

PART II

THE QUESTION PAPER

Questions are printed in numerical order

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QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED BY 5 APRIL 1976

FROM 17 FEBRUARY 1976

809 Mr WITHNALL to Dr LETTS -

1. Will he obtain from the Department of the Northern Territory a summary of all correspondence initiated by that department and any other department relating to the initial proposal to reserve and the actual reservation of the Prices Regulation Ordinance 1975 and the Crown Lands Ordinance (No. 4) 1975 indicating the designation of the officers concerned, their section and branch?
2. On how many occasions have the presentation copies of Ordinances been lost and when this has happened did the loss occur in the Darwin, Brisbane or Canberra offices of the department?

810 Mrs. LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

Further to the answer supplied to question 758 -

- (a) does the pollution of Melville Bay include a deposit on the sea bed of Magnesium Chloride and has this deposit killed off seabed marine life in its vicinity;
- (b) if the killing of seabed marine life is not irreversible damage by what means, either natural or through measures to be applied by Nabalco, is the marine life to be reactivated and what reasonable measures can be applied;
- (c) did the pollution of Melville Bay take place over a period of many months or years with both Nabalco and the Department of the Northern Territory knowing that it was taking place and, if so, how can the spillages be described as "accidental";
- (d) how in fact is the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch involved in the area if it only acts "per medium" of the Mines Inspector; and
- (e) do the Branches of the Department of the Northern Territory publish the results of their investigations or are they not available to the public at all?

811 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

When will the protective works at Gove be finished to the point that no further pollution will be possible?

812 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

Further to the answer to question 759 -

- (a) under whose supervision is filling and restoration of mined sand areas behind Wallaby Beach being done; and
- (b) who carried out the work?

QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED BY 5 APRIL 1976

813 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

1. What effects do the current travel and work restrictions placed on the Public Service have on the Department of the Northern Territory's ability to work at Gove?
2. Is the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch staffed to an adequate level to enable it to work effectively at Gove?

814 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

With further reference to Nabalco's operations at Gove -

- (a) has any monitoring of pollution been conducted around the general area of Drimmie Arm and, if so by whom and are the results available;
- (b) has the release of effluent combined with the level of magnesium raised the alkalinity of the sea water around Drimmie Arm to a pH above 10;
- (c) in view of the estimated seventy years of effective life of the Nabalco project, have any studies by the various branches been carried out on the changes in the mangrove vegetation fringing the Arm, or the beds of sea grass located in the Arm; and
- (d) have the levels of chromium and lead taken from samples of red mud and of fish been abnormally high, and, if so what action does the Department intend taking to reduce, or assisting Nabalco to reduce, the high levels?

816 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

1. On what occasions have caustic soda spillages occurred in Nabalco's operations, since February 1973?
2. What was the source and area and estimated volume of each spillage?
3. Where was the caustic soda deposited in each case?
4. Where deposition took place outside the operating plant, was any monitoring carried out before and/or after, who carried out the monitoring, if any, and are the results available?
5. Has the monitoring been carried out at varying distances from the discharge points in the open Bay?
6. What was the average daily discharge of caustic soda for the fiscal years 1974 and 1975 and the average daily discharges for the six months ended December 1975?
7. On what occasions have the security pond gates been opened to allow release of effluent and what was the estimated volume of each release?
8. Was any monitoring carried out before and/or after each release?

QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED BY 5 APRIL 1976

9. Has the Department of the Northern Territory advised Nabalco to strengthen the security pond walls and, if not, how are future conditions of possible breaching of the security pond walls to be met, or is it assumed that the recycling of the various solutions and/or mud will reduce the volume of effluent and therefore reduce the storage holding of the ponds during the wet?

FROM 24 FEBRUARY 1976

817 Mr WITHNALL to Mr TAMBLING -

Has the Darwin Reconstruction Commission furnished to the Australian Government any and, if so, what advice with respect to matters relating to the expenditure of public and private moneys in and in connection with development and construction in the Darwin area?

FROM 31 MARCH 1976

822 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr TAMBLING -

When will the rehabilitation of Administration Block 3, Mitchell St. Darwin, be completed and when and by whom will it be occupied?

824 Mr MANUELL to Dr LETTS -

I refer to the consortium which proposes to take over the Alice Springs abattoirs and ask: what is their programme for the operation and development of the abattoirs and is it intended to process all grades of meat?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

760 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

- (a) How many Environmental Impact Statements have been called for within the Northern Territory?
- (b) What officers prepare such statements?

ANSWER

- (a) No Environmental Impact Statements have been called for within the Northern Territory in the terms of the Environmental Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974-75 which is administered by the Minister for Environment Housing and Community Development. Projects within the Northern Territory for which E.I.S.'s or other environmental studies and reports have been, or are being, prepared in response to government policy are:

Ranger Uranium Mines,
Darwin's Second Powerhouse,
Gove Red Mud Leases,
MacArthur River Mines Project,
Marrara and MacMillans Road Industrial Sub-divisions
(suspended following Cyclone Tracy),
Darwin's New Town Development (also suspended).

- (b) The preparation of Environmental Impact Statements is the responsibility of the proposer of the project requiring a statement. The preparation of the statements and reports referred to in (a) above have involved a wide variety of professions both within and outside of government service.

767 Mr TUNGUTALUM to Mr TUXWORTH -

What plans does the Water Resources Branch, or any other department, have to provide water for the 50 000 gallon elevated tank installed near subdivided freehold Sections 462, 463 and 475 Hundred of Strangways?

ANSWER

The Water Supply Undertaking has no 50,000 gallon elevated tank installed in this area. There are no immediate plans to provide reticulated water supply to these sections.

769 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr RYAN -

Concerning the 1,500 sheets of high-quality teak ply wood given to the people of Darwin from the Government and people of Burma -

- (a) How many of these ply wood sheets have been distributed;
- (b) By whom were they distributed;
- (c) To whom were they distributed;
- (d) When were they distributed;

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

- (e) Where are the remaining sheets being held; and
- (f) To what purpose is it intended to put the remaining sheets?

ANSWER

- (a) Eight of a total of 1,500 sheets.
- (b) At the request of the Department of Northern Australia.
- (c) To Mr A.C. Helberg, an aged pensioner, to enable him to repair furniture which was damaged in the cyclone.
- (d) Early August 1975.
- (e) Distribution of the remaining plywood has been placed in the hands of the Corporation of the City of Darwin. All plywood is stored under cover at the Municipal Depot.
- (f) As there is not sufficient plywood to make a general distribution to the people of Darwin, it is intended to allocate it to organisations which will be able to use it in projects which will benefit the citizens of Darwin. All requests for plywood in response to applications which were called on 6 June 1975 have been referred to the Corporation. Distribution of plywood in response to these requests has not yet been made as the organisations concerned, while they have suitable projects in mind, have not yet commenced this work. An example of the type of project for which the plywood will be used will be the lining of a feature wall in the Civic Centre on which a plaque will be mounted, commemorating the gift from the people of Burma.

815 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

- 1. What role is the Department of the Northern Territory adopting in the negotiations presently underway with the Aboriginal communities of Arnhemland for further land to be used for Nabalco's operation?
- 2. Is the land in question envisaged for future use as a red mud pond or as a security pond?
- 3. What areas, including mangroves, are envisaged for future use within the next seven years and what total area does this involve?

ANSWER

- 1. The Department of the Northern Territory's role in the negotiations between Nabalco and the Aborigines is to ensure that the interests of both parties are preserved as far as is consistent with the overall national interest.
- 2. A small portion of the land will be used for the security pond, but the principal use will be for the disposal of ferro silt.
- 3. In the next 7 years about 160 hectares will be used for disposal of ferro silt, none of which will be in the mangroves area.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

818 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

I refer to the contract of \$20,000 for the transport of donated timber by Jackson & Spring Pty. Ltd. of Rocklea from Queensland to Darwin and ask, what does the Department of the Northern Territory intend doing with this timber and is it in Darwin?

ANSWER

All the timber donated by the people of Coffs Harbour (190 tons) has been carried to Darwin at the expense of the Federal Government. It has been delivered to the Corporation of the City of Darwin for distribution and use as the Corporation sees fit.

The Corporation advises that it decided to limit the use of the timber to Corporation purposes and public buildings because the timber was of varying sizes and there was insufficient for a general distribution. Use has been delayed because of the severe wet season conditions, but approximately one-third of the timber has been so used.

819 Mr STEELE to Mr TAMBLING -

1. Why did the Home Finance Trustee delay approval of the loan application of J.C.S. & M.E. Francis, Lot 4625, Daniels Street, Ludmilla submitted on 12 November 1975?
2. Why was approval not given?
3. When will approval be granted?

ANSWER

1. The Home Finance Trustee did not unduly delay approval of Mr & Mrs J.C.S. & M.E. Francis's loan.
2. J.C.S. & M.E. Francis of Lot 4625 Daniels Street, Ludmilla submitted an application on 12th November 1975. The papers were filed and submitted to the appropriate interviewing officer on 13 November 1975.

While the necessary investigations to determine eligibility were being carried out, an announcement was made that all available funds under the 6% concessional loan scheme had been committed, and that no new approvals could be given until additional funds were allocated.

Mr & Mrs Francis's application was still processed up to the approval stage and submitted to the Home Finance Trustee awaiting approval.

3. Application by Mr & Mrs Francis was approved by the Home Finance Trustee on 4 March 1976.

820 Mr KENTISH to Miss ANDREW -

1. Is any section of the police force currently investigating allegations made by Mr Clyde Reborse of the Finnis River Cattle

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Company that his stock has been interfered with and illegal branding has taken place?

2. If investigations are being made which section of the force is conducting them?

ANSWER

1. No.
2. See Part 1 above.

821 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr POLLOCK -

1. What funds have been allocated to the Family Planning Association by the Federal Government and how much was made available for expenditure in the Territory?
2. Do medical officers and nursing staff assisting the association receive payment for their services?

ANSWER

1. Family Planning Associations are jointly funded by Health Department and Social Security Department.

Social Security Department funds the clinical services of the Association, which is by far the largest component.

Health Department provides funds for administrative costs,

Health Department funds for State and Territory Associations totalled \$183,450 of which \$1,164 was for the Northern Territory Association. Expenditure so far this financial year totals \$970.

\$250,000 was allocated to the Australian Federation of Family Planning Association. Of this amount \$10,950 was earmarked for the Northern Territory. The actual sum expended by the Australian Federation in the Northern Territory will not be available until audited accounts are received after the end of the financial year.

In addition to direct grants by Health Department, additional funds were made available in the form of Health Programme grants totalling \$885,913 for State and Territory Associations. The Northern Territory's allocation from this sum was \$12 680.

\$24,794 was made available for expenditure in the Northern Territory as per details above.

2. Medical and nursing staff are paid on a sessional basis when attending clinics.

823 Mr MANUELL to Dr LETTS -

Will the disease eradication programmes to which the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch is already committed be adversely affected by restrictions on staff travel and, if so, to what extent?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ANSWER

The Tuberculosis and Brucellosis Eradication Programmes of the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch of the Department of the Northern Territory have been relatively unaffected by restrictions on staff travel to the present time. This is because stock movements and musterings are at their usual seasonal low point.

Once the normal dry season movements and musterings increase markedly from April onwards, staff travel will increase. In addition requests for new whole-herd T.B. control programmes are being received. Funds for travel to service both these programmes are expected to be adequate.

976 Mr ROBERTSON to Mr POLLOCK -

1. At what stage of construction is the sewerage scheme at Papunya?
2. When is it anticipated it will be completed?
3. What are the reasons for delay in completing the scheme?
4. Are some construction projects at present under construction at Papunya - for example, hospital and houses - designed to utilise the sewerage system before they can be put into use?

ANSWER

1. Work completed includes reticulation, pump station and lagoons. Still outstanding is pipe works at lagoons and commissioning of complete system.
2. It is anticipated that work will be completed by July 1976.
3. Failure of a contractor resulted in cancelling of the contract and the need to make alternative arrangements.
4. It is expected the sewerage system will be operational prior to completion of the hospital.

977 Mr ROBERTSON to Mr POLLOCK -

1. At what stage of completion are the following houses being constructed at Papunya -
 - a) Atco type homes
 - b) brick homes similar to present Department of NT design:
and
 - c) Dowsett contract?
2. When are the houses expected to be completed?
3. Are the houses designed with individual septic tanks, or for connection to the sewerage scheme at Papunya?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

ANSWER

1. a. Atco type homes for Department of Education are complete.
b. Brick Department of N.T. design houses are 90% complete.
c. Dowsett Homes - Company has been placed under receivership.
At the time of failure of the contractor 4 residences were 95% complete, 2 residences were 50% complete.
2. a. Atco now complete.
b. Estimate late April.
c. Estimate 6 months to complete work from acceptance of tender.
3. The sewerage system is for the collection of septic tank effluent by a reticulation system. Therefore houses are designed with individual septic tanks which will be connected to sewerage system.

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978 Mr EVERINGHAM to Miss ANDREW -

Can the honourable member advise me whether it is a fact that in schools run by the Department of Education in Darwin children will be left unattended by their teachers for a period of 2 hours?

ANSWER

Schoolchildren will not be left unattended. Each principal has ensured that a skeleton staff will be there so that adequate supervision will be available for any children who attend school whilst teachers are out on strike.

979 Mr DONDAS to Dr LETTS -

Is the Majority Leader able to give any indication as to when the Minister for the Northern Territory will appoint an Administrator for the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

I regret that I am unable to provide a satisfactory answer. When an Administrator of the Northern Territory is appointed, I presume the announcement will be made by the Minister for the Northern Territory. I understand that considerable progress has been made in the matter, to the point of selection, and it is at the stage now where formal ratification is probably all that is needed. In view of this, I expect that there will be an announcement within a few days; but I did hold expectations of that sort earlier which were not realised.

980 Mr STEELE to Dr LETTS -

Is the Majority Leader aware that the opening of the Katherine Meat Works has been postponed from late April to June?

ANSWER

I have not heard any definite announcement to this effect from the meatworks management but there are strong and fairly authoritative rumours to that effect circulating in the Top End. I believe that there is still some doubt on the opening of the works. This is extremely bad news for an industry that is already in critical circumstances and I am hopeful that tomorrow's sitting day may present another opportunity for some debate on the state of the beef industry and I can provide whatever information is available to me at that time.

981 Mr VALE to Mr RYAN -

Can he advise when and where the next Rural Road Conference will be held?

ANSWER

The date for the next Rural Road Conference cannot be set until such time as the programmes are known.

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982 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr SPEAKER -

Last week I received a telegram advising this Assembly would reconvene on Tuesday. On Monday morning, I heard on the ABC that the sittings had been postponed till this day and I received that advice late Monday. Why was the ABC advised of the change of date before the members of this Assembly or at least this member?

ANSWER

I have had some forewarning of this question. On Saturday afternoon, the 27th, the Whip of the Majority Party rang me and requested that the Assembly meeting be postponed till Wednesday from the original meeting date of Tuesday because he was unable to guarantee that all Country-Liberal Party members could be present due to the shortness of the notice of the special meeting and because of airline interruptions. Unwillingly, I agreed that it was a reasonable request. However, as Mr Clerk is not on the phone, I was unable to contact him until Monday at 8 30 am and he sent telegrams out immediately. Perhaps the delay of the honourable member receiving her notice of the change of date of the meeting should be brought to the notice of the honourable Executive Member for Transport and Secondary Industry in his capacity as being responsible for PMG matters. However, I do apologise for my indiscretion in allowing the media access to the information before all honourable members had been notified.

983 Mr WITHNALL to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he aware of any proposal or discussion relating to the introduction of a bill to increase stamp duty?

ANSWER

I am not aware of any proposals or discussions to increase stamp duty.

984 Mr VALE to Mr RYAN -

Can he advise when the rail line between Alice Springs and Port Augusta will be reopened?

ANSWER

I do not have that information at the moment but will endeavour to find out later today and have the answer for the honourable member tomorrow.

985 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr RYAN -

Can he advise me why, in view of the delays of up to and over 3 months, in many instances, in telephone connections in the Darwin area and throughout the Territory generally, private subcontractors should not be able to install telephone equipment at the subscriber's expense and to PMG specifications?

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ANSWER

I did have prior knowledge of this question and contacted the Telecom Australia manager in Darwin. It is not the general practice of that department to have private contractors install their equipment. The only time that this happens is in the installation of special telephone systems - such as PABX etc - which are installed by the manufacturer or the subcontractor and supervised by the PMG. I agree with the honourable member for Jingili that perhaps it would be a way of overcoming the problem, but at the moment the Telecom people do not intend using private contractors, at this stage to try to catch up on the backlog of telephone installations. This applies to the whole of Australia.

986 Mr WITHNALL to Dr LETTS -

I address this question to the Majority Leader on behalf of the member for Elsey. Will the honourable member investigate the possibility of establishing a canning factory in the Northern Territory for the purpose of assistance to the beef industry and to supply a demand from countries to the north of us for canned food?

ANSWER

Yes, I will make inquiries through and with the department to see what advantages such a cannery would offer to the Northern Territory. Some honourable members will know that the question of canneries is one that has been alive and raised over many years now. It is probably something like 15 years ago since the Federal Government and Department of Territories, as it was then known, made a site available for a cannery near Darwin. That site was never taken up. Since then, the matter has been raised and pursued on a number of occasions, particularly by the former member for Jingili in the Legislative Council. The department does make periodic investigations into the feasibility of such a project; I will check on the latest views and convey them to the honourable member.

987 Mr KENTISH to Dr LETTS -

Is it a fact that although the Northern Territory has 4.5 per cent of the Australian cattle population, it received only 1.5 per cent of carry-on finance and 0.0018 per cent of rural reconstruction finance? Was this because the states matched Commonwealth financial assistance and the Northern Territory, having no Treasury of its own, was unable to provide funds, or is this the reward for being a federal responsibility?

ANSWER

I cannot vouch for the accuracy of the figures used by the honourable member for Arnhem but I can say that the amount allocated by the Commonwealth Government to the Northern Territory for rural reconstruction purposes was, on a pro rata basis - whichever way you look at it - lower than the amount allocated to the various states. The reason for this is probably the second

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suggestion advanced by the honourable member, that we are a federal responsibility and we have not got the protection of state powers and the extra muscle which a state has in these matters.

It is not the first time we have suffered from this kind of situation. Some honourable members who have been connected with agriculture may well remember that, over a long period, some 20 years, when the Commonwealth Government disbursed money to the states for what they called the "Commonwealth Extension Services Grant" which provided special advisory services for the benefit of farming throughout Australia, this territory received not one cent out of approximately \$7m or \$8m which was given per year to the other states for this purpose. As a consequence, agricultural extension services of the Northern Territory are in a run down and decrepit condition, far below anything which exists in the states. Until we make progress in the direction of responsible self government we are going to suffer the kind of disadvantages which are represented by the low allocation of funds to rural reconstruction and other cases which we have seen in the past.

988 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr RYAN -

I ask this question on behalf of the member for Elsey. Is it a fact that Borroloola has an airmail service from Darwin and Mt Isa and does Gulf Transport convey mail etc, in excess of what can be carried by air to Borroloola each week from Darwin?

ANSWER

I do not have that information available. I will attempt to find it out later today and advise the Assembly.

989 Mr WITHNALL to Mr TAMBLING -

How much of the budget of about \$100m has been committed by the Darwin Reconstruction Commission and has there been a decision made that no further money will be committed this financial year?

ANSWER

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission budget figure for 1975-76 was of the order of \$98m. It has been necessary for the Reconstruction Commission to approach the Government for an increase in that cash amount to increase the figure to \$110m to meet all present contractual requirements of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission. In fact, the whole \$110m now appropriated will be paid out by the Darwin Reconstruction Commission.

990 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr SPEAKER -

You would be aware that the Assembly is without a photograph copying machine. Is it intended that the facilities provided by the Assembly in future will include such a machine?

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ANSWER

You probably are aware that a photocopier was part of the equipment of the Legislative Council. I consider it to be a fundamental piece of equipment of the Assembly. Unfortunately, the machine used by the Council is now beyond repair and funds have been sought from Treasury to provide a new one. In recent weeks I have had a communication from the Treasury querying the need for these funds and I have protested most strongly at the intention of the Treasury to exclude these funds.

991 Mr MANUELL to Miss ANDREW -

Is it a fact that the Northern Territory Apprenticeship Board has insufficient funds to permit day release in Alice Springs and Darwin Community Colleges and that some trade classes are having to attend block releases interstate? If the answer to these questions is yes, what is the plan for funding in the future and does the appropriation plan include proposals for day release for recognised trades?

ANSWER

The Northern Territory Apprenticeship Board does not have sufficient funds as it received a further appropriation of funds last October. The Darwin Community College arranged the courses. Problems have been experienced with regard to staff and a large apprenticeship increase of 300 per cent to the normal annual intake. The Apprenticeship Board does not consider that Treasury would pass the travelling expenses of pupils to attend day releases. Pupils do attend block releases interstate and will do so in the future as there are no facilities here for some trades. I have taken up this matter with the Minister for Education and I am awaiting an answer.

992 Mrs LAWRIE to Dr LETTS -

My question concerns the Cattle Price Stabilization Ordinance 1975 which is of some interest to the member for Elsey. This Ordinance was passed in April 1975 and reserved on 26 August 1975. I believe members have had advice from the Acting Administrator that questions of basic policy will need to be resolved in discussions between Federal Government departments and the Assembly before further progress will be possible with respect to the question of assent. I ask if these discussions have started, are ensuing and, in fact, what is the general status of that legislation?

ANSWER

Taking the last part of the question first, the legislation is largely one for the industry itself as well as the Government. In order to make the scheme work, there has to be a certain number of known participants who are willing to go along with that form of assistance. At meetings of the Cattlemen's Association and the Cattle Producers Council in recent times the indications have been that the priorities which the industry accords to assistance take the form of a better system of carry-on

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finance as an urgent requirement, both in the terms of the ceilings of the loan and the renewal of loan conditions. They also stress attention to debt reconstruction and the need for constant pressure on the government to give consideration to some kind of freight assistance. The industry would find these forms of assistance of greater advantage than the implementation of the beef cattle price stabilization scheme at this stage. At the time the legislation was framed, the economic situation of the industry was considerably different. By the time the legislation could have been commenced, the price of 6c or 7c per pound of beef had sunk to a level which virtually made the scheme unworkable in the form in which it was passed here. It has been generally agreed in discussions with the officers of the department and the minister that, for the scheme to become workable again, there would have to be a substantial increase in the level of the base price of beef towards the cost of production, probably something in the order of 15c or 16c a pound. At this moment, we do not have a firm indication of what the starting price for beef this year will be or even whether there will be one in the event of the Katherine Meat Works not opening. The matter is still under consideration but the views of the industry have been taken into account in discussion and these lean towards other forms of assistance at this time.

993 Mr DONDAS to Mr POLLOCK -

In view of the Federal Government's intention to ban all cigarette advertising on electronic media is he able to give me any indication when the ban will take effect in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

My understanding is that the proposals will be operative from 1 September this year and will apply throughout Australia. It has been pointed out that a ban on this form of advertising on electronic media which the Federal Government does control is discriminatory against other forms of media advertising. This is a matter which will be further discussed at the conference of the State and Commonwealth Ministers of Health in June in Adelaide. I hope to be represented at that meeting and these matters will be further discussed then.

994 Mr EVERINGHAM to Miss ANDREW -

Can she advise me whether it is in fact correct that the Attorney-General of Australia will be visiting the Northern Territory during the month of April and, if so, will arrangements be made for members of the Assembly to meet him?

ANSWER

The Attorney-General does plan to visit Darwin between April 21 and April 23 and I have asked his private secretary and the Attorney-General's Department in Darwin if time can be made available shortly after his arrival for members of the Assembly to speak with him.

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995 Mr KENTISH to Mr POLLOCK -

I have a press release for the Northern Territory dated 17 July 1974: "The Minister for the Northern Territory Dr Rex Patterson today said steps were being taken to set up a Liquor Commission in the Northern Territory. Dr Patterson said it was expected that the Liquor Commission would be appointed and in operation in the near future." We know what has happened to Dr Rex Patterson, but could the honourable member tell me what has happened to the Liquor Commission?

ANSWER

The words of the former Minister were all well and good but to provide a Liquor Commission you must have legislation. Since he made those statements, he was in a position to assist by providing the necessary manpower to draft legislation for this Assembly. However, nothing further eventuated. In the last few months, more work has been done on this matter and there is presently before the Executive a submission on the complete review of the Licensing Ordinance, including the establishment of a Liquor Commission. I hope that, within the not too distant future, we will have the green light from the Executive and sufficient draftsmen to prepare this legislation.

996 Mr MANUELL to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he aware of a transfer of funds in excess of \$100,000 being made to the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in recent days? If so, can he give me any indication on what these funds are to be used for?

ANSWER

I am not aware of the transfer of funds of this proportion. I would ask that the honourable member place this question on notice.

997 Mr DONDAS to Miss ANDREW -

How much money is allocated by the Federal Government to operate the Australian Legal Aid Office in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

I would ask that the question be placed on notice.

998 Mr VALE to Dr LETTS -

Can he advise the southernmost region of the Northern Territory in which the oriental fruit fly has been detected?

ANSWER

The oriental fruit fly seems to be proceeding on its merry way and every meeting I am able to give a progress report. It has now been discovered at Newcastle Waters and that is the southernmost limit of its range. Traps have been set along the Victoria

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Highway out as far as Timber Creek and further west and also along the Barkly Highway towards Mt Isa. The collections from these districts have not yet been processed. The work is going on all the time and the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch keeps me closely informed about what is happening.

The views of the entomologists are that they may be getting somewhere near the limit of this pest's range at the present time in the Northern Territory. However, they cannot be sure of that for a while yet. I might mention that I have had notification from the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch that there are some flaws in the Plant Diseases Ordinance of the Northern Territory which may need to be corrected in order to cope with situations which might arise for some greater activity on the quarantine front. Following discussions, I will probably be introducing legislation on that matter in the near future.

999 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr RYAN -

My question refers to the Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1975 which was given urgency when introduced by the member for Jingili. It appears that advice has been received from the Acting Administrator that it has been reserved as it became apparent that objections raised by Treasury and the Underwriters Association warranted detailed consideration and considerable progress has been made towards the drafting of legislation to replace this ordinance. Has he been involved with discussions with the relevant department and/or any other organisation as to the drafting of legislation to supersede the ordinance? If so, can he give an indication as to when it is likely to be introduced and if urgency will be sought?

ANSWER

In reading a report from the Acting Administrator, I was a bit concerned with the words "considerable progress". I do not really feel that there has been "considerable progress" made. I have been involved in discussions with the Department of the Northern Territory Transport Planning Branch. There is a paper which has been referred to the insurance organisation and an attempt will be made to come up with satisfactory legislation. I am presently waiting for a meeting to be arranged between the officers of the Department of the Northern Territory, the insurance companies and myself to try to implement some satisfactory legislation. There are many problems involved in the framing of an ordinance which will cover this particular problem particularly those events which have taken place in the past where companies have in fact gone broke. I hope that legislation will be introduced in the latter half of this year.

1000 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr RYAN -

In view of the fact that the Majority Leader advised this House a few moments ago that the oriental fruit fly has penetrated as far south as Newcastle Waters, can he advise me if it, too, is held up by the flooded causeway in that area?

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ANSWER

I cannot answer this although I would like to take the credit for it if our road is in fact holding it up. It would be the only good thing that has happened at Newcastle Waters this year, so far.

1001 Mr KENTISH to Mr RYAN -

I refer to the half mile of the Stuart Highway from the airport gates to Bombing Road, which has been under construction since 1974, about 18 months altogether. Is there a possibility that this road will be available to the public some time during this year?

ANSWER

It is just that I should be asked that question once more because I can positively say, in view of the fact that the contractors have been working on the road since last Saturday, that unless something unforeseen happens within the next week or so, that road will definitely be opened. I hope this is the last time I will have to answer a question about that piece of road.

1002 Mr ROBERTSON to Miss ANDREW -

Is it a fact that an employer of an apprentice cannot terminate the employment of an apprentice on the ground that the employer is no longer able to pay wages? Is it also a fact that an employer must physically close down the business and not re-enter that business in order to be relieved of responsibility to the apprentice? If the answer to those two questions is no, would she please make sure that the officers of the Apprenticeship Board are aware of it?

ANSWER

I was given some forewarning of this question and I contacted the Acting Chairman of the Apprenticeship Board this morning. He advised me that the answer is, in fact, no. Indeed, at the moment we have several apprentices from Brisbane up here seeking employment because they are no longer in the employment of the person to whom they were originally indentured. I will ensure that members of the board are aware of this.

1003 Mr WITHNALL to Dr LETTS -

Has there been any case in which the oriental fruit fly has found to have actually infested fruit in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

To the best of my knowledge, every case of identification has been made from flies caught in fly traps. I know of no case in which the fly has been recovered from infested fruit. I am pretty certain of that information in relation to what I might call domestic fruit anyway, fruit grown in gardens. I am not quite so sure in relation to native fruit. There is a pretty strong

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suggestion amongst the entomologists that the fly is not behaving as pathogenically as it does in a place such as Hawaii, where it has been a major pest of the fruit industry, and there is no evidence, I believe, as yet to suggest that it is behaving in this kind of way in the Top End of the Northern Territory. This is an area which will require considerable further investigation which may take some time. I will check on the answer and inform the honourable member precisely.

1004 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

Is the Darwin Reconstruction Commission preparing to call tenders for construction of new homes in the next financial year?

ANSWER

I am not aware that the 1976-77 budget has yet been finalised. The Darwin Reconstruction Commission has put forward its estimates and requirements and they certainly included proposals for the construction of new homes, for the repair and maintenance of damaged homes, and for a large proportion of rebuilt homes on existing decks to be reinstated. It would be foolish of me to predict what the contracts will be because they will be totally dependent on the 1976-77 budget and the honourable member will be aware from the report in yesterday's newspaper that the General Manager of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission is in Canberra today having discussions with Treasury with regard to the 1976-77 program.

1005 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

My question concerns the caravans bought by the Australian Government for use as temporary accommodation. I believe this matter is being handled by the Department of the Northern Territory. Can the honourable member advise the number of caravans presently being held in the store yards and not being used at all, the number of caravans on site but not yet connected, and the reason for these caravans not being utilised given the present housing shortage?

ANSWER

Mr Speaker, I do not have that information readily available. I will seek it and make it available to the honourable member.

1006 Mr MANUELL to Miss ANDREW -

What is the proposed opening date of the Braitling Primary School in Alice Springs, and is it planned to accommodate the students from the Ross Park School, while the Ross Park School is being revamped in the Braitling Primary School? Is there also a proposal to commence upgrading the Ross Park School immediately those students vacate the Ross Park School?

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ANSWER

I am advised that the Education Department is taking over Braitling Primary School at the end of this year and hopefully the opening date will be February 1977, that is at the start of the 1977 school year. Yes, students from Ross Park School will be accommodated at the Braitling Primary School if the Ross Park School is revamped; this is dependent on whether money is available. Regarding the proposal to commence upgrading the Ross Park Primary School immediately, this is of course dependent both on funds and the quick letting of the contract.

1007 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

Is the honourable member aware of, or has he had any discussions on, the removal of subsidised rent on Australian Government Public Service Homes in the Northern Territory; that is, the introduction of economic rent?

ANSWER

I have not been acquainted with any studies in this regard. I will certainly make inquiries of the Department of the Northern Territory to find out if there are any departmental reports or studies going on and make the information available to the honourable member.

1008 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

Is it true that the Department of the Northern Territory are charging full rent to government employees for accommodation which is substandard because of cyclone damage?

ANSWER

No, it is not true to say that full rent is being charged on sub-standard dwellings. The manner in which the department determines the rent of buildings in Darwin at the moment is that in residential housing there are several categories, I believe three, each with a maximum rent which is charged depending on the assessed status of that particular building. A very poorly constructed, lack of facilities type of home attracts a maximum rent of \$10 a week; the inbetween home where the electricity and linings are in the building but perhaps not up to full standard has an inbetween figure. Where a house has been restored to pre-cyclone standard or is a new home, then the maximum rent charged at the moment is 10 per cent of salary with a maximum of \$25 a week. From discussions with departmental officers, I have learned that there have been cases where incorrect assessments of the building's status have taken place; however, these have always been adjusted when brought to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

1009 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr POLLOCK -

It has come to my attention that the Department of Health may well be charging pensioners who are in-patients of the Darwin hos-

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pital if they elect to continue to avail themselves of the services of their own doctors. As I recall the position, an undertaking was given to this House by the honourable member on behalf of the department, before the time of the introduction of the Medibank charging legislation that we approved last year, that expectant mothers and pensioners would be permitted to retain the services of their own doctors in the hospital without any daily bed charge being made. In fact I understand that they are being charged \$20 per day. Is it a fact that old age pensioners are being charged for the occupation of a bed whilst under treatment in the Darwin Hospital and wishing to retain the services of their private doctor?

ANSWER

This is a matter which has been going on for some considerable time, as the member for Jingili has mentioned, and was the subject of some considerable negotiation between members of this Assembly and the Department of Health at the time that legislation to implement the Medibank system in the Territory was passed by this Assembly. The situation in relation to the pensioners is that the Department of Health agreed for pensioners to be treated free of charge, without the \$20 per day being imposed on them by their own private doctor, on the understanding of course that the doctor entered into an agreement with the hospital in relation to payment; that is, that the doctors would be paid by the hospital on a sessional basis. The doctors, at the time of these negotiations, said that they would rather treat the patient at no charge, than enter into an agreement. Some have entered into an agreement but others have declined to enter into an agreement and in consequence it is possible that some pensioners who are being treated by their own doctor, doctors who want to charge the pensioners the fee and who are not prepared to enter into an agreement with the Department of Health, could be paying the \$20 a day bed charge.

1010 Mr DONDAS to Miss ANDREW -

Is it true that the Births and Deaths Registration Section is short staffed, and is it also true that it takes as long as one month for a person to obtain a certified copy of his or her birth certificate?

ANSWER

Yes, it is true that the office issuing birth, death and other registration certificates is very short staffed. It is taking 3 to 4 weeks to obtain a certified copy of a birth certificate. However, I am assured that this position is improving. The problem is that only one staff member is available to handle birth, death and marriage certificates.

1011 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr POLLOCK -

Is it not a fact that he conveyed to this House an unconditional undertaking by the Director of Health that charges would not be levied against old age pensioners in hospital under

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Medibank using their own private medical practitioners?

ANSWER

I do not concede that it is a fact that it was an unequivocal acceptance of that proposal. The acceptance of the proposal has always been on the basis that the doctors would accept a fee. They are declining to do so.

1012 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr RYAN -

Is he aware that there was some \$400,000 appropriated for resurfacing the road from Gove airport to Yirrkala Mission? Have tenders been called for this road in recent times? Have any tenders been received and, in the light of the economy at the present moment, will this appropriation remain?

ANSWER

I do not have any exact details. However, I would say that, if the tenders had not been called prior to the decision being made that no further work be committed, I would assume that the job has in fact been deferred. I will check with the department concerned and find out the status of that particular contract when the decision was taken to stop all further contracts.

1013 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

On his recent trip to Canberra has the Federal Government given him any indication as to whether the Darwin Reconstruction Act will be repealed before its term is due to expire?

ANSWER

I have received no information relating to the possible early termination date of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission but I am aware that it is under review.

1014 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

My question refers to the free area. He made a statement I believe at the last sittings that such an area would be declared. I ask him when such an area would be gazetted so that objections can be received, considered and the area can proceed?

ANSWER

I am surprised that the gazettal has not yet taken place. From the information that was made available to me to use at the last session of the Assembly by the Acting Administrator, I would have hoped that by now the gazettal would have taken place. I will follow this matter up with the Clerk of the Administrator's Council to find out why there is a delay.

1015 Mr DONDAS to Mr PERRON -

When will Darwin get an area for nude bathing as provided in the Nudity Ordinance?

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ANSWER

I do have some information relating to this question. There are several problems which have arisen in relation to getting a free beach for Darwin. The ordinance states that all boundaries of the proposed free beach area shall have signs erected defining the area during a period when objections can be lodged. This includes the seaward boundary. Advice from Crown Law indicates that the signs should have fine details defining the boundaries including the various degrees of the compass as one sees in applications for mining leases and the like. The signs must also be visible from any point around the boundaries of the area to be declared. Current estimates to have the required signs made, printed and installed is around \$5,000 and that excluded the problem of the sign at the low water mark which will obviously be under water for most of the time. To further complicate the issue, the High Court has recently decided that some doubt exists as to the validity of state-type legislation which relates to any area projecting into the sea. Crown Law have some reservations on that aspect. In the light of these problems, unfortunately we cannot give an assurance as to exactly when Darwin will have a free beach area.

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1016 Mr MANUELL to Miss ANDREW -

Is she aware that the Alice Springs Community College this year does not cater for the plumbing trade even though it did last year? If so, can she advise if it is a fact that this year no plumbing trade is available in Alice Springs because the Darwin Community College claimed the plumbing trades tutor to avoid breaking staff ceilings? Further, is she aware that plumbing trade apprentices this year have to travel to and from Brisbane for 8 week block releases?

ANSWER

It is a fact that the Alice Springs Community College does not cater for the plumbing trade this year. In 1975, following the cyclone, the Darwin lecturer in plumbing was transferred to Alice Springs Community College. Block release courses catering for all Northern Territory apprentices in plumbing were offered. The arrangement was temporary and unsatisfactory because the workshop facilities in Alice Springs were inadequate for the teaching of the plumbing trade and there was only one lecturer available at Alice Springs to teach either 40 hours per week of plumbing or 40 hours per week of carpentry and joinery.

The reason that no plumbing trade is available this year is that the plumbing lecturer on transfer to the Alice Springs Community College for 1975 was recalled to Darwin in 1976. As a result of this, no course is offered. The facilities are inadequate whereas the Darwin Community College has excellent facilities. The number of plumbing trade apprentices in Alice Springs, 7, does not warrant the cost of duplicating facilities in that centre. The college has had only 2 plumbing lecturers on establishment both assigned to Darwin by agreement when allocation of the total college establishment was made. Block release courses in plumbing which would have catered for all Northern Territory apprentices were not offered at Darwin Community College because of the great time commitment which the Darwin Community College cannot cope with along with other commitments in the plumbing trade.

In answer to the third part of the question, plumbing trade apprentices for all Northern Territory centres except Darwin travel to Brisbane for 7 weeks for full-time block courses. There are 7 plumbing apprentices from Alice Springs, 4 from other centres going to Yeronga Technical College. It costs about the same amount per apprentice to send an out-of-town apprentice to either Brisbane or Darwin for a block course; dearer air fares to Brisbane are compensated for by cheaper accommodation rates there. The costs are met by the Department of Education through the Northern Territory Apprenticeship Board. Of the apprentices scheduled to train interstate this year, about half could be trained at Darwin Community College if they were able to appoint additional lecturing staff required to mount the block courses. Regarding the college staff ceiling, it is 214 for 1975-76, 16 positions of those were allocated to Alice Springs Community College but the ceiling was reduced to 190 on 2 February 1976. The Alice Springs Community College still has its full complement of 16.

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1017 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

I refer to the cut of \$10m in the Northern Territory Housing Commission's present budget. Could the honourable member advise whether this cut is affecting only Housing Commission projects in Darwin or does it affect other projects in other centres and can he advise any details?

ANSWER

The cut that the honourable member refers to is the balance of the unauthorised or uncommitted works program. It is in effect the commitment value that has not yet been agreed to for the Housing Commission's work. The cash component of that I believe is in the order of \$1m required in this financial year. In the figures that I gave the House yesterday, I indicated that there was a net increase of \$4.3m in the budget appropriations to the Department of the Northern Territory administration capital works. That increase was made up of a total increase to the Department of the Northern Territory's appropriations for the year of \$9.9m, which included the \$5.5m for the Home Finance Trustee, and a reduction in the department's estimates for the year of \$5.6m therefore producing a net increase of \$4.3m. I am not aware of the detail of how those figures were arrived at. I believe that the department, as a result of these decisions which were made earlier this week, will now be relaying to its various branches and statutory authorities what their program is for the balance of this year. I am also aware that the chairman of the Northern Territory Housing Commission has an appointment this morning in Canberra with the Minister for the Northern Territory to discuss the commission's program for the balance of this year.

1018 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr RYAN -

Is it a fact that the Telecommunications Commission charges a subscriber who has only a 2-line telephone exchange more for a local call than a subscriber who has a 4-line telephone exchange?

ANSWER

I have asked the appropriate officer with Telecom Australia and he assures me that they do not charge any more; the standard charge is 9c.

1019 Mr VALE to Mr TUXWORTH -

Can he advise me what the shareholding is of major mining companies holding uranium interests in the Northern Territory and what Australian shareholding is the Australian Government seeking in companies mining uranium and will these companies currently operating comply with these requirements?

ANSWER

We have 4 major companies operating in the uranium province in Arnhem Land, the Peko-Ez combination is, Peko 93 per cent Aust-

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ralian owned, and the Ez component 92 per cent Australian owned. Noranda, which is a totally overseas controlled company have indicated that they are willing to release 50 or 51 per cent of the equity in their operations to Australian investors. Pan-Continental, which is a consortium of companies involving Australian interests in getting oil is between 60 and 70 per cent Australian owned, and they too are prepared to increase the Australian equity if this is necessary. Queensland Mines is 85 per cent Australian owned and the Australian company Kathleen Investments which holds 50 per cent of the shares in Queensland Mines is itself 21 per cent foreign owned. This in turn reduces the Australian equity of the whole project to about 70 per cent.

In reply to the second part of the question, there is no doubt that the Australian content in any mining operation can never be enough, and in fact the ultimate that we would like to achieve is 100 per cent but this is not always possible. It is my understanding that the Australian Government will be looking for as much Australian content as the market can stand and the Australian investor can afford to put up. To my knowledge, none of the companies operating in the uranium province will be prejudiced in their operations.

1020 Mr DONDAS to Mr RYAN -

In light of the recent announcement by the DRC that the Darwin Airport would undergo minor surgery, when will the bar facilities be made available to the public?

ANSWER

I have it on fairly good authority that the Department of Transport and the concessionaire of the bar out at the airport have made arrangements by which the concessionaire will repair the ceilings and fixtures of the bar and the Department will repair the floor. I believe that these repairs are well under way and it is hoped that the bar will be opened around 1 May.

1021 Mr KENTISH to Mr PERRON -

I refer to the town of Katherine which has a pound with no pound-keeper or dog catcher. When is it likely that one will be appointed?

ANSWER

I heard a report that a private individual in Katherine had gone to the trouble of catching stray dogs on his property and delivering them to the local pound only to have them beat him home again. It seemed rather an unusual situation. Unfortunately, current legislation does not allow for a registrar of dogs to delegate his authority and all police officers are ex-officio registrars of dogs. However, it is obvious that none of these people are going to go out into the street personally and act as dog catchers as part of their duties and they cannot delegate this authority. The department is currently looking at legislation with a view to proposing an amendment that will allow a registrar of dogs to delegate his authority to go out into the

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street and catch the dogs and put them into pound at Katherine. The department is also considering a total review of the ordinance which does need updating. In the light of these proposals, I cannot give any assurance as to the particular date when Katherine will get an official dog catcher.

1022 Mr MANUELL to Mr RYAN -

Is he aware of rumours circulating about proposed increases in rail freights of up to 40 per cent into the central Australian region? If he is aware of the rumour, is there any truth in it?

ANSWER

I am aware of the rumour. I have not had a chance as yet to check out whether there is any substance in it.

1023 Mr TUNGUTALUM to Dr LETTS -

What steps are being taken to control hyptis and cyder on crown land in the Northern Territory?

ANSWER

The situation is far from satisfactory. In fact in the whole of the noxious weed exercise in the Northern Territory, the Department of the Northern Territory and the Animal Industry and Agriculture Branch is hopelessly undergeared and has been for many years to have any real effect in this matter, either on crown land or private land. They have been working for years as a one-man-band with inadequate funds and they are unable to provide even a satisfactory advisory service to private land holders, let alone have any real impact on the incidence of weeds such as hyptis and cyder on crown land. It is a matter that does need improvement. If the Legislative Assembly had any final authority and power with regard to agricultural functions, it would give some early attention to this matter.

1024 Mr ROBERTSON to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he able to provide any details of the Government's new home savings grant scheme?

ANSWER

I believe comprehensive details of this scheme were tabled yesterday in the Senate. I only have scant information that has been relayed to me in a discussion with Senator Kilgariff. The interesting point that I have is that a \$2,000 full grant will be made available for first homes and it is interesting to note that it will also now be available to single people and with no age limit. It will be backdated to 1 January and it will be based on a \$1 grant for every \$3 saved providing those savings are held in an acceptable form. I believe there is also some arrangement where people have saved other amounts in shorter terms, that is, perhaps if there was a \$4,000 savings in 2 years then a grant of \$1,333 would be made available. The scheme that has been carried on for a number of years has helped some

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350,000 young Australians and up to last year a total amount of \$167m had been made available. The Federal Government's new scheme will provide benefits 3 times greater than that provided by the previous scheme and it is currently estimated that it will cost the Government in the order of \$90m per annum. When I receive the comprehensive details, I will be in a position to make them available to honourable members.

1025 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr TAMBLING -

Is he aware of any unsatisfactory sales activities in the Northern Territory by a Queensland real estate company called Rural Co-operative Development Society Limited?

ANSWER

I am aware of what could be termed unsatisfactory sales activity if you take "unsatisfactory" to mean that the people have lost their dough. I had representations from some 5 people approximately a month ago with regard to the sales activities of this company in the Northern Territory. I contacted the Queensland Treasurer, Sir Gordon Chalk, and sought additional information. He has advised me that 2 companies are involved, the Rural Co-operative Development Society Limited and Condamine Country Estates Pty. Limited. He has advised me that both companies are presently in liquidation and are 2 of a number of companies which are the subject of a special investigation by Mr J. MacCrossen QC who is appointed by the honourable W.E. Knox, Minister for Justice and Attorney-General pursuant to the Companies Act in Queensland. An interim report has been submitted by the liquidators and this report indicates that there is a deficiency in funds of Rural Co-operative Development Limited of over \$1m. Condamine Country Estates Pty. Limited is alleged to be hopelessly insolvent. The minister has also advised that Rural Co-operative appears to have no assets and although Condamine Country Estates has real estate assets at Millmerran these assets are subject to a mortgage to a building society and the company has substantial creditors. The full extent of the activities of these companies will be known once the special investigation has been completed and more detailed information will become available at that stage.

1026 Mr WITHNALL to Mr POLLOCK -

Is he able to report to the Assembly the present position concerning the battle which the medical officers and nurses at the Darwin Hospital have been carrying on for months now to have their salaries raised to those appropriate in other parts of Australia?

ANSWER

In relation to nurses first, the Royal Australian Nursing Federation's case in relation to their claims for improved wages and conditions, is presently proceeding before a Deputy Arbitrator, Mr Watson. Mr Watson took evidence in Darwin between 16 and 19 March and in Alice Springs between 22 and 25 March. The case is continuing and there will be further hearings in Melbourne where

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a decision is expected later this month or early in May. With respect to medical officers, I am advised that the full bench of the Arbitration Commission on Tuesday commenced hearings and there was a change of ground by the Medical Officers Association. In consequence of that, the matter was referred back to a public service arbitrator, Mr Taylor, in relation to a time table. In consequence to further discussion yesterday and some difference of opinion, I believe, as to procedures and so forth, the matter has been returned to the full bench for hearing this morning. This matter is proceeding at the moment, but I would advise the honourable member and the House that the Medical Officers Association has, in recent weeks, and particularly at this current hearing, changed its ground considerably and this is complicating the processing of the case. However, it is in hand and it is hoped that an early decision will be reached because, as the honourable member and others are aware, it is quite imperative to the medical service of the Northern Territory that this matter is resolved and we are able to recruit and keep in the Territory medical service the medical officers that we need.

1027 Mr BALLANTYNE to Mr TUXWORTH -

Has the Northern Territory Tourist Board found a replacement for the recently resigned board member from Nhulunbuy? If so, will the replacement be from among the citizens of Nhulunbuy? If not, when will the replacement be made?

ANSWER

I would say that the Northern Territory Government Tourist Board has a policy of maintaining representation from every centre wherever it is possible. As a result of the resignation of Mr Baxter from Nhulunbuy recently, investigations are now in hand as to who may be a suitable successor to him. I am not aware of the exact date on which any appointment will be made, but I can assure the honourable member that it will be as soon as possible.

1028 Mr VALE to Mr RYAN -

Can he advise what the present position is concerning the realignment and reconstruction of the Stuart Highway through the foothills north of Alice Springs and the reconstruction of the Stuart Highway between Smith Street and Woods Terrace in Alice Springs?

ANSWER

The situation with regard to the realignment and upgrading of the road through Alice Springs remains the same as it did. I think I have answered questions with regard to other sections of the highway which are not contained in the upgrading. The second 3-year program as I think everybody is aware, never had funds made available after it was approved by the Federal Government last October and it is presently amongst the jobs which are deferred. Hopefully, money will be made available in the next financial year to go ahead with the job. I could say that the

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planning for the Alice Springs hill section of the road has been done and it is well up on priority so should money become available to proceed with the second 3-year program to upgrade the Stuart Highway and Barkly Highway, the Alice Springs hill will get top priority. With regard to the section of road in Alice Springs, I am unable to answer that question, I will attempt to get the information and pass it on to the honourable member after these sittings.

1028A ANSWER TO QUESTION -

Mr RYAN (by leave) : The honourable member for Stuart asked me a question yesterday about the railway between Port Augusta and Alice Springs. I have been advised that the rail line will be opened on 5 April.

1029 Mr WITHNALL to Dr LETTS -

Who is carrying out the duties of Administrator while the Acting Administrator is in Canberra?

ANSWER

I do not know who the actual person is who is doing this but I shall endeavour to find out and advise the honourable member later today.

1030 Mr MANUELL to Dr LETTS -

Is he aware of the progress of the plans to purchase the Alice Springs abattoir by a southern consortium?

ANSWER

I am aware that some negotiations are taking place and, having had an indication from the honourable member that he might ask this question, I have endeavoured to find out whether any information is available that could be made known publicly, I have not been able to get any such information as yet, but I believe that I may be able to get some during the course of the day and, if so, I will pass it on to him.

1031 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr POLLOCK -

In his official capacity, has he had consultations recently with either the Northern or Central Land Councils regarding the proposed Aboriginal land rights legislation and, if so is he prepared to state the views of those councils?

ANSWER

My consultations with these bodies has only been in relation to the Aboriginal land delegation committee from this Assembly last year. In recent times I have not spoken with these bodies directly or discussed the matters with them at all.

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1032 Mr DONDAS to Mr PERRON -

Is it true that water service connections were free until 30 March 1976? Is so, did the department administering water connections advise the public that the water service connections were to be no longer free as of 30 March 1976 and that a fee of \$6 would be charged as of 31 March 1976? If the public was not advised, why not?

ANSWER

The situation is not entirely as outlined by the honourable member for Casuarina. The situation basically has not changed from 31 March. The situation is that block owners who had meters removed either as a result of damage during the cyclone or as a result of damage during the clean-up of Darwin program can have reconnection at virtually any time free of charge. But if the block concerned did not have water connected to it prior to the cyclone or if the water was disconnected at the owner's request for any reason whatsoever, then a normal connection fee of \$6 applies. That situation for the moment and for the foreseeable future will remain as such.

1033 Mr EVERINGHAM to Mr POLLOCK -

I have a further question following up on my question yesterday morning when he advised that certain pensioner patients were being charged \$20 a day in the Darwin Hospital. I preface my question to him by reading an extract from Hansard of Thursday 19 June 1975 where he said: "All patients will be provided with free hospital care but patients who elect to be treated by a private doctor of their choice will be charged the prescribed amount for their accommodation and maintenance and will be nursed in the intermediate beds. Maternity patients are to be exempt from the provision. They will be nursed in standard beds and they will be able to continue under the care of the private doctor of their choice." Further on: "I am also assured by the Department of Health, by Dr Gurd the Director, that pensioners are to be treated in the Northern Territory hospitals on the same basis as maternity cases even though this is not provided for in black and white here." Is it not a fact that the executive member conveyed to this House an undertaking by the Director of Health that charges would not be levied against pensioners in the Darwin Hospital who preferred to use the private doctor of their choice?

ANSWER

The situation in relation to maternity cases and pensioners is exactly the same. As I related to the House yesterday, pensioners can be treated at the Darwin Hospital by their private doctor at no bed cost to them provided the private doctor enters an agreement with the hospital. The situation is exactly the same for maternity cases. This is part of the whole Medibank scheme in Australia which, at that time, we had to accept. Maternity cases that go to hospital can be treated by their private practitioner but that private doctor must have entered an agreement with the hospital in relation to the payment of his fees.

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1034 Mr DONDAS to Mr TAMBLING -

What plans have the Darwin Reconstruction Commission in hand to provide additional caravan parks in the Darwin area and does the DRC intend that these caravan parks be constructed to at least the standard provided in the Caravans Ordinance? If not, why not?

ANSWER

The Darwin Reconstruction Commission has turned its attention to caravan parks continually at every meeting. The recent actions have been to encourage private developers to establish new caravan parks. With regard to standards, there is apparently a survey going on to see whether the Queensland and, in particular, the Townsville code, would be adaptable as suitable standards for covenants on any new caravan park leases. That is not yet completed and it is being looked at in association with the Caravan Parks Ordinance to ensure that adequate standards are maintained. I believe that the Northern Territory Housing Commission has also indicated to the Darwin Reconstruction Commission that it is keen to receive a grant of land to establish a caravan park. The Darwin City Corporation has also indicated that it is interested in extending the facilities at its Mindil Beach caravan park. I foresee continuing problems with regard to caravan parks in the Darwin area because of the fact that over 3,000 caravans have come into Darwin since the cyclone and, as home sites are rehabilitated, it is natural that these caravans, particularly those people who wish to use them as permanent dwellings, will look for alternative sites. I do not see any easy answers. I think it has got to be a matter of co-operation between the Reconstruction Commission, private enterprise, the Government and local government.

1035 Mrs LAWRIE to Miss ANDREW -

Can she advise me whether the present inadequate buildings at Nightcliff Primary School are to be upgraded or whether, in fact, the mooted new school will go ahead?

ANSWER

Yesterday afternoon, we were visited by a building supervisor from the Department of Education and he advised us that repairs will be effected immediately to the current buildings that make up Nightcliff Primary School. He did quote a figure of over \$200,000 worth of repairs that are needed immediately. He said that a new school for Nightcliff was on the drawing boards and work would be commenced on it probably in the 1977-78 financial year.

1036 Mrs LAWRIE to Mr TAMBLING -

As it is obvious that a new Nightcliff Primary School has been recommended by the Department, is he able to advise at this stage whether or not the Darwin Reconstruction Commission has accepted that advice and recommended that the new school be built?

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ANSWER

It is not proper for me to indicate fully the preliminary details of figures with regard to forward budget planning. I am prepared to say that the matter of the Nightcliff Primary School has been brought before the Darwin Reconstruction Commission and the comments indicated by the executive member for Education and Law with regard to the repair requirements of the school have been carefully considered and put forward. With regard to the establishment of a new school, there has been a degree of controversy between the Education Department advisers and the technical staff of the Darwin Reconstruction Commission and I am not aware that there has yet been any resolution between those 2 bodies. I have, however, noted the comment of the Executive Member for Education and Law that the Education Department would like to see it commenced in the 1977-78 financial year.

1037 Mr DONDAS to Mr TUXWORTH -

Could he give details to the House of activities planned by the Darwin Tourist Promotion Association for its "Back to Darwin Week 1978"?

ANSWER

The Darwin Tourist Promotion Association has embarked on a very aggressive and most enlightened program to encourage tourists back into Darwin in the year 1978. To do this, it has centred its activities on people who were formerly in Darwin before the cyclone and those who had a very active part in the reconstruction and the clean-up of Darwin after the cyclone. The Tourist Promotion Association will be encouraging social groups such as the CWA and other womens' organisations, Apex, Lions Clubs, the various church organisations, Greek, Italian and Chinese communities to visit Darwin during this period in 1978 in the month of May. This will coincide with the school holidays in all States. With this, the Tourist Promotion Association is working hand in hand with industry to have caravan tours, package tours with both airlines and bus companies and with aero clubs and many other companies.

One other aspect that the Tourist Promotion Association is very keen to encourage is a strong participation on the part of the armed forces. The armed forces played a tremendous role in the clean-up of Darwin and there would undoubtedly be many people who worked at that time who would like to come back to see the improvement. Of course, all armed forces displays are of great public interest and attraction. The Tourist Promotion Association is now working towards encouraging industry, particularly the airline and motel industry, to reduce their prices for package tours so that the overall cost of returning to Darwin will be within the reach of southern citizens.

1038 Mr MANUELL to Miss ANDREW -

I am led to believe there are some policemen who have been noted on duty without wearing numbers and I ask whether in fact it is intended that policemen will have numbers on their new uniforms?

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ANSWER

It was felt by the Commissioner of Police that the uniforms should be top priority and must be got to the Territory as soon as possible. It was discovered that these uniforms did not have numbers on them. Rather than send them back and start all over again, he decided that he would allow the policemen to be issued uniforms without numbers.

Mr Tuxworth: What happened to the old ones?

Miss ANDREW: They fell off the old uniforms because they were so old.

It seems unlikely that the practice of wearing numbers will be resumed. However, no definite decision has been taken.

1039 Mr ROBERTSON to Miss ANDREW -

Is she able to advise if it is planned to re-establish the disbanded Special Branch of the Northern Territory Police Force?

ANSWER

The Special Branch was disbanded when Senator Murphy was Attorney-General. It was operating under an old charter and it had the right to look into industrial matters and communism and other bogies. It was replaced about 4 months later by a Crimes Intelligence Section dealing with the criminal aspect especially and almost all matters concerned with the Special Branch. It is still in operation.

1040 ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr RYAN (by leave): The honourable member for Nhulunbuy yesterday asked me a question concerning airmail services to Borroloola. I have been in touch with the District Postal Manager and he has informed me that there is an airmail service from Darwin. There is no airmail service from Mount Isa. Gulf Transport no longer carries excess mail; they apparently did in the past. So currently, Borroloola has one mail service, the airmail service from Darwin.

1041 ANSWER TO QUESTION

Mr TAMBLING (by leave): The honourable member for Nightcliff asked for details in connection with unused caravans in Darwin. I am advised by the Department of the Northern Territory that there are 63 caravans in store. About 20 of these require repair. There are 31 caravans sited and awaiting power connection. There are 13 demountables awaiting the connection of services. The department has also advised that all the units in store are earmarked for the Housing Commission although the Department of the Northern Territory has a right to them if required.

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