enterprise, if somebody has land and is prepared to put up the money to subdivide and then put the land on the market, it is only fair that he should receive his just reward for the investment of his capital. I am wondering if the same conditions will apply to the people in the other part of the rural area who also own land which has been spoken of as a closer-settlement area.

I do not have any problems with the legislation as it is presented per se,

but only with regard to the comparisons that I have drawn, and the people in my electorate are drawing, with the services that are offered in Palmerston and what people pay for them, and the scant offerings in the rural area and what we may have to pay for that. I mentioned the police and fire services. They are only 2 that I thought of quickly because, as I said, I was not going to speak about this. It is all very well saying that we do not pay rates and therefore we should not expect a better fire service or a better police service.

Mr Coulter: They have nothing to do with rates.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I know that they do not have anything to do with rates but that view has been advanced to me as one of the reasons for charging rates. Admittedly, it is incorrect. I would agree with the minister. But that is the view. It is rather a specious argument for levying rates in the rural area to say that we want health services, schools, police services and fire protection. I do not think there is anything further to say on this legislation. I have no argument with it.

Mr COULTER (Community Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will address a couple of points that the member for Koolpinyah raised in relation to Palmerston and the rate system in that area. The member does herself no credit by promoting rumours that people in the rural area will pay \$200. That is now recorded in Hansard. Last night she mentioned a figure of \$140. In fact, a much smaller figure has also been advocated for people in the rural area. It does us no credit at all to talk about rumours and innuendos and to spread that type of gossip without knowing the facts. I thought I addressed that point quite clearly in the Assembly last night. The people of Palmerston are prepared to pay their way for municipal-type services. Schools, fire stations, police stations etc have nothing to do with the rate burden which is imposed on them.

It is very encouraging to see that, in less than 2 years, the people have developed many facilities. On 22 June, they will have their elections. The municipality was declared on 1 April this year. Already they are moving towards local government elections so that they will have some say in their future. I have no doubt at all that the municipality of Palmerston will continue to prosper and grow. The people who live within the municipality will have a say and determine factors in their own area that will enhance the quality of life.

I would like to pay particular tribute to the Palmerston Development Authority for what it has done in developing the municipality of Palmerston. Less than 3 or 4 years ago, people were saying that you would not get 10 people to live out there. We now release 2 houses a day and the population figures continue to escalate. People are now identifying themselves as Palmerston people and this is to the credit of the Palmerston Development Authority.

We have had some problems. The very size of the project and the type of growth that it has experienced have created problems. We have had problems in delivering services out there. I will not try to apologise for the PDA but it has developed the area extensively and those problems are being addressed.

There is a bright side to the recent cutback of \$3.5m for new subdivisions in the Palmerston area. It will give us an opportunity to consolidate and catch up with the social infrastructure that is required to service that community. I refer to such things as health centres, police stations and fire stations. We have already passed the population of



Tennant Creek and we are now heading towards the population of Katherine. The total population of Palmerston is estimated at 5000. Within a 2-year period, we have become the fourth largest municipality in the Territory. Palmerston will be a monument to the efforts and the courage of Paul Everingham, in particular, and to the members of the Palmerston Development Authority team that was made up of representatives from statutory bodies and various departments that participated in the development of the area.

Over the last 4 years, the Palmerston Development Authority's task has been to coordinate the initial development and management of the town. It has achieved its objectives earlier than had been anticipated. As the member representing the residents, I take this opportunity to express on their behalf admiration for the forward thinking and innovative concepts employed throughout the entire project. Every day it appears that even I learn that something new and innovative has occurred in Palmerston.

Recently, I had the opportunity to invite Cabinet members to hold a Cabinet meeting in the new municipality of Palmerston so that they could view the growth and the problems which are being experienced out there. During the bus tour, I was interested to note some of the innovative projects and programs that have been employed out there. Mr Deputy Speaker, with your engineering background, you would be well aware of some of the innovative concepts which have been employed at Palmerston to meet particular problems.

We give thanks for the tireless efforts of those responsible for ensuring the timely birth of Palmerston and for providing motherly support in its formative years. However, the people of Palmerston are prepared now to stand on their own 2 feet and have a say in governing themselves. The third tier of government, local government, is closest to the people and more responsive to the needs of the people. Perhaps the people in the rural area might take a leaf out of their book and solve many of their problems instead of rubbishing certain departments in town. If they take the bit between their teeth, their progress can be just as rapid and controlled as that of Palmerston.

On 22 June, a mayor and 6 aldermen will be elected to the first Palmerston Town Council. They have already operated with a Palmerston Town Management Advisory Committee which has been increased progressively over the last 2 years. I understand those people will be standing for re-election as aldermen in the forthcoming elections. At the moment, they are on the hustings advocating what direction the town should take in the near future and how we can stabilise the area and capitalise on the programs which have been put in place by the Palmerston Development Authority.

The people of Palmerston have a right to be proud of the town. Since the first residents arrived, they have been involved in making their town what it is today. One of the objectives of the authority has been to involve the community as much as possible in the development of Palmerston. Early involvement of residents included the dissemination of information through a newsletter, radio program and through personal contact. By the time there were 500 residents, an election was held for residents' representatives on the Palmerston Town Management Advisory Committee. Through this advisory committee, the community has been able to relay its needs and desires to the government. This kind of communication with the community has proved vital to the successful, trouble-free introduction of the residents to the new development and has helped the emergence of a strong community spirit.

I would like to spend a few minutes on the community spirit which does prevail in Palmerston. Recently, I was involved in the promotion of sports

organisations in that area. There is a strong commitment from various sports organisations throughout the Top End to be represented at Palmerston and there is strong competition to establish themselves within the Palmerston area. The same thing also pertains to service organisations and volunteer groups within the community who have also established themselves at Palmerston. I pay particular credit to organisations such as the Lions, Kiwanis, the YMCA and Somerville Homes which have all had a presence in Palmerston and believed in its future right from its very inception. The kind of communication which is available through these community organisations is also excellent.

A drive around Palmerston shows why the people really appreciate living there. Thousands of trees have been planted to landscape arterial roads, suburban streets and open-space parklands. The tree-lined kerbed streets are instrumental in slowing down traffic in the inner-residential areas, making it safer and much less noisy, although we have some problems in that regard. Indeed, as the member representing the area, the noise has been brought to my attention, in particular, construction noise. That is one of the problems in living in an area such as Palmerston which is undergoing rapid growth. We have problems with backhoes and carpentry equipment. The residents who have been there for some 2 years are now looking for peace and serenity.

The width of the streets has been brought to my attention on several occasions. In the long run, as growth occurs with trees and gardens in the area, it will become one of the most magnificent cities in Australia. Houses have been oriented on blocks to catch the breeze and to provide an open feeling. The Northern Territory Housing Commission has used 15 different designs in a successful attempt to create a pleasing suburban atmosphere. The first commission house to be completed in Palmerston was occupied in December 1982. I might add that the first resident there was Lewis Potterton who came from England. He believed in the potential of Palmerston and bought a block there. Currently, he is the Chairman of the Palmerston Town Advisory Committee. He has devoted a lot of time to the development of Palmerston and has become extensively involved in various community organisations, emergency services and volunteer firefighting groups. He moved out to Palmerston when there was nothing there whatsoever and no services at all.

There are now 845 houses and 41 flats occupied. Of the 608 Northern Territory Housing Commission houses, 114 have been sold to tenants. A total of 237 houses and 3 flats have been completed privately. That indicates the balanced development which is taking place out there. The population has reached almost 3100 and still continues to grow. As I said, 2 houses a day are being completed out there and, as at last week, 460 houses are under construction. This has created some problems. The Minister for Education would be able to talk on them at some length. The Driver district neighbourhood centre is running right on schedule and the children are arriving daily at the Gray school. This is creating some problems. Although it has not reached capacity yet, we expect it to do so in the near future.

Work is proceeding on the high school in Driver and we believe that it will open for the first semester of 1986. I know that the Minister for Education is keeping a close eye on that for me to ensure that in fact it does open on time. We have had support from a number of ministers in the development of Palmerston and that is another reason why it has been so successful. Many interstate visitors have had the opportunity to look at the developments there and I have had the opportunity to take many distinguished visitors around Palmerston and show them part of the success story. I admit we do have problems because it is a rapid growth area but we are getting on top

of that. As I mentioned, the slowing down of the development will give us the opportunity to consolidate.

At a recent Local Government Ministers Conference in Melbourne, I mentioned the need for a paper on new town developments and to document the history of Palmerston and some of the problems that we have been faced with out there. I also mentioned the need to look at specific purpose towns such as Jabiru or the refurbishing of old towns such as in your own electorate, Mr Speaker, with the rapid development of Tindal. No doubt, you would be interested in some of the problems that have been experienced in the development of Palmerston. Some of the departmental people present today in the gallery have been involved with Palmerston since it was merely a pencil line on a piece of paper. They can be proud of the efforts that they have put into the development of this satellite city.

It is easy to see that the emphasis has been placed on providing a pleasant environment and one in which the residents can take an active part. A particular innovative idea is the stormwater drainage system which comprises wide, grassed channels which can accommodate the heaviest of wet season falls. We have had some engineers from the Snowy Mountains Authority examine this drainage system. It is not perfect yet. I am not sure if they intend to install hydro-electric generators at the end of the channels or not.

Certainly, at the end of the channels is an area known as Marlow's Lagoon which has been developed as a recreational area. Near the lagoon, we have sunk 3 bores which have fantastic capacity. Currently, the Palmerston Development Authority is looking at the possibility of installing large pumps on these bores and pumping water into the recreational areas, the parks and gardens and the 9-hole golf links in an effort to save money on water reticulation. It is another example of the innovative ideas of the Palmerston Development Authority to cut costs and deliver the best goods possible.

The extensive bicycle track network through the suburbs includes routes along some of the boundaries of the grassed drains. It is possible for our children in Palmerston to travel almost across the breadth of Palmerston, taking due care at some of the major arterial roads. These paths are quite pleasant and are used often by joggers and cyclists.

Palmerston development is taking place amidst the surrounding rural and semi-rural areas in the Darwin region. Many of the facilities provided for the residents of Palmerston also serve the residents of the surrounding areas; for example, the fire station and the town centre shopping facility which was the first facility in Darwin to open 7 days a week. That has been extremely successful. We have people from the northern suburbs travelling out to Palmerston to shop. Once again, a high risk was taken by the developer and operator, Coles New World Supermarket. When it took the decision to build the supermarket, there were less than 500 people living in the area. I am told that it is one of the biggest Coles New World Supermarkets in Australia. That is the type of risk that people are prepared to take in Palmerston because they are sure of its success.

The service trades area has placed people in Palmerston. Henry and Walker has just moved out there. Agserv is opening up another branch which, whilst it is not strictly in the municipality of Palmerston, it is only 100 m outside of it. I understand that Hastings Deering has a block out there. Firms like Bunnings and Mitre 10 are developing industrial blocks within the area of Palmerston itself. This augurs well for employment generation in the area.

This government took a conscious decision that it would not be a playground for town developers to carry out social experimentation. It was to be built as a community that could be proud of itself. It was not developed on an ad hoc basis. It had the opportunity which is not afforded to many other new towns in Australia: to start completely from scratch and to develop facilities, including the boat ramp at the Elizabeth River Bridge, which is a well-used facility. I opened it some 18 months ago. At that time, I said that I wondered how long it would be before the Palmerston yacht club or the Palmerston trailer boat club establishes itself in the mangroves beside the boat ramp. I am sure that it will not be very long before that happens because I believe that the potential is there. It is an ideal waterway as the honourable member for Ludmilla, who is an experienced yachtsman, would be able to tell this Legislative Assembly. It will not be long because there have been approaches by people interstate to establish such a facility. I spoke about Marlow's Lagoon and also the 9-hole golf course of which I had the privilege of becoming the patron just 2 weeks ago. I am now learning how to play golf.

Some facilities are under strain but we are addressing those problems. If I have any criticism at all about the Palmerston Development Authority, it is that we needed 2 authorities. It is easy to speak after the event but there should have been an authority which looked at what I term the 'people industries'. Issues that could have been addressed through that authority would be youth, sport and recreation, Department of Community Development functions and the federal support required for such town development. The Commonwealth Employment Service, the post office and the various other federal departments should have had a presence in Palmerston much earlier. Through my intervention in this particular regard, I am pleased to be able to announce that the Commonwealth Employment Service will be opening an office at Palmerston in the near future. The Department of Community Development has opened an office at Palmerston in the last month. Divisions within the Department of Community Development have a presence there now. The shopfront information centres for women, the childrens' service bureau and a whole range of other welfare organisations operate out of that facility at the moment.

The Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation will shortly be in a position to announce the development of a youth facility at Palmerston. The biggest hold-up has been the provision of a building that could take such a facility. We have only had one substantial building out there which could have been capable of providing a venue for such a facility. Unfortunately, it did not meet the fire code as a public entertainment area and therefore the youth centre has been slowed down somewhat.

I would like also to pay particular credit to Randazzo brothers in the development of Highway House. If there were 10 houses built when Highway House was commenced, I would be very surprised. They took the gamble and developed a \$5m facility out there with no population anywhere in the area. The Highway House was developed and it has generated employment, for example, through the Department of Lands. In the future, there will be great emphasis placed on job-generating organisations to move away from Darwin and to establish themselves at Palmerston as it becomes the population centre of the northern area of the Northern Territory. I do believe that there is a place for the sister city of Darwin and that the 2 will operate in a combined effort to promote the various lifestyles which can be obtained through living in each particular area.

Mr Speaker, in closing, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to a number of other organisations that have been helped and promoted through

the Palmerston Development Authority. Not strictly in accordance with its charter but through various means, the Palmerston Development Authority has always been available to provide material to develop the swings and slides in the park areas. This was slowed down because the developers did not establish parks in the first instance. We are looking now at developing park facilities. In Palmerston, we have more than twice the Northern Territory average of children in the 0-5 years age group. I am interested to ensure that there are facilities developed for that particular age group. I have instructed the Department of Community Development wherever possible to provide guidance in terms of what playground equipment would be suitable.

At Marlow Heights we have the new development of a densely populated area on the hilltop overlooking the East Arm area. I am sure some members would have had a look at some of the facilities and some of the views provided in the development of that area.

Mr Speaker, it has been a project of an immense size requiring millions of dollars to develop. Bold people took the initiative in the first place to develop such a town, but develop it they did. It is now up to the people of Palmerston. We have built the roads and connected the water and power. It is not roads, power, water or buildings that make a community; it is the people. Those people will be addressing the problem of how to take over from the Palmerston Development Authority and will improve on the efforts of the authority as they take over the third tier of government and become closer to the issues and more responsive to what is required. I look forward to the future and to its sister city which is to be developed at some future time - New Town. That is not necessarily the name but certainly the site has been declared as New Town in the Elizabeth River area.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak in this debate this afternoon but the presence of a non-aggressive and passive opposition is an opportunity which I would not like to miss. The development of satellite towns and suburbs is fraught with danger at the best of times. I must admit that, during the early proposals of Palmerston, I was one of those who had concerns as to how the suburb was to be developed, particularly in relation to those social aspects that are vitally important and which need to be addressed very carefully.

Aside from the social aspects, infrastructural requirements and facilities are very important. Some of them were mentioned. I would just like to elaborate to a small degree on some of those services. The provision of water is the most basic and important ingredient of civilisation. That was one of the earlier services to be considered. I must admit that I was extremely proud to be the Chairman of the Institute of Engineers in the year that the Palmerston water tower was awarded a commendation as a structure of engineering excellence. On behalf of the engineering fraternity, I must comment on a remark made by the member for Koolpinyah earlier. She made reference to the office block that was built next to this fine water structure. Engineers would say that the answer is quite clear: the water structure was designed by engineers and the office block by architects. I guess that that is a fairly pointed remark. I looked around first to make sure that there were no architects present. That office block has provided a very important facility for the town of Palmerston. Not only does it provide shopping facilities and the office of the Minister for Community Development but it provides a focal point for community life. It has a very fine library which was installed in the very early days. It is not only an area where people can

go to borrow books and improve their knowledge but it provides local people with a meeting place.

Aside from the community facilities in that office building, very early in the piece the government decided that the Roads Division would move out there. That was a fairly wise move in that it gave those officers working on highway jobs a head start out of town in front of the traffic. It also provided a good work base for the growing town of Palmerston. Many people are employed in those offices. As we all know, the Roads Division is one of the finest government divisions that we have working for us. Its record of performance is probably second to none, it would have me say. I agree with it. The presence of such public servants out there helps to provide a balanced work force. That is extremely important in a growing town.

Aside from the fine engineering aspects of the water tower, by virtue of its elevation and the access of its roof, it gives visitors an absolutely magnificent panorama of the Palmerston area. The member for Koolpinyah suggested that a restaurant could be developed on top of the water tower. That ought to be looked at. I would hope that the structure would stand it. It certainly would be a delightful location for a rotating restaurant.

Palmerston is a very important part of the growing suburbs of Darwin. The Minister for Community Development would have it that no place in the suburbs would match it. I do not wish to debate that issue with him now. Certainly, I am pleased to see the development of the town progressing very rapidly not only in those physical aspects but in the social aspects. I will get to those social aspects soon.

Other interesting engineering aspects relate to the areas of sewage collection and disposal. Along with many other engineering design works, I was pleased to see that the Palmerston Development Authority, through its agencies, stood back and reviewed the design criteria for all its engineering services. This has resulted in economies that have been able to be passed on to the general public through land purchase and rental of Housing Commission houses. The rationalisation of those engineering standards has led to those economies but not at the sacrifice of quality.

In respect of the sewerage facilities, quite sensibly the designers have taken advantage of the topography of the area and have provided a treatment process comprised of stabilisation ponds. Those ponds are located well away from town on the flat area approaching the foreshore. The basic principle is that the waste is decomposed by being retained at appropriate depths for appropriate periods. Decomposition and settlement of sludge takes place. The effluent is disposed of after a progression from pond to pond. It is so efficient that the basic oxygen demand - or BOD, as it is commonly called - of the effluent is reduced to a most acceptable level and is suitable for discharge into natural watercourses. The majority of liquid waste is evaporated into the atmosphere. I am sure that members would be interested to know that, during the dry season in the Top End, the evaporation rate in open ponds is approximately 10 mm per day. These ponds have been designed so that very little residual is discharged from them. In fact, even during the wet season, there is still a minor net evaporation from the ponds. Obviously, there are safety measures to ensure that there are no adverse effects on the surrounding waterways.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the very attractive features of such ponds is the low maintenance and operation costs. The member for Ludmilla has reminded us of his sewage treatment works down in the Ludmilla area. He has

had some difficulty with odours. Stabilisation ponds do not have that characteristic. They are usually quite pleasant places to visit because usually there is an abundance of birdlife and other wildlife that is attracted to them.

Another innovative design is in the area of stormwater drainage. A complete revision of the design criteria and the methodology of designing stormwater works was undertaken, particularly in respect of the major stormwater collectors. One of the interesting approaches was to collect the minimal run-off of stormwater through controlled conduits and culverts or, in some cases, open concrete-lined drains which would carry the high frequency but very low run-off to the major open unlined structures. These open drains have been grassed. The basic principle is that, once a particularly high level is exceeded, the stormwater will be carried down these major drains without any hazard to surrounding houses or buildings.

The major advantage of such an approach is the savings in capital costs. Of course, it is important to consider the long-term maintenance aspect as well. Conventional drainage, with pipes, culverts, manholes etc, silts up with the infrequent pre-wet season rains. The silt blocks up the drains creating not only a nuisance but, because it goes hard and becomes very difficult to remove, a real expense too. One of the advantages of this innovation is that the open grassed areas stabilise the embankments and very little problem results after heavy flooding. I have been most impressed with this very innovative methodology of disposing of the stormwater at Palmerston.

The roadworks also incorporate revised engineering standards. I should at this point acknowledge the good work of the Roads Division, the Water and Sewerage Division, the Town Planning Authority and the Building Board which no doubt played some part in helping to revise the design standards for the Palmerston area. It is all right to change standards but it is not possible to do that in the northern suburbs and other areas where existing standards are in place. It needs the opportunity provided by a new development. Naturally enough, a great deal of care was taken in revising these standards because they needed to last. Following minor mishaps in the northern suburbs, the departments were very conscious that they had to make very sensible decisions as far as the design criteria of roadworks and other facilities were concerned. In the area of roadworks, consideration was given to road widths which depended on the house loading on particular streets and the expected level of traffic. Low-usage roads did not need to be wide enough for 2 semi-trailers to pass each other. Of course, the wider the road, the greater the cost. Engineers and others needed to be very conscious of construction costs. Engineers are extremely responsible people. I am well aware of many cases where engineers have addressed themselves to the economies, particularly on behalf of government and their own clients. Palmerston illustrates that responsibility. The end cost was not as much of concern as the establishment of an appropriate standard and design to ensure that the most economic long-term result was achieved. One needs to consider not just those initial construction costs but the long-term maintenance costs and the costs of the operation of services. The standards that have been set for Palmerston are appropriate for the future.

The authority needed also to consider usability. It is very important that we consider the alignment of roads and the factors that cause disruption to traffic flow. As an engineering exercise, one could say that Palmerston has been a great success. I am sure that the efforts that are being made by the Palmerston Development Authority and all those other groups will be recognised in times to come.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will confine his remarks to the legislation before the Assembly. I am not quite sure whether he is debating that legislation or the Road Safety Council Report.

Mr FINCH: I would like to move on now to the development of the social structure of which I am only too familiar. One of the first facilities that was developed at Palmerston was an aged persons nursing home. I was concerned that the positioning of such a facility in a new suburb might be detrimental to the well-being of those residents. Instead, it has led to a now recognised fine establishment and I pay tribute to those people involved. Their dedication has helped the residents achieve a very satisfactory lifestyle in their declining years.

As Palmerston continues to grow, with community groups such as the Lions, the Lioness Club and various church and welfare groups, not only are the aged people of Palmerston gaining more support but the community is starting to blend into quite a well-balanced community. I mentioned the development of a service club. Other service clubs, including Rotary, Kiwanis and Apex, have a keen interest in the Palmerston area. Some of them have already established groups out there and others are working towards that. The Minister for Community Development told us about the high percentage of children between the age of 0 and 5. Such a young community will need a great deal of support. Community service groups provide a tremendous opportunity. Those service groups in Palmerston are fairly typical of evolving towns. They are playing a vital role in helping to provide social facilities as well as raising funds for vital amenities for the community. Through the newly-established schools, they are able to help build playground equipment. The Lions help to run a blue light disco which will be of great benefit in providing entertainment and guided leadership to the youth of the area. Only last week, I was present at the chartering of the new Lioness Club. It is important for us to appreciate the contribution made by women in the community through their service clubs, as well in support of their male companions who might be members of various groups as well. Various new sporting groups are evolving. They require equipment and people to help run them and encourage their development in a proper fashion.

Mention was made of the golf course out there. That is just another example of how quickly people in Palmerston have been able to get their act together and provide themselves with a broad range of facilities. In 1981, the first house was constructed. The population is now around 3000. The people have done extremely well in such a short period. Not only did the physical buildings and other facilities develop rapidly but they have been able to get their act together and develop all those community-based groups that are so vital to a well-balanced community.

Mr Deputy Speaker, now that local government has come to Palmerston, it has reached a level of maturity. It is able to shed itself of that bureaucratic support that was necessary in the early days. I do not say that critically. The bureaucrats have been extremely important. I hope that I have made proper reference to the important part they have played. Naturally enough, sooner or later a baby grows up and needs to shed that sheltering type of bureaucracy. Local government will mean increased self-dependency by the people of Palmerston and benefits and privileges from self-determination. Naturally enough, the community needs to accept the responsibilities that go with it. I am quite confident, knowing the type of person who lives in Palmerston, that they will meet that challenge most admirably.

The bill itself provides for transfer of property and powers to the



authority. It also provides for a sensible transition period. It is most important to permit a sensible transfer of these powers from the bureaucracy to the people themselves. I see that I have almost run out of time. I think that the development of Palmerston has been a success story in itself. I commend the bill.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not know if I can talk for as long about nothing as the honourable member for Wagaman did. After all, we are dealing with the repeal of an act which would not seem to me to be much of an initiative at all. The member for Wagaman was able to speak at length about water. All I know about water is that it is good to dilute scotch with.

In the early days of the planning for the development of Palmerston, one of the things that caused me some personal concern was what I thought was an oversight on the part of the Place Names Committee. I am sure it forgot the first part of the intended name of the township of Palmerston. I believe in my heart that the good gentlemen of the Place Names Committee did mean to call it 'Mick Palmerston'.

The need for the Palmerston Development Authority grew out of the cumbersome and wasteful land release system we had prior to self-government. Prior to self-government, land release was firmly in the hands of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth departments. Many of the suburbs in Darwin were a very wasteful exercise in town planning in terms of areas of open space and in terms of services provided; that is, stormwater drainage and width of roads.

Following self-government, the Northern Territory government had to address the highly-subsidised cost of residential land in Darwin. It addressed that in the suburbs of Leanyer and Karama. The team that developed Leanyer and Karama within the Department of Lands, the Lands Development Branch, which began the Palmerston Development Authority, certainly did learn the lessons of Karama and Leanyer in Palmerston. Karama especially is devoid of open space, and it is devoid of community facilities of any description. Some roads are inappropriately designed. There are cul-de-sacs in excess of 300 m with the tarmac widths less than 6 m, which I am sure would not be accepted anywhere else in Australia. Notwithstanding that, I was pleased to see that, in Palmerston, the lessons were learnt.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the resolve by the Northern Territory government at least to contain the cost of residential land and to alter the system by which land was released from a system of government auction of fully-developed residential lots to a system of sale of broad acres of town land for development by private developers, a number at a time, thus creating competition in the marketplace for residential land, I believe has contributed greatly to the level of home ownership, especially amongst young people in the Darwin area. The level of home ownership in the Northern Territory prior to self-government was, in national terms, very low. Still in national terms, the level of home ownership is low. I believe that the methods and the ways in which residential town land is now released in the Northern Territory is going a long way towards addressing that problem.

Within the Department of Lands, and I believe within many instrumentalities of government, the formation of the Palmerston Development Authority was the subject of much cynical debate. It was seen as something completely unnecessary that usurped the roles of public servants entrenched in various government departments who had been attempting to do the job for many years.

I spoke previously of the wasteful methods of land release. I suppose I may have been amongst those cynics. In fact, I probably was. But with the progress of time, it became apparent that the Palmerston Development Authority was working. It was releasing land and at prices affordable to the younger Darwin families. It was releasing land which was attractive. It was a nice place to live and that became more and more apparent. Now we have what I believe to be the model for future town developments in Australia.

I pointed out the shortcomings previously. I believe that the Territory government, Territory public servants and the many men and women who worked very hard to ensure the success of the Palmerston Development Authority and of Palmerston have learnt from initial errors and mistakes. I am sure that many of the states could learn a lesson from what we did in the Northern Territory with the Palmerston Development Authority. I am sure the Territory government will recognise the lessons we have learnt and, in future, when the need arises, we have the expertise within various government departments to create authorities similar to that at Palmerston, with appropriate sunset clauses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure that we have learnt and I am sure that this will set the pattern for the development of satellite towns throughout the Northern Territory. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions in this debate. It is pleasing to see there is so much support for the government's activities and initiatives in the development of the marvellous new town of Palmerston. My colleague, the honourable Minister for Community Development and member for Palmerston, quite lucidly outlined the excellent work that is being done there. We look forward to the normalisation of the town and its progress into the future.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.1.

There is a risk, albeit slight, that there may be a council in existence before 1 July 1985. Due to the electoral process, appointments of aldermen and mayor may be delayed because of absentee voting, preference distributions and so on. Therefore, we believe it is appropriate that we should provide flexibility in the specific date of application of this legislation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.2.

This amendment introduces the definitions of 'Palmerston Town Plan' and

'Planning Authority'. These 2 terms have been repositioned from clause 9(6) to this clause which is designed for definitions. The term 'planning authority' has been altered to give a more correct definition.

Clause 4, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 5:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.3.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.4.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 5, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 6:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.5.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 7 agreed to.

New clause 7A:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.6.

This amendment will insert a new clause 7A referring to loan debt.

New clause 7A agreed to.

Clause 8:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.7.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 8, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.9.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.10.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

New clauses 10 to 12:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.11.

New clauses 10 to 12 agreed to.

Schedule:

Mr HATTON: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 33.12.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Title agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent a motion for the rescission of the vote on the third reading of the Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Bill 1985 being moved forthwith.

Motion agreed to.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE AND STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 128)

Continued from page 1019.

Mr TUXWORTH (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the vote on the third reading of the Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Bill 1985 be rescinded and the bill be recommitted for the consideration of clauses 7 and 9.

Motion agreed to.

In committee:

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Chairman, in relation to the bill that we passed earlier today, the Public Service and Statutory Authorities Amendment Bill 1985, it was claimed during the passage of the bill that there were clauses that would enable the minister to have a power over any member of the Northern Territory Public Service by direction. I stated several times during the course of the passage of the legislation that this was not so and that it was not the government's intention. I further stated that the bill was to ensure the ability of the government to control, appoint and effect the transfer of departmental heads, chief executive officers and directors of statutory authorities within the Northern Territory Public Service. There are about 30 people in that category.

The opposition claimed again and again that the clauses could be applied to any public servant and I believe it is important, in the interests of the integrity of the Westminster system and the intent of the government's

legislation, that this claim be put beyond any doubt at all. I said several times during the debate that it was not the case and I propose to move amendment 34.1 to clause 7 and 34.2 to clause 9 to ensure that there is absolutely no doubt that this is true.

Mr Chairman, by way of explanation, I would also point out that the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues, in a demonstration of their disappointment at the passage of the legislation, saw fit to leave the Chamber and not participate in the rest of the day's proceedings. I have taken the opportunity to contact the honourable Leader of the Opposition and advise him of the passage of the amendments that are now before us so that his mind can be at ease about the government's intention. He advised me that his party members and colleagues had broken for the day and gone to various functions. He was committed to a function and would not be able to participate in any further debate. He invited the government to deal with the matter on its own.

Mr Chairman, I think it is important that it is placed on the record that the honourable Leader of the Opposition was informed of the intention of the government to ensure there is no doubt about the government's intention and to ensure that public servants, other than those whom I have just mentioned, are quite outside the intent of the legislation.

Clause 7:

Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 34.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 9:

Mr TUXWORTH: I move amendment 34.2.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 9, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 7 and 9 reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

#### SUPPLY BILL (Serial 121)

Continued from 5 June 1985.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr TUXWORTH (Treasurer) (by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Mr ROBERTSON (Health): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I was hoping for the opportunity either yesterday or this morning to give an explanation during question time of the circumstances surrounding the spraying of malathion in the northern suburbs. Of course, I wanted that opportunity for a very obvious reason: it would have been broadcast through the auspices of 8 Top FM and hopefully a number of people would thereby have found out about it who otherwise would not have found out about it through adjournment debates. The opposition, of course, being absent because of their fit of pique probably means that we have no media which is precisely the case as I observe through the glass of the press gallery.

In 1981, the Northern Territory was declared by the World Health Organisation as having eradicated the disease of locally-transmitted malaria; that is, indigenous malaria. Nonetheless, the area of the Northern Territory north of the 19th parallel south, which is a line that would run roughly across the Kimberleys in Western Australia, slightly south of the town of Elliott and through to Townsville in Queensland, is an endemic area for this rather nasty virus. There are 2 known vector carriers of the disease of malaria which are known to exist in the Northern Territory. I understand there may be a third. Those are the mosquitoes *Anopheles farauti*, *Anopheles hilli* and the one referred to as the big black malaria mosquito, *Anopheles bancrofti*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the recent incident was brought about by a traveller who returned from Bali who was carrying a version of the malaria strain called *Plasmodium malariae*. While not normally a lethal version of malaria, it is nonetheless a very persistent strain which, if not properly treated, can persist in the human body with all the symptom effects and discomfort for a period of some 20 years. This person presented himself to the Department of Health showing the symptoms of this disease. He was subsequently confirmed as having it. He had been back from Bali for a period of just on 2 weeks. Coincidentally, and unfortunately, he just happens to reside quite close to the swamps in the Leanyer dump area in the northern suburbs, which would be well known to you, Mr Deputy Speaker. There was very good reason then to suspect that one of the 3 vector-carrying mosquito types might well have made contact with him. Therefore, there was a high degree of potential risk to the people of the northern suburbs of contracting the disease and of a return to the pre-1981 days when the Northern Territory was not free of malaria.

Mr Deputy Speaker, obviously the Department of Health would have much preferred to have been in a position to notify residents that the spraying was about to occur. I understand that by the time the location of the person's residence was finally determined and a sampling done of the mosquito types in the swamp area, and it was then confirmed that vectors of that disease were living in those swamps, the Department of Health had to act with a great deal of speed. Unfortunately, people were not warned about the proposal by the Department of Health to spray. Nonetheless, as I will explain in a minute, I believe that it was the proper course of action for the department to carry out.

I turn now to the nature of malathion. As best as I am informed, it is a spray which has been proven and has had the World Health Organisation certificate of clean health for some years. It is an insecticide which has been used very extensively throughout the world for the last 20 years. I have been told that, in many places, it has been used for as long as 40 years. Malathion was sprayed daily and very extensively at the Butterworth RAAF base in Malaya, and Malaysia after the change of name of that place, for many years. There are no known side effects whatsoever. There is no evidence

whatsoever through any health authority that any ill effects occurred to any of the members of the defence forces stationed at Butterworth, notwithstanding that, as I say, over a period of years it was used daily. Nor is there any indication whatsoever of any side effects having been transmitted to any of their offspring or their families. There is no evidence of side effects whatsoever in any World Health Organisation records or records of any health authorities, as far as we can determine, anywhere in the world where this substance is used. In particular, there is no evidence of tetragenic effects, such as Down's syndrome. There is no connection whatsoever between the use of malathion and these unfortunate side effects which certain other agents perhaps could be accused of causing. Malathion has an extremely unpleasant smell. I think that is about the extent of its adverse effect.

We do not want to have to react to incidents of people coming in to the Northern Territory by spraying. We would much prefer to eliminate the problem at its source. The only way the problem can be eliminated is by eliminating the breeding grounds of the disease-carrying mosquitoes. I say that we do not want to have to keep reacting because, obviously, we will have to unless we can get rid of the breeding grounds. In past years, we have had 20 or more malaria cases come into the Northern Territory each year, a proportion of these being infected with malaria of the types which our various species of Anopholes mosquito can carry.

The government has been seeking to drain the swamps which are the breeding grounds of these creatures as quickly as it can and, on recent figures, the success rate of doing that is quite pronounced. There has been a 79% reduction in the number of Anopheles farauti mosquito and a 96% reduction in the number of Anopheles bancrofti in the region of the Leanyer swamp this year compared with the first 5 months of last year. These programs for draining the swamps and thereby removing the habitat of mosquitoes will continue but, of course, we are not able to say that we will eliminate all types of the mosquitoes. However, we hope to be able to eliminate the malaria-carrying varieties. There are certain species of very long-flying salt marsh mosquitoes which we cannot counteract very successfully at all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the nonsense that was being perpetrated by a particular member of the Darwin City Council is just that: baseless scaremongering nonsense which I suggest he probably indulged in for his own political small or big 'P' purposes than for any other purpose. There is no substance to his allegations. Certainly, there is substance to the concern of northern suburbs residents that they had no notice of the spraying. I can assure honourable members and the people of the northern suburbs that, in future, every effort will be made to notify them prior to spraying but I cannot say that there will not be occasions when we simply have to react in the interests of community health to prevent a spread of this disease. There may well be rare occasions when we will have to put out broadcasts over radio and so on and act simultaneously. I stress that every effort will be made in the future to notify people so that, if they feel that they would like to go to the beach for the afternoon while these necessary sprayings are undertaken, they will have the opportunity to do so.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise this evening to inform the Assembly of my real concern at the economic management of this country and to express my concern about the current economic state of the nation. Recently, the federal Labor government used the Northern Territory as its scapegoat in its desperate bid to save its sinking ship. Regrettably, its actions are futile. I would like to quote the Chief Minister who said:

'They are only shifting the chairs around the deck of the Titanic waiting for it to sink'.

I believe the federal Labor government is in deep financial trouble. It is swimming in a whirlpool and slowly being sucked inwards. We will soon witness this Labor government, together with its fiscal policies, go down the gurgler. I look forward to that moment with trepidation, however, because we will be sucked down with it. The Hawke Labor government came to power in time to take advantage of the upturn in the American economy and the breaking of the drought in Australia. It introduced its economic policies, which saw a redistribution of Australia's wealth from areas of development of constructive long-term projects, which created jobs and generated government income, to those of social welfare and short-term job creation. It has succeeded in transferring much of its funding to areas which generate little or no income in this country and create only short-term employment. When the funds are expended, we have nothing to show for it apart from some very nice cycle paths.

Late last year, we were forced to the polls 18 months early. That was not for the reasons it gave us at the time, but because it could see the writing on the wall and it wanted to get in before the people of Australia woke up. It had an indication of the direction in which we were heading. It knew the path down which its economic and social welfare policies were leading us. It realised that, if it waited, it would have little chance of return to government. Regrettably, the electorate fell for the 3-card trick and now must pay the price.

Recent Morgan Gallup polls tell us that Prime Minister Hawke's popularity is rapidly decreasing and that, if an election were called now, the Hawke government would be soundly defeated. Unfortunately, we have to tolerate it for another 2½ years; that is, unless the electorate tells it beforehand that it must place itself before the people again. The way it is heading at the moment with all the radical policies it is introducing, I am quite sure that it will not be very long before the electorate rises up against it. With consumer confidence tumbling and the dramatic fall in the value of the Australian dollar, this may not be too long. The rapid decline in the dollar means that, in the near future, we can expect to see up to 30% rise in the cost of imported goods. When one looks around and sees the amount of imported products we consume, one can judge the impact this will have on the cost to the end user. This means the inflationary spiral is again on the upward trend. Claims for increased wages follow hotly on the heels of increased costs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it would not have mattered who held the Northern Territory seat. We must realise that we are expendable. Senator Walsh realised he could attack the Northern Territory's finances and save considerable dollars without upsetting the Australian electorate at large. He could have sawn us off and let us float out into the Arafura Sea and the rest of Australia could not have cared less.

Let us have a look at the way in which we in the Northern Territory have been treated. Bear in mind that it is not just what minister Keating dealt out just recently but consider also the other amputations. I refer to the deferment of the \$120m airport redevelopment. I believe the deferment is only a ploy. It is most likely to be shelved. I do not think there is any doubt about that. Consider that \$20m has been expended already, much of which will blow away in the dust except for the water tower - a water tower without a top and without a cap. I wonder whether Mr Morris realises that



when the next wet season comes around, the water tower is going to fill up like a tank right to the top with stormwater. Either he will have to put a roof on it before then or go out there and bore a hole through the bottom to let the water out. It would not surprise me in the least if tomorrow morning I were to drive along there and find that a hole has already been bored. During the last sittings, I drew the Assembly's attention to the flag that was proudly flying at the top of a pole after he had cancelled the project. Lo and behold, the following day that flag pole, complete with flag, was gone, cut off by an oxy torch. I think he must listen to our debates.

\$37m per annum has been cut in the electricity subsidy, which will place undue hardship on most Territorians. Let us have a look at that one. The government knew full well it only had to fund fully the subsidy for another couple of years and we would be up and running with our gas-fired power-station at a greatly reduced operating cost.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, order! Honourable member for Jingili, I wonder if you might avoid direct reference to a bill that is before the Assembly. The honourable member may mention in passing matters which are before the Assembly but not dwell on them.

Mr SETTER: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker. I did not realise I was referring to a bill before the Assembly.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a ministerial statement on electricity.

Mr SETTER: I withdraw my comments concerning electricity.

Ministers Hawke, Keating and Walsh were not prepared to wait. They wanted to make it hard for Territorians and make us pay for standing up to their bullying tactics. They started the superannuation fiasco. The minister of the day, Dawkins, agreed in writing to continue the existing funding arrangement but 6 months later Senator Walsh tore up the agreement, just as he has now done with the Memorandum of Understanding. He put in jeopardy the superannuation entitlements of 13 000 Territory public servants at the stroke of a pen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the removal of the fuel freight equalisation subsidy together with the import parity pricing rise has caused a total increase of 8¢ per litre in the price of fuel in the past month or so. This will be reflected by increased freight costs and, therefore, a corresponding rise in the price of goods. This is compounded because, where items are taxable, the freight as part of the selling price, or the landed cost, is taxed also. I foreshadow my concern regarding the possibility of a 12.5%, or whatever the percentage is, consumption tax which may go across the board. Bear in mind that, if that applies, Mr Deputy Speaker, you will find that almost all products that come into the Territory will be taxed at whatever that rate is. Currently, only on a small quantity of items is the freight taxable.

On top of all this, Treasurer Keating took to us with his hatchet. As a result, we find ourselves being forced to introduce our own fiscal measures. Yet we hear that Australia funds Papua New Guinea to the extent of \$300m per annum. Only on Monday I read that the Australian government was to provide \$2.2m for relief assistance to Ethiopia. Foreign Minister Hayden confirmed that Australian aid to Ethiopia totalled more than \$27m since July 1984. One wonders about all the other aid that is being provided around the world. It goes to needy countries, certainly, but I believe that charity begins at home and that \$27m would have gone an awful long way

to providing us with the \$37m subsidy which has been removed from one of our authorities.

Let us have another look at the federal government's mismanagement. I heard recently that the Royal Australian Navy has decided to sail its patrol boats to north Queensland for their annual refit. The cost of a refit for a patrol boat is estimated to be \$0.25m. In spite of approaches made by a local company, John Holland, which has a small ships facility at Frances Bay, with assurances that it could carry out the work, the navy went ahead with its plans. It claimed that the Darwin facility is too expensive compared with the NQEA workshop in Cairns. If this is the case, considering the cost of steaming to Cairns - and I have a problem with the sailing and steaming of patrol boats because I know that they are diesel-powered - then John Holland should sharpen its pencil. I am not particularly promoting the cause of private enterprise but I am saying that the facility is there and that the people who operate that facility should make sure that their pricing on projects is competitive.

Regardless of that, however, at Larrakeyah the navy has a very modern workshop, equipped at great expense to the taxpayer, and this facility was designed to repair and refit patrol boats. It has a lift capable of removing boats from the water. It is equipped with a very modern workshop and certainly designed for such an activity. Why, then, do our patrol boats have to steam over 6000 km to Cairns and return when we have facilities capable of undertaking the work right here in this town. This is another example of the Hawke government's waste and mismanagement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me follow the example set on Tuesday by the honourable member for Millner and quote a taxi driver, this time from Canberra. During a discussion with the fellow, one of my colleagues was recently told: 'Labor is too expensive' and, of course, to our extreme cost, we are learning that his statement was absolutely correct.

Where does the NT Labor opposition stand on all this? I can see that the opposition members are not even in the Chamber to listen to what I have to say so one cannot really tell, although I heard that the Leader of the Opposition was bleating in the media quite recently about having 3 acting Chief Ministers in one week and about overseas trips. That was about all that he could say. I imagine he means the trip the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has just completed. He is wrong, of course, because our ministers undertake such trips in an attempt to attract investment. I must say that they have been extremely successful.

Apart from those comments, I have heard no constructive criticism of the actions of the Hawke government from this opposition. I would like to endorse comments made by the Hon Paul Everingham quite recently when he criticised Senator Ted Robertson for a Dorothy Dix question that he had asked of Senator Walsh in the Senate.

Mr Deputy Speaker and honourable members, thank you for bearing with me. I wanted to express my concerns about the fiscal policies of the current federal Labor government and share with you my concerns for the future.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, during the April sittings we debated land rights issues and ranged fairly widely. I remember saying at that particular time that I was expecting to receive a few broadsides from the opposition regarding certain concerns I had about the land rights issue and its potential for being used as a tool to try to divide Australia into 2

countries, with all the inherent difficulties and dangers that that would create for defence. As evidence to help back that up, there are some people who think this way. I would point members to the Australian of 16 May in which there was a photo of Aboriginal people and others on the steps of Parliament House. In the story that went with it, one Pat Dodson, late of Alice Springs - sometimes still around there, I might say - somewhat unfortunately was alleged to have said that not only did they want land rights but they wanted Aboriginal sovereignty. When it was claimed by G.F. MacDonald, the author of 'Red Over Black', that he had said similar things before, Dodson denied it vehemently. In fact, he even put a writ out against MacDonald over this claim. As I recall it, he said it to a local reporter in Alice Springs some time back. That is just a bit of evidence to support that possibility.

Last night, when South African sport was raised, the member for MacDonnell goaded the member for Braitling into discussing apartheid in South Africa and apartheid in Australia. The member for MacDonnell said something to the effect that, if a group of people want to live on their own, then that is not apartheid. I just wonder where the member for MacDonnell stands on this matter. Does he see any dangers in the potential of separation, separate development and attempts to try to get Aboriginal sovereignty, which people like Pat Dodson are espousing?

The main topic that I want to raise today is that this coming Wednesday 12 June is a day for celebration for that mythical creature, the average Australian. On that day, the taxpaying Australian will be free of working for the government and can start working for himself. This calculation is done as follows. The total amount of money which is taken by governments in Australia compared to the gross domestic product is calculated. The calculations show that governments take 44.5¢ in every dollar for their own purposes. The average Australian has 55.5¢ left to spend out of each dollar earned. If you start at 1 January and work out what 44.5% of the year is, it comes out to about midday on 11 June. So 12 June is the first full day when the average Australian starts working for himself. This I believe is a cause for celebration. The unfortunate thing is that, last year, 43% of the GDP was grabbed by governments and the celebration day was 7 June. We are still going down the track. More and more of our money is going to governments and I think that is a great disincentive. I am sure it is a great disincentive and the cause of much of the malaise that this country is in financially.

Our huge debt, the real debt, is in the order of \$5000m to \$7000m. That is not the deficit which is the interest on that money which we are due to pay this year. That is between \$8000m and \$9000m. I am sure that, if the people of Australia knew what our real debt was, they would be thoroughly disgusted and alarmed. In 1972, when the Whitlam government came to power with the slogan 'It's Time', I remember asking the Territory's then federal member, Mr Sam Calder, why the McMahon government left \$700m for the Whitlam government to spend? It could have been spent on projects which might have obtained votes which might have helped to keep Whitlam out. I suppose we have learnt what 'time' means. I think the truth of the matter was it meant it was time to stuff the country. That has been done very well indeed, unfortunately. It was not sorted out by Mr Fraser either, much as he said that that was his aim. Some tough decisions have to be made in this area if we are to avoid going down the same road as Argentina. I learnt the other day that pre-World War 1, the 2 countries which had the highest standard of living in the world were none other than Australia and Argentina. Well, Argentina is very much a third world country today. If we do not reverse the trend, we will be going the same way.

I would urge members to do what they can to celebrate Tax Freedom Day and bring to people's attention the fact that the government is playing far too big a part in our lives. It is killing incentive and it is taking us down the wrong track. Tax Freedom Day is 12 June.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to say a little more than a few words tonight about a situation that is currently facing the meatworks in the Northern Territory. Meatworks around Australia have faced hard times over recent years to the point of closure of large numbers of meatworks because it became too hard to make money out of them. A lack of cattle numbers has not been the major cause although that may have had some impact on the problems of some of the abattoirs that have closed. The main problem has been that they have become too expensive to operate because the cost of labour is so high. I put the direct responsibility for that in the lap of the Australian Meat Industry Employees Union. When I slate the AMIEU for the meatwork closures, I want to make it clear that I do not mean the meatworkers. I refer directly to the blood suckers who have lived off the meatworkers. I refer to the executive of the AMIEU, those few people who impose their views on the members of the union and the growing number of alienated members who, as free citizens of this supposedly free country, do not wish to have their lives subjugated to the will of a few radical, rude and crude representatives. I have good cause to refer to these people as 'radical, rude and crude' and I will come back to that later. There are a few unthinking meatworkers in the Territory who go along with the views of the paid representatives of their union. I could just about count them on the fingers of both hands. They are those few people who have been picketing places like Victoria Valley, Muninberri and Alice Springs.

I will give a little background on what has occurred before this present situation. Members may recall that, last year, there was a considerable amount of union action in meatworks around the Territory. As a consequence, some of the meatworks did not open and others were seriously damaged financially. Meatworks operators and their representatives met regularly with the AMIEU during the last year to work out guidelines for a Territory award. They did reach some agreement on guidelines by the end of last year and were able to live out the rest of the year reasonably happily.

Whereas the meatworks operators said that they would accept the findings of the Arbitration Commission, the AMIEU would not agree to accepting that at the time. It did not make any commitment at all to the hard work that was put in last year. Those meatworks that had managed to open last year were then able to get on with the business of killing cattle and employing people. I might add that part of the agreement reached last year between the AMIEU and the meatworkers was that meatworkers that had been expelled from the union during the dispute would be reinstated. We are aware that they have not been reinstated. In fact, union representatives have made it quite clear that they will never be reinstated. The only thing that they will agree to now is that those people will be out forever and they must be replaced by current union members. That is only part of the agreement that was subsequently broken by the AMIEU.

Mr Deputy Speaker, when Commissioner McKenzie released his decision on the award on 29 April 1985, there were aspects of the award which did not please the AMIEU. Those parts of the findings that did not meet with its approval were the parts that related mainly to payment by results which is, after all, a fairly reasonable thing. After all, if members do not produce results in their electorates, they will not be here in a couple of years time. If I do not produce results, I will not be here. Most people in private

enterprise in the Northern Territory are paid by results. If they do not provide results for their employers, they do not have a job. The other part was the ability of the meatworkers to reach an agreement with the meatworks. The unions did not like that. They said: 'We are the only people who can work out how much you will work for and what hours you will work'. Section 33 of the award relating to payment by results reads:

*An employer may remunerate any of the weekly employees under a system of payment by results, provided that such system shall enable a weekly employee to earn no less for the work actually performed than the remuneration that that employee is entitled to receive calculated in accordance with the relevant provisions of the award plus 20% and, where a weekly employee is employed by an employer for less than a week under any such system, that weekly employee shall be paid the amount earned during the time so employed under the system of payment by results and shall also be paid the appropriate rate calculated in accordance with the provisions of this award for any time he is employed by the employer for the remainder of the week... The terms of any system of payment by results pursuant to clauses (a) and (b) of this clause shall be established by negotiation and agreement between the employer and the majority of employees concerned or their nominated representatives.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, within a couple of hours of that award being handed down, the AMIEU was in touch with the meatworks around the Territory, and certainly with Victoria Valley, Mudginberri and Meneling, and told them it was not happy with what the commissioner had said: 'We do not like it very much. He is not giving us much money but we will accept that. We want you to interpret this award our way. We want you to accept the tally system. For \$x, we will kill x number of cattle'. That was considerably less than the number of cattle that the employees were happy to kill for the amount of money they were getting, which was more, I might add, than the award. It said: 'For that amount of money, we will kill only this number of cattle. Anything over that and we want more money'.

It went to the meatworks operators with a handwritten agreement based on the Western Australian tally system. It did not even type it up. This is a copy of it. This is the one it took out to Victoria Valley and to other abattoirs and said: 'You have 2 hours to sign it or we picket'. Of course, it was told to go on its way. At Victoria Valley, Don Hoar said: 'You have had 10 minutes. You might as well bring them on an hour and 50 minutes earlier and put them out there because I cannot sign that. I have my workers here and they say that you are not their representative. You had better go'. The very next day, the so-called representatives of workers were on the doorstep of Victoria Valley picketing.

The Victoria Valley meatworkers still will not talk to those representatives. One of them was a representative from Katherine and the other one was a representative from Sydney whom I will come back to later. The picketers have been out there since the beginning of May. They have not managed to close the abattoirs, as hard as they have tried. With the collusion of other unions, the AMIEU has attempted to intimidate the operator, the workers, the carriers, the fuel suppliers and the buyers. With the collusion of other unions, it has managed to keep out not only the federal meat inspectors at Mudgenberri but also the Territory meat inspectors at Victoria Valley. I believe it is also sowing a few other seeds now and trying to alienate the workers. What frustrates me is that the workers, the government and the operators are almost powerless in front of the tactics of unscrupulous, power hungry union representatives.

I said earlier that I quite deliberately called the people 'rude and crude'. A representative of the Meat and Allied Trades Federation informs me that a representative of the AMIEU - that very representative who was here with the Western Australian tally system - during hearings in the Arbitration Commission last year in fact dropped his pants in front of the commissioner to show what he thought of the bloke sitting in the chair. I know what would happen to me if I dropped my pants here right now. What happened to that man, Mr Deputy Speaker? He was not charged with contempt, he did not go to jail and he did not get a fine. Why? Because we are dead scared of the unions. The Arbitration Commissioner is dead scared of the unions. He would not take action because all the unions would be out on strike right throughout Australia. Not only are governments powerless in front of them, the Arbitration Commission is powerless in front of them - everybody is powerless in front of these people. They act in contempt of agreements, they act in contempt of people who should be shown some respect and they act in contempt of Australia. I do not understand why that man was not jailed. That is not the only thing he did. He also called the commissioner 'a silly old ...'. He used a word equivalent to an illegitimate.

If we accept what these unions want us to accept, then what we are accepting is the downfall not only of the Northern Territory but of this country. What are we going to accept if we give into these people? I suppose they are people. When I spoke to one of the operators recently, I asked him to describe one of the picketers to me. He said to his wife: 'Go and get me the animal book'. I am really amazed that we allow these people to get away with what they are getting away with. These few half-crazed but cunning union bosses and their cronies have ultimate power over this country. If we want to go along with that, we are bringing down on our heads the devastation of the cattle industry in the Northern Territory which only a few years ago had to suffer having only a few large, union-controlled meatworks. That meant extremely low prices to the grower and that is where we are heading again.

If these meatworks close under the threat that they are facing now, we will see the smaller cattlemen going out of business. The bigger cattleman will send his cattle off to Queensland, Western Australia or overseas. He can afford to do that because he has the type of cattle than can find a market in those places. The small cattlemen, the majority in the Northern Territory, will suffer. They will get less money for their cattle and probably go broke along with the meatworks. We just cannot afford this system. Meatworks that are Territory-owned and Territory-operated are currently operating at Meneling, Victoria Valley and Mudginberri. There are others but those are the ones that are close to home as far as I am concerned. We are likely to see these meatworks close down if we go along with what the unions are doing.

The cattle industry in the Northern Territory has been a major part, probably the major part, of the Territory's economy over most of this century. It may have been overtaken by other things now but it will still have much potential if in fact we can provide the infrastructure to keep it going in the Territory. We have a few stupid people who are going along with their southern union bosses, who would gladly see the Territory meatworks close down. This is what they want. They want to see the cattle going off to the eastern seaboard where the majority of their members and the majority of the big operators and union-controlled meatworks are. They want the cattle down there. They do not give a damn about our meatworks. We have these few stupid meatworkers, and they are only a few. The majority want to work and are happy to work in agreement with the employers.

We have these few stupid people who are prepared to go along with the AMIEU and see our meatworks close down, and see themselves out of jobs. In fact, I rather think that some of them would like to stay on the dole. They are sitting out there at Victoria Valley abattoir collecting the dole, collecting extra money from the union and drinking free beer. It is quite a jaunt. It is a lovely place, a beautiful spot. Those few people who are prepared to picket are on the dole and are quite happy to be on it, I think. But they will see our meatworks close down. They will see the cattle from the big cattlemen going interstate, keeping the southern and eastern states meatworks open while our meatworks close, our cattlemen suffer and the Territory economy suffers.

I am frustrated to the point of exasperation because we are powerless. I begged and begged that we do something about it but we have our hands tied behind our backs. We can do absolutely nothing. I just hope that a few of the meatworks can survive the next few weeks. If they survive the next few weeks, they will probably stay open. The Arbitration Commissioner is sitting again to try to sort the whole thing out, regardless of the fact that these people are in contempt of the award anyway. Also, they have intimidated people to break a clause of the Trade Practices Act. I think it is 44D or something like that. They have intimidated the carriers and the fuel suppliers to break the law and I think we all ought to call on our government to do something definite about it.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, for a while there I thought you and I might be looking at each other alone in the Assembly. I cannot miss this opportunity to bring to honourable members' attention once more the fact that I believe my constituents are the subject of increasing and unnecessary prying into their lives. I will relate a few instances of what I consider to be unnecessary energy expended in the rural area by building inspectors from the Building Branch.

I spoke on this some years ago when I was first elected. I do not know if they are the same building inspectors but I have a pretty fair idea that they are. They were pretty energetic or perhaps they did not have a lot of work to do in town. They came out to the rural area and put 'stop building' notices and 'stop work' notices on chook houses, gates, fences and things like that. After I drew that to the attention of more senior people in town, the energies of these building inspectors were directed elsewhere and my constituents were able to get on with living their lives as ordinary people again without being subjected to this unnecessary interference.

Mr Deputy Speaker, these people are becoming active again. I will give you a couple of instances which I will be drawing to the attention of the relevant people in the Department of Lands. I cannot understand why decisions have been reversed and I cannot understand why these people are working as they are.

I have had it drawn to my attention that there are 2 ladies of mature years in the rural area. They are both widows and have lived alone in their houses for about 8 years. The building inspector visited one lady and said she had to pull down her front verandah because it did not meet certain standards. She has been living there for about 8 years and the house has survived 2 cyclones. She is on a 5-acre block and has only 1 neighbour. The other pensioner lady bought a house, again about 8 years old. She has been told she has to pull the house down. I do not know for what reason. Again, that has survived 2 cyclones.

In these 2 cases, I think a little common sense must prevail, considering the people involved, the sizes of the blocks they are on and how long the houses have been built. A little bit of common sense must prevail and these people should not be victimised further.

In another instance, a couple came to see me. The man has been a reputable builder. He does not work as a builder now but he designed the house that his son intended to build. His son put forward the plans to the Building Board. They were adequate and the plans were approved. As most of us would, the son set about to build his house. However, he was told later to resubmit the plans because a new building inspector in town had found some little discrepancy and the original permit to build had been cancelled. He went in and submitted the plans again. After a lot of fiddling around, he has been able to start building his house.

Another instance was brought to my attention yesterday. One of my constituents works hard in the rural area and he is thinking seriously of going back to Queensland because he feels he is being treated unfairly. This gentleman and his wife bought an old house in town. They brought it out to their block. They submitted plans to have it put on piers on their block. They had the plans approved. A short while after they had their plans approved, they received a stop-work notice in the mail to say that they could not go ahead. They submitted new plans at least once, maybe twice. They had to submit more copies of the plans. I think some of these public servants get carried away with all the copies of things that must be submitted. They have no idea of conservation and all the trees that must be chopped down to make these papers. All they probably do when they get the plans is read them and shred them. Anyway, the plans were submitted at least once, maybe twice. Then he was informed that, if he wanted to go ahead and put this house on piers on his block, he had to take time off work to meet the building inspector on his block. This man is not a highly-paid salary worker; he is just an ordinary wage earner. It is impossible for him to take time off work. He and his wife have bought the house. They are prepared to do the right thing. I consider that he is being victimised.

In both these cases that I have mentioned, the plans were originally passed. I am wondering if these 2 constituents of mine have legal recourse to a bit of fair play. I think that they just might have.

I must follow this next one through. It has been put to me that I was a member of the government when the legislation was passed and I should have done something about it. The Building Code is about 4 cm thick. It is pretty heavy going when you are not an engineer or a builder. I certainly could not wade through it. But when you have to obtain a permit to build a chook shed, I think that is getting a bit ridiculous. Who would worry about a permit to build a chook shed? The chooks certainly will not worry. Your neighbour will not worry. It is getting a bit beyond a joke. We have heard a lot of talk about the need to economise. Different government departments must economise. I am very pleased that the Minister for Lands just came in. We have all heard how we must economise. I suggest to the Minister for Lands that one good way of economising is to economise on the positions of these very energetic inspectors who are visiting the rural area.

I understand that the sheds that do not need a permit are NAC garden sheds. I happen to know the young man who started up this business. I am very pleased to see that the standard of his work is such that his sheds are accepted by the Building Branch without any further plans.



I come to another case of a lady who intended buying one of these sheds. I do not know whether she has it yet. This lady has a 20-acre block and she wanted to put up this NAC garden shed. Most people put garden sheds up pretty close to a house or around the garden. It was most unlikely that she would put it right on her boundary. The bounds of common sense must have been exceeded by the building inspectors when they asked her to submit a detailed plan to scale of her block indicating where she was going to put this NAC garden shed. Again, that is ridiculous. These chaps cannot have too much to do if they are hounding the living daylight out of my constituents over such little things like this. It would suit them better if they stayed in town and really did what building inspectors are supposed to do: go around and inspect all these buildings in town that must have many discrepancies in their plans. They should leave us alone in the rural area so that we can build our chook sheds the way we want to.

Mr HATTON (Lands): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have just heard the most ridiculous statements I have heard in this Assembly since I have been here. The member must realise that the Department of Lands has responsibilities to police legislation. That legislation has been passed through this Assembly while this particular member has been here. She has seen this legislation go through. I am not going to apologise for the actions of building inspectors in carrying out their duties. If the member stood up and criticised the Department of Lands or building inspectors for negligently failing to carry out their duties, then I would have something to be concerned about.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the honourable member is loud on saying that people in the Darwin rural area should be completely devoid of responsibilities under any laws in the Northern Territory. That simply is not the case and nor will it be the case. The member would act far more responsibly if she spoke to her constituents and advised them of their legal responsibilities. After all, she is a member of the Legislative Assembly and has some responsibility to support the laws of this Assembly. If she believes the laws are wrong, she should seek to have them changed.

The member has been to my office on a number of occasions raising complaints but the member refuses to give any details of these complaints which makes it impossible for my department or my ministerial office or myself to follow up on complaints. It becomes an exercise in futility to come in and make vague accusations which are impossible to check. If the member wants to have issues checked out, she can always raise them with me and I will check them out. I am prepared to respect confidentiality but I find it impossible to follow up on vague, unsubstantiated, inaccurately directed complaints that are impossible to follow through.

The member may be seeking to support her electorate goals in the rural area and I have no objection to that. When the member has a genuine criticism or complaint against any of my departments, I would welcome them and would welcome following them up and seeking to resolve them. But I cannot do that unless I get details.

Mr Deputy Speaker, standing in the Assembly and making broad-ranging statements without giving myself, as the responsible minister, the opportunity to check and find out what is going on, or coming into my office with a range of complaints without any details which makes it impossible for me to follow through and check, is futile. I am not in a position to follow every member of the public service in the 4 departments for which I have responsibility. Things do go wrong. I accept that perhaps many of the complaints that the member raises are legitimate but the member would be well advised to have a bit of faith in somebody who is on the same side of this Assembly as herself

and give me an opportunity to follow through so that I can correct any errors. I cannot do that in the absence of detail.

There is one other matter that I would like to discuss briefly tonight. I understand the member for Victoria River has spoken tonight in respect of the dispute concerning abattoirs. It is a matter of vital concern to him and I support his concern. In this respect, I should note a very disturbing development. Prior to my becoming elected to the Assembly, I had been very concerned about something for a number of years. What I refer to relates to a situation that developed yesterday when some employees at one of the abattoirs expressed a belief that they were improperly paid under the agreement reached with the abattoir operator. They approached the Commonwealth Arbitration Inspectorate Service seeking advice on what direction they should take to enforce their rights under the agreements clause in the award. I am advised that they were directed to a trainee arbitration inspector in that department and that trainee inspector said that he had not heard of the award that was in question.

That is quite possible as the award only came into operation on 3 May and perhaps the Australian Public Service had not yet supplied him with a copy or advice of the implementation of that award. Obviously, he does not read the newspaper on industrial relations matters either. Mr Deputy Speaker, having done that, I understand that the employees concerned produced a copy of this award and showed it to this inspector who then read the award - or should I say misread the award - and then advised those employees that, in fact, they were not bound by that award. That was a mistake of an untrained, inexperienced person who does not know how to read an award.

Unfortunately, over the years, in my previous capacity, I was involved in these arguments with government officials on many occasions. Such situations arise when they do not understand what they are doing and have not been trained properly before they are thrust on the unsuspecting public. In this particular case, those employees were so upset at the thought that they had been misled by their employer that they went and spoke to the employees of the other 2 abattoirs involved and yesterday all 3 abattoirs went on strike on the basis of this trainee inspector's advice. Mr Deputy Speaker, he was wrong. Those employees were out of work and a dispute was created in that industry between the employers and their employees on the basis of misinformation presented to employees by somebody who did not know what he was doing.

Today action has been taken and I believe that the Chief Inspector of the Arbitration Inspectorate, who I know is a competent man because I have worked with him on a number of occasions, has had to go down now and try to explain to those employees what the real facts are and, hopefully, recover the situation. I need to put on the record my disturbance at that particular action. Unfortunately, it happens far too often. I trust that the matter will be resolved. However, members should be aware of that background if they hear rumours about what has happened.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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