

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Fourth Assembly
Third Session

PARLIAMENTARY RECORD

Tuesday 19 August 1986
Wednesday 20 August 1986
Thursday 21 August 1986

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Wednesday 27 August 1986
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NORTHERN TERRITORY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fourth Assembly
Third Session

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Chief Minister	Stephen Paul Hatton
Opposition Leader	Terence Edward Smith
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Minister for Health and Minister for Housing	Tom Harris
Minister for Community Development, Minister for Correctional Services and Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs	Donald Francis Dale
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PART I

DEBATES

DEBATES

Tuesday 19 August 1986

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

CONDOLENCE MOTION Hon Frank Joseph Scott Wise AO

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly express its regret at the death of the Hon Frank Joseph Scott Wise AO, Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1 July 1951 to 30 June 1956, and former Premier of Western Australia, place on record its appreciation of his distinguished service to the people of the Northern Territory and tender its profound sympathy to his widow and family.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that honourable members are aware of the distinguished career of Mr Wise in Western Australian politics, a career which spanned 38 years and which included a period as Premier and Treasurer from 1945 to 1947. Mr Wise was the Administrator of the Northern Territory from 1951 to 1956, a post he accepted after standing down as leader of his party in Western Australia. At that time, many political commentators regarded his decision as the sacrifice of his political career but he made no secret of the fact that he regarded the Territory as a great challenge and he met that challenge more than admirably until his retirement on the grounds of ill health. At the time, his resignation was greeted by commentators as a shock and a sad loss to the Territory.

His record of achievement is impressive. The then Minister for Territories, Paul Hasluck, praised Mr Wise's performance as Administrator and attributed to his leadership the increase in investment in the north as well as the expansion of key industries such as mining and agriculture, and the betterment of conditions for Aboriginal people.

Mr Speaker, the career of Frank Wise was an example of public service and dedication which few can hope to emulate. It was a career which transcended party politics and which was devoted always to concern for his constituents. I commend the motion to honourable members.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I rise on behalf of the opposition, to support this motion of condolence. Frank Wise was indeed a remarkable man. He not only entered politics in Western Australia and reached the height of Premier of that state but, after serving with distinction as Administrator of the Northern Territory, he returned to a political career in Western Australia and became Leader of the Opposition, as it was at that time, in the Upper House.

Of course, we are particularly interested in Frank Wise's contribution to the Northern Territory in his time as an Administrator. He was Administrator during the third, fourth and fifth Legislative Councils. It is interesting that, on our desks today, we have a book by Mr Walker called 'A Short History of the Legislative Council for the Northern Territory'. It has several references to the role of Mr Wise in the development of the Northern Territory and perhaps I could spend a little time going through that. On page 16, Mr Walker says that the most important attribute he brought to the council was his awareness of the impropriety of the Presiding Officer entering into debate and, as a result, the proceedings moved a little closer to those of the

Westminster-style parliament. He imposed a much stricter discipline on official members and the independence shown by some of them in previous councils was considerably diminished.

During the course of the fourth Council, Mr Speaker, the chair that you are now sitting on was donated to this Assembly by Hon Paul Hasluck who was at that stage Minister for Territories. In this debate, it is appropriate that I should read out the comments of Mr Walker:

Despite its impressive appearance, the chair proved over the years to be most uncomfortable. The seat was too high and badly padded and the back gave no support to the spinal column of the occupant. A later gift of a foot stool eased the discomfort somewhat and the addition of some foam upholstery in the 1960s made some further improvement, but it was never a place for someone seeking ease and repose.

Mr Speaker, as many of us have pointed out, we tend to go through cycles of development in the Northern Territory and express enthusiasms for various projects that are intended to bring the Northern Territory into the 21st century. In April 1956, the Rice Development Agreement Bill was passed in the Northern Territory. At the time, Mr Ron Withnall, a member of the Legislative Council, claimed the venture as 'the greatest step in the economic history of the Territory'. Unfortunately, that did not quite turn out to be the case. The Minister for Community Development will be interested to note that another problem that was troubling council members at that stage was the dog population.

Mr Speaker, Mr Frank Wise played a very important part in the evolution of the Northern Territory, in particular in its constitutional development. The opposition supports the government in this motion of condolence.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENT

Proposed Resignation of Leader of the Opposition

Mr B. COLLINS (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, it is with a great deal of personal regret that I advise the Assembly that I will be tendering my resignation as Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party at a meeting of the party this afternoon. I intend to remain in the Assembly for the rest of this term as the member for Arafura and I have indicated my willingness to the caucus to retain my existing shadow portfolios. My constituents in Arafura have known in a very personal way and over a long period of time of my continuing commitment to their interests, and I wish to express my deep gratitude for the constant support they have given to me over the past decade. I have no doubt that that support will continue.

Mr Speaker, I took this decision a week ago. I had hoped that I would be able to make this decision public in the first place to the Assembly because of the respect I have for this parliament. I deeply regret that that was impossible because of the actions of a few - and I must say a very few - people who got hold of half the story and perceived some political advantage in manufacturing the other half.

I would like to advise, also with some considerable personal regret, that I had hoped to have been able to remain as Leader of the Opposition for these sittings. That was my original intention. The reason I make that comment is

that someone asked me this morning whether I did not think it would be more appropriate to resign on the last day. I agree that it would have been. Since I am the last of the Mohicans of the original opposition in this Assembly, and because I have led the party for 5 years, it would have been nice if I could have continued to lead it for these last sittings. Unfortunately, some people took it upon themselves to leak the story all over the place at the weekend, and I was badgered by telephone calls. As was proper and responsible, I consulted with caucus and with senior members of the party across all factions. They agreed that, under the circumstances, and because of the damaging speculation, my only possible course was to make this statement this morning.

Mr Speaker, I have no wish to delay the business of the Assembly unduly. However, as I said before, I am the only member of the Labor Party who has been here from the first day that an official opposition appeared in this Assembly 9 years ago and I feel that a short statement is required.

When I assumed the leadership of the Labor Party 5 years ago, morale was at an all time low. Members opposite would know what that is like, with the resignations from the frontbench etc. Since then, new branches of the party have been formed all over the Northern Territory. I am particularly pleased that at least 6 of these branches have been established by the residents of Aboriginal communities. No such branches existed when I first joined the party.

The Parliamentary Labor Party, despite the imbalance of numbers in this Assembly, has much to be proud of in its contribution to public life in the Northern Territory. Parliamentary oppositions have 2 responsibilities, both of which, in my view, are equally important to the communities that they serve. They must initiate positive policies for the benefit of the community and support the government where necessary, and they must ensure that the government remains accountable to the community. I believe that we can rightly claim success in both these areas. Recently, we have been criticised for being far too effective as an opposition and not presenting ourselves as a credible alternative government. As leader, I have taken the view that these criticisms are designed to intimidate the opposition into being less effective in bringing its political opponents to account for the good of the community. The public record shows clearly that this intimidation has not succeeded.

I reject the view that we are not a credible alternative government. Since the last election, we have made significant inroads into the CLP support base. Recent polls have shown a significant across-the-board swing to the ALP in key seats. However, as we all know, it is election results that count. The 2 by-elections held in blue ribbon CLP seats produced swings to the ALP of 16% and 17% respectively. I note with some interest that the same level of swings recently in New South Wales led to press predictions of a change of government in that state and a general election.

Many of our initiatives have been taken up by the government and that is something I have been pleased to see. In my view, in more recent times, the major achievement was forcing the government to establish a Public Accounts Committee by making very effective use of this parliament.

Mr Speaker, I believe that the Northern Territory is the most exciting and dynamic political forum in Australia. As a result, it would have been impossible to operate at the level I have without controversy. Indeed, I would not attempt to deny that because much of it has been public. In reflecting on the major political issues in which I have played a part as a

leader, there are 3 which have had a profound effect on all Territorians, the Labor Party and certainly myself. I am sure that it will come as no surprise to honourable members when I identify those issues as uranium mining and its associated issues, land rights and issues affecting Aboriginal Territorians and, in more recent days, the Chamberlain case.

I am not interested, and honourable members will be relieved to hear it, in regurgitating the uranium debate, but I wish to say a few words which are directed as much to the members of my own party as they are to my political opponents and the public at large. We all have our own approach to the kind of Territory we want to see developed for future generations of Territorians. This place, to which we are all committed in our different ways, holds such boundless promise for the future. We have in the Northern Territory, as part of that future, a unique society of Aboriginal Territorians whose contribution to the Territory in both cultural and economic terms is irreplaceable. That uniqueness stems from their relationship to their land which, if destroyed, will destroy that society in the Northern Territory with the same certainty as it has elsewhere in this country. If, as a nation that is just a few short years away from celebrating our scant 200 years of occupation of this country - impressive as it has been - we feel that a scorched-earth approach to these issues is in the national interest, then, in my view, we are really not ready to celebrate our bicentenary.

I take some comfort, however, from my opinion that, for the first time in my 9 years in this parliament, the present Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Steve Hatton, is the first CLP politician to hold that office who sincerely shares my concerns in relation to these issues. In the interests of the Territory in the long term, I hope that his party will allow him to maintain these concerns.

Mr Speaker, so far as the Chamberlain case is concerned, I make no apology for my campaign to have a judicial inquiry established into the case. I believed then that it was in the best interests of the Territory and I believe that even more firmly now.

As I said earlier, there has been initial speculation - and I suspect that unfounded speculation will continue - as to why I have made this decision at this time. Of course, I know that those who have an understanding of the political processes of the Northern Territory will not contribute to that speculation. Mr Speaker, I want to make this fact absolutely clear. The Labor Party is concluding its preselection procedures for candidates for the next Territory election. It appears to have escaped the attention of the media that, under the normal preselection procedures of the party, nominations were opened for the federal seats last Monday. It will also come as no surprise to honourable members that I intended to nominate for the Senate.

I wish to inform the Assembly that I lodged my nomination for the Senate with the party this morning. Comments have been made, not unreasonably, that I could have nominated for the Senate and remained as Leader of the Opposition, but I did not think that that was the proper course. It was my view that, as a consequence of nominating for the Senate, I should resign my position as parliamentary leader, because we are concluding our preselection processes for the Assembly seats and I must allow a new leadership team to take the party into the next election. Having come to that decision, I sought the advice of my caucus colleagues and other senior party members of all factions on the timing of my resignation. As I explained earlier, there was general agreement that the decision I had taken to resign this morning was the correct one.

Mr Speaker, I said earlier that I have nominated for preselection for the Senate. I think that even my worst detractors have conceded that my application to public life, and my commitment to the Territory's interests, are total. Should my party see fit to support my nomination, I do not think that there would be any doubt that I would apply myself in that position in the same manner. I have had a good working relationship with Senator Robertson over the past decade, particularly during the last 5 years. The reason I mention that is that I have been asked repeatedly, and in my view foolishly, what Senator Robertson will do. That is why I am making this statement. I have consulted Senator Robertson about my decision. In the past, he has always shown me the courtesy of not discussing my affairs in public, as distinct from some others in the Labor Party, and that has been reciprocated by me. I have no doubt that that mutual courtesy will continue.

Clearly, I cannot pre-empt the decision on my successor that will be made later today by my colleagues. However, I will pledge my full support, both personal and political, to the person elected. I shall continue to serve in this Assembly as the member for Arafura. In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude for the support and loyalty I have received from my deputy and caucus members, both past and present, during the 5 years over which I have had the privilege to serve as the Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party in the Legislative Assembly.

I do not intend to become maudlin or wander down memory lane but, from comments in the popular press, I understand that my sparring partner Mark II, the honourable member for Barkly, is writing his memoirs about his time as Chief Minister in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly. Of course, all of us in public life in the Northern Territory are waiting breathlessly for that volume to appear; it would make a great Christmas gift. I understand that it is his intention to dedicate the volume, with love and affection, to Paul Everingham and Graeme Lewis, the 2 men who made it all possible. I heard yesterday that all of the proceeds from the sale of the volume will be donated to the bicentennial fund for the Lex Silvester burial at sea. That is an extremely generous and appropriate gesture. I could probably sign up a crew list to join Lex on the boat before he leaves. I understand that the book is to be called '400 Days of Damage Control' and that the author has said that the book will be totally objective. With a title like that, I am sure that it will be. I have no doubt it will be objective and I can probably guess who some of the objects will be even before it is in the newsagency.

With the greatest respect to the honourable members opposite, I must say that, if I were to write my memoirs of my time as Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, I would have to name it, with some relish, '1800 Days of Maximum Damage Infliction on the Government'. I have enjoyed every minute of it. Ian, I would like to receive a personally-inscribed copy of that volume, when it is released, and I will reciprocate.

Mr Perron: Modest to the end.

Mr B. COLLINS: You have not heard the last of me yet.

Mr Speaker, instrumental in my decision was the fact that I am leaving the Labor Party in very good shape. As has been noted in the press, the Labor Party has had 2 successive successful conferences. The determination of the party to succeed is in the best interests of everyone in the Northern Territory. I am encouraged by it, and it makes me satisfied that this decision is being made at the right time.

Mr Speaker, I have one last acknowledgement to make. I wish to thank the Clerk of this Assembly for the assistance he has given me. Every Assembly has to have its Sir Humphrey Appleby, and I thank him for his advice, which has assisted me to look much better in here than I really am.

I have enjoyed my time as Leader of the Opposition. No member of the Assembly will have any difficulty in accepting that, despite the fact that it was a considered one, my decision was taken with a great deal of personal regret. Like the Balmain boys in New South Wales, I do not cry, but I have enjoyed my time here. I appreciate both the political and personal relationships that have developed in the Legislative Assembly over that time. As has been commented upon by many people, I believe that the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and legislative process has been able to demonstrate a degree of cooperation between opposition and government which is unparalleled elsewhere in Australia, with the entrenched 2 party system. This Territorian hopes that that will continue.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, in the face of some very calculated taunts, the Assembly needs to be informed that, to honour an agreement, the government will not be debating the statement at this stage. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement, and seek leave to continue my remarks at a later hour.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

TELEGRAM FROM SECRETARY-GENERAL OF CPA

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following telegram from Sir Robin Vanderfelt, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and David Tonkin, Secretary-General designate. The telegram reads:

The following motion stands on the House of Commons Notice Paper at Westminster, supported by members from all sides of the House:

'That this House, noting that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association was originally established as the Empire Parliamentary Association on 18 July 1911, congratulates the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on its 75th anniversary, notes with satisfaction that it now has branches in 110 different parliaments and legislatures throughout the Commonwealth, reiterates its support for the aims of the association of promoting parliamentary democracy and understanding among Commonwealth parliamentarians, and expresses its welcome to those representatives from throughout the Commonwealth who will be attending its 32nd conference in London from 23 September to 2 October under the chairmanship of Mr Speaker in his capacity as President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association'.

By promoting parliamentary democracy and respect for its institutions and by providing a forum for the discussions of matters of common interest and concern between parliamentarians, the CPA has stimulated mutual understanding, fellowship and respect amongst them and has been of major importance in helping to maintain peace and stability within the Commonwealth and the world.

May these ties of friendship and cooperation be further strengthened in the years ahead.

The telegram is signed by Robin Vanderfelt, Secretary-General, and David Tonkin, Secretary-General designate.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Fringe Benefits Tax

Mr SPEAKER: I have received the following letter from the honourable Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Under standing order 94, I wish to raise today, as a matter of public importance, the introduction of a fringe benefits tax in the overall reform of the Australian tax system and its impact on the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely,
Terry Smith
Member for Millner.

Is the proposed discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr SMITH (Millner): The opposition has raised this matter because, quite clearly, it is of public importance and of concern to citizens in the Northern Territory and in the rest of Australia. It is a subject on which extensive comment has been made in this Assembly and outside of it. It is the opposition's intention to encourage the government to make a clear statement of its position on this particular matter. On a number of occasions, the government has criticised certain aspects of the fringe benefits tax, as has the opposition, but it has not said whether it is completely opposed to the fringe benefits tax. If the government opposes the tax completely, what would it do to reform the taxation system of Australia so that the high marginal tax rates, that we all face, could be reduced?

In discussion on the fringe benefits tax, it is often forgotten that it is part of an overall taxation reform package that this federal government has had the guts to attempt. For 20 or 30 years, previous governments have let things slide making it much harder for any other government to make a meaningful change to the tax system. A great deal of hysteria has been created regarding the introduction and implementation of the fringe benefits tax. No doubt, this is due to the level of uncertainty surrounding the operation of the tax, and scare tactics that have been aimed at creating public apprehension. I must say that, in the Northern Territory, there is a case for particular apprehension about the implications of this tax for the Northern Territory, and I will return to that later in my speech.

The problem is that we have been led into the fringe benefits tax by the necessity to move against the rorts that have been pulled over a large number of years by those in the extremely high prevailing marginal tax brackets. That includes every member of parliament here, not that I am suggesting for one moment that we have been involved in rorts. Certainly, people earning our levels of income and higher have been involved in rorts and have not been paying their fair share of tax, and that is why the fringe benefits tax has been introduced. We all know that this anxiety to avoid the payment of tax has led high-income earners to seek payments in kind as a means of avoiding taxation. The result of this has been the erosion of the progressivity of the Australian taxation system and the transference of the tax burden to the middle and lower-income earners who are unable to attract fringe benefit

payments. The ordinary Australian taxpayer will not be greatly inconvenienced by the implications of the fringe benefits tax and, in fact, what minor inconvenience there is will be more than compensated for by what I hope will be the decision of the federal government in its budget tonight to honour its commitment to reduce marginal rates of taxation even if it delays their implementation.

Mr Speaker, I would like to present some facts and figures regarding fringe benefits in Australia. Employers and the self-employed generally enjoy access to fringe benefits which are much less readily available to wage and salary earners. Among wage and salary earners, employment fringe benefits are heavily biased towards employees already receiving relatively high incomes. The figures reveal that, amongst the 11% of highest wage and salary earners, 1 in 6 receives a private transport fringe benefit, 1 in 7 receives an entertainment allowance, 23% have their telephone costs paid for or subsidised by their employer, 1 in 12 enjoys employer provided or subsidised housing, 1 in 12 has his medical and or hospital costs paid or subsidised by the employer, 1 in 13 has his holidays paid for or subsidised by his employer, 1 in 20 has his club fees paid as a fringe benefit - although I suspect that may have changed a little in the last few months - and 1 in 26 receives shares in the employer's firm, not as a productivity incentive but as a fringe benefit.

That is a dramatic contrast to the situation of the 74% of wage and salary earners who are paid below average weekly earnings. Only 1 in 20 of those people receives a private transport fringe benefit, 1 in 50 receives an entertainment allowance, fewer than 1 in 17 receive a telephone benefit, only 1 in 35 receives housing benefits, only 1 in 40 receives any form of medical cost fringe benefit, fewer than 1 in 33 enjoy any form of holiday expenses and fewer than 1% receive, as an employment benefit, any shares in their employers' firms.

Among the wage and salary earners, the highest-paid 11% include 25% of all those receiving a transport fringe benefit, more than 33% of all recipients of an entertainment allowance, 25% of all those receiving a private telephone benefit, 25% of all those receiving a housing employment benefit, over 25% of all recipients of a medical cost fringe benefit, over 20% of all recipients of any holiday-related fringe benefit, over 33% of all those whose employer pays any of their travel or society fees and more than 25% of those with company shares as an employment benefit. In other words, the top 11% of the salary earners are receiving most of these types of benefits and a substantial number of these benefits were designed in the past expressly for the purpose of avoiding the payment of income tax.

Among wage and salary earners, access to almost a full range of fringe benefits is heavily biased in favour of the most highly-paid employees. Overall, the highest-paid 11% have about 3 to 7 times the chance of receiving any particular fringe benefit as the 74% of wage and salary earners paid at or below average earnings. High-income earners receive the following fringe benefits to a disproportionate extent: holiday expenses, low interest finance, housing, household energy expenses, club fees, entertainment allowances, shares and children's educational expenses.

It can be seen, therefore, that the present hysteria is not only unnecessary but also illusory. Fringe benefits taxation has been operating successfully in New Zealand and, as can be seen from the latest figures for trade between Australia and New Zealand, it has not had any obvious adverse effect on the New Zealand economy today. This is not the first time that an

hysterical campaign has been waged by a minority of beneficiaries of a tax-avoidance rort in an effort to continue their unfair advantage.

Of course, the problem with any attempt to reform the taxation system is that there will always be winners and losers. In this case, we have a situation where the losers are the richer people in this community who are also the people who have the best access to the media and they have used that to attempt to protect their position.

A similar campaign was waged at the time of the introduction of the prescribed payments system. The exact opposite of many of the doomsday claims made at that time has occurred. The scheme is operating quite smoothly and has proven successful in minimising tax avoidance by contractors and subcontractors in the building, transport, motor vehicle repair and cleaning industries, to name some of those affected.

The fringe benefits tax is part of a total package of taxation reform which is being undertaken by the federal government and which forms a vital part of the strategy for economic growth in Australia. The reform package is aimed at restructuring the Australian taxation system to create a fairer and more efficient system and it is definitely not being implemented as a cynical means of raising revenue. In fact, recent research undertaken in respect of the new tax reform package indicates some interesting statistics. I must stress that these figures do not apply to the Northern Territory. Because of our particular circumstances, our figures may be a little different. Research indicates that the fringe benefits tax continues to have strong majority support. As many as 3 in 4 persons agree with some form of fringe benefits tax being introduced. I am not surprised by that statistic because it is quite clear that 75% of the population will not be affected by the fringe benefits tax in any meaningful way and, in return, will receive a tax cut.

The fringe benefits tax is seen as the best feature of the tax package. The research indicates that it is supported even more than the tax cuts that will arise from it. Fewer than 1 in 10 of the people who were surveyed wanted fringe benefits taxation on cars dropped and approximately 1 in 10 thought that they would be adversely affected by the fringe benefits tax. The majority response to the tax reform package was that it would make the tax system fairer, particularly because it would close off abuses of the system - and it will be interesting to see the government response to the question of how one closes off abuses to the system - it would help to reduce tax avoidance and it would lead to reductions in income tax rates. The major non-cash fringe benefits or payments in kind to be picked up by the fringe benefits tax are employer-provided cars, free or low interest loans, housing, goods and services provided free or sold at below cost price by the employer and other expenses such as holiday travel, children's schooling expenses and club fees paid on behalf of the employee by the employer.

The fringe benefits of all public servants, including politicians, will be treated for the tax in the same way as those granted to any other employee. The relevant state and local government or public authorities will be liable to pay fringe benefits tax on the taxable value of those benefits. Although the payment of fringe benefits tax applies to a much larger extent in the private than in the public sector, the Commonwealth Treasurer announced, at the time of introducing the fringe benefits tax, a number of cutbacks to public sector benefits. These included the withdrawal of the benefit of government-provided credit cards and a restriction on the use of Commonwealth vehicles. Entertainment expenses paid to employees by tax-exempt employers will also be the subject of fringe benefit tax, as we all know. The deduction

for entertainment expenses met by non-tax-exempt institutions has been abolished. This has been agreed so that the majority of taxpayers are no longer subsidising the social activities of others. When you think about it, that is only fair and proper. Why should the average taxpayer continue to subsidise the entertainment and luncheon expenses of 11% of the population, when the elimination of that subsidy can provide tax cuts for low income-earners?

It has been indicated recently that the opposition agrees in principle with the introduction of the fringe benefits tax. However, as we have pointed out very vocally on a number of occasions, we have basic objections to the ramifications of the application of the tax in the Northern Territory. We object to the classification of remote area conditions of service, such as housing subsidies, air fares, recruitment and relocation costs, and freight subsidies, as fringe benefits. These benefits were first introduced by the Commonwealth government to compensate employees for having to work in the sometimes third world conditions which exist in remote areas. I am advised that, because of the reluctance of the Northern Territory government to spend money in remote areas, and particularly on the provision of adequate repair and maintenance programs in remote communities, that their third world conditions are becoming more and more noticeable by the day.

As I have said, these benefits were introduced by the Commonwealth government as compensatory payments for employees who have to work in those sometimes third world conditions. Many of these conditions of service have become enshrined in awards and legislation. As the private sector has developed and had to compete for the scarce labour available within the Territory or willing to be recruited from interstate, these compensatory working conditions have also spread into the awards of private sector employees. The employment conditions of local government employees are also subject to the flow-on effect of those conditions established by the Commonwealth. The Northern Territory government is compelled to provide these conditions of service under various awards established by the Arbitration Commission, and also because the conditions of service for compulsory transferees to the Northern Territory Public Service from the Australian Public Service were protected by the 1978 Self-Government Act.

The benefits are paid as compensation for harsh working conditions, and not as a payment in kind to allow the employee to indulge in tax avoidance. The benefits paid in the Northern Territory are different also because they do not discriminate against lower-income earners. That is at the heart of the opposition's concern with the federal government's present views on this matter.

In the Northern Territory Public Service, starting from the A1 clerical range, everyone is eligible for many of the benefits which will now be subject to tax. I believe the application of this tax in the Territory situation does not presently take account of these facts. The federal government has introduced concessions for remote areas, particularly regarding holiday air fares and residential accommodation. These concessions include a 40% discount on the determined value of the employer-provided housing, the choice of using a statutory formula instead of the market-value approach for valuing remote area housing benefits, and a discount of 50% on financial assistance provided to employees for holiday travel where this is customary in the industry. Additionally, the definition of 'remote area' has been expanded to include a number of centres, one of which is Alice Springs. However, as we have said often, we do not believe that this has gone far enough to rectify obvious anomalies, and we would support the inclusion of Darwin in the category of 'remote area'.

Another common complaint regarding this tax is the compliance cost to employers. The federal government has introduced measures in the legislation to minimise compliance costs. These include a statutory formula for motor vehicles in remote areas and housing, and exemption for the first \$200 per employee of the aggregate taxable value arising from staff discounts. These concessions were introduced at some considerable cost to the revenue-raising capacity of the tax. In relation to the public sector, this problem appears to be vastly over-exaggerated, as government cars in particular should all have log books to facilitate the government's own accountability and management requirements. Reviews which may result from the fringe benefits tax may expose the lurk of government vehicles which are used by senior staff to drive to and from work. It is interesting that the Northern Territory government still has no policy on the use of cars in the public service. Cars should be allocated on a needs basis, particularly for people on call. However, all facts would need to be taken into consideration in the assessment of a policy, including whether the cost of secure garaging far exceeds the cost of home garaging.

Any means of reducing the compliance costs of the fringe benefits tax would be beneficial to the system, particularly in the Territory where many businesses are small operations. It is indeed unfortunate that Territorians' conditions of service have been caught up in a legitimate tax net. For example, a remote area condition such as holiday fares every 2 years is not specifically covered in the legislation except in the general no-escape clause.

The freight on perishables subsidy is another award condition in remote areas which has been caught. It should not be considered a lurk or a fringe benefit to have access to fresh fruit and vegetables. I am particularly concerned about those 2 areas because I was responsible, in a previous occupation, for arguing those cases before the Arbitration Commission and having them accepted - against, I might say, the opposition of the Northern Territory government of the time.

Mr Speaker, there are problems and we do not resile from them. They need to be solved in a calm and rational manner. As we all know, last week the Leader of the Opposition spent an hour with the Prime Minister detailing these problems. As a result of that meeting, the Prime Minister is considering these problems, and I am sure that we will receive a quicker response from the Prime Minister on that than we will obtain from this government on the sale of the casinos. That would not be very hard. It looks as if we shall have to wait another 6 years for that saga to unfold any further.

Mr Speaker, to summarise our position, as we have said consistently, the principle of the fringe benefits tax ...

Mr Coulter: Give us a dollar each way.

Mr SMITH: On the odds offered on the TAB, it would not be worth it.

Mr Speaker, the opposition supports the introduction of the fringe benefits tax. We believe it is a fair and appropriate way of avoiding the problems that have existed in the past in relation to ensuring that high-income earners pay their fair share. We have pointed out continually the problems that we have had with the implementation of the tax in the Northern Territory. We will continue to pursue those matters and to seek a satisfactory resolution.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, the honourable potential Leader of the Opposition speaks with about as much sincerity as a southern newsreader. I have just listened to his written statement on the fringe benefits tax. We heard his summary, which probably took 30 seconds, about where the opposition stands on this issue, and what a miserable performance it was. Much of the detail of his argument was based about southern figures and many of the figures he used were taken from a chap who was on television recently; I think his name was Clarke. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition failed to address the issues as they pertain to the Northern Territory.

I have no intention of reading from notes on this topic. I have spoken on it from footpaths, the tops of trucks, in parks and at public meetings. Members will recall the reaction of the members of the opposition when I first said what a disastrous effect this tax would have on the Northern Territory. They said that I had it all wrong and did not know what I was talking about. The opposition said the tax would cost the Northern Territory government \$5m, not \$16m as I predicted.

When I spoke to Mr Keating and I said that the tax would cost the Northern Territory government \$16m and that that was 50% more than it would cost New South Wales or a third as much as it would cost Western Australia, Mr Keating said: 'You don't know what you are talking about. Are you sure you have those figures correct?' I said: 'Mr Keating, I obtained them from your Treasury officials'. He said: 'Oh, you would have to doubt them'. No, he didn't; he said that he would check the figures and get back to me like a boomerang. I think that he should be called a stick rather than a boomerang because he has no intention of coming back.

I spoke to the Prime Minister and he said: 'Are you sure you have your figures right?' I said: 'Mr Prime Minister, I am sure I have my figures right. I got them from the federal Treasurer'. 'Ah', he said, 'I will look into it. It doesn't seem right to me'. That meeting took place during the Premiers Conference where the Premier of Western Australia, Mr Burke, got stuck into the federal Treasurer and the Prime Minister. Mr Burke gave the example of a policeman at Broome who is woken from his slumber at 3 o'clock in the morning, in his demountable - which is not air-conditioned - to break up a fight between some drunken people. He did not use the word 'people'; he was more specific about the types of people he spoke about. At the risk of personal injury to himself that policeman is required to drive to the fight scene in a Landcruiser. The government supplies the policeman with the demountable and the Landcruiser and the \$20 000 or \$21 000 that he is paid each year. He is not a fat cat. Those are not perks or perks yet the government would be required to pay fringe benefits tax on that.

The Prime Minister said that he would get back to us because it did not sound right to him. We wrote to him, as requested, even though we knew that that was Hawkespeak meaning that the government had no intention of doing anything about it. That is some of the information that we sent to the federal government for Mr Hawke to examine. We have sent telexes. On the day the Leader of the Opposition was in Canberra, we forwarded a telex to the Treasurer. We said: 'Mr Treasurer, you have still not got back to us. You have still not recognised that, in the Northern Territory, a stock inspector who sleeps on a swag between a cattle yard and his Landcruiser should not be charged for home garaging of that Landcruiser'. He said: 'We will get back to you. We realise that you have a problem'.

The Leader of the Opposition decided to swing into the argument. In all fairness, I spoke to him in the early stages about the fringe benefits tax,

and he said that we should have a joint approach to this disastrous impost. He decided to go to Canberra, and he sat down with Mr Keating. When he came away, he said that Mr Keating would examine the matter because part of the burden being shouldered by the Northern Territory seemed unfair. The Leader of the Opposition came away, and nothing happened. The Leader of the Opposition went back and spoke for an hour with the Prime Minister. From what we have heard this morning, we wonder how much of that conversation was devoted to the fringe benefits tax, and how much was devoted to: 'Why don't you come down and join us. We are in desperate trouble, and even you could not make it any worse'.

Mr Speaker, let us have a look at what it will cost the minister responsible for education. There are teachers in the remote areas and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition spoke about them this morning. The minister will need to find some \$2.7m in his budget to pay this tax, because there is no more money. We have to find ways to do things differently if we are to pay this tax that has been imposed on us. That works out at an extra cost of about \$100 per student or \$20 000 per school.

The federal government has let Australia down. It has destroyed the confidence placed in it when it was elected to power. It is not only the fringe benefits tax, the effect on mining has been well-recorded in the record of this Assembly. Recently, 2 senators were here: Senator Evans, the Minister for Resources and Energy, and Senator Peter Walsh, who was responsible for bad-mouthing the Northern Territory and has other minor responsibilities in terms of finance.

Mr Dale: With a machine gun.

Mr COULTER: Yes, and he is in charge of munitions as well.

They came up here and they said that the Northern Territory can help Australia out of its financial doldrums because of the opportunities available to it in mining. In fact, Senator Walsh went on to say that it was the only light at the end of the tunnel and the only real way out for the Northern Territory.

Let us look at what this bunch of desperadoes in Canberra has done to the mining industry, and remember that the federal ministers responsible for mines and finance are saying that this is the way out for us. Recently, they imposed a capital gains tax on the mining companies. Now they consider exploration licences as an asset. We are talking about a company investing millions of dollars in proving up a field. High-risk venture capital is now to be taxed and may cost the Northern Territory mining industry \$60m. They have imposed on them a fringe benefits tax. Many members have been out to the Granites and have seen the types of conditions that apply there. I am sure the honourable member for Stuart can back me up on this. They are provided with a few facilities but, when that mine was being developed, temperatures inside the demountables were extremely uncomfortable to say the least. The improved living conditions which the mining company developed in order to provide incentives to its workers are now being taxed because they are called fringe benefits. It is a fringe benefit to supply the workers with a meal or a demountable.

The federal government is now considering a gold tax. Of course, we all remember the member for Stuart saying that we would not have a gold tax. He trumpeted from downtown Tasmania that we should forget about it. Of course, he forgot to tell the bloke who was running the inquiry at the time. He is

still running around Australia, at considerable cost to the Australian taxpayer, trying to work out whether they will be taxed. This is the way out. The mining industry that will save us is being burdened by tax after tax after tax.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition used the New Zealand example. He said New Zealand has had this tax for a long time and has not suffered terribly. I ask him to look at how much New Zealand claimed that it would recoup from the introduction of the fringe benefits tax, the revenue that it actually derived from the tax and the cost of trying to collect the tax. In fact, I am informed that it was able to recoup only 50% of the anticipated figure. That is the model that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition wants us to believe is successful. It was successful only in that it did not work. People would not pay it. I believe the same will be the case in Australia. Forces have developed against it, including the well-known campaigner 'Axe the Tax' Bob Ansett. The National Farmers Federation is offering advice and a number of companies now supply manuals, at a cost of \$150 and \$170, on how to avoid the fringe benefits tax. These will be successful, and the income derived by the federal government will be nowhere near what it expects to enable it to feed the social welfare machine that it has created.

Our position is quite clear: we are against the fringe benefits tax.

Mr Smith: What are you for?

Mr COULTER: For private enterprise and the development of Australia.

The government's position is simply that the person who receives the benefit should pay the tax, not the employer. In the Northern Territory, relocation costs are \$3.9m a year. As the figures given by the opposition indicate, the tax will not have such an impact in the southern states. It boils down to 2 things. The first is the company car that is driven home. Everyone will get a 1 t ute and thereby avoid the tax. The other matter is relocation expenses from city to city. All the other points that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made today are well recorded. In fact, he made most of them on 11 June 1986. He has not changed terribly much since then. He spoke about club membership fees being paid. He said that these were the big issues that we should be outraged about. What he has not said is what he intends to do in relation to the Northern Territory. Are we to sit back and believe that the Leader of the Opposition, in his recent one-hour meeting with the Prime Minister, was able to achieve an understanding that these taxes will not be imposed on Northern Territorians? Did he convince him that they are not lurks and perks for the school teachers, the nurses, the stock inspectors and the policemen in the Northern Territory who have to operate in conditions that he described as worse than those of a third world country? Is that what is going to come out of the negotiations which the Northern Territory Labor Party has instigated in Canberra? Or are we to wait for tonight's budget, to realise again that we have all been kicked in the teeth, that the Northern Territory's proportional contribution to the fringe benefits tax will be greater than that of any state? Now 1% of the population will carry 10% of the burden. It is a standard formula used by the federal government when considering the Northern Territory. It did it in the mini-budget, it did it when it cut our capital works program, and it did it in relation to the fringe benefits tax.

We believe this is a matter of grave public importance. It will be the death knell for the federal Labor government. I heard that from Mr Unsworth. He rang me up and told me the other day. He has 76 reasons for thanking

Mr Hawke and Mr Keating for introducing the fringe benefits tax. We heard the Leader of the Opposition talk about swings. Sometimes I think he is in a park. One would have thought that the swings in New South Wales would have driven the message home. The Premier of New South Wales now has 76 voters to thank for giving him a seat. Are they counting them again or not? It could be even less. The impact of this tax will not be forgotten by business people, individuals and governments throughout Australia. I include the Labor governments in the southern states and, in particular, Mr Burke from Western Australia, who has made genuine efforts to have this tax reduced.

The opposition's contribution to this debate has been pathetic. It was simply a rehash of what has been said before. It was delivered from a sheaf of notes rather than from the heart. I just wonder about the opposition members' real belief in what they are saying about the injustices of the tax, and how clearly they see it as yet another money-grabbing opportunity to feed the social welfare machine created by their federal colleagues and supported by themselves.

Mr EDE (Stuart): It is no wonder that we have such problems, when the Treasurer cannot even get through one speech without getting himself so horribly confused and tangled up that he ends by arguing against his own conclusions. I think it is quite probable that they take him away from this place and lock him in a room somewhere without a telephone so that he will not telephone people and cause us to lose more money. If he had his way, we would be right back where we started when his mob was in power down south. In one instance, he started to say he was against the tax. The next moment, he was not against the tax but only against the fact that the employers are paying it. He wants the employees to pay. I hope that is reported in the Northern Territory News. He wants to whack the workers of the Territory for \$500 each. That is his means of solving this particular problem.

Mr Speaker, in principle the opposition supports the introduction of the fringe benefits tax and, indeed, any measures to abolish tax avoidance schemes. However, we have strong reservations about the application of this tax in the Territory. As members of this Legislative Assembly, it is our duty to criticise and campaign against any legislation that discriminates against Territorians. This legislation does that. We are very concerned. The Leader of the Opposition has expressed this to the Prime Minister. In intending to abolish a known tax port, the federal government unfortunately has taxed many legitimate working conditions in remote areas. We have doubts as to whether the Taxation Department in Canberra has given sufficient thought to the unique circumstances and conditions which pertain in remote areas. Given that this tax scheme seems to have been based on successful New Zealand legislation, it would be surprising if we were to discover that it would adequately cover all of the situations found in remote areas of Australia.

Last week, the Leader of the Opposition was fortunate enough to obtain a meeting with the Prime Minister in Canberra. We requested this meeting with the Prime Minister specifically to discuss the fringe benefits tax. I am happy to say that we were given ample opportunity to express our serious concern about the ramifications of the fringe benefits tax for the Northern Territory, and the problems associated with its general application. The Prime Minister was very receptive to our concerns.

Before the departure of the Leader of the Opposition for Canberra, he received a rather unexpected phone call from our new Chief Minister. Not the least surprising aspect was that it was on a talk-back radio program. There are more private telephones if the Chief Minister wishes to use them but, if

he wants to make a fool of himself in front of all the people of the Northern Territory, I can probably get him on the ABC. It was very surprising to us all. The Chief Minister had just issued an extremely negative press release, in which he had accused the Leader of the Opposition of political grandstanding. However, after the conversation on talk-back radio, the Chief Minister not only supported our efforts, he proposed to join in. Obviously, he no longer believed that we were indulging in some sort of cynical exercise in political grandstanding. And, indeed, that is to the Chief Minister's credit.

It would be most unfortunate to trivialise such an important issue as the impact of the fringe benefits tax on the Territory by placing it in the realms of mere political gamesmanship. However, while we appreciate this offer of support from the Chief Minister in our endeavours for the Territory, we cannot and will not join the Northern Territory government in bipartisan opposition to the fringe benefits tax. This would place the opposition in the position of supporting a known tax rort which costs Australia an estimated \$3000m per annum.

I would like to stress that the fringe benefits tax has not been introduced in isolation by the federal government. It is part of a total tax package aimed at reforming the Australian taxation system. That tax reform is a vital part of the government's overall strategy, aimed at overcoming the present structural weaknesses in the national economy and promoting growth. The present federal government is prepared to make the tough decisions required in the interests of the economy, even if it means putting taxation on the political agenda. That is a great deal more than can be said for the previous federal government that was supported by the members opposite. It has been evident for some time that the taxation system has become increasingly inefficient, inequitable and complicated. Previous federal governments did not have the courage to abolish or even to diminish renowned abuses of taxation law. The tax system was inefficient because tax avoidance strategies often encouraged the reallocation of resources into nonproductive activities and attracted resources away from more economically efficient pursuits. The federal government's efforts to encourage a more efficient tax system are vital to developing a more effective economy.

With regard to fringe benefits in particular, as inflation pushed income earners into higher income brackets, it encouraged the proliferation of payment-in-kind arrangements between employer and employee. In competition for higher income, more and more employees have sought positions in industries where fringe benefits are paid. This phenomenon has been eroding the progressive nature of the taxation system to the point where the top marginal rate is paid by just a few of the people who are in that bracket. For this reason, the federal government has incorporated initiatives such as the fringe benefits tax with structure reforms of the marginal tax rates, which I will outline at a later stage.

Every tax avoidance strategy places a greater burden on the employees and the industries who do not benefit from the avoidance. It is usually the lower and the middle income PAYE taxpayers who are called on to make up the difference. The hypocrisy of the campaign which has been mounted against the principle of the fringe benefits tax has also been noted in that reputable newspaper, the Australian Financial Review:

As its name suggests, the fringe benefit tax is a fringe issue generating far more heat than it should and, as often happens in Australia, people spend more time whingeing about the government than

getting on with the business of producing something. A tax system which discriminates against the majority in favour of the minority must lose credibility and lead to the general view that the system itself is unfair.

That is disastrous at a time when greater demands for restraint are being made on the very income earner who is being discriminated against. While the nature of the problem of tax avoidance is difficult to estimate in monetary terms, it has been estimated that the cost to Australia in terms of revenue forgone is approximately \$3000m per annum. The revenue loss in terms of fringe benefits tax avoidance alone is estimated at \$700m.

The new fringe benefits tax is part of a package that is aimed at reform rather than revenue-raising. It is designed to decrease the obvious misallocations of resources. People start moving into those industries which provide fringe benefits and that twists the economy out of the shape which would allow it to operate at its most efficient level. I must reiterate that the tax reform package is aimed at reform not revenue-raising. The cost to the nation's revenue of the cuts to the marginal tax rates will far outweigh the proceeds from new tax measures such as the fringe benefits tax. The Prime Minister has told us that the total amount of taxation revenue collected by all of the tax measures will be about \$1500m and the total amount paid back to the wage earners' pockets will be approximately \$4500m over a period of 2 years. A \$3000m benefit to the taxpayers of Australia is the type of benefit that the members opposite are complaining about.

Other initiatives in the present tax reform package include the disallowance of any deductions from non-tax-exempt bodies for entertainment expenses. That will stop the majority of taxpayers from subsidising the largely social activities of the minority. There will be improvement of the substantiation requirements for allowable deductions, the abolition of double taxation on company dividends, the introduction of the capital gains tax, with certain exemptions such as the family home, and the phasing in of cuts to the marginal tax rates will bring the high tax bracket in line with the company tax rate. The fringe benefits tax rate will also be aligned to the company tax rate and thus the incentive to indulge in this form of tax avoidance will no longer exist. This will decrease the burden presently imposed on middle-income earners. These reforms are part of a total economic strategy and the fringe benefits tax is a necessary part of that package.

However, whilst we support the abolition of intentional tax avoidance schemes for the reasons that we have outlined, we cannot support the inclusion of compensatory employment conditions in the Northern Territory in this category. Many of those conditions of service were introduced in the Territory by the Commonwealth government as compensation for working in remote areas. The Northern Territory government is compelled to provide these conditions of service not only by industrial awards but also because they were guaranteed to compulsory transferees to the Northern Territory Public Service by Commonwealth legislation. The flow-on and consequent establishment of these conditions into private sector awards through the Arbitration Commission means that employers who are compelled to pay these incentives are now liable to pay the fringe benefits tax. It is inequitable that an employer who is compelled to pay a benefit in an award is then to be forced to pay tax on that benefit.

That is not within the bounds of the original intent of the legislation which was to abolish premeditated tax avoidance benefit payments. These benefits were established mainly to compensate high-income earners for being

in the highest tax brackets. The benefits paid in the Northern Territory are paid as a compensation for having to work under very harsh and, at times, even third world conditions. I am particularly concerned at some of the anomalies which arise in the classification of areas as 'remote' and the application of the tax to remote areas.

First, remoteness seems to be classified purely in terms of the size of the population with little regard for distances involved or other aspects of isolation. This anomaly led to some small towns and country areas being classified as remote purely on the basis of their size while Darwin and Alice Springs were not classified as remote. Although this aspect of the tax has been reviewed to enable several large towns, including Alice Springs, to be classified as remote, Darwin has remained excluded. I seriously question the rationale behind these decisions and one would think that the present criteria were deliberately tailored to exclude Darwin. Of course, that is probably not the case because, unfortunately, the Territory, with its minor percentage of the total population of Australia, does not loom large enough in the minds of the bureaucracy in Canberra.

Additionally, I do not support the inclusion of recruitment and relocation expenses as a fringe benefit on local and general economic grounds. Firstly, the payment of recruitment expenses is essential in order to encourage professional and skilled persons to make the decision to move to the Northern Territory. Without such encouragement, the high cost for a person to relocate, with his or her home and family, would prove to be too great a disincentive. The Territory is severely disadvantaged in this respect as an importer of skilled labour necessitated by the lack of training facilities and the limited number of graduates available from existing courses. This situation is further aggravated by the high rate of turnover in the labour force in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, the cost of recruiting and relocating personnel to and within the Northern Territory is already a heavy burden for the government and the private sector. The fringe benefits tax will only add to this burden on the Territory's developing economy.

Secondly, I believe that taxation on expenses for recruitment purposes generally will be a disincentive to the occupational mobility of Australia as a whole and, therefore, may inhibit the efficient allocation of labour throughout Australia. I am also concerned about the additional administrative burden ...

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

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Deputy Speaker, the Treasurer has outlined clearly some of the fundamental inequities of this particular tax. I would like to get down to a few of the basics because, quite frankly, members opposite have been working very hard to try to pull the wool over the eyes of the community. That is what their current leader has been trying to do over the last week.

We should begin by asking what we are talking about when we refer to a fringe benefit. A fringe benefit is defined as a non-cash benefit arising out of a person's employment. The intent, therefore, is to tax that non-cash benefit. The fundamentals of taxation law say that, if you are receiving an income or a benefit as a consequence of your employment, then it can and should be treated as part of your income, and you should be taxed on that income. Every argument we have heard from the opposition during the last sittings, over the past week, and here again today, is directed towards saying: 'Here are these tall poppies receiving this benefit, be it a car,

home garaging or payment of subs to the local golf club, and they should not be allowed to avoid tax on this benefit'.

When confronted with that question at the economic summit last year, my predecessor said: 'That sounds reasonable'. The fact is that tax laws as they existed last year, allowed the government to tax those benefits. Legislation has allowed for that since 1916. Governments have always been able to tax those benefits. A great con is being pulled on this community over fringe benefits.

Mr Speaker, you will remember the attempt by the previous Treasurer who tried to impose tax on subsidised housing. He was entitled to under the legislation. Of course, the coal miners of Queensland all went out on strike, and there was great industrial pressure around the country. The federal government of the day backed off. This federal government, this Labor federal government, learnt a lesson from that. It wanted to tax fringe benefits, but it did not have the guts to go out and say: 'You are getting a benefit that is really part of your wage, and you should be taxed on it'. It took the coward's way out. It turned around and said: 'You can get that benefit. You can attribute it, no matter how you get it, to some tax avoidance deal or through your awards, or whatever. We are not going to charge you any tax on it. We are going to hit your boss for the tax, the fellow who is paying those benefits to you, even where he is paying them because he is required to by law'.

That is the fundamental inequity in this tax, make no bones about it. It is not the fact that these benefits are being taxed; it is that the tax is being charged against the employer, the person required in most instances to provide those benefits. If the government is honest about these non-cash benefits being taxable, the people receiving them should pay that tax. If the government does not believe those people should pay the tax, it should not levy it on others. You cannot have it both ways. What the government has done is to drive a lump down the throat of primary industry and governments other than itself. It is well protected itself.

This brings me to another great fantasy of the federal government's. 'We are charging ourselves fringe benefits tax', it says. So what happens? The Department of Defence gets a fringe benefits tax bill which it pays to the Department of the Treasury. Because of the additional costs of defence, Treasury increases the subvention to the Department of Defence, and money runs around in a circle while a few more federal public servants are employed to shuffle the paper. This is happening right now.

Let us look at some other points. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition stands there and says: 'This is a tax reform measure. It is a wonderful tax reform measure. We are going to collect all this money off the boss and we are going to pay it to the worker'. Real Robin Hood stuff, this is. He is going to take it off the boss and pay it to the worker. Damn the consequences of a few workers losing their jobs because the boss has to take it out of his income in a soft market! That seems irrelevant to the opposition.

Let us just look at this great tax reform. In his speech, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said that, in any tax reform, there must be winners and losers and, in this case, it is being taken from the rich and given to the poor; taken from the well-off and given to the low-income earners. It sounds good, but what the government is doing is taking it off the employer to pay the employee. Yet again, we see an example of the congenital incapability of that political party to develop any understanding of the fundamentals of

keeping business and the economy running. It is congenitally incapable of understanding it, Mr Speaker. The fact is that the consistently big winner in tax systems in this country has been the federal government.

If there has to be a winner and a loser, the loser should be the federal government and the winners should be the people of Australia. The only way that can be achieved is by cutting federal government expenditure to provide tax reform by reducing the total amount of tax collected in this country. That is what is killing this country. The federal government is bleeding it dry by overtaxing Australia to pump up its Community Employment Program, its social welfare payments, its commissions for the future and every other odd-ball thing it can dream up. If those expenses were limited, and the costs of federal government cut back, then we might have a chance in this country of keeping some money in the hands of people who will invest it in real wealth creation.

The members opposite have absolutely no hope of understanding that; they are incapable. Their philosophy, their ideology, makes it impossible for them to grasp the fundamentals of business and the fundamentals of the economy. They are hidebound and blinkered by their own stupid socialist philosophies which are killing this country. The best thing that could happen would be for their federal colleagues to get out of government and let some people in who would put some money in the hands of those who will invest and create real jobs, not make-work jobs and paper shuffling in the Australian Public Service or community employment programs, which have a demoralising effect on people in Australia.

I can only see one reason for the opposition bringing this debate on and that is to provide an opportunity for their colleagues to see how the candidates for leadership perform. I said earlier that they suffer from a tall-poppy syndrome. Once again, this afternoon, they are in the process of trimming tall poppies but, after this afternoon, I suggest that they put their secateurs away because the last of the Labor tall poppies is going out of leadership.

Mr Speaker, to summarise, the opposition is promoting a fundamentally inequitable policy. It is promoting to the community the view that there are people earning non-cash benefits and avoiding paying tax on them. Members of the opposition say a tax should be imposed on those benefits. However, they are promoting a scheme that is geared not towards taxing those people, but taxing the person who pays the benefits. That is the fundamental inconsistency in the opposition's argument and that of the federal government. You cannot have it both ways. Either you say that those benefits should be taxable, and charge the beneficiary, or you back off and exclude them as taxable benefits. You cannot say that a person should receive the benefit tax free and somebody else should pay the tax for him. That is what is wrong with the whole argument of the federal government and the opposition in the Northern Territory in this fringe benefits tax debate.

We want tax reform in this country. We want tax reform which will reduce the total amount of tax collected, not just shuffle it from one side of the Titanic to the other. We must reduce the total amount of tax and I accept that we have a responsibility there as a government. We must all work to minimise the cost of government and the drain on the taxpayer's purse. I accept that we have to do that.

The great suction on tax extraction in this country comes from the federal government and it is putting increasing amounts of tax revenue into the

sections of the community that are doing the greatest amount of damage to our economy. It is taking money out of the pockets of employers, small businessmen, farmers, miners, and manufacturers who are being hit with these taxes. There is a capital gains tax. Who remembers being told there would be no capital gains tax? Now we have been told by the honourable member for Stuart that, as part of this tax reform package, capital gains tax will not be charged on the family home. Once upon a time, there was not to be a capital gains tax.

The member for Stuart spoke about structural weaknesses in the economy. Certainly they exist; they are called Labor in government. My colleague, the Treasurer, once told me that we could impose an economic sanction on South Africa by sending Paul Keating across there for a couple of weeks. That might not be such a silly suggestion. We must oppose the principles under which this fringe benefits tax is being imposed. If people decide that non-cash benefits are to be taxed, then there is no need to introduce a law. The existing laws can be applied and the people receiving the benefits can be taxed.

STATEMENT

Leader of Parliamentary Labor Party

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, I report to the Assembly that, at a meeting held at lunchtime today, the Parliamentary Labor Party elected myself as Opposition Leader. My colleague, Brian Ede, was elected Deputy Leader and Dan Leo, the member for Nhulunbuy, was reappointed Whip. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the government, I am not too sure whether we should wish honourable members opposite all the best or all the worst, but it is pleasing to note that both the member for Millner and the member for Stuart have moved a little more to the right.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Continued from 17 June 1986.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure today to speak to the address-in-reply. Most of my remarks will relate directly to the portfolios for which I am responsible.

However, at the outset I would like to refer to His Honour's praise for major tourism projects in the Northern Territory. Members would be aware that many of those developments have occurred and are continuing to occur within the electorate of Port Darwin. We can all be very proud of the entertainment facilities at the new Performing Arts Centre, and the world-class accommodation and convention facilities available now in the new Beaufort and Sheraton Hotels. These exciting developments continue to be offset by delays in the construction of the Darwin Airport. This issue has been spoken of again and again, but I do not raise it simply to knock the federal government. It is an issue that vitally affects Darwin and the development of the Northern Territory, and we should pursue it at every opportunity. It is not only the development of Darwin Airport which matters. The other airports in the Northern Territory are also extremely important.

The federal government's responsibility, of course, extends far beyond tourism. Because we now confront the crippling consequences of the fringe benefits tax, federal assistance and incentives in relation to health are vital to the Territory's future. The federal government needs to be reminded that 25% of the Northern Territory's population are traditional Aboriginals and, with so many health and education programs involving work in remote communities, the Territory is unique. Without the inducement of amenities, our ability to attract highly-qualified health workers to the Northern Territory will be under severe threat. That has been acknowledged by members of the opposition as well as by this government. It is nonsense that a house provided for a health worker in an isolated community in the Northern Territory should be regarded as a perk or a lurk. Such amenities are essential, and we must ensure that this matter is raised continually with the federal government.

The fringe benefits tax, which will affect everyone in our country either directly or indirectly, is not only unjust but also totally confusing. No one, not even the so-called best Treasurer in the world, seems to know what the fringe benefits tax involves. Only last week, the federal Treasurer and the Prime Minister contradicted each other in relation to a question concerning this tax. It is no wonder that the whole country is totally confused, and it is no wonder that businessmen feel that they have nothing to look forward to but bankruptcy. Because of the unique circumstances in the Territory this iniquitous fringe benefits tax will strike at the very fabric of our society. Despite these very severe difficulties, this government will continue to act responsibly, and we will be implementing new health initiatives. We will be weeding out duplication and reviewing counselling and rehabilitation services to provide the most effective and efficient operation. This has to be done because of the way in which the federal government has treated us. Because of the various imposts that have been placed on us, we must ensure that the functions of counselling and rehabilitation services are not duplicated and we look to rationalising those services.

Another initiative which the Northern Territory government continues to support is the Aboriginal Health Worker Program. Aboriginal Health Workers, selected by their communities, have long been recognised in the Territory for their work in such areas as health education, communicable diseases and trachoma. In the diagnosis and treatment of trachoma, particularly in remote areas, their work has been invaluable. Under the Health Practitioners and Allied Professionals Registration Act, which came into force in March 1986, the role of Aboriginal Health Workers is recognised legally. Indeed, with the introduction of its 10 registration boards, the Northern Territory has become the first place in the world, I believe, to recognise primary health workers legally.

Now it is time to consider a career structure for our Aboriginal Health Workers. That is something that they have wanted for a long time. I am very pleased to be able to report that a work value study is about to take place, with an assessment team visiting every region where Aboriginal Health Workers are employed. That team will meet medical and regional officers and health workers in order to determine a fair structure for all concerned. I am sure that honourable members will appreciate that the mobility of Aboriginal communities - whether it results from the seasons or the movement to homeland centres or whatever - will create many complications, but we must ensure that we visit those communities and review the whole matter very carefully.

As was mentioned in the last sittings, the abuse of kava is a major problem that is being addressed by the government. Recently, I held a

briefing for members of the Legislative Assembly, the House of Representatives and the Senate on this subject. Unfortunately, many members were unable to attend but I hope they received the briefing papers that were made available. Very little is known about kava and its effects on the body. The real problem relates to the length of kava-drinking sessions and the fact that often alcohol and other substances are mixed with kava which obviously has a detrimental effect on the body.

At present a survey is being conducted on drug use and consumption patterns in the community. Data should be provided to me within the next 2 months and I will keep members informed on that particular issue. It is a major concern to the Aboriginal communities, particularly in the east Arnhem region. The Northern Territory government has applied to the Commonwealth government for a grant to assist with kava research to be undertaken by the Menzies School of Health Research. As yet, we have received no reply.

The Menzies School of Health Research, an initiative of this government, continues to reflect great credit on the Northern Territory. Already several world-first scientific achievements of enormous potential value have attracted international attention, and I think that needs to be brought to the attention of the Assembly. These are related to the chlamydia organism which causes trachoma, some sexual and possibly other genital tract diseases, and probably a significant number of respiratory diseases. The school is highly respected and has great community support. I am confident that any research that it carries out in relation to kava will be of significance not only to the Territory but also to other parts of the world.

Petrol sniffing presents a major health problem which causes social disruption to Aboriginal communities, many of which move across vast tracts of land without recognition of state or territory boundaries. A national conference on volatile substance abuse, held in Alice Springs in May 1986, was another Northern Territory government initiative which recognised the need for the 3 areas most affected - the Northern Territory, South Australia, and Western Australia - to join together in efforts to combat the problem. As a result, my ministerial counterparts in those 2 states are joining with me to seek financial assistance for petrol-sniffing programs under the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse.

At the same conference, it was decided that the Northern Territory Drug and Alcohol Bureau should provide a data bank for petrol-sniffing programs throughout Australia. There is a need for all Australian governments to work together to overcome these problems. The Commonwealth needs to consult with the Northern Territory and also with the state governments. In the past, the Commonwealth has come into the Northern Territory and provided funds to communities to look at problems related to petrol sniffing. This has been done without any consultation whatsoever with the Northern Territory government. Times are tough and we are taking a responsible attitude aimed at pulling our weight and avoiding duplication. The only way to avoid duplication is to ensure that all governments consult together so that the problems can be addressed in a responsible manner.

Another major concern in the Northern Territory is alcohol abuse. The alcohol services at the Royal Darwin Hospital were reviewed in 1984 and the task force set up at that time recommended that a 3-tier system of treatment be introduced. Firstly, an early intervention unit should be established to ensure that the large number of patients passing through the hospital's wards who have alcohol-related problems, but whose symptoms are not recognised as such, can be served effectively. Secondly, a short-term residential

detoxification program should be established to assist people to withdraw from alcohol. Thirdly, the alcohol dependence treatment unit should be moved out of the hospital and into the community. I commented on that particular matter this morning. This move would follow a national trend to emphasise outpatient and day patient rehabilitation treatment.

Members would now be aware that the first 2 tiers that I mentioned, the early intervention unit and the detoxification unit, are proving very effective indeed. The third tier, the move of the ADTU away from the hospital into the community, is at the negotiating stage. However, I can assure honourable members that the treatment will continue at the hospital until the new centre is up and running. I emphasise again that the move had nothing whatsoever to do with bed occupancy. The recommendation was made on the basis that the best place for rehabilitation, after the detoxification unit had played its part, was in the community itself. That is the direction in which this government is moving. Again, I emphasise that the outcome will be a professional rehabilitation program.

I am also pleased to inform members who have expressed concern in relation to the CT scan facilities at the hospital, that the Northern Territory government has negotiated a deal with a group of radiologists who will provide a state-of-the-art CT scanner at the Royal Darwin Hospital. Later this week or early next week, I will be releasing details of the successful company and the type of machine that is to be installed. I am unable to do that at present because one of the partners in the group is overseas and I am unable to contact him to give him the information. However, this will definitely not affect the decision of the government. We will soon have a very modern CT scanner in the Northern Territory, and it will serve our people well. That is good news for Territory people.

Meanwhile, negotiations for a Darwin private hospital are continuing according to schedule. Of the 80 or more organisations which expressed early interest, 14 have now been asked to forward detailed submissions. A final decision will be made before the end of the year. We expect to commence work on the private hospital during 1987 and it should be in operation by 1988.

I would now like to turn briefly to the nursing profession whose members' dedication and skill is at the very core of the Territory's health service. In October 1985, a task force was established to develop a nursing career structure, taking into account the changing role of nurses and the significant effects of new technology. Nursing today places great demands on both the individual and groups. The aim of the task force has been to extend the nature and the range of career opportunities, taking account of clinical, management and educational roles. The task force has now completed its work. The report is before me, and is being circulated for comment in other regions of the Northern Territory and within the profession itself. I want to stress that we have to be very careful in relation to this issue. We do not want to rush. The Victorian government got itself into a mess after rushing into establishing a nursing career structure. Many of the nurses find that they are receiving less under this career structure than they were previously. We want to ensure that a career structure is created for nurses but to do it in a responsible manner with people receiving the payments that they duly deserve.

Meanwhile, in line with the need for wider academic training for the nursing profession, the Territory's basic nursing course is being transferred to the Darwin Institute of Technology from the start of 1987. The course will lay equal emphasis on practical and academic skills and will play a significant role in the Territory's long-term plan to prevent the brain drain

of potential professionals travelling to southern cities for tertiary education.

Mr Speaker, I would like to comment on a remark made by the former Deputy Leader of the Opposition, now the Leader of the Opposition, during his contribution to the address-in-reply when he spoke about a university college. There is no doubt that some students will have to go interstate to have access to courses that will enable them to become doctors or lawyers. There is no doubt that that will have to occur, but we have to start somewhere. We cannot continue to deny Northern Territory people access to university undergraduate courses. I am most disappointed by the lack of support from the opposition for the establishment of a university college in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: Lack of support? It was our idea.

Mr HARRIS: Lack of support for the provision of university undergraduate courses in the Northern Territory.

Might I also say that the Leader of the Opposition's comments on the credibility of the degrees that will be offered at our University College are nonsense. He said that people lacked confidence in the degrees that were to be offered at the University College. They are degrees of the University of Queensland and they cannot be questioned. That needs to be made very clear to people in the Northern Territory. There is no doubt about the credibility of those courses. That was one of the problems that we had in relation to establishing a university college at the Darwin Institute of Technology, but that is another story.

We are trying to reach a point where our young people can undertake their studies in the Northern Territory and our young professionals can service our industries and professions in the Northern Territory, and there will be no need for these fringe benefits. Eventually, our own Aboriginal people will be our health workers and teachers in Aboriginal communities. We will not have to provide houses to attract expertise from outside because it will be there. However, we have to grow. The opposition stands condemned for its lack of support for the further development of our University College.

Mr Speaker, the need to provide a comprehensive psychiatric service for the Territory has long been of concern to this government. We are committed to providing such a service within the framework of the general health services. Earlier this year, the Territory's first community psychiatrist, Dr Joan Riddley, took up the position of Director of Psychiatric Services. Dr Riddley has completed a survey identifying areas of psychiatric need in the community which recommends accommodation for long-term patients and semi-dependent persons, a day-care service, a child and family therapy service and visiting rural psychiatric services. Tamarind House has been set aside by the government for the purpose and will include administrative and assessment areas. It will also include training facilities for nurses and Aboriginal Health Workers. Those services will be provided in a staged development. We are looking at psychiatric services also. We will be extending the existing psychiatric ward at the Alice Springs Hospital. We will also be looking at the provision of a half-way house there.

Mr Speaker, before closing, I would like to turn briefly to my other portfolio, housing. There is no substitute for housing as a generator of employment. Indeed, a great deal of research that has been carried out - and I refer specifically to CSIRO research - indicates that expenditure on housing generates more jobs per million dollars than any other industry. Since the

advent of self-government in the Territory, 15 000 families have been housed and more than 8000 housing loans have been made. The enormous contribution this has made to stabilising the Territory population cannot be over-emphasised.

There are real problems in relation to the housing industry at present. Recently, as its guest speaker, I attended a luncheon held by the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory. It was very clear that it had major concerns in relation to its industry. The current economic climate is particularly unfavourable to the housing industry throughout Australia. Further, the Commonwealth government has now removed the tax concession previously available from negative gearing with the result that there is no inducement for business people to invest in the private rental market. Consequently, the private rental market is shrinking and there is a significant increase in rental rates. This is a most serious situation because so many people in the Northern Territory rely on the availability of rental accommodation.

The government intends to address the issues that were raised. Later this year, I will be holding a seminar on housing. I will be asking the Real Estate Institute of the Northern Territory, the Master Builders Association, building contractors, suppliers and anyone and everyone who is concerned to attend that particular seminar to address our very real problems.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the Administrator's speech spelt out very clearly what the Northern Territory government is all about. The speech confirmed the direction and consolidated the initiatives of successive governments. Definitely, the Hatton government has a different attitude, a different style, and it is pursuing the goals of the only party that is fit to govern the Northern Territory, and I refer to the Country Liberal Party. I have had a great deal of pleasure in speaking to the address-in-reply and emphasising the direction in which the government is going.

Mr MCCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Speaker, I would like to expand on some of the initiatives now being undertaken in relation to the pastoral and horticultural industries in the Northern Territory. As the Chief Minister pointed out, a major initiative is the appointment of Gunn Rural Management International Pty Ltd to undertake a broad-ranging pastoral industry study. It is recognised that the oldest of the Territory's industries has the capacity to expand, to become more efficient and increase its production, and thus provide greater flow-on benefits to the Territory. The industry should be seen as the major long-term contributor to the Territory economy and it could benefit from cooperative and practical planning for its future development.

The study will provide a draft industry plan for raising the level of pastoral productivity, covering initiatives which the industry and government might take within a 10-year period. Included in the study will be a broad economic analysis of the Territory pastoral industry using reference material from earlier inquiries and investigations. Also, the study will provide a comprehensive bibliography to suggest ways to access this information. The study will look at the industry in its entirety with the object of planning for its future. Structures and changes in livestock population, current and potential markets and marketing methods for livestock and livestock products will be examined, and limiting factors and problems within the industry will be identified. Abattoir, meat processing, by-product processing, support industries and other related activities relevant to land usage will be examined also. Results of the study are expected to be released by the end of this year.

I turn now to the horticultural industry. In the current economic climate, it is heartening to know that the amount of Territory horticultural produce being sold both overseas and interstate is increasing rapidly. The export of rockmelons overseas doubled in volume during the past year. Years of work on mango planting and research will come to fruition this year with substantially larger quantities of Northern Territory mangoes expected to compete well on early markets throughout Australia and South-east Asia. The Territory has a natural advantage, which is now being exploited, in being first in the market for producing out of season. Both in central Australia and the Top End, growers and researchers have found that our produce matures weeks in advance of the same product in the southern states, or is available in quantity and quality when other areas are not producing. In relation to overseas markets, of course, our produce appears in their off-season. By way of illustration, table grapes produced in the Ti Tree and Pine Hill areas can be on the market at least 3 weeks before produce from southern states and, therefore, can command premium prices. It is worth pointing out that 4 operators are growing table grapes now in central Australia compared to 1 enterprise only 3 years ago. Inquiries have been made into the possibility of exporting table grapes to Europe.

Some estimates put the income-earning capacity of the horticultural industry at \$15m within the next 5 years. The industry is growing at approximately 60% annually and we are working towards redressing the imbalance between horticultural imports and exports. The Katherine Farms have been established for some time now, and the area planted with vegetables requiring cooler conditions is expanding rapidly.

Research is an integral part of this expanding industry. Research is being undertaken into the feasibility of introducing new specific-interest foods such as asparagus and, in the longer term, dates. Of course, research is not limited to horticulture. Extensive work has, and is, being done on the introduction of new crops such as sesame and peanuts and crops with commercial uses in the Territory. By 'crops with commercial uses', I mean crops that can be used as stockfeed and by industries such as gum making. For many years, rice production was considered to be a failure. With additional information now to hand, the introduction of new varieties and different approaches to farming, it is now considered to be a viable industry and a valuable supply source for the local stockfeed market. It is pleasing to see that Territorians are taking an enterprising and innovative approach to production and marketing. Where rice was grown only for human consumption in past years in broadacre farming style, today our Adelaide River farmers grow rice for both human consumption and stockfeed. As well, they run mixed farms making the most out of the rice crop by grazing their cattle on rice stubble.

Knowledge of crops and the potential of land is growing as is the enthusiasm for this young but expanding horticultural and agricultural industry. More land is being opened up in new areas, such as Mataranka and Annaburroo, for horticultural purposes. Our overall production is still small by comparison with that of the states, even for fruits such as bananas and mangoes. However, it is growing. In 1984, the Northern Territory had 59 h planted with rockmelons. This year, growers are expecting some 5000 t of rockmelons from 220 h. Research continues to find improved varieties of a wide range of vegetables and fruits, and field crops such as mung beans, rice, sorghum, maize, soya beans and peanuts.

In addition, more growers are now prepared to participate in on-farm research which, of course, is highly beneficial. The department and the industry as a whole benefit from that support. In anticipation of the future,

and as a support to growers, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority is committed to expanding markets for our produce, and the Department of Primary Production is continually upgrading production techniques. As was mentioned by the Administrator, another initiative being implemented is the formation of industry advisory committees, with wide terms of reference, designed to address broad issues and eventually replace the current research advisory committees. The proposed advisory committees, which are the Fuel Crop Advisory Committee, the Horticulture Advisory Committee, the Cattle and Buffalo Advisory Committee and the Southern Region Pastoral Advisory Committee have, as their main objectives: advising the Department of Primary Production and myself of problems facing the industry; advising on areas of research that will improve the efficiency of production in the NT; and reviewing research already being undertaken. Furthermore, in a 2-way process, the committees will be the means by which information on research results may be disseminated. The establishment of the committees is seen also as a facility for close working relationships between industry and the government. To this extent, the representatives on all the advisory committees are predominately from industry with an industry-appointed chairperson. I anticipate inaugural meetings of these committees will occur throughout September.

Mr Speaker, I will report briefly on progress in the Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Campaign and the assistance measures under the campaign now available to NT pastoralists. In view of industry concerns at the effect the present schedules have on property viability, the previous target date of 1992 for the complete eradication of the diseases has been modified as a new interim target of impending freedom. This means the status has been reached where there is no known infection and all test herds have reached provisionally clear status; that is, 2 clean tests have been achieved. Basically, any interim targets for the Territory will involve the finetuning of the current programs to ensure that the achieved reduction in disease prevalence is not endangered while financial viability is preserved. Certainly, it is pleasing to note that the whole of the Territory was declared provisionally free of brucellosis, and the area south of Alice Springs was declared provisionally free of tuberculosis in February 1986.

As an incentive to maintain momentum in the campaign, the Commonwealth government offers certain tax concessions under the Income Tax Assessment Act which allow an owner to hold destocking proceeds for up to 10 years without paying tax, and to use the proceeds for restocking. In addition, restocking freight rebates, which are funded by the Northern Territory government, are also available. Last financial year, the total payment was \$197 000. With regard to B-TEC type D loans, which are for approved B-TEC property improvements, a total of \$2.05m was allocated. Technical and economic assessments of each property with an approved program are continuing, but will take some time to complete despite the employment of 3 additional economists to assist with this task. Extension programs to disseminate information to pastoralists and others are being provided through regular issue of the B-TEC News, other promotional material and an information booklet for pastoralists which is currently with the printers and will shortly be available for distribution. Mr Speaker, I can assure you that every endeavour will be made in the future to consolidate the improved husbandry practices now operating in the rural industries, and to continue providing support to the industry with a view to achieving increased overall productivity.

I now turn to the bicentennial project, Droving Australia. Droving Australia is a major bicentennial project. It includes 2 separate events: a cattle drive, and a series of drovers' camps. The cattle drive will take 1200

head over one of Australia's last surviving stock routes between Newcastle Waters Station in the Northern Territory and Longreach in Queensland. A professional drover will supervise the drive which will be a re-enactment of the overlanders who, between 1873 and 1889, drove at least 350 000 head of cattle to the Northern Territory and the adjacent Kimberleys. The main routes, the Queensland road from the east and the overland telegraph line from the south, saw some of the longest stock movements in the nation's history.

The second event is a series of drovers' camps. The Australian Bicentennial Authority has approved the Northern Territory's application to have the Droving Australia drovers' camp segment included in the official program of national state and territory events throughout the course of 1988. An initial grant of \$40 000 has been authorised and a further review of funding has been promised. The project has received favourable publicity following the Australian Bicentennial Authority's official launch in Sydney. This segment of the project will see approximately 400 young men and women brought from every state in Australia to participate in a series of drovers' camps. There will be 15 individual camps, which will involve some 5 or 6 supervisors and support vehicles which will accompany 25 participants riding horses over historic routes for about 12 days. A typical route would be the trip from Darwin through Litchfield Park, arriving at Daly River. Although the Droving Australia project is the prime responsibility of the Department of Primary Production, all government departments and authorities have been asked to assist and to meet service costs of an administrative and operational nature. In addition, corporate sponsorships are being sought for the project. The project is evolving as planned, and every endeavour will be made to ensure that the Territory's contribution to the bicentennial celebrations can be regarded by all Territorians with pride.

Mr Speaker, in my capacity as Minister for Conservation, I will outline some of the commission's initiatives. In the area of conservation, this government has an enviable record. We propose to continue to take further initiatives, including the establishment of new parks, reserves and sanctuaries.

The Conservation Commission was established in 1980 to have carriage of conservation and environmental matters in the Territory. As a single statutory corporation, it brought together functions previously carried out by the Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission and other government agencies. The commission comprises 9 members who have executive responsibilities and powers subject to the direction of the minister. Aboriginal people participate in the work of the commission at the highest level. Two members of the commission are Aboriginals domiciled in the Territory. I am pleased to record the appointment on 10 June 1986 of Mr Ben Clyne from Ulpanyali and Mr Bernard Tipiloura from Melville Island.

Members will recall that some years ago this Assembly enacted legislation to establish the Cobourg Peninsula sanctuary proposed to be called the Gurig National Park. This was created on land vested in a trust for the Aboriginal traditional owners of that land. This national park is managed by a board on which those same Aboriginal people have a majority of members.

In the last sittings of the Assembly, I introduced a bill to amend the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to enable the establishment of local management committees in respect of parks, reserves, sanctuaries and protected areas declared under the act. These proposed committees are to establish a local management role in particular parks within a defined ambit of responsibility. The proposal was developed following successful negotiations with Aboriginal custodians in the Kings Canyon area.

I have touched on these 3 issues to demonstrate clearly that the Territory is well ahead of the Commonwealth in providing a meaningful role for Aboriginal people in the management of Territory parks, reserves and sanctuaries. By these means, Aboriginal people can participate as partners in the protection and conservation of these lands. Members will be aware of the decision of the Commonwealth in relation to the day-to-day management of Uluru. It is most regrettable that that government has chosen to exercise its powers in such a manner as to shut out the Territory from the management of this most important national park. The decision of the federal Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Environment effectively required the Uluru-Katatjuta Board of Management to agree only to an arrangement whereby Conservation Commission rangers would be seconded to the ANPWS in the same way as the commission provides rangers for the Kakadu National Park. Last August, the Northern Territory government advised the federal authority that such a secondment would be unacceptable to the Territory. The Conservation Commission offered the Uluru-Katatjuta board a contract management arrangement which was rejected by that board by unanimous decision.

Mr Bell: This is a selective view of history, Terry. We had one last sittings.

Mr McCARTHY: It is a truthful one.

Mr Speaker, the member for MacDonnell is also a member of that board. He had the benefit of a verbal briefing from the Director of Conservation prior to that decision. Some of his constituents are the commission rangers who had all rejected the secondment proposal. Other constituents, the Aboriginal people who have lived in the Uluru area, wanted the commission to remain as day-to-day managers of the park. It would seem that the member for MacDonnell has abandoned his constituents in voting against the commission's proposal and has accepted the federal minister's apparent direction to the Uluru-Katatjuta board.

Mr Speaker, I have already demonstrated the Territory's track record in Aboriginal management of the Territory's park estates. The Conservation Commission and, prior to its formation, the Reserves Board, has developed and managed the Uluru National Park from its inception over 28 years ago. The Territory is able to manage parks in the Territory better than is the Commonwealth. The Conservation Commission's operations would be much more cost-effective than those of the ANPWS and recent figures issued by people involved with the ANPWS indicated that that was true. In these times of financial stringency, this is another important justification for the return of Uluru to management by the Conservation Commission.

The Territory has undertaken a most significant development at the Yulara Village. This has the objective of providing accommodation and services for visitors to Uluru. In order to continue to support this development, the Conservation Commission will maintain its base at Yulara. This will become the Petermann District Headquarters. Commission rangers will continue to operate the Yulara visitors' centre and provide interpretive services for visitors so that they can gain a firsthand experience of the wildlife and habitats of the desert environment. In addition, the commission will continue its operations in the Petermann administrative region and improve services to pastoralists and Aboriginal communities in that area with particular reference to nature conservation and feral animal control.

Kakadu National Park has become another federal enclave which is being planned and managed without any reference to the relationship of that park to

the needs of the Darwin administrative region or the Territory as a whole or even to Australia as a whole. Indeed, it is very doubtful if the national interests and requirements have been taken into account at all in respect of the tourism potential and mining potential in that park. There is significant mineral potential in the region much of which could be utilised without any significant impact on the environment and the conservation and cultural values of the area. Unfortunately, the detailed submission by the Territory to the Commonwealth in respect of the revised Plan of Management for Kakadu has been ignored. There is every justification for that park to be handed over to the Territory to manage for the benefit of all Australians.

Mr Speaker, my final point concerns environmental education. The commission has one education officer who is carrying out a program to increase awareness and knowledge of conservation and environmental management in Territory schools. This education of those who will receive the natural heritage of the Territory is of the utmost importance. If at all possible, I shall be expanding this program so that our children are better prepared for the challenges of the years ahead.

Mr Speaker, I support the Administrator's address and commend it to honourable members.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I would like to make some comments on the speeches made by various members today in respect of primary production and tourism which are both vital employers in the Northern Territory. Earlier today, in answer to a number of questions, the Chief Minister indicated that the Territory should view the present economic climate with some degree of despair and gloom, but those 2 main income earners for the Northern Territory have indeed prospered with the floating of the dollar. Now is the time when the primary industry sector of our economy should be pushing itself to the very limit. We start with a number of very major disadvantages but also with a number of significant advantages.

Our major disadvantage is that our primary sector is underdeveloped. As the minister indicated, that is changing rapidly. However, it can also be an advantage to be underdeveloped. We are not stuck with bulk commodities as some states have been. Western Australian and New South Wales are stuck with bulk commodities that they cannot unload because of EEC and American intervention in the marketplace. Fortunately, we can develop discrete markets which will be to the advantage inevitably of all Territorians. The minister indicated a few of those areas. However, I am sure there are many more that can be developed for the income-earning capacity of the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, another area that has some interest for my electorate of Nhulunbuy in terms of primary production is fishing. The biggest single bugbear, for the previous and present ministers, is the northern fishing agreement, and I have some sympathy there. Under the agreement, we have very little control over a very major proportion of our prawn catch in the Northern Territory. The export market for prawns has almost prohibited locals at Nhulunbuy from buying them. They cannot afford to buy the damned things off the wharf; they are worth a small fortune. However, as in the past, very few of them are touching the ground in Nhulunbuy, and I believe that applies also to the rest of the west of the Gulf of Carpentaria. If they do, they are loaded into freezer containers and road freighted directly to Perth.

There is a need to obtain the maximum benefit from this very valuable primary produce. The prawn fishery is a very valuable resource in the Northern Territory's fishery. However, the only way we can benefit from it is

through having some control over it. As I said to the previous minister, I am more than prepared to assist him, in whatever way I can, to procure for the Northern Territory the degree of control which, I believe, needs to be exercised over the northern prawn fishery. Certainly, I believe it is one way that my electorate, Nhulunbuy, can look forward to an economic future extended beyond mining. Primary production offers a glimmer of hope in that area.

The deflated value of the dollar affects not only my electorate but various other parts of the Northern Territory community, particularly in respect of tourism. As a result of the Australian dollar becoming relatively inexpensive against many international currencies, including the US dollar and the Japanese yen, there has been a rush of overseas tourists into the Northern Territory. Dare I hope that that may pay for some of the monsters that have been developed over the years by the Northern Territory government? It may sound as if I am putting the cart before the horse in this particular debate, but dare I say that there is potential there for the Northern Territory taxpayers to be freed from some of the financial burdens that they are saddled with at the moment? I do not know the precise terms of the financing - whether it was arranged in Australian or American dollars or some other currency. I hope to be able to find out through the Public Accounts Committee. If it was financed in Australian dollars, hopefully, this rash of tourism will assist us to resolve some of these fairly crippling financial debts.

Mr Coulter: We will build some more.

Mr LEO: I hope not.

However, Mr Speaker, in those 2 areas, the floating of the Australian dollar and its depressed value at the moment is assisting the Northern Territory to develop and grow. As I have said, they are areas of significant employment. Primary production, in particular, requires innovative thinking but, because we are not saddled with the problems that the states have, where they have committed areas of land to particular crops the marketing of which is being threatened by financial intervention by various international governments, hopefully we can take advantage of the present situation.

Turning to matters within my electorate, some weeks ago I had the pleasure of visiting a community called Wundhawuy which, as a result of financial assistance from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, was able to establish a school. It is not the only school to be built in east Arnhem Land. A number of other schools are to be built in remote communities in my electorate. Of course, this is largely in response to the closure some 6 years ago of Dhupuma College, which left a gaping hole in the educational facilities which were offered in east Arnhem Land.

For reasons which I have described before, inevitably Aboriginal people will continue to move to remote communities. Basically, this is because their close proximity to urban areas inevitably leads to family destruction and the road to cultural decay. Consequently, most Aboriginal people within my area are moving to the outstations. This is being recognised by the federal government which has responded by building these outstation schools. I appreciate that the Northern Territory Department of Education is accepting responsibility for some of the funding for teachers in those outstation schools. However, it would be a monstrosity if the Northern Territory government felt obliged to restrict funding to outstation schools in any way, or those very limited teaching facilities available to outstation schools, because of its perceived priority of building a university.

Mr Speaker, I do not know the economics involved in educating university students. I do not know what the total cost of renovating the old Darwin hospital will be, but I will make a small bet with you that the money involved would educate a great many Aboriginal people in very remote areas.

Whilst the Northern Territory's European population is growing and developing along with economic improvements in the Northern Territory, let me assure members of this Assembly that the Aboriginal population is growing also, and at a very rapid rate. That is largely due to improved health and medical facilities. The infant mortality rate has been reduced significantly, and that is very much to the credit of this government. There are still problems within the general area of Aboriginal health, but it is to the credit of this government that the infant mortality rate has been reduced markedly. As a result, the number of school-age Aboriginal children is growing very rapidly as the population increases, and I would suggest that every member of this Assembly study the demography of the Aboriginal population in the Northern Territory. It is a remarkable structure. Very few people are over the age of 60. That is a very strong indicator of what is happening with the Aboriginal population. With improved medical facilities, that population will continue to increase rapidly and it will require continuing services.

I would like a categorical assurance from the government that not only will the education budget not be affected by the development of this new university but that it will grow in line with the demands that are being placed upon it. I admit that those demands are increasing and generating growing pressure on the government. Nevertheless, those demands must be met if Aboriginal people are to attain the same level of competence as, and be able to compete on an equal basis with, other members of this modern society.

Mr Harris: A lot depends on what happens in Canberra.

Mr LEO: Of course, much will depend on what the federal government continues to allocate to the Northern Territory. However, it wears a little bit thin when I sit in here year after year listening to these people continuing to blame people in other places when they manage to spend huge sums of money in pursuit of projects which affect Darwin only. There are people in remote areas who see very little benefit in the Taj Mahals which have been developed in Darwin. If the government continues to blame other governments and continues to ignore its own responsibilities, I believe that it will be proper for the Northern Territory electorate to question whether the government wants those responsibilities.

There have been some developments over the last 12 months which I am very pleased about. The Northern Territory TAB seems to be up and running very successfully. I suggested on a previous occasion that the government look at financial assistance to the Darwin Turf Club and the Alice Springs Race Club if it was deemed necessary. Certainly, the Darwin Turf Club conducted a very successful series of meetings recently leading up to the Darwin Cup, which is certainly an earner for Darwin and for the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, I had constituency obligations and I was not able to be here for the Darwin Cup. I am told by reliable sources that a hotel room was impossible to obtain during that entire season. I would suggest that, if the Northern Territory government is approached by the Darwin Turf Club - and I think it is quite possible that it has been approached - for some financial assistance, it should view that approach sympathetically.

Another development that I welcome with pleasure, particularly since the opposition pursued it for so long, is the establishment of the Public Accounts

Committee. Without presuming to make the committee's report, it has met and it is my belief that it will make a very valuable contribution to this parliament's operations. I think it will be of assistance to the government and I look forward to working on it for quite some time to come.

Mr Speaker, the only other matter I would like to address is the number of communities which have taken up the option to work within the guidelines provided under the recent Local Government Grants Commission Act. I look forward to reading the reports of the deliberations of the Grants Commission which has been established to allocate funding to those communities. When the legislation was introduced, I indicated that it would have to be monitored very closely. Certainly, I shall be monitoring it very closely. I will be watching its operations and listening to what the communities have to say about the operation of the legislation and their working within its provisions. It may require some amendment, but I believe that, in the long run, it will prove to be to the benefit of communities which are not large enough to be constituted as local governments, but are able to fall within the framework of the Community Government Act.

These are very tight, trying and testing economic times. However, I will be extremely disappointed if this government ignores the genuine plight of Aboriginal Northern Territorians in its budget, and does not recognise the genuine needs of remote Northern Territorians. We do not all live in Darwin, and I hope that the Berrimah line can be forgotten for at least a few budgets.

Mr STEELE (Elsey): In responding to His Honour's address, let me firstly congratulate you, Mr Speaker, and also offer my congratulations to the honourable Mr Terry Smith, now Leader of the Opposition, and Mr Brian Ede, now Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, you have been deserving of a promotion in successive governments, at least to the ministry, and finally your endeavours have been recognised through your election as Speaker of this Assembly. The onerous isolation of your position will not prevent you from speaking out on matters. I believe that Speakers should sometimes go to the floor. For 2 years and 4 months I neglected to speak from the floor of the Assembly. I believe that, given the isolation of the Northern Territory, you as Speaker should come down to the floor of the parliament and say your piece. I believe that my experience has been an interesting one, but I would give that advice to any future Speaker.

Also, Mr Speaker, your isolation does not mean that you should accept any pressures attempted by political operators. You are a member of a political party, but your position is not a sinecure; you are not there for life. You owe your nomination to the CLP, but this does not give the CLP a mortgage over your impartiality. I am sure that I have no need to say that to you. I am confident that you will be an excellent Speaker. During your stewardship, this parliament can show the way to other parliaments. Our members should avoid the bitter personal attacks and muckraking that takes place in other democratic institutions. Our members should be mindful of our collective reputation.

Mr Speaker, His Honour referred in his speech to many projects completed since self-government, such as the establishment of the port, the reconstruction of the Stuart Highway and many of its bridges. The many worthwhile projects supported by the government include the mango farm at Manbulloo Station in Katherine, and onion and potato production at Ballongilly Farm. These are projects which have taken place since self-government and

have been milestones for this government. Our assistance in tourist infrastructure development is another success. From memory, we have provided around \$5m of support for hotel and motel development in the Katherine district. Katherine is now reaping the benefits brought about by combined direct financial support and intensive marketing by the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and the local operators.

The era of development and job creation under the leadership of the former Chief Minister, Mr Paul Everingham, may never be paralleled unless the methods of management used at the time are given close examination. This would mean that we could take advantage of the successes which are evident today. In other words, let us not re-invent the wheel. Let us learn from the lessons of the past. The current government has to have a balanced relationship with industry to ensure that the Northern Territory advances. This government has to bestow its favours equally across the board, and I am pleased to see that marketing and infrastructure support will be given to the horticultural and nursery industries. If ever the Northern Territory is to broaden its economic base, it has to be in these specific areas.

His Honour referred to the need to pursue economic expansion to pay for our social objectives. For too long, many Australians have scoffed at the need to work hard and prosper financially. Now with the doom and gloom about us, brought about by the federal government's mismanagement and ignorance of northern Australian conditions, it is even more important that the umbrella of marketing support be maintained across the spectrum of industry.

Unfortunately, the Commonwealth government gives very little support to our objectives of improving and developing the Northern Territory environment for its people. Senator Walsh is out to depopulate the Northern Territory. Bob Hawke and Paul Keating are out to castrate the initiative needed to make our Territory go. This means an even greater challenge to Territory people to assess their position in the light of changing political conditions. In these changing times, in our northern isolation, it is vital that Territorians work smarter as well as harder, and the establishment of a university college will promote the education that we need to compete with other Australians.

Fortunately, the Northern Territory is not saddled with defunct industries like car manufacturing. It is not lumbered with oversubsidised industries like dairying or apple and pear production. Who would want to be in wheat or sugar at present? We have few subsidised industries. What we have is the opportunity to go forward in a better way than before. We should analyse our resources and the extent of our infrastructure, and back the growth industries that will provide employment for our young people. For example, we should maintain our research in the horticultural industries to obtain new products and the climatic and marketing advantage which will guarantee the economic viability of production. The Minister for Primary Production has just referred to the efforts of his department in this regard.

I turn now to the growth industry of the Northern Territory - tourism. In his remarks in the address-in-reply debate, the Chief Minister said that the 'government's future efforts will focus on strategies for national and overseas marketing of the Territory as a tourist destination'. As a government, we are combating the rising costs of supporting our marketing needs. Two years ago, we established offices in Tokyo, Singapore, London, Los Angeles and West Germany. We had no sooner done that than we pulled away the vital cash component needed for marketing. Some of those offices were battling to get a video to promote the Northern Territory because they had no money. In the face of those difficult financial conditions, the new Territory

overseas offices and the Australian offices have been doing reasonably well, although it could be said that, if the combined efforts of those representatives were put to work in one area with a combined budget, maybe a better economic result would be achieved for Northern Territory tourism. The marketing of the 'outback Australia' product needs to be accelerated. Some of my suggestions are in areas where the Tourist Commission is involved, but further urgent effort is required. We in the Northern Territory can capitalise on the 'Crocodile Dundee' and 'We of the Never Never' films, and the Americas Cup publicity, if we are involved in the marketing of our product at the same time. The Northern Territory Tourist Commission does not have a direct mail system. There is scope to write regularly to north America to several thousand special interest travel agents. This could be done on a 6-monthly basis, outlining the specific events and attractions available in the Northern Territory, and also pointing out the climatic conditions, the wildlife, and the Aboriginal involvement in tourism.

There is no direct marketing of Northern Territory designed packages overseas, except where a safari operator may go to a special safari convention or an inbound operator from Australia takes a specific package into the marketplace. What we should be doing is designing composite Northern Territory packages for our international representatives to sell. We have the product. We have the accommodation. We have some airlines - Qantas, Royal Brunei Airlines and Garuda - each provide 2 services a week into Darwin. The minister has stated that Royal Thai Airlines could commence landing in Darwin in early 1987.

There needs to be a cell of publicists and writers whose sole task is to ensure that articles are placed in selected magazines throughout Australia and the world. This was a recommendation I made to Paul Everingham, the then Chief Minister, about 4 years ago. That need has yet to be filled. Travel agents the world over are looking for new destinations. They have not heard of us because, rather than selling directly, we are relying far too much on the efforts of wholesalers whose interest, we assume, are the same as ours.

In the Australian context, roadshows by the private sector were initiated and assisted by the Tourist Commission. Some years ago, industry people went on the road with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission with reasonable success. If this is still being undertaken, it is at a pretty low key.

The government has to re-establish the concept of outback Australia. Perhaps the film, 'The Last I Heard', will assist the process. We are not selling sand, sea and scantily-clad females. We are selling the rugged outback which many Australian and international visitors wish to see. We have to exploit the special interest market. We must evaluate the special interests available and put those interests in lights to draw them to the attention of people with sufficient money to travel.

One such special interest is the Droving Australia project which has just been referred to in glowing terms by the Minister for Primary Production. I am advised by a very good operator located in Brisbane that this program could be packaged and joint ventured and I suggest that the government identify the easiest way that this could be done. The government should identify the easiest market to work with in terms of language and awareness, and I say that north America is that market. As a government, we should joint venture with an American wholesaler specialising in special interest tours to increase our market share of the number of Americans who come to Australia.

I spoke to an officer of the Australian Tourist Commission in Melbourne a few days ago. I do not know whether these 1985 figures relate to the period finishing on 30 June 1985 or to the full calendar year. 1 142 600 overseas people visited Australia last year. Of that figure, 245 300 came from New Zealand, 196 500 came from the USA and 163 400 came from Asia. Of these visitors some 68 500 spent at least 1 night in the Northern Territory. USA visitors made up the highest percentage of visitors to the Northern Territory - 28%.

The real level of spending in the marketing area has to be maintained. Unfortunately, the tourist industry has a reputation for operators standing around at receptions boozing without any real selling being done. This image has to be changed quickly. The industry has to spend a greater percentage of its income on selling its properties. Some tourist industry operators rely totally on the Northern Territory government tourist bureaus to market their product.

Mr Speaker, it has given me great pleasure to speak in reply to His Honour's speech. Great changes are taking place at Katherine in my electorate. The infrastructure needed to double the size of a town of Katherine's population in 4 to 5 years is being established and a lot of the older folk are being pushed out. In many ways, Katherine is losing its identity and becoming factionalised. There are many stresses and strains in my community which need to be addressed. One of the worst features of a growing regional centre is public drunkenness. Many people are attracted to Katherine from all corners of Australia. Unfortunately, the greatest impact is the visual eyesore of the public drunk. I am saddened at the welfare problems caused by alcohol amongst our local citizens. There is a generation of people condemned to an early death through alcohol abuse. I believe that my call for the government to form a select committee of this Assembly to examine this problem is still the best course of action to take at this time.

The Minister for Community Development has stated categorically in this debate that he will ensure that his department keeps pace with the community, welfare and recreational facilities that will be needed. I commend him for supporting the sports infrastructure needs in Katherine. Rugby league in Katherine is now attracting crowds of over 500 people. The Australian Rules competition desperately needs a new oval for training. A quality surface would ensure that Darwin footballers made the journey to Katherine and the risk of injury, due to a substandard surface, would be eliminated. Netball and bowls also have needs for infrastructure which will have to be met. These are the priorities identified and awaiting funding.

In closing, having completed the full circle in this Assembly and held many positions, let me reaffirm my commitment to the democratic process, the system under which we are governed. The Northern Territory is still a very young and complex community. Unfortunately, we are largely ignored by governments and parliaments in other places because of our size and lack of numbers. However, as Territorians, let us maintain our personality and the particular flavour of our individuality and our way of living. Of course, let us maintain our commitment to the Northern Territory people whom we represent.

Mr POOLE (Araruen): Mr Speaker, I rise today to comment on some aspects of the Administrator's address pertaining to the Northern Territory's second largest industry - tourism. Tourism is the largest employer of people in the Northern Territory. Over the last 5 or 6 years, tourism has grown at least 10% to 15% per annum. In 1980, 250 000 tourists visited the Territory. This year, it is estimated that tourist numbers will exceed 700 000. It is

interesting to note that the preliminary figures indicate that international tourism will have grown from 55 000 last year to 90 000 this year. That is a tremendous achievement. This information contradicts the comment Senator Walsh made recently in Darwin, that the Northern Territory should move into international areas because the domestic market is static. He obviously did not discuss this with his colleagues in the Northern Territory opposition, as the member for Millner has argued for many years that the Northern Territory Tourist Commission's emphasis should be on the domestic market. I should point out that, in the last 6 years, the commission has always spent its money in the same ratio as the industry derives its business: approximately 75% domestically and 25% internationally.

The inconsistencies of the federal ALP shine in its approach to the tourist industry. As recently as a month ago, the federal Minister for Tourism, Mr John Brown, called for the removal of states and territories from the international marketing scene. Quite rightly, our Minister for Tourism suggested that he should resign. The Northern Territory's entry into the international market has been well received by the industry both in Australia and overseas, particularly in countries such as Germany and Japan where we have employed nationals of those countries in our offices. Industry people in those countries tell me it is a great thing to do business with people who can speak your own language. Ours is still the only state or territory tourist organisation in this position.

The government emphasis on marketing is most welcome. We need at least another 100 000 visitors per annum to fill the dramatic increase in beds in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin. There has been a 68% increase in the number of beds over the last 18 months. That works out at approximately 180 000 room nights for sale, sufficient to cater for the passengers of 8 Boeing 727s a week over and above current landings. I believe the government is planning on expanding its marketing role, and we will fill up the available rooms at the top and lower ends of the market spectrum. Obviously this will take time, but I am quite confident that our resources will be put to work properly.

I point out to members that a national campaign like 'Part of the Story', cost under \$1m in 1981. To run the same program today would cost at least \$2m. The problem facing our government is where to find the necessary money. I am, of course, confident that we will find it in the coming budget.

A number of new properties in the centre of Australia are struggling financially, despite the fact that we have many extra visitors at this time of year. Basically, they are struggling because they do not know how to market and because they came into the industry with cost overruns on the construction phase or were under-capitalised.

We have seen many changes - not least in the sphere of air services - over the past couple of years. There are now 21 incoming flights per week more than there were 2 years ago. There are new, larger and more cost-efficient aircraft flying in, such as the airbus and the 767. We have applications from at least a couple of international airlines who are interested in flying into Darwin from South-east Asia. Of course, the first thing they will see on arrival is our terminal. Alice Springs and Darwin Airports must be upgraded and, if the federal government does not want to do it, it should stand back and let us combine with private enterprise to do it.

With the government's emphasis on the market end of tourism, the effects of the new fringe benefits tax must be taken into account. The industry

estimates that it will cost an extra \$25 000 every year to run a 50-room motel. There will have to be a reduction in services to achieve this. The problems faced by employers, who provide accommodation for employees such as motel managers and their wives, are really unbelievable. If you try to work out the equation that is provided by the Taxation Department, the taxable value is reduced to 75% of the market value of the rate charged on a comparable room. The equation on a room that costs \$90 a day is, of course, quite excessive. This is just one of the many problems that this tax has introduced to small and large operators in the Territory.

It is particularly pleasing to see the results of some hard work that began about 6 or 7 years ago with the involvement of Aboriginal people in the industry. I understand that the corroboree which is currently staged at Mandorah is providing excellent entertainment and is being extremely well patronised. The company that operates it is due to open up a fishing camp on Melville Island shortly, and I believe that will also be an unqualified success. Of course, tourism is not new in that part of the world. Stephen Marshall has been operating Tiwi Tours very successfully for a number of years.

The entry of Ansett into the New Zealand domestic market is a very interesting development that has connotations for Australia. It has bought into Mt Cook Airways and Newmans Air Services, and will be flying domestically very shortly. I understand that legislation is currently before the New Zealand parliament to facilitate that. As a result, I am told that Air New Zealand has applied recently to fly domestically in Australia. What a situation. Qantas cannot even obtain permission to pick up domestic passengers but, apparently, we will consider allowing Air New Zealand to fly here. The sooner deregulation happens, the better off we will be. We must become more competitive with our long haul domestic air routes.

Of course, the motor car will play an increasing role in the success of Northern Territory tourism. I said in my maiden speech that only time would bring the percentage of visitors travelling by automobile in the Territory, currently 55%, up to the national average of 84%. Every encouragement must be offered to the average holiday maker in Australia to visit us. The Top End operators are playing their part. They have extended the tourist season, and a number of operators tell me that they are now operating year round. In the wet season, they are operating now at a level equivalent to that of the peak season some 4 or 5 years ago. Many operators have spent a considerable amount of money on infrastructure, such as the boats that run wet season water tours in Kakadu, and they are providing year round facilities. I encourage this government to continue its support for the tourist industry. It provides jobs and more jobs. It is labour intensive. It offers further cooperative development with the Aboriginal people. It makes friends for the Territory, and provides thousands of ambassadors for us as we strive for statehood. Mr Speaker, I support the Administrator's address and I commend it to you.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this address-in-reply debate today, I propose to say a few words about issues relating to our northern neighbours. Of course, the Territory's northern neighbours are Australia's northern neighbours and I believe that, sadly, the importance of the Asian region has not been fully recognised by the current or previous federal governments or some of the state governments. It seems to me that past policies encouraged the sale of our resources and produce to Asia but discouraged investment from Asia. Imports from Asia were taxed heavily and immigration was made difficult or near impossible.

Instead of strongly pursuing the integration of our industry, economy and social relations with Asian countries, our European ancestry perhaps compelled us to cling principally to Europe. Enmeshed in their own problems, of course, the European communities developed trade pacts with each other which pulled the shutters down on countries like Australia. We were simply an expendable trading partner. Of course, we do some trade with them still, but the European community would rather pursue insane policies, like subsidising farmers to grow produce which is then destroyed because there is an over-supply, rather than let Australia upset its cosy trade agreements.

Even our powerful ally, the United States, has given us a smack below the wheat belt by subsidising grain sales to Russia, and all members know that there has been great speculation in the press about that. And, while we in Australia agonise over our historic, but very distant, friends giving us the cold shoulder, a sleeping giant has emerged on our doorstep. Despite the fact that we have known for some years that Asian economies and standards of living are growing far faster than our own, it is only now that the federal and state governments are switching on to the real potential of economic and social cooperation with Asian countries. Unless we get our act together and stop living beyond our means, Australia will fall behind several Asian countries within 2 decades.

ASEAN was formed in 1968 and, since that time, the member countries' economic growth rates have ranged from good to spectacular. Indonesia is just one example: it was a political and economic shambles just 21 years ago; today, it is considered important enough to rate a personal visit by the President of the United States to discuss bilateral trade agreements. No doubt an army of people went before him and after him to dot all the i's and cross all the t's, but I notice that, for a considerable period of time, Australia has not rated a visit by a President of the United States. I believe the last such visit was made by President Johnson at the time of the Vietnam war. His visit was not related principally to trade between the countries. However, the United States has certainly pricked up its ears about what is happening in Asia and is moving in on the act.

Whilst we have been staring at our navels, contemplating better times, the United States has been capturing markets at our front door. US trade with the ASEAN countries reached \$23 000m in 1985. Of course, that is real dollars, Mr Speaker, not discredited Australian dollars as we hear of them today. Australia can no longer rely on its traditional markets for its abundant resources such as coal. Indonesia has embarked on an export-expansion program for its coal and already supplies flow from Indonesia to Japan, South Korea, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand. At present, most of the coal imported by Japan, Korea and Taiwan comes from Australia but Indonesia is not only closer to those markets, but has many of its deposits located at shallow depths suitable for open-cut mining. Also, these deposits are close to the coast. Current estimates of Indonesian coal reserves stand at 23.5 billion tonnes with much more expected to be found as exploration continues. Do we really expect that somehow Asian countries will bypass each other to deal with Australia, without our entering into reciprocal agreements on economic and social cooperation? I doubt it.

Mr Speaker, South Korea is another of several Asian countries which makes a fascinating study of spectacular success. Like Hong Kong and Singapore, the country has had to rely on the resources of its people, not what it has under the ground or what can be grown on top of it. South Korea is very poor in minerals and energy resources. Unlike many other success stories, South Korea exists constantly in a state of preparedness for war, and has done so since

27 July 1953, the date of the armistice agreement which was signed at Pan Man Jom. The 38th parallel, which divides North and South Korea, is not seen by either as a permanent division of the Korean peninsula but rather as a ceasefire line. Fortunately, it has remained in force since 1953, despite several provocative incidents over the years, which could have led easily to full-scale war once again.

Despite the awesome burden of carrying a defensive war machine, South Korea has progressed from a per capita income of just \$87 in 1961 to \$2000 today. Forecasts show that the per capita income in South Korea will rise to \$3650 by 1991 and will be on a par with western European nations by the year 2000. That is 14 years away, not a very long time when one considers the development of countries over the centuries. The Korea Development Institute's blueprint for the 21st century forecasts 7% to 8% annual growth for the next 20 years. I wish Australia's future looked as bright.

Exports from South Korea have grown from \$119m in 1964 to \$32 000m in 1985, and that export figure has been achieved whilst it has had to maintain a massive military defence machine and import virtually all its energy and raw material requirements. Of course, a large part of South Korea's coal and raw materials comes from Australia. In fact, it is Australia's fourth largest trading partner. It was our fifth largest trading partner in 1984, and became our fourth largest trading partner in 1985. That came as a surprise to me when I first learned of it and I am sure it will come as a surprise to some members. We do not hear a great deal about that country although of late there has been some public discussion in the Northern Territory about our attempts to sell gas to South Korea. But, by and large, Australians would be unaware that that small country, of which we hear very little, is our fourth largest trading partner in terms of our export trade.

Despite that fact, the Australian government maintains policies such as refusing Korean Airlines landing rights in Australia. South Korea has persisted for some years with attempts to obtain landing rights in Australia for Korea Airlines - and I have no idea whether there would be big traffic or not; that would be Korean Airlines' problem - but Australia has refused to allow such an agreement to be put in place. In addition to that, I consider that the Australian Ambassador's office in Seoul and the associated trade office appear to be grossly understaffed and under-resourced in view of the importance of a trading partner of that level. I have been to a number of Asian countries on trade missions for the Northern Territory government and it seems to me that there are bigger and better-resourced Australian offices dotted all over Asia than there is in Seoul. I have to ask myself why that is the case.

Mr Speaker, the point I am making is that Australia should take a lead from the Northern Territory. We have been very successful in developing relationships and trade ties with our Asian neighbours, relative to our size and stage of development. We embarked deliberately on a campaign to encourage and foster cooperation as soon as we assumed self-government in July 1978. Even without Europe and the USA casting us adrift and Bob Hawke's capitulation over trade with South Africa, we should have become Asia-oriented 20 years ago. It is not too late but we will have to change our attitude towards Asians very quickly. We should be working with them now so that we are not working for them later. It is heartening to see indications of increased activity of late between Australian governments and Asian countries. Ministerial visits seem to be increasing and regular trade missions are venturing forth, not only from the Territory but from the Australian states as well. The shame is that it appears to have taken a contraction of our

traditional markets to make Australians look to Asia when all the indications of the phenomenal growth of the region have been staring us in the face for at least a decade.

In closing, Mr Speaker, and on an entirely different subject, I would like to congratulate the member for Millner on his election as Leader of the Opposition. I believe the move will mean that some of the more disappointing aspects of life in politics might disappear, particularly if we find ourselves in a position in the future where the member for Arafura does indeed gain preselection and go off to Canberra and we are rid of him from this place. I commend the motion.

Mr Bell: Charming.

Mr PERRON: Did you like that?

Debate adjourned.

ELECTRICITY COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 191)

Continued from 19 June 1986.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise that we intend to oppose the bill as circulated and will move an amendment.

This bill deletes section 14(3) of the Electricity Commission Act. That section sets out the powers of the commission and subsection (3) limits the ability of the commission to acquire or dispose of property or enter into an agreement involving an amount of more than \$100 000 without the consent of the minister. The control of funds is the ultimate exercise of ministerial responsibility and, as we know, we have a minister who does not know the difference between the current account deficit and the budget deficit. It may follow from that that he has rather scant respect for the forms of ministerial approval as they relate to finances.

However, we will not accept that. We believe that, as a minister, he has the responsibility to oversight the transactions of the authorities under his control. In his second-reading speech, he raised a couple of issues that I would like to take him up on. He says that this is in keeping with practices in other Territory government departments and authorities. That is not the case. His initial point was that it was 'causing delays', and he cited the Housing Commission and the Department of Transport and Works as not being subject to similar restrictions. Those are not valid comparisons. The Electricity Commission is not subject to ministerial control or direction as are the Housing Commission and other statutory authorities. All government departments, including the Department of Transport and Works, are covered by the Financial Administration and Audit Act. They are under ministerial administration and need the Treasurer's authority to expend funds. In those circumstances, they do not provide valid comparisons and cannot be used as a precedent for the abrogation of ministerial responsibility and a gross abrogation of his duties to his portfolio. We will be proposing in our amendment that the limit of \$100 000 be increased to \$250 000, that being well above the movement in inflation over the period to take account of the increase in costs. We are not, however, prepared to wear this gross abrogation of responsibility.

There is, however, another issue involved in this. It was rather interesting to read what the minister said in his second-reading speech when he referred to a number of the contracts that had come to him recently being worth over \$1m. What the minister is saying is that it does not matter how big the contract is - \$1m, \$5m or \$20m - he will not exercise a duty to oversight and approve. There is another reason. Some of the contracts run into millions of dollars. For example, many of the contracts in relation to the Channel Island Power-station were of the order of \$7m, \$9m etc. I would expect some ministerial overview of contracts of that size so that we ensure that we obtain a reasonable deal. I spoke out recently in the press about one such contract where the company involved was quite pleased with the fact that it was able to negotiate a contract which did not include resourcing and supervision from Darwin. It felt that it had pulled off rather a coup against a relatively inexperienced and not particularly astute minister.

There are quite a number of reasons why ministerial overview should occur. Resourcing and supervision in Darwin are added extras which the opposition believes should be taken into consideration in the awarding of a contract. That would ensure that far more of the flow-on from those contracts remained in the Northern Territory. That is what we are on about. We would like that to occur in the Northern Territory so that we may ensure that more local materials are used in the actual construction. If somebody in Brisbane did that, he would utilise contacts there; if it were done here, more local materials would be used. It would also result in the use of more local subcontractors. It would ensure that the contractor came to know the local scene and used local sources of material and labour and more of that money would continue to flow on - as, of course, would be the situation with local labour. There would be many other spinoffs from resourcing and supervision being provided here, quite apart from those major ones. These would include office rents and vehicle hire etc that would flow on within the Territory.

Mr Speaker, we have indicated how unhappy we are with the overall ability of this government to come to grips with the need to develop its tendering processes so that it can ensure that the maximum benefit actually accrues to the Northern Territory. I am very disappointed in the minister. This morning, he was talking about the lack of development opportunities but he is not prepared to keep this right under his thumb and maintain the principle that is in the original act. Rather, his amendment was simply to keep in line with, or possibly slightly ahead of, inflation.

As I said, we will be moving our amendment in the committee stage, and I hope that government members will see the wisdom of what we are proposing. I hope they will take the minister aside outside the Assembly and talk a bit of sense into him.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on this important matter, and to set the record straight. The provision which this bill seeks to repeal from the Electricity Commission Act is out of place in today's world and today's administration. It did, however, serve a useful purpose in the early years, following the formation of NTEC. Some members may recall that NTEC was an organisation brought together from a number of areas of Commonwealth administration, back in the early days of self-government. At that time, several areas of the Commonwealth Public Service were involved in the generation and distribution of electricity, as well as the issue of bills and collection of payments.

The main 2 departments involved were the Department of the Northern Territory and the Department of Housing and Construction. The Department of

the Northern Territory sought annual appropriations from Canberra to run the Territory electricity supply system. In turn, the Department of the Northern Territory collected funds from electricity consumers and these were sent to Canberra where they went into Consolidated Revenue. That was how crazy the system was. Also, the Department of the Northern Territory also provided funds to the Department of Housing and Construction to actually run the powerhouses, and to extend the electricity lines around the Northern Territory. It was really quite a hotchpotch because an electricity supply system is a 7-days-a-week, 24-hours-a-day operation, or should be, if the lights are to stay on. Public service procedures are certainly not designed to run that sort of operation. Indeed, there was considerable discontent with the system at the time and, at the time of self-government, we quickly came to the conclusion that the electricity system should be managed by a statutory authority of the Northern Territory, as is the case in all of the states. This authority would be allowed to develop its own procedures in line with the electricity supply industry.

The system we inherited was rather infamous in terms of its reliability. The construction and operation of the Stokes Hill Power-station left very much to be desired. Why the Commonwealth did not choose to put the electricity supply in the Northern Territory under a statutory authority, I will never know. It certainly had the ability to do so, because the old Legislative Council passed legislation establishing the Housing Commission and the Port Authority as statutory authorities in the Territory funded by the Commonwealth. However, for whatever reason, electricity was treated differently.

We established NTEC and brought together all sorts of bodies which had never worked together before. They had all been working through the mail, writing letters to each other and trying to keep the system going. We were told that the authority should be monitored very closely even though it was a statutory authority. The minister was required to scrutinise expenditures over a certain amount - I think it was \$50 000 to start with, and later that was increased to \$100 000. That provision was quite useful because there were some trials and tribulations with the commission and some of its personnel over the years. However, the situation today is that the commission is a well-run and responsible authority and, whilst internal reviews are conducted almost continuously to improve efficiency, by and large the authority is working well. Its handling of both the gas pipeline negotiations and the complex procedures involved in the Channel Island construction and, more recently, letting of the tender for the Katherine Power-station, have shown NTEC to be quite a professional body. It is simply not on to require the commission to seek the minister's approval for expenditure of amounts exceeding \$100 000.

The commission regularly lets contracts for over \$1m. One of the largest contracts was for the turbines in the Channel Island Power-station. That was for approximately \$84m. That went to the minister. Any contract of that size in the Northern Territory would require specific Cabinet approval; whilst it may not be laid down in legislation, government projects of that dimension normally involve Cabinet. There was a whole string of Cabinet submissions as the Channel Island project was worked up, and there may even now be Cabinet submissions relating to the completion of the project.

The minister made the point in his second-reading speech that it is not the practice elsewhere in the Territory government, or interstate, to have authorities waiting on ministerial approval for expenditure of large amounts. The minister was right. The Housing Commission of the Northern Territory

spends about \$60m a year on new housing and, in my experience, none of its contracts requires ministerial approval. The Department of Transport and Works has a capital works program each year involving some \$100m in cash. Again, I do not think any of those contracts go to the minister for specific approval, and I do not think there is anything unusual about that.

It is my understanding that the Housing Commission, the Department of Transport and Works and the Electricity Commission have provisions in their administrative arrangements or their acts that they can be directed by a minister. Indeed, once such a provision is in an act, clearly there is no need to have a specific provision such as this because it means that the minister, at any time, either if he becomes concerned over an individual project, or generally, can issue a directive to an authority saying that henceforth matters that involve more than a certain sum of money shall be referred to his office before tenders are let. That will fall into place then and be perfectly legal. That is the case with the Electricity Commission and that should allay all the fears that the honourable member for Stuart expressed in the Assembly. I would suggest also that it eliminates the need for his proposed amendment. I commend the bill.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to support the amendment and to take up some of the points made by the member for Stuart that really took some licence with the truth. Indeed, they were downright untruths and a total misrepresentation of the government's position and the facts of the matter.

Mr Speaker, I would like to recap for a moment on the history of NTEC, as my colleague has done, because a couple of important points need to be brought out. When the Commonwealth government offered the electricity-generating system to the people of the Northern Territory, at first it was rejected. At that time, the people were told by the then Fraser government that, if we were to have self-government, we would have it warts and all, and that the generating system was one of the warts. We rejected the proposal on the basis that nobody knew what was going on with the electricity-generating system.

Subsequently, the Commonwealth agreed to an inquiry by professionals into the electricity-generating system, and that was carried out. The inquiry brought together, for the first time, the accounts department in the Northern Territory Administration, which sent out the accounts, the accounts section of the government which was paying for the expenses, and the operating department for the powerhouses, which was the Department of Housing and Construction or, as it was in those days, the federal Department of Works.

That was the first time in the history of electricity generation in the Northern Territory that the officers responsible for the moneys payable and the moneys received in respect of electricity came together to compare notes. The upshot was that we found out that, in 1977 or 1978 dollars, the electricity system was losing \$24m a year. At that stage, the Commonwealth government nearly fell out of its tree because it had no idea that so much money had been poured down the sinkhole. It was eager to pass it over to the Northern Territory as quickly as possible.

From that point, NTEC was formed and my colleague, the member for Fannie Bay, was the minister who had responsibility for putting it together, under the chairmanship of Max Dryer. At that time, NTEC was authorised to spend \$100 000 without the approval of the minister and that was quite a significant move. Some people regarded it as quite daring to let a commission have that level of responsibility over its expenditure.

As my colleague said, in the last 8 years NTEC has developed tremendously. It is a very mature and professional organisation now, and it has some achievements on the board that any commission in this country would be very proud of. The people who work in the commission have good reason to be pleased with themselves and what they have achieved. However, they are now being hampered because they are unable to spend more than \$100 000 without the minister's approval and, as a tool of management, it is important that that delegation be reviewed.

I became the minister responsible for NTEC in 1982, and one of the first representations made by the board at that time was to have that delegation lifted because it hampered the efficiency and effectiveness of the board and the management. In hindsight, something should have been done to upgrade it then. \$100 000, in today's terms, is totally inadequate. You cannot buy a roll of wire for \$100 000. Withholding that power tells the officers of the commission that they are not considered competent, capable or trustworthy to spend \$100 000 on essential things like wire and ...

Mr Ede: Is \$20m okay too?

Mr TUXWORTH: The expenditure of \$20m would require approval from many people besides the minister.

The point that I am making is that, if we want the commission to be effective and a good manager, we have to remove the handcuffs and allow it to manage the way it ought. As the minister outlined, it cannot do that at present.

Mr Speaker, let us look at the composition of the board. The board is made up of local Northern Territory businessmen and representatives of the Territory community who, in their own right, would probably let \$1m contracts in their own businesses from time to time. Nobody challenges their ability to do that, and they all seem to be pretty successful. But, when we bring them together and put them in a room, and ask them to make a decision about a \$1m contract, we tell them that we do not trust them. That is nonsense, and it is time we acknowledged it. I think the move being made by the minister is overdue. It will be a good move for the efficiency of NTEC, and I think the opposition from the honourable member for Stuart is an attempt to be spurious and difficult.

I would like to close by dealing with something that he said that was simply arrant nonsense. He said that the commission was not subject to the directions of the minister. I would refer him to section 14(6) of the act which says: 'The commission shall carry out its functions and exercise its powers and duties subject to such directions as the minister may give'. Mr Speaker, that encompasses totally the argument that was put up by the member for Stuart. The commission is directly subject to the directions of the minister. It is in the act. What the honourable member said was complete nonsense.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I have listened with some interest to the responses to the proposal put by my colleague, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. To date, it has been a fairly interesting debate. No one would doubt that any persons in private industry, if they had the financial capacity, had the right to spend any amount of money they chose to, provided that it was their own. However, the money that officers are seeking to spend within the Northern Territory Electricity Commission does not belong to them; it is our money, the money of the taxpayers of the Northern Territory.

Whilst I am sure also that NTEC has requirements within the act to operate only within guidelines, which are clearly laid down by the minister, there was nothing in his second-reading speech to indicate that he intended to direct the board not to spend over a certain amount of money. If the minister, when he responds to this debate, tells the Assembly that he will give directions to NTEC that it should not spend over a certain amount of money without seeking his approval, that would probably take care of some of the concerns of the opposition. I believe that the commission's operations need to be governed by an act of this Assembly because it is spending our money.

It would appear from the responses to date that the opposition's proposed amendment will not be successful. Whilst we would not be entirely satisfied, a statement in this debate by the minister that he will direct the commission to restrict its spending without his approval to a certain amount, would go some way towards allaying the opposition's concerns. However, there has been no indication that the minister intends to direct NTEC in this matter at all. Until that is forthcoming, the opposition is obliged to pursue its wish that this constraint be imposed upon the commission by a law of the Northern Territory.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the amendment and I wish to concur with the opinions expressed. I was quite surprised and disgusted to hear the comments of the members for Stuart and Nhulunbuy. It is quite obvious that neither of those gentlemen has had much to do with NTEC. Indeed, their knowledge of business and how it operates probably could be written on the back of a gum leaf. I suspect that there are quite a few of those in the member for Stuart's electorate. He has accused the minister of abrogating his authority which is an absolute load of nonsense. What he is in fact reflecting upon is the competence of the board, the management and the staff of NTEC. What he is saying is that those people, in whom we place a great deal of trust, are irresponsible and incompetent. That is what he is saying about NTEC and its staff and I do not think that they would take very kindly to that.

I have total confidence in the ability of those people to administer the affairs of NTEC, which include the purchasing of equipment, and I know from personal experience the way that those people go about their business because I did business with them for 9 years. I am fully aware of the frustrations that these people went through, together with people like myself, a supplier at the time. One would tender on a contract, knowing full well that the time necessary for the validity of the tender was about 6 weeks, and then have to wait for 8 or 10 weeks for the system eventually to spit out an order for the successful tenderer. Frustrations and delays were caused to both sides. The staff of NTEC wanted to have those products in store and get on with the job of installing a cable, erecting a tower of whatever.

The system is bogged down in that approval has to be obtained from the minister's office. When expenditure is approved finally, the supplier will have to invoke the rise and fall clause because the cost will have risen. In many instances, the local supplier depends on a southern manufacturer who has quoted him a price and put a limited time on the validity of that price. Of course, the whole wheel starts to turn again. NTEC has to seek ministerial approval for the increased price. We are now talking about 10 or 12 weeks delay during which people are twiddling their thumbs and the jobs are not being done.

By removing this necessity to refer to the minister, we will improve the efficiency of the NTEC purchasing department quite considerably. What we see

opposite is creeping socialism at work. Those people like to keep their fingers on everybody's pulse. However, that is not the way we operate on this side of the Assembly. We believe in the free enterprise system. I am quite sure that the staff of NTEC would appreciate that as well.

In 1979, the Electricity Commission Act was passed into law. One of its requirements was that ministerial approval must be obtained for all purchases by NTEC. Since that time, inflation has caused prices to increase by approximately 80% and therefore has made the limit of \$100 000 totally inadequate. A couple of drums of decent-sized cable these days would cost \$100 000. A quantity of poles or a transformer would cost \$100 000.

The need to seek ministerial approval has also caused unnecessary delays in the awarding of contracts, as I indicated earlier. For example, if the minister is unavailable, delays of 8 to 10 weeks would be quite common. I have already been through the scenario of how frustrating that can be for the supplier and for the purchasing people in NTEC.

Mr Ede: Because they are slack.

Mr SETTER: You are saying that the staff of NTEC is slack, are you? I hope not.

From this, several problems result, including unnecessary delays in the supply of goods and services thereby creating inefficiencies, delays and inconvenience. Such delays create problems for suppliers, contractors and also subcontractors because many suppliers employ subcontractors. It is a normal contract requirement that the validity of the tender is maintained for 6 weeks. However, if the tender is not let for 8 to 10 weeks, the tenderers are entitled to renegotiate that contract.

The existing system is totally inefficient and impracticable in today's economic climate. The deletion of section 14(3) will remove this abnormality and allow for the smoother functioning of the tender and supply systems. It may be surprising to members opposite that we could become more efficient by doing this. Of course, the precedent is already there, because already the Housing Commission and the Department of Transport and Works have removed the requirement for referral to the minister before purchasing. I support the bill.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, although this bill was introduced by the Chief Minister, I advise honourable members that I am in fact the minister in charge of the bill.

Mr Ede: No wonder they cannot get a signature. No one knows who the minister is.

Mr COULTER: That interjection really underlines the arrogance and the stupidity of the member for Stuart. It emphasises his background and his knowledge and his contribution to the debate. It is zilch. Zero. He really does not understand the realities of modern day tendering or being in business or being active in making things happen. He just does not understand. I understand that the member for Stuart has an amendment which says that amounts over \$250 000 should still be subject to ministerial approval. I would be interested to hear, in the committee stage, what his logic is for the amount of \$250 000. Did he pull that number out of a hat? Was it the Tattslooto numbers last Saturday night? What reasoning enabled him to arrive at that figure?

Let me just explain to honourable members what you would get for \$250 000. If fuel was costed at 41c per litre, \$250 000 would purchase 600 000 litres. NTEC purchases 32 million litres per year, so \$250 000 would limit purchases to 1.8% of the total annual supply. Is that what the member for Stuart is talking about? He just does not know anything about this matter, and he has displayed his ignorance to the Assembly this afternoon. If he was talking about the Channel Island project, 25 contracts have been let out there so far, for a total of \$200m. Only one was below \$100 000, and 2 were below \$250 000. Is that why he came up with the figure of \$250 000? Of course not! There is no logic and no reasoning behind his amendment. We have heard this afternoon about drastic price rises for electrical cables since 1979. The rises have been over 80%. For \$250 000, you could install 17 km of 22 KV transmission line, at a cost of \$15 000 per kilometre. Is that the logic we are to use? Of course not. We have to get on with the job. We have to let people negotiate contracts and negotiate purchases, with the power and the knowledge that we have faith and confidence in them to get on with the job. The Northern Territory Electricity Commission has well and truly justified such confidence in recent times.

Some transformers cost in excess of \$100 000. However, if you use the average price of \$25 000 that means we can only buy 10 without ministerial approval, according to the opposition's amendment. What a load of nonsense! The minister can use his ministerial direction pursuant to section 14(6) of the Electricity Commission Act, which gives him the power to direct the commission in terms of contracts, from time to time, at whatever figure he wishes. As we have said, the Housing Commission and the Department of Transport and Works are not restricted by such provisions. There is absolutely no need for them. Times have changed and contract amounts have increased. You do not get very much for \$100 000 these days, as I have pointed out in my examples.

I thank honourable members and, in particular, the 2 previous ministers responsible for the Northern Territory Electricity Commission. They are well aware of the problems associated with the distribution of electricity across the Northern Territory. I thank them not only for their contributions in today's debate, but for their commitment to the development of the energy supply across the Northern Territory. My only hope is - and I am sure that I need have no real fear about it - that the member for Stuart, the shadow spokesman for mines and energy, never becomes responsible for the supply of electricity in the Northern Territory. If that were to happen, we should all buy big boxes of candles now.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole.

Clause 2:

Mr COULTER: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 83.1.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed to.

Mr EDE: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 84.1.

The minister asked why I chose the amount of \$250 000. We have heard about 80% inflation. The \$250 000 was simply an endeavour to move ahead of the inflation rate so that we would not have to amend this legislation every year. However, we believe that this provision should be in the act and not in regulations. That is why we referred to a particular figure. We have heard that \$100 000 is insufficient. We have heard other arguments from the minister, who said that he believed \$250 000 would be insufficient. He wants to remove all reference to any figure at all. He was not prepared to say that \$1m, \$5m, or \$20m was an appropriate amount. He has an ability, under the exercise of powers and functions, to give directions. He has not given us any undertaking that he is prepared to make a direction. He has not given us any indication of any such directions that he has made in the past.

This does not relate only to the acquisition of property but also the disposal of property. It also concerns entering into agreements. In relation to agreements involving substantial amounts, there is a very real need for the minister to exercise a close and personal supervision of the financial affairs of NTEC. In saying that, I am not being critical of the members of the board. I am simply saying that we are dealing with public moneys. Such public moneys are the responsibility of this Assembly and we have the obligation to ensure that ministers discharge their responsibilities. One of a minister's primary responsibilities is to oversight expenditures by the various boards, authorities and departments under his control. It is certainly not an encouraging sign when we see that this minister has decided simply to abrogate his responsibilities in this regard.

It is evident that the minister will not accept our amendment, and I find that quite disconcerting. If he continues with the line that he cannot do it because it takes 8 or 10 weeks for a signature to be obtained from his office, I find that particularly disconcerting. If there is a problem in providing those signatures to the authority within a realistic time, it should be up to the minister to check the procedures operating within his own office. If that period of 8 to 10 weeks relates to the time taken for the total process, and there are no problems within his own office, then this particular amendment cannot resolve that.

Mr Speaker, the arguments that have been put forward so far in favour of this legislation and in favour of abrogating the minister's responsibility to oversight expenditure on the acquisition of property, contracts, and the disposal of property up to any limit, are quite specious. Nothing has been said to give any indication that he intends to do anything more than abrogate his responsibility completely. I hope that, at some stage, he will set out a list of the guidelines that he is preparing for the authority and that it will contain something which says that he will maintain his interest in these contracts, to ensure that the good of the Northern Territory is looked after and that the funds that this Assembly votes to the commission are administered properly. When he does that, I hope that he will let me, as the shadow minister, know what the guidelines are so that I can satisfy myself that this will remain under the control of the Assembly through the minister.

Amendment negatived.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

NORTHERN TERRITORY TOURIST COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 202)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, this is a small amendment to the Tourist Commission Act. Basically, as the minister said in his second-reading speech, it reflects changed administrative arrangements that the minister has put in place. I do not want to go through the bill in any more detail than that, because these are not major changes, and the opposition supports them.

However, there are matters relevant to the Tourist Commission that would be interesting to traverse in this debate. The first relates to a report issued by the Mintel group in the last few weeks. I shall not be critical. I understand a very well-known group of consultants undertook a comprehensive survey of the tourist industry in Australia and the Mintel Report resulted from it. Unfortunately, because the report costs \$2600, I do not have a copy, and judging by the way the honourable minister is reading, he does not have a copy either. From what I can gather about this report, it says a couple of interesting things about future directions for tourism in Australia and, to a certain extent, those things are rather contradictory. One is that, because of the falling value of the Australian dollar, we are doing very well in terms of tourist visitors from overseas, particularly American tourists. The fall in the dollar, together with the terrorist scares overseas earlier this year, has meant that many more Americans than expected are now seeing Australia as a favoured holiday destination. I read somewhere the other day that, at one stage, Australia was about 24th on their list of favoured countries and now we are about second or third. That is good news and, without having seen the figures, I hope that the Northern Territory is seeing more of those American tourists.

The second aspect that the Mintel Report outlined was one that I have spoken of several times in this Assembly: the lack of 2-star and 3-star accommodation. One of the main conclusions of the report was that probably we have enough, if not more than enough, 4-star and 5-star accommodation to meet the available demand, but there is a shortage Australia-wide of 2-star and 3-star hotel and motel type accommodation. That subject has been dear to my heart for a long time. It is a criticism that the opposition has had of the situation at Yulara where there is nothing between the campground and the cabins, and the 4-star Four Seasons Hotel. There is a definite hole in the accommodation arrangements there and I think that everybody realises that now. If we get to Yulara stage 2, I understand that 3-star accommodation will be built.

Of course, the question of 3-star accommodation will become even more vital to the Northern Territory because of the imminent sealing of the south road. I am pleased that, since the last sittings, the Northern Territory Development Corporation, as it was then, got its act together with other government departments and did a survey of accommodation along the south road. I am sure that one of its findings was that there was a real need to provide better facilities outside the major towns to accommodate tourists who want to travel into the Northern Territory by road. Of course, that better accommodation should be at the lower end of the market because most of the people who travel by road are accompanied by their families, particularly young families. In other cases, they will be young people who do not have very much money. If we are to attract them to the Territory and ensure that they enjoy their stay here, we need to do something to provide them with

better accommodation than is available at many of the wayside stops at present.

The problem does not exist only in the out-of-town locations. Quite clearly, there is a dramatic and desperate problem in Darwin because of the lack of 2-star and 3-star accommodation. The Morandini caravan project has been a long time coming to fruition but I believe that it is almost ready to go. However, for people who do not want caravan accommodation but want somewhere reasonable to stay in the Darwin area, it is quite difficult.

I know there is an inherent difficulty in that it is extremely expensive these days to build 3-star accommodation anywhere, let alone in the Northern Territory where building costs tend to be somewhat higher. However, there is a definite gap in the market and the full potential of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory will not be realised until that gap is filled. Of course, I am not suggesting that the government should step in and build such accommodation, but I think it could be more active in promoting the need for such accommodation and encouraging firms which are interested in building that sort of facility to come to the Northern Territory. There is no doubt that tourism is the industry of the future for the Northern Territory and a wise and judicious investment now could well provide benefits for competent tourist operators in the future.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, I do not intend to deliberate on tourism as such in the Northern Territory nor on its development. If I did so, I could easily talk about the very positive things that have happened in the Territory over the last 8 years. I could go on for several hours but, because we are addressing an issue relating to administrative arrangements, I will be quite brief.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Northern Territory Tourist Commission Act to allow for more efficient administrative arrangements. The commission will now consist of an executive officer and not more than 4 other members. The executive officer will not now necessarily become the chairman which was the case in the past. I have the previous chairman sitting in the Assembly adjacent to me this afternoon. Previously, in the absence of the said chairman, the act allowed only for a public servant to act as the chairman. It did not provide for a person other than a public servant to fulfil that role. This limited the continuing efficient operation of the commission, particularly when the chairman was away on business.

The previous administrative arrangements were introduced in the late 1970s. During that period, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission was little more than a travel agency. It had a very small staff, a very limited budget and an equally limited capacity to operate. However, it was set an enormous task which it carried out very well indeed. We have only to look around today to see the results of the efforts of the commission and its staff over the last 7 or 8 years. They marketed the Territory with enthusiasm and aggression.

Today, we have an organisation which employs 130-odd people and has branches in all Australian states and in a number of locations overseas. The Tourist Commission is responsible for one of the Territory's largest industries and I am pleased to note that, in 1981-85, sales generated through its own offices doubled from \$5m to \$10.7m in 1985. In this financial year, it is anticipated that about 700 000 visitors will pass through the Northern Territory. As was mentioned earlier, a significant and increasing number of these are from overseas. Earlier this afternoon, the member for Fannie Bay

spoke about the potential of South-east Asia for trade and tourism, and I can only support the remarks that he made. We have only scratched the surface in that area.

Mr Speaker, you will note from my comments that the Tourist Commission has experienced considerable growth. It is therefore appropriate that we pass this amendment to improve the capacity of the commission to administer its business and to better equip it for the task that lies ahead. I support the bill.

Mr HANRAHAN (Tourism): Mr Speaker, I would like the Leader of the Opposition to tell me some more about the Mintel Report because I have no information about it. Provided that he does not accuse me of gross waste of government funds and provided the report is sufficient in its information to be of benefit to the Territory tourist industry, I would be more than happy to purchase a copy for the Northern Territory Tourist Commission and allow the Leader of the Opposition to read it as well.

Mr Smith: At a price.

Mr HANRAHAN: As a result of that interjection, the Leader of the Opposition can photocopy it himself.

Mr Speaker, during these sittings, I intend to reveal to the Assembly the tourist figures from various domestic and world destinations to the Northern Territory. Only 2 days ago, the federal minister, Mr Brown, indicated that there had been a very significant increase in the number of tourists to Australia. In fact, the increase from Japan was 80% and 40% from America. The increase that we are witnessing now is the result of past marketing by the Tourist Commission and possibly terrorism. Certainly, it does not have much to do with the movement of the dollar; the effects of that will come next year.

We have seen a very significant increase in tourism right across the board. A 40% increase in American tourists to the Territory and a significant increase in Japanese tourists is not the end of the story. The marketing program of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission during the next 12 months will be aimed at the family-orientated person, the motorist. That is the target that we have identified as having the greatest growth potential.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about a lack of 3-star accommodation in the Territory. I would dispute that. The amount of 3-star accommodation or lower that has been built in Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Mataranka and Darwin is quite significant. It should not be confused with a very deliberate move by this government to establish 5-star accommodation such as the Sheraton Hotels at Yulara, Alice Springs and Darwin. I believe that the decision to establish that quality of facility for interstate and overseas visitors to the Territory will be seen as one of the most far-sighted decisions ever made in relation to tourism in the Northern Territory. As was the intention, it is acting as a catalyst to attract not only tourists to the Territory but also further investment.

I am well aware of the importance to Territory tourism of the sealing of the south road. I am also aware of the review conducted by the Northern Territory Development Corporation into facilities. I am currently considering that report with the Industrial Development Unit that has been set up in the Department of Business, Technology and Communications. The Leader of the Opposition can rest assured that I will allow him access to the report as soon

as I have actioned it but, at this stage, we intend to take very positive action to correct some obvious deficiencies that exist both in the approach through, say, Kununurra from the west, and up the south road. I shall travel the route with the South Australian Minister for Tourism in early October to assess how we can develop some joint projects that will benefit all who use the road.

Although some say the era of tourism arrived in the Northern Territory some years ago, I believe it is just arriving now and that, in the coming years, we will see an absolutely massive flow of tourists from overseas and interstate into the Northern Territory. The credit for that will go largely to the marketing expertise and foresight of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole.

Clause 6:

Mr Hanrahan: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 82.1.

This amendment picks up a small error in the original draft of the bill and overcomes the problem that I originally set out to correct. It will enable the minister to determine whether the Chief Executive Officer - the new position created under this bill - or a commissioner would be the chairman. I advise honourable members that, upon the passage of the bill, Mr Bob Doyle, the recently-appointed Chairman of the Northern Territory Tourist Commission, will continue in that position.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6, as amended, agreed to.

Bill, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 194)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, among other things, this bill has the effect of increasing a range of benefits under the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act, and that increase is to be supported.

I would suspect that the reasons for this bill are 2-fold. One reason is that last year, in relation to motor accidents compensation, the TIO reported a profit of \$2.5m which was a very encouraging sign. Now everybody is waiting to see what sort of report it will submit for this financial year. I am reasonably sure that a previous minister responsible for this act said that, if the TIO showed a financial profit again, the time had probably come for a complete review of either, or probably both, the premium levels and benefit

levels. The view of the opposition is that the Motor Accidents Insurance Scheme should be delivered at the lowest cost possible, whilst ensuring good benefits and, certainly, it should not be the intention of the scheme to turn a profit.

The second obvious reason for the introduction of this bill was as a response to a pressure group which was formed earlier this year by a number of dissatisfied TIO consumers, and I think that most of their problems have been addressed by the contents of the bill.

The bill changes the definition of a Territory motor vehicle in respect of accidents occurring outside the Territory to cover any vehicle currently registered in the Territory. That will overcome an existing problem where ex-Territorians, who do not register their vehicles in their new home state within 3 months as required by law, would not be insured with their Northern Territory registration. They would therefore be classed as unregistered and thus uninsured in their new home state. We support this new provision which will assure them of indemnity against common law claims. We see that as being reasonable.

The weekly benefits provision is to be amended so that there is no distinction between male and female beneficiaries for calculation of loss of earning capacity. Currently, the benefit is calculated with reference to 85% of the average weekly earnings of Territory wage earners of the same sex as the injured person. The reference to the 'same sex' will be removed and, in fact, average weekly earnings will be the benchmark for the award of weekly benefit provisions.

In this modern day, we are trying to eliminate these unnecessary distinctions between the sexes and it is a sensible provision to have one benefit based on average weekly earnings for all people whether male or female. However, we point out that this clause will result in a financial benefit to the scheme because males will suffer a significant drop in the weekly benefits that they will be entitled to and females will benefit from a significant increase. I am informed that far more males than females are involved in traffic accidents and the end result will be that the scheme should save money.

The death benefit has been amended quite substantially, and quite properly, to remove a glaring anomaly in the present scheme. It has been amended to remove the distinction between the so-called head of the household and the dependent spouse. There is to be an outright payment of the prescribed amount to the surviving spouse and this outright payment will be made without regard to the financial contribution to the household. As well as this outright payment, there will be weekly benefits for each dependent child. Currently, there is no weekly payment for dependent children where the deceased was classed as the dependent spouse. Again, that was a sexist provision which disadvantaged a considerable number of people.

Of course, the best known case of disadvantage under that section of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act was Mr Laurie Northeast. Unfortunately, his wife was killed in a car accident and, under the act as it is structured at present, he was entitled only to \$6000 compensation. In that particular case, the death of his wife meant a complete change in his lifestyle, a dramatic reduction in his ability to earn an income, and placed him under considerable difficulties in earning an income and raising his 2 children. Had Mr Northeast died, and not his wife, the situation would have been reversed because she would have been entitled to close to \$50 000 plus money

for their 2 children. I am pleased that the government has come to grips with this and has removed that discriminatory anomaly so that all people, irrespective of their sex and irrespective of whether they are the head of the household or the dependent spouse, will be treated equally. I think everybody will welcome that with open arms.

Mr Speaker, I have already noted that the new death benefit payable to a spouse is a set amount in all cases, and is not related to pre-injury earnings. The government has announced its intention to gazette a new lump sum amount of \$55 000, to replace the current \$45 000, and a weekly benefit for a child of \$40 per week, currently \$15. I think that comes about because the scheme is operating in the black and the government has quite sensibly decided that it is in a position to increase the benefits in this area.

The bill also amends the death benefit provisions in respect of the dependent parents and the dependent children where the spouse of the deceased dies. Currently, under sections 24 and 25 respectively, they receive weekly benefits. However, the bill will amend the provisions so that a lump sum is payable. The government has indicated that it will introduce a prescribed lump sum of \$15 000, and that a lump sum payment instead of a weekly benefit will provide, and I quote, 'greater financial flexibility for the dependants in question'. We have no problem with that. However, it again demonstrates the amazing inconsistency of this government towards lump sum and weekly payments in different pieces of legislation. Later in these sittings, we will be debating the Work Health Bill in which a completely different approach is taken to the question of payment for children in the situation where the breadwinner is on work health benefits. There, it is clearly stated that there will be a weekly benefit payment; here, it is a lump sum benefit. This inconsistency between 2 or 3 current acts is difficult to follow. It has never been explained to me satisfactorily. Is there any logical reason for using lump sum payments in one act whereas, in a similar situation under another act, weekly benefits apply? It is a mystery to me. I would be much happier with this provision, without opposing it at this stage, if the government were able to provide a logical explanation as to why it has opted for a lump sum rather than a weekly benefit.

Section 27 provides extensions of time for the periods in which the general manager and or the board must make a decision on a claim or refer it to the board. At present, if the general manager refuses a claim or does nothing within 30 days of receiving the claim, the claimant may, within a further 28 days, request that it be referred to the board. The board must then consider and determine the claim within 60 days. The proposed change is that the general manager must make a decision or refer it to the board within 30 days of receiving the claim as well as the new element, called the 'prescribed information'. Now, in addition to making the claim, a claimant must provide certain information before the 30-day limit begins to run. This is probably reasonable, but naturally it will depend on what information will be required. Of course, that is not spelt out. The 30-day period is also extended by the period during which the general manager requests and receives further information 'reasonably required' from the claimant or another person, to enable him to assess the claim or variation. The words 'reasonably required' should help minimise abuse of this provision. However, since the general manager may request the information of another person, such as a doctor, delays could be quite lengthy without the claimant being able to do anything about it. I believe that it is undesirable that the time period should be so open-ended. It is the intention of the opposition to move an amendment which will restrict the ability of the general manager to act without time constraints.

Mr Speaker, an extra subsection has been added to enable both the general manager and the board to require a conference with the claimant or his representative, and to allow for any relevant time limit so extended by the period between the notice of the request and the conference. Again, this seems reasonable so long as any delay in holding the conference is due to the claimant and not the TIO board or general manager. There have been a number of examples in the past where the TIO's track record in treating claims has been quite cavalier. It is our intention to move an amendment to put a restriction on this ability of the board and the general manager.

There is a new provision to enable the Appeals Tribunal to deal with contempt. The tribunal is a single judge who can deal with contempt situations. This provision is reasonable, and we have no problems with it.

Lastly, the death benefit payout is restricted in relation to Aboriginals with multiple spouses. In such cases, the net benefit goes not to each spouse in toto, but the full single amount is divided amongst the surviving wives. This does not affect weekly payments in respect of dependent children. Again, we have no problems with it.

In conclusion, we support the government's efforts to eliminate some discrepancies and anomalies in the present legislation, and to increase benefit levels in certain instances where they are seen to be far too low. We are concerned about a couple of the additional powers to be given to the General Manager of the TIO Board under section 27, and we propose to move a couple of amendments, which I hope the government will support.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I preface my remarks by referring to a couple of issues raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He commenced by talking about the profitability of the MACA scheme. He said that he believed that the scheme should not be profitable. I disagree with him entirely on that. Whilst I agree with his philosophy in relation to balancing out profitability with benefits and premiums, I still believe that the MACA scheme should be profitable, and should return some residue to the TIO in return for its management expertise and to allow for future claims provisions. In the future, as the scheme becomes more profitable and stable, the government could consider further increases to the benefits or possibly reductions in premiums.

With many pieces of legislation, particularly landmark legislation like the Motor Accidents Compensation Act, only the passage of time will determine whether technical changes are required. This has been the case with the MACA scheme to date. It has only been in operation for a few years and, obviously, technical changes will be required at times. I think the Northern Territory government's track record in landmark legislation is very creditable. It has always addressed issues concerning such legislation as they have been identified by the community. Where we believe it is necessary to redress a wrong, we will do so. Whilst I agree to some extent with the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the pressure group that was formed earlier in the year, there have been and will be reviews of the act from time to time. Certain parts of the act were identified as requiring change when the time was right, and we believe the time is right now.

The major provisions of the bill include the indemnity for Northern Territory registered vehicles against the common law liability to non-residents, the equalisation of weekly payments to \$272 a week for males and females and the rescission of the current criteria of dependency and pre-death income for the calculation of death benefits. The bill also provides for benefits to dependent parents who lose a supporting child, an

alteration to the lump sum payment to orphaned children and general administrative changes to decision-making by the board or the tribunal.

The issue of indemnity for non-residents, arising out of an accident involving a Northern Territory-registered vehicle, arose as a result of the varying requirements in other states as to whether a vehicle should be registered in the state of domicile within a prescribed period. For some considerable time, TIO has indemnified vehicles which were interstate for up to 3 months, but fears have arisen as to whether some of the vehicles were, in fact, insured or not. The bill clarifies this particular matter.

The equalisation of weekly payments benefits for males and females of \$272 a week addresses an anachronistic distinction, which applied previously, by removing the previous calculation of 85% of the published average male or the published average female earnings in the Northern Territory, less tax. As was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, earlier this year considerable publicity was given to the inequity of death benefits payments to dependent spouses and heads of households and these amounts have now been adjusted to take those matters into account.

Mr Speaker, the other matters covered by the bill are minor and relate to the adjustments to benefits paid to orphans. I do not find the changes to the administration, that were raised by the Leader of the Opposition, quite so disturbing as he seems to. Solicitors or the parties to the claim will be obliged to lodge the required documents rather than waiting until the expiration date, which seems to have been the case in respect of many claims during the last couple of years. The general manager has the right to suspend the time limit only while the documents and the information are outstanding, and the time limit will then apply from the moment when those documents are tabled. I believe the matter has been dealt with adequately by the amendments.

I reiterate that I believe that, as time goes by, further amendments to the act will be required. It is a landmark piece of legislation. It has been a leading light in Australia in the formulation of motor accident compensation schemes. The adjustments that may be made from time to time when profitability is stabilised will probably allow us to increase benefits and, hopefully, to reduce premiums.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, for the record I will take up a couple of matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition. He suggested that, at some time in the future, if the MACA scheme remains 'seemingly profitable', there should be a review of premium levels and or benefit levels. I do not disagree with that at all. Certainly, originally it was the intention that the scheme would not make a profit. The scheme was to be a revolving fund of contributions which were sufficient to cover benefits being paid to injured parties. The member for Ludmilla felt that the scheme should make some profit, but he qualified that by saying that that should cover the TIO's administration of the scheme and provide for future claims. I would see both those things being included in the scheme but, beyond that, the scheme is not intended to return an income to the TIO, to the taxpayer or whomever. I see it basically as a community scheme run by the TIO which should be paid for its expertise in administration.

I would like to point out to honourable members that this is an area where we could get into some difficulty in arguing whether the scheme is in profit or not in profit. We heard from the second-reading speech that, in 1984-85, the scheme made a \$2.4m profit and it may be that the 1985-86 year will return

an even larger profit. No doubt we will have the answer shortly when the report comes before the Legislative Assembly.

What has to be borne in mind is that, because of the size of the pools of money in the MACA scheme, the numbers of accidents in the Northern Territory and the nature of the injuries that can result from those accidents, we have a fairly volatile situation. For example, about the most serious injuries that you can sustain in a motor vehicle accident, and still live, are probably such that you would become a quadriplegic. I understand that, in such a case, the TIO sets aside something like \$700 000 to meet the collective outgoings of that injured person in payments over a long period of years because the scheme does not work on the basis of lump sum payments but in looking after a person for a long period of time. At \$700 000 per serious case of injury, it does not take very many serious cases to total \$2.4m, which was the profit in 1984-85. Judgments have to be made by actuaries to estimate levels of accidents that are likely to occur in the future and make provision for them. I understand that, last year, there was only 1 quadriplegic case, and I am sure we are all very grateful for that, although sad for the 1 case. In the previous year, there were 6 such cases. We are all aware that quite serious injuries quite often result from seemingly insignificant accidents. Injuries to the spinal column can happen without the drama of a vehicle overturning. They can happen quite easily. It could be that, next year, 10 people are rendered quadriplegics which would consume a very large sum of money from the scheme.

A judgment needs to be made as to how much 'profit' is allowed to accumulate in the MACA scheme before we say that it is making too much money and the premiums should be reduced or the benefits increased. Obviously, that will be a matter for subjective judgment, tempered with whatever actuarial advice is available. However, all the actuaries in the world cannot really tell whether 1 or 10 people will become quadriplegics as a result of accidents next year. Judgments have to be made, and I advise members to be cautious in the future before they call for the scheme to be wound down by way of reductions in premiums or increases in benefits on that basis. I am sure that, from time to time, arguments will be put that benefits should be adjusted to reflect changes in society or in values. I make those few comments for the information of honourable members.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Communications and Technology): Mr Deputy Speaker, ever obliging as the government is to accommodate the opposition who, late this afternoon, found some amendments, we are quite happy to adjourn the debate until tomorrow.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, this morning I asked the Minister for Housing what the government was doing about the proposal to build a senior citizens' village at the Boxwood Swamp. I would like to go over a bit of the history of this and I am sure that you, being an Alice Springs' man, will be interested in it. I first came across the proposal in 1980 when attending Council on the Ageing meetings. It was raised by Mr Rex Hall and his wife, Margaret, 2 well-known Centralians. Mr Hall recently passed on and that is regretted. They indicated that an area was needed near to the centre of town

where elderly people who were still able to walk a reasonable distance could live. It would allow them to walk to the central business district to do their shopping and carry out their business.

It was thought that elderly people who were living in large houses might be happier if they had only a small unit to maintain. They would be able to sell their house and purchase a smaller unit. This would make more houses available for purchase by families in Alice Springs and the money realised by the elderly people through the sale of their house and the purchase of a much less expensive unit would be available for their enjoyment.

The area chosen is known as the Boxwood Swamp which is situated on the east side of the Todd River behind Lindsay Avenue and south of Undoolya Road. There are a number of coolibah or boxwood trees in this area which are registered sacred sites. The general feeling at the meetings was that we would not get very far. However, Mr Bob Gregory, who now lives in Darwin, approached the Sacred Sites Authority. The Aboriginal people in the area granted permission to build the units among the trees on the basis that the elderly people living there would help protect the trees which were of considerable significance to the eastern Arunta people in particular. I would say that those trees are significant to the locals. I was well aware of the concern that the European people living in Lindsay Avenue had for those trees. It is a lovely stand of trees and they certainly would want them protected.

At no stage was it intended that those trees be harmed in any way. To the contrary, the intention was that the trees be protected. We had a group called the 'Save our Coolibah' group who made a fairly big noise. I find their attitude rather amusing because, at no stage, was there ever any intention to destroy those trees. The Aboriginal people themselves said the units could be built there because it would help protect the trees.

A group was set up to investigate the proposal. Architects, engineers, the town council, members of the legal profession, the Housing Commission and the Council on the Ageing were involved. Mr Max Isbell, the president of the Council on the Ageing has been particularly active. Much work has been done free of charge, particularly by the architects and engineers. One problem is that the site where the trees are is a swamp.

The initial proposal was to put the units among the trees which would have meant that the ground would have had to be built up and that could have endangered the trees. The present proposal is to site the dwellings on the north-western side of the trees, but not actually dotted amongst them. Over the years, quite a bit of fill has been dumped in amongst the trees and that is of concern. I believe that that fill could be moved over to the north-western corner. That would provide extra height to make the units safe from possible flooding and solve 2 problems.

The minister mentioned this morning that there is a general feeling that the elderly should be dotted in amongst the rest of the community. That may be true but the Council on the Ageing has gathered considerable evidence that there are at least some people who would like this opportunity to own a unit close to the town. The people who go into the village would be controlled. It is envisaged that a group representing various local organisations and some people elected by those living in the village would control the way it is run. That would be done on a non-profit basis. There is no intention that anybody involved in the running of that village would do it other than for the love of it.

Mr Speaker, that is the situation. I am concerned about the trees and so is everybody else. Every care will be taken to preserve them and I believe that our senior citizens and the Council on the Ageing are to be commended for their foresight in proposing this village and their determination to see the project realised. As far as funding from the government is concerned, the committee envisages that the government would simply act as the seeding body to provide the initial money to build some of the units. The idea is that 80 units could be built at a rate of 20 a year, which is about the number of flats and units built for elderly people in Alice Springs at the moment. These would be purchased by the people and the government would recoup its money back. The government money would be used simply to get the project up and running.

I welcome the minister's inquiry. We will have to see the outcome of that but, from the research that has been done by the Council on the Ageing and others, I am certain that this is an acceptable alternative to many people. Nobody will be forced to go into such a village. If I were to predict the findings of the inquiry, I would suggest that many people would like the opportunity to purchase a unit in such a village that is conveniently located. The proposal would be of advantage to the town and to them. I look forward to the inquiry being established and hope to have some input into it.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I rise today to record the passing of a long-time community leader in central Australia, Mr Stumpy Martin, who died of a heart attack on Saturday, 16 August 1986.

Stumpy Martin was a leader of his people. He was known as a man who ruled with a rod of iron but with care and consideration. Stumpy was concerned about alcohol amongst his people - the Aboriginal people - and on many occasions was known as a man that took the law into his own hands. Soon after the Liquor Amendment Act was passed empowering the seizure of vehicles with alcohol on board in restricted areas, Stumpy was the man who detained the first vehicle which broke the rules. He detained the vehicle and the driver and notified the police at Ti Tree.

Stumpy was a former commissioner of the Aboriginal Development Commission and a past member of the National Aboriginal Conference and Aboriginal Benefits Trust Account. He was past president of both the Willowra Community Council and the Willowra Pastoral Company. He was concerned about employment, and he supervised one of the most successful Aboriginal pastoral properties in central Australia. He tried to ensure that as many people as possible were employed at the store, the school, the medical centre and the pastoral properties in his area.

Mr Speaker, I know he was an acquaintance of yours and a man whom you and many people in central Australia regarded as somebody who walked in both worlds. He had the ability to exist in both the white and black communities and he was held in very high regard by both. He was truly respected and admired. His passing will be a great loss to the entire central Australian community, and he will leave a large pair of shoes for somebody to fill in the future.

I would like to record my condolences to his wife and family.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, this afternoon, I would like to enlighten honourable members about what could be an interesting development in Northern Territory agriculture. I refer to some experiments with sheep, carried out in New Zealand by a Wellington-based atmospheric chemist,

David Lowe. His experiments were carried out with flatulent sheep which have been hailed by some as a significant energy resource. He says that preliminary results of his experiments have suggested that New Zealand's 68 million sheep, plus millions more sheep and cattle in Australia, were major contributors to soaring methane concentrations in the atmosphere. Theoretically, the daily amount of methane, a major component of natural gas, produced by 1 sheep would be sufficient to run a small car for several kilometres, a remarkable feat, as even the most unsociable human can produce only a fraction of this.

I say at the outset that my comments are centred on the interestingly passive nature of this agricultural development. Sheep farming has been conducted in the expectation of a financial return from the sheep's meat and wool only. Doors to further financial benefit to the farmer are being opened by the consideration of the methane gas emissions from the sheep.

To translate this consideration of agricultural gaseous output to the Northern Territory, and considering that we are about to finalise the building of our gas pipeline from Alice Springs to Darwin, what developments in energy conservation are we missing by not harnessing the natural gas output of our local ruminants? There are only a few sheep in the Northern Territory so we will forget about them. I have 1 sheep, so I might be right for the expected output of 11 litres of methane gas a day. As mentioned in the article, with a bit of mechanical adjustment to my car, I could use the methane to drive from home to the office every day. Then I could really thumb my nose at the fringe benefits tax. The article is not clear about whether I would take the sheep with me in the car or take off the bonnet and sit it comfortably there. Further, which end would I use? Cheek aside, consider our cattle population and our rising goat numbers in the Northern Territory. We would be riding on the cow's back here. If there are little breaks in the gas pipeline as it goes through any pastoral property on the way from Alice Springs to Darwin, all we need do is back up a cow.

Although it is unclear from the article which end of the ruminant's alimentary canal produces the relevant useful gas, I believe we could discover that we are neglecting a very valuable resource. Methane is pretty expensive and although I cannot tell you the exact content either in the ruminant output or in the natural gas output from Alice Springs, I think it would be worth a few dollars. If we used this gas, think of all the greenies and the animal liberationists we would keep quiet. We would be using natural resources, preventing pollution, and actively working in energy conservation. They would be so flat out chasing all the sheep because, being animal liberationists they would not have them confined, that they would be too beggared to stage any more of those useless demonstrations.

Let me assure honourable members that there is yet another practically bottomless biological source of natural gas in the Northern Territory. I speak from personal experience here. If any members have kept wallabies or kangaroos in close quarters and have observed a little of their alimentary gaseous emissions, they will know what I mean. These macropods, which have similarities to ruminants, emit a continuous supply of gaseous substances from either end, which I believe could be harnessed to our financial and industrial advantage. You might think we have thousands of cattle in the Northern Territory that we could use, Mr Speaker, but we have millions of kangaroos and wallabies.

I will put my ideas for the development of this natural resource to the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications for his consideration.

He is in the Assembly at the moment, listening to my adjournment debate. I will put this idea to the minister, knowing his concern for the future stable development of the Northern Territory.

I want to turn now to a more serious matter. With the financial restraint placed upon the Northern Territory government by Canberra, we are forced to ask whether some developments are really necessary and whether we make 1 dollar do the work of 2. My concern is for the development and opening of the Berry Springs Zoo in 1988, as was initially planned.

The Berry Springs Zoo is on the Cox Peninsula road in my electorate. I have made several visits there and I have been impressed with the development to date and the development planned for the future. It will be a most unusual zoo. I believe it will be cost-effective. Its buildings are pleasantly designed and proper regard has been paid to the scientific keeping of animals. I think I have spoken of this before. Also, great consideration has been given to the comfort and the habits of the animals, and to needs of the viewing public. It is important, in the overall consideration of the tourist potential of the Top End, that we use all our resources to the greatest advantage.

The Chief Minister and the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications have spoken of the increase in tourism potential that we can expect over the next few years, especially now that international travel to some places is very difficult. Australia is a reasonably safe place to visit. We certainly have interesting topography in the Northern Territory and, thanks to Mr Hawke, our dollar is falling in value. This does not give us any benefit, but it does benefit the tourists. It benefits us by increasing tourist visits to the Northern Territory. The completion of the Berry Springs Zoo should coincide with the development of Litchfield Park on Stapleton Station, with the relevant road reticulation to be completed at about the same time. I know that this is of interest to the Minister for Conservation as Litchfield is in his electorate, just as the Berry Springs Zoo is in mine. I hope that the minister can prevail on his Cabinet colleagues to have the roads to Litchfield Park sealed so that 2 items of interest to tourists can be developed simultaneously.

There has also been talk in the past about the development of Channel Island, not only from the power-station point of view, but also because of the old leprosarium site, coupled with the interesting underwater sites around the island. Taking these 3 locations together, we have a tourist package of unparalleled interest, not only to tourists but also to locals. I believe that it would be easy to arrange a coordinated transport package to these 3 places. They would be of interest to people from Darwin, to tourists located in Darwin and to tourists coming in by road from the south. Because of the importance of the Berry Springs Zoo development, along with these other 2 places, and considering the importance of the bicentennial year in 1988, I hope that financial restraints do not restrict progress on these sites.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, in this evening's adjournment debate, there are a couple of matters I wish to raise.

Most appropriately, on what has been a day of considerable change in the opposition ranks, I want to commence by giving my best wishes and paying my respect to the very hard work of the member for Arafura as he has his last day in this Assembly as Leader of the Opposition. I think that, apart from the extraordinarily curmudgeonly contribution of the member for Fannie Bay, there is considerable bipartisan recognition of the extraordinary contribution made by the member for Arafura over many years in this Assembly.

Mr Perron: I am glad you exempted me from that.

Mr BELL: Since the member for Fannie Bay chooses to interject in the sleazy, uncouth terms we have become accustomed to from him, I am quite sure that the member for Arafura will only regard those as an even higher accolade.

I first met the member for Arafura when he was the member for Arnhem in 1981, when I was first elected to this Assembly. I came up from Alice Springs to Darwin and received the blessing from Arthur Hangan at the Electoral Office. There was a bloke outside, a mere shadow of his present self, although he is returning in that direction, as all of us are so pleased to see. Parked outside was a dust-covered, tray-back ute with a roof over the back. I thought: 'Well, here is a bloke who comes from a similar part of the Territory to me'. I was thinking of my dusty Toyota, parked at the Alice Springs airport. From that time onwards, I developed a deep respect for all Bob Collins' qualities as a person in public life, a professional politician. These include a quickness of wit and an ability to absorb information and articulate it, which I have seen in very few people. His capabilities in that regard are all the more remarkable and all the more to be praised because, unlike some of us, he did not have the advantages of lengthy years of tertiary education.

I do not think he will regard it as patronising when I place on the record of this Assembly that I think his skills and debating abilities, his quickness of wit and his humour, are exceptional. If his capabilities in that regard make him remarkable in this Assembly, there is another quality that makes him singular, and that is that he is undoubtedly a man of principle, a man of high principle who does not always count the numbers before taking a stance on a particular issue. I think that that is what has made and will continue to make him a great Labor politician, with a contribution to be made not only in the Territory but right around the country. There is no point in disguising the fact that it is with a great deal of sadness that I see him step down voluntarily from his position under these circumstances. Mr Speaker, I am sure that it is along with you and everybody else in this Assembly, with the exception of the member for Fannie Bay, that I wish him well in whichever direction his future career may take him.

I raised a matter in question time this morning and I wish to make some further comments on it now. Mr Speaker, you will recall that I asked the Minister for Lands about the Kunta lease. To be quite accurate in this regard, Kunta is a hill behind the Alice Springs drive-in, and I think I have mentioned it before, so I will just refer members to the Parliamentary Record. They are more than welcome to approach me if they need further elucidation.

It is a matter of public record that this group of people have been known to me - many of them personally - for many years now. They have been living in that vicinity for some 5½ to 6 years, but they have no adequate housing. This is something for which the Northern Territory government stands condemned. Housing for these people is not blocked because of lack of funds. The funds for adequate housing are available. The people have no housing because of the refusal of the Northern Territory government to make appropriate areas available. That this has taken 5 years is a scandal. It is a national scandal and, in a moment, I will recount exactly why this has come home to me with such force.

On the last Sunday in July, at about 11.30 in the evening, I was well on the way to being asleep when the telephone by the bed rang. A young woman's voice said to me, in her language: 'That old bloke whose kids passed away is

very sick. He has to go to hospital'. I suppose if it had been a constituent from one of the comfortable bourgeois northern suburbs of Darwin you would say: 'Why don't they ring an ambulance?' It is not quite that easy, Mr Speaker. It is one of the difficult tasks that falls to somebody in my position. The responsibility for helping Aboriginal people through the bureaucracy, when they do not speak English as a first language, is a little bit harder than it might be for some other members of this Assembly to help their more fortunate constituents.

Suffice it to say that, on a freezing winter's night, with one of those very cold south-easterlies whipping across the flat, I had to go down to see this man who was in considerable pain. I spent 2 or 3 hours at casualty, because I was genuinely concerned about the diagnosis. It was unclear whether it was a chest infection or a gall bladder problem. Fortunately, he was able to receive a mild injection which took the pain away, and that gave some relief. But, Mr Speaker, can you imagine the circumstances that this man comes from? On a freezing night in July, he was living in an unlined tin shed. I really do not believe that anybody here can suggest that that sort of accommodation is acceptable in this day and age. I am not talking about somebody who is just staying somewhere for the night; I am talking about a place where people have been living for years.

Mr Perron: Where did they live before that?

Mr BELL: In answer to the honourable member for Fannie Bay, I do not have time to tell him that during this debate. However, if he would like to give me half an hour, I can give him a full account of how those people came to be living there and why. I understand that the honourable member for Fannie Bay and the local member, the honourable member for Flynn, investigated these circumstances. I am not surprised that the honourable member for Doctor's Gully takes a blow-you-Jack, I'm-all-right attitude, because that is what we have come to expect from the honourable member for Fannie Bay.

Mr Perron: I gave more leases in Alice Springs to them than to any other group of Aboriginals, pal.

Mr BELL: However, let us not be too friendly about it.

It is in that context that I urge, in the strongest possible terms, that the Minister for Lands take the issues seriously. I was heartened when I spoke with him outside of the Assembly after question time this morning and he told me that proposals were either before Cabinet or due to go before Cabinet that would provide some resolution in this regard in association with the social club proposals in that area. Those are progressive moves and I will look forward with a great deal of interest to their outcome. However, I cannot stress strongly enough the importance, urgency and responsibility - for health reasons alone - to provide shelter for people living in those circumstances.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak about something that received some coverage during the last sittings. However, it could not be covered in full at that time because it had not reached fruition. I refer to the pipeline episode in Alice Springs. To bring members up to date, I will first recap on that discussion and then advise them of the present situation as I see it.

I have in front of me a letter written in 1984 in which the Town Engineer in Darwin stated that there were concerns about the pressures that were pumped

through the pipe. I also have a letter from the then Minister for Mines and Energy, Mr Jim Robertson, in which he stated that, at that stage, the licensee was considering a reduction of pressure to 360 psi. I am not quite sure of the standing orders in this regard, Mr Deputy Speaker. You may be able to enlighten me as to whether it is legitimate for me to talk in the old British units. However, for the time being, I will talk in terms of pounds per square inch. He wrote that he saw the possibility of it being reduced too, and he indicated in a letter to TNT Bulkships that he hoped that it was considering the possibility of reducing the pressure at what was referred to as valve No 5 near MacDonnell Siding so that, through the town area, it would be reduced from 1000 psi to 360 psi. We continued on through the latest allegations.

In the course of those negotiations, when I first spoke of this earlier this year, I had with me some papers that I had received from a Mr Michael Kirlew, a consultant, who wrote reports for Bain Gastin and Co. In his first report, he stated:

I cannot go beyond my view that not to expose, under properly controlled conditions, sections of the pipeline is wrong. Evaluation of the conditions of the surface of the pipeline by reference to the cathodic protection potentials is now known to be suspect.

He went further in May 1986 when he discussed the results of tests which showed that the cathodic protection was extremely low. For members who do not understand that, from one view that was a good sign because, as the amount of current that is required to suppress electrolysis etc rises, that is a fair sign that the coating on the pipe is being degraded. He showed that, whilst it was very low there, it was in the order of 10% of what would be considered acceptable in an equivalent pipeline. However, he said: 'That does indicate that there are extremely small defects in the coating and it is in that itself that the problem lies'. He explained:

It is a regrettable fact that the better the quality of the protective coating, the shorter the time to first failure of the pipeline at a small defect in the coating in the absence of cathodic protection. The requirement to maintain the cathodic protection system operative at all times is now paramount.

We have the report from the minister. A copy was placed on my desk this morning in fact. For several months, I have asked him to supply me with one. In that, he states that there are now no problems whatsoever with the pipeline. In fact, he proposes a return to the maximum permissible operating pressure of 1000 pounds per square inch, and relies on the report that he received from Mr Alder to back that up. If honourable members would like copies of any of the papers I have here, they are available.

Mr Alder stated that pits occurred in the pipe while it was resting on the earth in the stockpile. He stated that 'it is evident that a significant quantity of unsuitable material was rejected'. The fact that a significant quantity was rejected unfortunately does not rule out the possibility that some of the material that was used was not of an adequate quality. However, he felt that the likelihood of this was not particularly high because 10% of the wall thickness had been lost because of corrosion in those that were discarded and he hoped, given the degree of safety factors that are built in, that it would be acceptable. The maximum allowable pressure, for the interest of members, as the member for Wagaman would possibly be aware, is obtained by doubling the specified minimum yield stress, multiplied by the nominal wall thickness, multiplied by the constant type design factor, multiplied by the

longitudinal joint factor, multiplied by the temperature de-rating factor, all divided by the nominal outside diameter. On that basis, it comes within the requirements for the movement of gas through town.

Mr Palmer: The answer is 42.

Mr EDE: It is 316.27 actually, for this particular pipe. Mr Speaker, we have a situation where the report commissioned by the government states that everything is quite okay because the level of corrosion was probably within the limit.

I have something here which disturbs me, and again I will make a copy available if anybody wishes to read it. It is a statement signed by one Terence W. Danks, who was an inspector on the line. Mr Danks, after stating that pit marks had been found in sections of the pipe installed in the ground and that there was a build-up of clay, says that, after cleaning and pitting had been checked with a mechanical depth meter, readings ranging from 0.1 to 0.45 occurred where the cutout situation was over 0.42. He states that, with this level, some pipes previously rejected were passed for coating. He states that, on 26 May, he and another person filed down one pipe to carry out tests with an electronic thickness gauge. It was then that they found there were problems with the electronic thickness gauge that was being utilised. As he had gone to the trouble of actually filing out the pit mark, he used a mechanical gauge and found that the actual level was 0.62 to 0.65. When Mr Murrell, the consultant safety inspector from Fleur, was informed of this, they discovered that there was an average difference of about 0.02 between the mechanical readings and the readings obtained after filing out the marks. Those positive results prompted them to retest some pipes already tested and passed. It was found that, when they were cleaned with a pocket knife, readings increased from 0.09 to 0.15. As a consequence, some of the pipes that had been first passed in the test, then had to be rejected. Until then, people had relied on the mechanical depth gauge. When its readings were found to be inaccurate, they were able to recheck the pipes which had been cleared for burial. However, they did not go back over the pipes which had already been laid.

I mentioned Mr Bill Murrell. One of the major points in Mr Alder's report which concerned me, and I hope that I am wrong about it, is that I do not find any reference to discussions with Mr Bill Murrell who, as I said, was the consultant safety inspector. I have been told that Mr Murrell refused to sign a guarantee of the pipeline's safety. If that is the case, and if that information is being kept from Mr Adler, I think that that would be a gross breach of somebody's obligation to the safety of the people of Alice Springs.

Mr Speaker, as I said, I am not absolutely certain of the safety of the pipeline. I would, however, accept that the thicknesses are there and, if the cathodic protection levels can be maintained, it is probable that we will not have a major blow-out within the town area. I ask the minister to accept a suggestion that I made right at the start of this debate: that he install a town-gate and install a pressure reduction station at valve No 5 to reduce the pressure in the gas pipeline from 1000 psi down to something in the vicinity of 250 psi.

As I understand it, one of the main reasons for the 1000 psi over the total length of the pipe is that the pipe is not pumped continually. It is filled and then the gas is utilised from it. I presume the argument is that, if they run it at a far lower pressure, they will have constantly to pump the gas into the other end. Obviously, that is something that they do not want to

do because it will increase their costs. However, with my suggestion, only 10% of the pipeline would have to be run at lower pressure. They could fill the other 90% for use as storage and release the gas at 250 psi through the town and into the power-station.

The counter argument from the minister is quite predictable. He will say that, in other places in Australia, there are 1000 psi pipelines going through built-up areas, and I accept that. Quite possibly, there is a need for that because the particular urban area may require that amount of gas. Our situation is that the gas is taken off at about 100 psi. The real point is, why should we have something which is more dangerous than is necessary? Surely we should reduce the risk to the minimum, and that is all I am asking for. In the meantime, that pressure should be reduced. An intelligent pig will be put through the pipeline in a month or so and, hopefully, that will resolve some of the other problems.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that I was extremely disappointed by the reaction of the member for Flynn and the way that he castigated my concern for the safety of the people of Alice Springs. Mr Alder added safety factors in relation to the pipeline in 2 pages of recommendations. He accepted that we have problems with the pipeline. I hope the government will give more consideration to the safety of the people of Alice Springs than it has shown to date.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

DISCUSSION OF MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE
Aboriginal Unemployment

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the Deputy Leader of the Opposition:

Dear Mr Speaker,

Under standing order 94, I wish to raise today, as a matter of definite public importance, the following matter: the very high rate of unemployment amongst Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely,
B.R. Ede,
Member for Stuart.

Is the discussion supported? It is supported.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I recall some years ago talking to a member of the staff of what was then the Department of Employment and Youth Affairs regarding a survey it had undertaken. It was carried out in towns in the east of Australia and it concerned the effect of long-term unemployment on peoples' psyches and their futures. The broad results of the study were quite shattering to me. At that stage, I was working for the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs, and I had to face the problems of long-term unemployment continually.

I was told that that department had found that, if a person is unemployed for a month, it generally takes a year of continuous work before that person can recover a sufficient level of self-confidence to perform a job effectively. The experience of the people who researched the paper was that, if a person were unemployed for a full year, that person would never attain the full potential he would have attained without that period in unemployment.

Long periods of unemployment tell people that what they have to offer to society is worthless and that society has found them guilty of having no value in the money economy. Long-term unemployment is a destroyer. It destroys the mind, it destroys the body and it destroys the very fundamentals of a person's belief in himself. Let us take this a step further. What if not only one individual, but a very high proportion of the particular age group to which the person belongs, is also unemployed? What happens if an entire peer group lives year after year with the belief that none of its members has the potential for full employment? To a limited but nevertheless very tragic extent, we see that occurring among the youth in our society. We see them grow up without the natural expectation of a full and rewarding career.

I was one of the fortunate people who left school in the mid-1960s when employment was seen as a natural right either to be taken up or not, as one wished. That is not an option for the youth of today. I would like the Assembly to give some thought to the effects of this on our society, not just in the short term, but also in the long term. I refer back to some of the address-in-reply speeches made by members of this government. At the start of the term of a previous Chief Minister, one of the problems that the government promised to address was youth unemployment. It was on top of the list. I cannot remember any programs initiated by that Chief Minister, or any other Chief Minister, to address the problem.

We have to admit that programs to date, be they federal or Northern Territory, have had very little effect on the basic problem. As a result of peer group pressure, because that sub-unit of society does not have the same expectations that we enjoyed, it has defined another set of values on which to base its existence. It has developed a means by which it can have a belief in itself within its own norms rather than the norms of the larger society.

The subject of this discussion today is a very high level of long-term unemployment that is not confined to a particular age group. It concerns the expectation of a whole race of people, a race that constitutes a quarter of the population of the Northern Territory. It is a very sad fact that, in the majority of the communities that I represent and those represented by the member for MacDonnell and others, some 80% to 90% of the people who make up what we would call the work force are unemployed. This unemployment is not confined to age group or sex within the community; unemployment is the common expectation of every person in the community. It is their expectation that, even if they have a job at the moment, it is not necessarily something that they will continue to have for the rest of their life. I leave it to members to ponder the effects of that on peoples' confidence in their ability to compete in the mainstream of society. You will appreciate, Mr Speaker, how this inability to share in society's common expectations gives rise to an alternative set of values and beliefs.

There is another and very basic problem involved with the community-wide, long-term unemployment experienced in Aboriginal communities: economic reality. Recently, it was shown that the cost of living in Alice Springs is some 60% higher than it is in an eastern town. I think the comparison was drawn with costs in Newcastle and Sydney. Members may know that the cost differentials between Alice Springs and most rural communities are far higher than the cost differentials between Alice Springs and eastern towns. If the cost differential between Sydney and Alice Springs is 60%, the cost differential between Yuendumu or Willowra and Sydney would be well over 100%.

If people in Aboriginal communities had a broad expectation of being employed in large numbers with only a few suffering unemployment or being forced to live on benefits, Aboriginal society would have the ability to look after these people because of its belief in sharing. However, when very large numbers of people are unemployed, those few who are employed have no ability - even by giving to the very fullest extent - to affect in any way the overall standard of living in the community.

I am glad to say that the differential in cost between isolated areas and large towns was taken up to some extent by the current federal government when, at the urging of the former federal member, Mr John Reeves, it introduced a remote areas component to the benefits system. However, I know that the federal Minister for Social Security agrees with me that that is a pittance compared with what is needed if some balance is to be achieved. It was unfortunate that our current member for the Northern Territory failed to address that matter in the lead-up to the budget in an attempt to have that benefit held at its previous level. To be frank, however, we do not so much require an increase in benefits as an increase in jobs. We require a far higher level of employment so that family members will have the ability to help relations who are receiving benefits.

It is unfortunate that, because of the large numbers of Aboriginal people who are unemployed, a belief has grown up that Aboriginal people do not want employment. My experience is that nothing could be farther from the truth. Aboriginal people do not lack the desire for employment; they lack a belief

that employment is available for them. Their history has shown that employment is something that may occur over short periods, and that they will be the first to be laid off if things go wrong. I am approached constantly by older people in communities who say to me: 'It is too late for me now; I am an old man. I know you cannot find me a job, but please find something for these young people. At least, in our time, we could get some skills in the cattle industry or as doggers'.

However, young people are not able to obtain jobs at all. That is the tragedy. If we do not do something soon, people will have found a lifestyle which, while it may cope with their most basic needs, will leave little demand for the extra goods and services which signal the difference between poverty and a reasonable lifestyle. This is the classic poverty trap, and people are beginning to topple in. It is very obvious that we need to break the mould. We need to take some energetic and extensive steps to ensure that this poverty lifestyle does not become so entrenched that it cannot be altered. We need to nominate jobs in communities for Aboriginal people and train people for them. We need to expand the good work being done by Aboriginal organisations. In Alice Springs, for example, the Aboriginal organisations are easily the largest employers of Aboriginal people. Those organisations have shown a real commitment to train, employ and place people in senior positions. That is the sort of thing we should reinforce with our own government policies. We should say to those organisations: 'You have the capacity and the will, so let us make you the trainers. Through you, people can enter the work force and gain skills. Then we will find them positions in the public service or private enterprise'.

I believe that, when non-Aboriginal people go to work in Aboriginal communities, part of their contracts of employment should specify the training they will provide to a designated successor. It should nominate how that training will take place, the steps to be followed and the evaluation program which will be used to determine whether the training has been effective. Too often, I have seen people go to Aboriginal communities and say: 'Look, don't worry about it. I will be the last white fellow you will ever have in this job. I will train somebody'. People obtain positions on that basis and 2 years later, when they leave, the trainee is told: 'Sorry, you still do not have the necessary level of skills'.

Mr Perron: Is that the government's fault?

Mr EDE: If the member for Fannie Bay would look at the subject of the debate, he would see that it is a matter of public importance. I invite him to make some positive comment rather than to criticise us for wanting to solve the problem. If he listens to the debate, he will see that we are attempting to highlight the problems in a spirit of compromise, and to work with the government to see how we might overcome them.

In terms of training Aboriginal people for employment in Aboriginal communities, I would like to congratulate the Batchelor College which has a program for training Aboriginal executives. It has the essential components for this type of training. First, the skills that are necessary to carry out the job are designated and incorporated into the contract of training. Next, the person who is to be trained for the job is assessed in relation to his current skills. The training is then designed so that the person achieves the additional skills required for the particular job. This is done through a mixture of on-the-job training and short, intensive courses at Batchelor College. It is a good program, and I commend it. It is essential that, at the end of these training programs, there is an actual job to go to. There is

nothing so demoralising as going through training program after training program, only to be told that the funds for training have been expended and that you must join the ranks of the unemployed until more funds are available for some artificial job.

We have spoken at length about the Rural Aboriginal Training Education program which has 2 aspects. One is to provide the Aboriginal trainees with the skills they need to obtain employment and the other is to provide role models. This second aspect is essential for young Aboriginal people. They cannot be allowed to grow up in a society where their only adult models are people who see their total life expectation as having no work and no hope. We all know the influence our teachers had on us, and it is essential that young Aboriginal people in primary schools see Aboriginal teachers as people they can model themselves on while they are working out what they wish to do with their lives. The Aboriginal teachers coming out of the Remote Area Teacher Education program will help to provide role models for children.

The health worker training program is another area where Aboriginal people are taking over responsibilities for delivering services. It is essential that health workers do not end up being de facto cleaners or interpreters. They must have career positions in their own right. Health worker trainees, as they obtain registration, must have status commensurate with the skills they have gained. This status is essential so that people in the community will recognise them for what they are and not simply as adjuncts to non-Aboriginal people. The police aide program is another that must be allowed to continually expand. People must be given new skills so that they can progress from being aides to having full police powers.

Many of these programs can only work effectively if ancillary problems are solved. It is all very well for police, health or education training programs to be set up. That is excellent. However, there are obstacles which often hinder these people from working effectively. Housing is an example. If a trainee or a fully-qualified teacher is unable to secure reasonable accommodation, it is impossible for that person to prepare adequately for the next day's teaching. I have seen teachers who have just graduated from Batchelor College, trying to get their lesson plans organised in a humpy. It is just not possible for people to work without power and water and without some protection from the elements. A number of police aides have spoken to me about the problems they have with simple things such as keeping their uniforms clean and tidy and being able to present themselves in the professional manner that their jobs warrant. Mr Speaker, as the former member for Stuart and a person who has spent considerable time in bush electorates, you will know how pervasive the dust can be and how difficult it is to keep anything clean.

We have deliberately attempted to approach this matter in a way which would not be critical of the Northern Territory government. We are not attempting to take a dogmatic stance nor to imply that we have all the answers and the government has none. We are simply trying to explore the area and we hope that the government will do likewise by discussing what it sees as the issues in Aboriginal employment and how they can be tackled. I have discussed matters concerning government employment and training programs. My colleague, the member for MacDonnell, will be talking more about private enterprise because private enterprise must come in behind the government. If Aboriginals were able to take over all the public service jobs available, that would still only produce about 40% employment for them. We have to link government into the private sector. We have to encourage small business to go out into the communities so that the communities can continue to allow the money and benefits of employment to circulate.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I continue to be amazed by the so-called matters of public importance which the opposition raises in this Assembly from time to time. The subject matter may be a matter of public importance, but the opposition's contribution in debate certainly does not indicate that. I would like to thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for putting forward what was probably the best CLP policy speech that I have heard in a long time.

He mentioned the fact that Aboriginal people in central Australia have had trouble getting employment in the general community. I am advised by a long-time Centralian that, in the 1960s and early 1970s, Aboriginal people were employed in banks, shops and industry until along came the sanctimonious and pious period of the Whitlam government which took them out of those employment areas and into Aboriginal Affairs and other departments where they could involve themselves solely with their own communities. As a result, we started to lose the integration of Aboriginal people in the general work force.

Until recent years, there was no economy in Aboriginal communities. Employment on Aboriginal communities, or the lack of it, has been typified by a wide range of abuses to the system. A majority of these abuses have been instigated by people working in management. Ali Curung store was swindled of funds some years ago. The Department of Community Development had to bail out the Lajamanu community and reconstitute it to prevent creditors seizing its assets. A major tax problem was also involved in that situation. There were fraud investigations at Ngukurr and police were called in to investigate community funds problems at Umbakumba. At Milingimbi, the Department of Community Development was called in to straighten out trading problems at the local store. \$1m is spent each year at Yuendumu on health services, amid complaints of lack of hygiene. Yet, the toilets at Yuendumu have been vandalised to the point of being inoperative. No one at the community has bothered to try to maintain them or to repair them in any way.

Mr Ede: There have never been any public toilets there.

Mr DALE: There has been general abuse of vehicles. Near-new vehicles have been left in a state of disrepair, in the belief that ...

Mr EDE: You want to mess things up.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr DALE: ... new ones will arrive when the existing ones stop or run out of petrol.

Let us have a look at some of the federal programs. Community Development Employment Programs have been cited by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs as a major achievement on some Torres Strait Islands. Under CDEP, dole money is held by the community and paid to recipients for work on community projects. Limited application has been achieved in the Northern Territory at places like Yirrkala, Gapuwiyak and some southern region centres. CDEP funding has been very tight and was under review prior to this budget. Quite frankly, I do not know what happened to it last night.

Mr Ede: There are 3 new ones in the Northern Territory.

Mr DALE: Well, that is great.

Mr Ede: Check it up.

Mr DALE: The Department of Employment and Industrial Relations has imposed stricter guidelines for funding of employment programs, making it more difficult for communities to qualify. As an example, funding for an arts grant to Snake Bay was discontinued after only 1 year. The most recent figures from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs show that 47 Aboriginals were employed in the Territory under special works projects - a great effort. The majority of these were involved in local government work; they were probably employed in homelands and health centres. The general story is that funds are drying up for these and other employment programs, such as CDEP and CEP, which are essentially make-work programs designed to look good in the statistics, and that is about the end of it.

As you would be well aware, Mr Speaker, funding in many federal projects is injected for 12 months as a bait and then withdrawn, and the Northern Territory government is left to pick up the loose ends. The Northern Territory certainly has a history of that occurring!

Let us look at some of the Territory initiatives designed to create employment. One is to encourage greater self-determination through the Community Government Scheme which will allow a large number of communities to benefit from local government funding under the Northern Territory Grants Commission. The commission is still working on its report to me following its first round of hearings under its present scheme. It will give communities the opportunity to do some good for themselves with funds for which they, and not government departments, are responsible. There is the transfer of responsibility for Aboriginal essential services, again from government departments carrying such services to individual communities. The people will be responsible for money allocated for the provision and maintenance of essential services. In fact, the message to the communities is that the luxury of being able to whistle up a government department to do a job simply no longer exists. The responsibility is on them to make the funding dollar go further. It is a case of using what is essentially private money as against government funding. This results in people having a greater interest in how far the dollar goes. For the first time in Australian history, we are seeking to give Aboriginal people some self-esteem.

NTEC period contracts are still being negotiated with communities so that they can run their own power supplies on the basis of payment for hours of operation. This will also lead to increased employment.

It is government policy to devolve powers on Aboriginal communities and to provide them with opportunities for self-management. We did not just stumble into it; it is not a knee-jerk reaction. On the administration side, the Department of Community Development sponsors courses at Batchelor College to train Aboriginal community advisers, community government town clerks and to provide community-based training programs. Also, the department sponsors Aboriginal field officer courses through the Darwin Institute of Technology. The department employs 7 Aboriginal trainees in general administration, with the intention that they will return to their communities. The Northern Territory Public Service has had a recent intake of 51 Aboriginal trainees who have been guaranteed 43 positions. It is the largest program of its kind in Australia and a model for all other public services. The North Australian Research Unit of the Australian National University has been given a \$50 000 consultancy over the next 18 months to research the economic potential of 43 major communities in terms of revenue and employment opportunities. We are doing plenty.

The DCD video crew and newspaper are vital parts of the communications link between communities, and the department will investigate the possibility of encouraging greater cooperation between communities in the sharing of job opportunities and resources. It is quite incredible to see the expectation of some communities which stem from the old paternalistic scheme. They believe that every community should have an A-grade mechanic, a first-class plumber and an electrician. They should have an electrician at one community and a plumber at another and pool their resources. That can be done only with good communications and education of the people in communities. We have that in hand.

The Northern Territory Tourist Commission has been commended for its work with Aboriginals in tourism projects. In June, the Minister for Tourism told the Tourist Ministers Council that there were more than 40 significant examples of Aboriginal involvement in accommodation, tours and cultural activities aimed at tourists visiting the Territory. Imaginative self-management programs should see that involvement increase.

Some 274 Aboriginal health workers were employed in the Northern Territory at the beginning of 1986. They are represented in almost all significant communities. They perform a major health-care role in centres where community health sisters are not stationed. They play a major role in hygiene education and I hope that increased responsibility for funds in communities will lead to greater awareness of what causes health problems. Federal funding is provided through ADC, while Territory funding comes through the Housing Commission. Most communities employ a housing manager. For example, Milingimbi employs 13 Aboriginal workers to maintain existing dwellings and I had the pleasure of seeing those people at work there only a few weeks ago. 188 houses were constructed in Aboriginal communities in 1985-86 and 230 are planned for 1986-87. This must be seen as a major employment initiative for people in those communities. I have seen them perform and they have the potential to build and maintain those houses themselves.

The Conservation Commission employs a total of 71 Aboriginals in positions throughout the Territory and 11 of those are trainees. All government departments are committed to Aboriginal training. The Department of Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs provides salary subsidies for the employment of Aboriginal recreation officers at a level equivalent to 16 full-time positions. Training opportunities exist at the Katherine Rural Education Centre where Aboriginals make up a considerable part of the yearly intake seeking experience in the pastoral industry. Similarly, through rehabilitation programs within the Department of Correctional Services, the opportunity exists for Aboriginals to learn skills which may gain them employment when they have been through the system. The 7 youths who attended the first wilderness camp recently have all been offered jobs with their own communities.

90 Aboriginals are employed in positions within the police department as clerks, trackers, aides and policemen. They are employed in the fire services also. There is no restriction on the activities and the availability of positions to Aboriginals in the Northern Territory Public Service. This represents 9% of the total positions in those classifications.

Let us look at some of the successes in Aboriginal enterprise. Yirrkala is an economically developing community, with an arts enterprise set up with \$3000 from the Department of Community Development and \$40 000 from the Aboriginal Development Commission. It now boasts an annual turnover of \$0.25m and most of those funds return to the artists themselves.

Mr Leo: You need to get some of those returns out of some other schemes you put money into.

Mr DALE: Is that right? We are not getting any returns out of them?

Mr Leo: No return out of the pubs.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will address their comments through the Chair.

Mr DALE: Senator-elect Collins - the man whose body was got at by Jenny Craig, but obviously not his head, judging by some of his egotistical statements yesterday - would agree that Tiwi Arts and Crafts has pulled off an international coup by winning the job to design the Pope's vestments for his Territory visit. Again, these are people who used their initiative rather than wait for the good fairy.

Last night's budget allocation of \$500m to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs was largely on the proviso that the department works towards implementing the recommendations of the Miller Report. The Miller Report concerns itself with the importance of employment and training of Aboriginals. It addresses itself to issues on which the Northern Territory has already achieved significant progress. We are leading the way again. Nonetheless, the Northern Territory government welcomes Canberra's concern and looks forward to close cooperation and achievement of higher levels of Aboriginal employment. We believe that the federal government has an equal responsibility to ensure the dollar goes further, and last night's budget impacts on all Australians, including our large Aboriginal population. I can still hear the Treasurer saying that it was not a wimp's budget, but a tough budget that would affect all Australians, including pensioners and Aboriginals.

In 1984, nearly 4300 Aboriginals were seeking work or, conversely, receiving benefits. To my absolute horror, when I visited Milingimbi recently it took a couple of the more responsible members of council a little while to drag some of the other members of council out of bed so that I could discuss matters with them. When we finally got to the council meeting, I was rather appalled to be told that their fortnightly social service cheque of \$7000 was spent immediately on the purchase of kava. Some of the members of that council, and a number of other recipients of the \$7000, sat down and drank themselves stupid on the kava. Their children are suffering from malnutrition, are not going to school and are totally inactive. That day, the Aerial Medical Services plane took out 2 individuals who had chest problems as a result of the consumption of kava.

Whilst I was talking to the members of the council, one of them thumped the desk and said: 'It is your job as minister to do something about the inactivity of our kids. We have a hall that is falling to pieces and you should provide the money to repair it'. I told him that perhaps we could solve a number of problems. I told him that I would negotiate a loan with any bank he named and the council could pay it back at \$3500 a fortnight. That would remove the necessity for the medical services plane to fly out people who are ill from kava consumption, and the community would be drinking only half the amount of kava. The kids would have a community hall because people could be employed rebuilding it rather than sitting around drinking kava.

As far as the Northern Territory government is concerned, the party is over. I told the council that it should cut down on its kava intake and use

its unemployment funds to carry out work in the community. If the Northern Territory government is to be held accountable for the way it spends its money, Canberra should obtain a far better idea of what happens to the millions of dollars which go to the Aboriginal communities as unemployment benefits. The Aboriginal communities are the largest per capita receivers of social benefits of any group in Australia. Armed with that knowledge, the federal government could realistically address the problems of Aboriginal employment, as the Northern Territory government has done.

The initiatives taken by the Northern Territory government in relation to community government and self-management, as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, constitute an energetic and positive step towards implementing employment in Aboriginal communities. This Northern Territory government has stopped patronising the Aboriginal people of Australia by giving them self-esteem, self-employment, self-management, self-responsibility and, we hope, a great deal of pride in themselves for the future.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I think I should preface my remarks by making a few comments about matters of public importance debates. As members will be aware, this definite matter of public importance relates to the very high rate of unemployment amongst Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. I am a little bit concerned about the contribution of the Minister for Community Development because he seemed to be suggesting that this particular debate is somehow irrelevant and a waste of the Assembly's time.

Mr Dale: Your contribution to it is.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I will allow that interjection to stay on the record because I think that I have attempted to address this issue in a constructive fashion. I am explaining the basis on which the opposition has advanced this definite matter of public importance. I can appreciate that, in some of the electorates held by government members, it is not of a great deal of interest. In that case, those members are most welcome to go out and have a cup of coffee or whatever. I certainly will not feel slighted. I see that the member for Leanyer is taking up my offer.

When introducing this debate, the member for Stuart referred to some of the figures involved. With respect to my own electorate, I wish to reinforce those figures and my concern about this issue. It has been an ongoing concern of mine for 5 years as a member of this Assembly. He quoted figures which indicated that as many as 80% to 90% of people of working age in communities in my electorate are unemployed, and that is a matter of deep concern to me.

To return to the contribution of the Minister for Community Development, I appreciated several of his comments. I appreciated his reference to the Miller Report, for example, which was a report of the committee of review of Aboriginal employment and training programs. It was presented to the federal Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in August last year. Honourable members will no doubt be interested to know that, in addition to my own submission, there was a considerable array of submissions from individuals and organisations, including many Northern Territory government departments. Quite clearly, the recommendations within that report need to be taken seriously. It is of some concern to me that, whereas the usual practice in this Assembly is to table federal reports of particular significance to the Northern Territory, accompanied by a ministerial statement, this was not done in the case of the Miller Report. Members will recall the tabling of the Toohey Report, 'Seven Years On', on a matter of equal importance to the Territory. Quite frankly,

the Miller Report deserves far more attention from this Assembly than it has received to date. It is not just the high rates of unemployment which concern me; it is the impact of this unemployment on young people. Young men just have nothing to do. They end up drinking too much and driving cars too fast. The adult mortality rate is clearly contributed to by this lack of employment and occupation.

Another reason for my desire to discuss this problem as a matter of public importance is my observation that, in my own electorate, projects which might have been expected to contribute significantly to the level of employment in Aboriginal communities really have not done so. I remember the erstwhile Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, saying that, if we just got the tourist and mining industries going, we would be right. Quite obviously, the tourist industry is labour intensive. One of the great benefits of the tourist industry is that it finds jobs for people. I have argued on many occasions, with respect to the broad Territory community and the broad Australian community, that tourism is a very important contributor.

In my own electorate, in the 5 years that I have been a member of this Assembly, we have seen Yulara grow up out of the sand. Yulara has obviously created a considerable number of jobs within the Territory, but I think I can say with some confidence that none of the jobs created at Yulara has gone to Aboriginal people. That is a matter of some concern, and a subject for investigation by members of this Assembly. I presume most members have visited Yulara. They would have no doubt noticed the wonderful landscaping that is carried out in the vicinity of the spine development there. To my knowledge, that is the only area where there was Aboriginal employment, and that was done under the Community Development Employment Program. These jobs were not generated by capital investment. They were government-funded, add-on jobs at the end. I have had some discussions with people in authority at Yulara, and I am aware of the contract basis of employment there. I am aware that there is clearly room to move, and I hope that raising this issue as a matter of public importance will bring such matters to the fore.

The erstwhile Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, also thought that there would be considerable increases in employment from the mining industry. I have some concerns about that. Unlike the tourist industry, the mining industry is not labour intensive but capital intensive. A paper has been written and produced by the North Australian Research Unit. It is called 'Mining as a Source of Employment in the Northern Territory', written by Dr Ciaran O'Faircheallaigh. I will quote from it:

Direct employment in Northern Territory mining, though providing those involved with relatively high incomes, is limited in extent because of the highly capital intensive nature of mining operations. Since relative capital intensity is increasing significantly as time goes on, even a substantial further expansion of mining is unlikely to generate significant additional direct employment.

Under those circumstances, it is a matter of concern that, within my own electorate, the Mereenie development and the Palm Valley development which are frequently the subject of comment in this Assembly, have not generated one job for any of my constituents in the Hermannsburg, Haasts Bluff and Areyonga areas. Again, I do not raise this in any sort of adversary sense. I merely raise it because I think it needs to be noted and I think that the government needs to develop some overall strategy in this regard.

One of the themes of the Minister for Community Development is a matter of some concern to me, and quite out of character in terms of the type of debate that we were seeking to promote. My colleagues and I were attempting to promote rational, reasonable debate in a bipartisan atmosphere. The Minister for Community Development contributed to that to some extent, but it is a matter of concern to me that, almost as an article of faith, he has to say that anything the federal government does is bad and everything his government does is terrific.

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I really do get sick and tired of the hyenas on the backbench. If they do not want to listen, they do not have to but I would like to hear them contribute to this discussion.

What concerned me was the minister's criticism of the excellent Community Development Employment Program. One moment he was complaining about the high level of unemployment benefits being received on Aboriginal communities, and the next he was bucketing that program. That really was extraordinary. Consider the situation at Nhulunbuy which he referred to so scathingly. The fact is that community development employment programs are providing schools that the Territory government is not building. Federal money is being provided through that scheme to establish schools at places like Wundaway, Bran Bran, Gann Gann and Dhulingboy. It is nice to see the member for Port Darwin assenting so fulsomely, and I suggest that he informs his colleague, the Minister for Community Development, about the value of those programs. When the federal government gets something right, the Northern Territory government should support it in the interests of its own constituency.

I see my time has run out. I endorse the subject of this debate and I recommend it to honourable members for their further consideration and for continuing bipartisan approach in this Assembly.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise this afternoon to speak on the matter of public importance brought to the attention of the Assembly by the opposition: the high rate of unemployment amongst Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

I can assure all honourable members, especially those opposite, that the sentiments expressed about the problem of unemployment and its effect on people in remote communities can be understood by almost all people. However, it is very important that the basic concepts of employment, unemployment and the ability to provide employment be understood. In relation to remote communities and European-style communities, there is a definite difference in these concepts.

When the members for Stuart and MacDonnell spoke about a lack of employment opportunities in remote communities, it must be understood that they spoke of areas where there is no large employment-generating industry at present and, in many cases, there is no possibility of private enterprise becoming involved in large, employment-generating industry. That situation will continue in those areas for a long time to come.

I am talking about areas where people have occupied the land traditionally for 40 000 years in a hunter-gatherer lifestyle. In the last 20 or 30 years, some very big changes have occurred in the way of life of those traditional occupants and people have settled in particular areas for a variety of reasons, including drought or the influence of missionaries and government

departments a couple of generations ago. People have gathered and settled down. In most cases, they have settled in areas where there are no employment opportunities. In addition, they are facing the concepts of the western world. They aim at living in fixed shelters, utilising electricity and motor vehicles and adopting the concept of receiving money in return for work.

Money now plays a very big role in communities where people formerly lived as hunter-gatherers. Money is now utilised for the purchase of food and goods, as occurs in Western societies. People in those communities receive welfare benefits, unemployment benefits and other benefits applicable to all people in Australia, replacing the traditional work or hunting ethic in their lives. There is no possibility of employment for a large number of them and they need money to purchase food and other goods.

We have an education system which provides knowledge to the young people in those communities. Previously, knowledge was power, and only the older people had the knowledge which enabled them to control their society. With the changes in the last couple of generations, there are problems in relation to social control and power. There is rebellion by young people. In a couple of generations, we have made big changes in the way of life of a traditional nomadic people.

Unfortunately, members opposite believe there is some simple solution to all this. There is no simple solution. We cannot provide employment for all people on Aboriginal communities in remote areas. The Minister for Community Development detailed the employment and training opportunities which this government has developed for Aboriginal people. The Northern Territory government leads the rest of Australia in respect of training programs and employment opportunities. The Northern Territory Public Service has certainly gone out of its way to ensure that there are training and employment opportunities for Aboriginals right across the Northern Territory.

The Department of Education employs 650 Aboriginals. There is a commitment by the government to train more Aboriginal teachers to provide education to the young people in their communities. However, it is a vicious circle. I am sure members opposite would agree that the more we educate young people, the greater is their need to obtain employment. We train them in the work ethic and the concept that education is for employment, but that employment is not available in outlying communities.

The member for Stuart mentioned that 80% of people in his electorate are unemployed. It is obvious that people will remain unemployed because there are no employment opportunities in those areas. Obviously, 20% obtain employment in education, community council work, health projects, road building and so on. The only way the other 80% will be able to obtain employment is to move into areas where it is available or create their own employment opportunities. We have had some examples of that occurring.

By the same token, we have seen some pretty poor examples of money being spent to generate employment where projects have turned into debacles. My colleague mentioned a number of those. We must be aware that there will be numerous failures in this area, as Aboriginal people attempt to create employment.

One basic problem is that we seem to have pursued a path which has discouraged people from working in return for an improvement in their way of life. When I was Minister for Housing, there were projects under way in several outlying communities in which local housing associations were

contracted to build houses. For various reasons, including lack of punctuality and general community problems, the period of time taken to build a house would often stretch beyond that required to undertake the same work elsewhere. A certain amount of money was allocated for the building of a house, but sometimes the work was so protracted that a house would be half-constructed with all the materials on site yet the money to pay the workers had run out. The housing association would then inform the Aboriginal workers that no money was left. Rather unfortunately, those workers would sit down in the shade of a tree and look at the half-completed house, receive unemployment benefits and complain to people - and I have had such complaints - that they had no money with which to complete the house.

The development of a concept of improving one's lot without making that one's sole pursuit is something that seems to be lacking. As I pointed out earlier, we are talking about a group of people that is moving from a hunter-gatherer situation into Western society. Probably, we cannot expect the same approach to the concept of work as Europeans have, but we are certainly not doing anything to encourage its development. Actually, I know a number of people who encourage people in those outlying areas to sit down, put out their hands to receive welfare payments, and wait for the government to wave a magic wand. Luckily, that is not the case in some areas. I have been to some communities, particularly some outlying communities, where the work ethic is alive and well, and the people are putting everything into developing their communities and providing either employment or training for their young people. One such place is Mount Catt in Arnhem Land. I was very pleased to see the work under way in that small community. Certainly, it showed that there was some hope when traditional people moved away from the advisers that some communities have. In order to build houses, these people collected material from quarries which they ran themselves and timber from trees in the local area. It was a great effort and unemployment funds were used as the main form of finance.

The future employment prospects for Aboriginals in remote places lie in training and education, and an understanding that many of those people will have to move away from their traditional areas into the major centres of the Territory: Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Katherine, Darwin, Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt. They will need to move to places where there is employment, because I think most people would agree that work will never be provided by private enterprise in outlying communities. I do not think anybody here would advocate that the government set up schemes in remote communities to provide employment, because that would involve a non-productive use of money and expenditure which would not provide anything. It is similar to a situation whereby a group of people who liked living in cold weather moved to the Antarctic and asked where the jobs were. You cannot be expected to create jobs just because people decide to live in a particular area.

Aboriginal people live in traditional groups in remote areas because of their traditional connection with the land and because that is where they have lived supposedly for 40 000 or 50 000 years. If people want to live by traditional concepts, even members opposite must understand that they cannot have it both ways. If you are going to live traditionally, you cannot have non-traditional employment. The member opposite is scoffing but I cannot understand his expectation that the government should provide employment for people in remote communities. Training in those areas is something that I see as being the answer for the future.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The minister's time has expired.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES
AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 200)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

Birth, death and marriage records are being computerised. At present, there are 2 registries for births, deaths and marriages, 1 at Darwin and 1 at Alice Springs. In the case of marriages within the Alice Springs district, copies of certificates are sent to the Darwin registry and bound. When the computer system is in operation, the division of the Territory into 2 areas will be abolished. Particulars will be entered into the computer at the appropriate location and so be included in the register. Under this new system, service to the public will be improved because the issuing of certificates will be a much quicker process. If an Alice Springs resident who was born in Darwin wants his birth certificate, he will be able to get it from Alice Springs without having to send away to Darwin. There are numerous amendments throughout the bill. They abolish the concepts of districts and the District Registrar and District Register and enable computerisation.

Sometimes births are not notified to the Registrar-General. To facilitate proper registration, clause 11 adds a new subsection to section 12 to enable the registrar to require an occupier to furnish particulars of births on premises.

Clause 13 amends section 14 to enable the registrar to dispense with the requirement for a statutory declaration for the late registration of the birth. He would insist on a statutory declaration in most cases but, if satisfied that he has sufficient particulars to complete the birth registration, he would not require one where it would cause unnecessary difficulties.

Under clause 14, a new section 16A provides a procedure for registering particulars of the father where the parents are not married. This is of particular importance in the Territory where 40% of children are born to relationships where the parents are not married in accordance with the relevant legislation. This figure includes Aboriginal couples who are tribally married. Problems arise where the father wants to be registered but the mother has not specifically applied to have the man's particulars as father as she is incapable of agreeing to the inclusion. The proposed amendment allows for the father to make application to have particulars included in the register if he can produce evidence to the registrar's satisfaction, indicating that he is the father of the child.

By clause 15, section 18 is amended to permit parents to change or amend the name of the child up to the age of 6. Presently, change of name can be done only if the child is less than 1 year old or on his baptism.

Clause 16 of the bill affects the father's rights under the act. It will also bring the act into line with the family law decisions in this area. As the act presently stands, where a mother of a child whose birth is registered is married to a person other than the father of the child and her husband so consents, she can change the child's surname simply by lodging an instrument with the registrar if she has custody of the child. There have been several occasions where this was done without the knowledge or consent of the natural

father. Under the proposed amendment, this will now be possible only with the father consent or where the mother produces to the registrar satisfactory evidence that the father is dead or unable to be found or incapable of consent, and that she has full guardianship of the child under the Guardianship of Infants Act or a court order.

Clause 17 adds a new section 19A which provides a procedure for the entering in the register of births, surnames other than the one originally given. This would cover a case where parents give the child the mother's surname but subsequently decide to give the child the father's surname.

Provisions relating to stillborn infants are streamlined by amendments in clauses 18 and 19. Under section 23, a medical practitioner must be prepared to sign a medical certificate stating the cause of death. He would not always be able or prepared to do this if he has not treated the mother. He could well be in a position to make inquiries and, on that basis, authorise disposal. The act is amended so that, in the case of a stillbirth, the medical practitioner can authorise disposal of the body, provided that he has personally made inquiries into the circumstances relating to the birth.

While there are restrictions placed on disposal of the body of the stillborn child without compliance with section 24, there is no duty placed on anyone for the actual disposal of the body. Normally, the parents will claim the body and arrange for its burial. In the case of Aborigines, for reasons of tribal belief, the parents do not like claiming the body. In many cases, they leave it at the hospital. The hospital must then either preserve the body or risk illegally disposing of it. Section 24 is amended so that, if the body of a stillborn child is not claimed for burial by the parents within 6 months from the date of expulsion from the mother, the medical practitioner can order disposal of that body. The existing section 31 prevents registration of a death where death is subject to a coroner's investigation. This provision has held up the issue of death certificates and, consequently, the administration of estates, causing unnecessary distress to a deceased relative. Clause 20 amends this section to permit the issue of a certificate which states that the cause of death is unknown pending the coroner's investigation.

Certain amendments are made by clauses 21 to 30 to remove the forms and fees from the act and place them in regulations, and to accommodate computerisation and make the language of the act consistent with that of the Coroner's Act where appropriate. At the same time, a major review of forms will be conducted with a view to making them easy to fill in. Other information will also be included.

Clause 32 provides that where, before this amendment, the father of the child applied to have his particulars so noted by the registrar and the registrar included those particulars, that registration is valid. This is necessary to clear up any doubts about this practice.

The information collected by the Births, Deaths and Marriages Office provides a great resource base for many other government departments, both Territory and Commonwealth. It is hoped to prescribe forms in which persons registering births or deaths will be required to indicate whether they consider themselves to be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. This has been requested by the Commonwealth. The information will be supplied to the Australian Bureau of Statistics and from there to other government bodies. The information will be collected in a non-identifying form and the government is keen to ensure that maximum confidentiality is maintained. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Remuneration Tribunal Report
1986 Review - Electorate Secretaries

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, on 2 December 1985, His Honour the Administrator, acting with the advice of the Executive Council, requested the Remuneration Tribunal to inquire into, and report with recommendations on, the remuneration and allowances to be paid to electorate secretaries. In accordance with the requirements of the Remuneration Tribunal Act, I now table on behalf of His Honour the report and recommendations of the Remuneration Tribunal in this regard.

Mr Speaker, the report sets out a broad functional statement as a guide to what the Remuneration Tribunal perceives to be the scope of functions which the position of electorate secretary could be expected to encompass. Briefly, the report envisages the primary task to be to staff the electorate office of the member with duties limited to office-type functions. Flowing from this perception of the duties of an electorate secretary, the tribunal makes the following summary of recommendations.

Duties: primarily to staff the electorate offices of members. Travel: the duties do not require travel, therefore no travelling allowance is applicable. Flexible pay structure: as the duties should be relatively uniform, a flexible pay structure at the discretion of the member is not justified. Remuneration: pay at maximum of A4 is appropriate to the functions required. Proficiency allowance: \$1000 per annum, after 3 years service, in recognition of enhanced skills, knowledge and value. Career structure: employment is not of a career nature, therefore expectations of career advancement are unrealistic. Workers' compensation: NTPS workers compensation. Long service leave: after 10 years service, similar to NTPS conditions. Termination benefits: a simple superannuation scheme through an appropriate insurance company. Removal cost, disturbance allowance: not appropriate. Maternity leave: up to 3 months without pay. Hours of duty: as defined by the member, no overtime payable; members, as good employers, to ensure that compensatory time off in lieu is granted where justified. Mileage allowance: use of secretary's car to be by arrangement with the member, reimbursement to be at NTPS rates and met from member's own funds. Training: a short orientation course of 2 to 3 days to be developed. Office cleaning: not part of secretary's duties; cleaning to be part of provision of an office for the member.

Mr Speaker, the Remuneration Tribunal Report is very useful and will prove to be of great assistance to the government in its deliberations as to the manner in which remuneration allowances of electorate secretaries should be varied to meet the needs of members in their electorates.

While the report and recommendations may be satisfactory, if one were to accept that the duties of an electorate secretary are limited to those described, I am sure that honourable members will agree from their own experiences, that this is not always the case. It is a fact of life that electorate secretaries are required to perform many different duties of varying degrees of responsibility. It may be true that, in some cases, electorate secretaries perform only office-type functions, however this is far from the norm. Electorate secretaries are frequently required to assist the member by travelling around the electorate, for a multitude of valid reasons, and long hours are worked frequently with minimal supervision both inside and outside the office.

Mr Speaker, it is the view of the government that these varying duties and levels of responsibility should be capable of recognition in a suitable flexible employment package. The government is fully aware of the financial constraints which we face and, therefore, it is appropriate for any proposed increased expenditure to be assessed carefully and justified fully. With this in mind, I propose that government review the matter further in the light of the point I have made today, with a view to determining an appropriate package for electorate secretaries which will compensate them realistically for the duties that they are required to perform.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion in relation to the report.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the report of the Remuneration Tribunal 1986 Review - Electorate Secretaries, but with the following reservations. It should be recognised that the duties of an electorate secretary can vary from limited office-type functions to those of personal assistant to a member in the discharge of his or her duties. Because of this variation in duties, there needs to be a more flexible system of determining the salaries of electorate secretaries. The nature of the duties of electorate secretaries can require them to use their personal vehicles for official purposes and mileage allowance should be made payable up to a maximum amount, depending upon the demands imposed by the geographic and other characteristics of a particular electorate and, because the employment is essentially contractual by nature, it is not appropriate that certain allowances payable to permanent public servants should be paid.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Continued from 19 August 1986.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, when I first came into this place in 1983, I was under the impression that an address-in-reply was something that occurred after an election. I have been disillusioned in the meantime. The first session lasted 1 year, the second 1½ years and we are not yet into the third year of this Fourth Assembly. 6 out of the 9 ministers have been wiped out in that period.

This raises problems in terms of lack of experience. The Cabinet of 1984 - and we remember them sadly sometimes because it was much more fun beating them around the head than this bunch - had a total of 65 years' parliamentary experience. The current Cabinet has a total of 32 years' parliamentary experience. The 1984 Cabinet had about 35 to 40 years' Cabinet experience. The current Cabinet has a total of some 10 to 12 years' experience. In fact, its members average just over 1 year of parliamentary experience. On average, they have sat for some 25 days in this place. If they do their sums right, they just might last for 25 more days.

The passing of the previous Chief Minister demonstrates the truth of the old adage that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks. He had been up to those old tricks for years and eventually he had to come to grief. Is this government a new dog or the same old dog? Can this government learn some new tricks? Can it learn honesty and integrity? Can it rid itself of the aroma of petty corruption that has hung over it and its predecessors like a stifling pall, an evil odour that has destroyed its credibility in the Northern

Territory and has overshadowed the odd good job that it has done over the years? It has followed up our ideas on the gas pipeline, the TAB and the university.

The government's work on tourist promotion has been quite excellent. I will return to that later. It has made people in the Northern Territory excited about development, and that is a very good thing. On this side of the Assembly, we are very much in favour of development. We wish to have the economic and social development of the Northern Territory proceed in harmony, and we believe that the Northern Territory has a great future.

I mentioned tourism. We are now told that marketing is a priority. The emphasis is to move from infrastructure to marketing. However, this makes me wonder about the latest hidden subsidy, the hidden bailing out of the Beaufort. I wonder whether, although we are no longer funding bricks and mortar, we will continue to subsidise operational expenses. That project is worrying.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise the need for quality products. I recall reading a paper on the preparation of sashime. It said that the total value of an average sized tuna, when made into sashime and presented in a shop in Japan, was over \$40 000. At that time in Australia, we were processing those same tuna into tins and selling them as dog food. We can create that type of value in Australia if we end our tunnel vision. We have been selling products cheaply when we could have been developing them into high value-added products like sashime. I am totally in favour of that. I think that is really the way we have to go in the Northern Territory.

In the field of primary production, I would like to congratulate the government on its initiatives in the growing of cashews. That development may provide us with a whole new industry, but I believe that it is only an indication of the way we should be going. Here in the Northern Territory, we have our advantages and disadvantages. But too much time is spent concentrating on the disadvantages and why we cannot do things. We have advantages. In the Top End, we have a tropical region, and that can be treated as an advantage. We are situated close to Asia. Our summer is in the northern winter. If you consider those 3 factors together, and you look at the South-east Asian market for food like jackfruit, lychees, durian, mangosteens and so on, you can see a real opportunity for the Northern Territory to produce quality fruits for sale on the Asian market during their off-season, when prices are high. Members who have been to South-east Asia will know how those prices rise on the shoulder of the season. If we do not act, technological developments in food storage will beat us, and we will lose those markets.

I want to make an important point now. What I have said so far is probably fairly commonly accepted, but there is one particular danger which was highlighted for me in a visit I made to a lychee plantation in Queensland about 2 years ago which had 15 to 20 acres of almost mature lychees. We spoke to the farmer about the opportunities in the South-east Asian market and he assured us that that was just what he was looking at. He wanted to sell his lychees in South-east Asia. He gave us some to taste and, as we left, I said to my wife, who comes from Singapore: 'What do you think? There is a bloke who has really hit the nail on the head. That is the way we should go'. My wife then indicated something which is so often overlooked. She said: 'They will not sell in the Singapore market. We don't buy the ones with those big seeds; they are treated as rubbish'. This fellow had wasted years of work because he missed a very basic step in market analysis before he started.

That is the point I wish to make regarding all these fruits. They have potential, but the market has to be investigated properly.

Mr Speaker, we have been told that much of the basic manufacturing infrastructure is in place and that the trade development zone has some possibilities. However, I believe defence support industries will be one of the major bases on which the Northern Territory will develop. We need to become involved with the build-up proposed in the Dibb Report. We should be looking at the implications of that report to see what flow-on industries will be required to support that development.

Mr Coulter: Nuclear warheads.

Mr EDE: Well, that is excellent. That is a plain indication of how the minister's mind works: it is destructive! When presented with anything constructive, he wants to destroy it.

Mr Speaker, the defence support industries will be the springboard which will develop manufacturing in the Northern Territory. They will begin with second-level support industries and will provide the basis, in terms of electronics, computer support and skills, which is needed to establish export industries.

Mr Speaker, I had hoped to discuss mines and energy. However, I cannot comment on the minister's contribution as he has outfudged me by not speaking in this debate. However, I will talk for a few minutes on communications.

Mr Coulter: Get your facts straight for a start. I did speak. You sure know how to hurt.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be heard without interjection.

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to address a number of queries to the Minister for Communications and I would like him to answer them at some stage. He has made considerable play about the AUSSAT deal that he miraculously contracted. He failed completely to mention that, of 27 satellite communication facilities presently in place in the Northern Territory, 26 have been installed by Telecom. However, he wanted to talk about AUSSAT, and that is quite excellent. I would like to know when he will go to Borroloola and explain to people there the nature of this system that he is making so much noise about. What communication facilities will be provided by AUSSAT to Borroloola? We have heard stories of data transmission, of a telephone for everyone, of PABXs, telex facilities and so on. The information I have is that only 1 telephone line will be provided.

Mr Hanrahan: I have never said anything like that.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the minister's interjection does not tell me how the press obtained this information and ran it, when he assures me that he was clear and concise in what he said. He says he did not give any impression to the press that rather more was coming than was actually to be provided. It was unfortunate that I did not see the minister's retraction in the next edition, where he tried to disabuse us of any exaggerated notions about the extent of what he was trying to achieve.

In the light of that, I would also like to find out who is to install and monitor the equipment that is associated with the groundstation at Borroloola.

We want to know who will have access to the telecommunications services following the installation of the AUSSAT facility. We would like to know about long-term commitments by the Northern Territory government after the 6 month free trial period. We would like to know something more about the discussions that he had with Telecom because I am told that he stated that he had discussed public telephones at Borroloola with Telecom. I am assured that Telecom have no record whatsoever of any discussion of public telephones at Borroloola.

Mr Hanrahan: Telecom where? Try head office, Canberra, in October last year.

Mr EDE: In October last year, Telecom made an offer of satellite services to the previous Chief Minister, Mr Tuxworth. If that had been taken up and if ITERRA had been allowed to go ahead, as I originally proposed in light of the Communications Technology Committee Report, using a mixture of Telecom and AUSSAT facilities ahead of the DRCS, people could have had immediate access to telephones. They could have been moved further out as the DRCS followed. As I understand it, the offer was made for installation at Borroloola last October. That would have meant that Borroloola could have had a full service in November 1985.

Mr Hanrahan: And who would have paid for that?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, in answer to that interjection, the total cost of that particular package was not investigated or discussed. They said: 'Tell us what you want. We will have a look at the whole package and give you a price'. That was never done.

In relation to communications, the government is very interested in making a great noise which sounds as though it will help people living in remote areas, but all it has done is delay Telecom. It has reached a stage where I am really worried about what will happen with the Telecom plan to provide DRCS throughout the Territory, as a result of some of the statements made in this Assembly by the previous Chief Minister and now by the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications.

Mr Hatton: For your information, the general manager of Telecom Australia has confirmed that DRCS will be ...

Mr EDE: You will have your turn.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am particularly concerned about statements made by the government indicating that they intend to set up something like the Q-Net system in the Northern Territory. For the information of members opposite, it is basically an internal government system. If that were established, we would take so much of the cream out of the telecommunications network in the Northern Territory that there is a fair chance Telecom would say: 'In light of all our priorities, how can we install a land-based DRCS system?' There is a possibility that, as a result of looking after its public servants and its own interests, the government will ensure that the pastoralists, the people on communities and the people on outstations will have to wait many more years before they get communications. Sad though that may be, it is a fact.

Before I conclude, I wish to mention a few problems in my own electorate. One of them is the road out to the Granites and through to Halls Creek. I

have pointed out to this Assembly before that, in the electorate of Stuart, the sections of that road which have been bitumenised since the war total about 10 km. That is the road to Western Australia, commonly referred to as the Tanami track, and now named the Tanami Highway. The government changed its name. It did not upgrade it; it changed its name. There has been a substantial increase in traffic using the Tanami Highway. Previously, if you had a breakdown out there you could wait 24 hours before you would see another vehicle. Nowadays, they come along at the rate of 1 an hour. One tourist bus a week used to travel that road, and now there are probably 2 per day.

We have had development at the Granites. The other day, it seemed likely that the Granites mine would have to close down for a period because it could not get sufficient supplies of fuel through on that road. A new contract has been let to supply fuel oil for all of the power-stations in the north-west of Western Australia. The person who has taken up the contract intends to ship the fuel oil to Alice Springs, process it at the old refinery and backload crude oil. The company will run the tankers up that road to service all the communities around Halls Creek and Kununurra. That road will not stand the traffic. The mine traffic, the pastoralists, the fuel contractor or the tourists will have to stop using the road if it is not upgraded. Something has to be done urgently in this budget to improve that road.

Mr Speaker, the Yuendumu Sports occurred again the other week. Unfortunately, despite my invitation to members opposite at this time last year, we did not see any of them there.

Mr Dondas: You did not invite us all.

Mr EDE: I invited you last year. I said: 'Bring your swag. Camp out in the bush. Come and see what it is all about'.

It was a great event that attracted some 5000 to 6000 visitors. That is not a bad effort when you consider that it is organised by a community of less than 1000 people. It is the equivalent of Melbourne trying to host 12 million people for a weekend. People come there in a spirit of friendship and take it easy.

This year, Lajamanu again won most of the major events and was the overall champion team. One team really amazed people. Nyirripi won the first grade women's basketball, came second in the athletics and had the top woman athlete. In fact, it was only beaten at football by 1 point, by Lajamanu.

Mr Speaker, members opposite have heard me talk about Nyirripi before. It is a little community way out behind Yuendumu. That mob opposite has been so lousy that it would not give it a hand with its airstrip even after the people cleared the area and did all the work with their bare hands for no pay. Members opposite talk about people helping themselves. There are a couple of soft spots and the people have been waiting for years for help. All they have asked for is a bulldozer to scoop out a bit of rock from the ground. They said that, if they were supplied with a bulldozer, they would do the job themselves. How can such an offer be rejected? The people opposite then turn around and sanctimoniously say that the people will not help themselves.

Mr Dale: We did that 2 years ago, didn't we?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, no rock was ever provided. A roller came through during the driest time of the year and went up and down. Somebody in government thought that would somehow fix the problem.

Nyirripi is also the community that has survived with the same amount of water that it had when there were only 20 people there. The water supply is totally inadequate. Recently, the community ran out of water for a period of 9 days and had to truck it from Emu Bore. How many years did it take to obtain a school there? Finally, it is there and it has no water. The school has electricity but we do not have approval for the supply of electricity from the school across to the community, to provide a few street lights and run the freezer. I know that the minister is looking at that. I hope that there is provision for it in next week's budget because there are many real battlers in that community.

Mr Dale: How many people are there in the community?

Mr EDE: There are about 180 people in that particular community and they have put in a great effort on their own behalf.

Mr Speaker, I do not know as yet whether the moves that I have made in relation to obtaining adequate housing for Nyirripi have borne any fruit. It is a fact that the vast majority of the people there are living either in humpies or in completely inadequate tin sheds. I have said before that I believe we need a minimum standard of rural housing. We should say to the communities that it is not simply a matter of taking the total package and breaking it up into the smallest possible units. We need to have a basic unit. It will not be the same as what we have in town. I can accept that for now and for a few years.

It is absolutely essential that we follow the 20/20 rule. We have to get the average level of water consumption to more than 20 L per person per day before people's health will improve. Until that happens, any health measures are basically bandaidd work. Water consumption has to exceed 20 L and water supply has to be within 20 feet of where people are living. I am not talking about a people who have developed a water technology. We have to get that water close, and we have to have an appropriate delivery system.

Mr Coulter: Tell the federal government that. They just took \$2m off the drilling program.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I have told the federal government this. They told me that you were running so far behind in your drilling program from last year that you had a whole heap of money left over.

Mr Coulter: You went to the wrong people, and you know it.

Mr EDE: There are a number of communities in my electorate who were promised priority in the water drilling program, and that water has not as yet been provided.

I conclude by once again mentioning Nyirripi. I do not say that it is the only community that is doing a great job. The Ti Tree Progress Association in my electorate is another that I would like to commend. It is doing an excellent job in planning and setting up sporting facilities, and developing that town into a regional centre, and I hope that it will be kindly looked after in budget next week. I use these communities as examples of 2 groups of people at completely different ends of the cultural spectrum, both working for the development of the electorate of Stuart. I hope that this government will heed some of the things that I have said, and give them a go.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I have listened with a great deal of interest to the member for Stuart this afternoon. His Honour the Administrator, in reading the comments of various members of this parliament in the address-in-reply, will find it interesting in some respects but very dull in others. Since we are almost into our last day of the address-in-reply debate, I thought I might throw a little bit of humour into His Honour's reading. I am going to send him this lovely little book which has been written by Alan Piese. It is called 'The Achievements of the Labor Government: Its Plans, Policies and Promises'. The Political Times calls it 'a remarkable document'. On the back cover it says:

In 'Body Language', Alan Piese took an analytical look at human beings and how their bodies reveal their thoughts and attitudes and desires in talk language. He showed how a person's intent is revealed through what they say. Now, in 'The Achievements of the Labor Government: Its Plans, Policies and Promises,' he presents an authoritative, fearfully frank, and brilliantly entertaining study of the accomplishments and the track record of the Labor movement. 'The Achievements of the Labor Government' is a veritable encyclopaedia of times, places and events in Labor's colourful history, and it is compulsory reading for any person who wants to acquire a deeper understanding of Labor's philosophies. 'The Achievements of the Labor Government' is the result of years of extensive research into the many basic principles and promises, which are expertly documented. The section on encouragement and incentive for free enterprise really hits home for the business person.

The opposition spokesman says the book gives all the voters a deeper understanding of Labor's business philosophies. 'They have still got my vote', says Richard Cranium. The book is published by Capel Publications. I am just very sorry for the only member opposite, because it is a blank book. There is not anything printed in it at all. I thought that I would send that to His Honour the Administrator to brighten up his day.

Mr Bell: It has been done before.

Mr DONDAS: The member for MacDonnell is really hurt over there. He said it was dreamed up before.

Mr Coulter: Do not knock him. We do not want him to leave because we will have nobody to talk to.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Deputy Speaker, I thought that I would throw that in for His Honour's reading because I know that the opposition's contribution to this debate has certainly been very mundane and boring.

During the course of question time, I was asked several questions in relation to the Darwin Airport. I was asked questions in relation to the Tennant Creek Airport and, of course, the Commonwealth government's inactivity in providing Territorians, Australian visitors and international visitors with decent facilities. We have been working very hard over the last 12 to 18 months to try to encourage the federal government to maintain a high profile in the construction of a respectable, decent, functional airport terminal for the Northern Territory, and especially for Darwin.

We have problems not only in Darwin but also in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. These have been highlighted over the last 6 to 9 months because of the attitude of the federal Minister for Transport, Peter Morris, who wants everybody to love him. He does not like anybody to talk badly about him or

criticise him. This particular gentleman had the effrontery to turn around and say: 'If you criticise my decision and say that I am not doing the right thing by Territorians, who are a mob of bushwackers anyway, I will not even think about doing anything for you'. That is the problem with Peter Morris. The idea is fixed in his mind that, if people dare to criticise his decisions, they will not get anywhere. Whenever we have said anything over the last 18 months about the development of Darwin, Alice Springs or Tennant Creek Airports, Morris has retreated one more step. He has now reached the point of no return and is not interested in anything that happens in the Northern Territory.

We all know what Senator Walsh said: 'Let's machine-gun those guys in the north. Let's depopulate the north'. Disgusting! We have never heard anything from members opposite in the Territory's defence. They have never said that Morris is out of tune with what is happening in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: We were at the meeting outside the Beaufort. Where were you and your mates? Were you there?

Mr DONDAS: In the last week or so, we have heard Gareth Evans say that we must start to mine uranium. We have heard Senator Walsh say that we should investigate the possibility of mining uranium. We have been trying to convince those gentlemen for a long time. We have been asking why mining uranium at Roxby Downs is okay but not in the Northern Territory. We can provide another 1500 jobs at Pancontinental within 6 to 9 months if it is given the green light.

I listened to the budget debate with great interest. I had a small hope for Darwin Airport but it was not to be realised. However, there was one good thing: some orders for uranium may be secured. I am quite sure that, once the dust settles on this budget in the next 24 or 48 hours, things will happen which will have a tremendous impact on the Darwin region. Tremendous. It will create employment and help Australia's economy by obtaining some of the French francs that we badly need. We will pick up some of the other currencies in the world. However, it has taken the federal government 2 years to make up its mind.

The former Leader of the Opposition has done an about-face on the mining of uranium over the last few years. However, he keeps throwing back at me a statement that I made in India 11 years ago. He says that I am an environmentalist. In our hearts, we all have some sympathy for environmental causes.

Let us think about Peter Morris whom we called the phantom because he sneaked in and out of town before you could say Jack Robinson. All he could say to Territorians was that the cargo cult was over. What he did not realise as he walked up the steps of the Beaufort Hotel was that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Stuart were there. I do not know whether the member for MacDonnell was there, but 180 people were waving placards telling Mr Morris that we need a new airport.

Mr Bell: Hear, hear!

Mr DONDAS: The member says, 'Hear, hear!' This morning at question time, he asked me to tell him about the people who are interested in building an airport terminal in Darwin. For the first time in 12 years, I remained in my seat and did not answer. I did that because the question was so ridiculous.

His own former leader had been to Canberra with submissions to the federal Minister for Transport requesting private development. Local people are happy to do the job and so are some Japanese people. At the appropriate time, I will make that information available, but I do not intend to tip my hand to the federal Minister for Transport who will only be there for another 12 months. I am prepared to wait for another 12 months. They will all go because they have lost contact with the Australian community.

Aviation is more important to the Northern Territory than the railways were to the development of America in its pioneering days. We have a federal minister who says that F28s will not land in Tennant Creek because all they need are small commuter aircraft. When we asked him to tell us what kind of commuter aircraft he was talking about - 16-seaters or 30-seaters - he said that he did not know, but the government would not spend \$4.7m on upgrading the Tennant Creek Airport to enable F28s to land there, because they are not needed.

Most of us have travelled to Alice Springs on the F28 and know that the aircraft is almost always full. If anybody here can say that he has travelled on that plane when there have only been 5 or 10 passengers, he can have me on his birthday. That plane is almost always fully loaded and there are people in Tennant Creek waiting to board. The sector between Katherine and Tennant Creek might not always have a full capacity but the aircraft would be filled from Tennant Creek to Alice Springs. Our friend, Peter Morris, who is an expert on Territory aviation matters, says that we need only a couple of commuter aircraft. What a load of ballyhoo!

All members of the opposition, except the Leader of the Opposition, live outside Darwin. They are all familiar with Territory aviation. They travel regularly on Ansett Northern Territory. Have we heard any support from them for the regional airline system that operates between Gove and Ayers Rock?

Mr Leo: You will not get any either because you cut TAA out of the market. Shame on you for it.

Mr DONDAS: TAA had its opportunity 5 years ago.

Mr Leo: You cooked up a sweetheart deal.

Mr DONDAS: If you tell the federal minister that Sir Peter Abeles had a sweetheart deal with the Northern Territory government, the federal ALP will haemorrhage. The Leader of the Opposition knows what I am saying.

Mr Leo: Ask your own Chief Minister about that.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, the member for Nhulunbuy spoke about TAA. The reason why TAA missed that contract 5 years ago was because it did not want to provide a service that connected our Territory regional centres. TAA's submission covered Gove, Darwin and Katherine. It was not extensive enough. That is why TAA did not win the contract. Ansett's bid served all the regional centres from Gove to Darwin to Katherine to Tennant Creek to Alice Springs and Ayers Rock. I would like to be rude to the member, but I will not be. My point is that Ansett won its contract fair and square 5 years ago, because it would cover each of the regional centres whereas TAA's proposal was limited. Anyway, I think we have covered the aviation portfolio pretty extensively this afternoon. There are other matters that I would like to cover relating to lands and ports and fisheries.

Lands is a very important part of the development of the Northern Territory. I have found the lands portfolio very stimulating because land is the basis for much development. In the major centres, the government is addressing the demand for serviced commercial and industrial land. We cannot say the same for Gove because Nhulunbuy and Gove have Aboriginal land and the Nabalco lease to contend with. In the coming year, a graphic data base called Mapnet, which currently embraces all urban areas, will extend over the entire Territory.

In Alice Springs, a shortage of serviced residential land has been overcome, and releases will be programmed to keep pace with the projected demand. The member for MacDonnell would remember about 18 months ago that there was a long waiting list for serviced land to come onto the market, but I am told by my department that 1000 residential blocks are now available in Alice Springs. 4 years ago, there was a very great shortage of residential land, so I think that the Department of Lands has certainly redressed the problem in the last 2 to 3 years.

Katherine is a different story because there is such a high level of activity there. Any available land is snapped up very quickly by developers and government. The Tindal project is having a great effect on land development there.

In Darwin, the demand for all categories of serviced land has continued to be met adequately. Purchasers now have a range of blocks from which to choose in different localities and at different prices. In terms of history, post-cyclone Darwin saw a great deal of land available. However, pre-cyclone Tracy, the only land available was that being released by the Commonwealth. It was released in areas like Wanguri, Wagaman and Moil, 20 to 50 blocks at a time. I am pleased to say that, in 1986, people who want to build homes in Darwin have a choice of land in almost any suburb and, with the development of Palmerston, they have a further opportunity. Prior to the cyclone, people were forced to buy a block of land where the Commonwealth government determined. In the last 7 to 8 years, as this government has moved out of a direct role in subdivisional development and handed it over to private enterprise, a lot more land has been made available.

The requirement for land in Tennant Creek is slightly lower than anywhere else. However, with future development of the south road between Adelaide and Alice Springs, we hope that vehicular traffic will increase and stimulate the tourist industry in the Tennant Creek area. I know that the member for Barkly is working very hard to stimulate further exploration and mining activity. However, you can only get so much out of the ground and you can only get so much blood out of a stone.

The land that has been made available in the last 5 years has been very important to the development of the Northern Territory in all regions. In relation to rural land, there is a firm policy of encouraging more intensive and diversified land use. Members would be aware that the government recently announced the setting up of a rural land use advisory council to make recommendations to the government concerning the development of rural land. This council, along with the relevant departments and representatives of pastoral, agricultural, horticultural, conservation and mining interests, coordinated by the Department of Lands, will certainly see areas of the Territory opening up faster than in the past.

Rural land certainly has its complications. 37% of the Northern Territory is tied up because of Aboriginal land ownership, and 17% is currently under

claim. I see that the member for MacDonnell, who cannot help himself when somebody talks about Aborigines, is shaking his head.

Mr Bell: You blokes are talking about giving 40% of the land to about 200 people.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell previously raised a point of order about remarks being addressed through the Chair. I would remind him also that interjections should be few and far between, and not across the Chamber.

Mr Bell: I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr DONDAS: Mr Speaker, every time somebody mentions Aboriginal land ownership, the member for MacDonnell's hands go in his pockets and he plays with his ankles. No bite? That is a fact of life. He just cannot help himself.

Mr Bell: Deliberately misleading the parliament!

Mr DONDAS: Maybe he does not have holes in his pockets.

Mr Bell: Certain inspirations might lead me in that direction, but this is not one of them.

Mr DONDAS: It is a fact of life that land in the Northern Territory is locked up for more reasons than we may care to discuss now. Nevertheless, I hope the rural land advisory council will be in a position to provide government with a very certain direction in regard to releasing land for rural development.

When one thinks of urban and regional planning and building control, particularly in the last 3 or 4 months, one must consider the problems in relation to the Building Board, its inspectors and the manner in which some inspections are being carried out. The Department of Lands, which has responsibility in this area, has certainly been investigating and trying to improve its performance to ensure that people have confidence in the builders and the Building Board itself. The department is to come back to me in the very near future with a paper recommending courses to be taken to ensure that shoddy building standards are eliminated.

More importantly, several residential buildings in the Darwin area are under investigation and surveys are being carried out by private consultants who will provide reports on them. This will provide the documentary evidence we may need in order to tighten up procedures, particularly in respect of building inspections. Many people seem to think that building inspectors have qualifications which would enable them to compete with a structural engineer. Maybe we should be changing our tactics. If inspections are to be made, perhaps they should be of a supervisory nature rather than stating that the work has been properly completed. Maybe we should leave it to private enterprise to ensure that the builder maintains construction at the level specified in the plans.

When we talk about land and land information systems, we have areas of acquisition that are still being considered by government for the betterment of the Northern Territory. Over the years, acquisition has become a nasty word in this Assembly because the government, for various reasons, has acquired land for the betterment and development of the Northern Territory.

Sometimes it is very difficult. I know that tomorrow the Leader of the Opposition intends to ask me some questions about the Beaufort Hotel. I am expecting a question from him because he raised it this morning on Territory Extra. He mentioned 2 matters that he thought the government was concerned about. Of course, one was retrospective employment of public servants. Most members are aware that, in question time this morning, the Leader of the Opposition requested information from the Chief Minister on that subject. I know that, during these sittings, a series of questions will be asked about the government's decision on rental space in the Beaufort Hotel for the Department of Transport and Works.

I am trying to make the point that, on some occasions, the government makes a decision to enable it to act for the benefit of the community. Land acquisition always reminds one of the problems that were associated with it in 1983-84. The Northern Territory government of that day was attacked strongly by the opposition over it. Several months ago, the former Leader of the Opposition attacked the government's acquisition of Humbert River Station. However, the government is striving to ensure that things are done in an orderly manner for the benefit of the community. During question time this morning, the Leader of the Opposition, quite unfairly, maintained an unwarranted attack on the Chief Minister about a public servant who had been given a hard time. The matter was only made public at the weekend and, clearly, the Chief Minister needs time to obtain answers. In making decisions on land acquisition, the government takes into consideration its own needs and community needs. Various proposals are put to government on a day-to-day basis, and some of them are out of this world; they are on cloud 9. We must maintain the thrust of development and, when I think of what will occur in the Darwin area during the next 12 to 18 months, I believe members opposite are barking right up the wrong tree when they seek to suggest something has been done for individual gain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it has been an honour to speak this afternoon to the address-in-reply. Certainly, I hope that His Honour the Administrator will enjoy this book recording the achievements of the Australian Labor Party. Really, I should ask members of this Assembly to endorse it with their signatures so that, at least, it will contain something for His Honour to read.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, that was one of the more extraordinary half hours that I have passed in this Assembly, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to some of the comments of the Minister for Lands and Transport and Works, as well as previous speakers. I promise that I shall fold my arms or at least keep my hands out of my pockets.

I think I will start with the issue of the Darwin Airport. I do not think the Minister for Transport and Works does the cause of the Darwin Airport any good whatsoever by making it a partisan issue. The plain fact is that, on the issue of the Darwin Airport, as on the issue of the railway, he has received good bipartisan support from this side of the Assembly. Is that right, Nick?

Mr Dondas: Yes, I agree.

Mr BELL: Good, thank you. I think that people who were listening to what the minister said, or who read it in Hansard, would suggest that his convictions were otherwise. Certainly, he seemed to speak 'liri waru' as we say in Pitjantjatjara - 'with a very hot throat'. He suggested, inter alia, that I was not particularly interested in the Darwin Airport.

Mr Hatton: How do you pronounce that?

Mr BELL: In response to the Chief Minister's interjection, I will give him pronunciation lessons later, as my time in this debate is relatively limited.

The situation at the Darwin Airport was brought home to me last week when I travelled to Townsville for a meeting of Labor Ministers and Shadow Ministers for Housing. I had the opportunity to pass through Cairns Airport and Townsville Airport. It was quite a lesson for me, particularly with regard to the Darwin and Alice Springs Airports. In the case of the airport that lies within the electorate of the member for Barkly, upgrading work certainly needs to be undertaken. But, in my view, because of their importance to the tourist industry, the airports at Alice Springs and Darwin are of higher priority. I trust that will reassure the Minister for Transport and Works that my interest in the upgrading of the Darwin Airport is maintained. I am prepared to put in whatever effort is necessary to bring about that upgrading because, clearly, the poor airport facilities prejudice any investment made in other tourist facilities.

There is no doubt that the facilities in Darwin are quite inadequate, which brings me to the question of the Alice Springs Airport. I noticed an article, with the beaming face of the Minister for Transport and Works gleaming out at me, in last Friday's edition of the Centralian Advocate, under the headline 'Alice Airport May Be Owned by Locals'. It is not a particularly definitive statement. All people who live in central Australia are aware that the upgrading of the Alice Springs airport is a vital issue. It is particularly dear to my heart because the airport is in my electorate. It is an issue that I have pursued with some vigour over a number of years now.

Some members will recall the history of an aerodrome local ownership plan for the Alice Springs Airport. I wonder where this fits in, because the article I referred to obviously was cooked up between the Minister for Transport and Works and one of his federal colleagues, a man who is referred to as the 'opposition spokesman, Mr Bruce Lloyd'. It does not say what he is the opposition spokesman for, but I presume he is opposition spokesman for aviation.

Mr Hatton: Transport.

Mr BELL: He is the opposition spokesman for transport, is he? Probably I will have a word about this when I get home because the article says absolutely nothing. Having spent the 5 years of my political life in opposition, I know how hard you have to work in order to get newspapers to pay attention to you. If you are in government, you have the opportunity to announce things. This is just a little lesson for your blokes to take on board for after the next election. When you are in opposition, you make considerable efforts to indicate that issues are of interest. Mr Lloyd has not done much of a job because he has not made any promises. He said the Alice Springs Airport could become locally owned if the federal Liberal National Party coalition was elected to government.

The Alice Springs Airport could have become locally owned if this government had been prepared to take up an aerodrome local ownership plan when it was offered, when times were slightly less straitened than they are now. Yes, I can appreciate these gasps of wonderment from the new boys. They have suffered under 3 Chief Ministers, so it might take a bit of a history lesson. But I suggest that they do their homework and, before the minister for

Transport and Works decides to cane the federal government because it will not come to the party on a local ownership plan, he should bear that event in mind. I fancy that the dreaded Mr Kim Beazley was Minister for Aviation at that time.

Mr Dale: Do not apologise for them.

Mr BELL: In response to the interjection from the Minister for Community Development, far be it from me to apologise for them, but it is about time, in the interests of good government and sensible public administration in the Northern Territory, that the minister and his colleagues started to realise that, just once in a while, the federal government gets something right. As a constructive opposition, we are prepared to recognise that even the Country Liberal Party government in the Northern Territory occasionally gets something right, and I have been quite happy to recognise that fact on a number of occasions. It is a great shame that the members of this government are not prepared to be objective about the behaviour of the federal government, because it does not matter at all to the federal government. Being kicked around the head like that does not concern it. However, it matters to the Northern Territory because it is the Territory that suffers when they make these mindless judgments. It is about time members opposite took their history lesson and realised that the Liberal National coalition and the federal shadow minister are not promising anything. The Territory was actually offered local ownership by the federal Labor government.

Those of you who are not quite au fait with the operation of the aerodrome local ownership plan may not realise that those 2 airports on the north Queensland coast, Townsville and Cairns, were upgraded under exactly that program. Have a word to your mate in Queensland. He is fairly good at kicking the federal government when it suits him. He does that out loud but, at the same time, he is around at the back door sorting things out.

Mr Manzie: Neil, you do not know what you are talking about there. If we had received the same offer, we would have taken it. You have to do your homework.

Mr BELL: Sir Joh organised the aerodrome local ownership plan. I see a grin on the face of the member for Araluen. He is nodding his head. That is right, isn't it? Yes.

Mr Poole: I was asleep actually.

Mr BELL: Over there, they sorted out their aerodrome local ownership plans, and tourism in north Queensland is booming as a result. The trouble with the Territory government is that it is being hoist on its own petard. It has kicked the federal government too often and too hard. Aerodrome local ownership plans are a classic example.

Mr Manzie: Rubbish. Do your homework, Neil. You are talking rubbish.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the member for Sanderson has not been in this Assembly for long.

Mr Hanrahan: You are talking rubbish. I was involved in it and I know. You are talking rubbish.

Mr Manzie: I have been here long enough to know about local ownership.

Mr BELL: Perhaps he should have had this out before he stood as a candidate.

Mr Hanrahan: We received a superficial half-baked offer. Do your homework and find out the facts behind it.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, can I have a little bit of protection from these hoons?

Mr Manzie: No wonder you are going to stay in opposition.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will be heard in absolute silence.

Mr BELL: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Members opposite should talk with Paul Everingham about how he organised a nice little aerodrome local ownership plan at Yulara, for Connellan Airport. He did not tell anybody about that when he was knocking back the aerodrome local ownership plan for Alice Springs. This is the very same aerodrome local ownership plan that the Liberal National coalition might - just might - consider if it is elected. Absolute nonsense!

I must also mention the issue of Ayers Rock and Uluru. I see that the government, through the Minister for Conservation and the Environment, is now sufficiently concerned about its outrageous behaviour with respect to Uluru that it is attempting to criticise me in the strongest possible terms. Yesterday, the Minister for Conservation and the Environment gave us another wrong-end-of-the-telescope view of what has happened at Ayers Rock over the last few years. He selectively picked a couple of facts which do not really prove a point. I referred to that during the last sittings and I do not propose to rehash it now.

There are 2 points among the minister's comments that I want to discuss. First of all, he spoke yesterday about his belief that the Territory is well ahead of the Commonwealth in providing a meaningful role for Aboriginal people in the management of Territory parks, reserves and sanctuaries. This is just more mindless Canberra-bashing. We will participate in objective criticism. We will be in it as hard as the government, but this mindless Canberra-bashing, supported by absurd blanket statements, does the minister no credit whatsoever. He should know, perhaps better than most, how difficult it is to involve Aboriginal people in western economic activities and western management practices of any sort. We had a whole matter of public importance debate about it this morning. It is not on for him to suggest that everything the Territory does is terrific and everything the Commonwealth does is poor.

Mr McCarthy: I did not say that.

Mr BELL: I will tell you what you said. You said: 'The Territory is well ahead of the Commonwealth'.

Mr McCarthy: That is what I said. We are in front of them.

Mr BELL: It just does not stand up to the facts. I am not going to stand here and say that Canberra or the ANPWS is ipso facto well ahead of the Territory. I am not saying that. I am interested in obtaining a good deal for my constituents. I am interested in getting a good deal for the Territory. I am interested in advancing our productivity and the involvement of all Territorians in that productivity, and statements like that do not help.

The Territory government has got Kings Canyon well on the way and that is good to see. It is good to see what is happening at places like Anarula after the damage done by Paul Everingham. He is perhaps most to be blamed for our current problems because of his intransigent attitude over Ayers Rock and Gosse Bluff. Have a look at some of his comments in the Parliamentary Record. In other cases, you blokes have got some things right. But to say that you are well ahead of the Commonwealth is just making an invidious comparison. That is my point. If there are areas where things are being done wrongly, that is fine. However, let us be objectively critical instead of making emotive blanket statements such as the one the minister came out with yesterday.

He went on to say that some of my constituents are commission rangers who had all rejected the secondment proposal and that other constituents, the Aboriginal people in the Uluru area, wanted the commission to remain as day-to-day managers of the park. That is so bewilderingly simple that it is difficult to know where to start in responding to it.

The plain fact of the matter is that the fundamental concern of my constituents who are Conservation Commission rangers at Ayers Rock is that they wanted the situation resolved. They were not concerned particularly about administrative arrangements as long as the situation was ...

Members interjecting.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, will you tell them to shut up?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for MacDonnell will not use unparliamentary expressions such as 'shut up'. The honourable member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark and all other honourable members will desist from further interjection.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw it.

The situation with respect to management arrangements at Ayers Rock and the Conservation Commission rangers who are employed there is the final link in the chain of inevitability, the first link of which was hammered together by the erstwhile Chief Minister, Mr Paul Everingham. I appreciate that the minister may not be particularly interested in recognising that fact, but it is a fact nonetheless.

While I am on the issue of Ayers Rock, let me refer in passing to the current disagreement between the minister and his federal counterpart, Mr Cohen, about the cost of operating the national park. I noticed, Mr Deputy Speaker, that there was an article in the Centralian Advocate in which the federal minister was quoted as saying that Uluru National Park is costing \$90 000 less per year since federal authorities took over control from the Territory government in May. On Sunday, I saw an article written by the CLP press secretary who is now employed by the NT News - he still works as a CLP press secretary - Mr Frank Alcorta, who was making a contrary assertion on behalf of his erstwhile employers. He said that the Conservation Commission had been able to do the job more cheaply.

As a member of board of management, I think it is a great shame that the Northern Territory government has not seen fit to nominate somebody to the board so that issues like this may be resolved in the interests of the most cost-efficient administration of the park. Unfortunately, the accounting involved in assessing the relative merits of each of these opposing claims is

rather difficult. Although an objective assessment should be possible, I do not think one will be forthcoming. I can but claim agnosticism with respect to that particular debate. I honestly have no idea who is right and who is wrong. I am interested to find out, but I doubt that I will receive an objective answer from the Minister for Conservation or any member opposite, because their blinkered approach to the federal government so colours their thinking that objectivity is quite clearly beyond them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I will return quickly to matters in portfolio areas for which I am responsible: lands, housing, transport and works, and central Australia. There are a number of issues in each which perhaps should be raised in this debate. I am not sure that I will be able to refer to the issue of the Darwin Airport.

With respect to the lands portfolio, an issue of crucial importance is the question of the freeholding of pastoral land. I understand that the Chief Minister issued a press release on this. I should place on record my concern that such an extraordinary initiative is nowhere to be seen in his speech to the address-in-reply. I have read it through fairly carefully and I saw no reference to the possibility of freeholding pastoral land.

I said that this was an extraordinary suggestion, and I mean that quite genuinely. It is extraordinary in the sense that every investigation into pastoral land tenure in this country, if it has not recommended against freehold, has recommended retaining a form of leasehold over pastoral land. There are a couple of minor exceptions, but the Jennings Report in Western Australia, the Vickery Report in South Australia and the Western Lands Commission Report in New South Wales recommended the retention of a leasehold arrangement.

I think this is an extraordinary way to proceed. The only conclusion I can come to regarding the way that the Chief Minister has proceeded is that he was stampeded into making what was an extraordinarily ill-considered public statement. One would at least expect an announcement like that to be preceded by some sort of inquiry. Some members will be acquainted with the Martin Report and the ensuing legislation in this Assembly in 1981 or 1982 to introduce some permanent leasehold arrangements as opposed to terminating leasehold arrangements that had applied before that. Quite clearly, the Martin Report and the subsequent legislation was a sensible approach to the issue. I am deeply concerned that the Chief Minister seems to be being stampeded into some decision when no appropriate consideration has been given to the merits or otherwise of the proposal for freeholding pastoral land.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one issue that I will canvass briefly is of concern to many people in central Australia. I refer to the renal dialysis unit. I have heard conflicting reports about the establishment of the renal dialysis unit. As honourable members will recall, it was announced towards the end of last year that a renal dialysis unit would be established in Alice Springs so that people who are suffering from renal failure do not have to travel to Adelaide or Darwin. I receive quite pathetic representations from people who are so far away from their families. I am referring particularly to Aboriginal people because their families are always located in one place. The requirement for them to move 1000 miles away for renal dialysis has caused a very unfortunate dislocation of family life. I am keen to see that unit established and I would appreciate hearing some comment from the minister with respect to it.

Mr Harris: During the sittings we will.

Mr BELL: I am delighted to hear that. I will look forward to it with interest.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, in responding to the Administrator's address, I draw your particular attention to his reference to the steady economic development and sustained growth in the Northern Territory since self-government. Since that goal was achieved in 1978, the Northern Territory has enjoyed enormous growth. Our population is increasing at 3 times the national rate. It has grown from 110 000 in 1978 to 146 000 in 1986. That is quite a remarkable achievement and is due to the policy of promotion of development pursued by successive CLP governments, and the entrepreneurial skills and confidence of private enterprise. I thank the good Lord that we have never had an ALP government here.

Mr Dale: If you looked over there you would never know the difference.

Mr SETTER: That is absolutely true, minister.

Mr Speaker, during the past 8 years, we have seen many projects under way, all creating numerous short-term construction jobs followed by permanent employment for Territorians. Consider such projects as the Ranger and Nabarlek Uranium Mines, the various gold mines that have sprung up over the last 4 or 5 years, the Yulara tourist development, the Sheraton Hotels, the gas pipeline, the Channel Island Power-station and the fishing boat marina in Frances Bay. The successful undertakings are numerous, and I am quite sure there will be many more in the years ahead. It is important that this growth be continued into the future to maintain and sustain our rapid increase in population.

I never cease to be amazed by the way people continue to migrate from southern states to the Northern Territory. They appear to see the Territory as a land of opportunity which offers them the chance to escape from the confinement and stagnation that residence in most southern states provides, particularly in today's disastrous economic climate which results from the policies of the current federal Labor government. Many people have asked me how it is possible to continue such expansion when the policies of the Hawke Labor government continue to retard enterprise and development. Mr Speaker, let me tell you that it is not an easy task. However, we are fortunate to have had successive CLP governments in the Northern Territory. They have sought private investment from overseas and Australian sources. Investors have been attracted to the Territory and, as a result, we have seen other developments such as the Beaufort Hotel and Performing Arts Centre, Raffles Plaza, the prawn farm, the Trade Development Zone and more.

Under this government, that policy will continue and will be just as successful as it has been in the past. As well as attracting investment in bricks and mortar, it is a government policy to develop trading relationships and tourism, particularly with our neighbours to the north. We have often heard it said that we are closer to Asian capitals than we are to our own southern state capitals. That particular point is often raised and it is very true. During the past few years, the Northern Territory Development Corporation has sponsored many trade missions and undertaken numerous promotional visits to South-east Asian countries. During this period, much success has been achieved and now Northern Territory manufacturers and suppliers sell their products in Malaysia and Singapore. Of course, Malaysia includes places like Brunei and Sarawak. As well, Territory timber merchants are importing sawn timber and plywood products from Indonesia and the Malaysian states to the north.

We have come a long way during this period, and I compliment the NTDC on its considerable contribution to the Northern Territory's development since self-government. It has done a fantastic job. I am confident this progress will continue under the newly-established Northern Territory Development Council. Whilst I acknowledge fully the progress made, I believe the time is now right for us to address the issue of accessing the markets of that sleeping giant, our nearest northern neighbour. I refer, of course, to the Republic of Indonesia.

Until recently, Indonesia was a market that was put in the too-hard basket, but I believe that we should direct our attention to that market now. Indonesia is a huge country which covers an area from Sumatra in the west to Irian Jaya in the east, and from Timor in the Tanambar Islands in the south to Northern Sulawesi in the north. It consists of more than 13 000 islands, with a population of 162 million, representing a multitude of cultures. That is an enormous number of people sitting right on our doorstep.

Mr Dale: They will soon be playing tennis on television.

Mr SETTER: Absolutely, and what a fine figure the minister cut too, playing tennis with the Governor of Molucca Province. I do not know how many games he took but I am assured that he lost gracefully - a diplomat to the last. The member for Ludmilla and I participated in that fine tournament also.

It is an enormous market and we in the Northern Territory have not even scratched its surface. Let me hasten to add that Indonesia is not an easy market. This is because of its centralised system of government and administration and, of course, its geographically difficult system of communication and transportation. It is easy to appreciate that, with 13 000 islands spread over an area of some 5000 km, communication and transportation are very difficult. Nevertheless, it can be accessed. Japan, China, the United States and quite a number of European nations have proved that. We need to find the right key and, when you talk about 160 million people, even if we only sell each one a big biro, that is a hell of a lot of business. We need to find that key. I believe it can be found, and I urge the Northern Territory Development Council to develop a strategy which allows this to occur.

Mr Speaker, during the past 12 months, I have had the privilege of visiting the Molucca Province and have been successful in developing good relationships with a number of government officials and business people in the provincial capital of Ambon. On several occasions, in company with representatives of NTDC, the Tourist Commission and private enterprise, including travel operators and timber importers, I have held discussions with our Moluccan counterparts. As a result of these meetings, I have recommended to the Chief Minister that a working party be established with a charter to develop trade and tourism relationships between the Northern Territory and Indonesia.

When I was in Ambon last week, a commitment was given by the Moluccan Governor that 2 Ambonese groups would visit the Northern Territory before the end of this year. Let me clarify the terminology there. Immediately to our north is the Molucca province of Indonesia, with a population of about 1.4 million. The capital of Molucca Province is Ambon, and that is why I referred to Molucca and Ambon. Basically, the first group will be a tourist group, but will include people involved in the travel industry, restaurateurs, representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, and bankers. It will arrive in

Darwin in late September. Although these people will not be here on official business, I believe they will wish to hold discussions with Darwin business people with interests similar to their own.

The second group is due to come here in November, and I understand that it will be led by the secretary to the Governor of Molucca Province. He will be accompanied by government officials and the business people who make up the working party which they have established with the idea of developing trading relationships with us. I hope that we will have a reciprocal working party. They will wish to hold discussions regarding the development of trade and tourism relationships. I anticipate that, once trading links have been established successfully with the Molucca region, we will expand our activities to other provinces of Indonesia.

One might ask what sort of products we could trade with Molucca? Let us look at several which come immediately to mind. There are 9 sawn timber mills and 11 plywood mills in the province. They have an enormous capacity and the ability to supply the whole of Australia quite easily. Currently, their product is exported to Hong Kong, and from there it is shipped to China and Taiwan. They also export into Singapore which acts as a distribution point to Europe and the United States. At present, Australia takes very small quantities. The mills have agents in Sydney and Melbourne.

I know of 3 Darwin timber importers who are keen to source their supplies from that area. Currently, these people bring their timber from West Kalimantan, which we used to know as West Borneo. It takes the barge about 6 days to steam to West Kalimantan and another 6 days to return, plus loading time. The barge could travel from here to Ambon in 2 days and, therefore, it could travel up and back in 5 or 6 days, which would provide a considerable saving in transportation costs. There is no doubt that the product could be imported economically over the Darwin wharf and distributed in southern states, taking advantage of our cheap road transport backloading rates.

You see, Mr Speaker, it is not just the Darwin or Northern Territory market that I am talking about. That is a relatively small market when talking about the importing of timber products. However, using backloading on road transport out of Darwin, which is available at 50% of normal prices, products could be accessed into southern markets very quickly and cheaply. Sea transport has to steam all the way around to Melbourne or Sydney. I understand that it will take 4 to 6 weeks for product to be unloaded across the Sydney wharf and proceed through the container terminal before it ends up in wholesalers' warehouses. We are talking about a probable saving of about 6 to 8 weeks in delivery time.

We have the capacity here. We have container crane facilities and roll-on roll-off facilities at the Darwin wharf. In spite of Minister Morris, whom we heard a little about earlier this afternoon, hopefully we will have a railway in time. You can just imagine a rail spur line going down to the wharf. We would be able to unload there, and clear goods through customs and quarantine onto the train - bingo! The potential is enormous, not only for timber but for all sorts of products.

There is also the opportunity for an entrepreneur to source spice. Cloves, nutmeg and cinnamon come from what have been called for centuries the Spice Islands. The major source of spices in the world is the Moluccas region of Indonesia. One might ask why we would want to import spices. Well, that is a fair enough question. We really do not use great quantities of spices in the Northern Territory. However, there are food manufacturers in

the southern part of Australia who use considerable quantities of spices. If we had a Darwin businessman who could set himself up as the Australian agent, importing to Darwin and backloading on the train south, he would have a wonderful business. At the moment, the products are probably being sourced via Singapore into Sydney or Melbourne. Why not bring them across the Darwin waters?

The Indonesians are interested in importing live cattle, frozen beef, dairy products, building materials and fittings and, of course, our expertise in such areas as building, earth moving and road construction. These are but a few of the areas of mutual interest that we could develop with these people. I am sure there are many others.

There are opportunities for tourism in both directions. We now have Merpati Airlines flying weekly through Darwin via Kupang, Ambon and Minado in northern Sulawesi. This provides ready access to this fascinating region and offers tourists an alternative destination to Bali. Quite a number of people have been to Bali 2 or 3 times. I have myself and I would be looking for an alternative destination. What better place than Ambon or Minado in northern Sulawesi? It sounds very exotic and I can assure you that it is. The people are extremely friendly, despite the nonsense that one sometimes hears or reads about in the media concerning our relationship with Indonesia. When one visits those places, one could not wish to meet more hospitable people. Australians are thought of very highly in that area and people go out of their way to make us feel at home and to encourage us. Thus, there is a wonderful opportunity for tourism.

I am also convinced that there is a considerable market to bring Indonesian tourists to the Northern Territory, not only to visit our beautiful countryside, but also to gamble in the casino. It is common knowledge that the Moslem governments of Malaysia and Indonesia are putting pressure on casinos in Jakarta and the Genting Highlands in Malaysia, and discouraging their people from gambling in such places. It would not surprise me if they were closed down in the not-too-distant future. The majority of the very rich business people in Indonesia are Chinese or Chinese Indonesians. They all love gambling; it is their hobby. What better incentive could there be to attract them to the Northern Territory than our casinos in Darwin and Alice Springs? I am quite sure that we can develop that particular market in spite of the fact that Indonesians have to pay a departure tax of about 150 000 rupiah, which is in excess of \$A200, and an airport departure tax of around 15 000 rupiah. In spite of that, there are people who would be prepared to pay such money to visit this area. I mentioned earlier that a group will be coming here in the third week in September. There will be between a dozen and 15 people visiting on that occasion and I am aware that, amongst those people, will be representatives of the chamber of commerce, the travel industry, 2 or 3 travel operators, some restaurateurs and a representative from the Moluccan protocol and tourism department.

Currently, we have an educational exchange program operating between the Northern Territory and Indonesia. At this moment, we have 2 students and one teacher from Ambon. The 2 students are in Darwin and the teacher is in Alice Springs. As well, we have 4 other students and 2 other teachers from other parts of Indonesia. It is an excellent program and certainly very well regarded in the Moluccas region. They are very keen to develop that program further and in fact, during my discussions with them last week, I mentioned that we will be commencing a university here next year. They were very keen to have information concerning that. I was told that they send about 3000 students out of the Moluccas region each year to undertake tertiary

education overseas. Even if we could attract just a few of those students, it would be a tremendous boost to our university. I see no reason why we could not also attract similar students from Indonesia to the Darwin Institute of Technology. That is another resource which we have not yet tapped. Let us make sure that we do so in the near future.

The establishment of sporting exchanges was also raised. The Minister for Youth, Sport, Recreation and Ethnic Affairs and myself discussed that matter with officials in Ambon last week and I believe that there could well be a sporting team from the Northern Territory visiting Ambon before the end of the year.

I also suggest that the Chief Minister should visit Ambon and the Moluccas region as soon as possible. I believe that if he were prepared to do that, he would certainly add a lot of credibility to the work that has already been done by members of NTDC, the Tourist Commission and others, and would further cement the excellent relationships that we have. I certainly intend to put that proposal forward to him. I believe that enormous opportunities exist there. It is up to us to recognise them and capitalise on them, and I am quite sure that this government will take cognisance and develop appropriate proposals and programs.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Deputy Speaker, sound economic planning requires not only clearly defined objectives but also some reflection on where the economy has been. The course of sound economic management in the Northern Territory has been relatively short. Since self-government, the Territory has witnessed the evolution of a sound economic base out of what can only be considered the primeval slime of the previous Canberra-based bureaucratic plasticine-play management. Unfortunately, some of the Canberra-based bureaucrats and their political masters still refuse to get out of the kindergarten.

At the time of self-government, the thrust and direction of Northern Territory economic management had little force or direction. The tourist industry had been allowed to lurch along on hopes and prayers, and the only real developments were the Darwin Travelodge and what was then the Territorian Hotel. These were built primarily to cater for the business and visiting public servant market. Self-government has seen the Darwin and Alice Springs Casinos, the Sheraton Hotel, the Beaufort Centre and the crown jewel of Australian tourist developments, Yulara. Tourist numbers and employment opportunities in the industry have grown astronomically since self-government. It was not luck that developed the tourist industry. It was the policies of the Country Liberal Party and its government. It was the intestinal fortitude and the vision of the various ministers which allowed them to stand up to the constant carping and prophecies of doom from the other side and set the industry on the road to outstanding and continued success.

In 1978, the Northern Territory horticultural and grain growing industries were virtually nonexistent. We relied totally upon southern suppliers and growers for our fruit, vegetables and stockfeed needs. Because of the policies put in place by the Country Liberal Party, that situation is largely being redressed. The expanding areas under crop in both the Douglas-Daly and Katherine areas, the increasing yields and the burgeoning export markets stand as testimony to the efforts of the Country Liberal Party. None of that existed prior to 1978 and it must be remembered that the Australian Labor Party, Northern Territory Branch, strenuously opposed self-government.

Mr Smith: How would you know? You were in nappies then.

Mr PALMER: Thank you, I was. I have a good memory though.

Mr Speaker, the Trade Development Zone being developed on the East Arm peninsula is another of the Country Liberal Party's triumphs. The Trade Development Zone, the first in Australia, will further widen the Northern Territory's economic base with expansion into export-orientated manufacturing industries. The Trade Development Zone will further highlight Darwin's strategic location in terms of a focal point for trade with Asia.

Perhaps the greatest millstone that the Commonwealth left around our collective necks was the expensive and inefficient, oil-fired Darwin power-station. Thanks largely to the efforts of the erstwhile Chief Minister, wholeheartedly supported by his colleagues on this side, the Palm Valley to Darwin gas pipeline is now nearing completion. The indigenous fuelling of our power-station, made possible by the pipeline, combined with the ability to predict long-term generating costs, will allow us to promote the growth of high-energy-using industries within the Territory. Channel Island Power-station, when fully on line with closed-cycle turbines, will stand as a lasting testimony to the Country Liberal Party's commitment to newer and appropriate technology.

Of course, the opposition opposed the gas pipeline and the power-station being gas-fired. It would have committed the Northern Territory to an environmentally disastrous coal-fired power-station. Not only that, it would have laid the Territory's electricity generation at the whims of various unions and the wiles of an unpredictable international coal market.

Mr Smith: The coal was going to come from Queensland.

Mr PALMER: The price of coal is determined overseas.

The continued development and upgrading of the Territory's road system is a direct result of the Country Liberal Party's commitment to infrastructural development. The upgrading of the south road is a direct result of the pressure that the Country Liberal Party was able to bring on the previous federal government.

The Country Liberal Party is committed to the development of our offshore fishery. On previous occasions, I have outlined the enormous potential the fishing industry offers the Territory by way of jobs both offshore and in onshore processing and support facilities. No better evidence of the Country Liberal Party's commitment to that fishing industry is available than the safe harbour we see under development in Frances Bay.

Sadly, the Northern Territory's major revenue-earner, mining, has been hamstrung by the nonsensical policies of the federal government and the intransigent attitude of a few who purport to be looking after the interests of our Aborigines. The Northern Territory's southern critics accuse us of being mendicant. That would be acceptable if it were not for the fact that it is those very critics who prevent us from realising the outrageously rich potential that this Northern Territory offers. Mining contributes about \$800m per annum to the Territory's economy. That figure could be multiplied many times if the Territory were given control of its resources.

None of the states is subject to the mindless interference that our status as a Territory leaves us open to. We are at the mercy of fits of petulance from various federal ministers and their out-of-control public servants. We are at the mercy of the whims of the various factions within the southern

branches of the ALP. Just last week, the NSW Trades and Labour Council took a vote on amendments to the Northern Territory Land Rights Act. Needless to say, they voted almost to a man to maintain the inequitable status quo.

Since self-government, the CLP has laid a very solid economic base upon which we can build a future for ourselves and our children. The future of the Northern Territory economy is inextricably linked to the further development of our infrastructure. The government must singlemindedly work towards the completion of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway link and, with equal resolve, continue to push for the construction of an international-standard airport terminal for Darwin. Not even in Vanuatu does our federal government expect tourists to suffer the privations that they find at Darwin Airport. The completion of both the railway and airport are vital to sustained economic growth and hence to our economy.

Mr Speaker, I will take the opportunity to comment on last night's federal budget which will have a lasting effect on the economy of both Australia and the Northern Territory. Although the projected deficit of \$3500m is commendable on the surface, it must be understood that the current account and budget deficits are in themselves not the problem. They are merely symptomatic of the deep-rooted problems facing the economy of Australia. Australia's terms of trade are dictated by our ability to compete internationally on the commodities market and our ability to compete domestically with imported manufactured and other consumer goods.

Both Treasurer Keating and Prime Minister Hawke dismissed comments regarding Australian labour costs as uninformed and nonsensical. Those comments were made by someone who was acknowledged on the ABC last night as one of north America's leading investment consultants and someone whose opinions unquestionably can influence the level of overseas confidence and investment in Australia. Both the Prime Minister and the Treasurer pointed to a 10% real wage increase in Great Britain last financial year as against the proposed 4% increase in Australia. That increase was achieved whilst Great Britain maintained an inflation level of less than 2%. That is an indicator of an economy on the move and an indicator that the policies of the Conservative Party in Great Britain are working. Australia, on the other hand, has now experienced 3 consecutive quarters of economic contraction and inflation rates of more than 8%. That is indicative of an economy in a nosedive.

Australia must tackle the cause and not the symptoms. The labour market must become just that: a market that is subject to full market pressures, not some sacred cow left to grow fat in the middle of a famine. Australia must rid itself of the insane centralised wage-fixing system which takes no cognisance of a particular industry's ability to pay. It is the height of economic imbecility to expect an industry to meet ever-increasing costs whilst its ability to compete and stay viable in an increasingly hostile market puts the very existence of that industry at risk. Australians individually must wake up to the fact that the country does not owe them a living and Australians collectively must realise that the world does not owe Australia a living.

It is useless to blame our current account deficit on the trade practices of our competitors whilst not being willing to become leaner and more competitive ourselves. The world no longer plays economic cricket. Last night, we had to witness once again the absurd comedy of the president of the ACTU being asked to confer his final assent or disapproval on the budget of the government of the day. Where has Australia got itself if the government

of the day requires the consent of a union organiser before it can implement its fiscal policies?

The Northern Territory has led the way in industrial relations. Mudginberri was a landmark decision. The support given to that issue by the Northern Territory government continues to be vindicated by something like 24 decisions in the courts. Until Australia has in place an equitable industrial relations program, we will continue to trade at a disadvantage with our competitors. The Northern Territory can lead the way in a resurgence of the Australian economy. However, that can only take place if we are given the means to do so.

So much of our economic well-being in the future hinges upon the Darwin Airport and the railway and they can only be considered to be programs of national importance and priority. If the federal government is not prepared to fund those projects in the national interest, it is obliged to open the way for private enterprise to do so. This country was built by private enterprise and it can be rebuilt by private enterprise. However, that can only happen if the interventionist policies of all governments are reversed and Australians are simply allowed to get on with the job. I support the government's policies as outlined in the Administrator's speech and I commend it to honourable members.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to preface my remarks by answering some queries that were raised by the member for Stuart, particularly in respect of Telecom and AUSSAT. I quite often wonder whether he was actually on the select committee that he refers to so often. His remarks in this Assembly certainly do not reflect any of the information that he received when he participated in that select committee of inquiry. When he does talk about it, he gets it wrong.

For the record, the Northern Territory government has never said that it did not agree with the DRCS system nor that it was an inadequate system. All we have said is that we want a full telecommunications package throughout the Northern Territory by 1988. From the words of Telecom and from its evidence, DRCS will not be achieved by 1988.

The DRCS and ITERRA options have not been abandoned. If the member for Stuart reads the select committee report again - he was part-author of it and he certainly did not put in a dissenting report - he will see that he agreed with a mix-and-match hybrid option of terrestrial facilities and satellites. The report did not necessarily specify that the satellite component of the option would be the ITERRA option. It said that the hybrid option was the one which the committee thought was an achievable option and it could have been addressed by any particular party.

With reference to the points that he makes about the Q-Net proposals in Queensland proposals, he stated categorically that he has evidence that the Q-Net proposal has taken revenue away from Telecom. I would like him to substantiate that claim because, in my view, it is totally incorrect. Evidence from Telecom shows that, when any additional services are introduced into the remote and rural locations, whether it be by satellite or terrestrial means, the traffic in the area increases incredibly. When the traffic increases, it means revenue for Telecom, not a loss of revenue to Telecom.

The government continues to adopt the policy that it wants a completion of the hybrid system or a system of telecommunications throughout the Northern Territory by 1988. We will achieve that in any way we can. As he knows from

evidence given to the committee, the Northern Territory government makes a payment of some \$9m per annum to Telecom. If we introduced a private telephone network and operated it throughout the Northern Territory as a hybrid system, we believe that system would eventually pay for itself and would represent considerable savings. I can inform the member opposite that discussions are now being held by the minister, and by others in the Northern Territory government, including myself, with officers of Telecom. A working party is looking at particular options at the moment and, at some time very shortly, we hope to have some answers. We consider this will be a major new initiative in the field of telecommunications to our remote people.

I would like now to deal with another matter. This relates to the legislative program outlined by His Honour the Administrator and expanded upon by the Chief Minister and his ministers in relation to their specific areas of responsibility. I wish to comment on some aspects of their remarks, specifically those about tourism.

Tourism is, and will continue to be for some time, the major job creator and revenue earner for Territorians. The Territory government has recognised this fact and has assisted by providing for the infrastructure and development of major tourist facilities and hotels. The government has also encouraged operators to create new markets, and has involved itself in a considerable advertising program to encourage tourists to the Northern Territory.

The centre of the Territory, focusing on Alice Springs and Ayers Rock, is a record growth area. The need for additional facilities in the region to cater for these rising numbers is not too far away. Visitations to the Top End are not increasing as much as we would like, and I believe the reason is the lack of accommodation in the major area of attraction. I refer specifically to Kakadu National Park. Kakadu National Park, in my view, is one of the most attractive wilderness destinations in the world today. Yet it has no accommodation structure within its boundaries, nor any substantial structure within close proximity to its borders. I find the attitude of Professor Ovington and the ANPWS not only personally mystifying, but blatantly anti-development and out of step with most of the major world park services. Whilst I was in America last Christmas, I drove through a large number of state and federal parks, and saw at first hand how intelligent management and creative assessment of visitor needs can go hand in hand with environmental protection. Both can be accommodated successfully, allowing for future controlled expansion so that the parks, which are for people, can be used and viewed by ever-increasing numbers without detrimental effects.

There is an increase in terrorist activities worldwide. I saw a map which is now being handed out to United States citizens at their travel bureaus. It shows the countries which are perceived to be risk areas. They are graded from those countries which a citizen should not attempt to visit to those countries which are perceived to be politically and economically stable. Australia and New Zealand head the list of preferred tourist destinations from the United States. Since the majority of American overseas tourists are in the 55 to 70 age range, they are reasonably well-off people who wish to stay at secure and comfortable places and make day trips to tourist attractions. Kakadu is not such a place because of the lack of a major structure within the park boundary. The Territory government has understood this for some considerable time and has attempted to redress the problem. Unfortunately, its reasoned arguments have fallen on the deaf ears of the ANPWS. It is time Professor Ovington and his staff crawled out of their log and came to grips with the real world. Parks are for people, not for bureaucrats, and Professor Ovington should resign and let somebody who understands these principles take over.

Whilst on the subject of tourism, I must also comment on the attitudes of Territorians to tourism. The attitude adopted by most people towards tourists is one of reluctant acceptance, underlined by a deep-seated feeling of barely concealed intolerance. A case in point is when the Tourist Commission attempted to educate the public with its 'Tell a Tourist Where to Go' campaign. The public reaction to that slogan was pointed and predictable, to the extent that the campaign was abandoned. If we are to succeed in our long-term tourism goals and eventually reap the rewards of increased numbers without resorting to massive increases in tourist promotion, we must concentrate on educating the public, the tourist operators and the hoteliers. The standard of service still leaves a lot to be desired. Operators must be taught to realise that the best sales promotion is a satisfied tourist who will return again and possibly be an ambassador for our product. It is no use providing a shoddy service and expecting to take short-term profits when we should be looking for long-term gains. This is particularly important with respect to roadside operators of service stations, caravan parks and food supply outlets along the Stuart Highway. For too long, some of them have adopted the attitude of: 'There is no where else for them to go, so they will have to take what I am prepared to give or go without'. We have been given examples of this in the Assembly. Members have related stories of people hitch-hiking up and down the highway seeking assistance when their vehicles have broken down and they have received little or no help. This must be redressed.

If these matters are redressed and the public is educated quickly in relation to tourism, I believe we could be poised to take advantage of the rapidly growing southern leisure market. People will tend to seek holidays within Australia for the next few years at least, and there will be rapidly growing numbers from the United States for the reasons I suggested earlier. We must prepare for the completion of the south road. We have spoken about it in this Assembly often enough, and the Minister for Tourism has frequently referred to the projected visitor numbers. I agree with him. I believe we are in for unprecedented visitation as Australians look for an alternative to overseas destinations in the wake of the fall in value of the Australian dollar. When we start to receive those extra numbers, we must be poised to take advantage of them. We cannot afford the luxury of treating them cavalierly. I have said it in this Assembly before and I will say it again now: each person who comes as a tourist or visitor to the Northern Territory and returns home a happy and satisfied customer will relive his experiences with relatives and friends and will continue to sell the Northern Territory at no cost to us.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak on the address by His Honour the Administrator, I would like to urge this government to accelerate its involvement in Aboriginal health, which is of major concern to members on this side of the Assembly, and also in education and psychiatric services.

I was pleased to hear the Minister for Health outline some very interesting developments that will be taking place in the field of psychiatric services. These have been lacking for some time and the Labor Party has been pursuing this matter over a period of 4 years. It is very pleasing to note that the Minister for Health has taken on board what we have been saying.

Certainly, there have been developments and improvements in education and health, and a number of statements have been made by various ministers. The member for Nhulunbuy referred to the building of new schools, particularly in Arnhem Land and remote parts of the Northern Territory, mainly homeland

centres. I know the people living in those places are excited and appreciative of the fact that, at last, decent buildings are being provided for their education. Funds are no doubt being provided by the federal government with the assistance of the Northern Territory and, because of this, I am very, very happy. For too long, these people have had to use buildings which in some cases could not even be described as tin shacks. I have seen some of those buildings on my recent visits to most of the outstations in my electorate.

Improvements in buildings and administrative practices do not always solve problems for teachers and children in remote Aboriginal communities. I would urge this government to focus also on providing adequate numbers of teachers for all schools throughout the Northern Territory. Without sufficient numbers of teachers, whether in the major cities, remote communities or visiting outstations, any improvements in other areas of education are useless.

Time and time again, we have heard this government say that it is committed to providing more facilities and manpower for psychiatric services. I support this totally, and I believe that these policies now need to be accelerated. For some time, the opposition has pointed out the importance of providing these services for people who live in the Northern Territory rather than those who visit during the dry season or the tourist season and then return interstate or overseas. Services such as health facilities and schools should be provided first and foremost for the people of the Northern Territory who have their foundations and their family life here.

If the government would take that into account, more people would be willing to help to implement the policies of the government which they see as being of benefit to the Northern Territory. People who live here must be disillusioned when they see the money that this government pours into hotels and casinos. Certainly, that is important, but I am sure that some people in the outlying communities are sometimes very concerned about the types of services they received. For example, at Angurugu, there was only one specialist teacher responsible for people with hearing disabilities. That teacher has been removed now and I understand that no facility in the Northern Territory can offer the services that those people require. I have received 2 letters from that community alone, asking me to make approaches to the minister concerned. I believe that the Department of Education is also concerned. If that sort of attitude is adopted towards our people in the Northern Territory - the mentally retarded, the deaf and dumb - I am sure that the government has a long way to go in serving its own people. I do not wish to be negative, but rather to encourage the Chief Minister to focus his government's attention on the real needs of the people of the Northern Territory.

Aboriginal health presents huge problems, and I hope that, under the direction of the new Chief Minister, the government can make rapid inroads which will dramatically improve and maintain better health and education facilities for all people in the Northern Territory. I am aware of the housing programs that this government has initiated, and I commend its actions. However, although some houses that have been built in Aboriginal communities look good from the outside, there are often hidden faults. For example, there are some designs where the shower is located right next to the septic tank. It is a health hazard and it is detrimental to people. It is no wonder we hear the government screaming that there is a 50% bed-occupancy rate in some hospitals, when houses are not built to the standard required by the code. I have seen it happen, and I know. I have seen people being transferred from some of these communities suffering from a variety of diseases.

Would it not be better if some programs could be initiated in those communities so that the people themselves could at least take the opportunity of trying to apply health and hygiene practices at home? I personally believe that is a crucial issue in Aboriginal health. I commend the former Chief Minister for his initiative in implementing the Aboriginal Health Worker Program. I have seen something of it, and spoken with people involved in it. Certainly, they are very happy to work in the communities, irrespective of some of the health conditions. I wrote to the Minister for Health in respect of the conditions that these people face in places like Milingimbi, Lake Evella, Numbulwar, Umbakumba and others. I brought those to the minister's attention and I am pleased to be able to say that he has responded in a very positive manner. He advised me that his department is considering renovations to certain buildings.

I was also pleased to hear the minister announce that there will be a survey concerning career structures for Aboriginal Health Workers who have been employed by the department during various stages of their lives or have worked in various stages of the programs. I was very pleased to hear that, and I am sure it will benefit the workers and the programs of the department. At the moment, Aboriginal Health Worker positions are insecure. If those people see structures which take their aspirations into account, the Territory government will have moved ahead.

I was also pleased to hear the minister speak of the ongoing survey on the consumption of kava. It is a matter that I have spoken on.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! In fairness to the honourable member, there is far too much conversation in the Chamber, and that also applies to occupants of the public gallery.

Mr LANHUPUY: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I was very pleased to hear about the ongoing survey of the consumption of kava in communities. This has been a matter of concern to me. However, because of community political situations, I could not come out publicly either for or against it. I have seen hard-core alcoholics turn to kava and totally stop drinking alcohol for some time. That has taken tremendous effort on their part. However, once again, I strongly urge the Department of Health to carry on with its survey. I hope that we will be advised of its findings.

I was pleased to hear the Minister for Health say that there is a long-term commitment from the government in respect of the petrol-sniffing problem, and that the Northern Territory has agreed to combine forces with the states of Western Australia and South Australia on this. It is a problem that all governments have been working on. Aboriginal communities, successfully or otherwise, have tried their best to overcome the situation. Once again, I urge the government to maintain its commitment and extend every effort to overcome this problem.

The Minister told us that the Department of Health will be provided with a CT scanner which the opposition has requested repeatedly. That is a very commendable effort from the minister concerned, who took up the portfolio recently. We had to argue with 3 previous ministers to obtain this facility, which is important to everyone who lives in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, in respect of my other shadow portfolio, conservation, I heard with pleasure the comments of the Minister for Conservation concerning the involvement of Aboriginal people in parks, ranger training services and similar activities. In his speech announcing his resignation yesterday, the

former Leader of the Opposition said how important it was for the Northern Territory to exploit the aspect of Aboriginal involvement in the tourism industry. Quite often, I have spoken to people who have been to the Northern Territory and returned south and they have commented on the small numbers of Aboriginal people participating in the tourist industry. I suggest that the Northern Territory government should take on board some sort of adviser, attached perhaps to the Tourist Commission, who might generate some ideas which will help reflect the Aboriginal aspect of the land to people who come to visit Kakadu, Kings Canyon, Uluru, and so many of the beautiful gorges that we have. The Aboriginal aspect is a fact that must be acknowledged. If the Northern Territory government could exploit it, it would be a major step in the right direction.

A couple of weeks ago, I was interested to see an ABC report concerning the tourist development at Nhulunbuy. Personally, I would like to see a tourist venture develop on the island. In fact, I am a member of the Gove Tourist Promotion Board. Whilst I have not pursued the matter vigorously, I have discussed the issue with people who are concerned. Most members would be aware, and the member for Nhulunbuy reminds us from time to time, that the Nabalco mine will run out. It probably has a life of 20-odd years or so. I would like to see tourism develop in a way that will be acceptable to the majority of the landowners around the Nabalco special purposes lease. I would be willing to talk to those people on behalf of the Northern Territory government. Many people there are willing to exploit their land so they can benefit by it, because the royalties from Nabalco will cease. Aboriginal people are looking for other ventures that will bring them benefits. I would be very pleased to take up this issue with certain landowners on the basis that their aspirations, their views and their cultural life will be taken into account; that is the most important aspect.

To recapitulate, I was very pleased to hear some of the initiatives that the Northern Territory government has taken, especially in the field of health. Once again, I urge the Northern Territory government to take up my views in respect of the tourism industry.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I would like to commence by recording that it is refreshing to hear a member of the opposition who has some positive and constructive comments relating to the Northern Territory government's policies, as opposed to the continual carping that we hear from most of his colleagues. Until I heard the last speaker, I was wondering whether I had listened to a different Administrator's address, because I was both inspired and invigorated by His Honour's comments, particularly when he highlighted the development of infrastructure in the Northern Territory over the last 8 years. He indicated factors that will reassure the Northern Territory population about our continued economic growth. In the last 12 months, we had 16% growth in the private sector work force, compared with a population growth of only 3.5%, whilst containing the public service to almost negligible growth. It is refreshing to have this government's realistic approach to reaching its social objectives reinforced. Unless we have continued economic growth and diversification of industry, we will not be able to afford services to help the needy, particularly in the outlying communities.

We have received some barbs about spending most of our time in negative criticism of the federal government. Such criticism is only fair and reasonable when one sees the vindictive way that the Northern Territory and its population is treated. The other relevant point is that, because of the total lack of any constructive policies or programs put forward by members opposite, we have no room to comment on their contribution to this Assembly.

This morning, we had the new Leader of the Opposition, who has held the shadow portfolio on economic matters for some time, admitting on ABC radio that he has been saying to the public for months that it will only be weeks until he releases his magic new economic policy. He not only acknowledged that he has been dilly-dallying and dithering for months, and fobbing off the press and the general public as to what the Labor Party's economic policies are, but he tells us that it will be at least another 6 or 8 weeks before he finalised his party's position. The opposition continues to jump on bandwagons about gas pipelines and other government initiatives. Hansard records quite positively and clearly whose initiatives most of those were. If some of those initiatives had been theirs, we would be still sitting around for another 2 decades waiting for them to get off their backsides and implement them.

We also saw the lack of policies in the federal ALP's budget last night. The \$3500m deficit was held up as the answer to this nation's economic crisis. I have no doubt that it will not be long before we see just how superficial that \$3500m deficit is. We will see that Labor's total economic package is a myth. What will we see from it except increased taxation and a token gesture of reducing the public service by a measly 2000 people?

What this country needs is incentives for more production, more export, less public service drain on our limited tax purse and, more importantly, less union dominance. We have certainly priced ourselves out of the international marketplace in terms of what we pay in wages, but what is more important and more pertinent to our performance is union intervention which affects our ability to meet overseas trade targets and contributes to our failure to be able to work solid, constructive working weeks. We have had figures from the Pilbara which show a 3% loss in time leading to a 35% drop in production efficiency. This country needs to address this outrageous bludgeoning by the unions with the support of the federal government through the myth that they call the accord.

We need less regulation, less bureaucracy and less restriction on mining and exploration, particularly here in the Northern Territory. We need to provide access to Australian entrepreneurs, particularly mining entrepreneurs, to all Australian soil, as occurs in other states. We have untold resources that we need to develop. We need fewer oppressive taxes. My colleagues have mentioned many of these, including the fringe benefits tax. These are a totally unacceptable burden on private enterprise and free trade. We need lower social security bills. It is all right to have social welfare programs, but we have to be able to fund them. We need less of these nonsense authorities that the federal government has created to look after the whims of the Victorian socialist left. We need more incentives for small business. That is no great mystery. All we need is for governments to get out of the way of small business and let it get on with the job of developing the economy of this country. Instead of this, we are given increased taxation and burdens on business. We have a token gesture of reducing the federal public service by 2000, which has already been more than counterbalanced by the 2000-odd people who will be put on to police the fringe benefits tax. We have halfhearted token gestures to contain wages through what is now seen to be a totally unacceptable industrial conciliation system. We have failure to address the issue of union power. All of these things are not helping this country get out of its current economic demise.

What we really need is for the federal government to address itself to the need to pursue external trade and positive, competitive economic development. We should get rid of all of these protected industries from Victoria and South Australia, the rag trades and the motor trades. Certainly, there need to be

transitional programs put into place but, when you see Australians, including Territorians, propping up the southern motor trades by some \$7000 per car, it is incredible. This country cannot keep withstanding that sort of pressure. What Bob Hawke and Paul Keating have to realise is that our trading reputation stinks overseas. Our ability to perform economically and, more importantly, our failure to deliver reliably is a sad reflection on union power in this country.

To a lesser extent, I suppose I should also aim a couple of rockets at big business because I have really been disappointed at how some businesses, particularly those in transport industries, have bowed unnecessarily to union pressure and blackmail, especially in relation to the superannuation scheme. This country needs to get an injection of commitment, incentive and confidence. That last word is extremely important. To have a Prime Minister declaring that the economy is like being in a state of war and that things will never be the same again is not very inspiring to workers in Australia. He has either thrown in the sponge or he is declaring publicly that he believes socialism is here to stay. We have news for him, because at least this little part of the country will not bow to socialism and certainly will not throw in the sponge.

This government, as reflected in His Honour the Administrator's address, works even harder under the pressure and the excess load. I suppose we are a bit like a thoroughbred racehorse. The greater the handicap and the load you give him, the harder he tries and the better he goes. That is what we will do, and it is the only way this country will rise from the depths to which it has sunk. All Treasurer Paul Keating can do is stick his head in the sand. He seems to blame our demise on the world. It is the world's fault that we are in this trouble. No wonder the international economy has judged our currency so harshly. Our dollar will be worth US50¢ unless we can shock this federal government into developing a more positive frame of mind and more outward-looking views in relation to our economy and our production. Of course, the more positive alternative is to throw it out of power at the very first available opportunity.

I was very interested to see - and maybe it is because the Australian dollar is heading towards US50¢ - that we are now going to produce a \$2 coin. This is the Keating method of fixing devaluation. Instead of a \$2 note, we will replace the \$1 coin with a \$2 coin. That is how you fix the declining economy. It is a bit like that 57¢ \$1 note that the member for Sadadeen had earlier.

I will close by reiterating that I have faith in this government. I certainly see that we have the answer, not only for Territorians but for all Australians. I wish to goodness that our Administrator could have given the address to the federal government after the last election. Maybe he could have instilled a little vigour and vim and forward-thinking into its mind.

My colleagues have covered all the components which not only affect my electorate in the most positive way, but the entire Northern Territory. I commend the Administrator for his most invigorating speech.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it gives me pleasure to rise in reply to His Honour's address. Other honourable members have canvassed most of the government's program. I do not intend to go over that ground. The contribution which I wish to make relates to the effect of regulation or red tape upon business, and small business in particular. A high priority of the government, and particularly of the Chief Minister, is an

examination of the effect of regulations, which result from statutes made in this place, and the methods of implementing those regulations, upon the viability of existing and potential businesses.

I read yesterday of an extensive and intensive study undertaken in the United Kingdom on this very problem. 200 small businesses were selected at random and studied in considerable detail to determine the effect that government regulation had upon their capacity and desire to employ more people. In some businesses, employment had actually increased, but this was simply to cope with the demands of government red tape. I am sure members would agree that that is definitely a non-productive type of employment. In most of the firms, however, regulations were actually having a negative effect on employment. On average, the study showed that 200 or more jobs were being held back as a result of the regulations. That was 1 job per firm. There are 1.6 million small businesses in Great Britain and I am sure that, if regulations could be reduced to a sensible level, 1.6 million additional jobs would give that country a great shot in the arm. They are making a serious attempt to cut down regulation in order to improve the prospects of small businesses.

If the study translates to Australia even in some measure, there would be several hundred thousand potential jobs which are being stifled by regulation. I shudder at times to think that we pass laws without realising the implications on the wider community of the regulations that follow and the methods that are used to implement those regulations. A regulation might only take 5 minutes a month to comply with, but you still have to remember to do it. The real point that we often fail to realise is that the straw we add may just be the one that breaks the camel's back. The whole matter of regulation both in the federal sphere and the state sphere needs to be stirred up.

There are efforts being made in the federal sphere. Once you get beyond the political hype in the documents of the Business Review Unit, you see that there is potential there to address this problem. The key measuring stick should be whether it is necessary. Can the regulation be justified? I believe we need bold answers to these questions. We do not want to hear that the regulations are there because we passed the law and the public servants are merely doing their duty. We need some bold public servants to give us some straight answers and some feedback. In fact, feedback is what we need from the people who are affected by legislation so that we can become fully aware of the results of legislation which we pass here with the very best of intentions. I have no doubt about that.

I would strongly support a sunset clause in all of our laws. After the community has reacted to it, and it often reacts in ways in which we never predict, we can determine its usefulness and make adjustments. One thing that I will say for our government is that, when things are brought to our attention, we are not slow to amend our legislation. We should do even more of that. I do not believe any of us knowingly and willingly would pass a law which costs each small business 2 hours a week to comply with, without asking whether it is necessary. If we come to the conclusion that it is, we should examine very carefully how we can make it easier to comply with.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the day when I hear a minister in a parliament say in answer to a question in relation to some statistical data: 'I do not know and, what is more, I do not intend to try to find out because x man-hours a month would be required to gather that information and that is too big a burden to place on the business community'. That is the sort of

thing which governments have imposed on the people of this country, bit by bit, and the burden is too large.

Wealth-creating jobs are what this country needs. Reducing red tape will create the climate for small business to expand and soak up unemployment. Surely the best thing we can do for the unemployed person is to give him or her a real job. Can you imagine the positive impact upon the country if all able-bodied, unemployed persons found real, wealth-creating work? The social welfare bill would drop, the former unemployed would be tax contributors, the overall level of taxation could be lowered, incentive to make the effort to create wealth would be further improved and even tax dodging would be less attractive. Tax evasion schemes have been invented because of the high level of taxation. Isn't it a shame that the smartest people in the country are spending their energies finding loopholes in taxation laws?

It may all sound simple but it is not simple because entrenched interests make it hard to make the necessary changes. Nevertheless, I believe that changes must be made and it behoves all of us to support the government's initiative in this area of regulation-cutting which has great potential to get this country going again. That is what this government is about and what Australia must be about.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will not repeat the comments of previous speakers. I agree with the complimentary remarks made by honourable members on this side about His Honour's address. I have no truck at all with the criticism thrown at the content of the Administrator's address by the members opposite.

Taking part in this debate in reply to His Honour's address after the recent prorogation gives me some pleasure. When speaking of the government proposals for the forthcoming period, he presented a steady-as-she-goes program. The Leader of the Opposition and some of his colleagues spoke unfavourably about this approach, but there is no pleasing them whatever the government does. When previous programs included government interest in large projects which have brought extensive development, the members of the opposition projected their barbs of disapproval over here in no uncertain way. When they heard that the government has a program directed mainly at consolidation and quiet development, they again criticised it in their rather vapid fashion.

The test of any program is what the people in the Territory think about it. No doubt other honourable members, to a greater or lesser degree than myself, are asked questions and invited to make comments on a range of issues concerned with our government. I try to answer such questions in an objective way. I am asked for my comments on many things. I am asked for my assessment of ministers' performances. At different times, my constituents ask for my comments on the performance of members of the opposition and the performance of my colleagues. All of these subjects make interesting conversation. I am asked my personal views on government plans for the future of the Northern Territory and we discuss current government work. People in my electorate know me well enough to know that I usually speak as objectively as possible. If there is criticism due on any matter, I direct it where I believe it will do some good. On the other hand, if I believe that someone has done a good job, I also give praise. I believe praise is what can be directed at the government's program and that is exactly what I have told my constituents.

Ordinary people appreciate familiarity with their surroundings, especially those who are permanently settled. For the information of honourable members,

people in my electorate have the highest rate of home ownership in the Northern Territory - about 84%. Those sorts of people do not want to see continuous changes in their surroundings, in their towns, their roads and so on. They cannot assimilate big developments occurring every month and they cannot assimilate buildings being bulldozed down to make way for such developments. They cannot assimilate continuous grandiose road developments which bring disruption to their ordinary life. It is a well-known psychological fact that people must mentally and socially assimilate change before they can happily accept it. We heard a lot on this subject when a seemingly infinite number of talks were held with Aborigines in the Jabiru area before the Ranger mine commenced. The Aborigines accepted the idea of mining. The same rules of behaviour apply to non-Aborigines.

That is why there are no serious complaints out my way about our proposed legislative programs as presented in the Administrator's speech. People can appreciate it because it is stated in terms and quantities that are readily understandable. There was nothing big promised in the Administrator's speech. There was nothing catchy, nothing to grab the headlines. It was good, solid, steady stuff that people can understand. In speaking to my constituents, whilst there naturally is not 100% agreement with what the government does at any time, I have not heard serious disagreement with the proposed legislative program. I repeat what I said in my opening remarks. Our proposals for Northern Territory development show a serious, considered concern for the future of all who live in the Northern Territory within the constraints of federal funding.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I want to thank honourable members for their contributions to this debate in response to His Honour's address to this Assembly.

At the outset of this debate, the former Leader of the Opposition spoke with his usual verbosity and cynicism about the government's objectives. He criticised this government for lack of direction and lack of policy - the archetypal hot air balloon in full flight. We are used to this sort of knocking from the member and his colleagues, the men the knock-knock joke was named after. In saying that, I will exclude the member for Arnhem who this afternoon presented a quite considered address-in-reply speech. He stands tall among his colleagues. Perhaps, despite my comments yesterday, there is a new tall poppy in the opposition. He is certainly not on the frontbenches, but perhaps he is sitting behind the leader. He deserves congratulations for a very considered and thoughtful response and, unlike his colleagues, he at least has the capacity to recognise when good things are being done by the Northern Territory government. The other opposition members, quite frankly, are bereft of ideas and policies beyond those given to them by their masters in Canberra. They seem to have no recourse but to rubbish the plans and policies of their betters. The absurdity of the opposition's case is manifest by the threadbare arguments it has put forward to the Assembly in these sittings. Clearly, it has neither the wit nor the vision to grasp the economic realities of the disaster Mr Keating and Mr Hawke have brought on Australia.

I wish to reiterate that the policies which my government is putting in place are correct and responsible and based on a clear vision of where the Territory is going. They are sound policies, and they are the only policies which can rationally be applied at this time and in this economic climate. Our vision for the future is founded on basic principles. We intend to streamline government so that it clears the way for private business. We intend to take advantage of our fundamentally sound economy and introduce an

aggressive marketing policy for Territory goods and services. We will build industries by taking a larger share of local markets in Australia and opening up new markets overseas, particularly on our doorstep in South-east Asia, the fastest growing economic zone in the world. We intend to meet the budgetary nightmare prescribed by Canberra by leading the way with restraint in spending and improved efficiency. These are the foundations of our policy. It is a policy of consolidation, growth and responsible financial management.

I cannot give anybody a guarantee and nor could any government, that there will not be incidents where in hindsight one may have taken a different approach to a particular financial decision. Where errors are discovered, they will be dealt with. Fundamentally, we are moving strongly to a far more responsible financial management position. That is evidenced by one of the first moves of my new government: the announcement of the formation of the Public Accounts Committee. We are not frightened to be publicly accountable for the financial affairs of this government.

We have heard various ministers giving detailed analyses of their portfolios. I do not propose to go over these in detail, but let me offer the following summary of the government's strategy for the coming years. First, we have moved to reorganise government in order to make it leaner, more efficient and more focused on the task at hand.

Previously, the main thrust of development was geared through the Northern Territory Development Corporation. It has done an excellent job for the Northern Territory during its 8 years of operation. It has given major focus and drive to the development of the Northern Territory and it has had its knockers, many from the opposition. I might say that most of those knocks were ill-informed and undeserved, given the very difficult task that it had, to kick-start the Northern Territory economy in the early days of self-government. However, the Northern Territory is growing, times are difficult and we need new approaches. We are focusing all our energies on the development and diversification of specific sectors of our economy. This broad thrust on development will come through the various departments and authorities: Primary Production for primary industry; Mines and Energy for the mining and extractive industries; Business, Technology and Communications for the secondary and tertiary industries, including the specialist units promoting the Trade Development Zone as a manufacturing base for the Territory; the Tourist Commission for specialist marketing and the development of tourism; and, finally, Ports and Fisheries for the exciting developments in the fishing industry. The ministers have spoken about what is occurring in those areas. Each of those departments has a principal thrust. We have instructed all government department and agencies to put into place immediate measures to cut costs and red tape. I have made it crystal-clear that performance in the executive areas of those departments will be judged by its success or failure in meeting the requirements of developing and diversifying viable industries in the Northern Territory. These and other measures which will become clearer when the budget is announced, are indicative of my government's intention to make our style of government one of facilitation rather than strangulation of the enterprise of the private business sector. The government is also putting into place a series of measures to ensure the success of Territory industry.

In agriculture and horticulture, major studies of various sectors of the industry are under way to improve productivity. We heard an interesting outburst this afternoon from the member for Stuart when he gave us lessons on lychee growing. If he cared to actually do some homework before he opened his mouth in this Assembly, he would find that he is only about 5 to 10 years

behind this government's work in research, development, marketing and promotion of crops. There is not one crop he has mentioned where we are not better informed than he is. As I suggested in some interjections during his speech, he is only about 4 years behind the government.

The fishing industries will be served by the construction of the boat harbour in Frances Bay, as well as by marketing strategies designed to increase our share of the market. We are just completing a major study on the potential of a fishing harbour to be constructed at the upper areas of East Arm.

In secondary industry, the Trade Development Zone will be crucial to the development of new industries and the marketing and promotion of export-orientated manufacture. Already, 9 manufacturing companies have agreed to invest in the zone.

Tourism is one of the great propulsive industries. In recent years, the government has had the vision to assist in the provision of fundamental infrastructure, and now we intend to reap the benefit of that vision. We have a number of plans in place to develop this critical sector of the Territory's economy. The opening of new tourist sites in places like Litchfield Park and Kings Canyon will expand the range of tourist destinations. New marketing policies overseas and interstate, including new publicity approaches, are based on the fact that the declining dollar has made Australia a very attractive tourist destination internationally as well as a more attractive tourist destination for Australians by default, because it has suddenly become so expensive to travel overseas. By aggressive marketing, as is starting to occur, we are able to attract Australians to come to the Northern Territory in larger numbers as they rethink their holiday plans when they suddenly find that to go to Europe, America or Asia will cost them 40% more than it would have 3 months ago.

Mining is the other great propulsive industry. The industry is growing in the Territory. 4 new goldmines will have been opened in the Territory by the end of this year. It is growing despite the best efforts of Canberra to strangle it at birth. Every member of this Assembly knows what the federal Labor government has done to mining in the Territory. It has put the lid on uranium mining at the behest of the vocal minority of anti-nuclear fanatics. It has effectively closed to exploration the vast resources of Kakadu. As a result of the dogmatic theorising of an exiled English academic, it has kept an estimated \$36 000m in the ground. The only spark of sanity in the whole sorry mess of last night's budget was the decision finally to allow the sale of uranium to France rather than the federal government buying and stockpiling it.

Mr Speaker, we intend that our new marketing agency will make it easier and more profitable for miners to operate in the Territory by working with the Department of Mines and Energy in the promotion and marketing of exploration sites and prospective mines. We will be aggressively promoting the development of mining in the Northern Territory and the marketing of the resources in the Northern Territory where we have the capacity to do so rather than what has tended to be the policy of simply saying that miners are rich and miners can build the mines and they do not perhaps need the sort of encouragement and assistance that we look at in respect of other industries. This is particularly important when we consider the potential for small gold developments and other smaller mineral developments.

In all of this, we have not forgotten the human element. In education, we are establishing the university college which will provide an appropriate centre of higher education for the students of the Territory. For once, we will be able to move towards a situation where Territorians will not face the traumatic decision of splitting up the family or moving from the Northern Territory simply so that their children can have the opportunity of a university education.

We have continued the emphasis on Aboriginal education through Batchelor College and the Remote Area Teacher Education program. As the budget will show, we have given very careful thought to the needs of youth, to the needs of rural people and to the provision of arts and entertainments. We have a policy, expressed in a number of initiatives through the various portfolios, which is dedicated to the simple principle of making life better for all Territorians.

All of the things I have mentioned and all of the detailed information which ministers have presented to the Assembly add up to the fact that my government is committed to the growth of the Territory. We are not going for the big plushy projects, the glittering toys to dazzle simple minds - although the opposition would like us to. Our policy is one of consolidation, of steady, managed growth and of streamlined and efficient government. Despite the cynicism of the opposition members and the deliberate policies of the Commonwealth government to hamstring the Territory, we will grow and we will prosper. We will come through this crisis tougher and more efficient and a damned side more competitive than we went into it, and we will make the Territory the envy of Australia.

Motion agreed to.

SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I intend to present the address-in-reply to His Honour the Administrator at Government House at 11.30 am tomorrow. I invite all honourable members to accompany me at that time.

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the member for Millner be discharged from further attendance on the Select Committee on Constitutional Development and the Public Accounts Committee and that, in his place, the member for Arafura, Mr B. Collins, be appointed as a member of those committees.

Motion agreed to.

MOTOR ACCIDENTS (COMPENSATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 194)

Continued from 19 August 1986.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, I wish to advise the Leader of the Opposition that there has been an ongoing profit by TIO. He should also be aware that we started this financial year with approximately a \$6.7m deficit on the books, which we are writing off. His suggestion that the review resulted from pressure groups is incorrect. The review was commenced by the board of TIO in October 1985. The board was more than happy to receive the representations of various groups in the community.

I certainly shared the Leader of the Opposition's concern in relation to Mr Northeast. However, I am sure that he is aware that those matters have been addressed. He can also be assured that the board of TIO will continue constantly to monitor the MACA act.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he believed it to be inconsistent that the Work Health Act provides for weekly payments to surviving children while the MACA act provides for lump sum payments. In fact, MACA provides for lump sum payments only where there are no surviving parents. Where there is a surviving parent, weekly payments are made. The reason for making lump sum payments in circumstances where there are no surviving parents is that the financial consequences of the loss of both parents are likely to be greater. A lump sum payment is considered to be more useful in such a situation because it would allow greater freedom of choice in respect of debt reduction, investment, payment of education expenses and so on. It is to be noted that the lump sum payment in the case of the loss of both parents is actually made to a trustee. In that respect, the thinking in the 2 acts is different but, over time, the 2 acts will become similar and the inconsistencies will disappear.

Mr Speaker, 2 amendments have been proposed by the opposition. The first amendment relates to a 90-day limit. We will not accept that amendment. The purpose was to reduce delays but this amendment may actually encourage them. If the claimant's doctor or solicitor delays for 90 days, the TIO actually could be forced into a position of making a decision without the relevant facts before it. The government is more than happy to accept the second amendment from the opposition.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 9 agreed to.

Clause 10:

Mr SMITH: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 10.1.

The effect of this amendment is to place a time limit on the ability of the General Manager to request further information concerning claims. We believe that some restriction needs to be placed on the General Manager's ability to seek further information.

Mr Chairman, I can understand the concerns of the Leader of Government Business that this may prove difficult to enforce but I would have thought that, where there is a will, in this particular case, there would be a way. We are talking about a period of 3 months, and the information concerned will be fairly simple. It is additional information the General Manager may require to assist him or the board in making a decision on a particular case. Quite often a medical practitioner will be involved, and I know that from time to time there are problems with medical practitioners undertaking their obligations within reasonable periods on matters such as this. I would have thought that, by having a time limit of 90 days, and with the General Manager ensuring that all persons involved are aware of that limit, the operations of TIO could be performed much more expeditiously.

With the existing clause, the General Manager has no means of demanding information from a person who is proving tardy in providing it. This could

result in deferring the consideration of a person's claim for a long period of time because neither the person nor TIO has any ability to do anything about it.

Amendment negatived.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I move the amendment 85.2.

I am pleased that the government has indicated that it will accept this amendment. It is our view that it will help in the effective delivery of benefits to people under the MACA act.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10, as amended, agreed to.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

CREDIT UNIONS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 187)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, we have before us 2 or 3 minor amendments to the Credit Unions Amendment Bill, and I signify at the outset that the opposition supports these amendments.

In essence, the first amendment enables the minister to consent to the words 'credit union', 'credit unions' or 'credit society' appearing in the name of a body corporate, other than a credit union. The reason given is to enable organisations to operate in the Northern Territory which are, in fact, credit unions, but do not have those words in their names. Clearly, that is quite sensible and we support it.

Clauses 5 and 6 provide for further controls on foreign credit unions in the Northern Territory, and I understand that the term 'foreign credit unions' does not necessarily mean overseas credit unions. In fact, probably they will always be credit unions based elsewhere in Australia. These clauses, for the protection of residents of the Northern Territory, allow the minister, if he so desires, to place certain conditions and obligations that would not necessarily apply to all credit unions, on particular foreign credit unions which wish to operate in the Northern Territory. Again, that is a very sensible provision and we support it.

Mr Speaker, it is interesting to watch what is happening in the rest of Australia in relation to credit unions, building societies and banks. I think it is fair to say that the amount of deregulation introduced into the Australian financial sector by the Hawke government, particularly by the Treasurer, has started to result in a massive shake-up in the traditional patterns of financial institutions in Australia. Of course, credit unions are involved in that.

I am particularly interested in what is happening in NSW where currently there is a proposal to amalgamate 1 of the major building societies with 1 of the new banks - and, of course, I cannot think of the name of either of them off the top of my head. Certainly, that is an interesting development. Although the official figures have not been published, apparently the building society members are prepared to vote overwhelmingly in support of the amalgamation.

As time progresses, I think we shall see bigger and bigger financial institutions develop. In 10 to 15 years' time, there will not be too many of the smaller, traditional-type credit unions. They may not be able to exist in today's modern financial markets and may feel the need to grow in order to survive. Whether we support that or not, it is the way modern financial systems operate.

Mr Speaker, I have strayed from the point somewhat, but I conclude by reiterating the opposition's support for this bill.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, I intend to address my remarks basically to the second part of the bill which puts Northern Territory credit unions on an equal trading footing with foreign credit unions. Given that we accept the need for legislative controls over credit societies, it is incumbent upon the government to ensure that home-grown Northern Territory credit societies are not put in disadvantageous trading positions vis-a-vis other credit societies.

Mr Speaker, our own public service credit society now boasts membership in excess of 14 000. It holds assets in excess of \$27m and, in 1985-86, loans to members totalled \$14.8m. Membership of that credit union is no longer restricted to public servants and, with the opening of the credit union to the general public, we can expect continued and probably rapid growth in its membership. The Northern Territory Public Service Credit Society has branches in Darwin, Casuarina and Alice Springs and is soon to open a branch at Nhulunbuy. Agencies have also been established at Tennant Creek, Katherine, Palmerston, Northlakes, Fannie Bay, Parap and a new agency will open shortly within the Hibiscus shopping complex at Leanyer.

The society is active within the community. It sponsors a credit-awareness program with NTD Channel 8 and it is ever-willing to provide sponsorship for various sporting and cultural events. It is the major sponsor of the Darwin Greyhound Association and its premier race, the Darwin Greyhound Cup. It sponsored the NT Junior Soccer Championship and the recent Australian Mens' Hockey Championships at Marrara. It sponsored the last Northern Territory Eisteddfod, which drew participants from all over the Northern Territory, and it also promotes various major sporting events in and around Darwin, including the NTL Grand Final and the Darwin Rugby League Grand Final. It provides services to members, including access to Visa Card. It provides automatic death cover on loans, an insurance broking service for its members, and a range of member discounts at various retail outlets around the Territory.

Much of the credit for the success of the society lies with its chairman Mr Geoff Gray, who was a foundation member, his obviously competent and forward-thinking board, and the enthusiastic staff which the credit union seems to have been able to attract over a number of years. Given the ability to trade on equal terms with interstate societies, and given that all of its 14000 members are Territorians who have commitments in the Northern Territory, the credit union is capable in future of fulfilling much of the role that one would see a state bank filling. Nothing would give me greater heart than to see a home-grown organisation, such as a Northern Territory credit society, become an investment leader in the many worthwhile projects which are currently on Northern Territory drawing boards.

Mr Speaker, I support the bill and commend it to honourable members.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the bill and to say a few words about building societies and the financial market.

I recall a debate some time ago in this Assembly about credit unions and whether or not controls on credit unions should be relaxed very substantially to allow them to become involved in all forms of transactions in the financial market. The debate was on whether there should be a difference between a bank and a credit union, just to take 2 examples. Varying views were expressed on that subject. With the advent of deregulation, which is certainly very welcome in the banking arena, and the tendency toward amalgamation of financial institutions alluded to by the Leader of the Opposition, one can only see this sort of thing going further and further. Provided it increases the services available to customers, it is fairly difficult to oppose. Of course, we should be mindful that monopolies should not be allowed to develop in the financial arena.

Already we see that banks have expanded their range of activities away from the simple role of banking that they fulfilled many years ago. They now offer loans, leasing, financial advice and the like. At least 1 of Australia's major banks is pretty heavily into the travel business. You can obtain advice there on where you should take your next holiday and purchase your airline tickets at the same time. At some time in the future, I would not be surprised to see insurance sold in banks while financial institutions offer a range of services to customers. For that matter, I would not be surprised if 1 of them opened a video hire outlet in its halls or perhaps sold real estate as well. I am not sure that I would object to any of those things occurring; I have always believed that people with business premises should be able to sell virtually any product or service provided it meets health requirements and the like.

As the member for Leanyer mentioned, we have 1 building society in the Northern Territory. It seems to be a successful local institution and that is very creditable. At present, any large organisation from interstate could establish a credit union in the Northern Territory and, perhaps with greater resources, simply swamp the local organisation. I think it would be a shame if that occurred.

The legislation before us today proposes to give the minister some powers over foreign credit societies operating in the Northern Territory. He can require them to meet certain criteria otherwise they might find registration somewhat difficult. I support this control although, unfortunately, it is an additional control imposed by government in the financial sector. However, in this Assembly, we have shown ourselves to be somewhat parochial, from time to time, when it comes to Territory institutions and Territory investment. The savings of Territorians, be they with banks, insurance companies or credit unions, should be used to support Territory development wherever we can influence that. We would be loath to see it siphoned off to a national board which would decide where in the country it would be invested. The Commonwealth Superannuation Board operates in that way at present. Our long-standing bitch with it is that, although enormous sums of money are contributed to its fund by people in the Northern Territory, these have no relationship to the amount of its investment in the Northern Territory. That was a motivating factor for this government to try to promote a Northern Territory government superannuation scheme and, hopefully, in due course, that will come into play.

Mr Speaker, with those few words I commend the bill.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments. I think the common thread that ran through the debate this afternoon was that times are changing and the role of institutions such as credit societies is becoming increasingly diverse.

There is a need for the Territory to ensure that its legislation is in step with the rest of Australia and changes that are occurring nationally. These amendments to the legislation will provide for that. I also thank honourable members for their recognition of the work of the local credit societies in the Northern Territory. As the honourable member for Leanyer said, the Northern Territory Public Service Credit Society has provided great impetus to a number of projects, including greyhound racing. Its contribution to the development of that particular sport has been most welcome. Interestingly enough, one of the feature events on the greyhound-racing calendar is the night when entry can be obtained free of charge by the production of the member's plastic card. That night attracts the biggest attendance for the year.

I believe that credit cooperatives have a role to play among financial institutions which are diversifying in the ways outlined by the member for Fannie Bay. The amendment providing for the registration of foreign credit cooperatives in the Northern Territory will only enhance the market and provide a better service for all Northern Territorians. Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

See Minutes for new clause 6A agreed to without debate.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

MOTOR VEHICLES AMENDMENT BILL (No 2)
(Serial 192)

Continued from 18 June 1986

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make a couple of brief comments in relation to this bill and indicate to the Minister for Transport and Works that it is the intention of the opposition to support it. We note that the bill makes a number of amendments to the Motor Vehicles Act. It repeals an amendment act of 1979 which has never been commenced. As the minister mentioned in his second-reading speech, it appears that a court case indicated that this act would be ineffective and so it was not commenced. Further, the bill empowers the minister to consent to the issue of a licence for a hire car to someone convicted of an offence punishable by more than 6 months imprisonment. The current situation is that there is an absolute prohibition on the issue or transfer of a licence to such an applicant. There are circumstances in other states where ministerial discretion prevails. As I have said, the opposition has no hesitation in supporting such ministerial discretion.

Further, the bill removes the historical distinction between A and Z class licences. The Z class licences were those that were issued before April 1971 or those that had run for at least 10 years. The bill reduces the periods for which a licence must be held before being transferred. It reduces them from 3 or 5 years, depending on the class of licence, to 12 months. Secondly, it reduces the period for which reapplication can be made for a licence after previously holding one. The former situation was that 5 years had to elapse before reapplication. This bill will reduce it to 12 months.

The bill empowers the minister to determine and gazette maximum fares and charges for a public motor vehicle. This is currently done through the regulation-making powers and has to be approved by the administrator. I have

some concerns about this because the minister claims that having the fares and charges set by an instrument in the gazette rather than by regulation would provide what he described as 'a more flexible and responsible approach towards fare setting'. I presume that 'responsible' should in fact read 'responsive', and that either situation would be responsible. However, I presume that the minister is arguing that it is somehow more expeditious to be able to do this through the gazette than by regulation. It is certainly true that a regulation has to be endorsed by the Administrator in the Executive Council, but it is difficult to see how this is a more time-consuming or, to use the ministers own words, a 'less flexible, less responsive approach' than what is proposed in this bill. I query the Minister for Transport and Works on that, and I presume that he will be able to give me intimate details of how the life of his department, himself and public administration within the Northern Territory will be streamlined by this particular change.

We note that the bill validates invalidly granted licences. In his second-reading speech, the minister said that there was provision to cover the technically invalid issue of a licence, which has presumably happened only once, in 1982, due to a misinterpretation of what constituted the transfer of a licence. I also note the minister's reference to the possibility of amending the Motor Vehicle Act to enable a taxi licence to be used as a security for a loan. We look forward to hearing about progress on that matter as, I am sure, will taxi licence holders across the Territory, because there is considerable investment in those licences and it is appropriate that people with investment tied up in that way should be able to use it as security for loans. I presume that the discussions concern the best process of dealing with cases of default on a loan taken out with a licence as collateral. I look forward to hearing any comments from the minister, either now or at some future time, on what legislative requirements may be necessary in that regard.

In conclusion, I reiterate the particular point that I hope the minister will examine. It concerns the reason for the gazettal of fare changes, as opposed to what would appear to be equally expeditious regulation-making processes.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is without doubt that the taxi and hire car industry is one of the most regulated industries in the world. Governments issue licences to protect the people who have the right to run these services. For example, in the Top End, it can cost up to \$80 000 simply for the licence which enables you to carry people.

Deregulation of the taxi industry is not an easy matter and the historical process by which it has come about is long and complex. In essence, it smacks of the mercantilism of England in Adam Smith's day. I do not have easy answers, but it does horrify me to think that a licence which has been issued by government can be valued at such a high rate.

This particular amendment bill removes some of the regulations and impositions put upon people with such licences, and that is a step in the right direction. There is no point in going over all the points mentioned by the minister and by the member for MacDonnell. However, I support the proposal that, if a person has been convicted of an offence which carries a maximum penalty of 6 months' gaol or more, he should not be automatically disqualified from obtaining a licence. The nature of the offence and the degree of punishment should be taken into account. The person may have been found guilty but, because of the circumstances surrounding the case, have spent no time in goal. I believe that the ministerial discretion provision is very wise in this case. I know that the industry welcomes the reduction of

the length of time a taxi licence needs to be held before it can be sold. It also welcomes the reduction of the time allowed between selling one licence and obtaining another. That will now be 12 months instead of 5 or 3 years and, with ministerial discretion, possibly even less.

Like the member for MacDonnell, I was interested in the setting of fees and charges for taxis by instrument in the gazette. Although the minister said that the more flexible and responsive approach to fare setting seems to be in the interest of the industry and the public, I am a bit worried that the people who provide the service have input as an organised group whereas the consumers of taxi services are a much more diffuse group of people. I wonder whether they have been consulted. I hope it works out in practice.

The good aspect is that the administration will be simplified. Some of the bureaucratic clutter will be removed from the industry and, hopefully, it will respond in a positive manner. It is hoped that it will provide a more responsive and responsible service. If the service is not provided, the government's answer will be to issue more licences. That will be an incentive for licensees to maintain the value of their licence by providing a good service.

Mention was made of the validation of a past act. That is pure common sense and would be supported by all those who have studied it. It has also been said that complaints about taxi services have decreased and I think that is true in relation to Alice Springs. I used to receive a large number of complaints, but I have not received any for some time. However, I must confess that, last Sunday, I arrived in Darwin on the milk run at about 7.15. Even though a taxi had been booked by the Assembly a couple of days earlier, it took 3 phone calls to get one out there. I fell into conversation with an interesting gentleman from the United States, originally from Austria, who looked to be about 60 years old. He revealed that he was 79 and was going out to Kakadu for 3 days. Thus, while waiting for a taxi, I had a very interesting conversation.

Mr Dondas: It is marvellous whom you meet at a taxi stand.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Indeed.

I understand from the minister that work is being done in relation to the taxi plate being used as security for loans. We have not resolved the legal complexities yet but I believe that will occur in time.

I welcome the bill because it will reduce the red tape. As I said in the address-in-reply debate, red tape is strangling this country and every step that we take to reduce it is a step in the right direction. I support the bill.

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank honourable members for their comments.

The member for MacDonnell queried the flexibility of the amendment. To increase fares by means of regulation is a time-consuming process. It may take 3 or 4 months for the regulation to be approved. The southern and northern divisions of the Taxi Advisory Council seem to function well. Their recommendations for fare increases are not arrived at hastily. Once a decision has been taken to increase fares, it should be capable of being implemented quickly, not 4 or 5 months later.

Mr Bell: Cabinet deliberations would still be necessary.

Mr DONDAS: Once the department has evaluated the application by the Taxi Advisory Council for a fare increase, it can be submitted to me for consideration. I can discuss it with my ministerial colleagues without necessarily requiring a Cabinet decision. That is why we want to do it by means of gazettal. In other words, the discretion ...

Mr Bell: In other words, it removes the Cabinet deliberation.

Mr DONDAS: Yes, because that is a time-consuming process. I hope that will satisfy the member for MacDonnell because he raised a very valid point and I wanted to clarify it in the interests of the industry.

The use of the licence as security for loans was raised. I am unable to say when that particular amendment will be ready. We still have a few problems that have to be resolved. I hope it will be ready later this year.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

CRIMINAL LAW (REGULATORY OFFENCES) BILL
(Serial 190)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Deputy Speaker, the opposition has difficulty in agreeing to this bill in the absence of an adequate explanation as to how it will affect the laws of the Northern Territory. A quick look at the second clause will indicate to all honourable members the wide-ranging effect that this bill will have on offences committed within the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, we have not been able to examine all the possible consequences and effects that this legislation may have on the inhabitants of the Northern Territory. The minister's second-reading speech contained inadequate information to obtain a clear picture on the wide-ranging effects of the bill.

Basically, the bill increases the list of offences under both the Motor Vehicle and Traffic Acts to be classified as regulatory. Regulatory offences may be dealt with summarily and are basically offences of strict liability; that is, the prosecution does not have to prove intent. There is another category of summary offences; that is, simple crime. Care should be taken that inappropriate offences are not classified as offences of strict liability. After all, the basis of our criminal system is still, optimistically, that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty. Thus, the intent to commit an offence is an essential element of our justice system. Within our system, the onus on proving intent to commit a crime still lies with the prosecution.

We have checked as many of the listed offences as we have been able to. For instance, one of my concerns is with section 127 of the Motor Vehicles Act which relates to one of the offences which is to be made a regulatory offence. Subsection (2) says: 'any such person shall not refuse or fail, without reasonable cause, to comply with any such notice'. The important words in that subsection are 'without reasonable cause'. If this bill is passed in its present form, it will be the responsibility of the defendant to prove to the court that the cause is 'reasonable'. Nobody in this Assembly could adequately define what is 'reasonable'. That has occupied the minds of the

judiciary for eons and it will continue to occupy the minds of the judiciary. This bill will put the onus on the defendant rather than the prosecution to prove what is reasonable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have similar reservations in respect of some of the other provisions. I would ask members to refer to section 26(1)(c) of the Traffic Act, which says: 'A person shall not, upon a public street, entrance or public place, leave any motor vehicle, vehicle, bicycle or animal unattended in such a position as to obstruct traffic or unreasonably cause inconvenience'. Once again, the meaning of the word 'unreasonably' is open to interpretation. Even though it is not a question of the defender's perception of 'reasonableness', we do not think that it is appropriate to make such an offence one of strict liability. Once again, the onus of proving what is reasonable within the law will be on the defender and not the prosecution.

Strict liability offences were all statutory offences. It was believed that the issue at hand, usually one of public safety, was such as to warrant such treatment in the public interest. An example is the production or sale of contaminated goods. Obviously, it is in the public interest that the onus of responsibility be placed on the defendant.

However, in relation to many of the areas addressed in this bill, it is the opposition's opinion that the onus of proof should remain with the Crown. We do not believe that the scope of regulatory offences should be widened without very careful consideration. These matters affect the liberty and the very rights of citizens within our community. We do not believe that to change the law in this manner, by means of a single wide-ranging clause in a single bill, covered by an explanation filling approximately 1 page in Hansard, is anywhere near adequate in terms of justifying why those specific offences should be changed to regulatory offences.

In conclusion, obviously the opposition does not have the numbers in this Assembly, but I would plead with the minister at least not to pass this bill immediately. I would ask him to reconsider the aspects that I have mentioned. Optimistically, the Assembly might then receive an adequate explanation of why offences in some 60 or 70 sections of 2 different acts will be made regulatory offences. I seek an explanation as to why each one of those should become regulatory offences because it continues to impinge upon the liberty of all citizens of the Northern Territory.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, listening to the speech of the member for Nhulunbuy, one would almost think that we did not have any regulatory offences. We already have some in the Criminal Code. As was explained in the minister's second-reading speech, the majority of those which we intend to move were regulatory offences before the existence of the Criminal Code. One did not hear too big a noise from the community over them. Perhaps his sense of propriety is out of proportion to the issue itself.

The Criminal Code classifies offences into 3 areas: the first, and most serious, is crime; the second is regulatory offences; and the third is simple offences. The code says that we must define in legislation which offences constitute crimes, and the same applies to regulatory offences. Legislation must define them. Any offence that does not fall into either of those categories is a simple offence. The member is quite right; a regulatory offence is an offence of strict liability. It is not necessary that intent be proved, as is required in relation to a criminal offence. The Minister explained in his second-reading speech that it was the intent of the Criminal Code to relieve the burden on the courts by determining the first argument of

whether an offence constituted a crime or a regulatory offence. The code removes that responsibility from the courts and places it upon the Legislative Assembly.

When the Criminal Code was enacted on 1 January 1984, the Regulatory Offences Act was enacted at the same time. Now it is considered that we were too cautious at that time over the offences which were put into the regulatory category. Whilst it has not occurred often, there have been a few occasions when this has caused some trouble to the courts. Offences which were of a regulatory nature, and accepted to be so by the courts before enactment of the Criminal Code, were classified as simple offences because they had not been declared to be regulatory.

This bill intends to correct that position and to declare certain offences to be regulatory. It covers large numbers of them, and I agree with the honourable member for Nhulunbuy that checking all of them presents a mammoth task. However, these were accepted as regulatory offences previously and I do not believe this presents a problem of the magnitude suggested by the member for Nhulunbuy. I support reclassification of offences in those sections of the Motor Vehicles Act and the Traffic Act as regulatory offences. I hope that it will provide some deterrent because we have a horrendous record of road accidents in the Territory, often resulting from bad driving habits. I support the bill.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I am afraid the member for Nhulunbuy is under a misapprehension regarding this bill. If the facts were as he stated, it obviously would be quite unreasonable to expect honourable members to pass this piece of legislation. However, he is under a misapprehension, and I would have been quite pleased to have given him any advice he required if he had difficulty in understanding it. A reasonable period of time has elapsed since the introduction of this bill. However, I would like to assure the member that all the offences under sections of these acts covered by the bill, which we are now intending to make regulatory offences, were treated as regulatory offences before the introduction of the Criminal Code. They were not so listed when the code was introduced, possibly because the government exercised extra caution at that time. It is the intention now to declare them to be regulatory offences again.

Section 81 of the Traffic Act says that it is an offence to drive a motor vehicle whilst under the influence of alcohol. That has to be a regulatory offence because, regardless of the intent of the offender, he is driving the vehicle while under the influence of intoxicating liquor. In terms of section 127, 'reasonable cause' is a defence under the act, and that defence remains under the act. The fact that it is a regulatory offence does not preclude the offender from defending the matter in front of the court. Those defences are laid out in the act.

I can reassure the member for Nhulunbuy about the issues he raised. We are legislating in relation only to offences which were dealt with as regulatory offences by the courts before the introduction of the Criminal Code.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a third time.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I listened with some interest to the Attorney-General's reply to the debate. I accept that there is a need for regulatory offences and I am prepared even to accept the Attorney-General's assurance that all the changes proposed in this bill relate to offences that were deemed to be regulatory prior to the introduction of the Criminal Code. However, I was in this Assembly when the Criminal Code was introduced and debated exhaustively.

At that time, the then Attorney-General - the present member for the Northern Territory in the House of Representatives - provided reams of information on every facet of the Criminal Code. It was a monstrous task, but it was done.

In spite of that exhaustive information and copious explanations offered by the then Attorney-General, we proposed many amendments. However, in the long run, this Assembly - including the opposition - accepted all those arguments, and the Criminal Code was enacted. Now we have a piece of paper before us which intends to change the very nature of a large section of that code. I find the explanations inadequate to say the least and I find the passage of legislation of this nature dangerous.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I think that the honourable member is now overacting. I was quite concise when I said that all these offences were of a regulatory nature prior to the introduction of the Criminal Code. He could have obtained some legal advice. He could have asked me for information regarding these matters over the last couple of months. However, he has left it until this last minute to read it and now, because of his ignorance, he is holding up the passage of this bill. It would not be so bad if he presented some facts with a solid basis behind them, but he speaks from ignorance. He will not accept the fact that he is ignorant on this matter and he keeps making noises. That is something for which I have very little tolerance.

I reiterate that all these offences were regulatory offences before the introduction of the Criminal Code; that is, they were offences of strict liability. They had been defined as such for many years but, since the introduction of the code, they have not been. It is obvious that they should be.

I believe that it is ridiculous for anyone to suggest that there should be a requirement to prove intent in charges of driving under the influence of liquor, refusing breath tests, failure to have efficient brakes on a bicycle, and matters like that.

Motion agreed to, bill read a third time.

CORONERS AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 185)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Motion agreed to, bill read a second time.

In committee:

Bill taken as a whole.

Clause 7:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I move amendments 87.1 and 87.2.

The effect of the amendments is very clear. It is proposed to amend proposed section 7A, and the effect of the amendment would be to omit 7A(1)(b)(i). Its effect would be to prohibit the coroner from delegating his responsibilities under the Coroners Act to another person. I had some discussion with my colleagues. There appears to be some particular fear and loathing about fire within the legal community. I have some difficulty in grasping why fire inspires such fear and loathing. Floods and famine are acts of God, I suppose, but there are many other acts of deliberate destruction which are committed in our community and do not have to be referred to the coroner. However, because of the nature of the legal community, fire apparently inspires particular fear and loathing. It needs to be referred to the coroner's office. A small amount of research has indicated to me that that is the case in all states in Australia. Given that those are the legal requirements, I feel that that power should not be able to be delegated. There may be a case that there is no requirement for it to be referred to the coroner, and that might make for fascinating legal argument but, while it remains a legal requirement, the opposition feels it should not be able to be delegated.

Mr MANZIE: In response to the member for Nhulunbuy, I agree that the decision of the coroner to dispense with the holding of an inquest should be made by himself and not delegated to a third party.

Amendments agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: I do not know if this is an appropriate time to raise this matter or not, but there is a printing error. The Speaker has the power to request the Clerk to make an alteration to correct a misprint and in this particular case a heading has been left out after clause 9. It should read 'Division 1A Common Law'. I ask that the Speaker advise the Clerk.

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill read a third time.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL BILL (Serial 186)

Continued from 18 June 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, this bill is part of a national scheme to provide for the biological control of pests. Biological control is defined as the control, but not necessarily the wiping out, of one organism by the release of another organism. The bill establishes the Northern Territory Biological Control Authority, to be constituted by a minister from the Australian Agricultural Council, who could be any state or Commonwealth minister. As a matter of practice, the authority's functions are delegated to an officer of the Department of Primary Production.

There is provision for the declaration of both the proposed target organisms and the agent organisms, which are the organisms released to control the target. Declarations for both categories are made by a similar procedure. Either there is a unanimous recommendation by the Australian Agricultural Council or an individual applies for a declaration. Any such application is

referred to the council. Where the council does not recommend a declaration, the applicant is advised and given the reasons or circumstances for the decision of the council. Where the council recommends unanimously in favour of the application, the authority must give public notice that it is considering making a declaration, and set out relevant particulars and invite public comment within 6 weeks. If, after consulting with the council and taking into account public submissions and other reports, the authority considers there is evidence that a person or the environment would be affected adversely by the proposed control, it may direct or arrange for a further inquiry so long as the council has unanimously recommended such action.

I hope that I will not become involved in debate about 'mandatory may's' tonight. It would make life so much simpler if we did not have to do that. A declaration of a target organism is made if the authority is satisfied that the organism is causing harm in the Northern Territory, or that it is likely to be controllable by biological means, or that the control would not cause significant harm to a person or environment, or that such harm would be significantly less than that caused by failure to control the organism. Similarly, a declaration in respect of an agent organism is made if the authority is satisfied its release could result in control of a target organism in the Northern Territory, or its release would not cause significant harm, or the harm would be significantly less than harm caused by the failure to control and harm caused by the release of another organism to control the target organism. Neither declaration can be made without the unanimous recommendation of the council, and I note that the declaration of an agent organism may set out conditions for release. That basically sets out how, where, under what circumstances and by whom the job will be done.

The bill also makes provision for declarations of target organisms in emergency circumstances where there could be a serious effect on the health of humans, animals, plants, or significant damage to the economy or environment. The control is possible by releasing an organism where no significant adverse effects are likely. Again, such a declaration can be made only by the authority on the unanimous recommendations of the council.

There is a fairly comprehensive prohibition on legal proceedings. Under clause 34, no action can be instituted or continued to prevent release of an agent organism nor to recover damages for loss caused by such release. There is some necessity for that provision, as has been indicated by the Salvation Jane dispute in South Australia. However, proceedings are permissible to cover damages for loss caused by a release where the release has had a significant effect on another third organism. An example would be cane toads. They have done a significant job in wiping out the cane beetle, but they have caused other damage which would allow a claimant to prosecute if the agent organism was responsible for an economic or human calamity. Proceedings can also go ahead for recovery of damages for loss caused by a release, where specialists at the time of the release had reasonable grounds to expect such an effect. That is quite reasonable. It also applies where, in making a declaration, the authority did not take into account that the release could have such an effect. There is a great onus of responsibility upon the authority.

There is a similar provision prohibiting proceedings in respect of loss or damage suffered in the Northern Territory by reason of a release under a declaration by an authority in another state in the national scheme. I think it is probably too late to make a claim against cane toads. However, the bill does contain detailed provisions in respect of inquiries held under the legislation. Hearings must be public unless this is not in the public

interest. The inquiry must consider the broader community viewpoint. I note that some decisions under the legislation can be reviewed by a court or tribunal.

We have some reservations about this legislation. There is no obligation to hold a public inquiry where there is evidence of adverse affects. This is where we get into the 'may' and 'shall' components of certain clauses within this legislation. Public inquiries will be only at the discretion of the authority, although no declaration can be made without the unanimous recommendation of the Australian Agricultural Council. This means that there is no guarantee that public input at an early stage will have any effect. The limitation on legal proceedings is, in our view, an unacceptable infringement on individual rights. This is further aggravated by the restriction on circumstances in which an action can be taken for damages or loss. Members will note that even permissible proceedings can occur only on the basis of loss - after the event. The proceedings cannot proceed while damage is occurring. We believe that, if individual rights are to be sacrificed for the common good, individuals must have the right to be compensated for loss. Why should they alone pay for the common good? This act is binding on the Crown, but the Crown is not liable to prosecution. This provision is basically a based upon the notion of all care and no responsibility.

I can accept that there are advantages in a national scheme of this nature. Indeed, it is with a degree of pleasure that I note the amount of uniform legislation being developed between the states. This is another example. However, I believe that, as long as adequate responsibility is not given to this, people will be concerned about its possible effects. With that in mind, I will be proposing amendments in the committee stage. I hope I will not have to become involved in a debate about the legal or legislative meaning of 'may' or 'shall'. The amendments will require the authority to instigate a public inquiry where there is an obvious example of the public good not being served. I hope then to have my second success in the committee stages of a bill.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, biological control is a very fascinating topic. I first came across it many years ago when I learned about a method used by the United States to help keep down the fly numbers which affected the cattle industry. The flies were coming over from Mexico. The method was to breed flies and, in the larva or maggot stage, to irradiate the larva with a dose of that terrible stuff called radiation. It was not sufficient to kill the fly but it was sufficient to make the egg and sperm of the male and female flies infertile or dead. The maggots turned into flies and were released deliberately into the wild population of flies. Apparently, with this particular breed of fly, once a female has mated, it mates only once. If, perchance, it happens to have mated with a male which has been irradiated and has dead sperm, the eggs produced by that fly are infertile, and that reduces the total overall fly population. It does not kill off the flies entirely, but it keeps the numbers down and is very effective. It is an ongoing process. I am sure, Mr Speaker, that as a Centralian you would be very interested in ways we might keep the flies down in central Australia. I know a certain weekend farmer who copes with a host of flies and wishes a method other than swatting could be found to reduce their numbers.

Another method of biological control used these days is a bacteria which you can buy and effectively use as a spray. This bacteria is totally harmless to humans when it is sprayed upon cabbages, lettuces or other vegetables which are attacked by a variety of caterpillars. When the caterpillar eats this spray, the bacteria get to work and attack its gut lining. This may not be

nice for the caterpillar but it stops feeding virtually immediately. The gut lining ruptures and the caterpillar dies. It is very effective. We had better not tell the animal liberationists about that because they will become upset. It is a very effective procedure which does not involve sprays that could have adverse affects on the consumers of the vegetables.

Australia has had some very good successes with biological control. The one that comes to mind most readily is the introduction of the cactoblastis moth which attacks prickly pear. Prickly pear is a fairly rare plant in Australia these days, but there was a time in the 1930s when it was taking over large tracts of the country. I have seen black and white film taken in those days. It shows vast tracts of land covered in prickly pear which made it impossible to run sheep and cattle. The cactoblastis moth was introduced from overseas and the prickly pear became virtually history. If you travel in Queensland, you may find the occasional prickly pear bush and also the occasional cactoblastis moth having a chew on it.

One of the problematic results of attempts at biological control is that rather nasty creature *Bufo marinus*, which is the cane toad. It was introduced to clean up one pest: the cane beetle. It may have had reasonable success there, but we now have this repulsive toad poisoning water and killing dogs, cats, birds, poultry and native wildlife. It is spreading from Queensland and apparently has been in the Territory for some time. It is certainly a repulsive animal. It is spreading throughout Australia and it does not seem to be taking any notice of political borders. That is one of the reasons why this legislation is being implemented on an Australia-wide basis. These things can affect the whole of Australia. I read recently that *Bufo marinus* was trying to get into Canberra. I am sure they will welcome it.

In my time in the Assembly, we have discussed attempts to control palm beetles by biological means. That seems to have been a neutral exercise which has not affected third organisms, as *Bufo marinus* has. However, it has not been as successful as the cactoblastis moth. Myxomatosis has had some success when used to attack animals. I wish it had had more success in the Territory. Myxomatosis is spread by mosquitoes which are one of the main vectors for carrying the disease. In the dry central Australian area, it is not all that effective. I am pleased to note that the minister is working on a Spanish flea to act as a vector to help clean up the rabbits in drier areas such as central Australia. Having had the odd grapevine nicked by a rabbit, I would be very pleased to see this attempt made.

Basically, the legislation before us resulted from an action by some farmers and beekeepers to attempt biological control of Paterson's Curse or Salvation Jane. This threw a spanner in the works and it was felt that a mechanism should be available to decide what constitutes the public interest. This will be done by the Australian Agricultural Council with which our minister is involved. I believe that our minister, and the ministers responsible for primary production in the states, will be very diligent in checking the work that their officers do on possible biological control agents.

Agents will be tested exhaustively to determine their effects. An organism may be targeted and public input obtained, which the legislation allows for, and a decision made on the best method or attacking agent to be used. But there is a risk that testing may not cover all the organisms that the particular control agent might attack, nor the possible side effects. That is of concern. I am sure that every effort will be made and that studies will be conducted overseas, where we usually obtain biological control agents,

to check what sort of things they attack and their possible effects in Australia. We do not want to release something which will produce detrimental side effects.

The blackberry is another problem plant for some people. It is a problem in a political sense also, because some people make their living from the production of blackberries for jam. In other cases, the blackberry is a great nuisance on farms and has been declared a noxious weed. Someone took the law into his own hands recently, broke quarantine regulations and introduced a rust from overseas which acts as a biological control on the blackberry. Whilst one section of the community is no doubt delighted, another section is upset. That is why we have this uniform legislation before us. It will ensure full input by the community in determining the public interest. Not everyone will be satisfied every time.

It is a very important area and deserves the support of this Assembly. The legislation must be uniform throughout Australia and I believe the controls and provisions in the bill, which are quite extensive, will give us a reasonable basis to determine the public interest and to look after individuals who may be affected by the legislation inadvertently.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will say at the outset that I have no argument with the intent of this bill. I think any sensible person would agree that biological control of pests, whether animal or plant, should be introduced throughout Australia so that the country can maintain its condition of relative freedom, in comparison with other countries, from undesirable botanical and biological pests.

The bill is rather unusual in that there is a combination of clear descriptive prose coupled with very convoluted circumlocution and duplication almost to the point of tautology. I believe it could have been written in half the time and half the space, and used a fraction of the trees required to supply the paper. I was hesitant about saying this, because usually everybody praises our Northern Territory legislative draftsman, but I am not too worried now because the minister has told me that this a copy of legislation used in other states to achieve uniformity. However, it appears to me to be the work of a draftsman with L-plates. He obeys all the road rules with the intention of good driving, other drivers are able to understand what he intends, but he is so slow and cumbersome. Not many people enjoy driving behind a learner driver; by choice, most of us drive in another lane. I would prefer to see another piece of legislation. Whilst I do not argue with the intent of the legislation in any way, I wish it could have been prepared better. I know how far and fast animal and plant pests can travel. This legislation is so cumbersome that its implementation will be like trying to kill the proverbial ant with a sledgehammer or me trying to trip the light fantastic in my gumboots.

Mr Coulter: Oh, the smell!

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: My gumboots don't smell!

In reading this bill, I have been impressed by its requirements for unanimity concerning the identification of any biological pest in Australia and any action decided upon. It applies to the states, the Territory and the Commonwealth. It is reassuring to know the legislation will have uniformity.

Certain aspects of this legislation are of interest to me. It is not only relevant to agricultural pests but others also. An example is the palm leaf beetle. Garden palms are not grown for agricultural but for horticultural purposes, although perhaps that is splitting hairs.

Other members have mentioned cane toads, which fall into the category of undesirable imports to the Northern Territory, like some other travellers from down south. The cane toad is rather easier to dispose of than are undesirable people who come up here to advise on all sorts of matters, but that is another subject.

I am very pleased to see that the Northern Territory Biological Control Authority will consist of 1 person: the minister. I have always considered that the best committee is a committee of 1. In that sense, it will not be cumbersome because the minister will be able to take decisions by himself, no doubt with advice from officers of the Department of Primary Production. He will be able to respond faster than if he had to call meetings to obtain advice before acting. The minister will have powers of delegation, except for making declarations and conducting inquiries. In consideration of target agents and organisms, unanimity between the agricultural councils of the states and the Territory is mentioned. I agree with that.

Clause 13 is headed, 'Referral of Target Application to Council'. I had difficulty understanding this at first. I was unsure whether it referred to other legislation in the Northern Territory or legislation in other parts of Australia. The minister assured me that the words 'relevant law' relate to laws in force elsewhere in Australia. I consider that clause 14, 'Notice of Rejection of Target Applications', is far too wordy. The same intent could have been expressed far more concisely and been just as useful. In fact, wading through this was like wading through mud up to your knees; you get there eventually but, by gee, it is heavy going.

I am very pleased to see that any notice of target and agent organisms must have certain conditions attached to it. One is that an invitation shall be extended to the public to object to or support the declaration of an organism as a target organism or an agent organism.

In his second-reading speech the minister gave us examples, no doubt on the advice of officers of the Department of Primary Production, of certain noxious weeds. One of those was hyptis. Assuming the Northern Territory Biological Control Authority declares hyptis to be an agent organism and a target organism is found for its eradication, as a member of the public, I would be forced to object most strongly to that. I believe that many of our noxious weeds and noxious insects are declared noxious without a true evaluation of other qualities. Everybody who has had anything to do with agriculture knows what hyptis is. Its full name means 'sweet smelling' and anybody who has smelled it will know that it has an aromatic smell. In fact, if it is chemically treated, it can produce a volatile menthol.

For the information of honourable members, hyptis can be used in many ways. It can be used as an anti-rheumatic and an anti-suppuritic and it can be used as a bath additive to restore you to full vim and vigour after a hard day's work. Taken internally, it can be an antispasmodic. When the root is decocted, it can be used as an emmenagogic.

The roots can be used as an appetiser and it can be taken internally for infections of the uterus. It can be used externally for headaches and boils. Internally, with lime juice, it can be used for colic and stomach-ache. It

can also be used against catarrh. For those of us who have been milk producing, it can be used as a lactogenic. The only thing it does not do is produce babies that play 'Advance Australia Fair'. That is one of the substances that has been declared a noxious weed in the Northern Territory.

The member for Sadadeen mentioned the blackberry. I could suggest a biological control which does not cost too much money, provided one has good fences. It also brings in a good income. I refer to goats. They will clear away any blackberries you have on your property. As any member who reads 'Footrot Flats' knows, goats feed on them.

Clause 28 relates to emergency declarations. If a very noxious import is introduced into the Northern Territory, an emergency situation could arise whereby the authority would have to take urgent action. If the cumbersome requirements relating to notices and public objections had to be gone through in every case, the noxious import would have taken over not only the Territory but the whole of Australia. Such unpleasant biological or botanical specimens do not observe state boundaries and they do not knock off at 4.21 every afternoon. I believe that emergency action will be taken. I hope that the minister will take appropriate action and not go through the cumbersome requirements in every case.

Considering that this legislation is similar to legislation in the states, it does appear to be very old-fashioned. I do not intend any disrespect to the minister. It has been agreed to by all the agricultural councils and they are a pretty conservative lot. Probably, it was the easiest way to have the draftsmen to draft new legislation but it is very cumbersome. However, I support the intention of the bill.

Clause 31 relates to inquiries relating to declarations under clause 29. Clause 29 relates to declarations of existing released organisms. Thus, clauses 31 and 29 both relate to the status quo. If something is already in existence here, while certain controls may be necessary as to its expected future behaviour, I do not think a lot can be done about it.

Before I conclude, I would like to comment on clause 50: 'Act not to render other controls illegal'. That seems to be a defence against any accusations of malpractice relating to this act. It says: 'Subject to section 33, nothing in this act shall be taken to render unlawful, the release of an organism for the purpose of the biological control of another organism if the release of the first mentioned organism would, but for this act, be lawful'. I find that a little convoluted but I think I understand its meaning. It appears that that could be a defence if somebody could not wait for the rigmarole of this legislation to be gone through before releasing an agent organism against a target organism.

Having said all that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I support the intention of the legislation and wish the minister well with it.

Mr MCCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank members for their comments and I note their concerns. I note also that they generally support the bill.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: I do not support it entirely.

Mr MCCARTHY: I believe that there is no doubt in the minds of most members that we need to control a number of pests, weeds in particular, but also insects and animals such as mosquitoes and rabbits. There is

considerable objection to chemical control. Hyptis may have some valuable attributes, but the fact remains that it is out of control in the Northern Territory and we need to control it. If it were grown for specific purposes under very controlled conditions, it might be a different matter. However, the present situation with hyptis in the Northern Territory, along with mimosa, sida, salvinia and other noxious weeds, is that they need to be controlled by some means, either chemical or biological. I think biological control generally has proven to be very effective, while not leading to the other problems that chemicals may cause.

I noted a number of things that other members have said. The authority, as was mentioned by the member for Nhulunbuy, is a member of the Agricultural Council. A state, territory or federal minister from that council can delegate an officer of his department. To be declared a target, the proposed target must have the unanimous recommendation of the Agricultural Council. That provides a fairly substantial limiting capacity which will prevent just anything being targeted for biological control.

This is a national scheme and, consequently, this legislation is identical to legislation in other states. It provides for public scrutiny and it provides for inquiries. There are a number of other controls built in, which are necessary when we are dealing with something as controversial as control of living species. There are a number of barriers to ensure that not just anything can be targeted for control through biological means. The member for Sadadeen mentioned cane toads, and cane toads are a target that the Northern Territory has identified. In fact, the Conservation Commission is providing funds for research into control of cane toads, along with Western Australia, Queensland and NSW. I think the federal government may have some funds in there as well. We are carrying out research. All proposals to target a species for control will be researched fully before any control mechanisms are put in place.

The difficulties which have arisen because of legal action taken on the control of Paterson's Curse in Victoria are the reasons why this legislation has become necessary, and has become the basis for uniform legislation. The opposition has put forward 2 amendments which refer to the words 'may' and 'shall' and, while I am not prepared to enter into the debate on the mandatory 'may' which the member for Nhulunbuy raised, I do have concerns with changing the legislation to take cognisance of the fact that they would like to change 'may' to 'shall' to tighten up the legislation in their view. The legislation is complementary to legislation in other states.

I have a copy of the New South Wales bill here, and I can read word for word sections 17 and 26, which are the same sections in our own bill. I will not read the whole bill but I will read the relevant section 17 of the New South Wales bill. The relevant paragraph contains the following words: '...considers that there is evidence that a person or the environment would be adversely affected by the control of organisms of the kind to which the recommendation relates, but an adequate investigation or inquiry into the effect of such control has not been held, the authority may...'. The word 'may' is used. The same wording is used in section 17 of our act, and it is also used in section 26 of both acts. The words in section 26 are: '...considers that there is evidence that a person or the environment would be adversely affected by the release of organisms of the kind to which the recommendation relates, but an adequate investigation and inquiry into the effect of such a release has not been held, the authority may...'. It is exactly the same again. I suppose we can talk about it in committee but I intend to oppose these amendments at that stage.

The member for Koolpinyah speaks of unusual legislation and I guess I am not necessarily prepared to oppose that view. It is perhaps a little exuberant in its verbosity. That is only outdone by the member for Koolpinyah, whose verbosity was rather exuberant also. As I said, it is taken from the other states' legislation, basically word for word. It has been thrashed out in the Agricultural Council and therefore I think that we should pass this legislation without any change at all if we expect it to operate in conjunction with other states. We must have legislation that recognises the decisions that other states have made.

There certainly is an essential provision for emergency declarations. There are a number of agents which may be let loose in the Territory or anywhere in Australia which would require an emergency declaration. We would need to act very quickly. The Agricultural Council meets once every 6 months, and it could result in disastrous delays if we had to refer all declarations to it, particularly in emergencies.

As was mentioned by the member for Koolpinyah, existing biological controls are deemed to have effect under this act. That is essential and relates to the problems that have arisen in Victoria with regard to Paterson's Curse, and all of the controls have been put in place in other states. Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend the bill.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 16 agreed to.

Clause 17:

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 86.1.

The intent of the amendment is to make it absolutely clear to the Agricultural Council that, given those circumstances detailed in clause 17 of the proposed act, that the authority 'shall' carry out those remedial requirements which, under the bill's present wording, it 'may' consider doing.

I heard what the minister said in his second-reading speech, and I appreciate the requirements of complementary legislation. However, I think it would be a pity if this Agricultural Council dictated to ministers around Australia the terms under which they were prepared to operate. I appreciate that the minister has an input to that council, but I would ask him to take to every Minister for Primary Production, a very clear message from the Northern Territory. There is one simple way of doing that. We can accept this amendment which gives the clear message that we believe that the authority's responsibility in exercising control over this legislation should in no way be discretionary.

I ask members to support this amendment. I do appreciate that it will contradict the requirements of complementary legislation. In fact, it will breach that common agreement amongst the states and the territories, but I feel that the minister should carry a very clear message from this Legislative Assembly to all of the relevant ministers in Australia. At least we may find out why, other than to satisfy the requirements of the authority, we should not have an act of law which would remove the discretionary nature of the council's power.

Mr McCARTHY: Mr Chairman, in speaking to the member for Nhulunbuy a few moments ago, I told him that I would be prepared to take this to the council to see whether other ministers would be prepared to change the wording to 'shall'. It would have no serious effect on the bill; in fact, it could tighten it up.

However, if we could refer back to 'authority under the act', this means the Northern Territory Biological Control Authority established by section 8. Section 8 says: 'There is established by this section an authority by the name of the Northern Territory Biological Control Authority...The authority shall consist of the minister who is for the time being a member of the council'. Now, that may be the minister of Primary Production in NSW or Western Australia or the Australian Capital Territory or wherever. By saying 'shall', we are telling him that he must refer to our act and not his own, as minister responsible at that particular time. We would be asking him to take cognisance of what we have said, even though it is against his own act. The only way we can change this is to take it to the Agricultural Council and have all ministers change the wording in the relevant acts throughout Australia. That would have some weight. But it would have no weight if we changed it here today, because we could be telling any minister from any state that he must go against his own act and do it by our act, and that just would not work.

Mr LEO: Mr Chairman, I appreciate that, with the defeat of this clause, there would be little point in pursuing the next one, because one is consequential on the other. However, I will pursue the matter.

The minister kindly showed me the NSW act, and I fully realise what this proposed amendment would do. It would breach the commonality in legislation across the states. There needs to be commonality between the states on this matter, and I believe this needs to include the obligations placed on the authority within the act under section 17. Certainly, I fully understand that we have had ample examples in the Northern Territory that pests do not recognise state or territory borders. They move freely from one part of countryside to the next. However, unless this extremely powerful authority which can potentially do great good, but equally can do great harm, is strictly controlled by the various state legislatures, it can potentially be very dangerous.

I would ask the minister to accept this amendment and take it to the Agricultural Council and say: 'Our act has this requirement and I would ask you all to accept it'. I am afraid that, if he asked simply whether it would be a good idea to change 'may' to 'shall', there would be no compliance.

Mr McCARTHY: I have already said that I am prepared to take it to the Agricultural Council. I am certainly not prepared to accept the change and have a minister from another state put in the position whereby he would have to act under our legislation against the wishes of his own state.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 17 agreed to.

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

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

This morning, the opposition raised a number of questions concerning the circumstances surrounding the appointment of Mr Keith Ward to the public service and, in particular, questions relating to the retrospective dating of that appointment. This morning, I undertook to provide the Assembly with further details during today's sittings, if at all possible. I can advise that I have been in contact with the Public Service Commissioner and have asked for a full and detailed report of the current status of the situation. With your indulgence, Mr Speaker, I will read this minute into the Hansard so there can be no doubt that this is as precise an explanation as I am in a position to give at this stage. As members hear the details of this report, they will understand why I made the comment this morning that I do not wish to go into details or answer questions in respect of the matter. There are many issues being investigated at the moment without all the facts before us. In addition, a range of legal actions are currently taking place or pending. I will quote from a memo to myself from the Public Service Commissioner. It bears today's date and the subject is 'Current Status of Keith Ward Issue':

Following the article in the Northern Territory News of 16 August 1986, concerning the determination which I made as Public Service Commissioner regarding Mr Keith Ward, you requested a report from me which you required by midday Monday 18 August.

On lodging that report and in discussions that afternoon, I indicated to you that it should be seen as a preliminary report only, that the matter was quite complex and that a number of issues which needed investigation were raised as a result of putting the report together. Further issues were raised, e.g. you stated that you had been told by an officer of the Public Service Commissioner's Office that he had seen Mr Ward with a cheque for \$50 000; and that you had also been advised that there may have been no legal basis in the Public Service Act for my determination.

Subsequently, the Northern Territory News on Monday 18 ran a story attributed to APSA that Mr Ward had been paid moneys by it in 1981-82, which would indicate that there had been 'double dipping', and the editorial of that paper strongly condemned any situation which allowed 'double dipping'. New information and questions being asked continually come to hand. As a result, the investigation is widening in all directions.

I met with Mr Ward and Mr Lawrence, in the presence of the Deputy Public Service Commissioner, Mrs Ots, on Tuesday 19 August and raised with them whether their interpretation of the determination would allow them to believe that there was any 'double dipping' possible. Both categorically denied that such interpretation was possible. Both stated that it had not occurred.

As notified to you in my preliminary report of 18 August 1986, page 3, there are a number of outstanding issues and you should be aware that while APSA has apparently provided information to the Northern Territory News and you showed me a telex from it to yourself on the 20 August, it has never provided any information to my office. This would be both the proper and appropriate place to direct such

information if there was any concern about the determination or its implementation being correct. Preliminary investigation in my office has revealed, however, that the usual administrative procedures were not followed to check leave and air fare entitlements, in that APSA and NTPSA were not requested back in March 1986 to provide these details regarding Mr Ward. This oversight was discovered on Monday 18 August when three senior officers of my office were investigating the files to put together my report to you. This matter is now being rectified and copies of telexes have been sent to your office for information.

You would be also aware that prior to making a determination one does not normally conduct an investigation of the depth that would allow instant response to a wide range of questions covering a variety of topics from the legality of the initial determination to the details of its subsequent implementation.

On the morning of 20 August, you advised me that you had been extensively questioned in the House and that you had replied. I will need to study the transcript in order to provide a more detailed report concerning all the issues being raised. At present, investigations are being conducted into many areas but, if other matters are raised, further investigation into them will be needed.

Because of the complexity of the case and its legal ramifications, I again strongly advise you that you should refrain from making statements and answering questions until all the facts are known.

The following investigations have been set in train:

- ° The Crown Solicitor is investigating the legal basis for the decision under the Public Service Act. My officers have been holding discussions with him about this and I have given him the names of other people he may wish to contact concerning past practices under the Act. Irrespective of his opinion, experienced officers of the PSCO believe the act gives authority to appoint people to the public service retrospectively, and advice in Mr Ward's case was that this was an option. We do not keep records in a way that allow us to extract names of people who have been retrospectively appointed to the public service. You should also be aware that departments and authorities retrospectively appoint people to the public service so it would be virtually impossible to detail the extent of this practise.
- ° The basis for the retrospectivity in this case is also a complex matter and requires a detailed paper which is being prepared, in consultation with the Department of Law. In my briefing to you of the 18 August, I indicated that 'this decision was taken in order to redress what was considered to have been a previous injustice as leave without pay was applied for in order to take up employment with APSA'.

As well, there may be a basis in law for the determination. It has to do with, I understand, Commonwealth and possibly state legislation. I am advised that if Mr Ward were to take the matter to the Federal Court a decision could be taken by the court for the employer to be convicted of an offence under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act and for Mr Ward to be

reinstated back to the date of his termination from NTEC. But this is preliminary advice only and the matter needs to be fully investigated. I believed at the time, however, that LWOP is always granted without question in these circumstances. That is my experience in the Commonwealth and in the Northern Territory.

- ° Mr Ward has taken action against the Northern Territory Government for defamation.

This is an issue that is quite separate from the determination concerning Mr Ward's employment in the public service. It is being handled for the Northern Territory government by the Crown Solicitor and I believe that, in view of what has happened regarding the press, union and opposition activity, you should obtain a full briefing about the circumstances of the defamation action. I have asked an officer to work on this and provide you with such a briefing as soon as possible.

- ° The circumstances under which Mr Ward left NTEC are being investigated. However, the information which I had when I made the determination was that Mr Ward was an employee of NTEC; that he had applied for LWOP to work for APSA; that the NTEC Board had made a decision that it would not give any employee LWOP; that Mr Ward was apprised of this; and that he asked for the decision to be revoked on the basis that he was going to work for a union. This was not agreed by NTEC and he was asked to resign. This he refused to do; he was advised to return to work by a certain date; when he had not done so he was deemed by NTEC to have been dismissed.

This information, to the best of my memory, was given to the Crown Solicitor in my presence by the Chairman of NTEC, Dr Ted Campbell. The Crown Solicitor has kept a record of the conversation and will be able to provide a more accurate report, although in discussions with him his memory of the conversation accords with mine.

On the 18 August, the ACOA called for a report in which one of the matters which it said should be covered was the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Mr Ward from NTEC in 1981. Information has been provided by NTEC. A detailed report is being compiled.

- ° NTPSA's approach to me concerning the reinstatement of Mr Ward in government employment without any loss of benefits was discussed at length between Mr Lawrence, representing Mr Ward, and my office. A summary of these discussions with attachments is contained in my preliminary report of 18 August 1986, but a more detailed report covering these matters is being prepared in view of the questions now being raised.
- ° Other issues regarding the determination are being investigated and will be reported upon. One issue that has already been discussed with the Secretary, Department of Law and the Crown Solicitor, and also with Mr Lawrence and Mr Ward because of the seriousness of the allegation, is that the determination may have given Mr Ward double benefits or implied that he was entitled to double benefits. Preliminary legal advice is that

this is not the case and certainly my advisers strongly deny that there was any such intention associated with the drafting of the Determination. Both Mr Ward and Mr Lawrence have indicated that they did not believe double benefits were intended or implied, and they have denied receiving any double benefits. However, this needs to be resolved in writing and that has been set in train.

- The implementation of the determination by my office is also now being investigated. Outstanding issues still to be resolved were reported to you in my preliminary report of 18 August 1986. Unfortunately, in the implementation of the determination, details of its development and substance were not obtained from those officers concerned with its negotiation, and there seems to have been some confusion about its intent. This is a serious matter, and is also the subject of detailed investigation.
- Since the 18 August report, telexes have been sent to APSA, NTPSA and Mr Ward to obtain details concerning air fares, leave entitlements and superannuation payments. When replies have been received, they will be assessed as to the implications concerning Mr Ward's entitlements under the determination. It is impossible at this stage from the information to hand to make any further statements regarding this aspect of the allegations.

I have received advice that the determination was leaked from my office to the ACOA in March 1986, but then raised by the ACOA with the Northern Territory News on Friday 15 August. If there was any belief on the part of officers in my office, or the ACOA, that a wrong had occurred then it should have been brought to my attention immediately. This never happened. In fact, even now, ACOA and APSA have not raised any concerns with my office about Mr Ward or the determination.

I also wish to reiterate advice that I have given you previously. As the Public Service Commissioner, I have the responsibility for making determinations under the Public Service Act. In this case, I did so independent of government advice or direction. In recent years, both the government and the opposition have been at great pains to support the independence of the Public Service Commissioner and the office. I do not believe I have automatically to seek advice or respond to direction from the government in such matters. To do so would totally destroy the independence of the office.

As matters under investigation above are finalised, I will send them to you. You should be aware, however, that some of the issues will take time to resolve. However, as I advised above, I believe you should refrain from making a public statement until you are in possession of all the facts.

Summary:

In summary there are four issues:

- (1) retrospective appointment;
- (2) 'double dipping';

(3) undue advantage; and

(4) \$50,000 payout.

As to (1):

(a) I believe I have the legal power;

(b) there is previous public service determination precedent for the exercise of this power; and

(c) pursuant to the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act, section 5, there is a legal basis for reinstatement in these circumstances.

As to (2):

(a) no 'double dipping' was intended by either party; and

(b) while there may be a question in relation to recreation leave from APSA, this is easily rectified by an early return to duty.

As to (3):

(a) there is no undue advantage as he has been reinstated at a level below his previous level in public sector employment.

As to (4):

(a) he has been paid \$14740.52 gross for recreation leave in advance; and

(b) there has been no payout of \$50 000 by my office.

Mr Speaker, I think that quite clearly demonstrates that, from the date the information became available to me in the newspaper article of last Saturday, I have instituted immediate action to have a full, complete and responsible investigation of the matters surrounding the allegations raised. As allegations have been emerging, they have been brought to the attention of the Public Service Commissioner for a full and complete investigation. It is obviously a detailed and complex matter and I do not intend to make any further statements or answer any further questions until such time as I have all the information and evidence before me.

I might say that the ACOA is well-known as a responsible union. As we all know, it regularly takes up issues where it believes there has been wrongdoing on the part of government, and pursues them with some ferocity. For some reason, in this case, the ACOA was aware of this information from March of this year and chose not to bring it to attention. It has never brought it to the attention of Public Service Commissioner's Office which is the proper and appropriate place with which a trade union should raise such a matter. Instead, it chose to leak it to the media at the end of the week immediately preceding the sittings. The APSA chose to send a telex to my office on Monday, the day before the sittings. Mr Speaker, you can excuse me for being suspicious that this has been set up between the opposition and the trade unions to beat up a story for the Assembly sittings. I am not concerned about

the issue being raised and investigated and, if wrong has been done, it will be corrected. I make that statement here and now.

There are matters of justice and the interests of individuals involved, and the Leader of the Opposition, as a former trade union official, would have spent his entire life arguing in favour of the actions that we are taking now. We are adopting a course of action to deal with the matter properly, not as a political exercise for the opposition.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the first question that has to be asked is: who is running the Northern Territory, the Chief Minister or the Public Service Commissioner? It is pretty clear that the Public Service Commissioner is running the Northern Territory. Consider the responses that we received tonight. The Chief Minister says that there has been a complete and responsible investigation yet the Public Service Commissioner and the minister's own office did not go back to the APSA to ask for information after receiving a telex. The Public Service Commissioner says: 'It is not my responsibility to get the evidence. The APSA should come to me and supply me with the evidence'. So much for a full and complete investigation!

The Public Service Commissioner has been lax in the extreme in this whole exercise and so has the Chief Minister and his office. They stand condemned. They have not taken this matter seriously from day 1. Now, 5 days after the matter came to light, the Chief Minister is saying that he cannot give any indication of when we will receive the full story. On the advice of the Public Service Commissioner, he is refusing to make public statements and he is refusing to answer any questions that I or anybody else might ask in this Assembly. In that situation, who can have any doubt about who is running the Northern Territory? The Chief Minister has abrogated his responsibilities. I can tell you there will be many questions arising from this minute, and I hope I can get a copy of it. Mr Speaker, you will be hearing questions from us tomorrow and, if necessary, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week and, if necessary, in the following sittings as well. This is an indictment on the competence of the Chief Minister to run the Northern Territory. We have a situation where the Public Service Commissioner can give him an interim report which he says is no good, can then give him a more detailed report which again raises more questions than it answers, and the Chief Minister is prepared to sit back and say to the dear old Public Service Commissioner: 'You are independent. Go for your life. When you have nothing better to do, come back to me with your report and I will look at it'. That is absolutely incredible.

We have the indictment of the Public Service Commissioner who made this determination without even bothering to check with Mr Ward's previous employers. He did not check with APSA to see if any benefits had been paid to Mr Keith Ward in his 12 months there. He did not check with the NTPSA to see whether any benefits had been paid in his period of employment there. We now know that benefits were paid to Mr Ward when he worked for the APSA. A simple check could have been made by the Public Service Commissioner, and one of our main grounds of complaint about this whole exercise would not have arisen. Yet, even in that simple task, the Public Service Commissioner has failed to adequately protect the interests of the Northern Territory and the interests of taxpayers.

Mr Finch: Is that all you are worried about?

Mr SMITH: No. That is not all I am worried about. I am worried about the whole question of retrospective reinstatement of public servants into the public service. I am very interested indeed in the statement in the Public

Service Commissioner's minute that this has happened many times and there are plenty of public service precedents. Members can be sure that we will be asking a question on that tomorrow. I hope the Chief Minister has the information. It will be question of looking at precedents of longer than 2 years, not precedents of 2 months.

Mr Palmer: What were you doing while you were secretary of a union?

Mr SMITH: I will tell you what I was doing while I was secretary of the union. I have personal experience of being on leave without pay from the Northern Territory government to take up union employment. The position is very clear. It is laid out in the general orders accompanying the Public Service Act. When you go on leave without pay from the Northern Territory Public Service to take up a union position, it is on the very clear understanding that the new employer will pick up all your benefits. When I was in the Teachers Federation, the Teachers Federation paid my recreation leave benefits. It paid my superannuation benefits in the sense that it picked up the employee contribution and paid it back into the Commonwealth fund. There was no mention that I would have been entitled, if I returned to the Northern Territory Teaching Service, to receive full benefits for the time I served the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. No other union official has had this offer. Perhaps I should claim for retrospective payments for that period of time, such as those the commissioner is so generously offering to Mr Keith Ward. Mr Speaker, the whole thing is ludicrous. There has obviously been an exception made for Mr Keith Ward in this particular instance. There is no precedent, and I would challenge the Chief Minister to find one in the Northern Territory.

Mr Hatton: You didn't get leave without pay?

Mr SMITH: Of course I had leave without pay, but I did not have my benefits paid when I returned to Northern Territory service. They were paid by my employer at that time - the union. That is what I have been trying to tell you all day. That is the point, and it is about time you realised it and about time you corrected the matter instead of letting the Public Service Commissioner fob you off. You are supposed to be the Chief Minister of this place. The Chief Minister, not the Public Service Commissioner's representative in the Legislative Assembly, which is obviously the role you have assumed in this adjournment debate tonight. The whole thing is simply not good enough.

To get back to the basis of our complaint, we have a situation where Mr Ward was seen to be on leave without pay for the last 5 years. It means he was not in the public service for that period. We know he was not on leave without pay, but we will pretend that he was. We will pretend that, for years, this man, with no formal connections with the Northern Territory Public Service, was retrospectively deemed to have accumulated recreation leave loading as well as long service leave entitlements. That pretence probably would not have mattered very much if Mr Ward had been paid in pretend money but, unfortunately, he has been paid in real money. He has been paid in taxpayers' money, and he does not deserve it at all. He is not entitled to it. You do not need complicated legal advice from the Crown Law Office to tell you that.

Mr Palmer: Tell us what you are doing this for ...

Mr SMITH: I am doing this, Mr Speaker, because I have a regard, that obviously is not shared by members opposite, for the taxpayers' money in the Northern Territory, and how the taxpayers' money is spent.

Mr Palmer: Has Barry Cavenagh got you on the hop, Terry?

Mr SMITH: It is very interesting that members opposite are prepared to accept this situation. I note, quite significantly, that the Chief Minister did not tell us what the employer contribution to Mr Ward's superannuation fund will be. 5 years at 17.5% of Mr Ward's salary will produce a sum mighty close to \$20 000, for this government to pay into the Commonwealth superannuation fund. It will be very interesting to see whether the Commonwealth will accept the Northern Territory government coming to it at this late stage with a sob story about its good friend Mr Ward, whom it has suddenly decided should be reinstated for 5 years, and would it please accept 5 years' worth of back superannuation contributions. That will be a pretty interesting story in itself. The one area where I agree with the Chief Minister in his abject reading of the Public Service Commissioner's advice is that there are many more questions to be answered on this matter. I have a few more to add to the list.

This is rapidly turning into a major issue. For one thing, we have the ineptness of the Chief Minister. He demonstrated that last week when he rang up Bob Collins on talk back radio to rapidly reverse a statement he had made in a press release he had issued just 40 minutes earlier. I understand he did not even see the press release before it was issued. Again tonight, we have the Chief Minister laying himself wide open and asking for our forgiveness, while his Public Service Commissioner goes away and does a bit more research.

Some of the questions that need to be answered at this stage are as follows. Was any minister involved in the decision to award Mr Ward retrospective employment with full benefits? Were the terms of the determination agreed to by a minister and, if so, was it the previous Chief Minister? I cannot believe that the Public Service Commissioner would have done this without reference to a minister and it will be very interesting to hear the answer tomorrow. Was the determination an attempt to persuade Mr Ward to drop certain legal actions against the government or was it in fact a settlement, in full or in part, for other legal actions that had been dropped? Was the determination issued as an appreciation to Mr Ward in his efforts to establish the Northern Territory Public Service Association? I am not blaming the Chief Minister for that; it happened before his time. We all know that there was a determined effort by the previous Chief Minister to set up the Northern Territory Public Service Association and to break away from the ACOA and the APSA. Is this some sort of payback for that?

Mr Leo: You are still covering up for bloody Porky.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nhulunbuy will withdraw those unparliamentary remarks unreservedly.

Mr Leo: I withdraw them unreservedly, Mr Speaker.

Mr SMITH: What are the precedents that exist in this case? It is all very well for the Public Service Commissioner to say that precedents exist. What are they? What is the value of the superannuation payment that the Northern Territory government will be up for for these 5 years? As I said, I would not be surprised if it is very close to \$20 000.

Those are some of the questions that must be answered. I will have a lot more after I have had a chance to study the statement that the Chief Minister has made tonight. The Chief Minister has made sure that this issue is not going to go away in a hurry.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I would just like to touch on a couple of matters that have been raised this afternoon in the adjournment. I do not have very much detail on this matter. I saw a report on the matter of payments to a Mr Ward in the newspaper on the weekend and we have heard some questions raised in this Assembly. It seems to me that there is a responsibility on several parties.

Firstly, let us look at the responsibility of the APSA, a union which obviously has an interest not only in justice for its own members but also a responsibility to see justice generally in the public service. It seems that this union may have had some information which the Public Service Commissioner should be aware of. It seems also that the APSA was quite happy to provide the information to the opposition. It was quite happy to provide the information to the media, very conveniently, as the Chief Minister has pointed out, a couple of days before this sittings of the Legislative Assembly. From what we have heard today, it appears that it did not provide the information to the Public Service Commissioner, the person whom all unions claim should be entirely independent of any political interference in exercising his responsibilities. For some reason, it declined to present evidence to him that he may have erred in his judgment. One could be forgiven for thinking that the APSA may be deliberately playing politics. I guess there are no laws against its doing that but, if that is the case, we should realise that that is exactly what is happening here.

From the observations I have made, it appears to me that the Chief Minister himself learned of this whole matter from the press and sought some information, as would be expected of a minister responsible in the Assembly for the public service. He has advised us of certain information and that certain other information will be received in due course. The Leader of the Opposition thinks that is not good enough, that the Chief Minister should have all the background story to this today, and that all the necessary investigations should have been concluded and tabled here this afternoon. He seems to think that there is some sort of urgency on this matter and that, unless it is resolved within the next 24 hours, some terrible doom will descend upon us all.

The opposition, through the former Leader of the Opposition, made great play of the independence of the Public Service Commissioner. I will mention a couple of instances. On 4 April 1983, the former Leader of the Opposition called upon government to 'immediately issue a public statement affirming its support for the principles of an impartial public service'. He said that the government's statement should give 'a clear and unequivocal commitment that all public service appointments are the sole preserve of the Public Service Commissioner'. One cannot argue about what that means.

Mr Smith: He didn't say retrospective appointments.

Mr PERRON: It is an appointment to the public service. Come on!

In December 1983, the former Leader of the Opposition also called upon the newly-elected CLP government to put aside politics when considering the reappointment of Dr Goff Letts as the Director of the Conservation Commission. He realised that it is the prerogative of the government to appoint departmental heads and we have never made any secret of that. However, the Leader of the Opposition at the time did not want any political involvement in that appointment, and that is a traditional political involvement appointment.

Last year, we heard an enormous fuss from the opposition when we made some amendments to the Public Service Act. Obviously, we touched a sensitive nerve when this Assembly amended the Public Service Act. The opposition felt that the actions being taken at that time could mean political interference with the public service system, and it made its views widely known. Is the Leader of the Opposition today suggesting, in his indignation about the Chief Minister not having all the information immediately, that there should have been at least an arrangement - if not a direction - between the Public Service Commissioner and the Chief Minister? I am not sure whether the Chief Minister can direct the Public Service Commissioner on such matters. Should there have been an arrangement that the Public Service Commissioner makes no such decisions without first referring it to the minister? Would the Opposition Leader prefer that?

Mr Smith: How many retrospective appointments does he make?

Mr PERRON: Would you prefer that there was an arrangement?

Mr Smith: My word. For retrospective appointments, I would.

Mr PERRON: That is very interesting and I hope that Hansard records that interjection. The Leader of the opposition would support a legislative arrangement whereby retrospective appointments by the Public Service Commissioner are first approved by the minister responsible for the public service.

Mr Smith: It was not the question that you asked.

Mr PERRON: It was exactly what I asked and you said: 'Yes, in respect of retrospective appointments'. You might be the only Leader of the Opposition in Australia who would support such a cause.

Mr Smith: We will check Hansard tomorrow.

Mr PERRON: We will certainly check Hansard tomorrow. He is suggesting that there should have been an arrangement and that the Chief Minister should have known about this before it was done. Therefore, now that payments have been authorised by the Public Service Commissioner, he is saying that the Chief Minister is totally responsible because he should have known all about it in advance and should have given his personal approval.

Obviously, we will hear much more of this in the future. I support the Chief Minister in his obviously rational statement that, until such time as he receives complete information on this matter on which he has undertaken to keep the Assembly informed, he will not be dragged off into side issues. It is a matter that is being investigated on a number of fronts and, until such time as those investigations are completed, it appears that we should be a little patient.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, just to change the tone of the adjournment debate as well as the subject, I wish to place a very sad matter on the record of the Assembly. Annie Blackwell may not have been known to many of the members of this Assembly, but she may have been known to some of the members from central Australia. Certainly, some of them would have seen the obituary that appeared in the Centralian Advocate a month or so ago.

Some time after the last sittings, Annie Blackwell died when a vehicle in which she was travelling rolled on the Papunya road. At that time, she was

employed as an anthropologist with the Central Land Council. She had not been working with the Central Land Council for all the time that she had been working in central Australia; she had worked in various capacities.

Annie grew up very quickly. Until I read the obituary that appeared in the local paper, I did not realise that her mother had been an invalid for much of her life and that she had nursed her mother and kept the home for her. Her mother passed away when she was 14 and she was left to look after herself. She was fostered out.

She was a person of considerable determination, and her capacity for hard work saw her through school and won her a scholarship at the Australian National University, where she excelled as a student. After she graduated, she spent several months as a research assistant at the office of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies and 2 further years as a research assistant at the Australian National University.

In 1984, she came to central Australia as a cook on a coach tour. During the time she was in central Australia, she met Gus and Liz Williams at Palm Valley. Through her association with Gus and Liz, she developed a deep love for Hermannsburg and the Hermannsburg area and subsequently worked on the heritage project there. She spent almost a year in that capacity and produced a significant report on the community, its historical value and the need for the restoration of many of the buildings there. With Gus and Liz Williams, she struggled to obtain funding to begin the restoration work but, at this stage, it is unclear how that will proceed.

At one stage, when no money was available for further research in that regard, Annie Blackwell went to work for the Central Land Council. In addition to her work with the Central Land Council, particularly in relation to the Alice Springs to Darwin pipeline, she did some work with the Arltunga Historical Reserve, which is also in my electorate. She was a young woman of sound purpose and high professionalism. Few people who have worked as a 'white adviser' have built up such a broad range of contacts within the Territory community, not only amongst Aboriginal people but equally with the company executives that she dealt with.

It was no accident that, at the memorial service held for her at Bazzo's farm, a Transfield spokesman said that she had won their respect as well. One of her friends commented that she was tough with mining companies. Often we hear advisers criticised for being too tough, but she was described also as being fair.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I can do no better in conclusion than to quote Pat Dodson from the Central Land Council who said at the memorial service: 'She was able to make big businessmen see what sacred sites and land mean to Aboriginal people. She could make them see it because she was not just talking about it; it came from her own convictions'.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning, the answer to a question that I asked of the Minister for Conservation gave me some hope that something may be done about a matter that I am very interested in. I know other farmers in the community have raised the matter from time to time but have met with no success. Lately, one of my constituents also expressed an interest in this matter. I refer to the catching, harvesting and breeding in captivity of wild native fauna.

I have been given a copy of a letter written by one of my constituents to the Minister for Conservation in which he requested the minister to look favourably on a proposal he put forward. He sought permission to catch certain species of birds and breed them in captivity under specified conditions in order to sell them for profit. If my memory serves me correctly, the minister said that he did not have any strong views one way or another. I know the views of officers of the Conservation Commission which are probably the same as those of the minister; they have no strong views one way or another.

I would like to try to bring the minister round to my way of thinking and that of my constituent. I believe the case he put to the minister was concise and well-researched. He is an aviary owner and breeder of caged birds. He is a retailer, and I believe he may also have a permit to catch native birds and sell them. He is now seeking permission to collect birds in the bush and breed them for sale.

Some people throw up their hands in horror at the idea of people making money from ventures connected with native fauna and flora. I see no objection to it. If a person is prepared to work on a certain project, why can't he earn an honest dollar from it? This constituent explained to the minister the ways he would be prepared to catch these birds. They are all ways that are used for catching birds of particular species. He is prepared to work with the Conservation Commission under a permit system. If he is given permission to catch the birds, he is prepared to do so in a manner which conforms with the rules laid down by the Conservation Commission. He is prepared to have his operation inspected by officers of the Conservation Commission to assure them that he is acting as they direct, and that he is catching birds and then breeding them in captivity.

I have spoken about this before. I believe that black market activities would be reduced if this man and others like him were permitted to catch native birds which, in many cases, are regarded as pests, especially in farming areas both in the Territory and in other parts of Australia. There is nothing sadder than seeing pictures, in newspapers and on television, of black market operations that have gone awry. One sees pictures of suitcases filled with beautiful parrots that have been drugged in order to be smuggled out of the country to fetch enormous profits overseas. Due to an inexact dose of a narcotic or soporific agent, the birds often die. That is very sad. If a permit were given to certain people to catch wild birds and to breed them, it would provide a backup to the wild population in times of stress. I suggest that it is not unknown for outbreaks of disease to have occurred among certain species in the wild and for the species to have been wiped out in particular areas. If small populations of particular birds were available in certain aviaries, these could be released into the wild to breed again. Such a condition could be attached to the permit.

I refer honourable members to particular species that my constituent has suggested could be caught. I am not au fait with birdlife; my interests lie in other parts of fauna conservation. However, my constituent tells me that pacific black duck, water whistle duck, grass whistle duck, grey teal, pink-eyed duck, white-eyed duck, maned duck and magpie geese can all be shot in the authorised shooting season, which I believe is now. I also believe that it is quite legal for people to have in their possession 30 of these birds that have been shot and placed in a freezer. The man who is seeking a permit to catch these birds in the wild cannot see any logic in it being permissible to shoot them and keep their bodies in a freezer while it is not possible to catch, keep and breed a similar number in an aviary. I think he has a pretty good case there. It is pretty sensible and pretty down to earth.

In some parts of the Northern Territory, certain species of cockatoos and parrots can be pests, especially when the farmers are growing grain. The areas I refer to are the Douglas-Daly and Katherine area, the Darwin River area and the Batchelor area, to mention a few places where farmers grow small fruit crops and grains. If the farmers believe certain cockatoos and parrots constitute a pest, they can obtain a permit to destroy them. I will give you an indication of the income that could be obtained from the sale of these birds if it were permissible to catch and breed them in captivity. It is another development which could be undertaken in the Territory if only certain people would move on the matter. Sulphur-crested cockatoos sell for about \$95 each. Red-winged parrots have a southern price of about \$240 a pair. Cockateels sell at about \$50 a pair and galahs at \$45 each. Little corellas sell at \$60 each and red-collared lorikeets sell at \$130 a pair. In my book, catching and breeding these birds sounds a pretty interesting proposition. It is true, as the minister has said, that the price will come down, but it will also reduce the black market operations which are with us all the time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I know something about the workings of the Conservation Commission. I know they do not consider such matters lightly. I know that they are all pretty deep thinkers. They are rather conservative in their approach to any ideas not put forward by their own officers, and I say that very tactfully without putting too fine a point on it. Probably, if I gave a further description, you would say that it was unparliamentary, but in relation to many matters, they move with the speed of a costive gastropod, as I wrote in a letter to the previous Minister for Conservation in relation to the formation of a program to keep reptiles. It concerned a program that the Conservation Commission was to formulate 2 years ago. In 1 afternoon about 6 months ago, I made phone calls to each state, and in 1 telephone conversation, I was able to obtain all the information that the Conservation Commission had taken 2 years to find. I am not a brain and I do not work at the speed of light, but I believe that the Conservation Commission could have come up with a program for the public keeping of reptiles a long time before this.

Conditions pertaining to the keeping of wildlife differ from state to state. In some states, there is a fee for permits and in others there is not. As other members and other people have said in other places before, the preparation of the Conservation Commission's program regarding the public keeping of reptiles is a little bit like the gestation period of a elephant: it all happens in high places and takes a long time to come to fruition. No doubt, when it does come to fruition and the elephant does produce, it occurs with a lot of noise. I hope that, when the minister refers this matter regarding the keeping of wild birds to the Conservation Commission, that it is not quite so tardy in putting its views and recommendations to him.

The particular man who is interested in this matter is not asking to export the birds out of Australia. All he wants to do is to be able to catch them in the Northern Territory, breed them here and sell them here and, under suitable legislation, sell them in other states.

Mr STEELE (Elsely): Mr Deputy Speaker, it is very unfortunate on the day after the budget announcement, that not many Labor spokesmen have addressed themselves to the matter of the detrimental effects of the budget on the Northern Territory and its people. There is obviously not enough time for even 25 members to do that adequately, because of the irreparable damage that has been done, particularly through the cuts to the fuel subsidy for our power-stations, and also for those other vital matters that concern the ordinary Northern Territory citizen.

I will refer to one report that was not mentioned tonight. A question was addressed to the Minister for Transport and Works today concerning the \$2m allocation to the Darwin Airport development. He responded by saying that the budget had allocated funds for a number of cosmetic changes and that the roof was going to receive some tar to block up the holes. My comment is that the federal government has been derelict in its duty over quite a number of years in respect of maintaining and upgrading our public roads. Heaven knows where that tar came from, but I suspect that it has been taken away from the Victoria Highway. I am waiting with some apprehension for the casualties and accidents that will occur on that highway in the coming years with the influx of tourists entering the Northern Territory. I am very disappointed in the failure of the federal government to upgrade our highway system. It is not making funds available in the proper way to minimise the risk to our tourists.

In speaking in the adjournment tonight, I would like to comment on the draft rural plan which has been circulated. It is called the Katherine Rural Area Plan 1986 and, according to the pamphlet which was distributed at the Katherine Show, written comments about this plan should be received before 18 September 1986. I commend the Department of Lands and the minister for putting the plans on display. It is very important that the public has a thorough oversight of such plans before they are finally adopted and brought into law. I refer to 2 particular sections in the brochure that outlines the scheme to be adopted. The first one comes under the heading of 'Agriculture', and it says:

The intention is to preserve those areas considered most suitable for agriculture, including horticulture, dry land and irrigated cropping, and pastoral pursuits. No minimum size of subdivision is specified, but advice must be obtained from the Department of Primary Production, the Agricultural Development Marketing Authority and the Conservation Commission.

I have just a brief word about the implementation of such a plan. I believe that there are many areas suitable for subdivision, but that some may be prevented from being subdivided because of the requirements of these departments. This plan was devised in the hope that further agricultural development will occur on some of the blocks. That needs very careful scrutiny by the department.

In the section under the heading of 'Business', it says:

In accordance with the draft Katherine Strategy Plan 1985, Katherine Town Centre will continue to be the main shopping centre for the area and only minor retail centres dealing with day-to-day necessities will be permitted elsewhere. Small centres are likely to be located in Katherine West and Florina Road areas to service rural residents' needs. No specific zone has been allocated but uses such as shops are consent uses in the rural residential zones.

There was an announcement in the Katherine press a couple of weeks ago that the minister's agreement was being sought for a \$20m shopping centre. That would be dead against the policy as outlined in this draft statement. What I am suggesting to the government is that, because of the inconsistencies that currently exist, the Minister of Lands should defer this whole process for a couple of months to allow further public scrutiny. I ask him to do that.

My final concern tonight about the Elsey electorate is the reaction of government to the present growth in Katherine. It relates to the response I received from the Chief Minister this morning about the Katherine Fire Station. I understand that the staffing is being reduced from 5 permanent officers to 2 in a town that will double in size over the next 4 or 5 years. It seems to me that, at a time when all government departments in Katherine are increasing staff to cater for the rapid rate of development, this is a shortsighted move. I understand from the Housing Commission that any of its houses can be gutted in 8 minutes. The response time, as a result of this reduction in fire station staff, could be anything up to 22 minutes. Under the previous staff levels, the response time was between 4 and 5 minutes. I simply put those few points before the Assembly tonight, and I believe the government will need to review this policy as a matter of course. I urge it to do so.

Mr MANZIE (Education): Mr Speaker, I will not keep the Assembly very long but I think it is appropriate at this particular time, as a result of the federal government's budget statement yesterday, that I very briefly detail some of the areas it will affect in education in the Northern Territory.

We are all aware of the introduction last night of what most people called tertiary fees of \$250 per head, although this morning the Prime Minister, using Hawkespeak, described them not as tertiary fees, but as fees for administration costs in universities and colleges of advanced education. This \$250 fee will apply to students at the DIT who are studying advanced education courses, and Territory students who will undertake university studies. I was pleased to see that it did not apply to students receiving TEAS or those involved in Aboriginal studies and, therefore, for students at Batchelor College and TEAS students there will be some relief. However, because Territory salary levels are higher than those in the rest of Australia, many students are precluded from obtaining TEAS because of their parents' earning capacity.

Another area that was cut by the Commonwealth was the general recurrent TAFE funding, which was reduced by \$100 000. Obviously that will mean a reduction in services in technical and further education and most likely that will occur in remote communities. As was pointed out this morning, a very big effort is being made to educate Aboriginal people in those communities so that they may take up employment opportunities, few as they are, in those places.

Another measure that I found very hard to take was a cut of \$140 000 in the professional development area. The cut in these funds, which are used for in-service training for teachers, curriculum training and general in-service training, will affect the quality of education. There was a large reduction in the area of multi-cultural education, and I think that should be drawn to everyone's attention. It affects us strongly in the Territory where there are a number of ethnic groups. There has been a big reduction in the English as a second language or ESL area. We do not have the full dollar details as yet, but a number of quite concentrated programs in the Territory will be affected. These include the Darwin High School secondary program and the program at the Berrimah Primary School which accelerate the use of English among young migrants and newcomers to this country so that they can take their place in our schools and work alongside Territory students. There have also been cuts in the capital grants for homeland centre schools. As yet, we do not have dollar details. In the participation and equity area, there has been a cut of \$118 000, which will reduce grants to secondary schools and to TAFE.

These are matters that have been picked up after a very quick look at the federal budget. Obviously, there are hidden matters that we will come across in the next couple of days. I think it is worth while mentioning that the 3¢ per litre duty on petrol and diesel fuels will cause a great increase in costs. There are a number of outlying centres in the Territory which are serviced from a central point by teachers moving out for a couple of days at a time. The extra fuel costs will be quite significant. We also generate electricity in outlying areas.

We cannot let members opposite escape from this. They are members of the Territory branch of the ALP and they must stand condemned, along with the federal politicians of that party, for their attack on education in the Northern Territory, which is an attack on all Territorians and the future of our Territory. I think it is abominable that the federal government has been so blase in the way it has ripped funds from our young Territorians. Certainly, we will not forget what has occurred in the last couple of weeks.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I draw your attention to the presence in the gallery of Hon Victor Ferry, a member of the Legislative Council of Western Australia, and Mrs Ferry. On behalf of honourable members, I extend to them a warm welcome and hope their stay in the Territory is a pleasant one.

MOTION

Uranium Mining

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move: (1) that the members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly unanimously endorse the federal government's budget decision to remove the ill-considered ban on export sales of Northern Territory uranium to France; (2) that members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly unanimously urge the federal government to alter its restrictive policies preventing the expansion of the Northern Territory's uranium mining industry and the growth of the national and Territory economy; and (3) that the terms of this resolution be transmitted to the Prime Minister forthwith.

Mr Speaker, the bans on uranium exports from the Northern Territory clearly have not worked, as has been admitted by both the Treasurer and the Prime Minister in recent television interviews. In the budget speech, the federal Treasurer was quite specific. He said simply that the bans have not worked. Since those announcements, recent events have given some concern to the Northern Territory government that there may be a move afoot throughout Australia to have that decision overturned by factions within the Australian Labor Party who would seek to see us continue on our downhill slide. The Northern Territory government believes that it is a matter of grave concern to all Territorians and indeed to all Australians.

Mr Speaker, I would like to table 3 papers which have been distributed recently by the Australian Mining Industry Council. They give the facts relating to mining within Australia, and those facts are fairly simple. The mining industry is the engine of growth in the Australian economy and it is the nation's major exporter. Mining directly employs 200 000 people in Australia. We have often heard people telling us that mining is not a large employer of people at all. Remember Mr Hawke saying that he would build tourism infrastructure in Kakadu which would create more employment than Jabiluka? According to him, the 1500 jobs to be created at Jabiluka would pale into insignificance compared to jobs created by the tourism infrastructure. Does anybody remember that? I think it was in 1983. What did we get? We got 7 barbecue plates!

Mr Dondas: We did not even get them.

Mr COULTER: We did not get the barbecue plates. So much for Labor Party promises! At that time, the Australian Labor government had budgeted \$116m to pay compensation to Queensland Mines for not selling uranium to France. That is what it paid over the 4 years, when we could have developed mines such as Jabiluka which would create \$1500m worth of export earnings in the lifetime of the mine. The federal government has ripped \$60m off our NTEC electricity subsidy, when we could be creating enough wealth to see Australia back on the road to prosperity again.

This just cannot be sustained. We have to tell the mad fanatics in the left, the centre left and the right and whatever else they have in the Labor Party - I am not sure if they know where they are at times - that the facts are simple. Whilst the federal government closed down the uranium industry in Australia, it provided a copper mine in South Australia at Roxby Downs. It took Mr Bannon, the South Australian Premier, to Japan to negotiate priority contracts to supply uranium to Japan. At the same time, it stockpiled millions of dollars worth of yellowcake out at Coonawarra Road. It is ridiculous and there is no logic behind it.

We learn from today's press that there is a movement among the backbenchers to overthrow the decision to sell the yellowcake. Not only should it sell the yellowcake, it should open the other mines at Koongarra and Jabiluka and let us get on with the job. We must remember the employment opportunities that would create for the Northern Territory. That is what the CLP government in the Northern Territory is about: jobs, jobs, jobs. For every job generated in the mining industry, a further 1.7 jobs are generated elsewhere in the economy.

Yesterday, we were told by the member for Stuart that we cannot sell the uranium. Since when has a government determined whether you can sell something? It is up to the companies themselves to determine whether they have markets. What happened with the Nabarlek yellowcake was quite simple. France entered into a contract to purchase it at \$36 a pound. The Prime Minister was on tour at the time and he decided to gain international fame by saying we would not sell yellowcake to France. That really hurt France. Many of the presidents of the major companies that were to be supplied with yellowcake developed hernia problems from laughing so much because the spot price for uranium in the world at that time was \$16 a pound whereas the original contract price was \$36 a pound. That is how much it hurt France.

Mining contributes some \$19 000m directly to Australia's gross domestic product, which is 14%. Mining contributes 80% of outward-bound cargo leaving Australian ports. The mining industry paid more than \$3000m in taxes, charges and services. Is it any wonder that I love it so much, Mr Speaker? Many government welfare and community programs depend on such revenue for their continuation. However, I would like to add in this debate that I believe that the federal government should not take advantage of the opportunities available to it through uranium mining to feed the social welfare machine it has created in the southern states. That must be stopped. If we want Australia to prosper again, we cannot open up a mine and take from it \$1000m to subsidise New South Wales' railways to keep them going, because actions of that kind are necessary to prop up Labor governments in the southern states. We all know the federal government's problems, the zero population growth in Victoria and other matters. We must adopt a doubled-edged sword approach: allow mining to get on with the job, and stop social welfare growth and the expansion of the public service of the federal government in particular.

Wasn't that an outstanding statement in the budget speech, Mr Speaker? It will drop 2000 jobs! The Northern Territory government, with 15 000 public servants, is reducing its work force by 400 yet I understand that the Commonwealth public service, including the armed forces, has some 40 000 and that number will drop by 2000. It does not have to cut back the armed services.

The wealth that can be created here must be used to develop meaningful programs that will put Australia back onto the right road. The federal government should stop talking about our weak growth and start developing our

strengths. One of those strengths is the possession of one of the most valuable minerals in the world which cannot be exploited because of Professor Ovington and a federal government that cannot come to grips with a policy to mine uranium. As a result of the policies of the current federal government, Australia has slipped as a supplier in the world's markets, particularly in relation to uranium exports where we have lost our position as the world's major supplier first to Canada and then to South Africa and the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister and the Treasurer have now admitted that the policies do not work. They must be scrapped, and we must get back onto the trail.

Honourable members, I have circulated the 3 documents from the Australian Mining Industry Council. The first document explains the mining industry's contribution to Australia's economy. The third describes mining as the backbone of Australia. I recommend that honourable members read those documents in their entirety. Recently, the Department of Mines and Energy issued uranium fact sheets and the response has been enormous from various parliamentarians throughout Australia. We have received letters of support saying that the fact sheets provide them with the information they require to comment constructively on the subject of uranium mining. They have thanked me for it, and they want to get on with the job.

So what happens? It looks like there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are now going to allow shipments of yellowcake to proceed. Just recently, the federal Minister for Resources and Energy, Senator Evans, visited the Territory, as did Senator Peter Walsh. They said that mining is the way to go and that it can provide the impetus to get Australia back on the road again. Let us hope that they are successful in their endeavours to have mining restored to its rightful place in Australia.

On the other hand, the Labor government contains lunatics like Peter Milton who took evidence here about environmental considerations and other concerns of people in the Northern Territory. He also went out to Coronation Hill - I do not know why. Senator Evans has gone on record as saying that he would like to see 35% of Kakadu Stage 3 open to mining but that was not to the liking of Mr Milton who was adamantly against any sort of mining anywhere at all. He is not a conservationist; he is a preservationist. He wants the whole place locked up. We can all walk back into the cave, throw away the keys of the car ...

Mr Tuxworth: And eat bananas.

Mr COULTER: .. and eat bananas. As the member for Barkly said, that is their type of economic logic. The Senate Committee on Mining in National Parks was here recently, and what did its unbiased chairperson do as soon as she arrived at Darwin Airport? She stood in front of a television camera and said: 'Of course I am against all mining in national parks'. Some hope we have with that type of logic! These people are prepared to sit down and listen to logical debate, aren't they?

The fact is that mining can occur in national parks. It is occurring at Jabiru under strict supervision. In fact, some people say there is too much supervision and that there are too many people protecting the environment, so much so that they are damaging it. The best thing that Peter Walsh could do is to remove the Office of the Supervising Scientist from the Northern Territory, along with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service and allow the Northern Territory to administer its own minerals and its own parks. We hear people cry that the Northern Territory is overfunded. Where else is \$40 000m worth of mineral wealth locked up for no reason? The rest of the

world must look at us in Australia and say: 'That mob down under are a joke. They must have a third world mentality'. We sit back and scratch our heads and say: 'We wonder why they think like that about us'.

I will give another example. Recently, I spoke about the fact that we had the Premier of South Australia in Japan negotiating priority contracts for his state's uranium while ours is locked up and not allowed to be exported. Recently, the Minister for Mines and Energy in Western Australia cut short a trip to Europe to fly direct to Japan to talk to Mitsui and Nippon Steel, the partners in the Robe River enterprise with Peko WallSEND. He was trying to bring pressure on Peko WallSEND to prevent it from carrying out the industrial realignment it is trying to achieve in order to get on with the job of mining. This is what we have. We have Labor governments right around Australia which have no definite policy and nowhere to go. It is 'ad hocery' in the extreme. They are running around trying to encourage and develop policies that in some cases are completely contradictory, and I point to South Australia and the Northern Territory as a good example of that. Recently, I went to the board members of Pancontinental to put to them a proposal that they should get on with the job of developing their gold mine if the federal government persists with its policy of not mining uranium. The value of the gold in Jabiluka 2 is estimated to be about \$100m. Pancontinental will require a drilling program to prove that ore body. It is prepared to get on with that job.

Recently, Senator Evans came to the Territory and told us that mining is the way to go. We then received a statement from the minister telling us that the government was considering regarding an exploration licence as an asset and, therefore, making it subject to the capital gains tax. The documents that I have circulated explain exploration licences. We all know that Uranerz has signed a private royalty agreement with the people at Oenpelli. I asked the company why it keeps bashing its head against the brick wall of government red tape. I was told that it believed that the area was probably the second richest mineral deposit in the world, second only to the massive uranium province in Canada.

Mr Speaker, exploration licences are really holes in the ground that one sinks money into. Jabiluka cost Getty Oil \$40m in exploration costs. That is not new. Mineral exploration is a highly-skilled, demanding, high-risk business. The average cost of finding an economic deposit in Australia is \$30m to \$40m. For the explorer, the risk is total. If success is not achieved, almost all the investment will be lost. Mineral deposits are few in number and hard to find. As a general rule, of every 1000 exploration prospects reviewed, 100 require detailed exploration, 10 are drilled and 1 becomes a mine. Exploration licences should be considered a liability rather than an asset. Still, we have to get on with the job. Risks must be taken.

Mr Manzie: Would sacred sites be an asset?

Mr COULTER: Sacred sites could be an asset. It all depends where they are. They have not been too accurate lately in getting them in the right place.

Low-cost access to large areas of land is essential at the early stage of exploration. Any unreasonable constraints or uncertainties will send the exploration dollar elsewhere. In recent years, an increasing amount of exploration activity has been directed overseas. The federal government's new capital gains tax could have a crippling affect on this particular industry. Thus, Mr Speaker, you can understand the Northern Territory government's concern this morning at hearing that the decision to allow Nabarlek yellowcake

to be sold overseas may be overturned. If it is, there will be disastrous consequences. We are not talking in parochial terms about the Northern Territory but the national economy. The lunacy of the federal government's previous policy has to be overturned. We have to be allowed to get on with the job.

I might mention another area close to Nabarlek and Jabiluka and that is the Munmarlary exploration licences of Peko Wallsend. Peko Wallsend surrendered its exploration licences to Mr Patterson in the Whitlam government on the grounds that he would issue them with new ones when the national park was declared. That has not happened, but we are getting used to broken promises from the federal Labor government. It told us that our electricity subsidy would not be touched until 1988. In May 1985, some 14 months later, it ripped 40% off of it. The policies of those people are pretty hard to understand.

When we have so much wealth locked up in Kakadu Stage 3, it is hard for the man in the street to understand where this federal government is going. We congratulate it for displaying some logic in allowing the yellowcake which it has stored to be sold. Remember that this federal government is probably one of the biggest stockpilers of yellowcake in the world. That is not bad when it has a policy of phasing out uranium mining. However, it is costing the Australian taxpayer. The money, which amounts to about \$35m, has not been appropriated. In fact, it has never been allocated through the parliament. When the Northern Territory is suffering because it has lost \$60m of the NTEC subsidy over the last 18 months, it is hard for us to understand why we cannot develop our uranium mines. Allowing the yellowcake to be sold is a step in the right direction, and we believe that there is a need to go rather further now.

I draw honourable members' attention to the employment statistics from the survey conducted by the North Australian Research Unit in January 1986. I direct this to the knockers who say mining does not employ people and that it is capital intensive. Of course, hundreds of millions of dollars are needed to establish a venture and have it running. One such venture in the Northern Territory which we hope to make some progress on in the near future is in the McArthur River area. In 1976 dollars, it was estimated that it would cost \$1000m to bring it into production. Imagine what it would cost today, Mr Speaker. Yet we will still hear the cries from the Labor Party that it is capital intensive, not labour intensive. These are the results of the January 1986 study undertaken by the ANU:

Wage levels at Ranger are well above the NT average, and very substantially above the Australian average, by 29% and 41% respectively, enhancing the flow-on effects of wage expenditure and increasing government payroll and income tax receipts. Indirect employment totalled 485, indicating job multiplier of 2.24; ie 1.24 jobs are created elsewhere for each job at Ranger. In addition, some 160 are employed in government departments and agencies ...

That does not include the Office of the Supervising Scientist, which would have another 160 in its own right.

... government departments and agencies providing services in Jabiru and monitoring the impact of uranium mining in the region. The Ranger project had a major impact on Commonwealth revenues from 1984-85. The first year incurred full tax liabilities. The cost was approximately \$54m. During the next decade, it is estimated the ERA

will account for 1% of all company tax payments. On recent trends, it will probably account for between 10% and 20% of total income paid by the mining sector.

Mr Speaker, I hope that I have silenced the cries from the Labor Party that mining is not labour intensive.

The figures I read out at the commencement of this debate indicated what mining is worth to Australia and the flow-on effects, including the cargo that crosses the wharf. As much as it may hurt me in some ways to say it, now is the time to support the Prime Minister of Australia and the federal Treasurer in their efforts to get Australia moving again. They should take into account that they have a long way to go in terms of reducing their burden and we do not want to fuel the fire just to see our wealth burnt. We want meaningful recovery of the national economy and, most of all, the Northern Territory would like the federal government to take its foot off the throat of the Territory and allow it to contribute to the national economy through the resources that make us the envy of all the world. Recently, I took an ambassador to the uranium province. We flew over the uranium province - I believe we were flying at below 4000 feet although I did not look at the altimeter. I might check on that.

Mr Tuxworth: You will get a summons shortly.

Mr COULTER: I might receive a summons from Professor Ovington; perhaps I blew the seeds off a couple of Easter daisies or something out there.

We were talking about the difference between his country and our country. He told me that his country has no resources at all but it has people who want to work and improve their standard of living. I said: 'We are in a different position in Australia in that we have all the resources in the world but nobody who wants to work at getting them out of the ground'. That is the real difference between the 2 countries, Mr Speaker. I explained about Mount Brockman as we flew past. I was talking about the Territory becoming involved with this particular country to the tune of some billions of dollars in export earnings, and I said that Mount Brockman was a sacred site. He looked at me and asked what a sacred site was. I explained about the rainbow serpent at the bottom of Mount Brockman. He was amazed and very interested but it is very difficult when you are trying to do business with international companies and overseas representatives and you are talking about rainbow serpents living at the bottom of rocks.

Mr Ede: You would not know. You are pathetic.

Mr COULTER: The member for Stuart has just said that I am pathetic. Well if I am pathetic, I am proud of it, because I am interested in the welfare of Northern Territorians, and that is what we are about in the Legislative Assembly. If I am pathetic, I wish some of it would rub off on the Australian Labor Party and its representatives in this Assembly who really are pathetic.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, isn't this typical? It is something we see time and time again. When this government is in real trouble about something under its control, when it has internal problems, what does it do? It brings on a debate about things over which it has no control. The export of uranium is one of those things and, therefore, the government brings on a debate over that issue. Rather than spending the time of this Assembly debating matters the government has control over and which it can do something about, things that are important to the economy of the Northern Territory, what does it do?

It runs for cover. It hides behind an issue over which it has absolutely no power. We had hoped to use question time this morning as a means of further investigating the matter of the government's \$50 000 rip-off of public money.

Mr HANRAHAN: A point of order, Mr Speaker!

Mr SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr HANRAHAN: There is a motion relevant to an important issue to the Northern Territory economy before the Chair, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is digressing to the point of being ridiculous.

Mr SPEAKER: The member for Stuart will confine his remarks to the topic being debated.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will discuss the motion under debate. I had hoped merely to point out that we have some very important issues before this Assembly. Certainly, uranium is an important issue. In the sittings before last, I tried to discuss the health of workers in the uranium industry and the failure of the Northern Territory government to legislate adequately in relation to that matter. It was not interested, because it was something over which it had control. As soon as we want to talk about things which the Northern Territory government has some power over, it runs for cover. It will not want to talk about the sale of the Channel Island Power-station to Japanese interests, which occurred just the other day. It will not want to talk about the rip-offs which are going on in the public service. Those issues are to be covered up because they the government wants to talk about France.

I will tell you about France, and I will tell you about the sale of uranium to France. France has a history of thuggery and arrogance which is unmatched by any western country. That is the honest truth, and this government knows it.

Mr Hatton: Send this to the French Embassy.

Mr EDE: I am quite happy for it to go the French Embassy. I am game to speak the truth, unlike the Chief Minister who is ducking the truth by bringing on this sort of motion and trying to run for cover when he is under pressure on issues like the \$50 000 rip-off in the public service. He failed to take up the issue yesterday, and he is trying to avoid it by raising an issue such as this.

We have some very important trade relations with South Pacific nations. Our balance of trade with that area used to be running at 5 to 1 in our favour. Unfortunately, our market share has declined at an average of 2% to 3% per year over the last 10 years. The main beneficiary has been New Zealand which has been able to develop its relationships in that part of the world at our expense. It would be very dangerous of us to view this issue solely in economic terms and say that what is happening with respect to the sale of uranium is totally unrelated to what will happen to our trade relations with the South Pacific region in future.

The purpose of the ban on the sale of uranium to France was to try to get it to cease the testing of nuclear weapons in the South Pacific.

Mr Hatton: Did it work?

Mr EDE: The fact is that it did not work because they are still testing.

Mr Hatton: It never would have worked.

Mr EDE: It is all very well for member opposite to say now that it would never have worked. We have a duty to work together with the countries in that region to attempt to stop the international thugs from France from testing their nuclear weapons in our backyard. France says that it is safe but, if that is the case, why doesn't it test them underground in France? We must get France out of that region.

Unfortunately, the ban did not work as a means of stopping it. What we have to do is to develop a smorgasbord of arrangements. We must change our tactics continually. We imposed the ban and it had to find other sources of uranium in order to continue with its testing. If we are to simply continue the ban on uranium sales to France, we would not be helping the other nations who are trying to stop the tests, because the French have been able to find a way around that ban. What we have to do now is to find other means of stopping them from testing. As I said earlier, it really galls me to be discussing these issues here today when we have so many other urgent issues to debate. The discussions about the national economy yesterday reminded me of a reserve for the C grade team trying to tell Hawthorn how to play football.

Mr Manzie: Why not?

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, they would not have a clue. When you are at the tail end of the third grade, you ought to do a bit of training and get yourself into a better condition and learn how to play the game. Maybe when the government gets into the first grade, it can start talking about how to run the country, how to develop the economy, how to organise the export of uranium, how to run our international affairs and so on.

Members interjecting

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Again I would remind all honourable members that this part of the Assembly proceedings is being broadcast. In fairness to other members of the Assembly, the public in the gallery and the public listening to the broadcast, I ask members to refrain from interjecting.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, we have to recognise the reality of the situation, which is that the ban by itself did not work. We need to find a smorgasbord of options and arrangements to be used against France to prevent it from using our backyard as a place to test nuclear weapons. We are doing that because we agree with the South Pacific nations that France should not be exploding its weapons in that region. We believe in a nuclear test ban. There is some self-interest there, because the French are actually doing considerable harm to the western alliance. This comes on top of the tuna fishing by certain American interests over the last 20 years which had the effect of driving some countries into the arms of the Soviet Union.

I would like to explain the purchase. Originally, when the French were exploding weapons, we had a Liberal government in power which refused to try to do anything about it. When Labor came into government, it said that it would try a ban on uranium sales first. Because there is a guarantee of the rights of property under the Australian Constitution, the government had to pay compensation to the company which had a contract to sell uranium to France. The government decided to sell the uranium elsewhere, but found that the markets were awash with uranium. It could not sell the stuff anywhere.

The government ended up paying the company well above the going rate. The change announced in the budget does not mean that we will sell the stockpile to France; France has already found other sources of supply. What will occur is that the company will have to go back to France and negotiate its way out of its own problems. The Australian government will not be trying to get it out of the hole it has got itself into. We will then be trying to find other means of putting pressure on France to stop it exploding those weapons.

Members opposite are all talking about how they could sell uranium. Haven't they heard of Chernobyl? Haven't they heard of how, in America, there are no new starts to nuclear power-stations because people know that they cannot economically supply that power with a decent set of environmental safeguards?

The figure that the Minister for Mines and Energy talks about is \$400 000m. That \$400 000m was projected when we were obtaining about \$40 a pound for our uranium. That is economic fairyland nowadays; you cannot obtain anything near that price for uranium today. Don't let us build the whole economy of the Northern Territory on the fairyland finances of the Treasurer because that will not get us very far at all.

Mr Hatton: Let the companies make their own decision.

Mr EDE: The Chief Minister tells us to let them make their own decision. I am saying that we should leave this to the federal government.

We will not oppose this motion because we recognise the reality of the circumstances as they exist in the world today. We attempted in all honesty to get the French government to stop testing weapons in the South Pacific. We attempted to use a ban on the export of uranium to that country to achieve that end. It was worth the try but it did not work. Any continuation of that ban would be counterproductive. The federal government is saying that it will not persist with it because to do so would economically benefit a country which does not deserve benefit. In these times of economic stringency, we cannot afford to pursue that line. We will find other methods. We will not continue to hit them with a left when a right might do.

Mr Speaker, why can't this government spend the time available to us in this Assembly in debating issues of real importance over which this legislature has control. As I said, we intended to use question time this morning to try to open debate on a number of fundamentally important issues. What is happening is that the government is attempting by the ...

Mr HANRAHAN: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable member's remarks are not relevant to the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: I direct the honourable member to contain his remarks to subject of the motion.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I was about to inform the Assembly that we will not oppose the motion as it stands even though we recognise what a farcical attempt it is to avoid the real issues over which the Northern Territory government has some control. It seems to me that it does not understand that there are issues over which it has control. It is trying to move into an area over which the federal government has control. It cannot affect the issue because it is a third-grade team at the bottom of the league. It presumes to tell the premiership team how it should be playing the game.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I am delighted to rise to support the motion moved by my colleague because it is timely in the sense that the new Leader of the Opposition has a golden opportunity today to explain to Territorians exactly where he and his party stand on the issue of uranium mining.

Mr Speaker, before his contribution today, we only thought that the honourable member for Stuart was a goat. He has just spent 20 minutes convincing us that he is a goat. My colleague demonstrated that Australia, without any doubt, is the world's basin for the supply of uranium yellowcake. We have done ourselves and the nation a great disservice over the last 10 years with our procrastination and indecision over mining our resources and providing the people of this country with the wealth that should be dug from the ground.

The beneficiaries of Australia's stupidity in the last 10 years have been Canada and South Africa. While we have been beating our breasts and contemplating the rights and wrongs of exporting uranium, the Canadians and the South Africans have been in the market going for their lives picking up every contact they could. What did we get out of it, Mr Speaker? We got 2 mines when we should have had at least 5. We have deprived the Northern Territory community and the Australian community of enormous wealth and opportunities.

In recent days, the federal Treasurer has likened the Australian economy to that of a banana republic. He does not have to tell people that because everybody in business knows it and most of the community who do not understand economics very well have a sneaking suspicion about it. We brought that upon ourselves. That circumstance did not arrive because other people gave us a hard time or because we were not doing our jobs properly. We pursued policies in this country that were designed to ensure that we became a banana republic. One of those policies was our attitude towards the mining of uranium.

What this country needs, and has needed for 10 years, is job-creation opportunities. We need export earnings and one has only to listen to the radio each day to get the message about our current account. We need internal revenue for the federal and state coffers. We took deliberate steps to ensure that we deprived ourselves of all 3 over the last 10 years.

It is not as though we did not know what we were doing; we did it with our eyes wide open. In 1979, the Country Liberal Party government sent a paper to the Commonwealth demonstrating the wealth that would come from the development of 4 mines in the Northern Territory: Koongarra, Jabiluka, Jabiru and Nabarlek. We demonstrated that we could create 3500 jobs directly in the uranium province by putting people to work to run the mines. We demonstrated that we had \$40 000m reserves that we could turn into cash over the lifetime of the mines. We believed that the corporate revenue that would flow from the development of those 4 mines into the federal coffers, apart from any taxes the Territory would obtain, was \$500m per annum every year for the life of the mines. Here is a country that is trying to get its deficit down to \$3500m, and has struggled for 4 years to achieve that, and yet we are denying ourselves the opportunity to bring in revenue like that because of a uranium policy that no one in the Australian community can understand, let alone anyone in the international community. Australia needs to get its act together on uranium policy. Queensland Mines' exports to France must go ahead. The world regards us as a laughing-stock for what we are doing.

Firstly, we have broken an international contract to supply. If you want to deprive yourself of export earnings, go around the world cancelling contracts because people in your parliament do not have warm feelings inside their tummies. What nonsense! When you sign an international contract, Mr Speaker, you sign to deliver at the price and in the time agreed on. It does not matter whether or not you like it. You must stand by your agreements if you want to stay in international business.

Another reason why we have to export is that each year we set aside \$60m to buy the Nabarlek uranium and store it in a shed. Has anybody ever heard such nonsense? Apart from the capital works that we could effect in this country, such as the Darwin Airport, the Alice Springs Airport - and perhaps make a start on the railway - we are losing the benefit of obtaining a return on the money from the federal coffers; we cannot even earn interest on it. At the same time, we are losing face in the international market because we are too proud to sell uranium.

A further reason is that people of the world do not understand how 2 mines in the Northern Territory can operate, but not 4 - although 1 in South Australia may be allowed to operate if they can get it going. We may be able to rationalise that amongst ourselves, in political and economic terms, but the rest of the world thinks that we are goats. It just does not add up. There is no common sense to it; it is totally inconsistent.

This is a time when the ALP in the Northern Territory must give an account of itself. Federally, the ALP has indicated that it will move in this direction. In the Territory, the ALP believes itself to be an alternative government. If it believes that, it ought to tell people what it would do with the Territory's reserves. Opposition members must decide today, deliberately, openly and without reservation, what they believe should be done about the development of uranium in the Northern Territory. They should vote openly on the motion that has been moved by my colleague. It is very important that they declare their position because Territorians are entitled to know. If they do not believe in it, that's great, but they should let people know. They should not hide behind the camouflage that it is not their responsibility and that they are not able to do it. If that were the case, we would not have 2 mines already.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition that he has a special duty today to declare his position.

Mr Smith: I agree.

Mr TUXWORTH: I raise that in this context, Mr Speaker, and the Leader of the Opposition might like to comment on it when it is his turn to speak. As I recall it, he was very anti-uranium in the early 1980s.

Mr Smith: You ran that lie in the election campaign for Millner and lost.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will be able to comment on this more fully later.

Mr Smith: I certainly will.

Mr TUXWORTH: Mr Speaker, he ought to say whether he was in the movement at any time. As I recall, the Leader of the Opposition was involved in 1 or 2 demonstrations on the wharf to try to prevent the export of Nabarlek uranium to France. That being the case in those days, and they were very heady days,

I can understand that a man seeking election to the Assembly would be out in front of the cameras trying to raise some publicity for himself. His attitude on uranium may have changed in the intervening 6 years, but he needs to make an unequivocal statement about it today.

Mr Speaker, it is not just a matter of whether he attended a demonstration on the wharf. As I recall events, the honourable member was later charged and dealt with by the magistrates court for his behaviour there. If that is not true, I would like him to stand up and say so. I am not accusing him straight out of having been convicted; I am asking him to deny that that was the case. Many years have passed since those heady days of the anti-uranium movement in the Northern Territory, and I can understand that all members of the Assembly may have changed their positions on uranium mining for a range of reasons. But, that being the case, today is the day to say where we stand.

The member for Stuart declared his position pretty clearly; he is in favour of it politically, but he is not in favour of it morally. I am not quite sure where that leaves us, nor am I sure how he will vote, but he ought to say quite unequivocally that he will work positively to ensure that all the uranium mines that we can develop in the Northern Territory will be developed. He should not place a bob each way.

I give credit to the former Leader of the Opposition, who stood up at the ALP conference in Tasmania some weeks ago and said that, whatever he thought about it himself, the reality was that it was in the interests of his constituents, the Aboriginal people of Arnhem Land, and the Northern Territory, that uranium mining should proceed post haste in the Northern Territory.

Mr Bell: That is not what he said at all.

Mr TUXWORTH: If he did not say that, Mr Speaker, let us hear what he did say because that is what he was reported to have said.

Mr Speaker, the members from Millner, Arnhem, Stuart, MacDonnell and Nhulunbuy should stand up today and make an unequivocal statement on exactly what they believe the Territory should do with the uranium mines, and the potential we have to develop them in the Northern Territory.

Let me deal now with the ramblings of the member for Stuart. We heard that we should not sell uranium to France because it is detonating nuclear devices in the South Pacific. Everybody in this Chamber is opposed to what France is doing in the South Pacific. Does any member in this place or in any parliament in this country believe that holding contracts up, putting uranium on the wharf in Sydney and leaving it there, will stop the detonation of devices by France in the South Pacific? What has been achieved? Absolutely nothing, except a string of debts for the Australian community to clamber over and, boy, are we having trouble doing that.

The member for Stuart spoke then about the viability of the market and how he has been told that uranium cannot be sold. The answer to that is to take the handcuffs off the companies concerned, give them export licences and permits to sell and let them get into the market and sell. Let us stop this business of big brother deciding for industry whether it can do it, what is good for it, how much it should sell it for and whom it should sell it to. Let us get rid of this nonsense. If the member for Stuart believes that, he ought to be supporting the companies because, if they have not made a sale in 6 months time, he can be vindicated and prove to the world that the mines will

never go ahead because they cannot find a market. However, he will not support that position because he knows that the moment they let the companies off the chain, they will have enough contracts under their belt in 6 months to start 3 more mines out there. He is philosophically opposed to it and he will do anything he can to see that it does not happen.

As a throwaway line towards the end of the speech, we heard a couple of mutterings about Chernobyl. Without wanting to pun, the dust has not settled on the Chernobyl incident by a long shot. There will be many revelations from the investigations into that incident which, in the course of time, will demonstrate that the uranium industry is here to stay. The generation of power by the uranium industry will be the only saviour for people in many parts of the world. If we want to be a part of that industry, we can start by getting our act together and presenting to the world community a rational, logical, commonsense, united approach to the development of uranium resources that everybody else in the world can understand, and that everybody in the Australian community can benefit from.

I call on members of the Labor Party to stand up and support this motion this morning because it is in all our interests for them to do so.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, it is very difficult to call the member for Barkly an honourable person at this moment.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I believe the Leader of the Opposition is reflecting on another member of the Assembly and I ask him to withdraw that remark.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw that reflection.

The member for Barkly has made some completely inaccurate accusations against myself and it is typical of the activities of that particular individual.

Mr Tuxworth: I know how you feel.

Mr SMITH: It is no wonder, when he behaves that way, that he got his just deserts, not only from the electorate of the Northern Territory but from his own political party. In my initial by-election campaign in 1981, he attempted the same completely ridiculous fabrication of my position on the uranium industry and suffered the same result. He took the trouble to send a personal letter, as Minister for Mines and Energy, to every member of my electorate. He completely misrepresented my policy on the uranium issue, and the result of that was that I won with a significantly greater majority than the previous member.

For the record, I want to say that I have never been involved in a demonstration against uranium mining at the wharf in Darwin nor at any other wharf. Furthermore, I have never been charged and dealt with by the courts over that matter or any other matter. I challenge the member for Barkly to repeat those accusations outside the Assembly because, if he does, I will take him to the cleaners. Of course, he relies on the protection of the coward's castle, and he will not repeat those accusations outside, because he is gutless. It is a pretty low day for the Northern Territory parliament when those sort of accusations can be made. He knows that they are not true. It is a very low day indeed in the history of this parliament.

We have before us today a motion that this government always raises when it is in trouble. It is a motion that stops us debating other issues that are

extremely relevant to this Northern Territory community. It is a motion that is typical of the way the government approaches things. All this week, it has been concentrating its attentions on things outside the Northern Territory that it does not control. It has been avoiding and running as hard as possible away from Northern Territory matters that it does control. We have had 2 question times during which almost all questions from the government have been directed toward matters outside its control, and we have the continuation of that today.

The problem with this debate is that it is a political charade. No one is interested in a debate that might sort out the future of the uranium industry and help the development of a changed policy on uranium.

Mr Finch: You have to be kidding.

Mr SMITH: I will give you an example. Within one minute of the member for Stuart beginning his speech, there was a comment from the other side: 'Do not tell us your arguments. Tell us how you are going to vote'.

Mr Finch: Well, how are you going to vote?

Mr SMITH: I am going to tell you later, but you are not interested in the discussion or the arguments on this particular matter; you are just interested in a political charade in an attempt to take the pressure off the Chief Minister. He demonstrated quite clearly last night that he cannot handle pressure.

The other problem in this whole debate is the extremely simplistic approach that the government takes on this particular issue. As a demonstration of that, I will pick up the point about Mount Brockman and the rainbow serpent. If mining is to take place in that area of the Northern Territory at some time in the future, there will have to be due regard to the needs of people who live in the area, to the needs of the conservation movement and to the needs of our rapidly increasing tourist population. The minister said in a scornful voice that people from overseas cannot understand what we are talking about when we mention Mount Brockman's rainbow serpent. His remark shows the limitations of this government's response to a very vexed and thorny issue, one which has divided the Australian community. It is an issue that will be resolved only through meaningful debate, not through political grandstanding such as this exercise.

Mr Coulter: We have legislation to protect such sites.

Mr SMITH: You have legislation to protect such sites. Thank God for that! That is all I can say after your comments today, because if you were the minister responsible for protection of sacred sites, we would have none left. The rainbow serpent and Mount Brockman are extremely significant sacred sites and essential to the Aboriginal culture in the Northern Territory, and the Deputy Chief Minister and the government are just prepared to wave them away.

As the member for Stuart said, the problem is that the policy of not selling uranium to France has not succeeded in its objective of getting the French to stop atomic testing at Moruroa. We accept that it has not succeeded, but it is not good enough - and here I differ from the Prime Minister - to say that, because one measure has failed, we should walk away from trying in other ways to dissuade the French from exploding their atomic bombs in our backyard. It is our backyard. It is 12 000 miles or more away

from France. It is not too far away from us. The winds blow in our direction.

There are also the implications for our relationships with South Pacific countries. They have to be considered too. The position that we will be putting to the Prime Minister of Australia is that an essential element in our relationships with France on this matter must be that we vigorously pursue other means of pressuring it to stop its atomic testing in our backyard. If it wants to test atomic bombs, let it do so in its own backyard. I would invite member of the government to join me in that stand because I think the public supports it. People do not want to see atomic testing anywhere in the world, and they certainly do not want to see a country which is not game enough to test its atomic bombs in its own backyard doing it in somebody else's. That is a position which everybody in this Assembly should be able to support. It is a logical position in furthering the advance of world peace and furthering the proposition that we do not need atomic testing and that the sooner all nuclear powers stop it, the better off everybody will be. If we can get a worldwide agreement that there is to be no nuclear testing, it will be much easier in this country and other countries to persuade people who oppose uranium mining because of their fear that it will lead to the nuclear weapons cycle. We can then start talking to people about peaceful uses of uranium mining in nuclear power generation. That is what everybody should be concentrating on.

Mr SPEAKER: If the Leader of the Opposition will resume his chair, he can continue his remarks at a later hour. Honourable members, as I advised yesterday, I will present the address-in-reply to His Honour the Administrator at Government House at 11.30 am today. The Chair will be resumed at 2 pm.

Mr Speaker Vale resumed the Chair at 2 pm.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I have always wanted to say: 'As I was saying when I was rudely interrupted ...'. I now have. But, unfortunately, I was not rudely interrupted, so it is not fair to say it.

One of the problems with the pie-in-the-sky approach of the Minister for Mines and Energy is that sometimes he loses touch with reality. One cannot help but admire his enthusiasm but, unfortunately, at times he loses touch with what is happening on the ground. The situation regarding uranium market prospects is quite sobering when you look at it objectively. The first thing of interest is that currently 60% of Ranger's existing mined reserves remain unsold. The markets are not there. Ranger has been actively pursuing contracts throughout the world and has had great difficulty indeed in obtaining them. I am advised that Ranger has only signed 2 small contracts in recent years, both in America.

Mr Coulter: Key Lake just sold 6 million pounds.

Mr SMITH: Yes, Key Lake might have sold 6 million pounds but Ranger has not.

Mr Coulter: That shows there is a market.

Mr Dale: Ranger wants to make a profit.

Mr SMITH: Yes, that is right, and it brings us to our second point. We have a floor price for the sale of our uranium. It is a floor price that was set, not by the Hawke government, but by the Fraser government. It is a

legitimate means of ensuring that we will get a minimum price for our product, otherwise we will not sell it. I would hate to think that people on the other side of the Assembly are arguing that we should open up these new uranium mines for these beautiful new markets that exist somewhere and sell the uranium for whatever price we can get. When we sell our raw materials, we must ensure that we obtain a good price for them. If we cannot obtain a good price, it would be more sensible to leave the product in the ground until the price improved.

Mr Manzie: The Arabs ought to leave their oil in the ground.

Mr SMITH: That is exactly what they decided to do. They decided to cut their production until the price improved.

Mr Manzie: And the price has not gone up.

Mr SMITH: That is right. They have learnt the hard way that you must have minimum price levels otherwise your resource is eroded rapidly and you are left with nothing.

Like it or not, Chernobyl has put a damper on the nuclear power industry. I can accept all the arguments that the Soviets do not have the same concern about safety as everybody else. Like it or not, Chernobyl has put a damper on the nuclear industry and has further depressed markets that were already slow. When Pancontinental was authorised to obtain contracts, the Fraser government knocked back the only contracts that they could obtain because the price was not high enough.

The hopeful anticipation by the Minister for Mines and Energy that the opening of these new mines will solve our balance of trade problems and create thousands of jobs just will not stand up when one looks at the global context of the industry.

Mr Coulter: Markets for 4500 t are presently available.

Mr SMITH: Why don't you show Ranger where they are and encourage it to take out contracts? That might help Ranger get rid of the reserves that it has been unable to move.

The sad thing about this debate on this very important issue is that it has not advanced the discussion on uranium mining in Australia one iota. The reason is that this government is not interested in addressing problems nor in attempting to meet the legitimate concerns of people who oppose the nuclear industry. They are legitimate concerns. We are talking about a fuel source that has the capacity to end the human race. That is of legitimate concern to people and those people within my party who feel strongly about this issue feel strongly about the survival of the human race.

Mr Speaker, I am not in the camp that says uranium mining is bad and we should leave it in the ground for ever and a day. I believe that it is possible to reach a point where, with the development of sufficient safeguards, we can mine uranium safely and we will be able to open new uranium prospects in Australia. The problem is that the approach offered by this government is counter-productive. It is no use yelling and screaming on this particular question. What is needed is reasoned debate and that is certainly something that I will encourage within my own party in the months and years to come.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, what needs to be said at this stage is that members opposite, in particular the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, have failed very deliberately to address the motion. We have had to sit here and listen to a load of tripe which they need to espouse to pacify the left wing of the Labor Party. What they are not achieving is exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has just mentioned: constructive debate. We heard the absolutely ridiculous argument put forward that this motion has been moved for the sole purpose of disrupting the good and successful carriage of business in this Assembly. Mr Speaker, that is ludicrous.

This motion is very relevant to issues affecting Australian nationally at this very moment. Federally, the Labor Party is splitting like a rampant atom. The centre left and the left factions in Canberra are attempting - and are suggesting that they will be successful - to overturn the federal government's recent budget decision to lift the bans on the sale of uranium to France. One would hope that the backbone of the federal Cabinet will hold together and that the decision announced in the budget will be implemented.

What disturbs me is that we have no idea of the uranium policy of the opposition in this Assembly. At least the former Leader of the Opposition had the gumption to stand in this Assembly and state his views. I do not recall any other member of the opposition stating his policy on uranium. I think it is vitally important to the people of the Territory that we hear what members opposite have to say. For too long, we have heard nothing in terms of suggested policies. What have they got to say about uranium mining? They have demonstrated it again this morning: absolutely nothing!

We have heard arguments that uranium should stay in the ground, that Roxby Downs uranium is okay and Northern Territory uranium is not okay. Surely members opposite realise that, if the companies were given free rein, they would get out there and find the markets and create the jobs. Denison will open up Koongarra and Pancontinental will open up Jabiluka. Just let them have a chance. This is very relevant to the Territory because it would provide jobs, jobs and more jobs. Why shouldn't we keep on saying it? This is what it is all about.

What is the policy of members opposite? Don't they want to see more jobs? Or do they continually want to throw at us this ridiculous rubbish about Chernobyl and French tests to pacify their left wing. The federal Minister for Resources and Energy, Gareth Evans, has said very clearly in today's Australian that the embargo has not pushed France towards ceasing nuclear weapons testing in the South Pacific. He also went on to say that the lifting of the embargo will save \$26m next year and \$13m the year after. It immediately adds \$66m to offset the trade deficit this year.

Mr Ede: He is agreeing with me.

Mr HANRAHAN: Sure he is agreeing with you, or are you agreeing with him?

To suggest that we have raised this issue in order to be frivolous is really expecting a little too much of the Northern Territory public. I would like to know what the policies of the Northern Territory Labor Party are in relation to uranium mining. What are its policies regarding continued support for the successful mining of uranium in the Northern Territory? I guess we are getting a little further towards the truth when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition tells us that they will be voting to support this motion. The motion is what it is about: it is about unanimous support for a federal

government budget decision, and it is about unanimous support for the lifting of very restrictive bans. If members opposite vote for the motion, I will be very happy, and everybody in the Northern Territory will have some indication as to how the members opposite feel about the mining of uranium.

Let us hear no more of this rubbish that the government does not have the right to bring before the Assembly a very substantial motion of considerable relevance to the economy of the Northern Territory and Australia as a whole. The opposition suggests that we are running scared, that we are worried because there is a censure motion on the Chief Minister or something else is happening. Mr Speaker, we do not care one iota for the rubbish, the ill-founded supposed facts, that the honourable members of the opposition bring forward in this Assembly. Time and time again, we have heard nothing but rubbish. This government reserves the right now, and every day in the future that it sits, to bring forward matters of importance and motions that are relevant to the Territory economy. If members opposite wish to carry on as they do, saying that they have been badly treated and badly done by, because they lack the gumption to stand up and say what they really think for the benefit of Territorians, let them. However, it is absolute folly, and the people of the Northern Territory will see through it.

Mr Speaker, I would be very pleased to hear the comments of the members for Arnhem, MacDonnell and Nhulunbuy because I think they need to say something of substance which both the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have failed to do.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I rise to make several comments in relation to this particular motion. The essential comment is that the government's approach to this matter has been irresponsible in the extreme. I say that for 3 reasons and I would like to take a little of the Assembly's time and, dare I suggest, some of the attention of those government frontbenchers who have a relatively short concentration span. If they will grit their teeth and listen, they may actually learn something.

Mr Speaker, firstly, the timing of this motion is irresponsible because of the way it was introduced into this Assembly. It is very sad that we have seen the departure of Mr Jim Robertson from this Assembly. He, without doubt, was a leader of the Assembly. As Leader of Government Business, he would never have tolerated treating the deliberations of the Assembly with this sort of contempt.

Quite clearly, the development of the Northern Territory's uranium reserves should be looked at in the perspective of the nuclear industry around the world. It is a matter of public importance around the globe, because none of the world's 5 billion people is potentially unaffected by these decisions. These are not small matters. These are not trivial issues, to be dealt with by filling in some little administrative loophole here or there. These are mighty issues, which are of concern not just to ourselves or our children, but for generation after generation. Here we see this collection of people who are prepared to trivialise a highly important debate by just dropping it on the table with no notice whatsoever.

Mr Coulter: It would take you years to make up your mind about anything.

Mr BELL: You have had your go. You just listen to me, fella.

When we in the opposition introduce matter of public importance debates into this Assembly, on most occasions give considerable notice so that

reasoned debate can be the order of the day. Here we have a pack of hooligans interested only in a few ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will withdraw that last remark.

Mr BELL: I unconditionally withdraw, and I do point out that I meant it simply in a metaphorical sense, not in an actual sense.

Mr SPEAKER: Metaphorical or otherwise, the honourable member will withdraw the remark and not debate the issue.

Mr BELL: I withdraw unconditionally, Mr Speaker.

To return to my theme of the irresponsibility of the Northern Territory government in this regard, let me say that the way this debate has been introduced today shows an extraordinary contempt for the Assembly and the subject of the debate.

In relation to the substance of the motion and its wording, I offer my services to the government. Perhaps they need some slightly more competent wordsmiths than those they are employing at the moment. I just draw the attention of honourable members to the phrase 'unanimously endorse', and the second phrase 'unanimously urge'. The plain fact of the matter is that whoever composed these motions, and since the Minister for Mines and Energy introduced them I presume he is responsible for them, does not understand parliamentary procedure. For the minister's future reference - and I appreciate he has not had too much time in this Assembly and even less on the frontbench - the question of the unanimity or otherwise of these motions should be reserved for comment after they are debated and passed. Whether they are or are not passed unanimously is obviously a matter that goes quite beyond the substance of the motion. I like to make a point of educating these young fellows. I am prepared to cope with their giving absolutely no notice of motions, however irresponsible it may be. However, I just point out to them for future reference that they really should get their wording right. That is the second indicator of the irresponsibility of minister's moving such motions in this Assembly.

The third area of irresponsibility is their attempt to trivialise what is quite obviously an issue of worldwide importance. Its importance has so many manifestations that, in the time available to me, it is not possible to describe them all. Reference has already been made to the Chernobyl disaster, and listening to the catcalls and razzamatazz from the government side, it is almost possible to believe that it never occurred and had not threatened the lives of so many people. Hearing them, it is hard to believe that the Three Mile Island meltdown sent such a shiver through the nuclear industry; you would imagine that it had no effect whatsoever.

When the government turns to trivialising the placing of sanctions on the export of uranium to France, in the way it has with this motion, it is positively breathtaking. Let us just go back to the source of this. I never cease to be amazed by the capacity, or lack of capacity, of this government to take a broad view or, to use one of the metaphors so dear to the heart of the erstwhile Chief Minister, to look at the big picture. Do you remember that one, Mr Speaker? I do. The poor old member for Barkly is not here, unfortunately, but I hope he is listening.

Mr Dale: Give us a global view now.

Mr BELL: Certainly, I will give you the global view.

Mr Finch: Give us your view. What is your view?

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BELL: The global view is that the nuclear industry is extraordinarily dangerous. I think that would appear to most ordinary people as a self-evident fact, but unfortunately

Mr Dale: Petrol sniffing is a dangerous practice.

Mr BELL: I will come back to petrol sniffing, because the chief difference between this and petrol sniffing is that the latter only involves a can and a poor kid who suffers.

The fact is that policies which allow the rampant, uncritical development of the nuclear industry, together with the arrogant, irresponsible attitude adopted by the government, are potentially dangerous and threaten the lives of people who have no chance of controlling the possible results.

Mr Manzie: Oh really.

Mr BELL: I hear the member for Sanderson interjecting. Will he be able to stand up in this debate and say honestly that the rumours of the Japanese government dumping nuclear waste in the Pacific Ocean, outside the currents that are likely to affect that country, did not send a shiver of fear up his spine?

Mr Manzie: What has that to do with the motion?

Mr BELL: What has it got to do with the motion? I will tell you, Daryl. Its relevance to this debate is the self-evident truth I mentioned before: that the nuclear industry is highly dangerous and ...

Mr Finch: How many uranium miners have ever died?

Mr BELL: The minister and the people who are supporting him do no credit to self-government and responsible government in the Northern Territory by taking such an extraordinarily uncritical attitude to the development of those resources.

I will turn back to the French tests in the Pacific. I said that Japan's dumping of nuclear waste in the Pacific should send shivers running down our spines. We are caught in a huge worldwide bind. Somebody mentioned the problems of acid rain. No energy sources are really safe. We are in a big bind. Western economies, growth economies, need energy. Burning coal in West Germany is destroying the Black Forest. Equally, there are problems with the nuclear industry. We hear of disasters like Chernobyl, the meltdown at Three Mile Island and the dumping of nuclear wastes in the Pacific Ocean. I believe that the federal government has taken a responsible attitude in its approach to France over the long term. Let us face it, a federal Liberal government would never have applied any sanctions whatsoever. It would have wrung its hands and said: 'Oh look, oh dear, we do not like them blowing up these things but we are not going to do anything about it!'. The Labor government took a courageous decision in telling the French that we would not tolerate it. Unfortunately, the decision had no particular effect on the French. There is something about the French manner that one would never be able to

work out. In fact, the French have that wonderful term 'hauteur' which means that they make it very difficult for people to determine whether they are particularly concerned about something or not.

I support that particular section of the motion. As much as I endorsed the application of those sanctions at that time, I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition hit the nail on the head when he said that going into the trenches on one of the issues for ever and a day is not necessarily the rational thing to do. Having registered our concern in this way and having put our money where our mouth is, we have reached the stage where - sorry about the mixed metaphors - we are possibly cutting off our nose to spite our face.

There has been some talk from government members about the waste of \$60m of federal money. That came from the member for Barkly. I would have thought that he would have been a bit ashamed. For the member for Barkly to start talking about wasting government money is really a little rich! His efforts inspire me to shake my head in wonder. He talked about \$60m of federal money. What sort of government guarantees has he been involved in up to his neck? \$60m would be a low figure to put on them. I suggest that, before he points the finger at the federal government, he should look a little deeper into his own heart and work out precisely whom he is attacking and whom he is not attacking because he will find that arguments like that have a dangerous habit of rebounding.

Mr Coulter: In 5 minutes, can you tell us whether you support the motion?

Mr BELL: To answer the Minister for Mines and Energy, I have said that I am happy to endorse the first part of the motion in the context in which I have described it, ignoring the drafting errors that I have drawn to his attention. I am not prepared to heartily endorse the second part. The plain fact of the matter is that, like most public issues, they are not black and white because there are shades of grey. What I have attempted to do is to lead the government members to an appreciation that the issue of the Northern Territory's place in the nuclear industry is not a simple one. It is not a simple one of leaving uranium in the ground or of taking a rip-it-all-out attitude. There are complex economic and technical considerations involved in decisions like this. The good purpose of responsible self-government in the Northern Territory is not well served by the irresponsible, idiot approach taken by the government in the substance of this motion and the method of its introduction into the Assembly.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I gather the member for MacDonnell is trying to say to us that, as long as there is a concern about the use of uranium in the world, then we should not mine it and sell it.

Mr Bell: That is not what I said, Marshall.

Mr PERRON: It appeared to be what he said. He went to great lengths to say that we simply passed motions calling upon the government to allow uranium mines to proceed, that we were not critical enough, and that we do not appreciate that there are problems with this particular energy source. Of course we appreciate that there are problems. However, if we were to set the matter to one side until all groups were satisfied, most realistic people would appreciate that uranium would never be mined.

The ALP's uranium policy is very rubbery. When it first came to power in 1983, it was going to shut down the whole industry. Its policy was to shut it

down. There was discussion about whether there would be compensation to the miners and jobs for the miners to go to or compensation for the mining companies. The brand new town of Jabiru was going to become a ghost town. That was the policy back in 1982-83. When the crunch came, the mines in the Northern Territory were not shut down. The parliamentary arm of the ALP interpreted the policy as allowing the existing mines to remain in operation. However, there were to be no new contracts. No new mines would open up and no new contracts would be negotiated. When existing contracts were wound down, the mines would close.

Next, there was a move to expand the interpretation even further to announce that Roxby Downs uranium would be allowed to be mined. That was done to save the neck of the ALP government in South Australia. Without that decision, it would have been thrown out, and there was no secret about that. I think that most Australians appreciate why the uranium policy was stretched that little bit because, by then, it was becoming very rubbery. Perhaps the rubber is perishing. It was rubbery enough to allow a new mine in South Australia to open, but simultaneously to continue to refuse permission for 2 Territory mines to go ahead, despite the fact that their ore bodies had been defined, environmental impact statements had been undertaken and there was open support from the Aboriginals in the area and the Northern Land Council.

Later, another aspect of the policy was changed. New contracts for the sale of uranium were approved. Then a completely new stance was adopted. Contracts for supply to France would not be fulfilled. Ranger could dig uranium up and process it into yellowcake, but not export it to France. Instead, the federal government would use taxpayers' dollars to stockpile it. In hindsight, the federal government has realised that its action in refusing supply was quite useless. It had not done France any harm or altered its testing program. The only one to suffer was Australia. In fact, we did France a favour, as the minister for Mines and Energy said. We got it out of paying some \$36 a pound under the contract for our uranium, and allowed it to enter the spot market where uranium was being sold for about \$16 a pound. The ALP was told at the time of the imposition of the ban on uranium sales to France that it would not work and that we were only slapping ourselves in the face. It now realises that was true, and so there is a policy change.

The former Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly had a pretty rubbery policy on uranium too. When he first arrived in this Assembly, we all understood him to be paranoid about uranium. He spoke about it ad nauseam. He was so opposed to it. I accept his right to oppose it as strongly as he did. But, in 1984, he did a 180° turn. He now supports uranium mining. He did the same thing in relation to the TAB, the pipeline, self-government and the term of the Administrator.

The ALP policy on uranium is so rubbery that anything could happen. That is why part 2 of the motion before the Assembly is the most important part. It advocates that the federal government allow the Northern Territory's new mines to proceed. All they need is a signature from the federal minister. Both of those mines could commence development. All that is required is a realisation in the ranks of the ALP that, just as the banning of sales to France did not work and only Australia suffered, so too withholding or not mining uranium will not change the world consumption of yellowcake by one ounce.

When the ALP realises that its entire policy is based on the false premise that we are having an effect on the world's consumption and use of uranium, this country might take a very significant step forward. If that rubbery

policy of the ALP has a little bit more stretch in it, and a little more pressure is applied, there might be a possibility of its stretching it to some degree of sanity and allowing this country to enjoy the benefits of uranium mining. I support the motion.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, at the outset, I indicate to the Minister for Mines and Energy that I agree with the first section of his motion, despite the drafting errors commented on by the member for MacDonnell. However, I disagree with his second section of his motion, including its drafting errors as commented on by the member for MacDonnell.

Uranium is a fact of life and, in these very stringent times, I do not believe that we can afford any longer to prevent our product being sold to the nuclear thugs of the international community, France. I do not believe we can afford that luxury any longer. As much as it pains me to say it, I believe that, unfortunately, we will be obliged to lift that ban on uranium mining.

Unfortunately, the same pragmatic approach to economics is not being demonstrated by the Northern Territory government. It continues to prop up its Taj Mahals and its glass castles, including Yulara, the Sheratons, the casinos and all the others. If this government was half as pragmatic as the federal government, we might possibly have meaningful employment in the Northern Territory instead of paying \$50 a night for airline pilots to sleep in pubs around this place. I am prepared to accept the economic realities in this country at the moment. I only hope that this government recognises that it needs to display precisely the same economic discipline because, unless it does, we will go down the drain.

As to the second part of this motion, I disagree with it. Like all members, I realise what a glut in any particular commodity will do. We have seen it happen with coal in Queensland. You end up with a glut of that particular commodity on the world market. The prices are forced down, the workers in the industry are obliged to take more cuts, are obliged to accept lower working conditions and are obliged, in some cases, to be stood down simply because, at some stage, a glut had been created. That is the reality of creating a glut in a commodity. That is one reason why I disagree with it.

The other reason I disagree with it is because this government has not recognised its industrial responsibility for the safety of working people employed in mines. I am not labouring under any delusions. Unlike the crew opposite, I come from a mining town. The arrant ignorance of the people opposite and their failure to apply industrial safety measures for people working in mining areas is another reason why I disagree with the opening of new mines. Despite the fact that 16 working people were sacked because they tried to pursue safe working conditions in a mine, the government did absolutely nothing. It stood by and saw them sacked. That is why I will not see any other working people being obliged to work in such conditions while this government continues to ignore their legitimate claims.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, what an incredible outburst from a former bus driver at a mine. The only thing he knew about safety was the site speed limit.

Mr Ede: At least, he did know something about it!

Mr DALE: I can see a parallel between today's motion and the matter of public importance that was raised by the opposition yesterday. I spoke yesterday of the need to achieve self-management in Aboriginal communities.

An integral part of that is self-reliance which, in all cases, will be dependent on the establishment of an economic base. Royalties which have flowed from uranium mining in the past 6 years are the catalyst of that economic base. Make no mistake; it is the entire solution to the economic base which has to follow on from the prudent use of royalty moneys. Some \$42m has been paid by uranium mining companies to Aboriginal interests since production began in the early 1980s. Wise application of those funds to the future of the Aboriginal people is reflected in the commercial interests of the Gagadju Association. Cooida Motel is a prime example of that Aboriginal enterprise. Aboriginal interests are involved also in plans to build another motel at Jabiru. It appears that they too have become tired of waiting for the big upgrading of tourist facilities in Kakadu, promised some years ago by our friends in Canberra.

Mr Speaker, the devotees of the left in the southern states will argue, in their usual do-gooder fashion, that royalties are harmful because they destroy the traditional Aboriginal culture. How many times have we heard that? With all due respect to that culture, why promote the stone-age mentality of the crazy left of the Australian Labor Party? Give Aboriginals the credit of being able to think for themselves. Royalties give Aboriginals and their organisations the ability to provide for their immediate needs, to plan for their futures in terms of local government and the provision of services. Both here and in Canberra, the message that the easy times are over has been given in the most forceful way, by putting the brakes on that good old gravy train. While we will continue to provide funds through the normal channels for all Territorians, communities must be weaned off the belief that government funding is endless. Royalties allow Aboriginal people the luxury of independent business pursuits to establish that all-important economic base.

We will continue also to supply help in employment, education and training, health and recreation, but it will be the royalty payments from the uranium mining which will allow them to grow, develop and be employed on a long-term basis. Aboriginal people agree with mining and royalty payments. Who are those of the loopy left to interfere with their choice? The more opportunities there are, the more communities will benefit from those royalties and the greater the chance of establishing a stable economy that is able to compete on equal terms and is free from reliance on handouts.

Royalties are paid by Ranger, Nabarlek, Gemco and Nabalco. As I said, some \$42m has been paid by uranium mines since the early 1980s. Ranger, for example, has paid between \$11m and \$12m annually for the last 3 years to Aboriginal interests. One of the spin-offs is employment. Both Ranger and Nabarlek have policies to employ local Aboriginals. Aboriginal organisations such as the Gagadju Association pick up contract work which would not have been available if it had not been for the mines in Jabiru.

It has taken the opposition an awful long time to learn that the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory want uranium mining to go ahead. The fact of the matter is that ideas and concepts have been stuffed down their throats by the arrogant left of the Australian Labor Party and its representatives in the Northern Territory. Today, we have given the members of this pathetic opposition an opportunity to come out and tell, not only white Territorians but also Aboriginal Territorians - those people who stand to gain the most benefit from uranium mining - precisely what they, as members elected to represent the people of the Northern Territory, have to say about uranium mining and the sale of uranium.

Of course, their performance so far has been quite pathetic. A couple of them have dodged the issue, as they dodge every issue - and I am sure Territorians are well and truly aware of that attitude. Obviously, the member for MacDonnell wants no part of uranium mining and nor does the member for Nhulunbuy. He does not want to see any expansion whatsoever to benefit the Aboriginal people in his electorate. There remains only 1 other member of the opposition yet to give his views to the members of the Northern Territory constituency. The former Leader of the Opposition is absent, due to the ill health of his wife and therefore cannot contribute, but we do know where he stands on uranium mining at this time.

But the person I challenge to rise and speak on this subject is the member for Arnhem. I was very disappointed that he did not speak yesterday in the debate on unemployment in Aboriginal communities. No longer can the member for Arnhem sit in this Assembly as a token gesture. He must get to his feet and tell his Aboriginal constituents, and the rest of the constituency of the Northern Territory, precisely what the only Aboriginal member of this Legislative Assembly thinks about the uranium mining industry. Before the people of the Northern Territory, I challenge him to state his opinion.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, I would like to begin by telling a story which I heard during my very last lecture at Adelaide University many years ago. It was a very interesting lecture on the use of underground nuclear explosions to shatter rock and allow oil production. But that is by the by. This is the story.

A Catholic priest was informed that his old parishioner, Paddy, was at the hospital and not likely to survive. Paddy was a favourite and dear parishioner so he went straight to the hospital and found Paddy in an oxygen tent. The priest said: 'Paddy, if there is anything on your mind that you would like to confess to me, I think it could be a good time to do it'. Paddy tried to raise himself on his elbow to say something in the priest's ear. The priest leant over, and Paddy tried to say something but flopped back on the pillow. The priest stepped back and Paddy seemed to regain his composure. The priest urged him to try again and once more Paddy tried to raise himself and the priest leant to try to catch his words. Paddy flopped down again. The priest said: 'Obviously, something is bothering you. Here is my notebook. Write it down there'. Paddy scrawled something and the priest leant over him while he wrote. Paddy slumped back and was gone. The priest administered the last rites and left, feeling very sad. 'I wonder what it was', he mused, as he walked along the street. 'What was Paddy trying to tell me?' Suddenly, he recalled his notebook and looking down he read: 'Get your foot off my oxygen tube'.

Mr Speaker, that is what the federal government is doing to the Northern Territory. It tells Territorians they are a group of mendicants who cost the federal government masses of money, but it has its foot on the oxygen tube. Territorians do not want to be a mendicant group; we want to contribute to the welfare of Australia. We have the capacity in the Territory, but we are hamstrung by the federal government. Not only do I believe we should open up the uranium mines, but we should also get out of the way of the companies who will open them. They should be the ones to examine the market and decide when to produce. The federal government should stand aside.

Beyond that, I believe that we are missing out, as Australia has done so often. We ship our iron ore overseas and we buy back finished products made from that ore. I have long believed that we should develop facilities for the enrichment of uranium. By that, I mean enrichment to the grade where

uranium 235 is brought up to about 3% of the total isotope value in the sample, which is the grade needed to produce the fuel rods. This is way below the level needed for weapons, which is 90% or more. We should become involved in the field of enrichment. We should produce the rods to the specifications of the nuclear plants around the world. What is more, we should get into the business of taking back those spent rods, processing them and putting the high-level radioactive material into the synroc process, which is an Australian invention devised by Professor Ringwood and the Australian Atomic Energy Commission Group. We would store it. We would certainly put it in a hole. We have plenty of stable geological areas, free from water, where we could store it. I use the term 'store'; I do not say 'get rid of'. Who knows, there may some good use for this material in the future?

The synroc process is something of which Australia can be very proud. Unlike the borosilicate process, which tries to trap the highly radioactive but short half-life material inside hollows within the material, the synroc process actually binds the atoms chemically so that each atom is virtually tied to part of the synroc material. It is a process which Australia should be very proud of but I am afraid that we may never benefit from it. Quite often, we invent the technology and then fail to take advantage of it.

If Australia takes the route that I am talking about, we certainly have the right places to put the material. Like the member for MacDonnell, I am concerned to hear of people dropping radioactive waste into the sea. I believe we have a responsibility to take into account that the uranium industry is not going to go away, and we could offer the world a decent place for getting rid of its radioactive waste with complete safety to the people of Australia. We should be doing this. If we did it, there would be considerable economic advantage. 2 years ago, the radioactive waste treatment industry was a \$1000m industry, and it has been growing rapidly. I get the bulletins from the Australian Atomic Energy Commission which give a run down on the world situation. There are nuclear plants opening up all the time. I believe we should go down this route, and I give a great deal of credit to a person in the gallery today, Mr Roger Watters, from the Department of Mines and Energy. He has put out a booklet on this ...

Mr Dondas: He is good at rugby.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Who cares about the rugby? This is good common sense, and I believe that he has had quite an influence on a many people in Australia because his book is immensely readable, understandable and quite convincing. If members of the opposition had his common sense, I would have a much higher regard for them. He has done an excellent job in that booklet and in promoting understanding about nuclear energy. The reaction to the nuclear industry among many people reminds me of the time when people rode horses with red flags in front of Stevenson's Rocket and the first motor cars. There is much fear about it and not a great deal of understanding. I pay tribute to him. It is even possible that the budget decision to lift embargos on the sale of uranium to France is partially due to his influence.

Let us just consider that particular matter. It is a real irony to me that the company had no say in the decision not to honour our contracts to France. The government simply said to the company that it could not sell the uranium and that the government would purchase it and stockpile it. That reminds me of something which the member for Stuart said this morning, and I wrote down: 'The company can get itself out of the trouble it got itself into'. What a load of poppycock! The only trouble it got into was through its willingness to honour its contract at \$36 a pound for the uranium. The

French would have honoured their side of the bargain and paid the price. In this holier-than-thou business, the French were saved \$20 a pound. South Africa, which we are now trying to pressure with sanctions, was one of the key beneficiaries. It has all backfired and, in the process, the Canadians have their big deposits of uranium on the market. Naturally, as supply increases, the cost decreases. It will be harder for us to sell our uranium on the world market. We certainly will not obtain the price that we had in the contract with France. We have been left with egg all over our face. I hope that whoever tries to plan the sanctions against South Africa has a crystal ball or at least the good sense to learn from this episode. The results of sanctions may be quite different to what is hoped for. I tend to agree with the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Mrs Thatcher, that the sanctions could be self-defeating. Let us hope that they are not as self-defeating as this effort to stop uranium sales to France has been.

I think other members have canvassed the issues fairly well. I support the motion wholeheartedly and would urge that we go even further and offer the world a safe and reliable method of disposing of highly radioactive waste. It would be economically advantageous to the Territory and it would be lovely if Senator Walsh and the rest would get their foot off our oxygen tube and let us get on with the job.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): I did not intend to speak in this debate. However, the performance by members opposite on behalf of the Northern Territory Branch of the Australia Labor Party certainly caused me to change my mind. I expected to see a change of attitude from those opposite. I expected to see some support for their charismatic Prime Minister as he attempts to steer the ship of Australia off the rocks of depression where it has been headed for the last 3 years with him at the helm. But we did not see very much support from members opposite for the federal government, the Prime Minister or the federal Treasurer who are attempting to rectify a major mistake and an attitude which has caused problems in this country of ours. Did we see any support from members opposite? I certainly did not hear it, and I am sure that the Territory community did not hear it.

The member for Stuart mumbled on for 20 minutes about bombs and unsuccessful attempts to prevent testing. It was a pathetic effort. How naive he is. The member for Barkly was quite correct when he said there was not a member in this Assembly who does not deplore the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the abuse of nuclear energy. That would be the case with just about everyone in this country.

Even Noddy and Big Ears would not have believed the stories that were put about a few years ago by the ALP that the breaking of international contracts would stop France from buying uranium from South Africa and Canada, would stop the French from testing nuclear weapons or perhaps prevent France from generating 60% of its electricity by nuclear means. Obviously, members opposite thought that it was worth a try, to use their own words. It had about as much chance of success as sharpening an axe with a banana. It was worth a go in spending \$116m of taxpayers' money in purchasing and storing yellowcake. It was worth a go to forgo \$116m worth of export earnings for this country. It was worth a go to deny the community \$232m. It was worth a go to appease the left of the Labor Party. It was worth a go to punish the Northern Territory community because the community had the audacity to support the government rather than the ALP. That became more obvious when it was okay to mine uranium from South Australia but it was pretty terrible stuff if it came from the Northern Territory.

The members for Stuart and Millner said that there are no markets. They had the audacity to suggest that governments should be in the business of marketing produce and exports. Then, we had the member for Millner, who has just been elected Leader of the Opposition, telling us how he agrees with blackmail. He agrees with the concept of denying products and strangling the world until it pays the price. He supports the Arabs in their concept of limiting the supply of oil until it reaches \$40 or \$50 a barrel. He supports the concept of governments interfering with the natural markets.

Mr Smith: Don't you?

Mr MANZIE: I certainly do not and I do not think the motorists of Australia would support the concept either. We know that you do and we will not let you forget it. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, that I will not let the Leader of the Opposition forget that he supports that sort of thing.

We had a beaut tale from the member for Stuart. He tried to tell us that nuclear generation of electricity is all in the past. They are not going to build any more nuclear power-stations in America. That is poppycock and he knows it. He knows that the nuclear energy industry in Japan is expanding.

Mr Ede: Tell me about America.

Mr MANZIE: He should know more electricity is produced with nuclear energy in the USA than the entire United Kingdom uses. He says that it is a dying industry. I guarantee that, in 20 years, there will be much more produced there. He does not want to know that because it does not accord with his philosophy. His philosophy is that it is dangerous stuff that will lead to the end of us all. Attitudes like that may result in the end of us all.

France is now selling electricity to the United Kingdom via an underground cable under the English Channel. The electricity that they are selling would require 6000 t of coal a day to produce. It is clean energy which can be effectively produced without endangering the lives of miners and without ruining forests. We heard about the acid rain but honourable members opposite are happy to keep their heads in the sand. They do not want to know about that sort of thing.

They are happy that \$232m of taxpayers' money went down the drain simply to feed a philosophy that they support. I think it is worth while to read a segment of an article in The Australian of 24 May. It is a part of a speech by David Kemp which was given in the Sir Robert Menzies Address for this year:

When Sir Robert Menzies left office in 1966, unemployment was under 2%. Today, on a minimum definition of those seeking to join the work force, it is just over 8%. Inflation in 1966 was almost non-existent and has since reached 16%. It is 8% again and is rising. A person on average earnings in 1966 paid 16% of his income in tax at a marginal rate of 27%. Today, that person pays almost 25% on a marginal rate of 47% and possibly another 15% in indirect taxes.

The health system is in crisis. There is a flight from the government school system. Tertiary education is running down. The national research capacity has declined. Welfare spending by the Commonwealth has increased from \$1m to \$19m or from 18% of the Commonwealth budget to 28% yet we are constantly told poverty is worse than ever. We seem unable either to effectively reform or generally to cut taxation. There has been a huge increase in

government patronage, in evidence of maladministration and in the scale of defrauding the revenue.

To mention these facts is not to join the doomsayers. Our past need not be the reflection of our future. To state them is but to record what has happened to our country in the 20 years since Sir Robert Menzies announced his retirement. What has happened was foreseeable and foreseen. We have used government to pursue grander security and equality. The costs have been heavy, the gain slight. The era of national mismanagement which it represents must be brought to end as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, this country has rapidly gone downhill. One of the major reasons for that is people who hold philosophies similar to those held by members opposite who still cannot understand that, for the same ideology, one can spend hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars.

Mr Ede: How much are you spending for purposes of ideology?

Mr MANZIE: Hundreds of millions.

Mr Leo: For Yulara?

Mr MANZIE: In the process ...

Members interjecting.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I remind honourable members, and for some of them this will be the last reminder, that cross-chamber chatter will cease.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, they still do not know and they cannot learn. They are the sort of people who expect the money tree to produce. Their federal colleagues have woken up and I admire the initiative of the Prime Minister - it is not often that I do that - and of the federal Treasurer to remove the ban on export sales of Northern Territory uranium to France. That is a positive step. There are some people in our own party and members opposite who do not want a bar of it. It is the most shameful thing I have heard. The member for MacDonnell ran out the old left-wing scare tactic. He said that shivers should run down my spine because the Japanese are dumping nuclear waste.

Mr Speaker, I think it is despicable that they are dumping nuclear waste, if they are, and I believe all right-thinking people in this world should do something about it. But that does not mean we stop mining uranium or selling it; it means we tighten up on dumping processes. If there is acid rain, we do not stop mining coal but tighten up on emission controls. Because there is carbon monoxide poisoning, we do not stop producing oil. If there are road accidents, we do not ban cars. The member for MacDonnell has the same mental attitude as the member for Stuart and the new Leader of the Opposition: 'Don't do anything. Put your hand out and the money tree will produce'.

I support this motion very strongly, Mr Speaker, and I am appalled by the sort of support we have heard from members of the ALP today.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members, particularly those on this side of the Assembly, for their contributions to this debate. The contribution from the other side was nothing short of pathetic. I now know the full meaning of the word the member for MacDonnell

applied to me, and it describes the contribution to this debate made by the opposition.

The member for Fannie Bay referred to a 180° turn in Labor Party policy. I mention it again for the benefit of honourable members opposite who claim that the gas pipeline and TAB were ALP initiatives. I shall remind them of some statements that were made and I will keep on reminding them that the ALP is a party without direction. They do not know where they are going. They never have and they never will under the leadership they have at present.

Firstly, on the 6.30 pm news on Channel 6 on 16 April 1984, which was a Monday, the former Leader of the Opposition attacked the government over the Channel Island Power-station. He said that the natural gas option was damned by NTEC's own report and went on: 'It is an absolutely lunatic proposal that the government is putting up, and I cannot understand the justification for it'. That is what the then Leader of the Opposition said about the gas pipeline deal. Let it be known by all Territorians that that is precisely what he said. 'It is a lunatic proposal' and it should not be supported. He did not understand the justification for it.

The ALP policy speech delivered on 18 November 1983 said:

A Territory ALP government, along with our colleagues in Canberra, will ensure that 1300 permanent jobs will be created in the program of development and decentralised tourist infrastructure in Kakadu.

Do you remember that? Have we seen any of it? We have not seen a single development out there. In fact, there are policies which are actively working against development.

The policy went on to state: 'A Territory ALP team successfully pressed for the new Darwin Airport terminal'. Great stuff. It finished by saying: 'The Territory is being frustrated by the inability of the CLP government to join in the national climb out of recession. Change is needed in the Territory. The ALP is offering that change. We do not need lobbyists in Canberra but we do need a Labor government in the Northern Territory'. That is the type of information that we have had from the Labor Party and the type of promises that we have had from the Labor Party. None of it has come to fruition. Every time members opposite stand up here, they should be reminded of what their policy platforms are and what they have said.

However, they did have a leader of conviction, a man who was prepared to stand up and be counted and he has received his reward for that. They told him to seek preselection for the Senate because they did not want him. I understand that the member for Arafura is not present today because of the illness of his wife. I would have liked to have heard his contribution to this debate. Probably, it would have been the only highlight of the ALP's commitment to a motion in support of their Prime Minister. All we are asking is for them to stand up and support their Prime Minister, their Labor Party colleague in Canberra.

However, the member for Arafura is a very hard man to silence. He came to us today courtesy of The Australian. On page 11, there is an interesting article about the new leadership of the Labor Party. It says that things are not very good in the Labor Party: 'The story behind Bob Collins' resignation is that he has been under intense pressure. His support for uranium mining and strong opposition to the federal government's decision on the Darwin Airport and fringe benefits tax have brought down the wrath of the self-styled progressives in the Territory branch of the ALP'.

His support to today's debate would have been very interesting indeed. I am sorry that he was not present to remind us of his speech in Hobart. We all saw that televised speech in which he spoke about the realities of life. Unfortunately, it is a sad day for the Northern Territory because not one skerrick of the commitment of the member for Arafura has rubbed off on any of his colleagues opposite.

Part of the nonsense provided today by members opposite is that uranium cannot be sold anywhere. The facts are that Key Lake in Canada sold 2700 t in 8 months in 1985. They really do not know what they are talking about even though they have had 6 years to prepare for this debate.

The member for MacDonnell is very fortunate that he will not have to record his vote today in support of his Prime Minister. I stand to be corrected by the Leader of the Opposition but I believe he is on an aircraft on his way back to Alice Springs.

A market does exist for 4500 t every year at the current price of \$US16 per pound. Key Lake is setting this price by its near monopoly. It is interesting to note that France can mine about 20% of its own uranium anyway. It does not have to run around the world to buy it. It can also buy it from South Africa and some of the African countries. It does not have to sign any nuclear non-proliferation agreements.

Territory mines are among the few which could compete given the chance. At a spot price of \$US16 a pound so many low-cost producers have entered the market that it is unlikely that a sustained increase in price can be maintained in the short term. The Commonwealth set price of \$US33 a pound is unrealistic in the current market. The only market that we ever really got a hold on in the world was the wool market. We are faced with trading competitors, not trading partners. The Treasurer said on Tuesday night that we must be aggressive and more competitive in the market. This is one of the areas where we must start adopting that mentality. We must adopt it quickly or otherwise pay the price.

The Northern Territory government has assurances from Jabiluka and Koongarra that long-term contract customers exist. It is not up to the Leader or the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to determine or decide whether these mines can come into production. It is up to the marketplace and those people who are involved in high-risk capital venture. They are the people that decide whether they have markets or not. Ranger was allowed 2 new contracts to the USA and 1 to Belgium in 1983, 2 more to the USA in late 1984, and 1 each to the USA and the Republic of Korea in 1985. This is the stuff the opposition says cannot be sold. Three others, including the Jabiluka proposal, were disallowed. That is part of the problem we have today. Inter-company preferences are a significant part of contract prospects for uranium sales for new Northern Territory projects. This refutes the argument that existing producers could take up interim market demand prior to Roxby Downs coming on stream in the early 1990s.

I will not dwell on this debate very much longer. The facts are quite simple, regardless of the pedantry of the member for MacDonnell about the wording of my motion. The fact is that we should give wholehearted support to the Prime Minister and the Treasurer in their endeavours to get rid of what could only be described as a system that did not work. Mr Hawke is today under attack by his own party for making that decision. He needs the support of the Northern Territory parliament and he needs it wholeheartedly. There should not be one member of the Australian Labor Party opposite who would deny the Prime Minister and the Treasurer that support.

Mr Speaker, I will leave the debate at that, and I sincerely hope for the welfare of all Northern Territorians and all Australians that the motion receives the unanimous support of all members of this Legislative Assembly.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICE OF MOTION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I give notice that on the next day of sitting, I shall move that this Assembly censure the Chief Minister because of his failure to exercise proper control over the investigation in the recent retrospective employment of Mr Keith Ward by the Northern Territory Public Service Commissioner.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 95, the government accepts the motion. I ask that any questions be placed on the question paper.

MOTION

Censure of the Chief Minister

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Chief Minister because of his failure to exercise proper control over the investigation into the recent retrospective employment of Mr Keith Ward by the Northern Territory Public Service Commissioner.

The opposition has always used censure motions sparingly. We have always been conscious that it is a serious thing to move a censure motion, and it is particularly important that a new Leader of the Opposition consider carefully the merits of any proposal for a censure motion. However, the merits of this censure motion have been well and truly established. Mr Speaker, you need look no further than what has happened today to demonstrate that. The reason for the previous debate today, which continued for 5 hours, is that the Public Service Commissioner and senior members of his staff have been closeted in the committee room with the Chief Minister, trying to put a story together on what is happening in the Ward case.

The reason we have moved this censure motion is that the Chief Minister has failed to exercise proper control over this investigation. We need only to look at recent events to realise that. On 16 August, there was a front page story in the NT News which made certain allegations about the determination issued by the Public Service Commissioner, Dr Keith Fleming. On 18 August, there was a front page story in the NT News which said, in effect, that Mr Keith Ward may well have been double dipping. Double dipping means, of course, that he was receiving 2 sets of entitlements: 1 set from the Northern Territory government and the second set from his union, the Australian Public Service Association.

On that same day, according to the Chief Minister, a report was received from the Public Service Commissioner. It was sent back to him because it was not good enough, and further information was requested. On that same day, a telex was sent to the Chief Minister from the Australian Public Service Association concerning the payment to Ward. That was 18 August. On 20 August, the Chief Minister stated that he had not seen the telex, although it had been sent to this office on 18 August. His staff had not passed it on, neither to himself nor - as will become clearer a little later - to the Public Service Commissioner. This is the first way in which the Chief Minister failed to exercise proper control over this investigation.

Mr Hatton: I did not read a 3-line telex.

Mr SMITH: He says he did not read a 3-line telex. Here we go again. The matter had been on the front page of the newspapers for 2 of the previous 3 days. He received a 3-line telex relevant to it, and his staff did not read it. That is a good sign. In future, we will put the word around that the Chief Minister's staff and the Chief Minister himself will not take any notice of telexes less than a page long. What sort of rubbish is that? On 20 August, the telex had been sitting for 2 days in the Public Service Commissioner's Office and nothing had happened to it. 20 August was, of course, yesterday, when we had the Chief Minister reading the minute from the Public Service Commissioner into the Hansard. I bet the Public Service Commissioner and other heads of departments in the public service are not too impressed about that either. What a story this minute reveals! It reveals the inability of the Chief Minister to extract meaningful information from the Public Service Commissioner. Remember we have already had a preliminary report, and this is supposedly the second report, providing at least some of the answers. It is full of inaccuracies and it is full of statements of inaction, things that have not been done that should have been done right through the whole saga of this determination. At best, it shows a profound lack of knowledge of basic industrial matters by the Public Service Commissioner, and at worst it could well have been a deliberate attempt to deceive the Chief Minister in a couple of important areas. I will come to those in a minute.

The simple way to proceed in relation to this censure motion is to examine the minute from the Public Service Commissioner. I have numbered all the paragraphs and I will refer to them as I proceed. Paragraph 2 says that, as a result of the preliminary investigation, 'a number of issues which needed investigation were raised'. Of course, that is the case. That is why we have this problem before us now. As we proceed through the report, we learn which matters needed further investigation. They were matters that should have been determined at the time the determination was issued.

In paragraph 4, we have a cute little sentence from the Public Service Commissioner which says that he raised with Ward and Lawrence whether their interpretation of the determination would allow them to believe that there was any double dipping possible. 'Both categorically denied that such interpretation was possible. Both stated that it had not occurred'. Mr Speaker, I will read from determination 61.

Keith William Ward shall be deemed to have been on an approved period of leave without pay from 1200 hours on 24 March 1981 until the date of this determination. The period of leave without pay referred to at (2) above shall count as service for all purposes.

There is no doubt; there is no ambiguity. There is no matter of interpretation. The period of leave referred to from March 1981 to March 1986 was to count as service for all purposes. There can be no ambiguity. It is not a matter of interpretation. It is written there. Later, I will demonstrate that there is also no doubt that the Australian Public Service Association fulfilled its responsibilities as good employers, and paid Ward benefits during the course of his employment.

To put, in a minute to the Chief Minister, that both categorically denied that such an interpretation was possible is nonsense. It raises again the legal point of what determinations are. Surely, Mr Speaker, determinations are there in black and white. They say what they mean and they should not be

subject to interpretation by whoever is in the chair at a given time. I want to come back to that point because it is referred to later in this document.

If more evidence that a prima facie case of double dipping has occurred is needed, the last page says that Ward received a sum of \$14 740 for recreation leave in advance. Mr Speaker, he was given leave without pay for 5 years. In the Northern Territory the norm is 6 weeks recreation leave per year which, over 5 years, amounts to 30 weeks. \$14 740 divided over 30 weeks gives \$491 a week which indicates an annual salary, in round terms, of \$25 300.

Mr Speaker, I shall side track for a moment there, because it is interesting. I believe those figures are correct and I would like someone to prove that they are wrong. The base salary of an A3 employee in the public service, according to a recent gazette, is \$15 000. However, a calculation based on Mr Ward's recreation leave entitlements indicates an annual salary of \$25 000. That also needs a response from the Chief Minister. If it is to be argued that he was paid only for 24 weeks recreation leave, because he received 6 weeks leave pay from APSA, that would take the weekly figure for recreation leave payments to \$614 indicating a salary of \$31 928, and I do not think that is right. A prima facie case exists that Mr Ward received double benefits for at least 12 months of that 5-year period. APSA stated that Ward received \$1600 for recreation leave accrued. That figure multiplied by 5 totals \$8000, not \$14 000.

On the next page, the Public Service Commissioner stated that he felt that he had no responsibility to act because no one had bothered to provide any information to his office. The same criticism applies to him as to the Chief Minister. Allegations are published on the front page of the newspaper for 2 out of 3 days, yet neither the Public Service Commissioner nor the Chief Minister had the wit to go to the people who had supplied the information and ask them for supporting evidence. I understand that that was not done until yesterday after I raised a series of questions in this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, as the motion says, the Chief Minister has failed to exercise proper control over this investigation. Despite front page stories saying that up to \$50 000 of taxpayer's money could have been at risk, 3 days went past and nothing happened.

Mr Hatton: Prove the \$50 000 that you allege.

Mr SMITH: I will have a go at it. I have never alleged a sum of \$50 000. I have said that the figure could be as high as \$50 000.

Mr Hatton: At risk, you said.

Mr SMITH: Rough arithmetic indicates an amount not too far off \$50 000.

Mr Hatton: Run it out.

Mr SMITH: There was \$14 000 in recreation leave fares; the employer's contribution to the superannuation fund must have been close to \$20 000; and then there were leave loadings and recreation leave air fares. I would think that that would run very close to a total of \$50 000. Of course, the Chief Minister may come back and say that no superannuation payment was made, but it was written into the deal that it would be.

Paragraph 4 is terrific; I will read it.

You would also be aware that, prior to making a determination, one does not normally conduct an investigation of the depth that would allow instant response to a wide range of questions covering a variety of topics from the legality of the initial determination to the details of its subsequent implementation.

Mr Speaker, I would not have thought that it would require an investigation of much depth to determine that a determination that is to be issued will be a legal determination. Its legality should be ensured at the start of the process, not at the finish. I would not anticipate that it would be a difficult job or require an investigation of much depth, to work out procedures for the implementation of such a determination and to ensure that those procedures would work. But the Public Service Commissioner wrote blithely that it was a pretty difficult job working out whether the determination was legal or not, and whether it would work or not, and he could not do it at the time so he issued the determination anyway. He did not bother to check it until 3 days after it hit the front page of the NT News. As I said, the Chief Minister bears the blame as well. He took no interest in this matter until we raised it in the Assembly. He is as culpable as the Public Service Commissioner in this whole matter.

The Public Service Commissioner saw the newspaper reports made by the APSA. Did he go out and start to dig? Of course, he did not. We now learn that the normal administrative procedures were not followed. The normal administrative procedures were not followed in determining whether Ward had received air fare entitlements from other employers. Again, that is slackness to the greatest extent. It is something that should not have happened and, if the matter had been handled properly at the time, we may not have been in this mess.

In paragraph 8, we have the advice from the Public Service Commissioner that the Chief Minister should refrain from making statements and answering questions until all the facts are known. I ask the question again, and I will do it in a much lower voice than last night, because I have lost my voice after that exercise: who is running the Territory, the Public Service Commissioner or the Chief Minister? Mr Speaker, you must have some doubts when, after reading this minute into the Hansard, with all its questions and ambiguities, the Chief Minister says that he will not answer any more questions.

Mr Hatton: Until I get all the facts.

Mr SMITH: Until you get all the facts. It is going to be very interesting today to see whether you do have all the facts.

In paragraph 9, the Public Service Commissioner prepares himself for the Crown Solicitor's advice going against him by saying that 'irrespective of his opinion, experienced officers of the Public Service Commissioner's Office believe the act gives authority to appoint people to the public service retrospectively, and advice in Mr Ward's case was that this was an option'. We have never argued that you cannot appoint people retrospectively. We have never argued that it is not legal to appoint people retrospectively. What we are arguing about is the propriety of appointing people retrospectively and appointing them on full benefits for that period of time. That is the point at issue here.

We then proceed to paragraph 10 where we see what may have been one of the real bases for the Public Service Commissioner's decision: that an injustice

may have been done to Mr Ward at the time he left his employment with NTEC. That is a valid point, but there are a couple of things that are relevant in that context. One is that there is a very recent example of a similar injustice. Mr Hugh Crawford, who has taken up an industrial officer's position with the Australian Metal Workers' Union in the Northern Territory was also forced to resign from NTEC. I would expect that he will be writing to the Chief Minister fairly soon, asking for a similar deal from the Northern Territory Public Service. He will receive a similar deal, won't he? He will get full benefits from the time that he left the public service to join his union.

The other thing that is mentioned in paragraph 10 is that Mr Ward's case is based on the fact that there may possibly be a challenge in the Federal Court under the provisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The problem with that argument is this. The Conciliation and Arbitration Act and its provisions concerning the right of people to move from the public service into union employment applies only to employees of registered organisations under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. Although it is quite clear that, when Mr Ward left NTEC, he entered the employment of a registered union under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, we all know very well that when he took up employment with the Northern Territory Public Service Association, it was not a registered organisation. It has never been a registered organisation and it never will be a registered organisation.

Mr Hatton: How can you say that?

Mr SMITH: All right, I withdraw the last statement. It certainly never was a registered organisation.

Mr Manzie: Is that really the basis of your problem?

Mr SMITH: That is a misconception, and another example of how the government, in handling this matter, does not know some of the basic facts about how the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission works.

Mr Hatton: We know a bloody sight more than you.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister will withdraw that last remark.

Mr Hatton: Most certainly, Mr Speaker.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I do not really mind those remarks. They prove that ...

Mr SPEAKER: It does not matter whether you mind or not. Standing order 239 clearly infers that the Speaker's ruling is final.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I stand corrected.

As I have said before, the key issue is not whether Mr Ward had a right to leave without pay. The argument being advanced in paragraph 10 is that, under the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, he may have had an entitlement to leave without pay, which should not have been refused to him at the time he joined NTEC. I am saying that is only partially correct at best, because the NTPSA is not a registered union and therefore the provisions of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act do not apply.

Another concern arises from the front page of today's NT News. The government is certainly keeping the NT News happy. For a significant period of his time out of the public service, in the 5 years between 1981 and 1986, Mr Ward was receiving unemployment benefits. That is a fact that has not been raised before, and it is certainly a matter that I have not been able to take full cognisance of at this stage.

Mr Hatton: You are discovering new facts every day, just as we are.

Mr SMITH: That is right. It is a very interesting little exercise. We read in paragraph 16 that there were discussions between Mr Lawrence, Mr Ward, and the Public Service Commissioner's Office. It would be very interesting indeed to have tabled in the Assembly the discussion and the attachment which was contained in the preliminary report. I invite the Chief Minister to do that, so everybody who has an interest in this matter can fully determine what was in the Public Service Commissioner's first report and see what took place in the discussions between his office and Mr Ward and Mr Lawrence.

Mr Hatton: It is none of your business.

Mr SMITH: There you go. You have something to hide.

In paragraph 17, we have a discussion about whether the determination had given double benefits to Mr Ward. The minute says: 'Preliminary legal advice is that this is not the case and certainly my advisers strongly deny that there was any such intention associated with the drafting of the determination'. That is irrelevant. As I pointed out before, the determination is there. It is in black and white, and it says 'the period without pay referred to at 2 above shall count as service for all purposes'. I do not care about the interpretation of people in the Public Service Commissioner's Office. The fact is that Ward, under this determination, has an entitlement without restriction to full benefits for the period he was on leave without pay.

We then have a classic sentence in paragraph 18: 'Unfortunately, in the implementation of the determination, details of its development and substance were not obtained from those officers concerned with its negotiation, and there seems to have been some confusion about its intent. This is a serious matter and it is also the subject of detailed investigation'. We have a situation whereby there are to be investigations of investigations. Again, the point needs to be made that you do not write determinations in secret ink which are only revealed under ultraviolet rays. They are there for everybody to see, and it is ridiculous in the extreme to say that 'unfortunately, in the implementation of the determination, details of its development and substance were not obtained from those officers concerned with its negotiation, and there seems to have been some confusion about its intent'. It is vital that it is absolutely clear what a determination means. Otherwise, how can you run a public service? If any person can interpret it any way he likes, if somebody in a job this week interprets it one way and somebody else comes into the job and interprets it differently, we are in a nonsense situation. We all know that. Determinations are legal documents. They have to be freely available, and they have to be written so that they mean what they say and anybody who reads them is able to interpret them.

We then come to the question of the leaked documents. Here we have a statement from the Public Service Commissioner that the determination ...

Mr Hatton: Yes, it is a public document.

Mr SMITH: ... was leaked from his office to the ACOA in March 1986. Leaked, Mr Speaker. A determination issued by the Public Service. It is a public document which ought to be freely available.

Mr Hatton: I agree.

Mr SMITH: Thank you.

The word 'leaked' is amazing in this context and I am glad that the Chief Minister and I agree on something. I put the Chief Minister on notice that I am sufficiently interested in this matter now that I will asking for a copy of all determinations issued by the Public Service Commissioner, both past and future, in an attempt to encourage a bit of openness in the Public Service Commissioner's Office so that everybody knows what is going on.

Mr Perron: They are already public.

Mr SMITH: If they are already public, why did one have to be leaked out of the Public Service Commissioner's office?

Paragraph 20 talks about the Public Service Commissioner being independent of government interference and being able to administer the public service as he sees fit. We have no basic objection to the independence of the Public Service Commissioner. It is something that we have consistently supported, as he notes in his minute, over a period of time. However, that does not give him carte blanche to do deals with people. He still has an ultimate responsibility to this Assembly and he still has an ultimate responsibility to the minister who controls his department. We are not arguing that he should not be independent in the day-to-day running of things. We do not want to interfere; We are probably stronger on that point than the people opposite.

Mr Perron: Did you read yesterday's Hansard?

Mr SMITH: What we are saying is that it does not extend to a carte blanche. I would have thought that a prudent public servant would have run a matter such as this past the minister before issuing the determination. Of course, the member for Barkly might like to indicate whether in fact the determination was run past him while he was the Chief Minister.

Before I come to the summary, I want to pick up a point that I know that the government will raise. I refer to my involvement in the Northern Territory Teachers Federation in 1975. In 1975, after Cyclone Tracy, the Teachers Federation membership dropped from 1200 to about 300. The Assistant Director of the Department of Education, Jim Gallagher, gave approval for the General Secretary of the Federation, who happened to be myself, to work full time on general secretary business. 75% of my salary was paid by the government and 25% by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation. That is a completely different situation from what we are talking about here. We are not talking about a retrospective entitlement that was negotiated after the event but about an up-front agreement that was recognised publicly at the time, and much appreciated, in recognition of the particular difficulties that everybody in the Northern Territory faced at that time in getting their organisations back together. Also, it did not involved double dipping in any context.

Mr Perron: That's the biggest revelation that we have had at these sittings.

Mr SMITH: You were just a tally clerk then and were not interested in education matters.

The last point I want to make in relation to this particular matter is that for 6 out of the 7 years that I was Secretary of the Teachers Federation, I was on the normal leave-without-pay arrangements. Applied to union secretaries, the union picks up all employee benefits, including the superannuation entitlement. If that procedure had been followed with Mr Ward, we would have no problems with that whatsoever.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I come to the summary in this minute which says that there are 4 main issues. I would have thought there are 5 main issues. The fifth and most important one is the retrospective appointment with full benefits. That is the crunch of this matter yet the Public Service Commissioner did not think it important enough to list as one of the major issues for the Chief Minister to address.

When he is talking about retrospective appointment, the first issue, he introduces a new element even though this is supposed to be a summary. Paragraph (b) says that there is 'previous public service determination precedent for the exercise of this power'.

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

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Leader of the Opposition from speaking for such time as to permit him to conclude his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr SMITH: I appreciate the courtesy of the Assembly.

This is a new element. One of the questions I asked yesterday was what other determinations are there that provide precedent for the exercise of this power. It is a bit staggering to see it launched upon us in the summary without any explanation, as if it had been mentioned in the body of the document.

The question that needs to be answered as a result of the double dipping item in the summary is whether in fact he did receive the entitlement from the Northern Territory Public Service Association. I must accept that there is probably some doubt whether he did receive entitlements from that body and I hope that that matter has been clarified by now.

Mr Hatton: It seems he was on the dole.

Mr SMITH: Apparently, he was on the dole during that time.

The reason we have moved this censure motion is that the Chief Minister has been most remiss in his responsibilities under this portfolio. I accept the possibility that, in this debate, he will be able to answer most, if not all, of the questions that have been raised. The point is that it was not until we raised this matter in the Assembly yesterday that the Chief Minister and the Public Service Commissioner were galvanised into action. It was not until last night that the Chief Minister tabled a minute from the Public Service Commissioner that revealed that, even at that stage, the Public Service Commissioner had become involved in a serious investigation of the

issues. As the motion says, the Chief Minister has failed to exercise proper control of the investigation into the recent retrospective employment of Mr Keith Ward and, by his actions, he deserves to be censured by this Assembly.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, speaking as a previous industrial advocate and knowing that the Leader of the Opposition made the pretence of being a union official for some period of time, I would say that, if we were before the Arbitration Commission, this would have been an easy case to answer. I would simply stand up and say that there is no case to answer. The whole essence of what the Leader of the Opposition has said this afternoon is that I have been remiss in the speed with which I carried out that investigation. Hansard itself reveals the nonsense of the censure motion.

I will not go through that Hansard again, but allow me to deal with the points. The issue appeared in the paper on Saturday morning. I spent 3 hours on Saturday morning trying to track down the Public Service Commissioner. I happened to catch him after he had finished shopping for the morning. He rang me in my office in the Chan Building and I instructed him to have a report on my desk by that afternoon. He said it was impossible because he could not get to the files over the weekend. He undertook to submit a report to me by lunchtime on the Monday. That was also in the paper. The report arrived on Monday at 2.30 pm and it was not a throwaway report. It was an effort, made under very tight circumstances, to answer a range of questions that I had put to the Public Service Commissioner on the weekend on a very complex matter. It was quite a detailed report but, as has become evident to anybody who has paid any attention to this matter, new revelations and new issues are arising every day. In this afternoon's paper, we find a statement that Mr Ward was on the dole for a period. A telex arrived during the week at my office. Obviously, the Leader of the Opposition would not know how a really busy office works.

Mr Smith: Obviously. You do not know how a really busy, efficient office works.

Mr HATTON: A telex from APSA was sent to the office telling me that Mr Ward had received full entitlements of recreation and long service leave, together with superannuation benefits for his period of employment from 1 July 1981 to 25 August 1982.

The full details of the circumstances surrounding Mr Ward leaving NTEC have yet to be ascertained and that is not because of slackness on the part of the Public Service Commissioner. He took action first thing on Monday morning of this week to obtain the answers in the detail that I required. He is still trying to obtain those answers so that he can respond to me.

There are a multitude of issues, as the minute I read out last night clearly demonstrated.

Mr Smith: It is now Thursday, Steve.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, the fact is that we had been pressing this issue before the opposition raised it. We could all see the setup that was coming, for God's sake. We could see from Saturday's paper that it was a setup from the opposition to try to grandstand in this Assembly.

It is grandstanding on a non-issue. It is saying that we have been remiss and tardy in responding. There have been 6 people in the Public Service

Commissioner's Office investigating this. Two people in the Department of Law have been detailing this since Monday morning to obtain the answers that I require to investigate this matter properly. This matter is being dealt with fully and properly.

Mr Speaker, I mentioned earlier that the Leader of the Opposition was a union official and he happened to be a union official in a fairly left-wing union, a fairly militant union.

Mr Smith: They will be pleased to hear that.

Mr HATTON: It was particularly militant during the time when he was there. Mr Speaker, in a situation where somebody is being challenged, it is a very serious matter to say: 'Why did you make this determination? Did you have the power to make this determination? What were the circumstances under which you made it because, on the surface, it looks crazy? How could you possibly make this decision?' I am not going to react as the Opposition Leader's predecessor suggested to the media last Saturday when he said: 'If the Public Service Commissioner had not told me in advance about it, I would have sacked him on the spot'. I do not do things like that, Mr Speaker. I try to ensure that I take into account natural justice and that a person be given an opportunity to comment to present his case to me before I make precipitate decisions, particularly where they affect his livelihood or the livelihoods of other people. I am not like the Leader of the Opposition who would jump down the throat of anybody. Already today he has told us that, if he ever became Chief Minister, every public servant in the Northern Territory should feel threatened. This afternoon, he said that, as Leader of the Opposition, he will check all determinations made by the Public Service Commissioner to determine whether he is satisfied with them.

That is politicising the public service, Mr Speaker. Playing political games with the appointments and movements of public servants is classic politicisation, an issue that the opposition rants and raves about continuously in the Assembly. When it comes to a specific issue and opposition members think they may be able to grab a bit of cheap glory, they jump in crying that they would do this and that, sack the Public Service Commissioner, change the determination and check everything the Public Service Commissioner does. But, actually, they do not even check the law. They do not even know that at law they would have no power, nor do they know that the minister has no power to direct the Public Service Commissioner, nor to change a determination of the Public Service Commissioner, nor to instruct him to vary a determination and nor to interfere with the appointment of an individual within a public service.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he would interfere with the appointment of an A3 clerk employed in public service, and determine the conditions under which that public servant would work. It is unbelievable that someone who purports to have been a public sector union official in the past should trot out that sort of garbage. The fact is that I, as the minister responsible for the public service, do not have the power to change that decision in any way. It is a matter for the Public Service Commissioner and him alone. It is a matter for him because, at law, he is independent in that decision-making process and, if confirmation of that is required, I received advice this afternoon from the Department of Crown Law that confirms that I have no power to do that. I had asked that my perception of what the law intended be checked so that I might know that it was correct before I opened my mouth and flapped it around the room, as the Leader of the Opposition is so apt to do.

Those are the facts. We are addressing this properly, in detail and expeditiously. We are not jumping to grab headlines or grandstand in this Assembly. We are dealing with people's lives, with the way the public service operates, and the role of the Public Service Commissioner. The Leader of the Opposition would wipe all that aside for a couple of cheap headlines. It is unacceptable in the Assembly. On his worst day, his predecessor would not have made the sort of statements the present Leader of the Opposition made last night, about how he would interfere with the Public Service Commissioner's determination in relation to an A3 clerk. Mr Speaker, that is unbelievably atrocious.

This motion seeks to censure me as Minister because I failed to exercise proper control over the investigation into the recent retrospective employment of Mr Keith Ward by the Northern Territory Public Service. What sort of control does the Leader of the Opposition expect me to exercise? I contacted the Public Service Commissioner within 3 hours of reading an article in the newspaper and instructed him to provide a report to my office within half a working day. When he delivered that report, the Public Service Commissioner told me that it was an interim report and contained information assembled at that time. He said that raised many other questions. I agreed with that and I asked him to obtain additional reports. That is what is occurring.

The matter is being investigated. More and more revelations are emerging and it is coming together. It is only 5 days since the matter was reported in the newspaper. It is not a matter that will turn the Northern Territory upside down if there is a delay of a few days. When an investigation affects people's lives, it is important that it be conducted properly and that their rights be protected. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, we do not interfere with the processes of natural justice in carrying out investigations into people's rights and responsibilities. He would trample all over them. Like most union officials, he does not even understand what the words mean.

I can understand why the Leader of the Opposition is trying to beat this story up; I really can. He is a brand-new leader, 2 days old. He is desperately trying to struggle out from the shadow of his predecessor - large as it is - and establish himself. He belongs to a party that is splintering in all directions. He is seeking to stand above it all, become a focal point to unite people and create some sort of an image and dominance in this Assembly. That is what this is all about, Mr Speaker. He is not interested in facts, if he had been ...

Mr Smith: You will not give us any facts. That is the problem. Give us some facts and we will be satisfied.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, he rants and raves. We saw a brilliant example of it last night. It was his great chance, his great opportunity. Suddenly, he had something. He would jump up in the adjournment debate, beat up the Chief Minister and storm out of the Assembly to make big headlines and run censure motions today. Off he went on his giant charade. And what did he do? He stood there, waving his arms around, his voice reaching the pitch of Joan Sutherland's and spittle flying everywhere. He nearly lost his voice. He squeaked!

The only trouble was that he did not listen to what he was being told. He went away last night and read it and even picked a couple of points out of it today. Perhaps if I sat down and went through things really slowly and carefully, he might hear what I was saying but, even if I did that, I don't think he would comprehend a thing I am trying to explain because he does not

want to. He wants to grandstand before the media, grandstand in the Assembly, and try to make a big fella of himself. I have news for him. He failed miserably. It was pathetic last night and his performance in this debate this afternoon was equally pathetic. He put forward nothing. I took copious notes of what he said, which was that I was too slow in obtaining the reports. Basically, that is what this censure motion comes down to. What a nonsense! What a waste of this Assembly's time!

We heard the members of the opposition perform this morning when we debated an issue that was raised in the media early this morning. It accused the government of wasting the time of the Assembly by debating a matter of national importance in relation to uranium mining. Members opposite raised this issue but they will not wait a day or two for an answer because that does not suit their purpose. It doesn't suit their grandstanding style and their mud-slinging slur campaigns - the only things they ever run with when they are trying to get their names in the paper. They have no policy to sell to the Territory. They try to tear down individuals, no matter who they are, in the public service or anywhere else.

In this case, they jumped on the bandwagon of their ACOA mates - masters. There is an inter-union battle between the Northern Territory Public Service Association and ACOA. Don't misunderstand it, Mr Speaker: quite clearly, this was set up in the paper last week by the ACOA and the Labor Party, to serve both their interests in their own little games with no benefit for this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I will give a few facts because I have facts to give. I shall not talk about things that I do not have facts on, but I will give the facts I have. I have received the opinion of the Department of Law and I ask members to listen carefully. Let us deal with the issues very carefully. I will quote now from the opinion of the Department of Law:

You have requested my opinion on 3 points connected with the appointment of Mr K.W. Ward to the Northern Territory Public Service. There is no authority under the Public Service Act for the relevant minister (the Chief Minister) to direct the Public Service Commissioner in the performance of his duties. By section 16A, however, the minister is empowered to direct another person, not being the Public Service Commissioner, to exercise many of the powers possessed by the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr Speaker, section 16A happens to be the section that was introduced into the act last year and I am quite prepared to quote what the Leader of the Opposition said then about its introduction. He accused us of politicising the public service by its introduction. That section empowers me to tell somebody to exercise the powers of the Public Service Commissioner in respect of internal audit and equal opportunities. That is what the section says, and those powers happen to be exercised now by the Secretary of the Department of the Chief Minister. So much for our trying to politicise the public service. The opposition grandstanded and stormed out of the Assembly and carried on a treat last year. The Opposition Leader's predecessor is even on record as saying, on 11 April 1983, in one of his press releases:

The government should issue a public statement affirming it supports principles of an impartial public service. The statement should give a clear and unequivocal commitment that all public service appointments are the sole preserve of the Public Service Commissioner.

I support that statement, and that is exactly what has occurred in this instance. The Public Service Commissioner exercised his rights and powers under the act, which gives him sole discretion. The opinion says:

The Public Service Commissioner is empowered, pursuant to sections 27 and 29 of the Public Service Act, to make appointments to the public service and determine the conditions of such appointments. This includes, through a retrospective appointment, the deeming of an employee to have had service. I consider the appointment of Mr K.W. Ward pursuant to determination No 61 of 1986 to be valid.

By section 5 of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, an employer is not permitted to dismiss an employee who reasonably takes leave to serve as a union official or delegate. The Public Service Commissioner complies with that requirement. NTEC, however, refused such leave sought by Mr Ward in 1981 and dismissed him when he absented himself on union duties.

The Leader of the Opposition made some play this afternoon about his great knowledge of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act and industrial relations. On that basis, he knows that, in that case, there will be an argument under section 5 of the Conciliation and Arbitration Act, when Mr Ward sought leave without pay to work for the Australian Public Service Association, which was a registered union under section 5(1)(a) of the act, that that would be a wrongful dismissal. That is a prima facie case. I do not know all the details yet but, on prima facie evidence, that would be the situation. If that is the case, and there was a wrongful dismissal, it does not matter what the subsequent events were. It is arguable that a court would rule that that person was wrongfully dismissed and should be reinstated retrospectively and, potentially, paid wages at the escalating rates which applied under the award during the period covered by the determination up until the current date.

Mr Smith: Do you have legal advice to that effect?

Mr HATTON: I am saying that that case could be argued.

Mr Smith: Have you had legal advice to that effect? You are just arguing off the top of your head, are you?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, I have been through a few wrongful dismissal cases in my day and I have seen a few decisions in those cases. I can say, if a man is ruled to have been wrongfully dismissed, he has been wrongfully dismissed, and there would be some payment as a consequence.

Mr Smith: I have no problem with that. But that should be worked out when the determination is issued. You have not even worked it out yet.

Mr HATTON: Quite clearly, from the information brought before me on Monday by the Public Service Commissioner, which I read into the Hansard last night, that was a matter that was very much in the mind of the Public Service Commissioner when he made his determination in March of this year. He was aware of the circumstances at the time, at least prima facie, and even if there was not an issue of wrongful dismissal in his mind, there was an inequity that had been perpetrated in 1981. Certainly, he was not obliged to take any action to correct that, but he took the decision that that inequity should be corrected and therefore he deemed that person to be retrospectively employed. What does that retrospective deeming mean, Mr Speaker? That seems to be a matter of some moment to the opposition, and perhaps it needs to be addressed.

I turn now to the issue of annual leave. It was said last night, and I repeat it, that there is no intent in the determination or the agreement for double dipping. The Opposition Leader tells us to read the agreement. My legal advice from the Department of Law is that that agreement does not provide for double dipping or, to use the correct terminology, double receipt of benefits.

Mr Smith: Have you got that in writing?

Mr HATTON: That is the advice of senior legal counsel in the Department of Law whose legal interpretations I will certainly take before those of the Leader of the Opposition. This advice is based on the argument that double receipt of benefits is not envisaged in the agreement and, if it were to occur, it should have been stated specifically that there would be specific benefits provided, notwithstanding anything else that had been paid.

Mr Smith: This is an interesting little argument.

Mr HATTON: As I am advised by the Public Service Commissioner, it appears - although it is still to be confirmed, despite correspondence sent to both APSA and NTPSA - that there were some annual leave, superannuation and long service leave benefits paid to Mr Ward. In that case, they will not be paid to Mr Ward by the Northern Territory Public Service. There have been payments for annual leave and if it appears - if the information from APSA in that telex is correct and is confirmed with details to the Public Service Commissioner's Office - that there has been an overpayment in respect of that particular period, Mr Ward will be expected to return to work earlier, and the payment that has been made will be treated as a wages overpayment, as is the normal pay practice. The amount is larger than a 505 variation in weekly pay, but it will be treated on a similar basis to an overpayment within the public service.

In respect of superannuation, the facts are these. Mr Ward has the right to retrospective superannuation entitlements but, if he has received superannuation payments from the Australian Public Service Association as the telex alleges, firstly it is not the Public Service Commissioner's duty to determine whether or not that person enters the public service superannuation scheme. It is a matter for the Superannuation Board. If they accept Mr Ward into the scheme retrospectively, it would be Mr Ward's responsibility to pay the contributions for the period of his service with APSA, if he has received the money from APSA, or for APSA to pay that money. For any period after that, it would be a matter for the NTPSA to determine whether it would pay the employer's contributions. I am advised by the Public Service Commissioner that the Northern Territory government will not be paying employer contributions for any of the period prior to March of this year. They will be treated on the same basis as for other trade unionists. The annual leave will be dealt with as I have outlined.

In the case of other rights, such as sick leave, I am advised that employees who go on leave without pay to work for a trade union continue to accrue their sick leave rights under their public service entitlements. When they return to work for the Northern Territory Public Service, they receive those accumulated sick leave credits, less any sick leave that has been taken during the period that they were working for the trade union. They accumulate sick leave entitlements whilst they are in the full-time employ of the trade union. The general conditions associated with leave for full-time union employees were set out in a circular 17 September 1981. It says:

Leave is granted under the general provisions of bylaw 28, ie leave without pay. Application for periods of leave of up to 12 months may be approved by the chief executive officer of the prescribed authority. Leave which is expected to or does in fact extend beyond 12 months must be approved by the commissioner. Chief executive officers in prescribed authorities would be expected to give favourable consideration to applications to engage in full-time union duty with an NT union or staff organisation, or an NT branch of a staff organisation, provided that the union or staff organisation has a direct application to the NTPS. All other cases should be referred to the commissioner for consideration. Approval should not be anticipated. The maximum period of leave that may be granted is 3 years. Leave is to count as service for the purpose of sick leave. However credits accrued while on leave are to be reduced by any period of sick leave utilised while with the staff organisation. In relation to long service leave, leave does not break continuity of service; that is, employment with a union or staff organisation counts in determining the qualifying period for long service leave, but no credits accrue during the period of leave.

If I can address that last point regarding the non-accrual of credits during the period of leave, that is a matter that is determined on an individual basis when the person returns to the public service. There have been a number of instances where different conditions have applied and have been varied by discussion with the Public Service Commission. In one instance, without referring to the person by name, an employee who took up a position with the ACOA for 2 years had the period of leave without pay counted as long service leave, provided that any leave utilised during the period was at the expense of the ACOA. In that case, there was an accrual of the actual time spent in the union as credits for long service leave purposes. An employee, who on appointment had previous service with the union, had that service counted for the purposes of the incremental advancements within the Northern Territory Public Service. In another recent instance, while the circular states that the maximum period of leave that may be granted is 3 years, an employee who had served 3 years with the ACOA was granted a further 3 years of leave without pay. Thus, variations do occur in individual circumstances. If one accepts that ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Chief Minister's time has expired.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Chief Minister from speaking for such time as would permit him to conclude his speech.

Motion agreed to.

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, it is quite clear that the Public Service Commissioner, quite properly, is exercising his discretion to try to establish a system that is fair and equitable and takes into account a person's individual circumstances. That is exactly what the Public Service Commissioner has done in this particular area. He has decided, because of inequities he deems to have existed in 1981, that the benefits should apply retrospectively. One can disagree with the view or not, and one can examine the circumstances surrounding it, as we are doing. But the fact is that the Public Service Commissioner has that sole right and is free from the interference of his minister. He is not subject to the ultimate control and direction of his minister, as the Leader of the Opposition would have. That is the way the act passed by this Assembly is written. A principle that has

been supported continuously by the opposition gives him that power. If there was any threat to that power, the opposition would bounce through the roof - or out the door, as they did last year.

The Public Service Commissioner does have that independent statutory authority. His appointment can be terminated by the Administrator on the advice of the Executive Council, but not by an individual minister. That is the way the act is written because we do have an independent Public Service Commissioner in the Northern Territory. Apparently, if Labor ever came to power, and thank God it will not, the opposite would apply. We have been told that it supports, in principle, the independence of the Public Service Commissioner. He has an ultimate obligation to the parliament and the minister, not a carte blanche. The opposition has defended that legislative provision to the point of walking out of the Assembly.

I am not going to touch this. I am going to leave the determination as it is. As minister, I do not have power to instruct the commissioner to do otherwise. The only possible action I could take would be to put the case before Cabinet, and get its approval to take it to the Executive Council to advise the Administrator to terminate the appointment of the Public Service Commissioner. If I did not do that properly, if I did not take into account issues of natural justice, we would be standing in court with an injunction around our ears, restraining us from terminating the Public Service Commissioner's appointment on the grounds of failure to take into account natural justice. Remember an incident last year in respect of the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority?

Mr Smith: Yes.

Mr HATTON: It did not even get to the point of arguing about that. That was what was being raised in that particular incident.

Mr Speaker, in my view there is no justification for that sort of action in this particular case. There are certainly problems relating to conditions under which leave without pay is granted to people to take up union official positions. It is never a healthy situation to have different conditions for different people. History shows that that has been the case. To use a phrase that was put to me this afternoon, it is a bit of a dog's breakfast. That needs to be rectified so that there is uniformity and standardisation of approach.

I have raised that matter with the Public Service Commissioner. I ask members to remember that I cannot instruct him. He has advised he will be determining standardised conditions, but they will have to apply prospectively otherwise we would be asking the Public Service Commissioner to change contractual agreements that had been previously made. I am not prepared to do that.

I am prepared to ensure the matter is investigated fully and thoroughly to correct any errors and to ensure that administrative arrangements within the Public Service Commissioner's Office are corrected so that such incidents cannot occur again. What I will not do is the sort of thing the Leader of the Opposition was suggesting. I will not start to interfere politically with the public service over the appointment of an A3 clerk.

I will not threaten every public servant with political interference in the public service as the Leader of the Opposition promoted in his speech last night and his speech today. He told every public servant this afternoon that

he will check every determination by the Public Service Commissioner. He will be breathing over the shoulder of the Public Service Commissioner looking for any mild slip-up. He will jump up and down and create a big headline over the least thing. He is trying to intimidate the Public Service Commissioner. That is an unbelievable action for the Leader of the Opposition, a member of this Assembly, somebody who purports ...

Mr Smith: Public documents

Mr HATTON: There is nothing wrong with reading the documents but that was not the implication of what was being said. What he said was that he would take a particular interest in this matter and he would check every determination. That is not just a routine matter; that is a threat to the Public Service Commissioner's Office. It is unacceptable. The Leader of the Opposition should be censured for trying to introduce political interference in activities in the Public Service Commissioner's Office.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, this really has shown up what a pathetic debater the Chief Minister is. He has not been able to grasp any of the issues that were involved in the censure motion and he has not shown any indication that he understands any of the real issues. He does not understand what the concept of ministerial control is. He has given us a report that is nothing more than a whitewash. It is quite obvious that he did not believe what he was saying when he was on his feet. He is trying to make out that he cannot do anything. He has given us the Pontius Pilate act: 'They do all these terrible things to me. They pay out all this money. I cannot be expected to keep an eye on them so that they do not make a mistake and slip a few thousand dollars here, there or wherever. What am I supposed to do about it? Don't come worrying me about all the \$10 000, \$20 000 or \$50 000 that have been given away'. We are not supposed to worry about those. As far as the Chief Minister is concerned, the Public Service Commissioner can do whatever deals he likes and there is nothing he can do about it. From what he has said, he is not interested in seeing what he can do about it.

Obviously, any minister who has responsibility for certain acts, such as the Electricity Commission Act that we discussed the other day, must have certain powers. As pointed out by the minister in the previous debate, there is a difference between having to sack the person for not following an instruction or because of a mistake and the situation where the minister has no power whatsoever over a public servant. This is referred to as ministerial responsibility for a department. From what the Chief Minister has said, we are entitled to ask just who is running the government. Who is in charge of the public service?

Mr Hatton: The Public Service Commissioner.

Mr EDE: Thank you. It is not the minister responsible for the public service.

Mr Hatton: Your party supports that principle.

Mr EDE: I would have thought that the line he has in his title would have had some bearing. Apparently, that is not something he is interested in taking into account.

We have a report that this action was taken months ago yet they are still investigating it. Why wasn't it investigated before the determination was actually made? Why didn't the Public Service Commissioner examine all the

facts, set them down on file and then make his determination? All we hear is that the facts have to be sought throughout the whole system. The facts should have been available before the determination was made.

Mr Speaker, it is becoming obvious that this Chief Minister will go down in Northern Territory history as the report generator. Each time there is some problem or he is on the ropes or he is caught out, he says that he is calling for a report. This time, he had to call for 2 reports. He was given an extra 6 hours today by the shenanigans that occurred this morning. After all that, what he has given us today is a very sorry effort.

Double dipping has been referred to. In fact, the NT News said that some people call double dipping bludging. I call it more than bludging; I call it fraud and corruption. It is fraud if a person goes to a prospective employer and does not provide him with all the facts or does not tell him that he is on the dole. I hope this person did not tell the Public Service Commission that he was on the dole or, if he did, that it was not considered irrelevant. Did he say that the organisation he was working for was not a registered union? If he did say that, was that found to be irrelevant by the people in the Public Service Commission? It was either incompetence or it was fraud.

He received money from one employer, the APSA, he received the dole, and on top of that, we hear that he was paid nearly \$15 000 in cash. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, it is probable that there is some \$5000 or \$6000 overpayment in that, even if the other facts are true. If we do not call it fraud, what is it? If that person was in an A3 position and the other facts are correct, \$9000 should have been paid.

Mr Speaker, all we have been told is that he has been paid \$14 740.52 gross for recreation leave in advance and there was no payout of \$50 000. I would like clarification in respect of all the other costs such as sick leave, superannuation, travel entitlements and leave loading. What is the total when all that is added to the \$14 000 which is already some \$5000 or \$6000 over what he would have been entitled to if we had accepted the rest of the argument?

The determination itself says that 'accrued recreation leave credits may be paid in lieu and utilised to offset any moneys outstanding in respect of continuation of eligibility to the superannuation scheme'. Was that figure, for example, in addition to the cash figure that we have heard spoken about here today? There are many more answers yet to be supplied in this debate.

We had an incredible statement that the determinations are made without worrying about their legality. That was quite a strange remark. We have a process whereby a determination is made under the Public Service Act yet there is no consideration given to its legality or otherwise. They sign the determinations but it is too much to ask that they check that the determinations are legal. We have been told already that they cannot check whether the amounts of money paid are correct. It is too much to ask them to check whether that union was entitled, under the terms of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission award, to be a union for the purposes of the provision of leave without pay. That is too much to ask.

There are other people who would say that ministerial responsibility has not been exercised in this case in that it is obvious that standards within the Public Service Commissioner's office have dropped to such depths that this could happen. Even worse, we are worried that this will continue to happen because it is obvious now that the Chief Minister is not taking his

responsibility anywhere near seriously enough. For that reason, and that reason alone, he deserves to be censured.

I ask myself too about Mr Hugh Crawford. I wonder whether he will be found to be entitled on the same basis. He works for a legitimate union, not this unregistered maverick, the NTPSA. We know about the NTPSA and about the government assistance and the connivance. We know about the attempts that were made by predecessors of the current Chief Minister, and members of his ministry, to prop up that organisation in order to use it as a stalking horse to break up the responsible union movement, and the way it was used in a backdoor attempt to rob honest workers of conditions of employment which they had battled for over the years.

We know about the NTPSA and I wonder about the correlation with this particular gentleman. For some time, this gentleman was involved with this maverick union that the government backs. Now he is no longer with that union and, suddenly, there is talk of a figure up to \$50 000. We cannot be told the actual figure because, apparently, the Chief Minister still has not done his sums. But, Mr Speaker, you cannot blame us for starting to ask questions in those circumstances, because there is an odour that continues to emanate from this government and hang over some of its most basic, and what appear to be, quite simple actions.

Mr Dondas: No problem asking questions. You pass a motion.

Mr Smith: We can't get answers.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that is exactly true. When we ask questions, how many times are we asked by ministers to put them on the Notice Paper or given only half the answer?

Mr Perron: Because we admit that we do not know everything, that is why.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the honourable minister said that he cannot check these determinations. We have an intimation that, unfortunately, it was not properly checked by the Public Service Commissioner before it was signed. I worry about this whole belief that not everything can be checked. I worry, because I heard an interjection from the member for Leanyer the other day when we were talking about backdating appointments and people collecting benefits as a result. 'It is done hundreds of times', he said. I would think that, if it occurs hundreds of times, that is probably an excellent reason for the whole matter to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee. I think it should go through all those areas and work out how many similar situations have arisen and what is wrong with the system in the Public Service Commissioner's Office.

Mr Speaker, at the moment, what determinations are checked if payouts of \$50 000 are not? Is there a limit on them? If they are \$100 000, \$200 000, is that when we start to check these things? Of course, the Chief Minister has no power. The Public Service Commissioner can make gifts to anybody. He said that his authority is limited under the Public Service Act, except in section 16A which, he said, contained the powers over audit and equal opportunities. Powers over audit, Mr Speaker? That rings a bell. Why didn't he appoint somebody to conduct an audit the other day? Has that been done? Is somebody going to conduct an audit of the procedures and of the amounts of money involved in this case? That is what I expected the Chief Minister to say in response to this question that, whilst he does not have power under a number of other sections, he has power under section 16A and will ensure that

an audit is undertaken of the determinations that have been made in this area, with particular reference to this particular case. Obviously, he does not understand what his duties are as the minister in charge of the public service.

There is another quite incredible aspect to this. The Chief Minister said that, because he feels that Mr Ward may have been wrongfully dismissed from NTEC, it was possible, or even probable he intimated, that a court would say that he should be paid all the amounts that otherwise he would have received, from the date of termination with NTEC right through to the current day, no matter how many years that may cover. I do not know whether the Chief Minister was correct but, after all, he is the Chief Minister, he is in charge of the government which is in charge of the law. But, it would seem to me that, if that were the situation, it would be incredible. Is he saying that if somebody complained to the Chief Minister that he had been wrongfully dismissed from a statutory authority 20 years ago, and it was established that that indeed was the case, that person would receive 20 years' entitlements? Under those circumstances, several of my constituents would be quite happy to have been wrongfully dismissed 20 years ago.

In fact, it may indicate that Mr Ward may be somebody quite special. Possibly he has demonstrated a rather incredible and quite amazing ability to negotiate. Perhaps we should terminate the employment of some of the advisers that the honourable minister has engaged and appoint Mr Ward to undertake negotiations. He seems to have been able to twist the people we utilise for some of our negotiations around his little finger, to the extent that he has obtained up to \$50 000 from them.

I am quite amazed, Mr Speaker. It raises a real doubt in my mind about the standards that apply in that area. In closing, I urge the Assembly to censure the Chief Minister. I do it for his own good. I think it is necessary that he suffer a censure at this stage so that he will wake up to himself and realise that he will not be allowed to continue to run the public service in this slapdash, haphazard manner.

Mr PALMER (Leanyer): Mr Speaker, this mob turns more somersaults than Nadia Comanenci. Let us have a look at the comments of the erstwhile Leader of the Opposition on the matter of political interference in the public service.

Press release 11 April 1983

The honourable member for Arafura said that the government should issue a public statement affirming it supports principles of an impartial public service. The statement should give a clear and unequivocal commitment that all public service appointments are the sole preserve of the Public Service Commissioner.

Press release 20 April 1983

Public service confidence has been seriously undermined by allegations of ministerial involvement in public service appointments.

Press release 18 May 1983

ACOA members have threatened to take industrial action if an inquiry is not held into association claims that the Minister for Community Development, Mr Tuxworth, interfered in public service appointments.

Mr Smith: They are always claiming interference.

Mr PALMER: Now let us look at page 102 of Hansard where we find some comments made by the new Leader of the Opposition last night. The Leader of the Opposition interjected whilst the member for Fannie Bay was speaking last night. I will start by quoting the member for Fannie Bay: 'Should have there been an arrangement that the Public Service Commissioner makes no such decisions without first referring to the Chief Minister? Would the Leader of the Opposition prefer that? The Leader of the Opposition asked, by way of interjection: 'How many retrospective appointments does he make?' The member for Fannie Bay: 'Would you prefer that there was an arrangement?' The Leader of the Opposition said: 'My word'. My word, he wishes there was an arrangement. Mr Speaker, he cannot rub that out now.

This censure motion is nothing but a manifestation of the coarse and gutter motives of the opposition in this whole affair. For a number of years, the ACOA and the APSA have been losing the confidence of their members. They have been losing the credibility of their members since about 1972 when they orchestrated the white collar workers for the Whitlam campaign. Not long after that time, a vote was taken throughout the ACOA on a nationwide basis asking members if they wished to affiliate with the ACTU. I think that motion was defeated by a vote of something like 75% of the membership. The ACOA took it upon itself then to vote at CAGO that CAGO would affiliate itself with the ACTU and, therefore, de facto - by way of its peak council - would become members of the ACTU.

Keith Ward was employed by the Australian Public Service Association as a union organiser. As an organiser for that association, Keith Ward became disenchanted. He became disenchanted because the APSA and the ACOA bore no relevance to the Northern Territory after self-government. We have 2 contracting unions which, along with the Teachers Federation, are losing membership hand over fist. We had a number of union organisers, and the now Leader of the Opposition was formerly one of their number, who had to protect their livelihood at all costs. What did we have? We had a campaign of slur and denigration, which continues to this day under the guise of a censure motion against the Chief Minister. It is base and gutter. He is just playing to the crowd at the Press Club. All he is looking out for is Barry Cavanagh's knife in his back. He has to kowtow to Jamie Robertson or he will not be Leader of the Opposition much longer. He is never in danger of being Chief Minister.

Let us have a look at why Keith Ward became involved in the formation of the NTPSA. The employees of the Northern Territory Public Service were not receiving the best representation by the present unions. They felt that, because the unions were federal organisations and their NTPS membership was not significantly large, they did not receive enough attention. They found that they were limited by their federal office in finance and decisions. Both Keith Ward and Pete Lawrence claimed before the Arbitration Commission that there was a lack of autonomy for the Northern Territory branch because of the veto powers of the federal office. There are a few respondents to that action including some really appropriate ones such as the Professional Officers Association (Northern Territory). I do not know what it had to do with the Northern Territory Public Service Association. We had the CSIRO Technicians Association. I do not know if the Northern Territory Public Service Association ever foresaw covering them. We had the Printing and Kindred Industries Union which may or may not be in there. There is a whole range of them, including the Plumbers and Gasfitters Union, the FMWU and the Royal Australian Nursing Federation. I do not think there was any intention that

the Northern Territory Public Service Association would take over those roles. All we have copped here today from the opposition is an attempt to continue the denigration of Mr Keith Ward because of his role in the formation of the Northern Territory Public Service Association. It has attempted to do that through censuring the Chief Minister and, in a roundabout way, the Public Service Commissioner who, in his wisdom, attempted to redress a long-standing wrong, a wrong that the Leader of the Opposition acknowledged occurred in 1981.

If we doubt the intention of the Leader of the Opposition, let us quote him. He said that the NTPSA 'will never be recognised as a union'. He speaks with some authority on that. He must know.

Mr Smith: It does not exist any more. It has no members.

Mr PALMER: To proceed with more facts, I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition taught, but I hope it was not sums. I certainly hope that he did not represent his union members in matters such as striking awards. For the record, Mr Ward was employed at an annual salary of \$17 626. He took leave of 33 weeks and 2 days. The salary component of that leave payment was \$11 620.07. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition conveniently forgot to include the Northern Territory allowance or perhaps he does not agree that Mr Ward should have it. That represents \$1470.17. He also conveniently forgot the 17.5% leave loading for the years 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, which came to a total of \$1647.28. That gives a gross payment of \$14 740.52, minus tax of \$3955.10. Do your sums.

There is something else that the opposition members have refused to understand. I do not know whether they are thick or whether they simply do not want to understand. In the matter of superannuation contributions, it is up to Mr Ward to ensure that both employee and employer contributions are paid to the Superannuation Board for the period of retrospective appointment.

Mr Smith: Out of his recreation leave entitlement, Mick. Have another look.

Mr PALMER: It can be paid any way. It is his money. I do not care how it comes.

Mr Smith: That is the question, isn't it? Should it be his money?

Mr PALMER: Mr Speaker, he was paid \$14 000 for accrued recreation leave! The superannuation for the period of retrospective employment has to be paid either by his previous employer and himself or in toto by himself. Even then, there is no obligation upon the Superannuation Board to accept him into the scheme. In accepting him into the scheme, the Superannuation Board will make a determination as to what his benefits will be under the superannuation scheme. He can buy a period.

Mr Smith: He can what?

Mr PALMER: He can buy his accrued benefits. The board may not necessarily accept that period of appointment as service in the terms of the Superannuation Act.

There was no direction in what the opposition said. It attempted to attack the Chief Minister over his failure to exercise proper control in the investigation of the recent retrospective employment of Mr Keith Ward by the

Northern Territory Public Service. The matter was brought to the Chief Minister's attention in the newspaper last weekend. There were many pages to the Public Service Commission's report. It is patently clear to myself that there has been no wrongdoing. It is patently clear by reading the Public Service Act that, even if he wanted to, the Chief Minister cannot direct the Public Service Commissioner to do other than exercise powers under subsections 14(2) and 14(3) of the act. It is patently obvious from the answers given by the Chief Minister that there is nothing more to be known. The facts have been laid on the table. What more does the opposition want us to do? Bring Mr Ward in and flagellate him publicly? What more do they want? Perhaps they want the Public Service Commissioner's scalp for some reason best known to themselves. Perhaps that is another of Jamie's directives to his old mate Terry. What else have you got for us Terry? What else are we going to do at the union's behest? Who else are you going to attack and denigrate?

Mr Smith: Sit down and I will tell you.

Mr PALMER: When the former Leader of the Opposition stepped down, I thought that we might get out of the gutter. This bloke has led us right down to the sump. We are right in the sewage pit now, and I say the sooner his colleagues get rid of him, the better their party will be. But, for the benefit of the Country Liberal Party, I hope we have this Leader of the Opposition for many parliaments to come.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Perhaps we should make the member for Leanyer Chief Minister. At least he attempted to answer some of the questions, and I do thank him for providing that information on the recreation leave entitlement.

We asked a whole series of questions and, at this stage, we still do not have answers to many of them. I want to pick up on a couple of matters. The motion is to censure the Chief Minister because of his failure to exercise proper control over the investigation. The key thing about this, and it is a point that has been expressed by members opposite quite often, is that the Public Service Commissioner is independent and he has the responsibility for running an impartial public service. In this particular case, there are real doubts about whether impartiality has been exercised in appointing a person to the public service and in determining that person's terms and conditions of employment.

There is a prima facie case that it is not an impartial public service when we have a situation in which one man has been given full benefits retrospectively and no evidence has been presented that anyone else has ever received similar treatment. We have been told on numerous occasions that there have been many others, but we have seen no evidence to substantiate that. You can hardly say the service is impartial if, in this particular case, there is such a deviation from the normal terms and conditions in the appointment of a person to the public service. That is a legitimate concern for this Assembly to take up. I can hardly go and talk to the Public Service Commissioner about it. It is a legitimate concern for the Chief Minister who has responsibility for the public service under the administrative orders of this government. He should be capable of conducting an investigation expeditiously into variations from the norm in respect of appointments to the public service.

But what did we have instead? It was not until yesterday, as a result of questions from the opposition, that the Chief Minister gave any urgency whatsoever to this matter. It was not until after yesterday that the telex

relating to double dipping, which is a vital element in this case, was rescued from some filing cabinet in his office and shown to the Chief Minister and the Public Service Commissioner. Obviously, it did not get to his in tray. The Chief Minister, as we have said, has clearly failed to exercise his responsibilities as laid down in the administrative orders of this parliament.

I want to raise one other thing that seems to have slipped peoples' attention and that is the suggestion that Mr Ward may have a case against his previous employer for wrongful dismissal. He may well have such a case, but it is not against the Office of the Public Service Commissioner. The Public Service Commissioner was not his employer. It was NTEC. If Mr Ward has a case against the government of the Northern Territory, it is a case against NTEC. What has happened is that he has gone along to the Public Service Commissioner for some reason with no legal basis for his demand, despite what is in the commissioner's report. No legal case could be presented which demands that the Public Service Commissioner has to find the man a job in the Northern Territory Public Service. He was never a member of the Northern Territory Public Service. He was a member of a statutory authority of the Northern Territory, and that is where he should have taken wrongful dismissal action. If that statutory authority was concerned about a wrongful dismissal action, it should have done something about it, not the Public Service Commissioner who had no liability whatsoever because he was not the previous employer.

Perhaps someone might like to answer that one. How did the Public Service Commissioner become involved in this little act when he had no right to? How did he come up with this sweetheart deal with full retrospective benefits? What if there was no obligation on him whatsoever to become involved? There was no legal basis. The best legal advice which the Chief Minister could obtain indicates that there is no legal liability on the commissioner to provide Mr Ward with any compensation for any supposed wrongful dismissal. It is a nonsense. Of course, it again raises the question of why the Public Service Commissioner was so generous to Mr Ward and the related question of why the Public Service Commissioner, in appointing Mr Ward, deviated from the accepted norm in respect of terms and conditions of employment for Northern Territory Public Service appointees.

That is the nub of the argument. It is why everybody is so interested in this matter. It is why it has been on the front page of the NT News for 3 out of the past 5 days. It is why we are continuing to pursue it in this Assembly. It is not an excuse for the Chief Minister to throw up his hands in a Pontius Pilate act and say that he has no responsibility because he has no control over the actions of the Public Service Commissioner. He has the overall obligation to account for the operations of government in the Northern Territory, and there are very serious questions that must be answered. They still have not been answered. Why? If Mr Ward was intent on taking action for wrongful dismissal or if he discussed it with anyone, why wasn't it addressed to NTEC, and why has the Public Service Commissioner even considered it in determining the terms and conditions under which he would appoint Mr Ward to the public service? It is completely irrelevant. For the Public Service Commissioner in this minute to say it is relevant and that it is a matter for consideration is nonsense. It reflects the whole series of bad advice contained in this particular minute. We have been sold short in this exercise. The taxpayers of the Northern Territory have been sold short by the failure of the Chief Minister to ensure that proper procedures were followed in the appointment of Mr Keith Ward to the Northern Territory Public Service, and the Chief Minister deserves the censure of this Assembly.

Motion negatived

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for today be granted to the member for Arafura who is unable to be present because of an illness in his family.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Redevelopment of the Old Police Site, Darwin

Mr HANRAHAN: Mr Speaker, I rise to make an announcement which will be of particular interest to members of the Assembly.

The Territory Insurance Office has submitted a proposal for redevelopment of the old police headquarters in Mitchell Street. The proposal involves the construction of a multi-storey office complex which would provide accommodation suitable for ministerial offices and for private organisations. As well, it is proposed that the complex would include provisions for an interim Parliament House. Following consideration by Cabinet, the proposal was endorsed in principle and, accordingly, the government has decided to sell the police headquarters site to the TIO.

Members are aware of the serious deficiencies of the present facilities which have long outlasted their usefulness, and which periodically require extensive maintenance and renovation. Members are also aware that the government's efforts over the last few years to find a permanent solution to these problems, while yielding a satisfactory design for a new Parliament House, have had to be deferred because of the high costs involved which could not be justified in the present budgetary climate.

The proposals being examined at present provide a cost-effective and imaginative solution to these problems. Under them, the TIO will include interim parliamentary facilities in its new building. This will provide the accommodation that will be essential when, some time in the future, a decision is taken to proceed with construction of a permanent Parliament House on the present site. Being incorporated into the design of the TIO's office building right from the start, the interim Parliament House can be designed to a suitable standard to provide reasonable facilities and provision for expansion over perhaps the 5 years or so that it would be occupied for this purpose. It will be a better solution to the problem of interim facilities than the cost of the conversion of an existing building, a solution which would be likely to result in less than satisfactory facilities.

At the end of its use as an interim Parliament House, the facilities in the new building would be converted to other uses, for example, a convention centre, theatre and library. The design will be such as to allow ready conversion. This proposal contains a number of novel aspects and benefits. Not only will the parliament be in a commercial building, but the parliamentary areas will be leased, possibly with an option to strata title. While this is a most unusual arrangement in terms of history and current practice amongst Australian parliaments, there is no real reason why it cannot work well and be compatible with the maintenance of parliamentary rights and privileges.

A detailed study of the implications under the Legislative Assembly (Powers and Privileges) Act will be carried out, including the need for possible amendments to facilitate implementation of the arrangements. However, no serious problems are anticipated. I believe that members will accept that history and precedent are not infallible guides in such matters, and new times and new problems demand that we are flexible enough to accept new solutions. Other advantages of the proposal are that it will possibly obviate the need to build new Supreme Court extensions costing over \$3m. This possibility is to be studied by the Minister for Transport and Works and the Attorney-General. With the possibility of providing badly-needed ministerial offices in the new TIO building, the existing Chan building can be converted for use as the Northern Territory Government Computer Centre at a considerable saving. It is estimated that a new purpose-built computer centre would cost in the vicinity of \$10m-\$15m. The Chan building already provides the necessary security and has other required features such as backup power supply. Conversion could be achieved at a cost of between \$1m and \$2m. A concept sketch and a model of the proposed new building are available for inspection by members.

This is an exciting concept which will provide this Assembly with more satisfactory accommodation in a cost-effective manner while, at the same time, enabling economical solutions to be found to cater to the need for expansion of Supreme Court facilities and for a new computer centre. In order that a more detailed study of the proposal as it affects the Legislative Assembly may be commenced, and to enable negotiations with the TIO, I am informed that the terms of reference of the New Parliament House Committee will need to be amended. I therefore give notice of my intention to move that the terms of reference of the New Parliament House Committee be appropriately amended. I have advised the New Parliament House Committee of the proposal. The reason the government is taking this course of action is, of course, to allow the New Parliament House Committee to examine the plans, investigate the concept, open discussions with the Territory Insurance Office and then advise this Assembly and the government.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I will respond to the minister's statement very briefly. I would not care to presume what the view of the New Parliament House Committee will be in relation to that site or whether it will recommend that the proposed new development is a suitable home for the parliament as an interim measure. Despite the minister's promotion of this particular idea, I do not intend to promote or decry it at the moment. I am on the New Parliament House Committee and we intend to investigate it very closely before we make any recommendations to the Assembly. However, I believe that the committee should be able to investigate the possibility of moving onto that site. Therefore, the opposition will certainly support the motion to amend the terms of reference of the the New Parliament House Committee.

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I thank the member for Nhulunbuy for his comments. Just to reiterate, it is for reasons of exact protocol that we are asking the New Parliament House Committee to investigate the offer to the Northern Territory government by the Territory Insurance Office.

Motion agreed to.

NEW PARLIAMENT HOUSE COMMITTEE

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Communications and Technology)(by leave): I move that the terms of reference of the New Parliament House Committee, appointed on Tuesday 17 June 1986, be varied:

(A) by inserting after paragraph 2 the following paragraph: '2(A) the committee act for and represent the Legislative Assembly in all matters concerned with the planning, design and construction of any interim accommodation proposed for the Legislative Assembly, its committees, members and officers and all matters incidental thereto';

(B) by inserting in paragraph (4) after the word 'thereto', the words 'or any matter relating to the planning, design and construction of interim accommodation proposed for the Legislative Assembly, its committees, members and officers; and

(C) by omitting from paragraph 4(A) the words 'the Minister for Transport and Works' and inserting in their stead the words 'the relevant minister'.

Motion agreed to.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have to inform the Assembly that, accompanied by honourable members, I have this day waited on His Honour the Administrator and presented to him the Address-in-Reply to the speech delivered by His Honour on the occasion of the opening of the Assembly, which was agreed to on 20 August 1986. His Honour was pleased to make the following reply:

Mr Speaker,

Thank you for the Address-in-Reply which you have presented to me. It will afford me pleasure to convey to Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, the message of loyalty from the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory of Australia to which the address gives expression.

THERAPEUTIC GOODS AND COSMETICS BILL
(Serial 197)

Continued from 19 June 1986.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, in speaking to this bill, I would like to advise that the opposition supports it.

This bill provides for the regulation of manufacture and sale of therapeutic goods and cosmetics. 'Therapeutic goods' are defined to include substances or appliances used for preventing, diagnosing, curing or alleviating disease, ailment or injury. Where there is any doubt, the minister may declare a substance or appliance to be therapeutic or cosmetic. Note that the minister may also grant exemptions under the legislation.

Manufacturers and sellers must be licensed. This does not include the need to license pharmacists in a hospital or dentists making up substances for their patients. There is also a requirement for a written consent of the

Chief Medical Officer for the sale of therapeutic goods by vending machines. Toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, condoms, razors and hand creams are excepted, together with any other goods prescribed as excepted. There is provision for examination of goods by the inspectors, who may also take samples from seized goods. Analysts can be appointed to analyse samples and issue certificates of analysis, and they have procedures set down for the analysis process. Seized goods may be forfeited to the Territory by consent or by order of the court.

The bill also prohibits certain representations in respect of goods, and the Administrator may prohibit the advertising, sale and supply of those goods where he believes them to be injurious to life or health or just plain useless. The bill also contains some provisions to regulate the advertising and labelling of disinfectants, germicides, antiseptics and preservatives. We also note that decisions by inspectors and analysts may be appealed against in the local courts. This is acceptable to the opposition. It also provides for a regulation-making power which allows for the prescription of standards, quality and purity content of therapeutic goods and cosmetics. It also refers to packaging, labelling, compounding, transport storage, and so on.

While the Commonwealth government controls the import of therapeutic goods and cosmetics, it does not have the constitutional power to legislate over their manufacture and sale in this country. Consequently, the states have introduced legislation to complement that of the Commonwealth in this area. Also, the legislation will introduce controls, and help guarantee safe and reliable therapeutic goods. Mr Speaker, the opposition commends the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak on this bill, I will say at the outset, as I said yesterday when speaking on the legislation relating to biological control, that I have no argument at all with the content of the bill. However, there are some objections that I would like to bring to the minister's notice. I have already spoken of these to him.

This legislation is part of a scheme to integrate legislation throughout Australia, and has the backing of the Commonwealth, state and territory Departments of Health. Its intent is similar to that of yesterday's legislation regarding biological control and the next piece of legislation, the Food Bill. All 3 put us into an Australia-wide scheme of control.

Again, I will say that I support the intent of this bill. However, I find an objection rising in me whenever I am confronted with legislation which is concerned with control and regulation. I have an objection where regulation determines that something must be done a certain way, when there could be any number of ways to achieve the same ends whilst allowing law-abiding people more legal freedom and still catching the lawbreakers and dealing with them in the public good so that they discontinue to be lawbreakers. It worries me more than a little that many of us on this side of the Assembly speak about our objections to an overcontrolled and overregulated regime, whilst we continue time and time again to pass more legislation containing regulations, at complete variance to our professed views. I have not actually made a study of the content of all legislation, but I will bet Anthony Hordern's to a bark hut that most of the legislation on our books gives inspectors more power to poke and pry into our lives than our police forces have.

I can see a time coming when we will not need a police force; we will simply point an inspector at the wrongdoer. It will not matter whether it comes under the Fish and Fisheries Act, the Obnoxious Weeds Act, the Motor Vehicles Act, the Caravan Parks Act or almost any other act, we will just say

to the inspector, 'Skitch him boy', and he will go after the wrongdoer and heel him, just like my blue dogs do. I can see a time coming when, if we are not too careful, this situation will really be here. We will have an exchange of powers between the inspectors for different acts so that they can all do each other's jobs. When we have developed this you-beaut regimented force of inspectors, all in plain clothes of course, we can cut back on our police force numbers. They will only be pale copies anyway. In fact, in many situations, I believe the police force is behind the 8-ball now. They at least have to obtain a warrant to search premises for certain substances and apprehend people. On the other hand, from reading some pieces of legislation, I believe most inspectors only have to convince themselves that they have reasonable grounds for suspicion of wrongdoing before they enter and search a place. I know they have to answer for their actions afterwards if they are incorrect, but I believe that they have many more powers of search and inspection than the police have. I do not believe this should be so.

The legislation as presented is interesting, and it is very comprehensive. It is very detailed but I will be very interested to read the regulations relating to this legislation and also the regulations relating to the Food Bill. I think the regulations will be more important than the legislation itself.

I am a bit concerned about the definition of 'therapeutic appliance'. Clause 4 says that 'therapeutic appliance' means an appliance that is 'represented to be, or might reasonably be taken to be, for a use of the kind referred to in paragraph (c)', which talks about the sole or principal use of that appliance. To me that seems too all-embracing. It seems that you only need to believe an appliance to have the slightest connection with therapeutic goods or substances, and it becomes a therapeutic appliance subject to all the provisions of this legislation.

I would also like to ask the minister about paragraph (g), which excludes 'an article of food' from the definition of 'therapeutic substance'. I think there might be a bit of a grey area there. I am unclear as to whether vitamins, vitamin supplements and diet additives would be considered articles of food or therapeutic substances, especially if they are included as additives in food.

Clause 4(2)(a) reads:

For the purposes of this act, a substance or appliance shall be deemed to be represented - (a) as suitable for therapeutic use or cosmetic use where it is, whether by reason of the way in which it is put up or for any other reason, likely to be taken to be for therapeutic use or cosmetic use ...

I would like to have the minister clearly state that that provision will be administered properly because I can see another grey area in there. I can foresee regulations covering certain substances which should not be the subject of legislation. I am talking about natural substances which can be used as cosmetics. You could call them old-fashioned substances. We all know that honey is a food, but it can be used for certain therapeutic purposes. It can be used as an external dressing to combat infection. That is pretty old-fashioned, but still effective. Buttermilk can be used cosmetically for skin softening. Cucumber also can be used cosmetically. Oatmeal can be used cosmetically. I would hate to see those foods included as cosmetics and therapeutic substances for the purposes of this legislation. I hope the minister can tell me they will not be.

Under clause 6, relating to notice in relation to certain goods, it says that the minister may, by notice in the gazette, declare a substance specified or described in the notice to be a therapeutic substance, a cosmetic, an article of food and so on. It also says the minister can declare an appliance specified or described in the notice to be a therapeutic appliance or not to be a therapeutic appliance. This has implications for the contents of 2 well-known shops in Darwin. I refer to a shop in Harriet Place whose name I do not know and another shop whose location is in the Workers' Club complex. I do not know the names of these shops but they sell sex aids and erotic whansanames. I do not know whether the minister will consider that the goods in those shops are classified as therapeutic appliances or whether they will come under his jurisdiction. If they do, I look forward with some interest to the insertions in the gazette regarding which appliances are considered to come under this legislation and which are not. Probably they will be competing with other notices in the gazette relating to publications of an erotic nature.

I am really worried about clause 9, which refers to appointment of inspectors. Clause 9(2) says that 'the Administrator may enter into an arrangement with the Governor-General of the Commonwealth for the exercise and performance, by an officer of the Commonwealth, of the powers, duties or functions under this act of an inspector'. If we are to have reciprocal arrangements with the states, I would be much happier to have an inspector appointed by the Minister for Health in the Northern Territory, not a Commonwealth inspector. I anticipate problems there, not the least being the way such an inspector would use the powers given to him or her. Clause 10 gives very wide inspection powers. I do not say that they will abuse these powers, but I would be much happier if it was an inspector from the Northern Territory. It is not that I distrust people from the Commonwealth, but I would not like them to get a foot in the door again.

Clause 13 states that, under this legislation, an analyst shall make a report to the minister. I assume that that analyst will be appointed by the minister in the Northern Territory. As we can appoint inspectors under Commonwealth legislation, can analysts also be appointed from the Commonwealth's ranks? If so, will they be treated equally with a public servant in the Northern Territory or will they have more power? Will they report only to the Territory Minister for Health or, because they come from the Commonwealth, will they report also on matters in the Territory to the Commonwealth Minister for Health?

Clause 18 relates to permits for hawkers. It seems that the days of freedom of those beautiful Avon ladies are gone. For that purpose, unless the minister decrees otherwise, I have to obtain a hawker's licence, and even the words 'hawker's licence' do not seem to be compatible with anything so 'frightfully nice' as an Avon lady. I believe a licence is required only to hawk therapeutic goods; it does not talk of cosmetic goods so perhaps the Avon lady will not be affected.

Therapeutic goods can include certain food items which can be used therapeutically, both internally and externally. These include eggs, honey, cucumbers and even beer used for beer rinses. I hope the minister is very light in any restrictions or prescriptions he imposes in regard to these therapeutic goods.

I am pleased to see that for any samples taken for analysis or inspected on premises, including packages that are broken open, the owner of the premises will have to accept payment whether he wishes to or not. I will read

clause 25(5): 'In proceedings under this act in respect of therapeutic goods or cosmetics bought in the usual course of business by a person other than an inspector, where it is provided that the sample of the therapeutic goods or cosmetics submitted for analysis was in the same state when received by the analyst as when so bought, the certificate of analysis of them may be received as evidence without proof of compliance with this section'. The words 'as when so bought' are very important but that would be extremely difficult to police. I will give an example.

Some years ago, a constituent came to me with quite a big problem. He had been supplied with diesel to generate power for his shop in which he had freezers and refrigerators. He told me that a particular batch of diesel that he received was dirty. Because of impurities in the diesel, his generator was ruined and the contents of his freezers and refrigerators were spoiled and could not be sold. This gentleman lost a considerable sum of money as he was not insured for that sort of accident. He wanted redress because he believed that the diesel contained impurities at the time of purchase. That was the cause of all his problems but it appeared that he had no redress. I tried to help him. He could not get an analysis of his diesel interstate. I obtained information as to where he could have his diesel analysed in the Northern Territory, but who was to say that the diesel that he took to be analysed was the same diesel that caused him all the trouble? I think we will have the same problem here because who is to say that the cosmetic or therapeutic goods purchased are the goods that are submitted for analysis?

I am unable to understand clause 30. It says that a 'person shall not, for trade purposes or advertisement, refer to an analysis made in pursuance of this part'. If the analysis were favourable, I imagine a person would wish to advertise that fact. If the results were not favourable, he would not wish them known. But, for the life of me, I cannot see why there is a prohibition on the use of this information. If a person submits either cosmetics or therapeutic goods for analysis at his own expense, and the analysis is satisfactory, I do not understand why that cannot be used for advertising purposes. I would like the minister to explain that.

I do not have any disagreement with the content of clause 37, but I would like to know why cosmetics were not mentioned. The contents of cosmetics, some of which contain lead, can have a deleterious effect on the skin.

I have no objection to cosmetic goods or therapeutic goods being examined under the provisions of clause 40 for the purposes of ascertaining their composition and properties. I can even accept the fact that the inspector comments on the results of these examinations and compares them with any advertisement that relates to those goods and cosmetics. However, I object to the fact that the inspector, who may be a Commonwealth officer, comments also on the price at which those goods or cosmetics are sold. I find it very improper that a public service inspector can comment on the financial dealings of a person in private business. I do not really think he would be competent to do it. Again, I will give an example.

An inspector may inspect bottles of well-known perfumes like Chanel No 5, White Linen or Chloe, and he may come to the conclusion that these 3 perfumes are overpriced. They have never been cheap. But will the inspector take into account everything involved in the sale of these perfumes? Will he take into account the popularity of different perfumes at different times or whether they are used predominantly by shop girls or sophisticated wealthy women or a combination of these factors? Will he be aware that some people purchase goods because of the brand name rather than because they appreciate the

quality of goods. People buy expensive perfumes for different reasons. They may purchase it because they like the smell or because of the shape of the bottle or because their friends wear it. I consider it a gross intrusion for the inspector to comment on the price and can see no useful purpose for it. I look forward to seeing the regulations that will be made under this legislation.

Finally, I find clause 60(1) interesting because I have not seen this written before. 'In proceedings under this act, a witness on behalf of the prosecution is not obliged to disclose - (a) the fact that he received information; (b) the nature of the information received by him; or (c) the name of the person who gave information.

I am not very well informed on legal matters, but it seems very unusual to me that a witness can refrain from giving information. The witness could be an inspector. If he refrains from giving information as a witness on behalf of the prosecution, does he make the decision not to do so or does his public service superior make that decision or does the minister make the decision? As a person of ordinary intelligence, I understood that, if one appeared in court and took an oath to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, one would be obliged to answer questions. I also understood that, if one did not answer, one could be held in contempt of court. I would like the minister to clarify that for me because I find it very unusual and rather confusing.

Mr Speaker, I support the bill but I hope the minister can find time to answer my queries.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I thank the honourable members for their contributions. I am very pleased that both members support the passage of this bill. It is a pity that, when members have concerns about issues in relation to legislation, they do not give us some warning of those concerns. I believe most of the matters raised by the member for Koolpinyah can be addressed without a great deal of trouble. If I am unable to address all her points tonight, I will ensure that the answers are supplied to her later.

In many cases, we tend to overreact in respect of the powers given to inspectors. In many of our acts, those powers are necessary. I will be referring to that again when we are talking about the Food Bill. Despite what anyone thinks about the powers of inspectors to enter properties etc, it is necessary to have those powers so that people are protected. We are talking about standards relating to safety and control. The controls that are laid down in the legislation are the result of a great deal of consultation on the part of the Commonwealth, the state governments and the National Therapeutic Goods Committee.

As I mentioned in my second-reading speech, the recall of pharmaceutical products has more than doubled over the past 10 years and the same applies with respect to substandard medical devices. Thus, it is necessary to have these controls in the legislation. I can assure the member for Koolpinyah, that the provisions of the legislation will be administered properly. If there are any doubts about what are therapeutic goods, there is a provision in the legislation for the minister to determine that.

The member referred to the appointment of inspectors in clause 9. There is a need, I believe, to have Commonwealth officers involved on occasions. I do not share the concern of the honourable member in relation to the appointment of inspectors. They are not people from off the streets, but

people who adopt a responsible attitude towards their job. Whilst there can be abuse by officers on occasion, that is very rare indeed.

The honourable member also referred to the Avon lady. This legislation is related to therapeutic goods that are manufactured or sold in the wholesale market. We are not talking about the retail market generally. In my second-reading speech, I indicated that it would not affect the majority of the cosmetics that are sold by chemists and other retailers. Nevertheless, it is necessary to ensure that the cosmetics will not be harmful to the consumer. My understanding is that there is no lead in lipstick but various eye shadows which are purchased from different parts of the world may have some weird ingredients.

In relation to clause 40, the member referred to the setting of the price. I agree with her that anyone who supports our free enterprise philosophy would not want to interfere with prices. I will not interfere with prices and the inspectors will not interfere with prices. What the legislation is saying is that, if a hair restorer is on sale at \$100 or \$200, I could require that that product be investigated to ensure that it does what it claims to do. The provision is not there for the purpose of interfering with the price itself, and I want to make that quite clear.

Mention was also made of clause 60 which states that inspectors cannot give hearsay evidence. This will protect the person who supplied the information in the first instance. I also have some concern about the powers of inspectors. Many of our laws give wide powers to inspectors and I will be commenting on those further in relation to the Food Bill. I assure the member that I will answer any of her questions which I am not able to answer during the course of my reply. We are not trying to set up a bureaucracy here. This is uniform legislation that is related directly to safety and control. That is of major concern to all health ministers in Australia. I am sorry if some people are concerned about the powers given to the inspectors whose job it is to try to ensure that we have a healthy society.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Bill passed remaining stages without debate.

FOOD BILL
(Serial 198)

Continued from 19 June 1986.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, the opposition supports this bill which replaces the food and drugs legislation introduced in 1936. It covers the labelling of food, including data stamping, hygiene, the cleanliness of premises, the preparation and packaging of food, and approval to install and register food vending machines. It also contains detailed provisions relating to the taking of samples for analysis, the report on the analysis and its use in evidence, and the seizure and destruction, where appropriate, of articles such as food, labels, packaging materials and appliances.

Clause 54 confers on the minister responsible emergency powers to prohibit the production, preparation, sale and supply of classes of food or to cause their destruction or quarantine. By clause 55, the minister may prohibit the cultivation or harvesting etc of food from a certain area where he is of the opinion that it may be dangerous or cause injuries to consumers. The opposition supports that.

We also note that the regulation-making powers in clause 56 are extensive and fairly specific. Many matters which were previously spelt out in the legislation will be set out in the regulations. This is not surprising and follows the trend nowadays with all legislation.

The opposition believes the bill follows the national model. The idea behind the model is to standardise provisions throughout the country, given that much of the food production is aimed at a national rather than a state, territory or local market. We cannot see any problem with the bill although I would query why the list of regulatory offences in clause 44 does not include the offence in clause 32.

Queries have been raised on variations from the national model in the provisions relating to the powers of inspectors or authorised officers. Under the model, inspectors can take or purchase samples whereas, under the bill, inspectors must pay current market value for the goods. We do not see any great problem there. Under the model, inspectors are empowered to examine and, if necessary, remove and seize and detain for such time as may be necessary. The corresponding provision in the bill states: 'examine and, if he sees fit, remove and seize and detain for such time as he thinks fit'. The provisions in the bill are, if anything, wider and in keeping with the other legislation conferring power on inspectors.

As I indicated earlier, the opposition supports this bill. For your information, I believe that the states are not rushing to introduce the model of this bill. However, Queensland has introduced it.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, I rise to support this bill. I notice that it is quite comprehensive and addresses quite a number of issues, including labelling and hygiene, food vending machines, sample analysis and seizure of articles. It details certain offences, the penalties for those and liability in respect of offences and soon. However, the particular area to which I will address myself this afternoon is one of interest to me. I refer to packaging and labelling.

Because I have been involved in the business, I am very much aware of the problems which manufacturers in the Northern Territory face and the difficulties that inspectors face under the existing legislation in trying to exercise some control. The Northern Territory is at the end of the line in so far as the supply of foodstuffs is concerned. Customers find on the supermarket shelves a whole range of products from every state in Australia and indeed quite a number from overseas.

Until now, each state has had different regulations and laws controlling the manufacture and packaging of the same types of products. It is true to say that, because of the lack of standardisation, it has been almost impossible for health authorities to monitor and control packaging standards. Local manufacturers have to purchase packaging materials from southern manufacturers and, in many cases, use packaging materials which are already in use in southern states. Because of the limited production capacity here, it is not economical for local manufacturers to produce or pay the cost of producing a die with their own name, address and local details. Assuming that they did have this die produced, they would have to buy the packaging in tens of thousands and, in the case of labels, in hundreds of thousands of a production run. That might last them for 12 months or more and, because of the humidity, the packaging, the glue and the wax on the pack deteriorates. The end result is that the particular pack or label is useless because it has deteriorated.

It is quite common to find locally manufactured products in packages which comply with the requirements of southern states but not necessarily with those of the Northern Territory. I hasten to add that, in the Northern Territory, the controls and the standards have been very loose indeed. Some states exercise very tight controls over packaging. For example, they insist on the details of the ingredients, the size of the lettering, expiry date stamping and so on. However, these requirements have varied from state to state. I am aware that expiry date stamping has certainly been a requirement in the Northern Territory for quite a number of years. The Department of Weights and Measures regularly monitors that. The trade practices people quite regularly sample and monitor the quality of product which is produced or sold here in the Northern Territory.

This is obviously a most unsatisfactory situation. With the introduction of this uniform legislation, the problem will cease to exist. This move is long overdue. It is essential that packaging requirements and standards are uniform throughout this country because the majority of products on supermarket shelves are sold nationally. Up to about 90% of products are sold nationally. It is absolutely crazy for manufacturers to have to modify their packaging and their standards to suit individual state requirements. That adds an enormous cost and, in his second-reading speech, the minister referred to some \$500m over 10 years. That is an enormous cost which is passed on to the consumer. Obviously, the previous system which allowed for varying packaging standards from state to state was a manufacturer's nightmare. It indeed added considerable cost to the selling price.

In May 1975, a joint Commonwealth, state and territories meeting of the responsible ministers agreed to establish working parties to consider drafting uniform legislation. I would like at this stage to draw attention to the fact that, in the Parliamentary Record, the date mentioned is 1985. That is incorrect; it should be 1975. The Northern Territory actively participated in that exercise and we see the resultant recommendations in the form of this bill before us today.

Unfortunately, there has been no agreement on the regulations governing food hygiene. Again, this varies considerably from state to state. In the Northern Territory, food hygiene comes under the control of the Department of Health. In many of the states, it comes under the control of local governments and, indeed, their requirements vary from local government area to local government area. Nevertheless, rather than delay the introduction of this bill awaiting resolution of the matter of hygiene, it was decided to proceed so that the packaging area could be rationalised as soon as possible. I commend the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, it is very obvious that the provisions in the bill and its regulations are similar to those contained in the previous legislation relating to therapeutic goods and cosmetics, in that they are extensive and uniform throughout Australia. The minister indicated that national legislation was first considered in 1980 at a Health Ministers' Conference. It was delayed because relevant regulations were not prepared. This legislation is before us today even though all the relevant regulations have not been prepared.

Mr Speaker, my views relating to the inspectorial powers in this legislation are exactly the same as those I expressed in respect of the previous bill. I have no argument with the contents of the bill. However, I am awaiting the regulations relating to food standards and hygiene with some interest. I believe that only food of a high standard of purity should be

available on the market, but I am also concerned that, on many occasions, we tend to have the mistaken view that the more regulations we make, the higher the standard of the food that is presented for purchase.

I believe that we should now be looking at the proper administration of food regulations already on our books. If I could give 2 examples, I am particularly concerned with meat and milk. On many occasions, I have seen trucks that carry frozen and chilled food pulling up to supermarkets and leaving their back doors or side doors open for some time, not only while the driver transfers the goods into the storeroom of the shop but also while he has a yarn with his mates. That cannot be good for the contents of the truck, especially dairy and meat products.

I have seen plastic containers of ice-cream and dairy products placed on the ground outside the trucks and left there for a while. I have seen plastic containers of ice-cream on the floor in supermarkets. This seems to be a regular occurrence. Because the ice-cream is in a plastic container, I am not concerned with possible contamination from dirt. My concern is the length of time that the so-called frozen foods remain unfrozen. It is very important that the provisions of the legislation be understood by every single handler of a food substance, especially frozen foods.

Mr Perron: Do you want more inspectors?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I do not believe we should have more inspectors. I believe that the people who work in these places should have a thorough knowledge of what they are supposed to do.

I have also purchased from supermarkets meat that turned out to be rather old. When it was cooked, it did not have a very pleasant taste. We were not violently ill from it; it was edible, but only just. Certainly, I made my views on the products known to the managers of the supermarkets. This problem is overcome to some extent these days because most meat, especially sausages, has an expiry date on the package. I believe that the staff of large supermarkets should have a thorough knowledge of the date-stamping on the goods and move the older stock to the front of the shelf each day.

In relation to the production of milk, I believe that the supervision of dairies should not be a responsibility of the Department of Health, but a responsibility of the Department of Primary Production, as it is in every state in Australia. Why we are so far behind up here, I do not know. Our legislation covering the production of milk is outdated and outmoded. It is not exactly useless but it is not relevant to today's farming practices at all. I do not want to see heavy regulation in the regulations relating to the production both of cow's milk and goat's milk. Whilst I do not want to see impure or dirty products on the market, I hope that the regulations sit lightly on the current producers. I know that both these substances are produced in a healthy way. I believe that I have in my electorate, if not the only cow dairy in the Northern Territory, one of the few cow dairies in the Northern Territory. Its product is a full cream milk and is so popular that the dairy cannot supply enough of it. In fact, it can only supply to the rural area. The dairy has a pretty big herd of cows, but the product is so popular that it is not even worth while bringing it into town, because it can all be sold in the rural area.

Mr Perron: Is that the Berrimah line in reverse?

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: It is the Berrimah line in reverse.

In relation to the production of goat's milk, it is a very energetic and burgeoning farm industry which has a great potential and a great future. If the regulations sit so heavily as to make it completely unfinancial for the small or hobby farmers - call them what you like - to proceed, I can see goat's milk becoming unavailable for human consumption and being available for animals. People will still drink goat's milk for certain health reasons. Goat's milk fulfils a need, which cow's milk does not, for people with certain ailments. However, if the regulations sit too heavily on the producers, they will produce it only for animals. People will still buy it, but it may not be sufficiently hygienic if it is only being produced for animals. We will then be in a worse state than if the regulations had been allowed to rest fairly lightly on producers.

I believe that some health surveyors, and I am speaking now about some who have operated in the past in the Territory, tend to get carried away with their own importance and lots of ceramic tiles and stainless steel. These things may be very good in big dairies, where there is a reason for them, but I believe that good standards of health can be maintained in ordinary commonsense situations. I will say again that I do not want to see heavy-handed regulations following on from this legislation. However, I support the legislation, and I look forward to seeing the regulations. I would appreciate it, if the minister is still thinking kindly of me despite what I said about his previous piece of legislation, if he will perhaps let me see the regulations before they come into effect. I support the legislation, Mr Speaker.

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, again I thank members for their support of the bill. I particularly note the concerns, once again, of the member for Koolpinyah in relation to powers of inspectors. It should be noted that the act that we are amending is a very old act and has been in existence for about 50 years. The actual powers remain basically the same, except the powers to remove books and documents and records. We are not changing the basic, underlying powers.

Another issue which has been brought to my attention relates to inspection of vehicles. Once again, powers already exist to inspect vehicles. I can recall some years ago that we had a meat scandal and there was a need to have the power to inspect vehicles. We did not have it at that particular time. These are the sorts of concerns that we have had, and we have to make sure that we have the power to stop vehicles.

I can assure members, in relation to the employees at many of the supermarkets, that they are well aware that freezers are supposed to be kept closed. Once again, you have the problem of ensuring that that does happen. I can recall seeing trucks with their backs open on many occasions, but it is a difficult matter to police. That is a problem. Again, the practice in most supermarkets is to keep stock updated and to rotate it. I am sure that the employees understand that. They are given a particular task, but whether or not they carry it out is another matter.

There has also been concern expressed by the member for Fannie Bay. He had the courtesy to write to me in relation to outdoor food stalls. I can assure him that we are not in the business of closing down those particular stalls. We are in fact trying to protect the public by making sure that stalls are run hygienically. You would be aware, in relation to the devolution of health survey functions in Darwin some time ago, that there was comment about the need for more health surveyors. You could have 20 or 60 inspectors, and you would always find work for them to do. In this case, it

is not necessary. We do not go around looking at restaurants or shops or kitchens for the specific purpose of trying to close them down. I can assure the member for Fannie Bay that, at least while I am the minister, these matters will be looked at in a great deal of detail.

I can also recall, from my days in the restaurant business, the type of bureaucracy which can evolve from inspectorial powers. Some time ago, when the police were still carrying out inspections in relation to the liquor licensing, they were complaining about the dust on bottles of wine, and things like that. If you allow these procedures to go overboard, you can find many areas that could be considered to be of some sort of health risk, such as a bit of mildew outside the door of a fridge or whatever. As time goes by, you will always find inspectors are able to find more and more things on which to pull people up.

This bill has been drawn up with a great deal of consultation with the states. It is necessary, for the reasons which have been mentioned by the member for Jingili, to have standard legislation in relation to foodstuffs. The National Health and Medical Research Council and officers of my department have been looking at this legislation for a long time, and it has not been drawn up willy-nilly.

As the member for Koolpinyah has mentioned, the regulations are still to be drawn up. This could take some time, and I will endeavour to keep the member informed. I would like to foreshadow that, in the committee stage, I will be introducing 2 amendments relating to vending machines. I thank honourable members for their contributions.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

In committee:

Clauses 1 to 12 agreed to.

Clause 13:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 80.1.

This amendment will allow the Chief Medical Officer to exempt classes of vending machines from the requirement to obtain approval before installation. Any such exemptions will be kept under review and removed if health requirements make such action necessary. This refers specifically to vending machines that may sell soft drinks or those types of things, and it is not necessary to have them inspected every year.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 13, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 56 agreed to.

Clause 57:

Mr HARRIS: Mr Chairman, I move amendment 80.2.

Mr Chairman, we have provided for various sections of the Food and Drug Act to continue. This adds subclause (5) to provide a period of grace for food vending machines already in operation in the Northern Territory.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 57, as amended, agreed to.

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

Bill reported; report adopted.

Bill passed remaining stage without debate.

TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 196)

Continued from 19 June 1986.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, in rising to speak to this bill, I would like to say to the Minister for Conservation that the opposition is happy to support the bill as it creates specific regulation-making powers in the act in 2 particular areas. The first is in respect of the licensing and operation of zoos and aviaries and the second is for the establishment of local management committees for parks, reserves, sanctuaries and protected areas.

Proposed new section 123(2)(b) permits the making of regulations for the establishment and composition of local management committees, the appointment and terms of office of their members, their meetings and proceedings, and their powers and functions. This is something that I, personally, am very much in support of because it relates to parks such as the Gurig National Park on Cobourg Peninsula and the Kings Canyon National Park in Alice Springs, and it gives so many responsibilities to people actually involved in these local management committees. This is important because, as the Minister for Conservation would know, people were living in those areas before the parks were established under the Conservation Act.

Proposed new subsection (2)(a) makes provision for the planning stages for the future running of the park. The provisions will allow opportunities for people to be involved in the planning of the park and to participate in the running of the park and beautification of the area.

Mr Speaker, with those comments, I indicate the opposition's support for the bill.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Speaker, I will say at the outset that I support the bill. Firstly, not only will this reduce the bureaucracy of the Conservation Commission but it reduces the workload of the commission in the interests of the community. The powers and functions given to local committees of the reserves and parks nominated by the Administrator need to be monitored so that local committees have some consistency and their activities do not intrude into other Conservation Commission functions. I believe this legislation will work well for the good management of the reserves in particular areas and it will lead to close integration of the uses of the parks and reserves by the local community.

In his second-reading speech, the minister used the Cobourg Peninsula park as an example in relation to certain matters. I believe the management of that park is an example not only to people in the Northern Territory but also to the ANPWS, which comments frequently on how our parks are run and whether or not Aboriginals are involved. The park provides a good example of the

excellent working relationship between Aboriginals and officers of the Conservation Commission. In the declaration of parks and reserves in other areas it is not necessary to repeat this exercise, because separate legislation was enacted for the Cobourg Peninsula park. We do not want individual legislation enacted for every reserve and park that is declared in the Northern Territory.

The Board of Management of the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary has on it some senior officers of the Conservation Commission. Mr Speaker, you might say that this is good and, in one way, I believe it is. The senior officers of the Conservation Commission sit down with the Aboriginal people to make decisions about policy and management of their particular park. I know from my friends, and I refer not only to Aboriginal friends but to farming friends, that Aboriginal people do not make snap decisions on any matter. Before they say yes or no to anything at all, complete aspects of the subject are examined in great detail. Of course, this takes time. When Conservation Commission officers on the Board of Management of the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary take part in these deliberations, they are there for some time, when they could be back in their jobs looking after their other responsibilities. Under this amendment, the Administrator can make provision to license reserves to be run by local committees and this should ease the situation with parks and reserves in the Territory. I believe the amendment can be used quite happily where there is Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal involvement in park management and park policies.

The local officers of the Conservation Commission, depending on which area the park is in, will still have a role on the local management committee, either as members of the board management or acting in a liaison capacity. I believe there will be close cooperation between officers of the Conservation Commission and local management committees. Mr Speaker, I support the bill.

Mr McCARTHY (Conservation): Mr Speaker, I am pleased to note the support of the opposition and the member for Koolpinyah. I would have been surprised if we had not received total support for this amendment, because it is designed to do what we all want it to do: provide for efficient local management of parks and reserves in the Northern Territory.

Recently in this Assembly, I was jumped on by the member for MacDonnell, who is not here this afternoon, for saying that the Northern Territory is inclined to do things very well when it comes to the management of parks and the involvement of the Aboriginal people in the management of parks.

The amendment, as proposed, repeals existing section 123 of the act and replaces it with the new section. The first part of it is just a housekeeping measure to tidy up the legislation with words that are more fitting for present day use and which are easier to understand. That has provoked no comment, so I assume that nobody has a problem with it. It allows the Administrator to make regulations establishing local management committees on parks, reserves, sanctuaries and protected areas, and to put in place operational arrangements.

The member for Arnhem made some comments in support of the bill and he mentioned the role that Aboriginal people play in the management of parks. He referred specifically to Gurig Park on Cobourg Peninsula. It was established under Northern Territory legislation, as the member for Koolpinyah said, and it has worked extremely well. The difficulty is that we could have a proliferation of legislation if we were to do this for every park and reserve in the Northern Territory. The later model that has been established at Kings

Canyon is seen to be more effective and easier to put in place. We will be able to do that for parks and reserves throughout the Territory by this very simple amendment to the act.

The management of Gurig Park and all our parks in the Northern Territory is a model for the states and the ANPWS. We have it right, and they have a long way to go. Membership can be drawn from local residents, not necessarily only Aboriginal people. In the case of Gurig Park, Aboriginal people make up a big part of the management committee because they are the people who are living there. In a number of other parks, there will probably be a balance of Aboriginal people, local residents from various walks of life, Conservation Commission people, perhaps even tour operators.

There is not a great deal more for me to say. The legislation does have support. It will do the job. It will do what no other state Conservation Commission or national parks body has been able to do, by involving the people who will use the parks and the people who live in or near the parks in the management of those parks. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr McCARTHY (by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be read a third time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, very briefly, I wish to add my commendation to this particular piece of legislation which, as the member for Arnhem stated, fits in perfectly with the philosophy of the Labor party and those of us on this side of the Assembly. We believe strongly that it is a model which can be used very effectively to create what we see as a unique model for national parks. It will allow Northern Territory parks to incorporate not just the physical components of the park, but also a social component where people can come and have a cultural experience, as well as enjoying the natural beauty of these places. We will be discussing this further as we develop some of the more intricate parts of our policy and as the negotiations we are currently having with various Aboriginal groups around the Northern Territory come closer to fruition. However, I would simply like to place on the record that what has been done fits in perfectly with our policy. I add my commendation of the work that has been done by the minister.

Motion agreed to; bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr COULTER (Deputy Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly do now adjourn.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, in this evening's adjournment debate, I would like to draw attention to a press release that I received today. Maybe even the member for Elsey might be interested. This particular press release was issued jointly yesterday by the Federal Aviation Minister, Peter Morris, and Senator Ted Robertson, and it relates to the Darwin Airport. This press release, issued only 1 day after the catastrophic federal budget which indicated that the Darwin terminal would not be proceeding, says that the federal government will proceed with detailed planning of a new passenger terminal at Darwin Airport. On the surface, this is news which would absolutely delight all Territorians. However, I soon realised that this is one of the most deliberate and outrageous political smokescreens that I have ever come across in my 3 years in political life.

This press release says that the federal government will proceed with detailed design of a new terminal building in the south-west corner of the existing airport site. That is a site that contains the existing 1940s ex-RAAF hangar building, which is the old, outdated and certainly obsolete, existing terminal. My concern initially relates to the fact that this is nothing but a political smokescreen to try to draw Territorians' attention away from the federal government's failure to provide Territorians and our overseas visitors with a satisfactory and suitable facility for air travel. They are talking about one of the plans put forward in the middle of last year which, as I understand it, was discarded by the review team as being excessive in expenditure, and containing many features which detracted from that site as an option.

The plans included construction phase 1 in front of the existing terminal building on the existing apron, with a second stage behind, knocking down the old building in between, and bridging the gap in a third stage. It was not only messy, but also much more costly than the logical, simple option recommended by its own review team: to proceed on the north side. Maybe it is now considering building on existing runway 1836, which I would suggest has more than 1 or 2 demerits against it. Or maybe it will move the RAAF base, including all those buildings and communication centres. The site that the federal government is now proposing would not only create massive disturbance to travellers and international passengers, but would involve a significant delay. The delay would be entailed by the need to negotiate with the Department of Defence to gain access to RAAF land. That was one of the main disadvantages that was found by the investigating committee and pointed out very clearly by the Northern Territory government in the early stages of last year.

Not only would such a proposal provide an unwarranted delay of some 2 or 3 years, but it would involve wastage of more taxpayers' money at a time when this national economy is already at a crippled stage, and we hear the federal government continually crying about wastage. This proposal would involve the additional expenditure of at least \$15m from the taxpayers' purse to provide a substandard facility, compared with proceeding with the logical option on the north side.

What will the government do with the water tower that is standing on the north side? What will it do with those steel framed buildings? What will it do with the sewerage installation and the electricity supply? There is already \$20m of works sitting on the north side which have been idle for almost 2 years. Maybe it intends to have some sort of roundy pole made out of the water tower to use for a childrens' playground or something. Maybe it intends to have a picnic area on the pad that cost \$500 000 worth of fill. The Public Works Committee would not endorse expenditure on the south side because it would represent an outrageous waste of taxpayers' money, by leaving abandoned on the north side those works already in place. These are worth at least \$15m when you count \$5m spent on design, almost \$10m worth of construction on site and millions of dollars worth of wastage through various committees running around the countryside. To build on the so-called preferred option mentioned in the press release, we would have to go through the processes of renegotiating access to more Defence land in the south-west corner. This is nothing more than an absolute sham.

This is the first time that the honourable Ted Robertson has been involved in the airport saga since March or April 1985. What did he say then? He said that the Northern Territory government did not know what it is talking about when we suggested that there was a possibility that the terminal project would

be given some sort of a chop. We did know what we were talking about then, as we know what we are talking about now. Senator Ted Robertson chose not to participate in any of the discussions in that whole 15 months of review. Now he comes out holding hands with the Minister for Aviation, Peter Morris, one of those little people who gets his knickers in a knot every time somebody dares to question his judgment. His judgment is such that he will be involved in wasting at least \$15m of taxpayers' money, plus what is on the ground on the other side. It would be so expensive to move all of those RAAF buildings and to provide additional aprons and taxiways that these people seem to be suggesting that what is there will be good enough. The existing facilities are so constrained that they constitute a danger for the travelling public.

The proposals involve reducing what is there now. That is incredibly insane and stupid to the highest degree. I would challenge Peter Morris, Ted Robertson, any members of the ALP and any of their technocrats to a public debate, in any forum and at any time, to convince Territorians that this is anything more than a shameful sham.

Mr Deputy Speaker, one day after the federal budget excluded that project, they issued this press release. Why? It is plain as day. Ted Robertson is against the ropes. He is so scared that he has run off to Peter Morris and asked for some cloud cover. He wants the pressure taken off him because Bob Collins has thrown his hat in the ring. Bob Collins would eat him. He is the most ineffective senator that anybody could have the misfortune to be represented by. Ted Robertson is really up against it.

This little play will be expensive for the taxpayer. Detailed designs for that project probably will cost another \$5m. It is not in the appropriations. Where will they find it? It will be a waste because the Public Works Committee will throw it out, and rightly so. It is absolute insanity.

Ted Robertson ought to resign right now. He ought to get out of the way of the progress of the Northern Territory. He ought to let Bob Collins slip into his shoes now. I would suggest that they are not shoes but bedside slippers because he is the only member in the whole of the Senate who can go to sleep in the corridors while they are ringing the bells. What sort of a performer is he?

We are not only going to get Ted Robertson by the short and curlies; we are going to get the Minister for Aviation, Peter Morris, as well. Guess what he has been doing? He has now announced that the south-west corner is the preferred option. What does that mean? I call on the Minister for Transport and Works, through the Freedom of Information Act, to give access to the reports that they have kept tucked in their little drawer. We will see government mismanagement at its best: an ad hoc decision made by a silly little man who pretends to be the custodian of the federal tax purse in aviation matters. I tell you what: this man is finished, because when we get hold of those files, we will see that this decision is not only a sham but also a waste of taxpayers' money. Morris should resign now as well to make it easier on himself.

I guess that people have heard enough about why we need a new Darwin terminal. It is important not only for the Northern Territory, but also for the national economy. We are no longer even asking them to build it for us, because we realise they are broke. All we want them to do is to move aside to allow private entrepreneurs, who want to invest their own funds in the project, to get on with the job. Do not fob us off for another 3 years with a nonsensical decision. Maybe they intend to extend the bitumen coating and

provide a tarpaulin or two to give us this magic new terminal in the south-west corner. What an insane proposition!

I am angry. I am outraged by this incredible press release from Ted Robertson and his partner in crime. Once we get hold of those files, it will be seen that they are partners in crime. What we need to do is to reveal not only to the public of the Northern Territory but to the whole Australian population that, in these times of desperate economic need, the federal government is prepared to spend another \$5m on erecting a smokescreen. I find it absolutely incredible. Ted Robertson, Peter Morris or any of their supporters, with any number of bureaucrats, would not have the gall nor the guts to debate this publicly with me or any other member of government who has been involved in this nonsense since it began 18 months ago, because they know where they stand.

Mr STEELE (Elsey): Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about some government actions which are detrimental to the electorate of Elsey. Over the years, we have seen quite a number of rationalisation changes taking place in government and obviously government has to explore its own workings from time to time to ensure that the tax dollars go in the best direction possible. Unfortunately, at times, some government decisions do affect communities. In particular, I speak tonight about the Daly Waters Police Station closure. There is no doubt that legitimate reasons have been advanced for such a closure such as the lack of work for the policeman and the fact that these efforts are diluted by having to service such a large area. I am told that the cost of a new police station would be in the order of \$2m. It would have to be relocated and provided with a water supply. Just to re-establish cells at a 1-man police station at Daly Waters would cost in the order of \$0.5m.

I know that the member for Victoria River has tried very hard to have the policeman retained at Daly Waters. Unfortunately, at present, the commissioner and the minister responsible for police are not able to accede to that electorate request. Quite a number of people will be very unhappy about this. I believe that petitions are circulating. I have had representations from my constituents in Mataranka who are quite alarmed that the services of the policeman located at Mataranka will be needed further down the Stuart Highway in the area now serviced by the policeman at Daly Waters. With the growing population of Mataranka, and a 20% per annum increase in tourism in the district, these are obviously concerns that the government must recognise.

What I am suggesting is that the government does not walk away from the fact that it has closed the police station down. It has made arrangements for the area to be serviced by Elliott and Mataranka. Let us not just walk away from the area like that. Let us think about the impact of the 60 000 tourists who will be coming up the south road. Let us think about the commercial and other traffic that goes up and down the Stuart Highway and the incidence of accidents, which no doubt will increase despite the efforts of road safety councils and government and all sorts of regulations. Let us not lose sight of the fact that there will be an increased pressure for police services in that area over the years. Let the government reconsider its position in the light of that information and make plans for a distinct and better service in the area.

I would suggest that better public relations should accompany a matter such as the closure of a police station. I can recall when I was party to decisions to close police stations at Larrimah and Anthony's Lagoon. The Chief Minister at the time said to the commissioner: 'Get on your bike and get down to that area. Call meetings of all the people and explain to them

the reasons for the closure and make sure you do it properly'. That was done. In this instance, the government is probably being a little unmindful of its PR requirements in respect of Daly Waters.

Let me turn to another matter of prime importance in the growing district of Elsey, and that is the need for a government centre in Katherine. At present, the government is expanding to cater for the growing needs of the development taking place. Stewart West, the federal minister, made an announcement recently that some \$84m of contracts had been let. It is very hard to estimate what the population of Katherine is but it is probably in excess of 6000 people at present even though only some 5000 are statistically recorded. We are looking at an expanded Lands Department, an expanded Housing Commission and an expanded Department of Community Development and there is need to centralise these services to the community in Katherine. There is probably a need to expand the library services currently housed in the city council building, and consideration may need to be given to the relocation of the regional health headquarters. In a preliminary examination being undertaken by the Chief Minister's Department in Katherine, sites are being sought. In any development, the private sector undoubtedly would be involved either to purchase government land and lease it back to government or to use private land for that purpose. I commend those thoughts to the Assembly.

Mr LANHUPUY (Arnhem): Mr Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes of the Assembly time to speak about the Arnhem Land Progress Association. During the last sittings, I had the opportunity of attending an official opening which took place at Galiwinku on Elcho Island. The community has a population of 1500 hundred people. The Arnhem Land Progress Association, which used to be a unit of the Uniting Church, operates a chain of retail stores throughout the Northern Territory. At the moment, it has stores on Goulburn Island, Croker Island, Galiwinku and Ramangining. I believe it is also expanding to areas in central Australia, Western Australia and across the border in Queensland.

The training, management and job opportunities that these create for Aboriginal people throughout the Northern Territory have reached a very high standard. I would like to commend the work that the Arnhem Land Progress Association is doing in training Aboriginal people for the management of their own retail stores throughout the Northern Territory. I believe it has recently taken over the operations of Hickman Distributors in Darwin. That is a great credit to the organisation itself.

As I said earlier, I had the opportunity of attending the official opening of a store by the member for the Northern Territory, Hon Paul Everingham. I was somewhat amazed that he was invited to open that store. I thought someone like Charlie Perkins should have been invited to open it. However, I suppose there are some church links with the government and I did not make any noise about it.

The actual opening went well, with traditional Aboriginal dancing. Some church people sang some songs to dedicate the church. The singing would have taken you back to early mission days. I was very surprised by that because you hear these days that a growing number of people are giving serious thought to going into the field of missionary work, with responsibilities that they take into their own hands when they go back to communities like Galiwinku.

I believe the building cost about \$264 000. Adjacent to the store itself is a training building with computers and audio visual equipment. Every 3 or 4 months the training centre takes in people from all the centres, as I

mentioned earlier in my speech. The Department of Community Services has been very helpful in this respect, in granting some funding to enable these people to come up to Elcho for training. That is a very pleasing effort.

I hope to go out to Lake Evella next week. The Arnhem Land Progress Association is also opening a store there, but I believe the cost will be around the \$80 000 mark. This store will be of considerable benefit to the 400 or 500 people there. Once again, I commend the operations of the Arnhem Land Progress Association.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, I arise in the adjournment debate tonight to talk about a matter which is of extreme moment, not just to the people of Tennant Creek but to anybody who lives along the road bridge between the Darwin wharf and Tennant Creek and along the Barkly Highway. Of course, I refer to the proposal for a waste disposal unit at Warrego.

The reports to date have centred around the idea of a high-temperature incinerator with a throughput of some 20 000 t per annum. I shall make a couple of points in relation to this before I continue further. The first is that Australia needs a high-temperature incinerator as a method of disposing of the PCBs that have accumulated around Australia to the extent of some 8500 t. Various reports have been developed on this. I have a pile of reports that is a couple of inches high. These all talk in terms of 1 waste disposal unit, having a capacity to be able to convert, not just the 1000 t a year being produced throughout Australia but, over a period of years, to reduce the backlog. We are talking about 1500 t to 2000 t per year. The Northern Territory government, of course, never one for shyness, has gone for a capacity to convert 20 000 t per annum, 10 times the size of what has been estimated as necessary to cater for Australia's needs.

I think that the location for this facility has to be worked out cooperatively between the various states and the Northern Territory. We cannot simply site a waste disposal unit like this in the desert and say: 'It is down in the desert and we all know that deserts are tough'. Deserts are not tough environments; deserts are very fragile environments. Often it is necessary to take more precautions when siting units like this in a desert area than would be in siting them in places similar to where they are sited in Europe. Even so, we have all heard some of the horrendous stories of accidents that have occurred in relation to waste disposal units in Europe. The ongoing arguments regarding some of those in England are quite terrible. That is the first point.

I am raising this now because the minister will probably be able to confirm for me later whether it is true or not. I have heard that the carriage of the current project has moved from the Department of Mines and Energy, at this stage, over to the Department of Business, Technology and Communications, and that is rather worrying. If that has happened already, it is rather worrying because the responsibility has not been given to the authority which should have had it from the beginning: the Conservation Commission.

It is very important that we get the focus right at the start. We must ensure that we select the correct location, and that it is the best in Australia. A great deal is involved in choosing the location, the rock types, and so on. Then, we must determine the infrastructure for transporting the waste from wherever it is in Australia to that point. I was particularly concerned at first that it might be the intention to move it by road. The prospect of 8000 t of waste coming from Mt Isa on the Barkly Highway was a

rather daunting prospect. That road is not of a standard where you would like to put anything over it, let alone containers full of waste products. The Minister for Mines and Energy has informed me now that he envisages that the waste would be transported by sea to Darwin and then by road transport down the highway.

Mr Speaker, you may have read the report by Mr Watters in which he was talking about storage of higher-level radioactive waste in the Northern Territory in an area similar to this one. In that report, he stated that he did not believe that the waste should be brought in through Darwin area because it is a region that is prone to cyclones. Nuclear wastes are stored in particular types of containers. I would be very interested to find out whether the storage containers that we are talking about here would be sufficiently strong to be able to be recovered if we were to have a catastrophe, such as the foundering of a ship off the shore of Darwin, or whether many thousands of tonnes of waste might be dumped into our very precious fisheries, or even more dangerously, in Darwin Harbour. An environmental impact study should be carried out on the area where it is intended to locate the incinerator.

In the time that is left to me, I would like to examine some of the stories that have been circulating and expose the fallacies that they contain. This unit may be necessary for ourselves here in Australia. We may need something with a capacity of about 2000 t per annum, but we are talking about a 20 000 t capacity with the idea of bringing the waste of Asia into the Northern Territory.

I have received a report from the minister which includes a proposal for a high-temperature, hazardous-waste incinerator in the Northern Territory. The report had various attachments. One of them is quite interesting because it is the estimate of stable chlorinated hydrocarbon wastes in Australia, ANB. Obviously, it is a direct lift from a table given in the Australian Environment Council's 'Discussion Paper on Disposal of Stable Chlorine and Related Chemical Wastes'. The figures do not match up when the 2 tables are compared. The minister's letter shows costs estimated at about \$1000 per tonne. The cost is estimated in the other report to be currently in the vicinity of some \$3500 to \$4000 per tonne. Obviously, an argument is being made that, if we can do it for \$1000 per tonne, instead of spending \$3500 to \$4000 per tonne to move our waste to Europe, that would be quite beneficial to our industry.

The discussion paper from the Australian Environment Council points out that some 50% of the cost of disposal of the waste represents the insurance which is required to cover the movement of the waste. As I explained in a press release, the actual movement of the waste is one of the most dangerous aspects of the total operation. If we have a total cost of \$2000 to \$4000, there would be \$1500 to \$2000 per tonne in insurance costs alone. But the government is saying that we can do it for \$1000 per tonne. Clearly, it is ridiculous to base calculations on that figure. If we start to kid ourselves about a project of this nature, and start seeing it as some glorious light on the horizon for Tennant Creek, we will possibly make the wrong decision when we get a bit further down the track.

The government is proposing that the waste of Asia be shipped into Darwin. Obviously, that would entail an amount of \$1500 to \$2000 per tonne for insurance, plus the additional cost for the actual incineration. If the incineration cost is \$1000 per tonne, and we add that to \$1500 or \$2000 for insurance, we are already up close to \$3000. We will then have the cost of

transport. At those costs, we will be in direct competition with the waste disposal units in Europe. There is a very real danger, something which really worries me, that in the member for Barkly's haste, we will end up having to negotiate costs by cutting the environmental safeguards which need apply not only to the facility itself, but to the various points along the highway and the transport of the substances by ship.

There are numerous questions still to be answered about the whole project, and it is something I will be speaking on further. However, the initial aspect that I would like to stress is simply the political one. It is quite surprising to me that, after the first few times this was discussed in Tennant Creek, there was very little reaction to it and people appeared to generally accept it. I was surprised, because often people react to such schemes by saying that they do not want them in their backyard. It appears that some of the alternative information was given to people in Tennant Creek only recently. The reaction was rather amazing. In the space of a few hours, I am told, 400 adult signatures had been collected, which represents a very sizeable proportion of the town's adult population.

The people of Tennant Creek deserve far more answers than they have been given to date. I would make a plea for the government to hold off looking at the technology while it makes the first and most basic decision as to whether Tennant Creek is the appropriate place for this project. I know that the government's good friends in Peko have a high-temperature smelter which I hear is rather a financial embarrassment to them. They would dearly love to have somebody take that off their hands. I do not want the government to be persuaded by its desire to look after its mates in Peko into making what could be an extremely foolish decision which we could regret for many years to come. It may be that 99.9% of the dangerous toxins are taken out during the process. That would leave something like 20 000 t per year which would still be going up the chimney. There is a fair bit of information starting to come to me now that the waste that goes up the chimney contains some of the most dangerous heavy metals. This would have a very deleterious effect on such a fragile environment.

As I have said, what we need to do first is to work out, in cooperation with the states, just where in Australia is the best place to do this. It is obvious from what is happening between Western Australia and New South Wales and the Northern Territory, that there is some competition as to who will get this waste disposal unit. I find that particularly worrying, and it is something which I hope the minister will address.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I had not intended to speak tonight, but I cannot let the roving comments from the member for Stuart go unanswered. As usual, he has taken a few facts, blended them with a fair amount of his own mental meanderings and imaginings, asked a question and then answered the question.

I would just like to give the member the background to the proposed incinerator so that he is aware of the facts instead of having to make them up as he goes along. I first became involved in this about 4 years ago, when I was Minister for Conservation and became involved in the discussion at the federal and state ministers' meeting on what measures Australia might take in respect of the disposal of its noxious wastes. At the time, the federal government had just paid \$6m for a visit of the Volcanus to Australia to take away those liquids that could be pumped aboard. The solids could not be taken away, and they are still stored around Australia in different places. We were also told at the meeting that the Volcanus was making its last trip and

Australia had to decide what it would do in future. There is a limit to the quantity of noxious waste that can be stored in various warehouses around Australia without becoming a threat to the community.

At this stage, Peko announced that it would be closing the smelter for commercial reasons. It was not able to compete with the price of oil on the international market in those days and it had decided to put the smelter into mothballs.

Mr Ede: It was the copper price.

Mr TUXWORTH: The member for Stuart says it was the copper price. Who could dispute that? The copper price and the price of oil were pretty closely allied to each other in those days.

Mr Ede: One was going up and the other was going down.

Mr TUXWORTH: One was going down as a result of the other going up.

It seemed at the time that Australia ought to look at its available options, and it became very clear that the populous states of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland had no interest at all, for political reasons, in having anything to do with any facility that disposed of waste. The ministers were quite open about it. No one in their respective parliaments wanted any of these facilities anywhere in their states. It seemed to me that it was worth seeing whether the Northern Territory ought to have a facility of that nature. At the same time, the Western Australians embarked on a similar survey of their own state.

The project started to gain momentum after I became Chief Minister. Officers of the government were asked to investigate what sort of volumes were being disposed of in Australia, what sort of volumes we should be disposing of that are currently being stored in warehouses, what noxious chemicals we are storing, and whether we could export those to other disposal plants and, if not, whether there was potential for us to treat them in the Northern Territory. Given that gas was becoming a possible fuel source for the incinerator, officers examined the various problems involved.

It is important to stress that no one is rushing into this. This exercise is now 18 months old and should continue for another 12 or 18 months before any conclusion is reached about whether it should proceed or not. A whole range of reasonable questions, and the member for Stuart asked some of them tonight, are being examined by a small task force within the government so that the answers can be made available, not only to this Assembly but to everybody who is interested. If it is deemed that the incinerator could be sited in Tennant Creek, that proposal ought to be put before the people of Tennant Creek in the most comprehensive terms with all the answers available to any questions that people want to ask.

Mr Ede: Will you undertake an environmental impact statement?

Mr TUXWORTH: I would think that it is absolutely essential that there be an environmental impact statement. I would think that there will be dozens of studies carried out on various aspects of the whole proposal.

When officers of the departments went looking for criteria to evaluate where a site of this nature might be established, they did not have any textbooks to fall back on, so they went to the American authorities and asked

them for the criteria that they used in establishing their incinerator and disposal unit. As the member for Stuart would know, the American authorities have much greater controls on these things than you would find anywhere. For example, the regulation of the uranium industry is so great that they have 12 inspectors for every guy in the mine.

With the criteria that was provided to us by the Americans, 6 sites were identified in the Northern Territory. As a result of the desk-top study by those officers, the optimum site identified for further consideration and investigation was Tennant Creek. Possibly, the other sites will be looked at again. It is a careful exercise of study, evaluation, education of the Territory community in general as well as Tennant Creek in particular, and making a decision on whether to go ahead.

Mr Ede: Do what you decided to do at first - help Peko.

Mr TUXWORTH: I would like to pick up the snide comment made by the member for Stuart about the government looking after its mates in Peko and how we intend to use their smelter to get them off the hook because they are financially embarrassed by it. I would be the first to admit that the Warrego smelter would have to be one of the great embarrassments of Australia's commercial history. It was a regrettable investment for the company, a brave one but a very unfortunate one. There is no commitment to the Warrego smelter site. It has been evaluated simply because it is already a smelter and has certain infrastructure available. An environmental impact statement has been done already on whether the smelter should have been put there in the first place. It is within a few kilometres of the gas pipeline and a major bore field. It is 30 miles west of Tennant Creek and generally isolated. When the Warrego mine goes, and if everything there is removed, there will be nothing west of the facility except for sand dunes, spinifex and ironwood.

Mr Ede: A few Aboriginal communities.

Mr TUXWORTH: They are not there; they are in town.

I would like to inform the member that a great deal of effort is being devoted to informing the community about what is going on. Officers from government come down on a regular basis and hold briefings for anybody who wants to attend them. Any questions that officers cannot answer on the spot are answered later. That is the rational way to deal with it.

I went to a meeting last week organised by the Greenpeace Movement of Germany. The townspeople were invited to hear all about the reasons why we should not have a smelter in Tennant Creek. Never being afraid of walking into the lion's den, I attended and found myself about 1 of the 6 pro-smelter people among the 50 people who were there. I sat quietly and listened to all the discussions for the evening.

We spent 2 hours of the 2½-hour meeting listening to how fish in German rivers swim upside down because somebody has put pollutant in the rivers, how leaves are falling off the trees in the Black Forest, how acid rain is forming over Europe and turning it into a wasteland, how people have moved out of Chernobyl Valley and how, if we did not have plastic bags in the supermarkets and stopped buying plastic products, we could stop all this petro-chemical nonsense because there would be no need for the industry and no need for disposal of its waste products.

I am pretty patient at the best of times and everybody is entitled to his point of view. Towards the end of the evening, out came the knife and it went into the incinerator project. There was no rational discussion. It was all 'what ifs'. What if the trucks turn over? What if the wind blows the wrong way? What if the containers break? What if there is a mistake?

Many of the questions raised were valid and ought be answered and will be answered. Let us put it on to a rational plane where we can all discuss it like sane human beings, evaluate it and, at the end of the day, decide whether we want to go ahead for good reasons or stay out of it because there are no good reasons. It is not simply a commercial exercise. We have to consider the reality that people pay today to dispose of these products. In other parts of the world, they pay cost plus, and that is what we would have to do. There is no point in our pretending that we are going to run an incinerator at half the cost of whatever anybody else is doing. It is a cost-plus operation. Your cost is the amount of money required to dispose of the product in the most sensible and environmentally acceptable way, and you add your profit on: no shortcuts, no expediency, no tricks, no sleight of hand.

People have asked what it costs to dispose of this material. The answer is that it depends on the material, where it is sourced, where the nearest incinerator is and how long it has been in store. That is how you work out what it costs. Those answers are different for everybody and every product. There are places in the world where these incinerators exist. I think it would be an ideal situation for people from the Northern Territory and my own home town, in particular, to go and see what other people do.

Mr Ede: Send them all on a world tour.

Mr TUXWORTH: That is what you do. When we built the pipeline and the gas power-station, we sent people overseas to see what other people were doing. This is a socially important and environmentally important project and we ought to get people to have a look at what is happening in other parts of the world. If we find that we do not like what we see, we can report back and take conscious decisions about it. But if we go and see that it can be done satisfactorily, and everybody is happy with it, well then let us report that back too.

I would say to the member for Stuart: let us forget the scare tactics; let us deal with the facts and the truth; let us leave all the slur and innuendo out of it and get on with the job. He might have a job, and all the people in his electorate might have jobs, and all the people in Alice Springs might have jobs, but there are many other people who do not have jobs and who would dearly love to work. If we can create an opportunity for them, let us do it.

Mr MCCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Stuart raised a number of issues this evening and I do not intend to go into them to any depth at all because the member for Barkly did it far better than I could. Suffice it to say that the Conservation Commission has been working for 18 months on studies on the environmental impact of any incinerator in any part of the Northern Territory, whether it be in Tennant Creek or elsewhere.

I would like to take a little bit of time tonight to pay tribute to a great lady who passed away last Saturday after a long illness. This lady was Mary Swan. Mary was one of those unique characters that the Territory seemed to attract in days gone by and perhaps are now something of a rarity. She was a strong-willed, no-nonsense woman with a heart of gold. But, before

honourable members start thinking that she was just another one of the ladies who went out with their husbands and opened up a new bit of country somewhere in the Territory and really got things going, that is not quite the story. She was a typical pioneer woman but, in other ways, she was far from typical. Mary Swan was unique.

She was born in Melbourne and with the advent of World War II she joined what was popularly known in those days as the Women's Land Army. These tough women replaced the menfolk from Australia's farms who had left for the war. Following the war, Mary headed north and began work at Garden Point, now known as Pularumpi, on Melville Island. She worked there as a lay missionary until 1967 when the mission was closed.

Garden Point was a place where part-Aboriginal children were taken and raised. When the mission closed down and the children left, there were still 9 young boys, the youngest of whom was 3, who had nowhere to go. Mary Swan sorted out that problem. She decided she would raise those 9 boys herself. She moved her new-found family into a house in Robinson Road in Millner. As you can imagine, rearing 9 boys alone would be a difficult task for anyone. Naturally, the job was not made any easier by the unique circumstances behind her family, but Mary threw herself into the task with a will.

Most of the boys were active in sport and Mary was no less active when it came to supporting her adopted sons in their various fields of endeavour. Those who knew Mary will remember the old Holden she used to carry the kids to various venues. When a sports group was flagging - say, hockey - and her kids wanted to play hockey, she would get into the club and inject new life into it. She did the same thing with boxing. She was that sort of woman.

Mary simply did not know how to do things by halves. This was nowhere better demonstrated than in her love for animals. She started by getting 9 cats, 1 for each of the 9 boys. She just did not go and get any old moggy; she had to have something a bit special. She started with a Siamese which, incidentally, was a gift from the former Lord Mayor and now Health Department Secretary, Dr Ella Stack. Eventually she branched into exotic breeds such as Burmese, Blue Manx and the like. As one lady who knew Mary well recalled this week, she was known for her personality.

Of course, the boys grew up and moved away to various parts of the Territory, but that was not the end of the foster mother role for Mary. Her next task was to take on a group of 6 children from Daly River when their father was killed and their mother was not able to look after them. She took on another group, first of all at Daly River and later in Darwin. Once again, Mary demonstrated the strength and kindness that had been the hallmark of her first job of raising a family.

Mary was held in very high regard by all people who knew her. In fact, it was at Mary's house in Darwin that the late Bishop O'Loughlin collapsed the night before his death. Despite his own ill-health, the bishop had decided to visit Mary who was ill. Mary's funeral will be held tomorrow at St Mary's Cathedral. It will be a final farewell to a person who gave so much to others and who will surely be long remembered for her work and her richness of spirit.

In the address-in-reply debate yesterday, the member for MacDonnell, who is not here this afternoon, commented on my statement that the Northern Territory is way ahead of the Commonwealth in providing a meaningful role for Aboriginal people in the management of Territory parks. He referred to my

factual statement as mindless Canberra-bashing. He went on to say that I should know how difficult it is to involve Aboriginal people in any sort of western economic activity.

I am very well aware of those difficulties. However, that is no reason to give mindless support to the ANPWS when it does not even try to hide the powers it gives to its director to the exclusion of Aboriginal interests and intents. Gurig National Park, Kings Canyon and the amendments to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act that we passed in the Assembly today, all bear witness to the desire of the Territory government to involve Aboriginal people in the decision-making and management of our very significant Territory parks estate.

The member went on to comment on my observation that he had gone against the legitimate interests of his constituents in supporting the removal of the Conservation Commission staff in favour of management by the ANPWS. I reiterate my claim in this regard. The Conservation Commission rangers at Uluru were totally opposed to secondment to the ANPWS, as is the case at Kakadu. He had full knowledge of this, as well as the fact that the Territory government was supporting its rangers and would not accede to the pressure from ANPWS.

The member for MacDonnell was party to the hoodwinking of the Aboriginal people of the area in that he and the ANPWS indicated to the Aboriginal people that the Territory government would bow to pressure and give into the ANPWS demands. History shows that the Territory government is made of sterner stuff. We support our rangers, and we are not prepared to place them in a situation of conflict of principle. I could also refer to the defection of some very significant Aboriginal people from the ANPWS to the Conservation Commission at Uluru. It is happening more and more often. They have recognised that they have been let down.

I refer now to a recent comment from my federal counterpart that the ANPWS will run Uluru Park more cheaply than the Conservation Commission - \$90 000 a year cheaper. That is with 5 people and after only 2 months of involvement in the management. I have received complaints from tourists that they were met at the ranger station by an untidy person in a dirty t-shirt and thongs who collected their money. No wonder it is doing it more cheaply; it is doing it on the cheap. For the sake of the Northern Territory tourist industry, I hope they get their act together and I give notice that I will be watching the management practices of the ANPWS at Uluru with interest, and will be scrutinising its expenditure whenever figures are released.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I rise tonight to advise the Assembly that the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Hon John Howard, tonight delivered his response to a federal government's budget. In that speech, which has only just concluded, he provided the Australian people with a realistic alternative. In his speech tonight, Mr Howard made the point that in his trip around Australia, through the cities and provincial areas, he had been told 3 things continuously: people believe that governments are taxing too much, spending too much and interfering too much. Those sentiments are fully supported by this government and are reflected in our actions and activities and in the way in which we are approaching our budgetary responsibilities. It is a shame that the current federal government could not look at least half the way down the road. Quite rightly, Mr Howard pointed out tonight that the current federal budget is one of too much tax and too few acts.

Tonight the federal opposition reiterated its undertaking to put a freeze on spending during its first term, cutting out the plethora of quangos, boards and commissions that consume money and interfere with the community. He stated that it will drop the fringe benefits tax, the capital gains tax, taxation on lump sum superannuation and the pensioner assets test. Those are just a few of the measures included in a wide-ranging package announcing what the coalition will do when it comes back into government after next election. There is no doubt that it will be in government after the next federal election.

However, Mr Speaker, I must make a point that can be drawn by implication from a statement of the federal Treasurer. That statement was that there are no expenditure commitments by the coalition government. I draw particular attention to the Alice Springs to Darwin railway line project. Our government recognises the need for restraint and hard decisions. Our government has been demonstrating its equal willingness to make those hard decisions. However, the coalition needs to recognise the importance of this railway for Australia. That railway is not merely a sop to the Northern Territory. It is not a drain on the Australian taxpayer. It is a capital project that will provide jobs, generate wealth, stimulate private enterprise and open up the vast and untapped wealth of northern Australia to create wealth for Australia through international trade.

We are promoting it as a project that will not be a drain on the Australian taxpayer because it is to be built and operated by private enterprise although, as I have said in this Assembly, it may require some initial government equity. This project deserves the support of the federal government and I will be taking the first opportunity that I have to be in Canberra to press the point with the federal coalition and demonstrate that this project is an economic, rational and visionary project for Australia, and one that the federal government should support.

I made the point before and I will make it again: the project will provide economic advantages for Australia. It is a major project for this nation. It is something that Territorians have paid for time and again. They have paid for this railway by having to endure 75 years of colonial rule by the Commonwealth government. Our citizens have paid that price and they have not yet received the other side of that contract that was negotiated in 1910. We do not intend to allow any federal government to forget that obligation. I will be going to Canberra and putting to the coalition the arguments for the railway line in order to ensure that it remains on the agenda for the new federal government which will come to power after the next election.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MESSAGES FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, the following messages have been received from His Honour the Administrator. I read message No 9:

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 provide superannuation benefits for persons employed by the Territory and by certain public authorities, to make provision for certain dependents of those persons and for related purposes.

Dated 21 August 1986
E.E. JOHNSTON
Administrator.

Message No 10 reads:

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 Northern Territory Legislative Assembly a bill to amend the Territory Insurance Office Act.

Dated 26 August 1986.
E.E. JOHNSTON
Administrator.

PETITIONS

Batchelor Tourist Development

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 17 citizens of the Northern Territory. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that Batchelor should become the centre of tourist development for the new conservation park at Stapleton Station. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that members of the Assembly of the Northern Territory take action to ensure that Batchelor becomes the centre of tourist development, and that the initial access road is constructed from Batchelor, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Daly Waters Police Station

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 1 citizen of the Northern Territory requesting that the police station at Daly Waters be retained. The petition bears the Clerk's certificate that it conforms with the requirements of standing orders. Mr Speaker, a further 232 people have signed sheets and letters forwarded with this petition but

these signatures were not written on sheets containing the prayer. They were unable to be counted as signatories to the petition. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, the humble petition of certain citizens of the Northern Territory respectfully sheweth that we think it is necessary to maintain a police station at Daly Waters due to the many road accidents which occur in our area, also owing to the fact that, with the opening of the Northern Territory South Australia sealed road in the near future, the tourists using our stretch of road will be greatly increased. We, as the people on the land and in the township, will be deprived of a vital link for our protection and safety. The stating of the poor condition and heavy maintenance to the police station seems ludicrous when it was not more than 12 months ago that it was painted and renovated. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that the police station remains open and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

MESSAGE FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received message No 8 from His Honour the Administrator:

I, Eric Eugene Johnston, the Administrator of the Northern Territory of Australia, pursuant to section 11 of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978 of the Commonwealth, recommend to the Legislative Assembly a bill for an act to appropriate certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund for the service of the year ending 30 June 1987.

Dated 18 August 1986.
E.E. JOHNSTON
Administrator.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1986-87 (Serial 218)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

It gives me great pleasure to present the Territory's ninth budget. Like its 8 predecessors, this is a balanced budget. It totals \$1269m. Compared with the 1985-86 budget, this is a reduction of 3% in real terms. The development of the 1986-87 budget has been a difficult process. There is no doubt that this has been the most difficult time the Territory has faced since self-government.

The reasons for the difficulties are largely external to this government. The federal Treasurer admitted in his budget speech last Tuesday that the Australian economy faces grave difficulties. The terms of trade have moved dramatically against Australia, with a 10% decline in 1985-86. The Commonwealth budget predicted a further worsening in terms of trade during 1986-87. World economic recovery has not been as strong as expected. There

has been little favourable impact on the demand for Australian raw materials, due at least in part to the rapid development of alternative sources of supply. Australian agricultural exports are in serious difficulty, with both the European Economic Community and the United States subsidising exports in Australia's traditional markets. Gross domestic product, the measure of Australia's production, showed a slowing of growth to 3.7% in 1985-86. Coupled with the heavily increased foreign borrowings associated with the resource boom and infrastructure programs of the early 1980s, this has led to large deficits on the current account and the alarming and unprecedented collapse of the dollar.

In response, monetary and fiscal policies have been tight and high interest rates have discouraged borrowings for investment. To put it bluntly, Australia has been brought to the brink of recession. In the year ahead, the gross domestic product is expected to grow by 2.5% only in real terms and unemployment growth is expected to be 1.75%, meaning unemployment must decrease this year.

The Northern Territory economy has been affected in different and, to some extent, offsetting ways by the economic downturn. Building commencements are down, particularly in housing. World commodity prices have had a dampening effect on the mining industry, although activity in gold and gas remains strong. The fall in the Australian dollar has also had an effect, and the Northern Territory has been able to benefit from increased tourist numbers. Completion of major construction projects, such as the international hotels, the gas pipeline and the Channel Island Power-station, will remove much valuable stimulus from the Territory economy in 1986-87, although activity in Katherine and Alice Springs remains high.

The Territory budget has been framed to keep private sector activity and employment as vigorous as possible despite the limited resources available to the government. I cannot promise an economic miracle in the Territory in the face of the overall world and Australian economic situation, but the government has maximised the use of its resources to stimulate activity in the private sector. This will be a responsible Territory budget which will enhance the Territory's image as a place to invest and do business.

Members would be aware that, at the June Premiers Conference, the Chief Minister and I accepted the national strategy of restraint as an essential ingredient in the recipe to overcome the nation's problems. Total payments for the states rose by 5% in monetary terms. The Territory received only a 3% increase in monetary terms, which was a 5% reduction in real terms. To make things worse, the Territory receives a higher proportion of its funds from the Commonwealth than the states and is less able to take effective counter action using revenue under its own control. The bottom line is that Commonwealth payments to the Territory, which will account for 77% of the consolidated funds received in 1986-87, increased by 3% only. In other words, the Territory received about \$50m less than would have been required to maintain the 1985-86 status quo. By far the most significant item has been the \$40m reduction in general purpose capital payments to the Territory. This disappointing result has occurred at a time when the Northern Territory's population is growing at nearly 3 times the national average. On top of the reduction in Commonwealth payments, provision has been made for major new expenditure in the form of the fringe benefits tax. The fiscal reality is that, if programs are not to be reduced, either additional revenue has to be raised or economies have to be achieved.

The Territory budget has been prepared under conditions of financial stringency in a state of uncertainty. This is because of the Commonwealth's reference to the Grants Commission concerning alleged overfunding of the Territory in 1983-84 and 1984-85. This reference is unprecedented in relations between the Commonwealth and the states or the Northern Territory. It is retrospective and seeks to suggest that the Territory could re-create money already received and spent in good faith. It is outrageous. The commission has received submissions and held hearings, and the decision is awaited. In the federal budget papers, 2 full pages were devoted to this review. The Commonwealth argument has twisted the very provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding, which no Commonwealth minister has ever suggested has been or will be abrogated. Because of the uncertainty this review has cast over the budget, the Treasury has prepared an analysis of the issue for the information of members and the public at large. This will be tabled during the course of these sittings.

Despite the external constraints placed upon us, this is not a horror budget. We have managed to limit the imposition of additional charges, and rearrange our resources in such a way that standards are maintained in the essential areas, such as education and health. Overall, the aim has been to maintain high standards of service to Territory residents. In fact, in some important areas, real progress has been made in raising standards. The budget strategy has been directed also at ensuring the Territory economy continues to expand by creating an environment within which the private sector can grow. This process will help promote jobs, and improve standards of living for all Territorians in the future. To achieve the 2 basic goals of boosting growth in the private sector and maintaining services, this government made some important broad decisions as soon as the budget parameters became clear. First, no deficit would be allowed. Secondly, no new or additional taxes would be imposed to raise revenue. Thirdly, the government would maintain impetus in the capital works program. Fourthly, there would be a thorough review of government activity to identify where savings could be made with the least disruption to services. This budget represents the result of these uncompromising decisions.

As a first decision, we rejected the temptation to take the soft option and go into deficit budgeting for the first time in the Territory's history. In practical terms, a deficit involves spending more than you receive. However, if we do not live within the capacity available to us in any one year, the problem is carried over to the following year. Ultimately, it is far better to take the hard decisions in the year in which cuts appear rather than live in the hope that the following year will be a bonanza. Once this decision was taken, the options for framing the budget became much clearer.

The second decision was not to increase taxes. This was not taken lightly as the bids for resources outstripped the financial capacity available to us. Again, extra taxes would have provided the easy way out. We are confident that the decision not to increase taxes will have a strong and positive impact on expectations and attitudes in the private sector and act as a real stimulus to the economy.

The third decision was to maintain capital works expenditure, the cornerstone of the budget. Despite the \$40m reduction in general purpose capital funds at the 1986 Premiers Conference, the Territory has maintained its unswerving commitment to essential capital works. New projects total \$190m. Cash to be spent in the capital works program will increase by 18%, from \$268m in 1985-86 to \$317m in 1986-87. The Northern Territory Electricity Commission's 2 major projects, at Channel Island and Katherine, make up a

significant part of this, but even excluding these, the cash figure is \$216m compared to \$199m in 1985-86. In other words, the Territory has allocated its resources in such a way that the real value of capital works expenditure has been maintained.

Mr Speaker, the fourth decision this government took, once the budget parameters became clear, was to review government activities comprehensively. I wish to spend some time on these changes as they represent one of the significant elements of this budget. Many administrative changes have already been decided and implemented, and others will occur over the course of the year as details are finalised.

Obviously, staffing in the public sector will be affected by this review. Aggregate staff numbers will decline by at least 400 over the course of 1986-87, as signalled previously by the Chief Minister. This initiative will save \$5m in 1986-87 and \$10m in a full year. As a general rule, standards of service should not be significantly impacted as reductions have been planned to obtain the maximum economies. I hasten to add that no staff will be sacked as a result of these decisions. At the same time, it has to be understood that, like all other governments, the Territory is facing tough times which require flexibility in approach and a willingness to change.

As announced by the Chief Minister in July, the various activities of the Northern Territory Development Corporation are being transferred to other organisations that were performing parallel functions. A single Trade and Marketing Service Bureau has been established as a centre of expertise for all relevant industry areas of government and to coordinate the marketing thrust of the Northern Territory.

There is no longer scope for budget funds to be used to underwrite private developments, other than through the provision of government services and infrastructure. Financial assistance to industry will be sought from the private financial markets. I am confident these changes will encourage worthwhile industrial growth and make best use of the limited resources available. Savings to government will be \$1.8m.

As part of the comprehensive review of administrative functions, water, sewerage and electricity utilities will be combined to achieve economies of scale in billing and other functions. This will achieve a more commercial environment, and savings to government through this exercise will exceed \$1m. The threshold for referring matters to the General Tender Board has been raised from \$10 000 to \$25 000, and this will save double handling by departments and the board of a substantial number of small tenders. This will save \$100 000.

The Gaming and Drug Squads have been combined to produce savings of \$90 000. A review of Department of Mines and Energy functions, particularly in the area of deregulation, has identified 16 positions which will be abolished. This, together with reductions in non-salary costs, will result in savings of \$1.4m.

Consistent with the government's policy of withdrawal from direct involvement in underwriting private sector-type activities, the government is assisting the Tiwi people to find financial support for the continued operation of the Melville Island forestry project. The government's direct involvement in funding of Melville Island forestry will cease from the end of this financial year. Savings of \$500 000 are anticipated in a full year.

Substantial changes are being made in some areas affecting costs other than wages. For example, the government vehicle fleet will be reduced by 6%, saving \$2m; the \$2-for-\$1 subsidy scheme for the purchase of school computer equipment has been abolished, saving \$240 000; the \$375 grant for tertiary students has been removed, saving \$200 000 in 1986-87 and \$435 000 in a full year; Tourist Commission staff rationalisation will save \$200 000; and, economy air fares for all public servants will be introduced for intra-Territory trips saving up to \$300 000 in a full year. Most departments and authorities have also reduced overall non-salary costs, and will be required to monitor priorities carefully during the course of the year. These, and other non-salary cost reductions, will save more than \$15m.

Mr Speaker, I have demonstrated that the government has been prepared to bite the bullet and real cuts have been achieved within government administration.

Local government is another area where significant reductions have been made as part of this review, and those warrant special mention. Following the Commonwealth's Self Inquiry into local government financing, arrangements were put in place to have the Territory treated like a state. The Territory now receives the Commonwealth grant for local government in respect of all citizens, and a Northern Territory Local Government Grants Commission has been created to distribute these funds in a fair and equitable manner to local government bodies. I should add that this increase in specific purpose payments from the Commonwealth for local government was offset by a reduction in general purpose funds so that there has been no net financial gain to the Territory.

The government has decided that local government in the Northern Territory must share the economic constraints that have been imposed on the Northern Territory government, and take a cut in funds. The government took this decision in the light of stringent budget conditions, and the fact that the Territory is the only state-like jurisdiction to provide general top-up assistance to councils. Furthermore, municipal councils have far greater control over the bulk of their revenue resources than does the government and, therefore, can compensate for the reduced budget allocation by increased rates and charges, if they feel expenditure cannot be curtailed. However, I would expect that a responsible first priority of the councils would be to follow the same course as the Territory, state and federal governments and actively pursue ways to reduce expenditure. We have reduced funding by \$700 000, compared to that allocated for 1985-86. While the extent to which the burden will fall on each council can only be decided in the light of the Local Government Grants Commission's findings, it is expected that a substantial part of the reduction will fall on the major urban centres.

The decisions not to have a deficit, not to raise new taxes, to maintain capital works, and to generate savings from a review of government activities were the building blocks from which the budget was constructed. I hope I have made it clear that many of these decisions, particularly those involving reductions, were difficult to reach and forced upon us by circumstances largely beyond our control.

Mr Speaker, I will now outline some of the progressive initiatives contained in the budget. In all, these initiatives are in keeping with the government's budgetary thrust to increase Territory development, but within the resources available to us: \$5.6m will be spent on capital works in the Trade Development Zone this year; \$3.4m for police training facilities at Berrimah; \$4.1m for a new central fire station in Darwin; \$13.5m for

construction of the Katherine East High School; \$36m for new road projects, including 82 km of national highway, 20 km of arterial roads and 367 km of local roads - in all, \$56m will be spent on improving the Territory's roads; \$5m for the completion of the safe anchorage in Frances Bay; \$0.5m for a number of projects within the fishing industry; \$1.2m to upgrade psychiatric services in the Territory; \$12m for the construction and operation of the Northern Territory University College which opens in 1987; \$27m for the construction of the new Katherine power-station; and \$0.8m towards construction of a Palmerston recreation complex, including a public swimming pool. I now turn to the initiatives in further detail.

\$5.6m will be spent on capital works in the Trade Development Zone this year, allowing the completion of 4 factories and related facilities. It is anticipated that some factories based in the zone will be sold during the financial year so that this private-sector-type activity will have less impact on the budget. By the end of 1986-87, we expect the Trade Development Zone to be in full swing with manufacturers who otherwise would not have been able to set up in Australia contributing to the Territory's wealth and prosperity. Tenders have already closed for operation of a bonded warehouse, a key feature of the zone. The operator will be required to provide a range of services, including freight forwarding, customs agent services, tariff advice and a variety of bonded warehouse functions. This year will see heavy promotion of the zone in Japan, South-east Asia and Australia. The main thrust of the zone's promotion will be Darwin's proximity to world-wide markets and the absence of tariff barriers.

Turning to public works, a number of important new projects will be committed this year. I have mentioned some of these already and further examples include: \$1.1m for Berry Springs school; a total of \$0.5m for boat ramps at the Adelaide River, Bynoe Harbour and the Mary River; \$0.5m for Ludmilla Special School; \$0.8m for a library resource and staff centre at Milingimbi; and \$1m for upgrading Gapuwiyak school. The government will support local contractors with an \$18m minor new works program. These are projects which will cost less than \$40 000.

Repairs and maintenance is another area of special note in 1986-87. It is an area that tends to receive low priority when available resources are being allocated because it is not glamorous. There is often the feeling that another year may be squeezed out of a building, plant or equipment before they fail. But sensible repairs and maintenance save money, and have the added advantage of being labour intensive at a time when job-creation is important. Accordingly, the government has increased its appropriation for departmental repairs and maintenance by \$6.2m over 1985-86, a 20% increase.

The budget reaffirms the government's commitment to a major program to develop the full potential of the Territory's fishing industry. \$240 000 has been allocated to develop new markets and products. The Minister for Ports and Fisheries will detail the elements of this important initiative at a later stage. \$250 000 has been allocated to develop aquaculture, an exciting new industry which is attracting world-wide interest, and an additional \$40 000 will be provided to monitor the Mary River as part of the Barramundi Management Plan. The Frances Bay mooring basin is scheduled for completion by the end of the 1986 prawn season at a total cost of \$6.5m and additional funds have been earmarked for the promotion and marketing of its use by the fishing industry. The response from the fishing and service industries has been most favourable. Ship repair and marine services will benefit from this development.

Turning to tourism, a total of \$12m, an increase of \$1.1m, will be spent on Tourist Commission activities this year. We have set aside \$1.4m for a national advertising campaign to achieve an even higher profile in key national and international tourism markets. Elements of this proposed marketing campaign include a joint promotion with the South Australian Department of Tourism aimed at the motoring market, associated with the completion of the sealing of the Stuart Highway in March next year, a promotion campaign to follow up the international success of the film 'Crocodile Dundee' and Aboriginal involvement within the tourist industry. As well, the Territory government is cooperating with one of Australia's leading tourist figures, Bill King, to encourage the independent traveller to the Territory.

Following the unfortunate abrogation by the Commonwealth of the agency agreement for the management of Uluru National Park, Conservation Commission staff have been redeployed to expand tourist facilities in the Petermann district. These facilities are broadening the range of tourist attractions in and around Yulara, which should increase the length of stay of tourists. This process involves cooperation with the local Aboriginal people in conservation and tourism projects, leading to job-creation and a more secure future for those communities.

There are continuing significant programs in housing where, despite a lull in demand, housing commencements per capita remain high compared to the rest of Australia. I am also pleased to say that housing for people in rural and remote areas will receive a substantial increase. A total of \$56.6m will be spent building houses this year, which will be only marginally less than was spent in 1985-86. The program provides for work to begin on 633 new dwellings this year. The budget also includes \$20m for the Territory's generous Home Purchase Assistance Scheme.

I turn to police, fire and emergency services. Police funding has been increased by \$3.4m to a total of \$46.3m. One major new project is the integration of the Northern Territory into a national fingerprint computer system. This will link our police force with technology that is recognised as a major breakthrough in crime detection. New equipment will be acquired for the enlarged training facilities now under construction at Berrimah for all 3 services. The successful school-based community policing program will be expanded by another 10 constables so that one can be placed in every Territory high school by 1988. Funds have been provided for the reintroduction of the police cadet scheme and the Police and Citizens Youth Club will be relocated to Berrimah to improve access for Darwin's youth. A new central fire station for Darwin will be built at Stuart Park at a cost of \$4.1m. This will replace the Daly Street fire station and will be ideally located to service the central city area and Darwin's industrial environs.

Mr Speaker, in spite of the difficult times, the government has decided that leisure activities and the arts must continue to be given due emphasis. A number of new proposals are provided for in this budget and overall funding will total \$4.8m. A youth centre will be opened in Katherine. Funding will be provided to assist with the establishment of a Youth Worker Training Resource Centre in Darwin, and up to \$20 000 will be provided on a \$1-for-\$1 basis for the Darwin City Council to improve community youth services.

\$250 000 is allocated for the establishment of the Northern Territory Theatre Company, to provide a consistent level of professional theatre in the Territory and to improve the quality and quantity of theatrical performances in Darwin, Alice Springs and other Territory centres.

The Tracy Village Sports and Social Club will receive \$150 000 to develop ovals and open space areas. An indoor dressage arena will be completed at Palmerston with a \$50 000 grant to the Equestrian Federation. In Tennant Creek, council tennis courts will be upgraded and 25 horse stables erected for the Tennant Creek Saddle Horse Club. \$445 000 is provided for the completion of the Alice Springs shooting complex in time for the Masters Games. \$12 000 has been provided to the Darwin City Council to assist in the provision of a stinger net at Nightcliff Beach. As well, Department of Lands appropriations include \$800 000 towards the construction of the Palmerston public pool as part of a recreation complex, and construction of this is due to be completed by 31 August 1987.

I turn to primary production. The B-TEC program is the largest item with an allocation of \$16.6m. The operation in north-west Arnhem Land will involve destocking the area by turning off 10 000 to 12 000 head per year over the next 3 to 4 years to overcome the high disease prevalence.

As with other industry departments, a shift in emphasis in primary production will see increased attention focused on the expansion and diversification of our primary industry base. This year, the government will concentrate on important research and development projects. These include field cropping, horticulture and small animal farming as well as research into the production of dates and table grape in central Australia.

Top End environmental research has been centred at the Coastal Plains Research Station, allowing rationalisation of the Berrimah Research Farm and more appropriate use of the land stock for industrial purposes.

Of major interest in health initiatives will be an upgrading of the psychiatric services in the Territory. This budget provides \$1.2m to establish a community-based service located at Tamarind Centre in Darwin in addition to the existing acute-care service, and to improve psychiatric facilities in the Alice Springs Hospital.

Other items of interest include design work for laboratories for the Menzies School of Health Research and the Department of Health on the Royal Darwin Hospital site, a renal dialysis unit for the Community Health Centre at Alice Springs, a new aerial larviciding program at Leanyer Swamp to control salt-marsh mosquitoes, matching funding with the Commonwealth for the National Diseases Control Program, and increased funding for projects under the Home and Community Care Program.

The Department of Education's expenditures are up 6.6% to \$156m. A projected enrolment of \$29 000 students in 1987, an increase of 3% over 1986, has created the need for additional staff at a cost of \$2.1m. Other programs include a \$250 000 grant to the Casuarina School Council to fit out the secondary college library; 49 new teaching scholarships, which will take the full-year cost for all our scholarships to \$580 000; 3 post-graduate scholarships to the University College; \$20 000 to the Marrara Christian School to provide additional assistance to Downs Syndrome students, and interest subsidies totalling \$88 000 for the Alice Springs Lutheran Primary, Sanderson Catholic High, and St Joseph's Primary School at Katherine.

In tertiary education, the significant event this year will be the opening of the University College, for which a total of \$12m has been allocated. This allows \$6m for the capital works to establish the university, and \$6m for its operation in the 1987 academic year. The opening of the University College represents one of the true milestones in the Territory's development. It has

had to proceed at the expense of other programs, but this government has concluded that the benefit is well worth the sacrifice. In all other parts of Australia, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission accepts responsibility for university funding. We continue to argue our just case for the Territory University College. I hope that this clear demonstration of the importance we place on the provision of full and proper tertiary education is recognised and rewarded with a substantial injection of CTEC funds.

In the nation's current economic climate, the Territory's mining industry can provide a pathway for economic growth. To this end, Mr Speaker, the Department of Mines and Energy will place fresh emphasis this year on trade promotion and marketing of the Territory's vast resources. This government will continue its unrelenting pressure on the Commonwealth to reverse the illogical policies that prevent the development of major Territory uranium mines.

The Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline will come on stream during 1986-87. The pipeline has been built primarily to enable NTEC to generate electricity, using gas at Channel Island, Katherine and Tennant Creek. The spin-off benefits to the Territory are already emerging. The Australian Gaslight Company, one of the pipeline project partners, has announced plans to construct a gas separation plant in Darwin. This exciting private venture will open up new opportunities in the area of diesel fuel displacement. We expect that construction of the \$15m plant will start this year. NT Gas will open its head office and pipeline control centre at Palmerston, with an area office in Alice Springs and maintenance bases in both Tennant Creek and Katherine.

The liquid natural gas market, particularly in relation to the Bonaparte Gulf project, looks to have exciting prospects for the Territory. Next month, I will be leading a trade mission to look at market openings in Japan and Korea. We will be encouraging further exploration of the highly prospective Alligators Rivers region and of promising areas around the current North Flinders lease of the Granites in the Tanami Desert. These regions offer much potential to the national and Territory economies.

I have mentioned a significant increase in the cash that NTEC will spend this year and the importance of the Amadeus Basin to Darwin gas pipeline. This year, the Territory's natural resources will actually save \$45m per year in overseas fuel payments and foreign exchange. It also means there is now a realistic possibility that, in the not-too-distant future, electricity will be generated in the Northern Territory at a cost comparable to that for power in the rest of Australia.

The Tindal defence base developments are proceeding at a rapid pace and Katherine is expecting prosperous growth which will continue for some years. To provide the necessary electricity generation capacity, \$27m will be provided for a new gas-fired power-station.

NTEC's operating position is not reflected in the Consolidated Fund and, therefore, does not affect the budget outcome. However, it is important to inform honourable members about NTEC's financial position in the light of last week's federal budget. I should add that that financial position improved in 1985-86. Strong demand growth continued despite the higher tariffs forced on us, oil prices fell significantly and major operating economies were achieved. Until last Tuesday, NTEC would have looked forward to an essentially break-even situation this year after taking into account the expected \$43m Commonwealth operating subsidy. Obviously, the decision by the Commonwealth

to cut the subsidy by \$21m has thwarted that hope. Despite the tariff increases I was forced to announce last week, NTEC will still have a \$16.7m operating deficit.

It is clear from the Prime Minister's letter announcing the subsidy cut that the Commonwealth's actions have been based on unrealistic calculations. Most of the oil price savings referred to by the Commonwealth in justification of its actions had already been taken into account when the Territory predicted a break-even position for NTEC at the June Premiers Conference. I wish to state quite emphatically that the Territory does not seek to secure any unreasonable gains as a result of the NTEC subsidy. The gas pipeline project will reduce the long-term requirement for the subsidy and I am delighted that the Territory will be able to save the nation money in this way. However, it must be realised that, currently, electricity is generated at a severe cost penalty. That is why there is a subsidy. If that subsidy is reduced too rapidly, before the benefits of gas are fully realised, the only realistic option open to the government is to raise tariffs or borrow to fund the deficit, and repay the debt at some point in the future. Already the Territory has the highest-priced electricity in Australia. Use of loans to fund the deficit means an increased interest bill, further delaying the time when the operating deficit can be eliminated. I sincerely hope we can have constructive and fruitful discussions with the Commonwealth on this important issue which affects every Territorian. I will be reporting to the Assembly on the outcome of these negotiations.

This year's budget includes a \$15m provision for employer contributions to superannuation. This amount represents a prudent provision for part of the accruing liability for superannuation and is a consequence of the Commonwealth's decision that the Territory is to be responsible for all superannuation payments arising from service after July 1984. The Territory's superannuation liabilities will grow rapidly from now on and this provision will ensure that this cost is recognised and funded to the maximum possible extent. This will avoid the problems the Commonwealth and some of the states have experienced in meeting their superannuation liabilities. Because the Territory does not yet have any capacity for superannuation identified by the Commonwealth Grants Commission, this funding has been earmarked for the purchase of government financial assets with no net effect on the budget this year.

The appropriation to the Public Service Commissioner includes \$400 000 for the operation of the Work Health Authority. These funds have been provided from reallocations within government. New legislation has been introduced following the Doody Inquiry into Workers' Compensation and will be the subject of further debate during these sittings.

The Treasurer's advance stands at \$35.4m. Funds have been set aside for specific items of expenditure where the amount of the commitment has yet to be determined. Some examples include provisions for drought relief, finalisation of the Palmerston and Litchfield Shire local government packages, modest provision for inflation, and provision for the fringe benefits tax.

I have already mentioned the overall revenue position and the relatively low growth in Commonwealth receipts. In the matter of revenue raised within the Territory, it is clear that the economic downturn will have some impact on our tax collections. Despite this, there is expected to be significant growth in collections. This will not result from higher tax rates, which would be an impediment to private sector growth, but from economic growth which the Territory can still achieve in the face of a national recession. Territory

taxation is expected to grow by 10% over 1985-86 collections, to \$87.2m. This projected growth in tax receipts was insufficient by itself to achieve a balanced budget. After careful appraisal of available options, it was considered that some charges were below the levels imposed in the states, where costs of providing services are continuing to rise. Consistent with our policy to maintain a reasonable revenue-raising effort, charges have been increased. As honourable members are aware, those increases were announced previously. The most important increases are in water, sewerage, and motor vehicle charges, which between them will produce an additional \$12m in revenue in 1986-87. I repeat that these charges have already been announced and this budget makes no additional increase in them. Overall, Territory receipts are projected to increase to \$263m. This represents a 3% increase in real terms on the 1985-86 figures.

Mr Speaker, honourable members should be in no doubt that 1986-87 will be a testing year for all Australians. While the Commonwealth remains our major revenue source, it is unavoidable that our public sector will be affected by national economic problems. The Northern Territory is fortunate in not having the burden of those inefficient industries that plague other parts of Australia and in being, at least partly, isolated from the downturn in economic conditions. We have responded to these economic circumstances by producing a budget of positive outlook based on increased efficiency and encouragement to those who want to develop the Territory. We shall need to watch the direction of the economy carefully during the year and we may need to adjust our course if the economy does not perform to expectations.

Mr Speaker, I am proud to deliver this responsible and optimistic document as my first budget and I believe it merits the full support of this Assembly.

Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER
Report on Youth Needs in Palmerston

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I table a report entitled 'Youth Needs in Palmerston March 1986' commissioned by the Northern Territory Department of Community Development. I move that the Assembly take note of the paper.

Debate adjourned.

WORK HEALTH BILL
(Serial 203)

Continued from 19 June 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the question of workers' compensation in the Northern Territory is becoming a recurrent nightmare for me. I have spent a considerable proportion of my time over the last 12 to 15 months looking at the question of workers' compensation and the development of an appropriate system for the Northern Territory. Quite clearly, this is a major piece of legislation and it deserves to be approached very thoroughly with adequate time given for all those who are interested in making a contribution. We accept that we need to get it as right as possible in order to minimise the necessity for further changes to it once it is in place. Last year, I was talking to Dr Peter Sheehan in Victoria about workers'

compensation. He said that, when the Victorian government introduced its new workers' compensation system, the opposition had been predicting that the government would have to move over 300 amendments to correct the bill. The Treasurer of Victoria gave firm instructions to his departmental officers that, on no account, were there to be more than 299 amendments. In fact, I think the government managed to introduce about 290 amendments.

I am not suggesting that this government should attempt to beat that record but, in our view, there are aspects of this legislation that should be changed. The philosophy of the Work Health Bill is set out in the long title and I think it is worth while to read it into the Hansard:

To promote occupational health and safety in the Territory, to prevent industrial injuries and diseases, to promote the rehabilitation and maximum recovery from incapacity of injured workers, to provide financial compensation to workers incapacitated from industrial injuries or diseases and to the dependants of workers who die as a result of such injuries or diseases.

Mr Speaker, we agree that the bill attempts to do this. How successfully it does it is a matter of some dispute and we will be outlining those matters. When introducing the legislation, the minister said that the Work Health Authority, which will have responsibility for administering work health in the Northern Territory, will be consultative, advisory and conciliatory in style. I think that some of the problems that we see in the bill result from that set of words: 'consultative, advisory and conciliatory'.

A number of questions arise from them. Whom will it consult? Whom will it advise? Why should it be a conciliatory body rather than an arbitrating body, if this role is necessary? In terms of consultation, it is our view that the balance is all wrong. There is not enough provision for consultation with workers and their representatives and, in fact, the consultation is almost a one-way process between the Work Health Authority and employers. I will come to the advisory and conciliatory aspects in due course.

We all know that the developing of work health legislation is a balancing act. The legitimate interests and needs of employers and employees must be balanced. Under the system being proposed by the government, the interests of the insurers must be taken into account and, of course, the interests of government itself. One of the most basic reasons for the introduction of this new piece of legislation was concern at government and employer level that the existing bill was becoming too expensive and making it difficult for employers to take on more staff. The whole question of workers' compensation needed to be looked at, and any venture in that sphere is a balancing act.

In our view, the government has not got the balance right. We say that because we think benefit levels are too low in some cases, and that insufficient powers have been given to employees and their representatives to effect safe working conditions in some areas. Insufficient powers have been given to the Work Health Authority to implement its responsibilities, and the provisions relating to occupational health and safety are not strong enough. Those are the essential problems we have with the legislation, and I will return to them in more detail.

We must say that there are a number of good things in the bill. It does make some attempt to cover existing gaps in occupational health and safety. It seeks to do this through a consultative and advisory role, although this is not the right approach. It provides for medical and rehabilitation expenses

on an 'as necessary and reasonable' basis and I think that that is terrific. It is time that we provided a system whereby a person, who has suffered severe injuries at work requiring long-term medical and rehabilitation care, can recoup those expenses, whatever the cost to the system. It is a pleasant change from the existing limitations under the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act, which we have always opposed, where there is upper limit which a person can obtain for medical and rehabilitation expenses; I think it is \$50 000. That limit has always struck me as ludicrous. If a person has a legitimate need for medical treatment and rehabilitation care that costs more than that, he must meet the extra expense himself.

Mr Perron: You can get them under MACA.

Mr SMITH: That is not what you said when the bill was debated quite some time ago. Anyway, the point that I want to make is that we support the excellent provision that reasonable medical and rehabilitation expenses will be provided to injured workers, no matter what the cost for an individual worker.

Another good point is that there is an increase in the level of some of the benefits, and I will return to that in some detail, and access to compensation for permanent impairment in some areas. As I understand it, basically that is because the definitions have been broadened for permanent impairment. There has been a trade-off for that in terms of reduced benefits for some permanent impairment areas, and I will deal with that more fully later.

The legislation provides a statistical base which has been lacking in the past. Of course, I suspect that one of the reasons why we might want to change the legislation, once it is up and running, is because, in 12 to 18 months time, we will have a good statistical base which may indicate that some areas of the system can be changed. Certainly, it has been an indictment on the way the present system has operated that we have not had a solid statistical base. If you read the actuaries' report into the cost of the system, it is quite interesting to see the assumptions that they have had to make on very significant costing areas, because of the lack of statistical information.

The sixth aspect, that I think is good, is that greater effort will be put into getting people back to work. I think that it is a legitimate criticism of the present system that there is no emphasis on encouraging injured workers to re-enter the work force. That was a weakness and we are pleased to see in the new bill that positive, not negative, incentives have been put in place to encourage people to go back into the work force.

One of the major areas of debate in the whole question of work health, both here and elsewhere, has been whether common law should be removed or not. This government, like other governments, has adopted a position that common law should be removed. The way I read the actuaries' report - and heaven knows whether I am right or wrong because it is a very difficult document to understand - there is a cost to the system in taking out common law benefits. I think appendix 2 of the actuaries' report says that. There are 2 opinions - one from Cumpston and the other from Buchanan - but I think they are both saying that the removal of common law and its replacement by a weekly benefit plus an impairment benefit, plus medical rehabilitation will cost extra money. In fact, the figure given by Cumpston is that, for every \$100 a person would have received in common law settlement, he will now receive a weekly benefit of \$102.50, an impairment benefit of \$7.50 and a medical

rehabilitation benefit of \$5 - a total of \$115. In my view, Buchanan is saying that, for every \$100 in common law settlement, that person will now receive a weekly benefit of \$92.50, an impairment benefit of \$7.50 and a medical rehabilitation benefit of \$5 - a total \$105. If this information is correct, and no one has argued with me about this interpretation, the argument that the abolition of common law will save costs to the system is not valid. In advancing the abolition of common law in the work health area, the government will have to come up with another argument.

We have argued consistently that there should be a common law component in work health legislation. The reason is that common law provides a deterrent against negligent employees. I know there is a logical answer to that under the present system in that every employer pays into the common pool but it does not matter particularly whether he is negligent or not because it does not have all that much impact on the premiums that he pays. I believe it is possible to develop a system whereby negligent employers can be sued at common law and required to take the prime responsibility for payment of the common law provisions. The Doody Report hinted at a way of doing this by its talk of variation of premium rates - reduced premiums for good employers and penalty premiums for bad employers.

The last point I want to make in relation to common law is that, when we talk of common law, we are not talking about leaving the present system in place. We accept that it is not wise to provide a lump sum entitlement to injured workers who are able to sue at common law. We accept that the evidence indicates that, in many cases, that lump sum is frittered away and the injured worker is left, after a few short years, with very little money. What we are saying is that people, who have suffered injuries at work through the negligence of an employer, should have a right to the pension entitlement, the medical and rehabilitation entitlements and the permanent impairment entitlements, as outlined in the bill, and they should be able to sue for a pain and suffering component in addition. I think that is a way by which pressure could be placed effectively on employers to come to grips with the provision of safe work places. It is very difficult to work out the additional cost to the system without a statistical base, but it is my understanding that the pain-and-suffering component of common law entitlements under the existing system is relatively small. The major costs under the present system are the pension entitlements, worked out over a 30 to 40 year period, and medical and rehabilitation entitlements that a person may have to receive over his lifetime. That is our position on common law. I realise that it is probably too late for the government to consider it, but I wish that it would.

Another area that has caused some concern is that of redemptions. Again, we have no problem in agreeing with the government that that section needed tightening up. It is too easy, under the legislation as it is at present, for people to apply for redemptions and, on receipt of them, to invest them at the racecourse, in sports lotto or whatever. But we believe that it is appropriate in this situation for an employee, with a very good reason, to approach the Work Health Authority and ask for redemptions to be made to him instead of his regular weekly payments. One such good reason would be where a person has a clear opportunity to get into a business. There might be a situation where, if he could redeem his payments, he would be able to get into a business and become self-sufficient rather than exist on payments for the rest of his life. The government should reconsider that area because, with a little more flexibility within the existing redemption clause in this bill, many people would be helped out.

Mr Speaker, turning to occupational health and safety, in our view this section is clumsy and ineffective. The government boasts that it has established umbrella occupational health and safety legislation under this act. Theoretically, it is true that, in a sense, all areas of work are covered by legislation now and, if umbrella occupational health and safety legislation means just that, that has been done. The Work Health Bill picks up those areas that are not covered elsewhere. But there is a dramatic difference in the powers provided for in other pieces of legislation and the powers provided to the Work Health Authority in carrying out its obligations under the Work Health Bill.

For example, let us look at section 80 of the Construction Safety Act.

Inspection by an inspector: an inspector may at any reasonable time, and for the purposes of making an inspection, examination or inquiry necessary or convenient for the administration and enforcement of this act, enter and remain in or on any land, building or other structure or works where work to which this act applies is being carried out.

The Mine Safety Control Act provides that:

Subject to this act, an inspector may: (a) conduct an inquiry and examination for the purpose of ascertaining whether the provisions of this act affecting a mine have been complied with; (b) enter and inspect a mine, at any time of the day or night with such assistance as he considers necessary, but not so as to unnecessarily impede or obstruct the working of the mine.

In my view, that is a legitimate power that any occupational health and safety authority ought to have: to be able to enter a work place and make an inspection. Obviously, there need to be limitations on the power to make inspections so that the work patterns of that particular work place are not interrupted unnecessarily. These quite strong powers are contained in the Construction Safety Act, the Mine Safety Act, the Construction Industry Award and 1 or 2 others that I checked. Under the Work Health Bill, basically, an inspector can only enter a work place after an incident has occurred. The only other way he can enter a work place is on the direction of the minister. We shall be moving an amendment to the effect that the Work Health Authority have a power, under its own right, to order its inspectors, where it has sufficient reason, to make an inspection of a work place covered by the Work Health Act. It is consistent with the provisions of other pieces of legislation, and we consider that its absence is a serious weakness in the bill as it stands at present.

The other problem with the government's approach to occupational health and safety is that control is spread over a number of ministers. The government argues that the Work Health Authority will act as a safety net and, where there is no other legislation, the authority will prevail. Where other pieces of occupational health and safety legislation exist, they will take precedence. That is a cumbersome way of doing things. I would have thought that, with this present government's stated intention of improving the efficiency of the public service and perhaps - dare I say it - reducing the number of people employed in particular areas, that it could have had a very close look at its ability to bring together all staff concerned with occupational health and safety under one minister and that those government employees would be responsible for occupational health and safety as covered by all government legislation. I defy anyone to tell me that that is not a more efficient approach than that adopted by the government at present.

Our other major concern relates to the lack of power for workers to protect themselves or involve themselves in the development of codes of practice. I will give an example. Section 32 is headed 'Immediate Threat'. Basically it says that a worker can stop work where there is an immediate risk of severe injury. The mind boggles. If there is an immediate risk of an injury which is somehow defined as 'not severe' under this act, the worker would be committing a crime if he stopped work to protect his own health and safety.

Mr Hatton: That is a long bow.

Mr SMITH: It is not a long bow at all. There is a much better set of words to cover that precise situation, and it is contained in one of the amendments that we will be proposing. The average person would read that clause as I do. It is just a nonsense. The phrase 'an immediate risk of severe injury' carries the clear implication that any other injury is of no account.

Another concern relates to clause 47: 'Codes of Practice'. Under this clause, employers can devise codes of practice and seek the approval of the Work Health Authority or the minister to introduce them, whilst employees have no equal right to do so. If the government has an earnest desire to improve the health and safety conditions under which all employees work, it should ensure that employees who are sufficiently concerned and interested to develop a code of practice could run it past their employer and then seek the approval of the Work Health Authority or the minister. We are not saying that employees should have a unilateral right to set their own conditions of occupational health and safety, but we are saying that they should be given the right, under clause 47, to do some work on a code of practice and submit it to someone else for approval. I think that is a basic working right which anybody should expect in this modern day and age.

We now come to benefit levels. For most people, these are perhaps the most important provisions of the bill. We support what the government has done with death benefits. It has indexed death benefits to increases in average weekly earnings, and set the level at 156 weeks of weekly earnings, which is a sum of about \$75 000. Obviously, as weekly earnings rise, that figure will increase. In our view, that is a generous benefit and we support it. In the clause on incapacity, the government proposes an earnings-related system after the first 26 weeks. For those members unfamiliar with the bill, the first 26 weeks remain much the same as now, where normal weekly earnings apply. After the first 26 weeks, the earnings-related system begins. It is a system based on 70% of normal weekly earnings, or 150% of average weekly earnings, whichever is the lower amount. We have a problem with this particular area which is that, on our figures, 25% of the people who will be injured, will end up worse off. It is the 25% on the lower income levels who will be worse off. 75% will be better off; there is no problem with that, but I am concerned about the 25% who, on our figures, will be worse off. As I have said, they will be at the lower end of the income scale.

It is quite a complicated scenario, and members need to listen fairly closely to understand what I mean, but the actuaries' report said that the lower income earner earned about 75% of average weekly earnings so, for a start, he will earn less than average weekly earnings. After 26 weeks, he will receive 70% of that 75% of average weekly earnings. He will receive less under this new system than he would have under the previous system, if he has a spouse and 1 or 2 children because, under the present system, I think the basic rate is about \$181 plus \$46 for a spouse and \$23 for each child.

The new system will offer only 70% of average weekly earnings. There will be no spouse entitlement and no entitlement for children. Low income earners with wives and children will be distinctly worse off under this system. I ask the government to reconsider that because, in my view, it is not the intention of the government to create a situation where low income earners, who are unfortunate enough to be injured at work, will be worse off in terms of weekly benefits than they would be under the present legislation. It is a very serious point and the government needs to check it through. Certainly, we will be proposing amendments in relation to that.

Mr Speaker, in terms of permanent impairment, again there has been a reduction in the benefits payable. The present maximum value for permanent impairment is \$57 000. Under the new formula, this has been reduced to about \$51 000 at present. As I said earlier, the range of impairments recognised under this category has been widened quite extensively, and now picks up things like permanent brain damage and the old horrific back complaints that ...

Mr Hatton: Mediterranean back, as they call it.

Mr SMITH: The honourable Chief Minister, who always has a tendency to denigrate the working man, calls it Mediterranean back. You can understand why people call it Mediterranean back because it is an injury that is very difficult to prove. There are no visible signs that a person has a back injury. You cannot demonstrate pain, unfortunately, but I am pleased to say that the new guidelines that have come from America recognise back injuries as a legitimate cause for reimbursement under the permanent impairment section.

There are a couple of problems with permanent impairment entitlements. One is that the maximum amount has been reduced from \$57 000 to \$51 000. The other is that, under the American guidelines, the existing percentages that can be claimed will be reduced quite significantly. For example, at present, one can claim 75% of \$57 000 for the loss of power of speech. Under the new guidelines, one can claim 25% of \$51 000. That is a dramatic drop. For loss of the leg below the knee, under the present system, one can claim 65% of \$57 000; under the proposed guidelines, it is 28% of \$51 000. For the loss of a leg above the knee, at present it is 75% of \$57 000 but, under the proposed system, it is 40% of \$51 000. For loss of hearing, at present it is 75% of \$57 000 but, under the proposed system, it is 35% of \$51 000. For the loss of both hands, under the present system, it is 100% of \$57 000 but, under the proposed system, it is only 79% of \$51 000. If one reached 80%, under our legislation one would receive 100% because all injuries assessed at 80% incapacity are judged as 100%. For loss of both feet, it is 100% of \$57 000 but that is to be reduced to 48% of \$51 000. I think that we should clearly understand that people in the work force who suffer a permanent impairment will receive considerably less money than at present. That is a matter of some concern to this opposition.

The rehabilitation aspects of the legislation are weak and require some toughening up. In his second-reading speech, the minister who then had carriage of the bill said that the employers had a duty to assist rehabilitation counsellors in specific ways - for example, in efforts to train workers. There is nothing in the bill to provide for the employment of rehabilitation counsellors. I expect that amendments will be introduced to correct that. If rehabilitation is to succeed, it will require a certain number of rehabilitation counsellors to be employed by the Work Health Authority to assist employees in returning to work.

Rehabilitation is probably one of the greyer areas in terms of how it will work once the legislation is in force. Certainly, rehabilitation has not been a high priority under the present system. We do not know with any certainty whether we have sufficient facilities in the Northern Territory to treat adequately all those people who will require rehabilitation. It is one aspect that we will need to keep a very close eye on to ensure that rehabilitation is provided in accordance with the requirements of the legislation. Rehabilitation is essential in getting people back into the work force and that is something on which people on both sides of the Assembly would agree.

Mr Speaker, another vexed question has been whether we should have a single insurer or a multiple insurer. The view that we have taken is that that judgment should be made in terms of whether single insurers or multiple insurers deliver the product most effectively. In this discussion, the product is the delivery of work health services, both to the employer and to the employee. In our view, a single insurer can do that better but, of course, this is a matter of philosophy with the present government, and we do not expect that it will pick up our view on that. We do not intend to proceed with amendments to that effect.

However, we will be watching the system with interest. One way in which, in our view, the single insurer can do the job better is in the area of the negligent employer. Under a multiple insurer, it is very difficult to operate a system of premiums that penalises negligent employers and rewards effectively safe employers, because the decisions on what premium rates are offered are not based solely on the previous records of the employers but are based in part on the willingness of the insurance company to tout for business in this particular area. The opposition would have preferred a single insurer and we will be watching carefully to see how the multiple insurer system works.

One change to the draft bill which appears in the present bill is the introduction of a preliminary conference. We think that a preliminary conference, before a matter goes into the court process, should expedite payments, and it should lead to the development of a system that will ensure workers receive payment as soon as possible. I stress that we are concerned that, under the bill as it stands at present, there are opportunities for unscrupulous employers to evade their obligations to pay workers injured at work for a longer period than should be strictly necessary. That is an area where we propose to move some amendments.

Mr Speaker, we also support the efforts made in the bill to ensure a full declaration of wages. The court can impose additional penalties on employers who avoid full declaration of wages and these additional penalties are quite stringent - in fact, they amount to double premiums. Also, we were advised in the second-reading speech that the Work Health Authority would be working closely with the Commissioner of Taxes to ensure that as few employers as possible slipped through the net. Of course, it is as a result of ensuring that as close to 100% as possible of those who should be covered are part of the scheme that the most efficient scheme can be run and premium levels can be kept as low as possible.

We have a situation, in this bill, where the government has backtracked from the benefit levels outlined in the draft Work Health bill. The actuaries' report said, and I quote: 'The total cost to injured workers of work health should not be greatly different from what they might have had to pay under the Workers' Compensation Act'. In coming to that conclusion, the actuaries cited a number of pressures, some increasing costs and some reducing

costs. They estimated that the cost of benefits would rise by 18%, the coverage of the work force was anticipated to rise by 10%, existing premium levels would be 22%, and under-declaration of wages would be 10%. However, their assumptions overall indicated that the premium levels proposed under the work health arrangements in the draft bill were about right. Now, the government has decided that that is not good enough and has reduced proposed benefit levels significantly in some areas. I can understand the desire of the government to ensure that, in the initial years of the operation of this legislation, premium levels do not rise dramatically because that would, to a large extent, defeat the purpose of the bill. I understand and share that concern. However, I believe that, in coming to a decision to cut the benefit levels in this way, the government has overreacted. It has unfairly denied the employees adequate compensation in a couple of key areas, and I would ask it to reconsider that.

To conclude, there is no doubt that getting to this stage has been a long and exhausting process. Many people have been consulted and many reports have been made. Many people have been involved in working full time on this legislation. However, in our view there is still some way to go, and I am pleased that the Chief Minister has indicated that he will not be proceeding through all stages of the bill at these sittings, and that there will be an opportunity to make further representations to the government before the bill is finally passed at the next sittings. We have to get it right. The opposition believes that there are 20 or 30 areas that need to be addressed, and we will be contacting the government about those. If the government is able to address itself to those 20 to 30 matters, we will have a piece of legislation which will be the envy of all Australia.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, without a doubt, the Work Health Bill would be one of the most discussed and publicly debated pieces of legislation ever to come before this Assembly. It has created great community interest, particularly among employers, unions, insurers, the legal profession, and the public at large. Even the Leader of the Opposition had the grace to tell us that it contained some good things, and certainly it does. It is quite a visionary move. Certainly, we may not yet have it right. We intend to continue our discussions with all sectors of the community. We want to get it right, and I am quite sure that we will continue that discussion until we do.

I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition commented on the Victorian Work Care Scheme which was introduced about 12 or 18 months ago. I had the good fortune to meet a member of the Legislative Council of Victoria on one occasion and I discussed this matter with him. He was good enough to send me a wad of information including the Victorian act and all the associated documentation. I received an envelope about 3 inches thick. After reading some of this paraphernalia, I decided not to read right through it. I could see that it was an exercise in socialism at work. For a start, the cost of the material sent to me would have been absolutely astronomical. From my reading of it, I could see that the cost of implementing the scheme, including setting up the Work Care Authority and the single insurer, would be absolutely horrendous. Our work health program is being implemented at minimum cost and that is very important indeed.

In all of these things, we must minimise the cost of implementation. We do not want unnecessary bureaucracies that feed upon themselves and cost more and more as the years go by. That is not our intention, and it will not happen in this case. I disagree with the idea of a single insurer. This is a free enterprise government, and it will encourage all insurers to participate in the scheme, provided that they can supply the service.

There can be little doubt that the government has gone to great lengths to allow for as much public debate as practicable in establishing this scheme. The result has been numerous modifications and amendments since the first draft was tabled on 27 March 1986. At that time, the minister indicated that 2 years of public inquiry and discussion had taken place. On 28 February 1985, the minister tabled the report of the board of inquiry into the system of workers' compensation in the Northern Territory, often referred to as the Doody Report. It was compiled by a 3 member committee, which spent quite some time investigating our existing workers' compensation scheme and coming up with recommendations. I have had the experience of sitting through quite a number of discussions and briefings with a range of people, including unions, over the past 18 months. Many constructive suggestions were put forward and noted, and these are reflected in the bill we see before us today.

The Doody Report was debated at length on 22 August 1985. Meetings were conducted with representatives of all interested groups. There is no doubt that every opportunity was provided for the interested parties to have input. Of course, as time went by, they provided further input as they gleaned more information regarding the contents of the bill. That is what it is all about.

The existing system of providing workers' compensation protection to the Northern Territory work force has been totally inadequate. As a past employer, I am fully aware of its inadequacies. Let me refer to some of the ones with which I have had personal experience. For example, a multitude of insurance companies have offered cover and many of them are located interstate. This is true particularly where a locally-established company has its head office interstate. Normally, that head office arranges the workers' compensation with a southern company, many of whom are not represented in the Northern Territory. Therefore, when one lodges a claim, it is very difficult to communicate and negotiate with such companies. It is difficult to lodge a claim and to follow up claims outstanding. I have known people who have lodged claims through the head office and waited weeks and weeks with no result. During this time, the claimant is not being paid by the employer and he is not receiving workers' compensation; he is out in the cold.

Common law claims can take years to be settled, and premiums have been extremely high compared with those in the states. Some employers avoid taking out workers' compensation cover and thereby expose their employees to great financial risk because, under the existing scheme, it is very difficult to ensure that all employees have taken out workers' compensation protection.

Mr Speaker, those are but a few of the problems that this bill will redress. The Work Health Bill before us today provides a far-sighted and far-ranging approach to addressing the problems created by injury and disease occurring in the work place. It encompasses such issues as occupational health and safety, and rehabilitation. It provides a new approach in the Northern Territory to compensation as it disposes of the common law entitlement which has applied for so long and offers, in its place, immediate payment of normal weekly earnings for the first 26 weeks and, beyond that, 70% of that rate.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about common law and said that he did not agree with lump sum payments but believed that other entitlements should be allowed. Let me assure the honourable member that one of the problems with common law is that it takes so long to bring the case to court. I have known instances where the injured person has waited 6 or 8 years before the case finally came to court. What does that person do? How does he survive? Many people are totally incapacitated yet they receive no compensation until the

case finally comes to court and, hopefully, they receive just compensation. That is totally inappropriate. Such people require financial compensation virtually from day 1 so that they can pay their bills and their families can survive. They require ongoing compensation throughout the rest of their lives because of their incapacitation. This absolute nonsense of having to wait for years, in a state of uncertainty, cannot be tolerated in the Northern Territory. It has been so cruel to so many people and it is time that it ceased. This bill will ensure that it ceases in the Northern Territory.

Provision is made for the recording of statistics which will be invaluable in the years to come. When setting premiums in the past, one of the problems faced by insurers was the lack of any data base from which to make their calculations. If there is no data base and they have to take a punt in the dark, they will take it to benefit themselves rather than the employers.

The primary role of the Work Health Authority will be in counselling aimed at ensuring the best possible use of existing facilities and that early and appropriate rehabilitation is undertaken. I note that the Leader of the Opposition addressed that issue when he suggested that counsellors be appointed.

Mr Speaker, part VI of the bill sets up the Work Health Court whose role will be to hear and determine disputes and appeals. Where a dispute exists, a magistrate will preside over a compulsory preliminary hearing so that all matters can be discussed between the parties in the presence of a magistrate in an attempt to resolve the matters before they reach the court. However, if that conference fails, the dispute will be listed for hearing in the court.

The Work Health Bill replaces the existing Northern Territory Workers' Compensation Act. It is designed to provide immediate and reasonable financial compensation to an injured worker while, at the same time, providing a system of rehabilitation which will return that person to the work place as soon as possible. Let us face it, that is the important thing. That is what it is all about: rehabilitating people who have suffered injury so that they can return to the work place, which is what they want. They do not want to sit back for years and years on compensation. They want to get back into the work place where they can be useful and productive citizens. I believe the intent of this bill is positive and will provide a much wider protection for our work force than exists at present.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, it would have been relatively simple for us to have opposed this bill, to have taken a philosophical stance on it and said that it did not conform to our philosophy which entails a combination of common and statute law. However, we have decided that, as the government is committed to following this course, we will go along with it and discuss the full implications of the bill in its present form. As the Leader of the Opposition has advised, we will propose numerous amendments. We intend to discuss these with the government, which has indicated that it will consider them in a constructive manner in order to determine which can be accepted prior to the next sittings. I think it is essential that such important legislation be treated in a bipartisan manner, rather than sinking to bloody-mindedness. We will attempt to work through the various related issues, and use the ideas of members in order to create a system of work health which fits Territory needs, and will be of benefit to workers in the Territory.

One of the issues I wish to discuss concerns what I will call pain and suffering. I realise that pain and suffering is a very difficult thing to measure. However, there are some examples which show what I mean, and these need to be taken into consideration. Mr Speaker, consider the case of a person who is severely injured, to the extent that he will probably not work again, but who has suffered no disfigurement and is in no pain. Contrast that with the circumstances of another person, who has suffered a similar injury but, because of the nature of the industry in which he worked, will have to live with gross disfigurement and continual pain for the rest of his life. As I understand it, under the present proposals, both people will receive the same benefits. This needs to be examined. I believe that there is a need to allow an additional component to cater for a person who has to live the rest of his life in absolute pain and who, because of disfigurement, finds it particularly difficult to relate on a social level. This particular disadvantage, over and above any financial disadvantage, needs to be covered.

I am sorry to see the deletion of the benefit to the employee where the employer has been grossly negligent. It is one of the positive components of the American system. My personal view is that there should be a penalty where an employee has been grossly negligent in relation to the safety of an employee, and has placed an employee in a situation of danger which has led to extensive disfigurement and brutal pain. I do not see why that employer should be able to escape the responsibility to pay a penalty in addition to damages that are awarded.

The Doody Report discussed the recovery of workers' compensation. Mr Speaker, as you will be aware, if only 50% of recoverable moneys are received from employers, there is less available in the pool for disbursement to people who are injured. If the size of the pool is increased, there is more money available for distribution to injured employees, both for compensation and rehabilitation. My recollection of the Doody Report is that the figures over a period of 3 years were: 38%, 42% and 48%. That is a grotesque reflection on employers in the Northern Territory. Over those 3 years, employers paid into the pool less than 50% of what they were legally obliged to pay. In real terms, it meant that either the insurers had to increase their rates to try to make up for the amount that was not recovered or there would need to be reductions in benefits paid out.

I am well aware that there are employers who work together with insurers to rot the system. The method of operation is quite simple. The insurer asks for information on the total amount of salaries paid out in the previous year and the projections for the following year. The amounts given, as the insurer knows, are understated quite dramatically. When the insurer states that it is not happy with the figures, the game plan is for the employer to put on an act, stand on his dignity and say that, if that insurer does not want to accept them, someone else will. Either that insurer comes round and accepts the figures provided by the employer or the employer tries it on another insurer. Overall, that reduces the percentage of the money that actually goes into the pool and either results in an increase in rates to boost the figure or a reduction in the amount of benefits that are paid out.

Mr Speaker, I believe that only a single-insurer system will overcome this. It is the only means I know of by which to ensure that we obtain the rate of contribution above the 90% rate which would allow us to provide an adequate and comprehensive system of workers' compensation, rehabilitation, work on housing etc that is required for the benefit of employees. Indirectly, that would benefit employers also in that the actual rate per dollar that they would pay out would be less. Mr Speaker, I note that the

Bulletin gave this system its fullest backing, and I wonder why. I wonder whether what is good for the ICA is always good for the employee. The Insurance Council of Australia is a representative group of the various insurer groups and, obviously, wishes to have all of its members in the field. However, as I have said, often the result of having many insurers in what is a small field of clients is that, in the competition for business, they accept the lower declarations of the total amounts of wages that they receive from employers.

A final point that I would like to make concerns the introduction of an alternative system of providing notice of injury. I am talking about a parallel system, if you like, Mr Speaker. I know that we have a requirement for an employer to advise if one of his employees suffers an injury. I would like to see another system which will act as a check that that notice is provided. I will refer to the situation of ringers; there are many of them in my electorate. They are a bunch of very tough men on the whole.

Dr Cutter is a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and a man very well respected in his field - in fact, one of the very best. He has had very considerable experience in seeing the results of the years of work that ringers have performed on the stations. He made a submission to the Doody Inquiry and I think that honourable members should read it. They will see that, from the years of experience that he had had, he estimated that the average ringer was burnt out by the time he was 35. There are some notable exceptions, but that was the average rate. That would indicate 15 to 20 years of working life before a person is so incapacitated he is unable to pursue his chosen career.

From reading the Doody Report and from the discussions I had with the gentlemen conducting it during the time that I made my submission to it, I was interested to note that they found that they were unable to locate a statistical base for payouts to ringers. They said that the amount that was paid out was so small as to be statistically insignificant. This means that, in the Northern Territory, there is a group of people whose average working life in their chosen job is only 15 to 20 years and yet the amount that has been paid out is statistically insignificant. Why does that happen, Mr Speaker? I think the answer is obvious to anybody who knows the industry.

What could be called peer group pressure operates in that industry. The ringers work together in a close relationship with the boss, and it is a hard life. Everybody gets a few knocks and bumps and bruises. I know several ringers personally. In one particular case, a gentleman was gored just above his temple, and his boss said to him: 'Look, don't worry about this sort of stuff. Old Uncle Joe, he had it go in one side and out the other and he is still going'. While that may say a lot for Uncle Joe, it also says a great deal about the way that people work together in those areas. People are put down by their fellow workers as rather less than manly if they go to see a doctor or whatever, just because they have a bad back, were gored and suffered a bit of damage, sprained an ankle or broke a leg. The effect is compounded by the bosses and managers; it is all part of the job. Generally, these people pay their workers' compensation premiums on time. I am told that they are quite good payers, and they seem to be well regarded. Part of their good repute results from their very low claim rates.

The result is that very rarely does a notification of injury come in on anybody hurt in the cattle industry. The result is that, after 5 or 10 years and a succession of injuries, the ringer is finished. He finds that he can no longer ride a horse. I know many ringers in Alice Springs who cannot even

drive a bus without special seats because their backs have been so damaged by their work on the properties. However, when they try to obtain workers' compensation in the years to come, there is no history of the course and extent of their injuries and they are unable to make a claim. They are cast into jobs for which they are unsuitable, generally because they have not been trained for them. They are forced to move well down the economic and social scale to try to find something for themselves and they are given very little assistance in doing that.

Mr Speaker, I have not been able to find a way to overcome that entirely. However, I think it would be of assistance if a doctor or other health worker documented an injury which, in his estimation, could be work related. It could be documented on a simple form that is forwarded to the Work Health Authority for use as a check to determine that the system is operating satisfactorily. It would be simple for a letter to be sent back from the authority. I am sure that would result in people notifying injuries more readily.

Mr Speaker, I offer those 3 ideas in what I consider to be the best spirit of this legislation. It is legislation which we all want to see work and work well. We all know of people who have slipped through the net of the current system. We know of people who have waited for years and years and received very little compensation. We hear of very sad cases, and all of us want to see the system tightened up and working effectively and well. We each have different views on how that can best be achieved. If we cannot agree on the philosophical questions, at least we can examine each other's arguments to see if we can all work together to ensure that this piece of legislation, one of the most important that has come before this Assembly in my time, has the minimum number of inconsistencies that may be utilised later by those members in the insurance industry who tend to play the game a little fast and loose.

Mr Speaker, I began by saying that the opposition will propose numerous amendments to this bill and I finish by saying that I hope the government will take those amendments into consideration and that we will be able to negotiate a satisfactory piece of legislation.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Last week, I raised the issue of aerial tours over Kakadu National Park and altitude restrictions that have been proposed over wilderness areas. Obviously, I hit a very raw nerve with the Director of the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, Professor Derrick Ovington. Firstly, on radio last week, the professor acknowledged that the Draft Plan of Management over Kakadu contained a provision for a 4000-foot altitude restriction on aerial tour aircraft. However, the good professor obviously became a little confused and talked about Uluru National Park as well. What comparison there is between the 2 parks, apart from the sad fact that they are both run by the ANPWS to the detriment of Territory and Territorians, is beyond me. But let us concentrate on Kakadu for the moment.

From what Professor Ovington said, I understood that he believed the ANPWS should be taking credit for the increase in tourist numbers to Kakadu. What absolute nonsense! Apart from producing a few posters, what exactly has the

ANPWS done to promote Kakadu? On the other hand, of course, the Northern Territory Tourist Commission has promoted Kakadu throughout Australia and, indeed, the world. The park received wide publicity initially when it was added to the World Heritage List and that is when tourism and tourists began clamouring to get to this magnificent region. The Tourist Commission has kept that ball rolling; certainly, it was not done by the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

I criticised Professor Ovington for proposing the altitude restriction at Kakadu and, on radio, he suggested my statement was designed to denigrate his tourism promotion efforts. Quite clearly, it was designed for exactly that purpose. Let me quote from a transcript of what the professor had to say last week:

I think there may be plans to place some limits on heights in certain areas. For example, you know, areas which are of special significance: Aboriginal living areas and things like that. But to suggest there is going to be a general embargo on flights below a certain height, I do not believe is correct. In a sense, what he is suggesting is that ANPWS is not supportive of tourism. But during the period when ANPWS has been responsible for the management of Kakadu, the visitor numbers have increased from 20 000 to 100 000 this year. This is remarkable growth of tourism and it contrasts very significantly with a growth that has occurred at the Cobourg Peninsula under the Conservation Commission of the Northern Territory.

It can be seen quite clearly from that that the dear old professor is off his wattle. The professor displays a profound lack of intelligence by making that remarkable statement. Cobourg Peninsula and Kakadu cannot be compared. Cobourg is remote and largely isolated. There is limited access by sea and charter aircraft and, thanks to a breakthrough achieved by the Northern Territory government last year, there is now limited overland access to Cobourg. I stress 'limited', because vehicles still have to cross Aboriginal land.

On the other hand, Kakadu is open to the family sedan. Who constructed the all-weather roads? Who built the Pine Creek to Kakadu road? The Northern Territory government of course. Who supported the commercial tourist venture at South Alligator? The Northern Territory government did; certainly, it was not the ANPWS. Who is continuing to support the efforts of the Gagadju Association to expand its tourism venture? The Northern Territory government.

There is so much that needs to be done to develop the vital tourism infrastructure in Kakadu but, at every turn, Professor Ovington is hell-bent on preventing it. He ignores the massive potential of the park and he ignores the determination of those Territorians who see that potential and want to get on with the job of developing the resources. Professor Ovington is a barrier to progress. Where else would you find a man so prepared to restrict people, many of whom come from around the world, in their appreciation of a natural wonder of world significance? Professor Ovington wants to limit the height at which aircraft carrying tourists can fly over Kakadu. I will quote from the Plan of Management for the park, page 91, under the heading of 'Management Prescriptions':

Discussions will be held with the Department of Aviation about the procedure for specifying areas such as wilderness zones in Kakadu, where operation of aircraft below a specified altitude, possibly

4000 feet, may be prohibited except for park management's purposes, during landing or takeoff procedures or in emergency.

How very kind of him.

What is a wilderness zone? What does the dear old professor mean? Here is his definition of a wilderness zone:

Wilderness zone: wilderness is difficult to define. Areas of Kakadu which appear to be wilderness may be regarded by some as managed or domesticated landscapes reflecting a long-term Aboriginal occupancy. Terms often ascribed to wilderness such as remoteness, naturalness and large size will be major descriptive components of this zone and the major aim is to maintain pristine values.

This is yet another indication of the professor's inability to grasp reality. If, in fact, he means that wilderness is an area of Aboriginal habitat, and tourist aircraft flying overhead will disturb the pristine value of that habitat, then I say that not only is he attempting to be selective but he is guilty of discrimination. He is trying to exempt one region, one group, from regulations which apply to all parts of the country and all other Australians, except in defence circumstances. I am sure those residents who live around Darwin Airport would also appreciate the imposition of an altitude restriction so that the pristine value of their properties could be protected from disturbance.

Last week, I told the Assembly that a thriving aerial tour business, based at Jabiru, was in danger of being devastated by Professor Ovington's altitude restriction proposal. Certainly, Mr Bob MacDonald of Kakadu Air Services is not the only man who is seriously concerned about this stupid plan. As late as this morning, my office was contacted by the Northern Territory representative of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association and the Darwin Aero Club. Private pilots are concerned that Professor Ovington's move could be the first official closure of air space surrounding other than a defence facility. I use the term 'official' very deliberately, because there are some areas over which aircraft are excluded periodically, such as Goulburn Island, north-east of Darwin, during traditional ceremonies. In these cases, pilots are asked to respect the wishes of the communities involved. Such occurrences are not regulated officially, and that is the difference. A steadily increasing number of private pilots tour Australia on holiday. It is a growing market in tourism. Each year, dozens, and perhaps even hundreds, of privately-operated light aircraft fly into Darwin. Most of them take the opportunity to fly across Kakadu to experience the unique landscape.

Pilots have told me that, if they were to fly at no lower than 4000 feet, it would be a waste of time to try to see and experience the floodplains or the escarpment of Kakadu. I do not know how many honourable members have experienced flying in light aircraft over spectacular landscapes at a height that gives one a true impression of the features, but I have to tell you that it is a tremendous feeling. It cannot be the same as flying at more than 1 km high. I am told that the Territory pilots intend to raise Professor Ovington's altitude proposal with the National Airspace Advisory Committee which, in turn, would make strong representations to the Department of Aviation to keep the skies of Kakadu free of Ovington control.

Let us face the fact that Professor Ovington is abusing his power. He is a one-man band and can take full credit for the Kakadu Plan of Management and its iniquitous provisions. He wrote the Plan of Management. There is no

board of management for Kakadu; it is just one man, an exiled English academic who thinks he knows what is best, not only for the people living in Kakadu but for Territorians generally. The concentration of power in this man is overwhelming. In effect, this man is denying to many thousands of Australians and overseas visitors the chance to experience a wonder of the world.

Tourism is a complex industry. When bringing tourists into a region, operators are conscious of the need to maintain that region and to protect it for future generations of visitors. Tourism is not a one-off business. Clearly, the ANPWS is not credible as the guardian of the interests of tourism. Professor Ovington has proved over and over again that he holds absolute discretion over all licensing, regulatory and administrative functions within Kakadu because of the nature of the management plan he devised. This concentration of responsibility engenders uncertainty and frustration within the tourism investment sector because there is no provision for appeal against the professor's unreasonable exercise of discretionary power.

There is no consultation between conservation and tourism interests on Kakadu because, in its present form, the Plan of Management discourages tourism. The worst scenario for Kakadu is just around the corner. That scenario is a build up of tourist pressure which is not matched by suitable planning and infrastructure development. Let me refer to a letter sent to me by a New South Wales couple who visited the Territory recently on holiday. In a 7-point list of comments on their trip, only 2 were critical and both those related to the ANPWS: sign posting was inadequate inside the park and the travellers could not locate a ranger to direct them. The ranger station was unattended so our visitors left without seeing the Kakadu they should have seen.

That is not nearly as bad as the complaints being made about Uluru at the moment. Mr Speaker, 3 years ago, the Prime Minister promised to spend some \$74m on infrastructure development in Kakadu to expand the facilities for tourism. We all know the results of the Prime Minister's promise: about 100 barbecues and a couple of toilets. Where is the \$74m worth of infrastructure - still coming, like Darwin Airport?

A few nights ago, our Prime Minister was described by former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, as 'the most charismatic leader in the world last year'. The charisma has tarnished somewhat over the past year. It is a pity I cannot say the same thing about Professor Ovington. He did not have any charisma in to start with, just misplaced power - sufficient to keep Kakadu National Park one of the best kept secrets in the world. It is time this man was pensioned off and an independent voice in the management of Kakadu introduced in the true interests of a balance between conservation and tourism. Quite frankly, I am sick to the teeth of the man.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR
Hon J. Kennett MLA

Mr SPEAKER: I draw the attention of honourable members to the presence in the gallery of the Hon Jeff Kennett MLA, Leader of the Opposition in the Victorian parliament. On behalf of all honourable members, I extend to him a warm welcome and hope his stay in the Territory is a pleasant one.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): 200 years ago, about 200 languages were spoken in this country by the Aboriginal people who then inhabited it. In 1986, 150 of those languages have disappeared, more or less without trace. Currently, about 50 languages, many of them spoken in the Northern Territory, are still alive and well.

The history of the impact of the mass media has been that many traditional languages, like those Aboriginal languages that I referred to, have been swept away and the people of those cultures have been unable to control that impact. I am quite sure that people of Scots descent, for example, would be aware of the impact of the tabloids etc on Gaelic culture in Scotland.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is probably fortunate that decisions have been taken in recent days to provide a television facility to Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, and not, I hasten to add, for Aboriginal people alone. I am referring to the recent Australian Broadcasting Tribunal decision to award a remote commercial television service licence to Imparja Television Pty Ltd.

Mr Speaker, during this morning's question time, at least 2 questions were asked of ministers of the government in respect of the awarding of this licence, and the CLP government has quite clearly shown its true colours. I don't think the other government members showed their true colours to the extent that the Attorney-General did when he drew his comparison with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and proceeded to lambast the federal government for what he chose to term a 'social experiment'. By drawing this to the attention of otherwise ignorant members, like the member for Ludmilla, I hope that I will convince them that the experience of the languages used in those traditional cultures is something worth buttressing and preserving. Apostasy as it may be in this Assembly to suggest that the federal government has got something right, I would suggest that, with the federal government's assistance, this is a bicentennial gesture that may go some way towards making that particular celebration something of worth.

Mr Speaker, during question time, many furrphies were raised by the government. One of them was that the Channel 8 proposal for the RCTS licence was preferable because it was a private sector proposal which would be self-funding. In this instance, the Territory government has compounded its usual racism with hypocrisy. The fact is that the Territory government was going to provide \$2m worth of government money to Channel 8. When I say 'hypocrisy', I do so advisedly because, halfway through this process, the Northern Territory government changed its mind. At the beginning of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal hearings into this matter, the Northern Territory government made a magnanimous gesture, saying that, as a commercial television service was so important to people of the outback areas of the Territory - which is quite true - it was prepared to provide \$2m to the successful applicant. That \$2m was to go to whichever applicant was successful. I had no problem with that at all.

Members will recall that, during the last sittings, the then Chief Minister brought in this furrphy about the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association broadcasting slander against Mr Peter Severin of Curtin Springs. Regardless of the merits or otherwise of that particular claim, the plain fact of the matter was that the then Chief Minister conducted a fairly ugly, little smear campaign. The Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association had nothing to do with that matter, and I very much appreciate the member for Barkly recanting. It was quite interesting that that matter seemed to be the trigger for the extraordinarily hypocritical action of the Northern Territory

government in deciding that it would provide \$2m only if Channel 8 was the successful applicant. That was one little decision that nobody in the government could talk about, indeed, it is something that they have been remarkably silent about.

Mr Finch: Why didn't you listen in question time? It was answered this morning.

Mr BELL: In spite of the 2 banner headlines in the weekend copies of the NT News, in spite of all sorts of comment today, they failed to mention why they chose to restrict the offer of \$2m to Channel 8, and it does them no credit.

The other furphy that was being peddled by the Chief Minister was in relation to programming. The citizenry of Alice Springs are not about to be subjected to 24 hours a day of Pitjantjatjara, Aranda or Walpiri or even a mixture of all 3. The fact of the matter is that, when this TV channel actually gets going in about 12 months time, there will be approximately an hour or so a day of Aboriginal programs. As the coordinator of the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, Ms Freda Glynn, explained, people will be able to watch Dynasty or other popular programs currently available on commercial TV. They will be available to people, and it is very difficult to see the sort of uninformed reaction, typified by the comments of the Chief Minister, as other than a racist reaction: the blacks have got it; we have to oppose it. It does the Chief Minister no credit to behave in that fashion.

When I look at my own electorate and the lack of availability of broadcast television services, it is very easy to see that the majority of people who will be affected by this proposal are Aboriginal people. They are the people who do not have those broadcast services at the moment. I believe that this Assembly, as well as the federal government and the Minister for Communications, has a responsibility to consider the impact on the lives of those people that such commercial television, indeed broadcast television of any sort, will have on their way of life.

Since the Minister for Small Tourism, and Business and Large Technology has ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister's portfolios are well known to the member for MacDonnell, and he shall refer correctly to the same: that is, Minister for Business, Technology and Communications, and Tourism.

Mr Hanrahan: I thought they had a financial responsibility to all of us.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, unfortunately I do not have the benefit of a crib sheet in front of me. If I have caused any offence either to you or to the minister, I humbly apologise.

I want to make 2 further points, and these are the guts of the matter. I received a briefing from Mr Philip Batty, who has been responsible for presenting much of Imparja's case to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. I see the minister is walking out of the Assembly now. I am not surprised to see him do so because he will feel inclined to cover his embarrassment. The fact is that the minister set up an appointment with Mr Batty and other people associated with Imparja Television, which he later cancelled. They wanted to talk to him about the Northern Territory government's future cooperation with them and he decided to disregard them. I understand that they have written to the Chief Minister saying they want to talk to him about possible cooperation

in the future. I suspect that the Chief Minister will not answer the letter and will cut off his nose to spite his face.

Certain data transmission facilities are associated with the leasing of this 30 watt transponder on the domestic satellite. I suspect that the Northern Territory government will cut off its nose to spite its face. Instead of coming to some arrangement with Imparja, it will spend loads of public money to rent its own transponder. There could not be a more absurd waste of government money. I mention that in the context of this adjournment debate in the hope that it is not the case. Hopefully, the Chief Minister will enable some consultation with Imparja Television, so that some suitable arrangement can be made for the Northern Territory government to have access to this facility on an appropriate basis.

Imparja Television will be using expertise from elsewhere. As a Territorian, I would like to see that happen within the Territory. For example, I would like to see the service contracts, that will be necessary for this operation, use Channel 8 in Darwin. I am aware, as informed government members would be aware, that Imparja Television Pty Ltd has had discussions with, and support in its application to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal from, the Golden West network in Western Australia. If contracts are to be part of the arrangement that Imparja Television involves itself in, I hope that these can be carried out within the Territory. It will have facilities associated with the satellite right through the Territory - Bathurst Island, Katherine, Tennant Creek and so on - and, quite obviously in that regard, it is important that money be spent in the Territory where possible. I suggest that as a further point for the Northern Territory government to pick up.

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

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, for some time, I have maintained a constrained silence on a situation that has occurred near the boundary of my electorate because it would have affected me personally. I can look after myself, but this matter concerned business establishments, private people and workers in my electorate, all to their detriment.

Some 6 months ago, I received notification that there were to be certain road closures in my electorate. These were occur in different parts of the electorate, and I have spoken of this before. At about the same time that I received this notification, a main road was closed following recommendations by the Roads Division through the Department of Lands. The locals bulldozed the barriers away twice, and the barriers have been erected for the third time. I do not know how long they will stay there. At present, that road is closed.

Another road in my area was just a dusty track. It was taken over by the Department of Transport and Works or the Department of Lands a couple of years ago. It is a fire hazard when the grass is long and, when the long grass is burnt off, usually in bushfire conditions, it becomes a dusty track. Then the young locals ride their motorbikes up and down it, to the detriment of the people who live nearby, as it creates a dust menace. The residents wanted this road to be closed or brought up to normal standards. Within the electorate, a road has been closed now that the people did not want closed and a road opened that they want to be closed.

The notification indicated that 8 roads were proposed for closure in my electorate. I agreed with 1 or 2, because I could see that there were duplications, and it would not present any inconvenience to my constituents.

However, it was apparent that, if the others were closed, it would cause considerable inconvenience, as people would have to travel much further to reach the main roads. The whole exercise is what I call government by regulation or government by stealth, which I do not agree with.

For some time, we have been promised a rural strategy plan but it has not eventuated. Any sensible person would understand that closure of roads and so on would be part of a rural strategy plan; they should not happen bit by bit in this way. The Litchfield Shire Council is in operation now and local government interests also have to be considered and protected in the rural strategy plan.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 3 weeks ago, I learnt from a constituent who happened to be talking to a small businessman, that certain people in the Department of Transport and Works intended to close my access road to the Stuart Highway. I say 'my access road' because we have used it for the 25 years that we have lived there. This road provides access also for 5 businesses in the area, and these businesses are not inconsiderable. One has a very large quarry. With the closure of this road, trucks would have to travel many kilometres further to reach the highway. A very well-known and quite large caravan park is located there and the only piggery in the Top End, and it is quite a large piggery accommodating some 2000 pigs. In addition, 2 small businesses have set up recently and, of course, there are the local residents.

Mr Deputy Speaker, to say that I hit the roof would be to put it mildly. My objections were not merely to protect my own interests; I was also protecting the interests of the constituents and the business people who lived nearby. In a rather agitated frame of mind, I telephoned certain people in the Department of Transport and Works and I went up through the ranks until I got to the top. I conveyed my concern to the Minister for Transport and Works. In the course of inquiries, I learned the names of the 2 gentlemen in the department who were about to set up barriers across the road, although I was assured that this was not about to happen.

The only body I did not contact, although it may have known about, or indeed instigated it, was the Palmerston Town Council. Strictly speaking, this road closure was to occur within the Palmerston municipal boundaries. However, whilst it would have produced no detrimental effect for the people of Palmerston, it lacked any consideration for the interests of the people living on the edge of Palmerston, namely the businesses and the private people around us. We have heard about the great Chinese takeaway when the Palmerston Town Council and the Darwin City Council conceived the idea of acquiring certain areas of the Litchfield Shire to add to their not inconsiderable areas of land. I understand that a draft plan has now been lodged by the Palmerston Council to change the zoning of a block of land on the road which would be affected by this road closure, and I am forced to the conclusion that perhaps there is more to this than meets the eye. If the Palmerston Town Council hopes to hit it off with the people in the Litchfield Shire, particularly those who live on the boundary of the municipality, I do not think it is going about it in the right way.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Deputy Speaker, in question time this morning, I asked the Chief Minister if a certain statement attributed to him in the Sunday Territorian was correct. That statement was: 'It is nothing less than inexcusable that people outside the Darwin area should be forced to receive Aboriginal television'. The Chief Minister admitted that, in essence, that is what he had said.

At that stage, the Chief Minister demonstrated a new depth in his performance in this Assembly. I was extremely disappointed. I do not believe that he holds those type of views personally, or I did not believe that. I hope that he was suffering from a mental aberration and that he will recover after a good night's sleep and get back to reality. I would hope that he would not say that it was inexcusable that Aboriginal people living in the Darwin area should receive non-Aboriginal television, which is the converse of what he stated. I think that it is inexcusable that this government has attempted to raise a smokescreen across this issue.

I would like to clear up, once and for all, this idea of government subsidies because it is something that has been thrown around with gay abandon and it is an absolute load of rubbish. In appearing before the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, both applicants stated that, because of the nature of the area to be covered, they would not be able to service capital for a period of 5 years. The sponsors of Imparja, the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, organised sponsorship to the value of \$5m from the ADC and the Bicentennial Authority. It proposes a public issue to raise \$2m, which is a part subscription of 50 million shares at 50¢ each. It has organised a term loan of \$2m and an overdraft facility of \$1m. We have heard bandied around some mythical figure of \$23m of taxpayers' money which is going to go down some Imparja hole. It is an absolute load of rubbish. The only way that figure could arise would be if there were some forms of ongoing grants. There are none, not a cent. The funding is for establishment and, from there on, Imparja will be on its own. It would have been quite simple for any member of this Assembly to have done what I have done and obtained a copy of the application that Imparja made to the ABT. If they had looked at it, they would have seen what a good operation is proposed.

Amongst other things, they would have seen the source and application of funds statement. I doubt whether there is anyone on the other side who is capable of reading it. However, members opposite could have used their resources to have it explained to them. It is all laid out in appendix 8. It shows that in 1 year only, year 4, will the organisation have to dip into the overdraft facility. It has \$1m organised as an overdraft facility and it will dip into it for 1 year only, to the extent of \$185 000. Mr Deputy Speaker, I hope you yourself have done some work on sensitivity testing. I applied a sensitivity test to this, and it comes well within the commercial norm. This proposal was put together by experts in the field and I have met many of them. The people commissioned to put this proposal together are of the very highest repute and standing in the industry. By year 6, Imparja will be showing a profit and, by year 8, it will be showing a net profit of over \$800 000 per annum. By then, it will be grossing net positive cash flows of over \$2m. It is an excellent proposal and it is one that deserves all our support.

I will go past the Chief Minister for a moment because, after all, he does live in Darwin and it may be that, because he will not be affected by this personally, he was influenced by some of his colleagues from central Australia. They stand condemned for what they are attempting to do to damage the economy of central Australia. They stand condemned for making negative remarks about what will be one of the biggest industries to grow up in central Australia. I will explain that more clearly. There will be 70 full-time staff and 4 part-time staff employed in this operation. This is one of the best employment prospects in Alice Springs for quite some time.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Who will be paying them?

Mr EDE: Mr Deputy Speaker, if the member for Koolpinyah cannot understand the last 5 minutes of my discussion, I will ask her to remain behind after this Assembly has adjourned, and I will explain it to her personally, over and over again, until she does understand.

Look at some of the possibilities for Alice Springs: there will be a set of studio facilities; an uplink, which none of the other proposals would have put in Alice Springs; an extra 4 radio and 40 voice channels, which will be available for leasing out to other bodies; qualified technicians, camera operators and gaffers; and, people who have worked as actors. What industry immediately springs to mind? It is a television and film industry for central Australia, where we have natural environments in which to produce some of the great films that will come out of Australia in the future. We now have the facilities to enable that industry to go ahead without having the added costs which are suffered at present by people attempting to make films in the Centre. There will be an opportunity for this organisation to lease out its facility to groups interested in making films. The corollary is that the production houses will have the infrastructure that is needed to make what could be a very marginal industry into a very profitable one.

I would like to lay to rest the other argument that has been raised: that the non-Aboriginal people of central Australia will have to bear some terrible consequences of this decision. The member for Flynn and the member for Braitling seem to be terrified as they contemplate the idea of listening to hours and hours of Aboriginal programs. It is patently obvious that programming time is not available to run more than 4½ hours per week of Aboriginal programs, as stated in Imparja's submission. There will be some additional time in Aboriginal languages on news programs; it will amount to about 40 minutes per day, I am told. Horror of horrors, Mr Deputy Speaker. There will be some 6 hours per day of network programming. I do not think that that represents a massive imbalance. Imparja has already been in negotiation with Golden West. It has told me that it would dearly love to negotiate with the Northern Territory government and talk to it about the letter sent to the Chief Minister asking him to enter into negotiations to which it did not even receive the courtesy of a reply. I have been told of the invitation sent to the honourable minister responsible for communications, who was supposed to keep an appointment on the Friday afternoon, but rang up at the last moment and cancelled that appointment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this government does not misunderstand what is going on, because it does not know what it is happening; it does not want to know. When the opportunity is given for it to get the facts, it is not interested in finding out. The member for Braitling has often spoken in this Assembly of sports coverage as something that he would dearly love to see. I have spoken to the people from Imparja and they say that, by having the uplink situated actually between the east and west beams, the ability will be there to take programs from the different commercial channels down south. By this means, they will be able to offer an alternative sports program to that which is run by the ABC. This can obviate the sort of problem that arose when broadcasts of the tennis at Wimbledon and the cricket test clashed.

It will also provide coverage of local sports in Alice Springs, and that is something which there was no way in the world that Channel 8 would address. Channel 8 intended to offer central Australia coverage of Top End sports only. That may be very interesting to members up here but, in the Centre, we would prefer to have our own sports events broadcast.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to make a final point. This is so incredibly stupid. What would happen if the honourable members opposite had their way, if they were able to overturn the umpire's decision and to go back completely on all the principles they told us that they had with regard to Mudginberri? Their actions were not anti-union then, not anti this or that. The government was not pro this or that; it simply backed the umpire's decision, and was prepared to back it financially, if necessary, to ensure that it stood. Of course, this time it was not going to back the umpire's decision. But what if members opposite were successful in overturning the umpire's decision? Where would we be? You know what would happen, Mr Deputy Speaker. The matter would go back to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal for another hearing. There would be another 18 months delay and, if some other body received the licence instead of Imparja, there would be a further delay while it set itself up. We would not have television in central Australia for another 3 to 4 years.

That is all very well for the members who come from Darwin and those from Alice Springs who are satisfied with 1 service, but some 80% of the people, who have no service at the moment, are waiting for a service. They are waiting eagerly and want to see a service in operation as soon as possible. They are not prepared to have it returned to the ABT again and to end up with nothing for another 3 to 4 years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I commend Imparja for what it has done. I think it has done a great job and I look forward to seeing its production beaming out to the people. I hope it happens quickly and I wish the organisation all the best.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning, I was pleased to learn from the Minister for Community Development that some consideration had been given to establishing a prison farm in central Australia for low-security prisoners. I appreciate his concern that the numbers fluctuate rather extremely from time to time which has made the costing and the benefits of such a prison farm questionable at times, but I am pleased to note that work has been done to locate a possible site. I do not know the name of the place that he mentioned this morning. Obviously, it was an Aboriginal name with which I was not familiar. However, I have made inquiries and I understand it is on the old Woodgreen Station. That will be of interest to people in Alice Springs.

I attended a seminar recently in Alice Springs arranged by Prisoners' Aid.

Mr Ede: There is no such station as Woodgreen.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Well, there used to be a Woodgreen Station.

Mr Ede: You can't pronounce the new name, that's all.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr D.W. COLLINS: Much concern was expressed that, in Alice Springs, the hardcore prisoners had to mix with those who had been convicted of relatively minor offences. It was thought that, if something could be done to separate the 2 groups, the latter might not be influenced by the hardened criminal elements and end up being involved in a variety of crimes. I am pleased to note that the matter is being examined. I appreciate the problems and I am sure that all thinking people know that funds are not limitless, particularly at the moment. However, I am pleased the minister is making those efforts and I look forward to learning of the results of his inquiries.

This morning, I raised with the Minister for Lands the problem that has been holding up the decision on whether Undoolya will be the next area for the extension of Alice Springs after Larapinta is filled. I welcome the news that the federal government and the United States government have agreed that the seismic array can be moved. From further discussions with the minister, I understand that initially they might have to move only a couple of the sensors and then move more as development proceeds. However, we need to plan ahead. A considerable amount of headworks is required at Undoolya before a satellite town can be developed there. We needed that decision and I will be looking for a response tomorrow in question time to find out if the government will declare Undoolya as the next area. That will satisfy people who have been wondering if it will be White Gums or Undoolya.

X and R-rated videos were also mentioned this morning. The Leader of the Opposition issued a press release which claimed that children would be able to get hold of X and R-rated videos. He seemed to think it was a great joke that I should be interested in this. I can assure you that I am very concerned that young children should not have access to these, as I know the minister is also. In his reply, he stated that the legislation had been implemented only 5 days beforehand, imposing some very severe fines upon video operators who allowed children to get hold of those particular tapes. The opposition then asked how many charges had been laid and how many convictions obtained. I believe that there are none, but I believe that is because the video operators are law-abiding. I know many of them personally and they are concerned that young people should not gain access to this material. They have my support in that endeavour. I know the people of Alice Springs would be horrified to know about some of the stupid comments made by the former Leader of the Opposition, Bob Collins, which were made on radio. They would deplore his childish comments.

I am informed that part of the reason why we are currently demanding that these films be put in a separate display room is because it is anticipated that the federal government may ban X-rated videos. Of course, it let them in in the first place, but it is now anticipated that it will ban them. If that is the case, we will almost certainly reconsider the whole matter of X-rated videos. The Territory would be the only place in Australia where they would be legal. Mind you, as has been pointed out previously by my colleague, the member for Fannie Bay, when the South Australian government announced that it would ban X-rated videos, they were all sold off cheaply. As a result, there are probably thousands of X-rated videos in cupboards in homes around South Australia where kids, being inquisitive by nature, may well be able to get hold of them. Attempting to ban them had some unanticipated side effects. However, we may well have to reconsider our position on X-rated videos and, if that is the case, it is a wise decision by the minister not to force people to build separate display rooms at this stage, and I support him.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

STATEMENT
Police Investigation of Allegations Against
Member for Barkly

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, in late April this year, serious allegations were made in the Legislative Assembly concerning the conduct of the former Chief Minister in regard to travelling allowance claims and other financial matters involving Territory moneys. Subsequently, the Rev Gallagher made a general complaint to the police relating to the same matters. Mr Tuxworth then instructed the police to investigate all those allegations and directed his staff and officers of his department to cooperate and produce all records touching upon the allegations.

The lack of particularity concerning all but one of the allegations meant that the police had to divert considerable manpower and other resources to the task of examining a large number of documents and interviewing a number of people, including Mr Tuxworth. The transactions in question extended over a period of 6 years. I received the police report and delivered it to the Solicitor General for his consideration in late July. After examination of the report, the Solicitor General sought further information from police. The police carried out further investigations and provided the information requested during the course of the last few days.

The Solicitor General has provided me with a detailed opinion in which, after reviewing the facts disclosed in the police report and the relevant law, he concludes that no charges should be laid against Mr Tuxworth arising from the allegations made against him and accordingly none will be brought.

Mr Speaker, in view of the circumstances and public interest surrounding this matter, I believe it is appropriate that I read the report from the Commissioner of Police to me so that it can be recorded in Hansard.

To: The Attorney General

From: Commissioner of Police

Subject: Investigation of Allegations against former Chief Minister concerning travelling allowance.

As you are aware, a complaint in writing, dated 22 April 1986, was made by the Rev Jim Gallagher, in which it was alleged that the then Chief Minister, Mr Ian Lindsay Tuxworth, had committed criminal offences in respect to receipt of travelling allowance. These allegations were non-specific and were in fact inferred from statements made in the Assembly by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Bob Collins.

I should emphasise at the outset that, taking into account the vague nature of the allegations, it would not have been normal police practice to agree to undertake this investigation without the benefit of a proper and comprehensive report from an auditor. However, normal procedures were not followed because Mr Tuxworth directed me to fully investigate the allegations. It was part of that same directive that I should report to you as to the outcome.

It was a consequence of the then Chief Minister's directive, that police officers were then required to undertake what amounted to a painstaking and extensive audit of all records relevant to the travelling allowance transactions. The transactions themselves covered a period of some 6 years, with the result that the investigating members, Detective Sergeants Hedley and Bourne, have gathered together a variety of documents and compiled balance sheets and comparison charts which have filled a large safe and filing cabinet.

My view is that the investigating officers, supervised by Superintendent Palmer, have conducted a very comprehensive and competent investigation. Nevertheless, I must say that most of their time was consumed in the performance of tasks which would not ordinarily be undertaken by the investigating officers. In the light of this experience, especially as it related to the use of valuable and scarce police resources, I would feel bound to challenge a ministerial directive for the police to undertake an investigation of this type without a proper auditor's report, or a specific allegation of criminality, should similar circumstances arise in future.

I have examined the attached reports, and have from time to time made spot checks of documentation and received briefings during the course of the investigation. In consequence of this accumulated knowledge, I am now prepared to accept that the appended reports portray a proper resume of the investigation and conclusions.

Reduced to the simplest terms, it appears to me that there are 2 issues to be considered.

The first relates to a period of time during which Mr Tuxworth collected travelling allowance in respect of the presumption that his home base was in Tennant Creek while in fact he resided in Darwin. Based upon the information before me, it seems that there is substance to the arguments which he has put forward in support of his claims. Consequently, I am extremely doubtful whether it can be suggested that there is any criminality involved. Nevertheless, the question is one substantially relating to interpretation. Therefore, I respectfully suggest that you take legal advice in this regard.

The second issue relates to discrepancies, or possible discrepancies, in respect of excessive or overpayment of travelling allowance during a subsequent period. I emphasise 'possible' discrepancies because from my assessment of the information before me, I do not believe that it can be said clearly that the few remaining discrepancies might not actually relate to a present inability to finally acquit expenditure against reimbursements.

If in fact there have been overpayments, and subject to the qualifications I have already made that this may be the case, it would seem that they have arisen through mistakes made by ministerial staff. I know it can be said that the minister is ultimately responsible for the actions of his personal staff, but even if this claim holds true in all circumstances, it is clear that criminal liability would not arise vicariously under these circumstances.

It is now my duty to advise you that, on the basis of the information I have received from the investigating officers, I am of the opinion

that the former Chief Minister, Mr Ian Tuxworth, has not been guilty of any criminal behaviour. In normal circumstances, I would be prepared to accept the responsibility in advising you that no further action ought to be taken. However, having regard to the very high level of public interest in this matter, you may wish to avoid further controversy by referring this file to the Solicitor General for advice.

If the investigation is to be reviewed, it would need to be done at Police Headquarters, because of the impracticality and security risks associated with transporting such voluminous files to another location.

I feel duty bound also to advise you that, in my opinion, it would not have been necessary for the police to undertake this investigation at the stage we did, had it not been for the directive given by the then Chief Minister. That is not to say that it was not to his credit that he should seek such an investigation.

R. McAULEY
Commissioner of Police.
16 July 1986.

Mr Speaker, I table the statement and the police reports regarding the investigation.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

As honourable members can see in the police report, extensive investigation has shown that I am innocent of the charges, accusations and innuendo aimed at me by various members of the community in so far as my travel allowances are concerned. I must remind the Assembly that it was I who instructed the Police Commissioner to conduct an inquiry into my travel allowance entitlements. I was willing to do this because I have always believed that I have never claimed anything to which I was not entitled. The police report is now printed and available for people to read. It shows that every travel movement I have made since 1980 has been checked and accounted for and, not only that but, that all the Amex expenses that I have incurred outside my travel allowance have also been checked and accounted for.

The inquiry occupied 2 police officers, full time, for about 90 days. They had access to all the files of the Chief Minister's department and the complete cooperation of the staff of that department. The police interviewed many people, including former members of my staff, officers of the department, hotel and motel operators, and a range of other people, in an effort to corroborate my statements and the records that exist. As it says in the police report, the consistent theme that came through in all the interviews was that I am an honest person. I have never tried to milk the system, and any errors that might have occurred would have been through administrative mistakes made by staff or departmental officers, because I never became involved in processing travel claims. I have been interviewed by the police on 3 occasions so that they could follow-up queries that arose, and I have answered all the queries to the satisfaction of the police.

Subsequently, the police report was given to the Solicitor General for an independent assessment and his review found that the police investigation was thorough, satisfactory and correct, and that its conclusions were unchallenged and upheld.

Mr Speaker, I believe that I have been the subject of a public trial, and I wish to put on record today my feelings about that public trial, and make general comments on it. Like all members in this Assembly, it is incumbent upon me to advise you, Mr Speaker, of where my home base will be for the purpose of collecting travel allowance for duties that I carry out as a member of this Assembly. Accordingly, in 1974, I advised your predecessor that I regarded and nominated Tennant Creek as my home base, and that situation continued until 1982.

In 1981, I brought my wife, Ruth, and my family to Darwin, because Ruth's illness required her to be near me for support. The nature of her illness was such that it was not possible to determine whether my wife would be in Darwin for 3 weeks, 3 months, or 3 years. Because we anticipated my wife would return to Tennant Creek, and as I was maintaining my family in Darwin and my residence in Tennant Creek, I continued to claim travel allowance. My wife's convalescence was prolonged, and it was not possible for her to return to Tennant Creek. Police inquiries found that departmental officers accepted the validity of my claims, and interested themselves only in the calculations involved in them.

It was not until a very senior officer of the Chief Minister's department raised the matter with my colleague, Marshall Perron, the then acting Chief Minister, that I became aware there might be a perceived problem. I should emphasise that, notwithstanding my concern for the welfare of my family, I also believed that I was legally entitled to the payments because I had maintained a home in Tennant Creek at all times, and it was Tennant Creek which I had nominated to the Speaker as my home base for the purposes of the determination of the Remuneration Tribunal.

My colleagues advised me that, although my actions were legal and I had claimed only my entitlements, it could be seen to be unreasonable for me to collect travel allowance if my wife remained in Darwin. My colleagues held the view that, from that time, I should declare Darwin as my home base for the purpose of assessing travel allowance. It was my view that, if I was to pursue that course, I should be consistent and have all my travel allowance reviewed and recalculated from the time of my wife's arrival in Darwin, with Darwin as my home base. Under those circumstances, I subsequently reimbursed the government \$9443. This was the difference between the amount I received whilst declaring Tennant Creek as my home base, and the amount I would have received had I been declaring Darwin as my home base, for the period from January 1981 to February 1982.

I think it is important to stress that this repayment was instigated by myself and was not exactly a state secret. All the ministers of the day and senior officers in the Department of the Chief Minister were aware of the facts surrounding my travel allowance. Many of the staff in the Chan Building were aware of the circumstances and senior members of the CLP were briefed on the background. In my view, at least 40 people would have known about it. There was never any question, as has now been confirmed by the police report, that I had done anything illegal. I claimed only those things to which I was entitled.

So far as my colleagues and I were concerned, Mr Speaker, the matter was closed and I got on with the business of developing oil and gas fields, building pipelines and erecting power-stations. The issue of my travel was raised again during the period preceding my election as Chief Minister. During that time, one of Mr Everingham's staff, Mr Peter Murphy, conducted a campaign in the Chan Building amongst ministerial staff and some MLAs

stressing that this matter should be used against me if I should make a bid for the leadership. I raised this peculiar behaviour with the then Chief Minister, Mr Everingham, who admonished Mr Murphy. However, I was never in any doubt that Mr Murphy was acting under instructions. As Paul Everingham knew, and has stated publicly on many occasions, there was no illegality or impropriety in my travel allowance claims because, as Attorney-General in the government at the time, Mr Everingham would have been obliged to pursue the matter as the government's senior legal officer, and all of us who know him would be aware that he would do that if he had to.

In 1985, Mr Murphy continued his efforts to create mischief by making allegations about my travel allowance payments. I am advised that he briefed the then Leader of the Opposition about the issue, with a view to causing me political damage. It is now a matter of record that the Leader of the Opposition pursued the travel allowance issue with a series of questions on notice, and it is also a matter of record that the questions were answered comprehensively. There was no public debate on travel allowances at that time. However, I am also advised by members of the Labor Party that, because the Leader of the Opposition had not pursued the matter publicly in the Assembly, Mr Murphy then began to brief members of the ALP party machine so that they might pursue the matter themselves. Because of party machine pressure, the Leader of the Opposition pursued the matter in question time. Mr Speaker, you will recall that the Leader of the Opposition raised a number of questions without notice referring to a period of time going back 4 years and sought details of travel payments and transactions during the period 1981-82.

The Leader of the Opposition implied that I had received cash for travel allowance as well as charging my accommodation expenses to the government, that I had double dipped and abused the system, and that I had robbed the Territory taxpayer of \$21 000. The allegations were false and the Leader of the Opposition knew them to be false. The questions he raised were unreasonable and almost impossible to respond to, in the sense that extensive investigation was necessary to provide the answers. As you can see from the police report, it subsequently took 2 officers 3 months to sift through the records and check details to confirm that my travel allowances were in order.

This matter very quickly became a political issue because it is easy to promote in the public mind the concept that politicians are dishonest and that everybody working in the government is involved in some sort of rip-off. It was impossible for me to provide detailed information at short notice to disprove the allegations that were made at that time. I was subsequently regarded as someone who had done wrong. The media campaign promoted by Mr Collins, Mr Hare, the ABC and others at that time, was based on the premise that I had to be guilty, because I could not respond quickly with satisfactory answers and, for that reason I should resign my office. I have always maintained that the citizens of this country are innocent until they are proven guilty, and I believe that principle should be applied to everybody in the country irrespective of their office.

During the course of the campaign, the Leader of the Opposition ran a story on a national ABC program alleging that I was a self-confessed thief. There is absolutely no doubt that I am not a thief and I have certainly never confessed to being a thief. These words are defamatory and I wish to advise you, Mr Speaker, and the Assembly that I will not be saying anything more about this matter because I am suing the former Leader of the Opposition and the ABC for defamation and damages.

As you can imagine, Mr Speaker, the hurt and humiliation caused to my family and the damage to my political career are easy to prove and quite substantial. During the course of this campaign against me, the Rev Jim Gallagher, a real estate salesman who in his spare time works in the ministry of the North Darwin Branch of the Baptist Church, assumed the role of Christian folk hero by mobilising members of his church in a campaign of letters to the editor, condemning me for a crime that was never committed. He also argued for a trial by the people's court and, subsequently, he lodged with the Police Commissioner a vague and unsubstantiated complaint alleging criminal activity. I received calls from several members of the Baptist Church who complained that they were being pressured by the minister to write condemnatory letters about me to the editor of the paper. He advised his parishioners he was prepared to call at their houses and pick the letters up so that they could be posted. When one member of his flock advised him that she did not believe the charges, and that she and her husband were supportive of me, he expressed his displeasure quite openly and, I understand, they felt it necessary to leave his church.

As a Christian minister, the Rev Gallagher would be well aware of the damage that can be caused by people's courts, and he would also be conscious of the fact that it is important to deal with the facts and the truth when dispensing justice. I used to believe that if there was any group in our community that knew what it was like to persecute an innocent man, it would be the ministers of the Christian faith; but the Rev Gallagher seems to be an exception.

I accept that in public life politicians are fair game and that, from time to time, the media will delight in cutting down the tall poppies. However, I also believe that the media has a special responsibility to ensure that it is working from the basis of truth, and that our parliament should ensure its role is also based on integrity and the pursuit of truth. If we are prepared to forgo truth in issues such as this, to participate in regular character assassinations for the sake of political expediency, or to beat up stories to keep the public amused, then we have lost any chance of becoming a nation in which integrity has any meaning at all.

Events in March and April of this year were reminiscent of the character assassinations that took place during the McCarthy years in America in the 1950s. The McCarthy style of character assassination used the legislatures, and unscrupulous reporting techniques, to lead to the demise of many respected citizens without any proof of their guilt. Ironically, while I was being portrayed as the villain in the Northern Territory, the now Premier of New South Wales, Mr Barry Unsworth, was being lauded in the New South Wales press as a man of great honour and integrity because, after public exposure of details of his travel claims, he had agreed to repay \$5400 to the public purse. It is interesting to note, Mr Speaker, that I repaid the money of my own volition, because I believed it was appropriate to do so. Subsequently, I was publicly chastened. Another man, who agreed to stop his claims and repay the moneys concerned only after being exposed, was proclaimed as a favourite son by the press and was ultimately elevated to the highest political office in his state.

I would like to place on record my thanks to my wife and family, who stood by me during this public campaign of innuendo and denigration. My wife Ruth withstood enormous pressure in the face of untrue and unfounded personal attacks. My children withstood jokes and whisper campaigns conducted by their peers in these times of stress, and their own endurance gave me tremendous strength. I would like to thank those parliamentary and party colleagues who

believed in my innocence, and supported me when other members of my party were trying to tear me down. Their confidence and loyalty will never be forgotten. I owe a debt of gratitude to members of my staff who served me at the time and gave me their unstinting loyalty. It is important that I record my appreciation to former staff members, who kept my records in an exemplary manner so that I was able to provide all the answers to queries that were raised by the police and the Solicitor General. To the constituents of Barkly who gave me their trust and support, I extend my thanks. Most of my constituents have known me for a long time and their confidence in my innocence was unswerving. I am grateful for that. Last but not least, I would like to thank those members of the public and officers of the public service who believed in my innocence and were not afraid to let me and others know their feelings. I am grateful for the many hundreds of personal letters of support that were sent to my home.

To those people, some staff members, some parliamentary colleagues, some party members and others self-appointed protectors of all that is true and just, who were happy to see this charade as an opportunity to cause my political demise, I say to them all that I plan to be around for a long, long time. It is my intention to contest the seat of Barkly in the next election and every election after that, until the people of my electorate decide they no longer want to be represented by me in this Assembly.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, in certain respects, that was an astonishing statement. I intend to be extremely careful about choosing my words in this reply, because the member for Barkly made personal references to me which, in respect of the litigation he has initiated against me with the support of the public purse, with great respect to the member for Barkly, do him no credit and leave me in an impossible position. I ask him to consider carefully the written words in front of him, in respect of the litigation which is a matter of great and serious concern to me, as will be indicated by a simple listing of appearances in response to the prosecutions brought against me in this matter, with the full support of the public purse. It has already involved me in considerable expense, from my very meagre resources, in obtaining opinions from silks, as I intend to defend this action.

I am going to divide my response into 2 parts. Firstly, I will deal with the statement made by the member for Barkly in so far as it does not accord with the public record of this Assembly. Secondly, I will direct my remarks to his statement that this matter was initiated by the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Mr Paul Everingham, and his press secretary Peter Murphy. Of course, I have not had the advantage of seeing a copy of this statement. I have perused it very quickly - 10 years here has taught me to be a very quick reader. I would like to point out to all members of this Assembly, to the public, and to the member for Barkly, with no disrespect to him, that if you read this statement from the Commissioner of Police, it does not put the matter to rest at all. That is clear from the information contained in paragraph 4 of page 4 of his report.

Let me say initially that the question of the legality or illegality of the member for Barkly's actions was never an issue with me, and I said that both inside and outside this Assembly. This is a serious matter and I made a decision 1 minute ago that I would now canvass what is totally relevant to this debate; that is, what I believe to be the true story behind the fall of the member for Barkly from the position of Chief Minister. This information has come to me over the last 6 months, mostly from members of the Country Liberal Party. But let me say this: the statement which the member for Barkly has made in the Assembly this morning, in respect of his initiatives

and decisions, is completely and utterly at odds with the public record of the debates in this Assembly and the answers he gave to questions from me in question time. If honourable members would care to put his statement this morning alongside those answers, they could only come to the fair conclusion that the member for Barkly has been hoist with his own petard. Like any other member of this Assembly, I can only rely on the accuracy of statements made by members in this Assembly. I would point out to the member for Barkly and other members opposite, that his statement was completely at odds with information given by the member himself in previous debates, and I will point out 2 major discrepancies.

The member for Barkly said that it was his initiative, on discovering the discrepancies, that caused him to bring the matter of his travelling allowance to the attention of his colleagues, and that it was his own initiative that caused it to be paid back. He then said that I had pursued certain statements which I, to quote him, 'knew to be false'. In respect of the very matter at issue in the litigation between us, he then went on to say that the statements that I made outside the Assembly 'are defamatory' and 'the hurt and humiliation caused to my family and the damage to my political career are easy to prove and quite substantial'. With some degree of feeling, I must say to the member for Barkly that I had no desire to transgress the sub judice conventions of the Assembly by addressing myself to the subject of litigation, to which appearances have already been listed in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, but I am forced to respond to it.

The facts are these. In this Assembly, the member for Barkly, as the then Chief Minister, said: 'I was directed to pay the money back by the then Chief Minister', and I do not need to refer to Hansard to remember that. During debate, the member for Fannie Bay said that the discrepancy 'had been discovered by a public servant'. Let us not have any rot perpetrated in here by anyone, including the member for Barkly himself, that it was his initiative and that he personally decided to pay the money back. His own words and those of his colleagues condemn him for misleading the Assembly. The member for Fannie Bay disclosed, without any prompting from me, that this matter was first discovered by a public servant, not by the member for Barkly. The member for Barkly said, in that memorable statement which was responsible for my remarks outside the Assembly, and I quote: 'I was not morally entitled to the money'. We can have legal interpretations, political interpretations, and Oxford English Dictionary interpretations of what that statement means, but as an old Irish Catholic I confess that I have a very clear interpretation. That is, if someone stands up and says he was not morally entitled to something, be it money or whatever, it is fair and reasonable for me or anyone else to say that that person has, on his own admission, transgressed in some way. I was hoping that I would not need to say that in this debate. But I am frankly astounded at the direct reference to the current litigation at issue and the assertion of the member for Barkly that my statement would be proven to be defamatory and that damages would be substantial. The matter has not even gone to court yet.

I reiterate, it was the member for Fannie Bay who disclosed voluntarily that the repayment was initiated by a public servant, not by the then Chief Minister, and it was the member for Barkly himself who, in question time, stood up and said, 'I was not morally entitled to the money'. The question of legality or illegality has never been an issue with me. I said that in the Assembly and outside it. Journalists said to me, 'Why don't you lay charges?' I can remember what I said on the public record, in and outside this Assembly: 'Why would I?' I have looked at the section of the Criminal Code which deals with matters such as this. It applies specifically to public servants. I do

not see how he has done anything illegal. Why have I not pursued the police report in this Assembly? For obvious reasons, I could not care less what it says; it has never been an issue with me. Personally, I never thought that he had done anything illegal, and I said so at the time. I was entitled to take the action that I took in the interests of the good government of the Northern Territory, because the Chief Minister himself in this Assembly at question time said: 'I was not morally entitled to do what I did'. It was a moral issue with me, never a legal one.

However, I must finish by directing honourable members' attention to paragraph 4 on page 4 of this statement. I have only just had a chance to read it. I will read it out in full. I am not saying that the result will not be a positive one for the member for Barkly; I hope sincerely that it will be. However, do not think the issue is at rest here. The Commissioner of Police says: 'I am doubtful whether there is any criminality involved'. I will put his mind at rest: I have no doubt there is no criminality involved. He then goes on to say: 'Nevertheless, the question is one substantially relating to interpretation. Therefore, I respectfully suggest that you take legal advice in this regard'.

Mr Speaker, I have been a politician in this Assembly for 9 years, going on 10. There are many old hands in here who do not need to be told what the word 'interpretation' means. We all know that whether something can be proved or not proved depends on how one interprets the legislation. With great respect, I suggest to the Attorney-General and to the member for Barkly that it is a factual nonsense to suggest that this statement puts the matter to rest. The Police Commissioner himself is not a lawyer, and he has said that he does not think there is any criminality involved but it is a question of interpreting the act. What I think he may be referring to is interpreting sections of the Commonwealth Crimes Act. He says that there should be legal advice taken as to whether the matter stops here. I have not had a chance to read the whole statement but I picked that up immediately.

I think it can be fairly said, if all reasonable members carefully consider the public record of debates in this Assembly alongside this statement, that the Chief Minister was hoist with his own petard. His own words hanged him, but who provided the rope and the gibbet? I did not intend to do this, but I will do it and bring it out into the open.

I dispute the member for Barkly's interpretation of the likely outcome of the litigation at issue between us. I am sorry that he raised it, but I am prepared to confirm the accuracy of his statement that this matter was brought to the ALP by senior members of the Country Liberal Party. Indeed it was. There is no doubt that a well-planned and well-orchestrated execution took place, and there is no doubt that the conspirators were members of the CLP. I am prepared to admit that his statements in that regard are accurate, but it goes further than that. I am pleased that honourable members are listening to me with the same silence that we accorded them in relation to this serious matter. It will indicate, for what it is worth in the public interest of the Northern Territory, what I consider to be the true circumstances - and he has my genuine sympathy in this - behind the fall from grace of the member for Barkly, and what caused him to be knifed by his own colleagues.

I wish to say that I intended to raise this in another way in the Assembly. Let me ask you, Mr Speaker, for the public record - and there is not a single member on the other side who does not know it better than I - what was the final nail in his coffin, the thing that really killed him? I will tell you what it was. I ask members to refer to the public record in

fairness to me. Members thought it was strange of me to express my surprise at his eventual resignation. That was genuine surprise. Members on the other side rolled about laughing and pointing at me. I was not prepared to enlighten them at that stage myself. I was surprised because the travelling allowance issue on its own was not enough to bring him down.

I will tell you what brought him down, and it came straight from the Country Liberal Party: it was the information that was released publicly, that the money had been paid back by a loan, so-called, from Carpentaria Pty Ltd, the bankers to the CLP. That is what brought him down and no one doubts that. That was the nail in the coffin. It caused front page drama and rightly so. Not only had he taken money to which he himself said he was not morally entitled but, according to the evidence of the member for Fannie Bay, when he had been sprung by a public servant for that, he did not have the cash to repay it. Carpentaria Pty Ltd, bankers to the CLP, this mysterious company that has been operating in the background, shrouded in mystery - and I can assure you from personal contact that most of the rank and file members of the CLP are starting to get very worried about this company - provided the member for Barkly with the money, under very interesting terms of repayment. Let me tell the Attorney-General that there is no record of that so-called loan in Carpentaria's files at the Companies Office, as is required under the terms of the Companies Act. The company appears to be at least in breach of that act.

Let me tell you about Carpentaria Pty Ltd because it is totally relevant to this debate, to the obscene telephone calls that my wife and I received, and the death threats that were made against me at my home and over a telephone in my office forcing me, after 9 years in public office, to request a silent number for my home telephone. It was all because of Carpentaria Pty Ltd.

I have a file, which I have entitled: 'Bottom of the Billabong Pty Ltd', which is what I call Carpentaria Pty Ltd. That file was in my office until 6 months ago. It is now in the hands of my solicitors, not because of any legal matters but for safekeeping. I started to get a bit worried when I received death threats over the phone as I moved closer to Carpentaria Pty Ltd, and I had that file removed from my office. At present, I am filling garbage bags with 10 years' accumulation of dead files, and it is a very debilitating and depressing exercise, I can assure you. However, 1 file that will not be placed in a garbage bag is 'Bottom of the Billabong Pty Ltd'. As I said, that is with a firm of lawyers, locked up in a safe.

I believe that the real reason for the downfall of the former Chief Minister - and it is to his credit - was because of investigations he initiated. I have no doubt about that and the reason why I have no doubt is the question I put, and the answer that I received from the Chief Minister, in question time yesterday. I have no doubt that after 8 years of the Everingham government, with the machine operating quite happily outside the Chan Building, that the member for Barkly made inquiries about 'Bottom of the Billabong Pty Ltd' when he took office as Chief Minister, and was told to take a flying leap.

At the end of this speech I want to say something to the Chief Minister, for whom I have some regard. I am well aware of the substance of the statements I am making. I had intended to leave this until my 'Bottom of the Billabong' file became thicker, but I think that the appropriate time to make these statements is now.

I have no doubt that the former Chief Minister tried very hard to find out what in the hell was going on with Carpentaria Pty Ltd, run by senior executives of the party. Everyone knows that it is the banker for the Country Liberal Party. We first flushed out its existence, in a public sense, through the campaign donations it made to the CLP. I take some pride in having done that. We pursued it. It kept popping up everywhere and, of course, the last time it popped up publicly was when the CLP disclosed that it provided the funds to pay back the TA for the honourable member for Barkly. I dare say that the engineers of that little plot thought that the limited amount of damage to Carpentaria Pty Ltd was a small price to pay for the maximum amount of damage that would be done to the member for Barkly, and he has my sympathy. They shot him down. Of course, Carpentaria Pty Ltd - 'Bottom of the Billabong Pty Ltd' - does not appreciate people with an interest in scuba diving, who want to go nosing around the bottoms of billabongs. People who sniff too close to Carpentaria Pty Ltd end up in the bottom of the billabong wearing concrete boots, certainly in a political sense.

I began to receive mysterious phone calls from CLP members, and I started taking 60 km drives down the track at midnight. It was like something out of Watergate. Senior members of the CLP, people I have known for years, prominent business people in this town, started telling me little bits and pieces, and I began adding to my 'Bottom of the Billabong' file. I became extremely alarmed, because I knew that I had been used. I suspected it and then I knew it. I had been used, in carrying out the political assassination of the member for Barkly, by a number of prominent members of his own party. There were a number of other prominent members of his own party who were a bit miffed and upset, quite reasonably as I now understand, about why he got knifed. The people in the CLP responsible for knifing him can take no pride or credit for the way they did it, and I am feeling personally bruised.

I got a few midnight calls. As members would know, in question time yesterday I asked the Chief Minister how much he knew about Carpentaria Pty Ltd. We all noted on this side of the Assembly that he turned a whiter shade of pale. I have no doubt about the reason for that, and it is to his credit. You can have a look at the answer that he gave me yesterday. Despite the evidence on his backbench of what happens to people who do this, he also has tried to find out about Carpentaria Pty Ltd, the bankers to the CLP. He also was told to go and jump in a billabong.

Mr Speaker, have a look at the answer he gave: 'It relates to the responsibilities of the directors of private companies'. Good. Full marks for that. 'Mr Speaker, that question has absolutely nothing to do with this Assembly or my ministerial responsibilities'. You know it has. '... I have had some discussions within the party but have not fully informed myself on all the matters raised by him'. Yesterday in the Assembly, I described that as a safe answer. It was a very safe answer indeed. I think the directors and other individuals involved in Carpentaria Pty Ltd are approaching the Rubicon. At least, the rank and file members of the CLP should ensure that they are, for the sake of the Territory.

I was told some astounding stories. My office was telephoned one day, and members will recall a subsequent series of questions I asked about Humbert River. These questions were about the proprietors of Humbert River being paid an extraordinary increase over the amount that had been agreed upon in negotiations. I will tell you what I was told. A senior member of my staff was informed by a senior member of the Country Liberal Party, a prominent business man in this town whom I have known for many years, that he had been told by a minister of the then government that the reason that inflated price

was paid was because there had been a subsequent kickback of the extra money to Carpentaria Pty Ltd. Furthermore, this then minister of the government had told him that he had been part of a cover-up to hide that kickback to Carpentaria Pty Ltd. I do not believe or disbelieve that story and I am not saying it is true or untrue. I will say categorically, for the record, that all the information that I have, and all the people who have been talking to me indicate indisputably that there is not a single member of the current CLP parliamentary team that has been involved in this at all. I make that clear - not one. I was a bit astounded by this, and I have a member of staff who is perfectly happy to sign a statutory declaration to that effect. When I heard the story about Humbert River, I said: 'My God'. I then started asking questions about the matter in this Assembly. I asked persistent questions about it, and I assure you that it is just one little piece of paper from the 'Bottom of the Billabong' file. One piece of paper. There are many more.

One theme that kept on emerging comprehensively from the rank and file members of the CLP who kept ringing me up and meeting with me, was that Carpentaria Pty Ltd is surrounded by a stink of corruption, kickbacks and, at the very least, patronage, which is going to get to very dangerous levels indeed if it is not controlled. I was told by a prominent member of the CLP - and I do not know if he wants to deny it or affirm it - that the member for Barkly did not know about Carpentaria Pty Ltd when he came into office. He was only aware of contingent liabilities, and he was absolutely horrified by the extent of the financial mess that this government really is in. We will be making a statement tomorrow about contingent liabilities. The former Chief Minister became extremely alarmed about the financial operations of this mysterious company, Carpentaria, the bankers to the CLP. This information came from the CLP, and if you want to push me any further I will start naming names. I am not going to today. I was astounded. I was told: 'Ian tried to find out what was going on and he got told to go take a flying leap, to mind his own business'. It was all running nicely, thank you very much, and they did not want any nosy parkers like the head of the Northern Territory government asking nasty questions about Carpentaria Pty Ltd. They did not want Leaders of the Opposition doing it either.

After I talked to about a dozen CLP members, I thought: 'This story is going to get around shortly'. The word did get around. I started getting obscene telephone calls. I was subjected to a campaign of extraordinary innuendo and gossip designed to get back to me, which it did, and I traced one of the stories right to its source. My wife started getting obscene telephone calls too, and then I started getting death threats over my office telephone. I said nothing publicly at the time, nor would I have expected to, but for this debate. I was obliged to have a bug put on the phone in my office to trace calls. I had a tape-recording machine put on my home phone so that my wife would not be in tears when I got there, because she had heard heavy breathing on the end of the line from people saying that they were going to knock me off, because I was getting too close to Carpentaria Pty Ltd. I will not deliver the rest of this information on Carpentaria Pty Ltd, as I had intended to in this Assembly, because I expect the members of the CLP to do that. It is about time they did.

Let me say this sincerely to the Chief Minister, who is a man for whom I have some respect. I say again, categorically, that from what I have learned from the people who have spoken to me, the member for Barkly was quite accurate when he said that he was set up by senior members of his own party. He was, and I will affirm that and confirm it in here. He was assassinated by members of his own party. As a result of the information I have been given, I honestly believe that he was brought to his knees, robbed of his office, and

knifed in the most ignominious way. As a practising politician, I, for one, am pleased that his colleagues supported him, and I mean that. I hope mine would do so in similar circumstances. It is to their credit that not one of them was involved, and I know that.

He was brought down by people outside the current parliamentary party, and I believe he was brought down because he started asking too many nasty questions about Carpentaria Pty Ltd, the bankers to the Country Liberal Party. I know that many rank and file members are dissatisfied. Have a talk to some members of the Sanderson branch. Ask them about the 25 questions about Carpentaria Pty Ltd which they put to the Central Committee of the CLP, to which they received no answers. It is about time the facts were faced.

As a result of the answer I received in the Assembly yesterday from the Chief Minister I believe that, to his credit, he has tried to pursue this matter as well, despite the pretty dreadful example of what may happen, in the form of the previous Chief Minister sitting on the backbench. As I said before, if you get too close to 'the bottom of the billabong', you end up politically on the bottom of the billabong, wearing concrete boots. Even if you are a Leader of the Opposition, they start spraying a bit of concrete in your direction, with a few hints that more may follow if you get too close.

Without being too emotional about it, as a politician I feel very much for the member for Barkly, because he has had a most comprehensive and professional knife job done on him. I survive in a party that specialises in knife jobs, but we do not even approach the sort of tactics employed against the member for Barkly by certain senior people within his own party. On the evidence before me, I suspect that his motives were to his credit, whereas those of the people who organised his political assassination were highly suspect.

Something stinks about that company. I believe that the Attorney-General needs to have a look at it, certainly in terms of technical breaches of the Companies Act. How can it say it has given loans to the member for Barkly, when there is no evidence of that on the company records required by the Companies Act? What other loans have been made? I would like to know, for example, whether Carpentaria Pty Ltd has any financial interests, either directly or indirectly, in radio stations or perhaps tourist lodges or tourist accommodation somewhere. I would like to know that, because I think it is of relevance to the good government of the Northern Territory.

I would like many questions answered about Carpentaria, but not nearly as badly as members of the CLP would. I think it is about time the holiday stopped and I will tell you why, Mr Speaker. I believe that the corruption, kickbacks and, at the very least, patronage, which surrounds Carpentaria Pty Ltd is of a sufficient scope to bring down this government. If you want to doubt that, have a look at what happened to a Labor government in Queensland, that was in power for decades and was thought to be unbeatable. It was brought down because of corruption and misuse of public office.

I give the current Chief Minister a piece of genuine political advice which is prompted by what I have heard in this Assembly this morning: there is no time to be limp-wristed about this and there is no time to be a wimp on this issue. I am talking also to every member of the CLP opposite and the rank and file members who have come to see me jointly and separately over the last 6 months. It is about time the Country Liberal Party stood up for the people of the Northern Territory and started getting some hard answers to the questions they are asking about the operations of Carpentaria Pty Ltd. Do not

be put off by the obvious threats that it provides you with the funds for your campaigns, so that you can get back into office. I know how significant a threat that is to an impecunious party and how nice it is to have \$1000 ads run in the NT News whenever you want them, and a well-funded campaign. It has been a pretty good threat and it has worked for years.

Members of this Assembly will know that I am both a patient and a persistent man and I say to the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory that my file on that company is getting thicker and thicker. I am going to be in politics in the Northern Territory for the duration, in whatever capacity, and I do not give up easily. I say to the Chief Minister, for whom I have a great deal of esteem, that he had better start making these people account for themselves for the sake of his party because if he does not, and if the rank and file members of the CLP do not start delving into exactly what this company has been doing - who it has been lending money to apart from the member for Barkly, where its money is coming from, and where it is going - then other people will start doing it for them.

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

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I would just like to pick up a point that the honourable member for Arafura made. Very simply, I did not profess at any stage that I was the person who discovered this and brought it to anybody's attention. It was a senior officer of the Department of the Chief Minister who brought it to the attention of the member for Fannie Bay who was Acting Chief Minister at that time. While it is true that I was directed to pay the money back, it was a matter for me to decide, as I said at the time. You cannot compel somebody to do something they do not have to do. I did not have to do it, but I did it because I believed that I should.

I do not want to comment on the other remarks made by the member for Arafura other than to say that I believe that I have been exonerated by the findings of the police investigation. The Solicitor General, in his own communication with the Attorney-General, has confirmed that I have no charges to answer. I accept that I have been the victim of a knife job, but I accept that as a part of politics and I will continue to be the member for Barkly and represent my constituents with the effort, energy, zeal, enthusiasm and dignity that I have tried to portray over the last 12 years. I hope I can make it work for another 12 years.

Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Eleventh Report of the Subordinate Legislation
and Tabled Papers Committee

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I table the Eleventh Report of the Subordinate Legislation and Tabled Papers Committee.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Remote Commercial Television Service

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, I rise to speak on the recent grant of a remote commercial television service licence to the company Imparja Television Pty Ltd. In addressing this issue, which is of fundamental importance to Territorians in remote areas, I wish to draw

members' attention at the outset to the name of the service: remote commercial television service. This is to be a commercial service, based on the free enterprise system; a service which obtains its revenue from advertising and sales and converts profits from sales into the production of programs and services for the community.

The issue of the service being commercial is vitally important, so important that, in announcing the policy for the RCTS service in the Australian parliament on 10 October 1984, Michael Duffy, federal Minister for Communications said: 'Remote commercial television service licensing will be fully commercial'. He said also that the federal government would not '... be prepared to subsidise remote commercial television services in their operations'.

Until this time, the federal government has been consistent in the implementation of its stated policy in the granting of the other 3 RCTS licences in Australia. The previous 3 licences were issued to regional television: Western Australia Pty Ltd, sponsored by the Golden West Network; Queensland Satellite Television Pty, a consortium of 9 companies made up of regional commercial broadcasters in the north-east zone; and to Satellite South East Pty Ltd, a commercial organisation servicing the south-east zone. All of these companies are fully commercial, with extensive experience and background in commercial broadcasting. They are in no way experimental.

Why then has the Territory been singled out, once again, for separate treatment? This reeks of the uranium issue. It is another example of how policies considered quite workable in the rest of Australia are sacrificed in the Northern Territory on the altar of Labor Party vested interest. We are all aware that uranium mining is acceptable in South Australia, but not in the Northern Territory, and that sales to France may or may not go ahead depending on the whim of the Prime Minister at the time. Is this kind of malicious and muddled logic now to be applied in the commercial broadcasting arena?

From the outset, the commercial viability of the licensee has been of great concern to this government. Even the preparation of Imparja's initial application for the licence, and its continued participation in the tribunal's hearings, was dependent upon federal funding. This contrasts with the only other licence application, which was lodged by Television Capricornia Pty Ltd, at a cost of some \$200 000, funded wholly from company resources. Television Capricornia Pty Ltd had to stand on its own 2 feet and compete in a market which the federal minister himself had stipulated would be fully commercial.

It is important that honourable members understand the nature of the applications that have been made. Therefore, I draw attention to some of the specifics, and outline the reason for the government's disquiet - indeed, disgust - over the recent award of the RCTS licence to Imparja. The rejected application was based upon funds drawn entirely from commercial sources. It was based upon the injection of shareholders' capital and the application of commercial loans. I may add that these loan sources have been clearly identified in supporting documentation provided to the tribunal. As a result of the initial hearings the tribunal concluded: 'Television Capricornia has established the necessary financial capability to provide these services'. In subsequent hearings, Capricornia further strengthened its application and the financial viability of its proposal.

In addition, the tribunal examined whether Television Capricornia was, in its terms, a fit and proper entity to hold the licence. The tribunal concluded that Territory Television Pty Ltd, the parent company of Television

Capricornia, is a responsible and experienced operator. It has established a track record second to none in commercial television. It has an established structure and proven experience in providing services to Territorians in the last 14 years.

In examining applications, the tribunal addresses a range of other crucial criteria, all of which Capricornia has been able to meet. In particular, Capricornia has the advantage of already possessing excellent studio and technical facilities, which it would use to provide remote television services. Also, Capricornia would establish a production facility in Alice Springs to provide the service which business and the community in Alice Springs require. In summing up, Capricornia is a well-equipped, well-qualified and highly-respected organisation capable of providing a quality service in accordance with the requirements of a licence. By contrast, the situation of the successful applicant, Imparja Television, is very different.

For example, let me list Imparja Television's financial supporters: the Aboriginal Development Commission, \$1.8m; the Bicentennial Authority, \$2.5m; and the South Australian government, \$1m in the form of a term loan. All these funds are derived from government; all come ultimately from the taxpayer's pocket. In addition, Imparja proposed to raise \$2m from corporate sponsorship. As yet, no source of sponsorship has been identified. In itself, this must place a question mark against the ability of Imparja to raise funds crucial to its proposed operations. Not only would it cost up to \$7m to establish an Imparja broadcasting station, but an additional operating subsidy would be required. This has been estimated by Capricornia to be of the order of \$22.5m over the 7-year period of this licence.

Not only are there serious questions concerning the financial approach taken by Imparja, but there are very serious questions about its management structure and abilities. In the original application, CAAMA and Imparja made much play of the fact that the management structure would be democratic, with Territory and South Australian participation. At the March hearings, however, the situation was totally changed, with the majority of board members being provided by CAAMA and a minority from land councils and certain communities.

I understand that questions of commercial experience were raised during both hearings. To my knowledge, none of the directors and other officials of Imparja have any commercial expertise. This situation raises many questions and provides very few answers.

Again in contrast with Capricornia, Imparja is faced with the near-impossible assignment of establishing a complete commercial television facility, including a major satellite link, from the ground up. This must be achieved in a very dubious company financial situation, contingent upon continuing Labor government support and currently devoid of commercial input. Even the tribunal said in its report that it was being asked to take Imparja's application on trust. Listen to this beauty. The tribunal decided to '... trust that a butterfly in the shape of a practical commercial television service would emerge from the cocoon of a theoretically-based application'. Our illustrious Prime Minister purports to hang the future of Australia, and Australians, on the shoulders of lean and commercially-efficient business developments. What went wrong here, Mr Speaker?

In addition to all of this, we find that Imparja intends, according to its published plans, to provide only 60 or so program hours per week, whereas the commercially viable but politically unacceptable application from private

enterprise would be providing in excess of 115 hours a week - twice the length of the broadcast services that will be provided by Imparja. Obviously, the benefits to Territorians rated as nil.

Mr Speaker, the tribunal is now convinced that both applicants adequately meet the requirements for a licence, including those aspects pertaining to Aboriginal programming, and that this decision has been taken in the public interest. What sector of the public, Mr Speaker? Certainly not the vast majority of Territorians.

What we are now faced with is a licensed operator who appears set for a massive debt, in excess of \$20m in the next 7 years, a debt which I am sure the Liberal federal government, when it comes into office in 12 months time or less, will be very quick to distance itself from. This is not the time for yet another of a federal government's social experiments in the Northern Territory. It is clearly evident that the Northern Territory has been singled out again for treatment quite different from that given to the rest of Australia. However, this is consistent with the performance of the federal Labor government since it came into power, including the recent examples of the slashed NTEC subsidy and the continued lack of commitment for commencement of the Darwin Airport.

In fact, the airport comparison is quite timely. The subsidy foreshadowed for Imparja is comparable to that amount of taxpayers money already expended on the currently threatened airport proposal. Northern Territorians may even be drawn to the conclusion that the recent unjustified cutback in the NTEC subsidy is required to fund this latest social experiment of the federal government. From the outset the Territory government has been committed to see a successful, viable commercial service in the zone and, to this end, originally undertook to purchase a range of services to a maximum of \$2m to ensure that remote Territorians were able to gain the maximum advantage from this exciting initiative. A proposal to use a satellite service to extend programs such as education and health requires detailed planning and long-term commitment to ensure that maximum advantages are gained. Following the initial hearing in August 1985, and a thorough assessment of the draft report to which I referred earlier, and recognising the federal government's determination to ignore the commercial aspects of the proposal, the Territory government was forced to the inevitable conclusion that the Imparja proposal would be unlikely to meet its requirements. Unqualified support to a project of this nature would not be in the interests of the Northern Territory taxpayer. Indeed, it would not be in the interests of the taxpayers of the rest of Australia who will eventually and inevitably be asked to fund this extravagance.

By contrast, however, the evidence before the tribunal indicated that Capricornia and Territory Television would be capable of providing the services being sought if they were to win the licence. The Territory government has gained experience already through working with Channel 8 on television-based educational programming when a joint trial was conducted in Darwin late last year, and it is confident of that organisation's ability.

No new evidence has been produced which would modify the Northern Territory government's unequivocal position on this issue. In seeking to purchase the package of services that I mentioned earlier, the Territory government wants to include: daytime television windows potentially up to 10 hours per week; the use of itinerant broadcast downtime for block data transfer and program exchange; staff training for relevant government employees; excess transponder band width for communication purposes;

government community service advertising; and such other worthwhile initiatives as may be developed from time to time.

Now that the federal government has taken this inexplicable decision, alternative means of delivery in the long term will need to be explored. If the federal government wishes to champion the cause of this particular organisation, it has a mechanism within its current framework to do that. Indeed, CAAMA and the ABC already have a working arrangement by which CAAMA injects as many as 67 hours per week of radio programs into the ABC HF radio services in the Territory. More importantly, I understand that a closed-door decision has been taken to add CAAMA-based television programs to ABC television services in central Australia.

Another alternative which might have met the federal government's desire for social experimentation would have been to add CAAMA services to the Special Broadcasting Service's programs and beam that service Australia-wide via the satellite. Why then have these alternatives not been developed? As I said, there are many questions and very few answers. I find it bewildering that, in the same week that the federal government is merging SBS and ABC to save a miserly couple of million dollars, it simultaneously took a decision which would rob the public purse of very much greater amounts of money.

Mr Speaker, in this short statement, I have tried to summarise some of the main aspects of this remarkable decision. From the outset, the Northern Territory's sole interest in the granting of a remote commercial television service licence has been its keenness to see the provision of a high-quality, ongoing commercial television service to all Territorians living and working in remote areas. This will not be accomplished with the vesting of a licence in an organisation which is untried and untested and has not the qualified staff nor the commercial experience to provide the level and quality of service required. Its only hope rests with its ability to receive guaranteed ongoing funding from federal government sources, possibly to the tune of \$20m or more over the period of this licence. I can only assume that the major factor influencing this decision is the federal government's patronising attitude towards some sectional interests in the community.

For the past few years, we have been witness to the Commonwealth-sponsored grab for more than 50% of all Northern Territory land. We cannot now allow ourselves to be subjected to a similar assault on our airwaves. More than 30% of the whole continent is involved in this single proposal. We cannot be pushed from the great land grab to the great skyjack. That is what it is, a skyjack. I applaud and support the action of Capricornia in foreshadowing a formal appeal against this entirely unjust decision, and urge Territorians of like mind to similarly register their disapproval and show these petty-minded and malicious masters of indecision from Canberra that we are fed up to the back teeth with them salving their social conscience north of the 26th parallel. I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, the government has made continuous play, over the last couple of years, of its determination to back up the decision of the umpire. We all saw the manner in which, in high dudgeon, it defended the Conciliation and Arbitration Tribunal in the decision that it made in the Mudginberri case. We heard it state that, when disputes of this kind occurred in the industrial arena, it was essential that there be an independent tribunal - an umpire, if you like - whose job it was to look at the issues, hear arguments from both sides, and make a decision. As we all know, its support for the umpire's decision in the case of the Mudginberri meatworks was more than simply moral backing. It went to the extent of providing millions

of dollars in support of one of the parties, whom it perceived to have been disadvantaged by the fact that another party had not followed the decision of the umpire. We have seen since the amazing about-face made in attempts to assist its mates in Peko, in the industrial dispute in progress in Western Australia. However, that is occurring interstate, and possibly is not something we should dwell on in this debate.

The manner in which government members have been willing to cast aside the decision of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal is most disappointing. They were willing to cast it aside even before they had had the grace to peruse the decision and examine what it entailed. On the strength of media reports, they leapt immediately into the fray. They said: 'We will not accept that. We do not agree with it. We will oppose it'. At the weekend, the newspapers were full of statements from CLP politicians as members opposite jumped into the argument and fell over themselves in their efforts to see who could make the strongest statements of opposition to the decision.

The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal is an independent tribunal. It performs a judicial function similar to that of other bodies of that type, an example of which, as I said earlier, is the Conciliation and Arbitration Tribunal. In the very best sense of the Australian term, such bodies are the umpires. It is their role to look at the arguments from both sides and to decide which provides the most compelling case. The Australian Broadcasting Tribunal has had 2 hearings on this matter over a period of 18 months. It travelled to places like Alice Springs and Kintore, as well as holding hearings in Sydney itself. The decision to grant the licence to Imparja was not political. There are no politicians on the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. The government simply followed the umpire's decision.

I would like to refer to the Sunday Territorian of 24 August, where the former Chief Minister stated that, as soon as there was a change of federal government, the whole thing must be dismantled. I find those remarks quite incredible. He has said that a new Liberal Country Party government in Canberra should overturn decisions of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal. I have sent a telex to the Leader of the Opposition in Canberra asking him whether it would be a policy of his government to look at decisions of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal and to decide, on a political basis, whether it would follow those decisions. Would they, on a political basis or at the behest of their political friends in the Northern Territory, overturn the decisions of the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, or would they abolish the tribunal altogether and make political decisions about who would be granted licences of this nature? The scenario painted by the former Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, is frightening, and I am looking forward to hearing from the Leader of the Opposition in Canberra to see whether that is really his intention, or whether his colleague in the Northern Territory is mouthing off to no avail in his usual manner.

It has also been said that the funding by the Australian Bicentennial Authority was somehow suspect. There have been rumours in Alice Springs about a letter stating that the Bicentennial Authority had decided not to provide the money to Imparja, but that that decision was somehow overruled. Just before lunch, I was able to get a copy of the letter that is being circulated. It is available for members if they wish to see it. It states that the \$2.5m of bicentennial money went into the project, courtesy of the federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding. The local chairman of the Bicentennial Authority in Alice Springs states: 'We are told that this allocation of bicentennial money was opposed by both the Northern Territory Council for the Bicentennial and the Australian Bicentennial Authority but that their advice

was overruled by Mr Holding and the federal government in granting the funds to Imparja'.

Firstly, I contacted the Australian Bicentennial Authority in Canberra. It denied categorically that it was under any political pressure in this matter. It denied categorically that it followed anything other than the normal decision-making process used with other applications for funds. Secondly, I asked one of my staff to check, because I believed that this matter had been canvassed in the Senate. I refer honourable members to the Senate Hansard of 30 April at page 2144 and 30 May at page 3130, where the opposition raised this question in the Senate. It was quite clear from the answers provided by honourable ministers involved that there was absolutely no substance to the claim, that it was a complete scuttlebutt and furphy raised by members of the opposition in the Senate. In fact, they were doing no more than flying a kite, a kite which was cut down very effectively and which should be laid to rest.

What was it that impressed the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal? After its first hearing, it felt that it could not make a decision because both applicants before it had problems. It felt that Imparja had not put together a satisfactory financial package and it decided that Channel 8 had not sufficiently established that it had the ability to provide services to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people make up 38% of the total number in the receiving area and 80% of the people who currently receive no service at all. Both applicants went off to revise their proposals and see how they could strengthen their weak points. The Channel 8 applicants came back with a proposal which they felt helped them surmount the problems that the ABT had with them, and Imparja held discussions with various consultants who then negotiated a financial package that could be submitted to the tribunal.

Having examined the applications as amended before they came before the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal the second time, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal decided, in its own wisdom, after considering all the issues involved, that Imparja was best able to serve the interests of the people of the region concerned.

Members opposite have stated that somehow CAAMA has no background in the media. CAAMA started up some 6 or 7 years ago, as a radio facility. Initially, it produced radio programs which were put over the ABC for, from memory, a couple of hours a week. Then it moved into the area of FM radio. This was prior to the operation of 8CCC Alice Springs. At that time there was ABC radio, 8HA and CAAMA radio. I recall the results of a survey that was conducted at that time in Alice Springs. It was found that, following Territory Extra at 8.30 am, after the newsbreak on the ABC until the start of the John Laws program on 8HA, CAAMA had far and away the largest listening audience of any of the radio stations in Alice Springs.

That listening public has been reduced slightly with the introduction of another FM station, 8CCC, which has done quite amazing things in attracting an audience in Alice Springs. However, CAAMA is still one of the major broadcasters in central Australia, with an audience which crosses racial boundaries. CAAMA is not listened to by Aboriginal people only. It puts out good music, good programs and the type of service that the people of Alice Springs have been looking for. It caters for the market and has gained a high degree of acceptability.

Recently, it moved on further and is broadcasting on the scatter frequency out of Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. Because of this new scatter

frequency, which has a range of some 500 km, people in central Australia have reasonable daytime access to radio for the first time. That is being produced by CAAMA, the parent group for Imparja Television.

The total population of the area that will be covered is some 90 000, of whom 38% or 34 000 are Aboriginal people. In the Top End, 46% of the people who will receive the service are Aboriginals. The proportion is 35% in the Katherine-Barkly area, just over 30% in the southern Northern Territory, and almost 40% in South Australia and the eastern part of Western Australia. I will give you an idea of the number of locations and the population involved outside the microwave corridor. There are some 364 communities, with an Aboriginal population of over 18 000 out of a total population of just over 22 000. Well over 80% of the people who currently have no access to these services are Aboriginal people. That was one of the reasons why the ABT decided that it would back the service. I wish to point out that about 50% of the area to be covered will be in the Northern Territory and 50% will be in South Australia. In fact, the service will be provided down to Mount Gambier, Mildura, the Riverina, Broken Hill and so on, which are outside the actual designated service areas. It will be going across to the west beyond Ceduna, into the eastern part of Western Australia, and up to the Kimberleys in the northwest.

CAAMA has done a lot of work in radio but it has also produced TV programs. It very effectively covered the handover of Uluru to the traditional owners. It made a movie based on the experience of people in that area, and for many years it has been producing tapes. I believe annual sales from that source are currently in the vicinity of \$100 000.

It has been stated that there is some problem with the amount of government money allocated to this organisation. First of all, I would like to point out to honourable members opposite that the ADC has put some money into the organisation. There seems to be a problem about this. They seem to have rather mixed feelings about the Northern Territory government's involvement with the ADC. In fact, as members opposite would know, the first Territorian loan of some \$10m, was underwritten by the capital account of the ADC. The ADC capital account contributed some \$4m to it. That investment is now returning about \$600 000 per annum in interest and probably that money has provided the ADC with sufficient funds to invest in CAAMA.

It is rather strange that the government is quite happy to criticise the ADC when it places money into organisations like Imparja, but is quite complacent about going to the ADC in an attempt to encourage it to put its money into the Northern Territory. The ADC has decided to back the Northern Territory. It is backing this government; it underwrites its loans. It is backing organisations like Imparja, after looking at it and deciding that it has great economic potential. The ADC money is equity participation. It has been spoken of in this Assembly as some form of grant, but it is equity participation. The ADC has taken up \$1.8m in B Class shares. It is the height of hypocrisy for this government to turn around and say that it objects to the ADC buying shares in Imparja, when it has placed \$10m in the Alice Springs Sheraton.

The government stated that it was willing to assist the licensee of the remote commercial television service. I refer to the NT News of Wednesday, 7 August 1985. "The Territory government was willing to assist financially the successful applicant for the remote television licence for central Australia", Chief Minister, Mr Ian Tuxworth said. Mr Tuxworth said: "The central zone was the least likely of the AUSSAT satellite footprint areas to

be economically viable and, for this reason, the government was prepared to provide assistance, but we believe the federal and South Australian governments should be with us".

Mr Coulter: Yes, equity participation.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, that does not sound like a fee-for-service basis. As the Treasurer interjected, it sounds like equity participation. It seems that equity participation from the Northern Territory government is all right, but when it comes from the ADC, suddenly there is something wrong with it. I cannot understand this government. It complains about people coming to it with their hands out for money. When they go elsewhere to obtain a term loan, or an equity participation arrangement with another group, that is socialism and there is something terrible about it. When the government does it itself, that is different.

It is very unfortunate that, although it said initially that it would provide \$2m to the successful applicant, the Territory government changed its mind and said that it would provide that assistance only if the successful applicant was Channel 8. That was the beginning of the ridiculous position that this government has taken on the whole issue. The government's attitude is ridiculous. Most of the money raised initially will go into assets. The initial setting up of the operation will be quite expensive.

I would like to contrast the 2 positions. Through the Northern Territory Development Corporation, the government can inject funds into businesses. For example, I believe V.B. Perkins was the recipient of a loan from the Northern Territory Development Corporation which was of great assistance to it. We are not complaining about that but, obviously, it assisted that particular company to buy shares in Channel 8. Other businessmen who have received money through the NTDC have put themselves in a financial position whereby they have been able to buy shares in various other businesses. Apparently that is okay, because it is the capitalist economy in operation. However, when the ADC puts in some money to buy shares in a company, that is socialism. That is a terrible thing; it is not commercial. When the South Australian government decided to provide a term loan, something which the Northern Territory government urged it to do in an early press release, as it did the Western Australian government, and the money was actually provided for Imparja, that was terrible. The government will not have a bar of that. It portrays it as a disaster. The position being taken is absolutely hypocritical.

I drew attention to a number of the advantages of the Imparja decision in last night's adjournment debate. I refer members who were not present to the daily Hansard, because I covered several areas which I will not have time to canvass again in detail now. They include the extremely exciting possibility that this will act as a catalyst for the development of a film industry in central Australia, and the excellent effect that it will have on economic development through increased employment.

I want to lay to rest once and for all the \$23m bogey. Somebody said somewhere that it might cost \$22m. In an attempt to bring about a self-fulfilling prophecy, this government has attempted to enshrine that as part of the common wisdom of the Northern Territory. By denigrating Imparja, the government is attempting to scare off its creditors and make it impossible for it to come through the development phase successfully.

Mr Speaker, I table a copy of Appendix 8, the funds statement from Imparja's application. I would like copies to be provided to honourable

members so that they can see for themselves just how economically viable this new service will be.

I see that my time is running out and I will end by making a plea for the government to become involved. It could reach an agreement with Imparja to supply the services that the minister referred to in his statement today. It could obtain those services on a fee-for-service basis if it were prepared to negotiate with Imparja. Twice Imparja has attempted to negotiate with this government and it has stated to me that it is still quite happy to do so. All it is trying to do is to cooperate with the Northern Territory government to provide services to people in rural areas. I think that the educational programs which the minister highlighted in his speech could very easily be provided if the minister went to Imparja and said: 'Let us forget about all that has occurred. Let us sit down and talk on a commercial basis about the services that we would like to see provided. You have the facilities and we have the need. We will come to a commercial decision on how we can provide those services to people out bush'. There is the excess transponder band width which is available for negotiation with the Northern Territory government. There is the government's community service advertising which has to be provided to people in those areas. There is a vast range of services which need to be provided for those people and I plead with the government to get back to the negotiating table with Imparja Television.

Mr FIRMIN (Ludmilla): Mr Speaker, today we have heard some quite interesting information from the member for Stuart, but not a great deal of it was true. Let us start getting straight some of the facts about the tribunal and the attitudes of the federal government to the granting of a licence. Let us begin with what Mr Duffy, Minister for Communications, said in a ministerial statement to the federal parliament on 10 October 1984. I will read part of that into Hansard:

'In considering the questions which hinge upon its belief as to what constitutes the public interest, the tribunal will have regard to the Broadcasting and Television Act, its own substantial body of experience in broadcasting matters and the government's publicly expressed policies. In particular, it will have regard to the need to: (a) ensure the availability of at least 1 commercial television service to all Australians; (b) avoid undue concentration of media ownership or control in the service area concerned; (c) avoid control, direct or indirect, of foreign persons; and (d) any such other matters as may be prescribed in regulations.

He goes on to talk about future developments:

I now wish to say a few words about the future. In its SBS report the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal provided a very useful analysis of strategic objectives regarding commercial television. It identified 5 major concerns of government: (a) to maximise diversity of choice in radio and television services, so that all Australians have access to as wide a range of services as possible; (b) to bring a similar range of entertainment and information throughout broadcasting services to all Australians, especially those currently without any, or inadequate services; (c) to maintain the viability of the broadcasting system and to encourage an Australian look for television and radio by maintenance of an appropriate Australian content level and the fostering of an Australian production industry; (d) to provide broadcasting services relevant and responsive to local needs; (e) to discourage concentration of media ownership and control of stations.

It is interesting to note that the Communications Technology Select Committee Report commented in a very similar vein. Section 4.5.04 of this bipartisan select committee's report says:

that the committee supports the granting of the central zone licence to an applicant who can demonstrate Territory participation and ownership, is clearly a commercial applicant and not an organisation primarily government-funded, has proven expertise and business experience in the provision of television broadcast services, and is able to deliver programs of the widest possible appeal to a majority of the potential audience and is not a representative of sectional interest.

This was the report of the bipartisan select committee of this parliament. It states clearly how we felt after debating the matter at some length. The federal minister has clearly stated his criteria, and they are all much the same. Let us have a look at the Broadcasting Control Tribunal criteria for the granting of a licence. The following specifications apply to RCTS licences:

(a) Licensees should provide commercial television services by means of space transponders and at least such terrestrial transmitters as are specified in the schedule to this direction; (b) the areas served shall be of those parts of each of the regions specified above which are not included in the service areas of existing commercial television stations or commercial television translator stations; (c) the purpose of the licences shall be to provide services appropriate to the needs of the residents of the areas referred to in (b) above; (d) the licences shall provide services utilising the 30 watt space transponder in zonal beams using the transmission standard for the HACBSS service set out by the Minister for Communications, and the Tribunal shall report by 1 April 1985.

It was interesting to consider those criteria, particularly in relation to the time limits imposed on the inquiry by the minister, and to apply them to the problems the ABT faced in receiving evidence in respect of the commercial and financial capacity of the groups making application for the licence. Several members of this Assembly asserted in yesterday's adjournment debate, and in this debate on the minister's statement, that the tribunal took these criteria into account when it found in favour of Imparja. That may be what the tribunal says in its conclusion, but in the short time that I have had to read the tribunal report, I can find very little evidence which connects its conclusion with those criteria. I find the conclusion difficult to understand. Members may not be aware that I gave evidence to the tribunal on 3 separate occasions. I sat and listened through 9 sitting days of the tribunal's first hearing, to an average of 8 hours of evidence per day. I listened very closely to the evidence that was led by eminent people from around Australia, trying to determine who should be the successful applicant in this particular inquiry.

Mr Bell: How could you find 9 days to spare to listen to that? It beats me.

Mr FIRMIN: I have a dedication to the Assembly and to my government.

Mr Smith: Not to your constituents.

Mr FIRMIN: I do, to all of my constituents, and certainly to those constituents who have an interest in the bush, which seems to be a little more than many members in this Assembly do.

I attended the hearings in Alice Springs on 2 other occasions, the first time for another period of 8 days, and the second for a further period of 9 days. I have had the opportunity to listen to both the parties, and persons that have appeared before the tribunal as witnesses on behalf of each applicant. When I left the tribunal at its last hearing, at the back of my mind I thought that the licence would go to Imparja. I felt that the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal was looking for a means to give the licence to that organisation, and that is what has now happened.

In my view, it was evident that the witnesses were being led in such a way as to produce that result. We have had a clear demonstration of that technique from the member for Stuart, who trotted out once again the same arguments as were presented by the eminent silks and legal representatives for Imparja and the GWN service and other sectional interest groups. He gave us the same tired argument about the Aboriginal population versus the remainder of the population in the viewing zone. Mr Speaker, if you look through the tribunal's findings, you will find that there are 3 separate references to the population percentages in the zone. Percentage figures you arrive at depend on the way in which you attempt to define those populations in concentrations of areas.

For the time being, let us accept the figures put before us a moment ago by the member for Stuart. He determined that a total Aboriginal population of 34 000, as opposed to the remaining population of 90 000 in the viewing area, represents 38%. Let us accept for now that that is the upper percentage figure. To my mind that still does not mean that a licence granted to Imparja on that basis will serve the interests of the majority of people within the zone.

Mr Smith: Why not?

Mr FIRMIN: Well, it cannot, can it? Not if 38% of those people are represented by a sectional interest television service ...

Mr Smith: Why can't it represent white people's interests as well as black?

Mr FIRMIN: I will come to that in a moment. But in terms of straight population percentages, it is spurious to argue that because 38% of the people in the viewing area are Aboriginals, Imparja should have the right to run the television station which services them. The tribunal's findings indicated that that was the long bow it attempted to draw. Whether the service will provide balanced programming or not is yet to be determined, and probably it will not be determined for 16 or even 18 months.

Mr Bell: You will get a good idea when I get up and speak, Col.

Mr FIRMIN: Thank you. If you had evidence of what the content of Imparja's daily output would be, I wish you had given it to the tribunal. Certainly, you did not do that.

We have dealt with the financial ability of the 2 companies presented to the tribunal hearings. The member for Stuart made much of the amount of money that Imparja has managed to create on paper at this stage. I say 'create on

paper' because it does not have it in its hands nor are the commercial arrangements yet in place to commence its operation. The tribunal identified that as well. Television Capricornia demonstrated to the tribunal, through its accountants and its financial advisers, in my hearing, that it not only had the financial expertise, but also adequate backing. That was accepted by the tribunal at that time, and identified in its findings. It had the directors' guarantees that showed the commercial operations that it controlled. It showed the bank loans that it was able to have in place to get its operation going immediately and it showed that it had the financial structure in place. In my view, Imparja has never ever demonstrated that.

Have a look at page 66 while you are waving around your bit of paper, because you said yesterday that you had a copy of the tribunal findings.

Mr Smith: He did not say that at all.

Mr FIRMIN: Have you a copy of it now?

Mr Bell: No. I have a copy of Imparja's licence application.

Mr FIRMIN: Have a look at page 66 of the tribunal's findings at some stage.

In the estimated revenue of Imparja, it still shows figures of \$1.5m in the second period, \$1.45m in the third period, \$1.395m in the fourth period, \$1.3335m in the fifth period and \$1.268m in the sixth period - all from the Northern Territory government. It is projected revenue income which we have not decided to grant at any stage. While we are talking about the money that Imparja suggested would be forthcoming from the Northern Territory government, I should say that it was never a grant; it was always a fee for service.

In evidence to the Remote Commercial Television Service Inquiry, the director of the department said: 'I am able to indicate to the tribunal and the licence applicants that the Northern Territory government is prepared to financially support the remote commercial television service in the central zone if the licence is issued'. He then went on to say:

It will be for an agreed non-escalating total annual fee which will provide a package of services. The package of services being sought are to include items such as fully-serviced television time; voice and data circuits, 1 and 2-way capable; studio production support; staff training; other services offered by the licensee such as computer communications support and so on, for education, health, transport and works and other government functions.

It was not a grant. At no time was it ever considered to be a grant.

The Imparja figures contain, at page 66, a proposal to receive \$2m in corporate sponsorship. This was never demonstrated to my satisfaction to have any tangible support. I heard it claimed that support was forthcoming, but at no stage was the corporate sponsorship demonstrated to the tribunal. In my view, it was just a loose piece of accounting to try and make the figures look good. I do not believe it has been successful.

One of the other criteria laid down by both the minister and the Remote Commercial Television Service Inquiry, related to undue concentration of media ownership or control in the service area. In last night's adjournment debate, the member for MacDonnell alluded to the possibility that the service may be

provided with the assistance of an operator from another zone, the Golden West Network service from Western Australia. Let me suggest to the member, who can transmit my view to his friends at Imparja, that if they elect to ask for assistance from Mr Bendat of GWN and GWN agrees to provide services, that will constitute a massive concentration of media ownership in an area where there is no alternative. The Golden West Network has been granted the Western Australian licence. If it operates the central zone licence, that will concentrate one half of the Australian remote area licences into the hands of one single group. I am certain that is not what the minister would be prepared to accept. Certainly, it will not be accepted by the major television operators of Australia, the big boys of television. Imparja is a little boy who wants to come into the pond rather late with very little money and, supposedly, a lot of government support.

It will have to fight for its licence at renewal time. The major networks have already been there; I saw them working. Imparja was protected on its first time around. It was protected by the government and by the fact that this was an innovative remote area licence application. The tribunal dealt with all of the applicants very kindly in the face of incredible pressure from the majors. Some members realise the extent of that pressure because they know that the majors were looking for a total Australia-wide service via the satellite. The minister had to perform some quick foot-shuffling manoeuvres to ensure that he headed off that proposal. When it goes back for licence renewal, Imparja will not be protected in that way. The majors will be giving it a heap of trouble. If it wants to go to bed with GWN, I think it had better think again.

Mr POOLE (Araluen): Mr Speaker, I am an elected representative of a large percentage of the community of Alice Springs.

Mr Ede: 25%.

Mr POOLE: That is a fairly big percentage when you consider that 3 members of my party are representatives of 75% of the Alice Springs community. By decree of the federal government, we are getting a television service that we do not want. The wishes of the majority of people in Alice Springs have been totally ignored.

I have no argument with CAAMA or Imparja. I have no argument with the idea of Aboriginal people in central Australia obtaining a television service. I have an argument with my tax money being spent to provide that service when a perfectly good, commercially viable alternative was offered by Capricornia. The subsidy which has been talked about today will probably total about \$20m over the next 5 years. That is totally laughable when one considers the amount of money that the federal government has ripped off the Territory over the last 3 or 4 months in electricity subsidies etc.

Capricornia has a good track record. It is an experienced operator. It has operated commercial television in Darwin for many years. I have been a frequent visitor to Darwin and have watched its programs on many occasions. The main thrust of my argument is that the people of Alice Springs want to watch commercial television. They do not want another ABC or SBS service, or an ethnic television station; they want to watch commercial television, and that is a fact of life.

Mr Bell: That is what they are going to get.

Mr POOLE: It is not; they will get 60 hours of it.

Mr Ede: How many hours a week are you going to watch TV? Aren't you interested in what you watch?

Mr POOLE: I am not talking about myself. The fact of the matter is that a commercial television station can provide 150 to 160 hours a week of television. What they will receive is about 60 hours of Aboriginal programming.

Mr Bell: That is wrong, it is wrong.

Mr Ede: 4½ hours.

Mr POOLE: There is ample provision within the ABC service to provide Aboriginal television to the Aborigines of central Australia. Why can't the residents of central Australia receive the service they want? I would suggest that if the ABT conducted a public referendum throughout the footprint area, it would most certainly receive a response in favour of Capricornia of about 70% to 30%.

Mr Perron: But that would be democratic.

Mr POOLE: That would be democratic, but unfortunately it looks as though it will not happen. I think the general public, particularly those people who live in Alice Springs, are fed up with federal government support for minority groups. The amount of money that we, as taxpayers, spend on support of all kinds of weird and wonderful things...

Mr Ede: Territorians are a minority group.

Mr POOLE: They are too, and why don't we have a television service?

Mr Manzie: Or a university. We are trying to obtain support.

Mr POOLE: We are trying to get this support, but we want this support for what we want to watch.

I realise that the 2 honourable members on the other side represent Aboriginal communities and I have no argument with them receiving a television service. However, I feel that we should act in accordance with the wishes of the majority to obtain the same type of service as is available to the average citizen in Darwin, Brisbane, Cairns, Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.

The comparison between 60 viewing hours and 115 indicates clearly that we shall not receive what we want. It is quite obvious that, if the federal government is prepared to subsidise the operation of Imparja to the tune of \$20m over 5 years, that will cost us money where it hurts. I think the population is utterly fed up with subsidising this sort of government funding. Along with the fringe benefits tax and various other imposts, it will knock out the federal ALP government at the next election. It is time...

Mr Ede: What is going to knock out you blokes?

Mr POOLE: Nothing will knock out 'us blokes', because 'us blokes' provide a service to the community by developing, and creating employment. That is what life is all about, and that is what the CLP ...

Mr Ede: Your subsidies are different, are they?

Mr Bell: Employing backbenchers to sit before the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal.

Mr POOLE: It is a pity that the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal was probably overruled by its minister, the minister for giving everybody everything.

Mr Bell: I challenge you to repeat that outside. Go on, if you're fair dinkum.

Mr POOLE: It is good to see you getting angry. As far as I am concerned, I represent the wish of the majority of people that live in Alice Springs, which is that we should have a viable commercial television station. We should have the opportunity to see programs such as those offered by Channel 9, Channel 7 and Channel 10, in the southern capitals. It is an opportunity which the people of Darwin have had for a number of years and they have been served very well by the local commercial television station. It is an operation that taxpayers in Darwin do not subsidise to any degree that I am aware of, and I think we should have that opportunity in central Australia.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): That very scant peroration from the member for Araluen almost caught me off guard.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there are a few points that I wish to make in the context of this particular statement. I suppose the key issue is the one taken up by my colleague the member for Stuart. We constantly hear from Country Liberal Party politicians in this Assembly about respecting the umpire's decision, playing by the rules and obeying the laws. We always hear them beating the good old law-and-order drum. We had these offensive comments from the member for Araluen. I challenge him to repeat outside this Assembly, his allegation that the federal Minister for Communications rorted the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal ruling. His allegation was that the federal minister for Communications has exerted undue pressure on the ABT to make a particular ruling. I challenge him, here and now.

Mr Poole: We have not got what we wanted.

Mr BELL: I appreciate that the member's nose is a bit out of joint. He did not get what he wanted and he is crying like a spoilt child because of it. I think if he actually read the speeches made by myself and the member for Stuart during the adjournment debate yesterday, he might have some appreciation in that regard. However, I will return to that point later.

I do want to stress the opposition's position, and that is that we should cop the umpire's decision. The government is always telling us, as it did in the case of Mudginberri, that we have to accept the umpire's decision. Well, it is about time members of the government did that, instead of carrying on with this nonsense about appeals to this one and appeals to that one. The fact of the matter is that government members are not accepting the umpire's decision, and I really do not think that it reflects any credit on the Northern Territory's Legislative Assembly when they behave in this way.

There is a second point I want to make. In his stumbling way, the member for Ludmilla managed to convey that the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal operates under strict legislative requirements and that there are strict licence conditions which apply to the remote commercial television service licence that has been awarded to Imparja Television Pty Ltd.

Just for the sake of future conduct of this debate, I would like to explain to honourable members, who I am sure are interested, that the pronunciation of this particular word is 'imparja'. It is an Aranda word meaning 'track' and it was originally chosen by the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association when it was producing records and tapes for sale. I see them frequently around communities in my electorate. The track on the ground became recognised as the track on a record. It is a neat little analogy and a very appealing name. Equally, the phrase 'inka imparja' means 'footprints'. I am sure that the member for Ludmilla and many other members will be aware of the terminology used in relation to satellite technology, and will be overwhelmed by the poetry of 'inka imparja'. I presume that my sarcasm is not entirely lost on the member for Sadadeen.

To return to the previous issue, Imparja Television Pty Ltd will be subject to strict licence conditions with respect to the RCTS licence that it won, and I would appreciate some recognition of that from government members. The opposition is making 2 points: that the government members are clearly refusing to abide by the umpire's decision, and that they seem to be rather unaware of the requirements of the Broadcasting and Television Act and the attendant strict licence conditions that apply to the licence won by Imparja.

I want to turn more specifically to the statement introduced into this Assembly by the Minister for Business and Technology and the other business that he is minister for. I should say in passing that the titles of these ministers for this, that and the other, place quite a strain on the memory of the honest hard-working backbencher. I would appreciate it if they could stick to shorter names and not change them quite as often. I mean no irreverence to the minister in that regard.

However, I do intend great irreverence to the minister with respect to what he did not talk about in his statement this morning. I am particularly concerned about his failure to mention, in spite of my earnest tutelage in last evening's adjournment debate, the linguistic implications of the granting of this licence. I spent some time attempting to get through the thick heads of the minister and his colleagues the potential impact, social and linguistic, of mass media. Quite clearly, I was casting pearls before swine, because absolutely no mention of that was made in the minister's statement this morning. Honourable members might be interested to know that many of the names that they hear around the Territory and in the Legislative Assembly are names of languages that are no longer spoken. Nobody knows a thing about the Larrakeyah language, for example, and I suggest that the member for Wagaman should chase up the few remaining speakers of Wagaman before it is extinct. Wagaman is not in very good shape. Jingili is in reasonable shape. It is spoken in the electorate of the member for Barkly, I think. He has probably got a few constituents who are fluent speakers of Jingili, although they have been transported, in name only, to a northern suburb of Darwin. Whatever shape the electorate might be in, I understand the language is still in reasonably good shape.

Mr Perron: How about Fannie Bay?

Mr BELL: In the case of Fannie Bay, all I can say is that the remnants of the Larrakeyah weep.

One of the saddest and most damning lacunae in the statement by the minister this morning was his failure to mention any of the social or linguistic implications of the granting of this licence. Time after time, we hear government members talk about the localisation of authority and

responsibility, and the need to grant to the people of the Territory control over their own affairs. How can Australians take those sorts of cries with any degree of seriousness when we see such a vast area, that should be of concern to government members of this Assembly, totally ignored. That is un-Australian behaviour and unacceptable behaviour and I think it stands utterly condemned. I believe that the people of the Territory and the people of this country will see that sort of ignore in exactly those terms.

On that theme, let me reiterate what I mentioned in last night's adjournment debate in relation to the Australian Bicentennial Authority. 150 languages have been swept away since European entry into this country, many of them without trace. What a bicentennial gesture it would be if, in a free spirit, we were prepared to accept that this was a gesture that might make some recompense for those 150 languages and the thousands of people who have disappeared along with them.

Mr Poole: Bring the poms back to bloody Normandy.

Mr BELL: I will pick that comment up from the honourable member for Araluen because it deserves to be included in Hansard. That is the sort of attitude that has been evinced by government members continually in this Assembly. They are prepared to walk by on the other side when it comes to the physical and spiritual pain that Aboriginal people have unquestionably suffered in this country. It is interjections like those from the honourable member for Araluen that perpetuate and exacerbate exactly that pain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the second lacuna in the statement by the minister this morning relates to the \$2m. There was no mention of the sheer hypocrisy that I referred to in yesterday's adjournment debate. I will not go over territory I covered then, but I will simply place on the record that it is nothing short of hypocrisy that the Territory government was prepared initially to offer \$2m - it is somewhat unclear now what the terms were to be - to whichever applicant was successful and now it has reneged on that offer. That sort of behaviour does the Northern Territory government no credit whatsoever and I am sure it will be perceived in my electorate as compounding racism with hypocrisy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, just to rectify a few of the misapprehensions that clearly abound on the government side, I seek leave to table an appendix to the licence application that was made on behalf of Imparja and the program schedule that was included in that application. As honourable members peruse that program schedule, they will see quite clearly that this commercial licence will not be used only for Aboriginal programs. Let us just kill that furphy for a start. As the program schedule shows, there is provision for a variety of Australian drama, light entertainment and movies. A relatively small portion of the schedule will be taken up by programs produced by Imparja Television.

Mr Deputy Speaker, another matter deserves comment because of the high moral tone adopted by the minister when he introduced it. He quoted the federal Minister for Communications, Michael Duffy, and selectively picked out a few comments in relation to remote commercial television services. Let us look at an antidote for that. In exactly the same speech of 10 October 1984, quoted by the minister, the federal Minister for Communications said:

In the context of small communities, I want to mention the special situation of Aboriginal communities. The government realises that Aboriginal needs have to be specially recognised. My colleague, the

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and I have received a report from a task force we established in March 1984 to advise us on the development of policies and strategies in Aboriginal broadcasting. We will be closely examining the task force recommendations to ensure that special attention is given to Aboriginal communities in the extension of remote area television services.

I suggest that the next time the honourable minister introduces into this Assembly a statement, and quotes a federal minister, that he do so in toto and not in the extraordinarily selective way he did today.

Mr Hanrahan: It is all a matter of interpretation.

Mr BELL: The minister interjects that it is all a matter of interpretation. I have spent the best part of 20 minutes explaining why his interpretation was inappropriate and incorrect. It is a shame he is leaving. I was hoping that he might be able to sum up, and say something a little more sensible to indicate to us that he was thoroughly convinced by the cogent arguments put forward by my colleague and myself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I see my time is running out.

Members: Hooray!

Mr BELL: Goodness me, they do sound like a class of fourth formers sometimes, Mr Deputy Speaker, and fairly slow ones at that.

I could have picked up a few other comments here, such as the gratuitous remark about CAAMA's allegedly undemocratic structure. That was quite absurd. I am sure that a few of the member for Flynn's constituents will be interested in the black-bashing he has involved himself in today: for example, his comment about the development in Alice Springs. Those are the sorts of issues I would like to have addressed had I more time.

Quite clearly, the award of this licence to Imparja will be a great thing for central Australia. In closing, Mr Deputy Speaker, I think that I could do worse than quote this: 'Imparja television will be based in Alice Springs and provide a full and comprehensive service to all Australians in the central zone'.

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I have spoken on many occasions in the Assembly on this issue, and I do not think I have agreed on any occasion with the views put forward by the ALP. Today is no exception.

Mr Speaker, there are very fundamental differences in the way the ALP and the Country Liberal Party perceive this issue. We would try to achieve our objectives in a totally different way. The member for MacDonnell summed it up when he said he thought that everybody should agree that it was a great gesture by the Australian people, for the bicentenary, to provide Imparja with the licence. Providing television licences to anybody in the community is not a gesture that you make to create a warm feeling inside yourself or keep the party faithful happy, or to keep onside with your constituents. The issue of television licences is a very important one, because it affects more than just the special interest groups that are involved in it.

I will start by saying that the treatment that the Territory has received in the issue of the licence to Imparja, is no different to the cavalier treatment that it has been receiving for 3 years from the ALP over the use of

the satellite. Mr Speaker, you would recall that after the Labor Party came to power in 1983, Mr Duffy started a campaign to make sure that the satellite never went up, because it was obvious to all concerned that once the satellite went up, the role for Telecom and the use of manpower by Telecom would be greatly affected and greatly reduced. Satellites make it unnecessary to run wires and service plant and equipment all the time. All that sort of thing becomes obsolete.

In central Australia we had to hold a national conference of people with country interests, in order to send a message to the federal government that we wanted the satellite because our communications systems were totally inadequate. At the time that we were sending that message, we knew in the back of our minds that the one great asset of the satellite for people in remote areas, in particular those in the central zone, would be access to a commercial television signal. We accepted that the details had to be worked out. Channel 7 or Channel 2 or Channel 9 or NTD8 could have been the recipient of the licence. We even accepted that Aboriginal organisations and other special interest groups, such as the mining industry, might want to take a special interest in transmission of a television signal in the footprint.

In the end, the federal government conceded and launched the satellite. It fought consistently against having any telephonic communications on it, but we will get around that in one way or another. Now, it is trying to ensure that Territorians and people living in the central zone will not be treated in the same way as people in the rest of Australia. We will be dished out something special. We will have an Aboriginal television station and an Aboriginal-based programming system. If you believe anything else, Mr Speaker, you do not know what is going on around you.

The federal government said at one stage that the commercial station must be able to stand on its own 2 feet and that there would be no federal funds available for the support of the station. We knew that, if that letter of the law were adhered to closely, there could be no station in the Territory because it was not completely possible at that stage for a commercial station to stand on its own 2 feet, although it will be in the years ahead. This government said, as did the Western Australian and Queensland governments, that it was prepared to assist the applicants by providing government support, by buying time and ensuring that education programs went on the satellite, or by whatever other means were deemed acceptable by the tribunal. We wanted to ensure that there was no implication that the government was trying to own or be involved in the operation, or subsidise the station in order to have a privileged position.

The essence of the exercise is that this television signal is for the whole community and, as such, it should be run professionally by professional television people. If the licence had been granted to a Greek-based organisation or a Chinese-based organisation or a mining group or a union group, I would have been as opposed to that as I would be opposed to the government owning and operating the station. Imparja is not a professional television organisation and it is not even a professional media organisation. By its own testimony before the tribunal, it shot itself down.

It went before the tribunal after we had given an undertaking that the Northern Territory government would assist both the applicants, together or singly, provided the tribunal was satisfied that they were competent to run a television station. Let me go through the criteria and give a breakdown of what the tribunal said about the respective organisations. In relation to fitness and propriety: 'Imparja, not known, not experienced'. The committee

had reservations. Capricornia was a responsible and an experienced operator. Financial capabilities were not established for Imparja, but with Capricornia they were established and realistic and the company was possibly able to provide extra services. Technical capabilities with Imparja were not clearly established whilst with Capricornia they were established. In terms of managerial capabilities, it was thought, on balance, that Imparja might have capability but, with Capricornia, that ability was established.

The committee looked at a range of other things and called for more information. After additional information was provided on the fitness of the 2 organisations to be recipients of the licence, the criteria showed that Imparja was formed as a company with a majority of CAAMA representatives on its board. Capricornia showed that Aboriginal ownership and input was possible. In relation to Imparja's financial capabilities, additional federal grants were not established, whilst new details were established for Capricornia. Technical capabilities of Imparja were still not established and more information was sought. With Capricornia, they were established. In terms of managerial capacity, Imparja was not clearly established and was reliant on CAAMA, whereas Capricornia's capacity was substantial.

At that point, it became obvious to the Northern Territory government that there was no way that Imparja was capable of receiving a licence and running a television station. Furthermore, it was not able to justify and clarify its financial arrangements for the continuing operation of the station. Once we utilise the satellite, there is no point in having a station for 12 months or 2 years before it goes out of business. We must have an ongoing program.

I do not accept the umpire's decision, and I can speak for another 100 000 Territorians who think it is a joke. The tribunal has made a fool of itself in its own report, which says that Imparja does not have the capacity, for whatever reason, while Channel 8 does, and then uses a weasely form of words to justify the giving of the licence to Imparja. What sort of service would we get if the federal government gave Channel 8 \$20m to \$30m for the next 5 or 6 years? 'Hurry off and run yourself a TV station'. What sort of service would we get? We would have something like CBS in America. What are we going to get? Imparja will give us half the transmission time proposed by NTD8.

We live in hard financial times. I accept that it would be really great to be able to beat the breast and make a gesture to the Aboriginal people of Australia for the 1988 bicentenary, but life is a little tougher than that. We are talking about dollars and cents. We are dealing with a government which does not have \$20m to finish the Darwin Airport. It cannot find \$2m to service the runway in Tennant Creek. It cannot find any money to do what is needed at the Alice Springs Airport. It cut the NTEC subsidy by \$21m. It has cancelled a \$20m water research program with the Northern Territory government this year, because it is short of dough. Yet, out of the hat, it can produce \$20m or \$30m to run a TV station in the central footprint zone with a minority group of the community being the benefactors. What a joke. What a joke.

I will tell you what this is a sign of, Mr Speaker, because you and I have been in this Assembly a long time and we have seen it all before. When the Labor Party is on the skids and it knows it cannot win the next election and that it is on its way out, it implements all the extravagant, way-out programs that it would not dare introduce in good electoral times, before it gets the heave-ho. If ever there is a signal that the federal government is about to be tossed out, this is it, and we can keep our eye out for a few more. If we see a grab on Katherine Gorge, that will be another sign. This is desperation stuff. To be giving a television signal that covers one-third of the

Australian continent to a group in the community that has been proven before the tribunal to be incapable, incompetent and unfinancial, is madness.

I support the minister in his efforts to have this decision overturned. He has a responsibility to the Territory and he is carrying it out the way he should, by trying to stop this nonsense from proceeding. I say this to members on the other side of the Assembly: here is a recipe for political destruction. I am happy for them to continue to support the federal government because they are sealing their political death warrants. I support the minister's statement.

Debate adjourned.

TERRITORY INSURANCE OFFICE AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 220)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): I move that the bill be now read a second time.

These amendments are for the purpose of enabling the Territory Insurance Office to provide limited financial services, as approved by the responsible minister. With financial deregulation in Australia it is becoming increasingly apparent that financial institutions are having to diversify in order to survive in a much more competitive financial environment. Consequently, we are seeing banks and other financial organisations beginning to provide insurance services as well as other new services. The traditional single-purpose insurance companies are beginning to diversify into other areas, and many of them are now providing financial services.

This has many advantages for the insurers who have taken up the challenge. It allows them to engage in cross-selling between their insurance and financial activities. It allows them to extend their client base and to achieve more rapid growth for their organisations. The TIO Board has considered the implications of these trends for the future of the office and, while it is clear that the TIO is doing well at present and is in a financially-sound position, the board believes that it cannot afford to disregard these trends. It believes that it must move with the times so as to be in a position to respond effectively to the increasing competition that can be expected in insurance and financial markets over the next few years.

For this reason, the TIO has sought an extension of its powers to enable it to provide some limited financial services, as approved by the minister. At the present time, the office is examining the possibility of establishing an approved deposit fund. The timing of this move will be particularly appropriate with the introduction of new superannuation arrangements for Territory public servants, due to begin in October. These changes are expected to result in funds becoming available for investment, through approved deposit funds, and the TIO wishes to be in a position to provide this kind of service.

The amendments to the act are intended basically to enable this to be implemented, but the opportunity is being taken at the same time to lay the groundwork for later extensions of financial services into other areas which will complement the TIO's insurance activities. These may include deposit taking, consumer finance, and so on. However, such moves will be subject to further detailed consideration at the appropriate time, and would only be entered into with the full support and approval of the government.

Mr Speaker, the bill contains a number of provisions which will aid the TIO in its moves in this direction. It provides for the protection of depositors' balances and accrued interests through appropriate guarantees from the government, in the same way as applies to TIO insurance policies at present. It provides that funds deriving from the provision of financial services are to be kept separate from motor accident compensation funds and general insurance funds.

In general, the amendments are designed to provide necessary powers to the TIO to enable it, at a future time, to provide limited financial services and, at the same time, provide security for potential depositors with the TIO.

I commend the bill.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 5 bills, the Northern Territory Land Corporation Bill (Serial 208), the Conservation Commission Amendment Bill (Serial 210), the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Amendment Bill (No 2) (Serial 211), the Territory Loans Management Corporation Bill (Serial 209) and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment Bill (Serial 212), (a) being presented and read a first time together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third reading of the bills together, and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

NORTHERN TERRITORY LAND CORPORATION BILL
(Serial 208)
CONSERVATION COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 210)
TERRITORY PARKS AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 211)
TERRITORY LOANS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION BILL
(Serial 209)
AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND MARKETING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 212)

Bills presented and read a first time:

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move that the bills be now read a second time.

On 14 July 1986, I announced a number of cost-cutting measures and changes to the administrative arrangements of the Northern Territory. As announced, the government has set itself new goals to provide satisfactory levels of service to the public, to make lasting savings in the cost of government and to refocus its emphasis on the promotion of industry development and the marketing of Northern Territory products and services.

As part of that process, the government has decided to decentralise the functions of the Northern Territory Development Corporation in the following ways: the Department of Primary Production and the Agricultural Development and Marketing Authority are to assume the Northern Territory Development

Corporation's rural assistance and rural development functions; the Northern Territory Development Corporation's functions in fishing, port development and fishing support services will move to the Department of Ports and Fisheries; the Northern Territory Development Corporation's industrial housing responsibilities will move to the Northern Territory Housing Commission; the Department of Lands will assume the Northern Territory Development Corporation's responsibilities for industrial land and direct land sales; and, the Northern Territory Treasury will administer the development loan and loan management functions of the Northern Territory Development Corporation.

Most of these functions can be transferred administratively. However, legislation will be required for 2 important aspects: firstly, with regard to the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation and, secondly, with regard to the existing development loan and guarantee functions of the Northern Territory Development Corporation. The 5 cognate bills now before the Assembly set out to achieve these aims.

At present, the Territory Development Act sets up the Territory Development Land Corporation, which has the function of acquiring, holding and disposing of land. It is necessary that the title so held should not be disturbed and accordingly it is necessary to create a legal body which, of course, will be independent of the Crown, and capable of holding this land upon the repeal of the Territory Development Act. Accordingly, the draft legislation proposes a new Territory Land Corporation to which all rights, titles and interests previously held by the Territory Development Land Corporation will be transferred legislatively.

There is also currently in existence a Conservation Land Corporation, which holds lands in a manner similar to the Northern Territory Development Land Corporation. In order to avoid duplication of effort, it has been decided that this corporation will be amalgamated into the new Northern Territory Land Corporation along with the Territory Development Land Corporation.

In the course of establishing the new land corporation, it was considered essential that the principle for which the Conservation Land Corporation was established should not be lost. The government sees that principle as being that when land is acquired for the conservation estate, its status should continue as land held in trust for the enjoyment and benefit of present and future generations. Therefore, it would be desirable that, when the new land corporation acquires land for conservation and related purposes, it should be earmarked as such and held separate from the category of land that the new land corporation holds for specific present and future development purposes.

Another important function of the Northern Territory Development Corporation was to administer development loans and loan management functions, and a number of loans and guarantees currently exist in this regard. In order to provide the necessary continuum with the recipients of these current loans, the government has decided that it would be desirable for a corporate identity to be set up, under the control of the Treasurer, so that the Northern Territory Development Corporation's existing obligations in this regard might be honoured. Therefore, one of the cognate bills sets up a new Territory Loans Management Corporation to undertake this function. I might add that the Treasurer is presently investigating a range of options to ensure that development finance is available for future worthwhile ventures, with prospects of long-term viability.

Mr Speaker, I propose now to turn to the specific provisions of these cognate bills.

The first bill I wish to refer to is the Northern Territory Land Corporation Bill 1986. This bill establishes a new land corporation which is not an authority or instrumentality of the Crown, along the same lines as the former Territory Development Land Corporation. Its powers and functions are identical except that its powers are slightly more broad to allow it to make arrangements for the management and control of land to fill the hiatus left by the demise of the Territory Development Corporation. In addition, all real property currently vested in the Conservation Land Corporation is transferred to the new corporation in a move designed to avoid duplication of effort. In a nutshell, this bill transfers to the new Northern Territory Land Corporation all rights, titles and interests previously held by the Territory Development Land Corporation and the Conservation Land Corporation.

The second bill amends the Conservation Commission Act by abolishing the Conservation Land Corporation, and allows the Conservation Commission to have the care, control and management of lands made available to it by the new Northern Territory Land Corporation. In this way, the Conservation Commission control of lands formerly held by the Conservation Land Corporation will not be affected.

The third bill contains a consequential amendment to the Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, providing for the deletion of the reference to the Conservation Land Corporation and replacing it with a reference to the new Northern Territory Land Corporation. It also allows for the declaration of sanctuaries on land leased for the purposes of conservation by the Northern Territory Land Corporation.

The Territory Loans Management Corporation Bill repeals the Territory Development Act and establishes the new Territory Loans Management Corporation. This new corporation has strictly limited powers which are restricted to the administration of existing loans and guarantees entered into, arranged and or guaranteed by the Northern Territory Development Corporation. It has no power with respect to further loans and guarantees which the government may contemplate at some time in the future. This new corporation is being established for several good reasons. It will avoid uncertainty in the minds of lenders with Northern Territory Development Commission security as to their ongoing situation. It will minimise confusion concerning the continuing obligation of borrowers with regard to the repayment of loans by providing, in an orderly way, a successor to the NTDC in this regard. It will retain the existing rights and obligations of the NTDC in a single, readily identifiable body which is separate from the Crown, and it will provide a public focus for these existing activities.

Finally, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Amendment Bill proposes a consequential amendment to transfer to the Territory and the new loan corporation remaining assets which were previously to be transferred to the NT Development Corporation and the NT Development Land Corporation, under the sunset provisions of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Act.

Mr Speaker, I commend these bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I move that leave of absence for today be granted to the member for Arnhem as he is in his electorate attending to electorate duties.

Motion agreed to.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Superannuation Bill
(Serial 195)

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, the Superannuation Bill (Serial 195) was introduced in the June sittings of the Assembly with the intention that it pass all stages at these sittings.

Members will be aware that the government had undertaken an extensive consultation process with public sector unions prior to introducing the bill. This consultation occurred through the Superannuation Working Party, chaired by the Public Service Commissioner. Since the last sittings, the working party has examined the new bill in detail and made a significant number of recommendations to the government. The government has considered these recommendations and decided that they should be incorporated within the legislation. In addition to the consideration given to the bill by the working party, Treasury officials have held discussions with officers of the Commonwealth Department of Finance, with the aim of improving portability provisions of the scheme, particularly in relation to the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. A number of amendments to the bill are proposed as a result of these discussions.

There are in total approximately 100 amendments to the Superannuation Bill which the government wishes to proceed with. The vast bulk of these amendments are of a minor or technical nature which in no way changes the underlying philosophy of the bill which I outlined in my second-reading speech in June. In detailed legislation, such as is required for superannuation, amendments to one provision of the bill often necessitate consequential amendments to other provisions. This has been a contributing factor to the number of amendments now sought. The opportunity is also being taken to clarify the intent of certain provisions where these were not sufficiently clear in the original bill.

To incorporate all the amendments in the usual manner, at the committee stage, would take up an inordinate and unnecessary amount of the time available to the Assembly in these sittings. Therefore, I intend to seek leave to move a motion to discharge the Superannuation Bill 1986, (Serial 195) from the notice paper, so that a new superannuation bill may be introduced. This new bill has consolidated within it all the amendments which would otherwise have had to be dealt with individually at the committee stage. Since the new bill does not alter the fundamentals of the bill introduced in June, it is my intention that the new bill pass through all stages at these sittings, and I intend to move for a suspension of standing orders to permit this. In order that debate on the new bill take account of the changes to the original bill, I have given the Leader of the Opposition advance notice of the amendments by providing him with a copy of the drafting instructions prepared by my officers. As well, all members of the Assembly will be provided with what would have been the schedule of amendments to the original bill, so that they are able to identify the changes which have been made to that bill.

DISCHARGE OF BILL FROM NOTICE PAPER
Superannuation Bill (Serial 195)

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that Government Business Order of the Day No 1, Superannuation Bill (Serial 195) be discharged from the notice paper.

Motion agreed to.

SUPERANNUATION BILL
(Serial 215)

Bill presented and read a first time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent the Superannuation Bill (Serial 215) passing through all stages at these sittings.

Motion agreed to.

SUPERANNUATION BILL
(Serial 215)

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

I do not think it necessary to repeat the contents of the second-reading speech I made in June. As I indicated in my ministerial statement, the philosophy and policies underlying the original bill remain unaltered in this new bill. The changes which have occurred have largely been procedural and mechanical in nature and are designed to facilitate the smooth operation of the scheme. I do not propose to discuss all the amendments which have been made to the original bill. Members have before them a schedule of amendments which will allow them to identify changes between this consolidated bill and the original bill. However, there are some amendments which deserve comment so that the government's reasoning in accepting them can be understood.

The qualifying period for eligibility for contract and limited tenure staff to join the scheme has been reduced from 12 to 6 months. This is in line with the government's intention that the scheme have as comprehensive a coverage of public sector employees as possible. The change is not expected to impose unnecessary administrative difficulties for the operation of the scheme.

The provisions relating to the appointment of the Commissioner of Superannuation have been amended so that they correspond with those of the Commissioner for Taxes. The commissioner, who is responsible for the administration of the scheme, will be appointed in the usual manner for public servants and the same public service conditions will apply to the Commissioner of Superannuation as to the Commissioner for Taxes. In this light, it was felt unnecessary to apply a range of separate terms and conditions to the commissioner's employment.

The composition of the Investment and Review Boards has been streamlined, with membership of both boards being reduced from 5 to 3 members. This is considered to be a more workable arrangement. The original bill provided for

a largely common membership for both boards. On considering the matter further, the government has accepted that the different functions undertaken by the 2 boards require different skills and, accordingly, has amended the bill to remove the requirement for overlapping membership.

In my second-reading speech in June, I said that employees' interests would be properly represented in the management of the scheme, and this commitment has carried over in the restructuring of the boards. After taking into account the range of different types of public sector employment covered by the scheme, the government has decided that employee representation on both the Investment and the Review Boards is most efficiently achieved by the appointment of one member of each board who will be nominated by the Northern Territory Trades and Labour Council. This nominated member will be a member of an industrial union having a significant membership among eligible employees. The TLC has played a constructive role within the Superannuation Working Party and the government looks forward to a continuation of this involvement in the Investment and Review Boards.

The Investment Board will be responsible for policies relating to the investment of employees' contributions. Funds are to be invested towards achieving maximum returns consistent with the sound management of fund assets. Interest rates declared by the board are to reflect the net earning rate of the fund, though allowances have been made for a smoothing mechanism to reduce fluctuations in declared interest rates, if the Investment Board considers this desirable.

A new provision has been included in the scheme to allow employees, who have resigned to stand for parliamentary elections, to remain members of the scheme until after the declaration of the results of the poll. This arrangement parallels provisions in the Public Service Act and is currently available to employees under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme.

I wish to make particular comment on the portability of the provisions of the scheme. These have been amended to allow for arrangements to be entered into with the administrators of other superannuation schemes. These arrangements will facilitate the transfer of benefits between the Territory scheme and other schemes. This has particular significance in regard to the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. An agreement with the Commonwealth government is expected to be finalised in the near future. This agreement will allow new employees, who have left Commonwealth employment to work for the Territory, to have their accrued entitlements in the Commonwealth scheme transferred to the Territory scheme. This will have a beneficial effect on recruitment of staff and is a further step towards complete portability of superannuation benefits across all types of employment.

These new portability provisions will not apply to existing staff who choose to leave the Commonwealth scheme and join the Territory scheme. The government, however, has been able to negotiate more flexible transfer arrangements for this group of employees. Existing employees who opt to join the Territory scheme will be able either to defer a benefit in the Commonwealth scheme or to take a refund of their accumulated contributions. By deferring a benefit, employees will have available to them on their retirement an employer-financed pension which they would otherwise have foregone by taking a refund of contributions. Previously, employees would have needed to be members of the Commonwealth scheme for 5 years before they could have exercised this option. The Commonwealth has now agreed to allow existing employees to defer a benefit after 12 months' membership. This is a considerable improvement on, and accords with, the government's desire that

existing employees have the maximum options available to them in deciding between the 2 schemes. I commend the bill.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I have just realised why we do not normally debate second readings immediately, because there were 1 or 2 new elements in that speech that probably need addressing. Unfortunately, I was not quick enough to pick them up in their entirety so that may have to wait for another day. Certainly, we have in front of us another very important piece of legislation. I seem to have spent most of these sittings handling important pieces of legislation. Work health and superannuation are particularly important because they affect a wide range of workers in the Northern Territory. In this particular case, the bill's effect is restricted to members of the Northern Territory Public Service. The setting up of our own superannuation scheme is another sign of the growing maturity of the Northern Territory. In fact, it is a maturity that has been thrust upon us rather than one that we have anxiously sought. I can remember the gnashing of teeth 3 or 4 years ago when Senator Walsh made some fairly pointed remarks.

Mr Hatton: It was last year.

Mr SMITH: It was last year, was it? It seems longer ago than that. Senator Walsh made some fairly pointed remarks that it was about time that we ran our own superannuation scheme because the Commonwealth was not prepared to do it for much longer.

Mr Speaker, I congratulate the ministers and the departmental people who have been involved in the development of this scheme for the care and time that they have taken to consult with various interest groups. I should pass on my congratulations also to the Trades and Labour Council representatives. The way that both sides have gone about discussing this legislation has provided a model that we could use in relation to other significant pieces of legislation.

Mr Perron: You are talking about of late, of course.

Mr SMITH: I am talking about the last 12 to 18 months.

There have been extensive and wide-ranging discussions between all parties and, as a result, we now have legislation which all parties are basically happy with. On the employees' side, there are still some reservations about certain aspects of the bill but, certainly, I think they are basically happy with the legislation that we have in front of us. I must again give credit to the government because, even after we had been through the normal consultation process, it was still flexible enough to consult one last time with the Trades and Labour Council 5 or 6 weeks ago. As a result, it agreed to accept a number of amendments that the Trades and Labour Council proposed at that time. That is an encouraging and a healthy sign. It has led to a piece of legislation which will serve the Northern Territory well, within the restrictions placed on it by the government's philosophical approach to the whole matter of superannuation.

The reason Senator Walsh was so concerned is probably because of his wider concern at the cost of the Commonwealth scheme to the Commonwealth and his desire to hive off as many of its present responsibilities as possible to other bodies. Of course, there is an Australia-wide concern at the cost of superannuation to governments. That concern has been creeping up on governments over the past few years. There is a realisation now that the traditional types of schemes that we have had in Australia can no longer be

maintained by governments in this present economic climate. I think that we will find that other governments in Australia will follow the New South Wales' model which basically provided the model for the Northern Territory in the development of its new scheme.

The scheme goes a considerable way to reducing the cost to the Northern Territory below the level of expense which would occur if Northern Territory government employees continued as members of the Commonwealth Public Service Superannuation Scheme. To continue in the Commonwealth scheme would require the Northern Territory government to make an employer contribution of some 17% of employees' salaries. That is a considerably higher amount than the 12% employer contribution proposed for the operation of this scheme.

As I said, this scheme is based largely on the New South Wales public service scheme, which also requires a 12% employer contribution. The opposition accepts the proposition that the Commonwealth Grants Commission would be hard put to accept a Northern Territory government contribution rate greater than that of the New South Wales government, whilst we are so dependent on federal funds. I think it is fair to say that we have had the 12% employer contribution thrust upon us, whether we like it or not, by that good Labor government in New South Wales. By setting a 12% rate, the New South Wales government has probably set an employer standard for public services which everybody will follow in the not too distant future.

This reduction in the employer contribution means a reduction in the totality of benefits payable to employees. It is noteworthy that this reduction in the totality of employee benefits has been achieved by moving from the Commonwealth pension-based scheme to a lump sum scheme. In effect, a cash carrot has been offered to employees so as to enhance acceptance of the scheme. It is accepted that, for large numbers of employees who terminate their public service employment before reaching retirement age, the provision for full or partial vesting of the employer contribution is preferable to the Commonwealth scheme.

Quite clearly, this scheme is designed for relatively short-term public servants. It signals yet another blow to the concept of a career in the Northern Territory Public Service. In fact, it is a tacit admission by the government that it expects the public service to continue to be characterised by staff instability and high turnover. Certainly, this scheme does nothing to encourage public servants to become permanent employees in the Northern Territory Public Service.

Having said that and, I am pleased to say, having had most of our objections to the bill in its various stages dealt with through discussion with officials in Treasury, our major disappointment at this stage is that we have heard nothing of any government plans to provide access to pre-retirement financial counselling. The opposition believes that all employees will receive lump sum benefits under this scheme. A large number of employees receiving lump sum benefits will have had no previous experience in dealing with large sums of money. In some cases, they will receive \$150 000 to \$255 000.

We all know that difficulties in handling lump sums was one reason why common law was abolished in the work health area. However, this will see a reversion to lump sum payments for people retiring on superannuation. I am saying that if we are to provide lump sums, we need to ensure that all employees who retire and receive large superannuation payments will receive proper advice on how to invest that money properly to provide for themselves

in their future years. Of course, this will not apply to the person who stays in the service only for 5 or 10 years and then cashes in his entitlements. It will apply to the person who has been employed for 20 or 30 years and is looking to live on his or her lump sum entitlement for the rest of his or her life. In my view, it is essential that the government accept a role in providing that person with initial financial advice on how that money can be best put to work. I accept that the government's philosophy is that that money should be turned into annuities offered in various forms in the private sector, but I believe that the government has an important role to play in pointing people in the right direction so that they receive the best possible advice.

Mr Speaker, it is also hoped that the government accepts its responsibility, during the period of transition from the Commonwealth scheme, to educate its employees fully as to the choices they have to make. It would be irresponsible on the part of the government not to make a considerable effort to ensure that its employees were fully aware of all the pertinent facts they need to make a decision now that could affect their lives 20, 30 or even 40 years on.

With those comments, I am pleased to say again that this bill has the support of the opposition. We look forward to seeing it work as from 1 October.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Sadly, the matter of a government superannuation scheme for its employees in the Northern Territory was not resolved at the time of self-government, in July 1978, some 5½ years ago. By the time the legislation is passed, the necessary funds are established, and the board set up, it will be nearly Christmas 1986. That means that we will have waited more than 5 years to get this scheme up and running formally in the Northern Territory.

In November 1981, the first Superannuation Bill was introduced into this Assembly. When he introduced that bill, the then Chief Minister indicated that arrangements with the Commonwealth for financial support to introduce a Northern Territory superannuation scheme were fairly well advanced. His intention in introducing the bill in 1981 was that the scheme should commence on 1 July 1982.

At that time we proposed an innovative scheme more in keeping with the demography of the public service in the Northern Territory than the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme is today. We wanted to commence the scheme with a transfer equivalent to the value of employee contributions that had been made by public servants in the Northern Territory to the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. We did not mind whether that transfer of funds was made in cash or in assets. What we wanted was to inherit the collective past contributions of public servants, which our new scheme was to cover, in order that they could be reinvested by a new Northern Territory superannuation board. We would then have been able to take full responsibility for the funding of the scheme, as the arrangement we had with the federal government was that the base funding for the Northern Territory would be increased by an amount which would give it the capacity to meet the employer's contribution. That was to be a one-off transfer, and thereafter that base amount would have escalated by the Northern Territory government's annual recurrent grant.

At the time the value of the accumulated deposits from public servants working in the Northern Territory, that were in the hands of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme, were about \$120m. Such a transfer would have enabled a

Territory superannuation board to redress some of the imbalance whereby, despite having received \$120m from public servants working in the Northern Territory, there were only a few million dollars. Unfortunately, I could not locate the exact figure invested in the Northern Territory by the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. I am only aware of it owning 1 building, and I do not know whether it still owns it. That is the Hooker Building in Mitchell Street, which it purchased some time after it was constructed and tenanted, and it is probably quite a handsome investment.

Our proposal for taking over full funding and responsibility for the superannuation scheme was a bit too much for people in Canberra to swallow. Apart from the awfulness of the thought of handing over \$120m, the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme could not have done it anyway. The Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme was then, as I believe it is now, insolvent. Its assets were not sufficient to cover its liabilities. That was no secret. It has been spoken about considerably during the last few years. We were obviously going to get nowhere in pursuing our optimum position back in 1981. It was not only the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme managers who opposed the Northern Territory's proposal; a number of public service union officials did likewise. It seems that there was considerable objection and procrastination in those early days, in reaching agreement on the provisions for a Northern Territory Superannuation Scheme.

Some people saw it as a matter of principle. A union covering employees nationally would do what it could to stop the national superannuation scheme covering its members being whittled away in any way, such as by smaller schemes which would cover some of its members.

I am very pleased to hear the minister report that the recent negotiations which have resulted in this bill being introduced in the Assembly, have been conducted in a very cooperative spirit. Indeed, I am delighted to hear that, because I think this must be about bill number 5. In fact, several have been introduced formally, and at least 1 or 2 tabled in the meantime. I started off by saying how sad it was that it had taken so long to reach this stage. As a result of the delays, we no longer have the understandings we had with the federal government about the financing of the employer's contributions. We had an agreement in 1983 or 1984, before Senator Walsh came along and decided that it was too generous. He determined that that agreement should be torn up and the Northern Territory cast adrift as far as the employer's capacity to pay the employer's contribution was concerned. We would have to rely on our own resources and our arguments to the Grants Commission for a catch-up payment, which is what we are doing now. We really do not have much choice. It is either that, or foot the bill at the expense of other government projects.

In closing, I want to make some comment on the Leader of the Opposition's remarks about the 12%, 17% and lump sum aspects of the scheme. Despite the fact that some aspects of the Territory scheme are regarded as advanced and more beneficial to contributors than provisions under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme, some of the unions seem to argue that their members need protection even from themselves. I would have thought that lump sum payouts would have provided the contributor with an additional option, an option which he does not have under the Commonwealth scheme, which should be encouraged. It offers the employee an opportunity to take a lump sum early in his retirement if that is what he chooses. He does not have to do it. It seems that the unions feel that their members should be protected from having such options placed before them.

Mr Smith: We have accepted the scheme. What is wrong with you?

Mr PERRON: Not without a few whinges about these sorts of provisions, though. I just find this attitude interesting, that there should not be a range of options placed before a person retiring from a superannuation scheme. The unions seem to be arguing that we should force the employee to take an annual pension.

As far as the 12% and 17% argument is concerned, I thought it fairly outrageous to suggest that, because the Northern Territory scheme was anticipated to cost 12%, the contributors would be losing out. Providing a proposed scheme is at least as generous as the one employees are being asked to move from, which ours is in certain respects ...

Mr Smith: It is not.

Mr PERRON: You could argue that all day. Some provisions are certainly more generous than those in the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. I am told that the Northern Territory vesting benefits are the most progressive in Australia. To that extent at least, the Northern Territory scheme has advantages over the Commonwealth scheme. It is not good enough to argue that, if the Territory government is to bear a 12% cost instead of 17%, additional benefits should be thrown in. It is a bit like arguing that where an employer is providing a house or some benefit to an employee at a certain cost and the employer obtains that facility more cheaply, benefits should be increased to the employee. The argument is that the employee should have the additional cost passed on. That is the mentality that I really cannot grasp, and I hope it is not widespread throughout the opposition and union movement in the Territory or we will lock ourselves into ever-increasing benefits as employers find cheaper ways to provide them. It seemed to me that that was about the only argument used in the matter of 12% and 17%.

Mr Smith: Oh, go on. It is simple arithmetic. If you put 12% into premiums and you put 17% in the benefits, it has to be less.

Mr PERRON: Not at all. The benefits are different, not necessarily less. They are different. Indeed, as the Leader of the Opposition has admitted, aspects of the Territory scheme are, in fact, more generous than the Commonwealth scheme. Mr Deputy Speaker, this is all I have to say on this bill. I do not want to cause the Treasurer any more heartache or be the cause of a sixth bill being introduced into the Assembly because I think that we have already lost enough through having to wait 5 years to reach the stage that we are at today.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, as the member for Fannie Bay indicated, the development of the superannuation scheme to the point that we have reached today, has been continuing since self-government. It has been a long and arduous path. I understand that, under the Memorandum of Understanding, there was an agreement that the Northern Territory develop its own superannuation scheme for its public servants. We have been attempting to work away at that all this time, for better or for worse, with many problems being thrown in our way.

I notice that the Leader of the Opposition passed very quickly over the role that the good Senator Walsh has played in this matter. Today, I will commence my comments by quoting from a statement made by the then Chief Minister, the honourable Ian Tuxworth, in April 1985:

It was agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding that the matter of superannuation and, in particular, our capacity to pay, should be considered by a joint Commonwealth Northern Territory task group. The task group considered the matter, and reported in June 1984. The Commonwealth and the Territory agreed to the recommendations of the task group on 25 October 1984.

In summary it was agreed that the Commonwealth would make annual payments to the Northern Territory to allow the Territory to fund the employer finance benefits of the CSS on an emerging-cost basis. The payment would be in respect of benefits that became payable on, or after, 1 July 1984, to Territory employees in respect of whom the Territory had not to that date been provided with the financial capacity. The arrangements were so designed to permit the Northern Territory government to facilitate the introduction of an NT scheme.

The NT government has pursued a course of supporting all arrangements made with the Commonwealth to provide comprehensive superannuation cover for our employees. I must now report that the Commonwealth has decided, without any prior consultation and without any notice, to walk away from these arrangements. This means either no superannuation scheme for our public servants, or our accepting a continuing contingent liability estimated to be \$50m per year.

That was the situation in which we found ourselves, Mr Deputy Speaker. But that was not the end of it. Some 12 months ago, Senator Walsh dropped one of his many bombshells: he announced that the Commonwealth would no longer fund the Northern Territory Public Service Superannuation Fund. Of course, during this period our public servants had been members of the Commonwealth fund while negotiations were proceeding, and that was working very well indeed. However, Senator Walsh decided that the time had to come to terminate that arrangement and, on 4 April 1985, he wrote to the then Chief Minister, the Hon Ian Tuxworth. I have a copy of his letter and I would like to read that into Hansard, Mr Deputy Speaker. The letter was addressed to the Hon I.L. Tuxworth, MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Darwin, and said:

My dear Chief Minister,

I refer to my predecessor's letter of 25 October 1984, about the arrangements under which the Territory would meet the employer liability for benefits payable to its employees under the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme, and to your reply of 21 November 1984. I have reviewed these arrangements and have concluded that they should be varied significantly.

Under the revised arrangements that I have agreed with the Prime Minister, the Territory will be required to meet a portion of the emerging costs of employer-financed benefits payable to its employees who retired or retire on or after 1 July 1984. The Territory is to meet that part of the liability that relates to the person's employment with the Territory on or after that date. The Territory would not, however, be required to meet any liability in respect to any employee who retired before that date. The liability would continue to be met by the Commonwealth.

Also, the Territory will be required to fund the employer superannuation contributions from its own resources. That is, no

additional financial assistance will be provided by the Commonwealth to the Territory for that purpose. Should the Territory decide not to pay the employer superannuation contributions, action will be taken to terminate membership of Territory employees in the Commonwealth scheme. In that event, and should you so desire, I would be prepared to consider arranging for the preservation of the accrued entitlements of employees affected.

Yours sincerely,
Peter Walsh.

That is the sort of contempt with which Senator Peter Walsh treated Northern Territory public servants. Mr Deputy Speaker, it was an absolute disgrace. The announcement by Senator Walsh caused quite a furore, as the Commonwealth scheme is unfunded by the employer and the Northern Territory government refused to accept the Commonwealth's liability. It decided that it would not participate in an unfunded scheme because it did not want that \$50m per annum of accruing contingent liability.

Much debate ensued and I am pleased to say this was followed by much meaningful discussion between the public service unions and officers of this government. Subsequently, a Northern Territory Superannuation Working Party was established, chaired by the Public Service Commissioner. This process of consultation has been ongoing since the draft bill was introduced in the June sittings. Since that time, the draft bill was considered in detail by the working party, and the revised bill before us today reflects the numerous amendments which it recommended. Further discussions took place between the Commonwealth and this government's Treasury officials. These were aimed at improving the portability provisions of the scheme. I understand these have been successful and are also reflected in the new bill.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me turn now to some of the aspects of this new bill. For a start, the scheme will replace the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme for new employees. Existing employees will have 12 months to choose whether to stay in the Commonwealth scheme or join the Territory scheme. Benefits are to be paid in lump sum form and not through pensions. An employee, however, can use his or her lump sum to buy an annuity from a life assurance office if he or she so wishes. The scheme also contains an early vesting provision. Employees have partial access to employer-financed benefits after 5 years' membership and full access after 10 years' membership. This is an excellent feature of the scheme when compared with other large public sector schemes.

The bill provides for the appointment of a commissioner whose terms of employment will be similar to those existing for the Commissioner of Taxes. The commissioner will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the scheme as directed by the Investment Board. He will administer the scheme and manage the investments of that board.

The bill also provides for the establishment of the Investment Board which will consist of a chairman and 2 other residents of the Northern Territory, 1 of whom must be a representative of the trade union movement nominated by the Trades and Labour Council. When I say the 'trade union movement', I refer to unions involved with the public service. The Investment Board will act as trustee of the fund and be responsible for directing the commissioner on investment policy. This will enable him better to manage the fund.

Division 2 of the bill establishes the Superannuation Review Board, again consisting of a chairman and 2 other persons, constituted on a basis similar to that of the Investment Board. Its responsibilities include the overseeing and arbitration of decisions made by the commissioner in the settlement of a claim where a dispute exists and, from time to time, advising the minister on amending the rules. Because the functions and responsibilities of the boards are not compatible, it was decided to establish 2 boards rather than have 1 board responsible for both functions.

The minister has already explained in detail the various provisions of the new bill so it is not my intention to repeat them here today. I would like to make the point, however, that it is this government's intention to protect and provide adequately for the superannuation interests of its public service employees. I believe this bill satisfies that desire to the best of this government's ability under the prevailing economic situation. We have been faced with a complex situation since the Commonwealth dumped the superannuation of Northern Territory public servants. With goodwill, it has been shown by all parties that we have been able to work together through what has been a difficult situation to a point where existing employees will be offered maximum options in deciding their future superannuation needs. I commend the bill.

Mr FINCH (Wagaman): Mr Speaker, I will attempt to be extremely brief. As honourable members know, I have a long-standing interest in superannuation and retirement and, more recently, in early retirement.

This bill is both flexible and responsible. It is flexible in that, contrary to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition, it will provide an opportunity for Territorians who may wish to move between the public sector and private sector after periods of time in each sector. That will be to the benefit of both sectors. People who understand the intricacies and complications of working with government departments must be of benefit to people in private enterprise. Undoubtedly, from my point of view, the public service could do no better than to have the vitality and vigour of the entrepreneurial approach of private enterprise injected into its system. I think that flexibility is one of the features of this legislation that has not been mentioned.

The legislation is responsible, in so far as the proposed system will not become a noose around our necks like the Commonwealth scheme, which relies on a blossoming public service for continued funding of benefits to its members as they retire. Perhaps one of the reasons that the Commonwealth government is not able to cut back realistically on its work force is that it would not be able to afford its superannuation scheme.

There is a move these days for more people to be employed on contracts. There are a great number of benefits for the government and individuals in the superannuation proposal that is before us. It will enable people to maintain flexibility in their working arrangements and, more importantly, to plan for their retirement through this scheme.

The Leader of the Opposition touched on pre-retirement advice on what people should do with their lump sum. There is a need for all Territorians, both within and outside the public service, to have appropriate access to pre-retirement counselling. In my humble opinion, that cannot start too early in their career. They need to plan not only their financial arrangements, but many other matters such as health, activities, and so on.

Mr Speaker, as I mentioned, I do not wish to elaborate at all on the points that have been raised by other members, and most eloquently by the member for Jingili, other than to commend the bill to honourable members. It is a most imaginative scheme that can only be to the benefit of Northern Territorians both within and outside the public service. I think that this scheme should receive 100% support from all Territorians.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I thank honourable members for their contributions, in particular the member for Fannie Bay, who has been involved with this issue for some time. Whilst at times I was concerned about his commitment and his contribution to today's debate, I thank him very much. This matter really does have a sad history in terms of the action taken by the federal government. As the member for Wagaman said, perhaps the Commonwealth cannot reduce the number of its public servants because it would not be able to maintain its superannuation payments.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the need to provide pre-retirement counselling. The Public Service Commissioner's office already has such a counselling service. In addition, the Darwin Institute of Technology runs courses on creative retirement and one is scheduled for next October. These include counselling on financial matters. I note that there is a \$75 fee but the course is well worth it.

In relation to the information program, officers involved with the Commonwealth scheme will come to the Territory in October and November to hold talks with employees. A full 12 months is available for existing employees to make a decision on which scheme they wish to belong to. There is no need for hasty decisions to be made, which was a concern of the Leader of the Opposition. Financial counselling programs will be developed as the scheme comes into full operation. As I said, this will include the involvement of facilities and infrastructure already available through the Office of the Public Service Commissioner.

The member for Jingili went into some detail on what has happened, and stressed the need for the provision of the 2 boards. I will not go into any more detail on that. The proposals before the Assembly are the result of some 5 years of work and negotiations, and I would like to congratulate sincerely the officers of the Treasury who have been involved in recent rounds of discussions with the various people involved, and I would like to offer particular thanks to Mr Doyle, the ACTU advocate who came up to the Northern Territory. He was most helpful in discussions to allow this bill to be presented to the Legislative Assembly.

Last year, the government had to come to grips with a difficult situation after the Commonwealth walked away from the funding agreement on superannuation - or dumped it, as the Chief Minister said this afternoon. The Territory was left with the problem of meeting the full costs of the Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme. There is no doubt that, by general community standards, the Commonwealth scheme is a high-cost scheme. It provides good benefits, but often these go only to the minority of the employees, and that is what was found; the scheme does not suit the work history of employees in the Northern Territory. Only a minority of employees stay in the scheme to retirement age. Many more employees resign and leave the scheme and receive little return for contributions that they were asked to make.

After assessing the scheme and discussing alternatives with our actuaries, we came to the conclusion that a better, fairer, but less costly scheme, could

be developed for the Northern Territory. We set up a process to bring a new scheme into operation, and this bill is the cumulation of this process. Mr Speaker, we believe we have achieved the objective we set ourselves last year.

This bill provides for a scheme which will allow more employees to obtain better benefits within a more reasonable time. The scheme is appropriate for the Territory because it is designed to reflect the need of the Territory's work force, which is young and mobile, and has a higher turnover than any other state's. The scheme does not penalise public servants because they may spend only a part of their working lives in the Territory. Instead, it allows them to obtain very reasonable superannuation benefits after an initial qualifying period. At the same time, the scheme provides a real incentive for employees to remain in the Territory when the qualifying period for vesting has been reached. An employee is entitled to a benefit of up to 21% of salary for each 6% of salary contributed. Employees will have to look far and wide to find another superannuation scheme that guarantees them this level of benefit.

Before concluding, I would like to make some comments on the financing of the new scheme. The fully-funded cost of the scheme is estimated to be 12% of salaries, some 5% less than the cost of the Commonwealth scheme, which the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Fannie Bay referred to. Nevertheless, that is more than acceptable by community standards. To meet this cost, the government intends appropriating moneys each year in the budget and putting these aside in a government fund so that a reserve can be built up to cover liability. The extent of funding will be determined each year in the normal budget process. However, the government is committed to the principle that the scheme should be funded to the maximum extent possible. Provision will also be made in this fund for other superannuation commitments, such as the Commonwealth scheme and the police supplementary scheme. Accordingly, the government has appropriated \$15m in this year's budget for this purpose.

Mr Speaker, I am sure that all members of the Assembly will welcome this approach as financially responsible and indicative of the government's commitment to the long-term viability of the scheme. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Motion agreed to; bill read a second time.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I seek leave to move a motion that the third reading be taken forthwith.

Leave granted.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): 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 COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 5 bills: the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission Bill (Serial 226); the Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 224); the Lotteries and Gaming Amendment Bill (Serial 223); the Totalizator Administration and Betting Amendment Bill (Serial 221); and the Racing and Betting Amendment Bill (Serial 222) being (a) presented and read a first time

together and one motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stage and the third reading of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

RACING GAMING AND LIQUOR COMMISSION BILL

(Serial 226)

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 224)

LOTTERIES AND GAMING AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 223)

TOTALIZATOR ADMINISTRATION AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 221)

RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL

(Serial 222)

Bills presented and read a first time.

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

Mr Speaker, the intent of these bills is to provide a reshaped administrative and management structure for the TAB, the Liquor Commission and the Racing and Gaming Commission. Legislation to create the Liquor Commission came out of a 1978 inquiry into the liquor industry. It was constituted formally in 1979 for the purpose of regulating the sale of liquor. It has a full-time chairman, supported by 4 part-time members, and carries out its functions under various legislative requirements. The Racing and Gaming Commission was formed in 1979 also and evolved from the former Betting Control Board. Broadly, this commission's charter is to provide proper regulation and control of racing, lotteries and casinos and the gaming industry in general, in the interests of the public.

As honourable members are aware, as part of a campaign to provide better services and facilities to the betting public, an off-course totalisator betting system was introduced throughout the Territory from 2 July 1985. The administering body of the system has been a board, comprising a chairman who is also the chairman of the Racing and Gaming Commission, 2 other members appointed by the minister, and a general manager appointed by the board itself.

During its first year of operation, the TAB failed to establish its turnover target and its own identity. It was seen by many as just another arm of the Racing and Gaming Commission. Turnover in the year to 30 June reached \$18.557m. This was \$1.16m short of the \$19.716m assessed as achievable for 1986-87 by the Racing Industry Working Party. The TAB's budgeted turnover is \$21.646m, compared with the working party's assessment of \$23.751m.

The government expects a greater and growing return from TAB operations by increasing promotion of TAB activities. The new board is aiming at turnover levels which are higher than the projections of the working party's report. Not only will increased turnover mean an increased contribution by the TAB to Consolidated Revenue - and as Treasurer I know we need every available cent - but it will also raise the level of financial assistance to the racing industry. I am committed to assisting those in the racing industry to achieve strong growth, through the development of infrastructure on racecourses and

increased stake monies. Over time, this should encourage large crowds to attend the races and stimulate more people to become involved in the breeding, owning and training of racehorses and greyhounds.

To remove any doubt about the independence of the TAB from the Racing and Gaming Commission, and to allow the TAB to exploit its own image in open competition with all other forms of gambling, this bill will provide for a new-look board to manage TAB operations. I propose that the board will have a full-time chairman who will be appointed by and be directly responsible to the minister. The chairman will be assisted by 2 part-time board members, and the 2 existing members will continue in that capacity. This restructure will obviate the need for a general manager, and that position will be abolished. The reshaped management structure was announced on 14 July, and the spirit of these changes has been in place since then. People in the racing industry have applauded the change. TAB staff and agents, who have all stuck to their task in trying circumstances over the past 14 months, have welcomed the moves, and the press has shown signs of cautious optimism. The new TAB is under no misapprehension as to what is required of it. The results of TAB operations are readily quantifiable, and many will be watching to see that performance matches expectations.

The racing and liquor industries have some common denominators. They are both revenue generators for government. Both require regulation to ensure the orderly and fair collection of this revenue. Both require inspectorial services to protect the public's interest. The creation of one commission to perform these functions will enhance the administrative efficiency of the Territory government. With the separation of TAB responsibilities, one chairman only is required to administer the new commission. He will have the ability, under this legislation, to form 2 separate quorums from the part-time members, to exercise the powers, authorities and functions of the new commission. These separate quorums will be convened to consider matters from the 2 industries. Effectively, the bill provides for the minister to appoint 2 panels of experts with a common chairman. The bill also provides for the minister to appoint the chairman and members, and to set the terms and conditions of their employment. Apart from some minor amendments to associated acts, all other aspects and intentions of the principal acts remain the same.

Mr Speaker, I advise that, at the appropriate time, I shall be seeking the suspension of standing orders to allow these bills to pass through all stages during these sittings. I commend these bills to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, I asked in yesterday's question time whether or not the Emergency Service unit, presently located at the old Winnellie Fire Station, would be relocated. The minister said that the facility was to be relocated to the present police complex at Berrimah, and that was borne out subsequently in the budget. I would like to read into Hansard some correspondence I have received on this matter. I think it is important because, as all members would be aware, like various other service groups in the Northern Territory, the Emergency Service unit relies to a large extent on voluntary manpower. I believe the views of these volunteers should be heard in the Assembly. The letter reads as follows:

For several years until mid-1985, the Darwin volunteer unit of the Northern Territory Emergency Service was housed in 3 substandard demountable buildings at the service training complex in Bishop Street, Stuart Park. The major disadvantages of this complex were no facilities for onsite storage of the unit's major items of equipment, such as its vehicle, rescue trailer and boat. These items had to be secured remotely from the unit's headquarters, at the service's headquarters in Winnellie. This remote storage had a bad effect on unit response times, control, care and maintenance of this equipment and, importantly, unit morale.

In mid-1985 the decision was made to close the Winnellie Fire Station as a fire station, but the building remained a departmental asset. In view of the inadequate facilities under which the Darwin volunteer unit was operating, a departmental decision was made to relocate this unit into the former Winnellie Fire Station. This move had many advantages including: the consolidation of unit activities, operations training, and administration under one roof in a cyclone-resistant building; excellent physical security and ample space for all unit equipment, including vehicle, boat, rescue trailer, etc to be held under direct unit control, supervision and maintenance; good areas for wet weather and outdoor training activities; a massive boost to unit morale and identity.

These were all perceived advantages of moving to the old Winnellie Fire Station.

On 30 August 1985, the Darwin volunteer unit moved into the former Winnellie Fire Station, as it had on that day been officially transferred to the Emergency Service. Since occupying the building, the unit has, with minimum assistance from the service's headquarters, put in many hundreds of man hours, all voluntary, in modifying the building to suit its operational, training and administrative needs, and in attempting to improve the surrounding grounds, so that the very public position of the building would be a visual credit to the unit and the service.

For reasons that seem very strange, the government has now decided that it is going to sell the former Winnellie Fire Station.

The volunteer unit has to now move again in just on one year. Alternative accommodation can be found, but it will return the unit to the problems listed below in the second and third paragraphs ...

Of course, those are the problems that existed when the training group was operating at Bishop Street in Stuart Park, prior to the move to Winnellie.

... in that it will not be possible for the unit to have on site storage and control of its own equipment, with all of the problems that go with such a state of affairs. On top of some existing morale problems within the unit, this precipitate action by the government to sell the building is likely to so further affect unit morale as to cause mass resignation of the entire unit.

That amounts to some 45 people in the Emergency Service unit in Darwin.

Mr Speaker, I know people tend to see Emergency Service volunteers as weekend cowboys or weekend warriors but, in fact, in times of emergency they

do perform a very vital function for all members of the community. I appreciate that the government has certain budgetary considerations which will make it very difficult to change the newly-allocated site of the volunteer unit. However, in the interests of all of the people in Darwin, I would urge it to reconsider its decision to move the unit from the old Winnellie Fire Station. If those 45 people resign, it will virtually be the death knell of the volunteer Emergency Service unit in Darwin and, in times of emergency, Darwin and its residents will certainly need those people.

I would ask the Chief Minister, who is the minister responsible for these matters, and his Treasurer, to review their decision and to consider whether or not the facility need necessarily be relocated. At the very least, before any move is made, they should ensure that there is very extensive and exhaustive consultation with all members of that unit, because I can assure you that, it takes considerable resources to train Emergency Service personnel. If those people resign, it will be very difficult to replace them. I would urge the Chief Minister to review the decision to move the unit from the old Winnellie Fire Station. If he is determined to move the unit, then I suggest that he do so after far more consultation than seems to have occurred to date.

I want to discuss some aspects of the proposal to man several of the Northern Territory's smaller fire stations substantially with volunteer fire fighters. There is no reason at all why volunteers cannot carry out the emergency work which fire services are obliged to do: the putting out of fires in emergency circumstances. However, there is a real problem in maintaining those important facilities which are required by any reliable fire service. If an adequate examination of firemen's work is carried out, it will be seen that 2 people will not be able to maintain adequately the equipment which is required in emergencies. Of course, putting out fires is not the most essential side of a fireman's work. That is absolutely incorrect. Everybody has a perception that firemen are about putting out fires; in fact, firemen are about stopping fires before they start. That is the most essential element of their work, and volunteers are neither adequately qualified nor would they have the time to undertake the professional functions of fire prevention.

I hope that the Chief Minister, who has responsibility for these matters, will look realistically at the manning levels of the Tennant Creek and Katherine Fire Stations. He quoted Nhulunbuy as an example. Nhulunbuy has several advantages over both Katherine and Tennant Creek. It is a much newer town. It is built substantially of materials that are not readily combustible. Of course, fires still occur there, but I do not think Nhulunbuy is a good example of the potential fire risks or the workload that firemen may be required to deal with.

I would ask the Chief Minister to take my comments on these 2 issues on board. I think that there is potential for matters like these to be reconsidered, despite what appear to be fairly firm government decisions. I hope the Chief Minister reviews these decisions, in view of their potential consequences.

Mr McCARTHY (Victoria River): Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to refer tonight to a couple of recent comments made by the terrible twins of the ANPWS, who pretend to be the guardians of environmental protection in the NT. I refer, of course, to Professor Ovington, the man responsible for the ANPWS, and his minister, the honourable Barry Cohen, who obviously puts his name to whatever the professor asks him to.

First I will reply to the professor's remarks earlier this week regarding Kakadu, and his attempt to compare it to Cobourg. To make his point, the professor claimed that, while Kakadu was a success under the ANPWS, Cobourg compared poorly in terms of visitor numbers. I will refer to some of his comments. The 2 parks are so different that to make any comparison between them is absolutely ludicrous. Although the difference has escaped the professor, I will try to educate him.

The first point that should be made is that Kakadu, and I trust the professor is aware of it, is accessible by all-weather roads from Darwin and the south. On the other hand, Cobourg is one of the most remote and difficult spots in the Territory to reach. Road access is limited and most people get there either by air or by sea. As a result of this restricted access, only a limited number of tourists can reach Cobourg. But Cobourg's remoteness and the small number of tourists that visit there are, in fact, a part of the park's attraction. About 2000 people sampled the splendour of Cobourg last year. That is the way the Cobourg Board of Management wants it. The board of management is aiming for a low-key, high-quality style of tourist experience. In case the professor is not aware of it, let me explain the makeup of the Cobourg Board of Management. There are 4 Conservation Commission representatives on the board, 4 Aboriginal representatives, and the Chairman is an Aboriginal with the casting vote. This makes it fairly obvious that the local Aboriginal people, and not the Conservation Commission, have the ultimate say in running the park. On the other hand, Kakadu is run directly by Professor Ovington and his ANPWS.

Apart from the varying levels of access and development of the 2 parks, it must be realised that Cobourg is still very much an infant among parks when compared with Kakadu. Kakadu was declared a national park in 1976 but, it should be pointed out that, perhaps more significantly, the attractions of Kakadu have been recognised, both in Australia and around the world, since the mid-1960s, a long time before the professor and the ANPWS became involved. On the other hand, Cobourg was not declared a park until 1981. The act which made Cobourg a park also made Cobourg Aboriginal land, and that was a Territory action. This is another feature which makes Cobourg so different to Kakadu.

Naturally, the Tourist Commission features Kakadu prominently in its marketing, not only in the Territory but around the world. It should also be noted that the Territory Tourist Commission undertakes the bulk of the promotional work for Kakadu, not the ANPWS or Professor Ovington, who seems intent on taking credit for the number of tourists who visit the park.

While Kakadu receives world-wide exposure, relatively little is heard of Cobourg. Anywhere near the same level of promotion of Cobourg would conflict with the board of management and its views on running the park. When a few of these facts are realised, they show just how nonsensical the professor's comparison between Kakadu and Cobourg really is. The comparison simply defies logic, but then the good professor has shown very little logic in most of his previous comments.

Mr Speaker, I go on from there to some comments made today by the professor's pet minister with reference to the Northern Territory government's response to the Uluru Draft Plan of Management. I will quote from parts of his press release:

The Northern Territory government wanted to see mining and oil exploration provided for in the Uluru National Park, the Minister for

Arts, Heritage and Environment, Mr Barry Cohen said today. The NT government reinforces its view with a call for an appropriate body to balance the Plan of Management proposals by advising the federal minister on economic resources utilisation.

What is wrong with that? Nothing. Clearly, it is the sensible way to go.

We find it favouring a forest in this sparse and silent land: a forest of oil drilling rigs. It would approve scouring and excavation, the digging of huge holes, and the adornment of the landscape with heavy machinery and processing plants. If the NT government had its way, what a vista would result for international visitors gazing out from the top of Ayers Rock ...

What about Yulara?

... across this ancient and evocative country. The Uluru board, quite rightly, unanimously rejected the NT's submission.

That submission was made to a Draft Plan of Management that did not involve the Northern Territory government at all. It did not involve the Conservation Commission. The ANPWS formulated its Draft Plan of Management on its own. It sought information, without giving any recognition of that information in the Draft Plan of Management. The Conservation Commission gave information quite readily, but the board made no response at all to that in its Draft Plan of Management. Now our submissions in regard to that Draft Plan of Management have been rejected as a pack of nonsense.

I will quote directly from the resource management section:

The draft plan does not specifically allow for exploration and mining in the park. Consequently, under the provisions of the act, this activity would be disallowed. Furthermore, the lease-back agreement between Aboriginal interests and ANPWS prohibits mining. This prohibition eliminates potential for hydrocarbon exploration, and the extraction of materials for road construction and maintenance. The Northern Territory contends that, not only are there significant opportunities for conservation of these unique national resources, but also that substantial economic benefits would follow from their responsible utilisation. Such utilisation is justified by the public demand for those resources and their suitability for professional management, without significant impact on the values of the park.

Mr Ede: What do you want to mine?

Mr McCARTHY: I am not talking about mining anything. We are talking about looking to identify what is there.

Mr Ede: Do you want to mine Ayers Rock?

Mr McCARTHY: That would be typical. That is exactly the sort of comment that the honourable Barry Cohen came back with.

The submission makes various points on the subject of resource management and, at the end of that particular section, the Northern Territory government requests that the following should be incorporated in the proposed Plan of Management, which should be amended accordingly.

- A. That CC NT be acknowledged for substantial base information provided in the present plan, including comprehensive update of information provided in May 1986 for inclusion in the new plan.

Certainly, no recognition was given to the Conservation Commission's support. It was the only thing asked for; the ANPWS asked for no advice apart from the base material we had. It was incorporated. No recognition was given, no acknowledgement that information was sought from the Conservation Commission, which had been managing the park for many years. Obviously, we have a view. Most certainly, the Northern Territory government should be involved.

- B. That a survey be conducted on tourist movements and levels throughout the year, such a survey to be carried out in consultation with the tourist industry and Yulara; the survey to include tourist access requirements, routes and transportation.

We know that the federal government does not believe we should have anybody there in the summer season, because it is supposedly too hot. It is telling the world that it is too hot, and tourists should not be brought in. That is the federal view: forget the rest of the year and only bring them in in the cool season when they feel they want to come. We know that people will go there at all times of the year and that it is a beautiful place at all times of the year.

- C. Conduct a base-line study of the greater park area to determine the effect on environmental resources of alternative land uses, including intensive occupation.
- D. That emergency services training be conducted and that contingency planning be developed for such situations as wildfire control, and
- E. That an assessment of possible utilisation of mineral resources on the park should be identified in the Plan of Management ...

That is the section that the honourable Barry Cohen took exception to, so he put out this press release, denigrating the Northern Territory government by saying that it wants towers all over and around Ayers Rock. Obviously, we do not want that. We have Yulara there, and it is a very significant development. There is no way in the world we will allow oil rigs to be set up everywhere in that part of the country. It was ludicrous to say that we would. Barry Cohen misrepresented what was put in that submission. He misrepresented it deliberately and used parts of the NT government's response on the Plan of Management selectively in a shabby attempt to score political points, like you blokes over there. He claims that the Territory government wants to see a forest of oil-drilling rigs at Uluru, and that is a load of hysterical nonsense.

The Territory government recognises the environmental and economic value of Uluru better than most people do, and probably better than does the member for Stuart. To suggest that we would want drilling rigs anywhere near Ayers Rock, the Olgas or a magnificent resort like Yulara, is absolute stupidity, and Mr Cohen knows that, as we all do.

The Territory government is particularly concerned by the lack of emphasis on the crucial areas of resource management and environmental conservation in the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service's Draft Plan of Management,

not only for Uluru but for Kakadu as well. These cover vast areas of the Northern Territory, yet there is no way we are able to consider the proper management of the resources of these national parks.

The Territory government has no intention of opening the gates of Uluru and allowing it to be ravaged by miners, as Mr Cohen would like to have Australia believe, but we would be remiss in our duty if we did not attempt to identify what mineral resources are there. If we are to put roads in, are we to carry road gravel from 100 km or 500 km away? Are we expected to do that? That is the sort of thing we are expected to do in many other areas, but we should not have to do it in the national parks. Right now, in Litchfield Park, which is managed by the Northern Territory government, an assessment of suitable sites for mining road gravel is being made. We are looking behind ridges, in places where it will not affect the environment, where it will not be seen by people, where it will not do any damage and where there will be no erosion problems. Of course, we do these sorts of things. This government has no philosophical opposition to mining in national parks. I do not try to hide that, even as Minister for Conservation. I have no philosophical opposition to mining in national parks because, not only do I believe but I know that it can be done without any serious detriment to the environment. Any mining in areas of such immense value could be approved only if the strictest environmental controls were applied.

It is my view, and I believe it is the view of most people in the Northern Territory, that if a mine cannot be operated in an environmentally responsible way, it is not a viable mine. However, in most cases mining companies can afford to do the job and do it properly. It is both possible and important that we strike a balance between environmental and economic considerations, because they are not mutually exclusive. Mr Cohen's own government recognised this when it adopted the National Conservation Strategy for Australia. For him to go back on that now is just sheer hypocrisy, but it is typical of the sort of response that we have come to expect from the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Environment when carrying out his instructions from the almighty Professor Ovington. I had better not go any further on that, otherwise I might say something harsh.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, on Tuesday morning last week the Chief Minister announced the appointment of an interdepartmental committee to carry out a review of procedures and legislation covering the declaration and registration of Aboriginal sacred sites in the Territory. That announcement represented the culmination of a series of unmitigated attacks by the government on the work of its own Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority.

This latest attack started almost a month ago on 15 July when the unholy team of the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Mines and Energy issued a joint press release foreshadowing the establishment of a parliamentary committee of inquiry into the procedures for the registration of Aboriginal sacred sites. With a great fanfare, the ministers released copies of the so-called Davis Report, which they said raised matters of concern to all Australians. They expressed concern that Aboriginal culture and traditions might not be receiving adequate protection and that Aboriginal people were not being represented properly on the issue of their sacred sites. We all read this report, which was supposedly of great import, except, apparently, our Chief Minister. For, when approached by journalists during the CLP conference in Alice Springs on 9 August, he had to admit that he had not got around to reading the Cabinet report which presumably included the Davis Report, a response by the Sacred Sites Authority to various questions, and a further report by Mr Davis. However, our honourable but intrepid Chief Minister, no

doubt spurred on by the journalist's inquiry as well as the surprise at the government's tardiness expressed by some delegates at the conference, rushed to his room, read the report, and called an urgent Cabinet meeting. Unfortunately, it appears that when the Chief Minister gave the report his measured consideration, it became obvious that neither the report nor the related material came up with the goods. To those of us who had read the Davis Report, this was already obvious. So, the parliamentary inquiry foreshadowed by the Ministers for Mines and Energy, and Lands, was reduced to an inquiry by a government-appointed investigator. Last Tuesday, that was further modified to a 3-man interdepartmental committee.

It should be noted that this is not the first inquiry into the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority undertaken in the recent past and, undoubtedly it will not be the last unless the whole matter is resolved once and for all. Therefore, although the opposition can agree with the Chief Minister that the Davis Report is not up to much, it is forced to support the call for an inquiry. We want an inquiry which will clear the air by examining all the major issues at arm's length, leaving the authority free to carry on its work without constant interruption and attack. This cannot be achieved by a review at departmental level, as proposed by the Chief Minister. He himself instituted a departmental review of the authority during the past 12 months, when he was Minister for Lands. It was conducted by one of the members of the currently proposed review committee. That obviously did not yield the expected results, and so nothing more was heard of it. These forays cannot continue. The authority must be allowed to perform its legislated functions unimpeded. The matter must be put to rest. We should have no more servants of the government carrying out reviews and producing reports that can be forgotten about. The time has passed for such half measures.

An inquiry under the Inquiries Act must be held. If there is substance to these constant attacks, details can be verified and appropriate action taken. If there is not, the authority can be permitted to carry out its job without working constantly under siege. The Chief Minister and all his colleagues must take full blame for having created a climate where a cooperative atmosphere is almost impossible. At least an inquiry under the Inquiries Act could proceed at an objective and distant level which would ensure an acceptable and credible report. The terms of reference of the proposed review are to inquire into the philosophy and policy of sacred sites legislation and the effects of that legislation. They are hardly appropriate terms of reference for an inquiry at departmental level.

The Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act is a major piece of Northern Territory legislation. The terms of reference given to the committee of inquiry could not be more far reaching. An inquiry of such magnitude deserves more appropriate treatment. It deserves an inquiry of the sort which the Inquiries Act was specifically set up to provide.

I would like to take a brief look at the Davis Report, which has been used to launch this latest attack on the authority. This report is part of what the Chief Minister has so loosely termed 'the evidence before the government'. A casual reading of the report is sufficient to alert the reader to its glaring contradictions. I would like to take just a little time to follow the threads of some of the amazing inaccuracies in this report, by which the government has placed so much store.

Mr Speaker, I would draw your attention the section headed 'Anomalies and Problems with Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority's Procedures' at page 10 of the report. Obviously this is a key section. In the second paragraph of that

section, you will note that Mr Davis states quite categorically that he does not have the report which led to the registration of Coronation Hill as a sacred site. Despite this, the section sets out over several pages a whole series of specific criticisms of that report, which Mr Davis openly admits he does not have at hand to examine. From this criticism, he draws damning conclusions. At the beginning of the section, on page 10, he states that the report should have specified clearly the boundaries of the site and the criteria under which those boundaries were delineated. The report does so. He goes on to say that those boundaries should have been the boundaries recommended for registration. They were. On page 11, Mr Davis states in his first conclusion that the report was deficient in most respects but passed through the registration process. This is surely an amazing conclusion in respect of a report that he did not have at hand to examine.

Mr Davis goes further, and states that the Sacred Sites Authority led custodians into ascribing an incorrect significance to areas such as Coronation Hill. At no time does Mr Davis provide any evidence to back up that statement. He continues by saying that the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority must clearly understand that it is not its prerogative to judge which site should be brought forward to be registered. Look at the repeated statements by Mr Davis throughout this section, to the effect that the custodians have never requested registration of the site. I would suggest to Mr Davis that he has only to inspect the documents of the Sacred Sites Authority to ascertain that there is a written application from custodians for the registration of the site, and that that application carries the signatures of custodians.

How can the government rely on a report where, in the first paragraph of the conclusion, the author says that his conclusion has been drawn without the benefit of access to documents from the authority yet, in the same paragraph, refers to the evidence at hand? What evidence? I would suggest to the government that no evidence is brought forward anywhere in the whole of the Davis Report which could have prompted any responsible government to take any serious action. The report is a farce. Further, it is the result of the active conniving of the Minister for Mines and Energy, who was so keen on having a particular development proceed that he went to the length of threatening the mining company with government intervention if it did not expedite the procedures with the Aboriginal people. Obviously, he wanted to browbeat the Aboriginals concerned, or force them into a confrontation. The Chief Minister, to his credit, was quick to dissociate himself from this ploy and contradict it by reassuring the mining company concerned. When that strategy was not successful, the Minister for Mines and Energy requested Mr Davis to prepare a report to stir the pot. He then released the report, with much public fanfare, hoping to embroil the government, in particular the Chief Minister, in a witch-hunt of his own creation. He managed that with the backing of the Minister for Lands. He indicated publicly that a parliamentary inquiry would proceed, leaving the government in the embarrassing situation where it could not let the matter drop without political damage to both ministers and hence the government.

Mr Speaker, the government and the Chief Minister were committed, without consultation, whether they liked it or not. However, the Chief Minister was obviously astute enough to see that the Davis Report, particularly when coupled with the thorough responses of the Sacred Sites Authority, would not bear close outside scrutiny. Hence, the smokescreen of an interdepartmental review, in other words, an in-house inquiry. It is about time that the government's conduct in respect of the Sacred Sites Authority was examined in the light of day. What needs to be examined is not the empty Davis Report

but, rather, the conduct of a government and, in this case, a particular minister, who released publicly a report containing unsubstantiated allegations, and then used that report to institute an in-house inquiry. He did all that with the purpose of undermining the work of one of the government's own instrumentalities which had been so bold as to fulfill its functions conscientiously without succumbing to political pressures and convenience.

It should be remembered, Mr Speaker, that what is at the heart of this recent controversy is the fact that the authority, after proper inquiry, on 2 separate occasions gave permission for mining at Coronation Hill. That is part of the authority's function under the legislation.

The government has an opportunity to show some responsibility in this matter. If it is genuine in its wish to hold an in-depth inquiry into the philosophy and policy of sacred sites legislation, then let it establish one under the Inquiries Act. The opposition will support such an inquiry. However, the government's motives are very suspect. Justice must be seen to be done. Let the government show a responsible attitude and initiate an objective inquiry under the Inquiries Act.

I do not have the time here tonight to go into the issue of the second Davis Report. I hear that the report is full of holes and backtracks over issues raised in the first report, so I am not surprised that the government has not released it. However, I believe that that report should be delivered to an inquiry. At a later stage, I will express my disgust at the way the government has impugned the officers of the Sacred Sites Authority. The cowardly attacks made upon them have been aimed at undermining their professional integrity. These are professional people and, in the final analysis, the one thing that they have is their professional integrity; their ability to go out into the world with their good name and to rely on that as a means of continuing in their profession.

However, this government has not seen fit to hold a full inquiry under the Inquiries Act, in a way that would allow those officers to redress the imbalance created by the release of these reports. They are unable to clear their names through an independent inquiry which would also examine the allegations contained in the Davis Report. The government needs to define its own role in this matter. It must cease these continuous attacks on the Sacred Sites Authority. It needs to clear the air by instituting an inquiry under the Inquiries Act so that all of the allegations can be brought to light. The roles played by the 2 ministers need to be examined by an independent inquiry, to see just what function they performed in attempting to undermine the role and operation of a government authority.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, just before 8 o'clock this morning we were delivered notice of an MPI before the Assembly dealing with this matter. Later, we found that the opposition Whip did not know that the MPI was to be brought on, and then we were told it would not be introduced today. Obviously, the opposition members decided on some other tactic, but decided not to waste the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's speech and have used it in the adjournment debate. I have never heard so much garbage in all my life as that statement by the member for Stuart.

Mr Speaker, on 12 August this year a report on ABC radio said that the opposition was not opposed to an inquiry. It said that Brian Ede, the opposition spokesman on Aboriginal affairs, had already supported publicly the need for a review after 8 years, and he was not objecting to that. If he had

bothered to read the press release that went out, and it was not secret, he would have discovered that we were adopting a cooperative approach with the Sacred Sites Authority but, in the event that cooperation was not forthcoming, I would not be opposed to using the Inquiries Act. Mr Speaker, I object to any inference that our government is frightened to have this matter discussed fully, and all the facts brought out.

This week, I received a letter from the Professional Officers' Association seeking an inquiry into the Coronation Hill project. The terms of reference of the review enable that subject to be fully canvassed before the committee. If the facts are still not forthcoming, we will keep chasing. I do not want to leave anyone in doubt about this. I want to know the truth about the Sacred Sites Authority. Whether the opposition wants to know it or not, there is severe disquiet in the Northern Territory about the activities of the Sacred Sites Authority. That was so long before the Coronation Hill issue arose. Until April this year, I was the minister responsible for the Sacred Sites Authority, and I was working with its director on necessary reviews to the legislation. Continuous questions have been raised about a number of issues to do with the Sacred Sites Authority. I felt, and Cabinet felt, that it was inappropriate to deal with an individual issue like Coronation Hill. Obviously, if we had done that, the opposition would have said that we were on a witch-hunt for the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority. The opposition is interested in creating dissension and trying to paint the Northern Territory government as taking a racist attitude towards the Sacred Sites Authority and Aboriginal people. That is simply not true, although it is the implication behind everything the opposition says. Every time there is a debate involving matters related to Aboriginal people or Aboriginal organisations, members of the opposition leap out of their trees, jumping and screaming about the government: 'Here it goes, kicking the blacks again'. That is what they say.

I have fought hard to avoid doing that but, as the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, I am not going to surrender my responsibility to stand up against things that I believe are unreasonable or inequitable. I do not care about the colour of the people involved. Can I make that very clear, Mr Speaker? I am not going to be intimidated out of talking about things which involve Aboriginal people, which I believe are improper, unreasonable or unfair, any more than I am prepared to accept arguments denigrating Aboriginal people unreasonably.

There are problems with the Sacred Sites Authority and I have tried to have them dealt with properly through a review committee. We have not made any secret about the review nor about the reasons particular people were chosen to sit on that review. We have made no secret of the fact that, if we still do not get to the bottom of it, we will invoke the Inquiries Act. If we do it this way, properly, with the cooperation of the Sacred Sites Authority, it will save this government a considerable sum of money. I do not object to trying to save money for this government. If it does not reach the root cause, then we can invoke the Inquiries Act; we still have that option. It would be a very expensive exercise and a very unusual way to review government legislation and the operations of a government statutory authority. Certainly, it would give the opposition the perfect excuse to say: 'Here we go, they are building up Coronation Hill. They are trying to tear into the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority.' Even the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority has indicated publicly that this review is not intended as a witch-hunt against himself.

Mr Ede: What?

Mr HATTON: Mr Speaker, that is very clear. The Director of the Sacred Sites Authority made that comment in an interview on ABC radio on 11 August. He stated that he did not believe the inquiry was an attempt to attack his position.

Mr Bell: Are you reading from something?

Mr HATTON: I certainly am, Mr Speaker. I have some notes, not a prepared speech.

Mr Ede: What is it?

Mr HATTON: It happens to be my personal notes, Mr Speaker, and I object to the member for Stuart carrying on like that. I am talking openly and frankly in this Assembly in a debate *ab initio*, if I can quote the member for MacDonnell.

Mr Bell: I have never used the term '*ab initio*'.

Mr HATTON: Look at Hansard in 1984.

If the member for Stuart read a prepared speech to this Assembly on this issue, I would not be surprised if it was written by the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority. The member for Stuart's speech today was almost identical to a letter that was written to the Centralian Advocate last week by the director. He made exactly the same accusations as did the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority.

We are not afraid to have the Davis information released. It was not released because it was to be considered by the review committee, and I have put that proposition to the Professional Officers' Association. The terms of reference enable any individual decision to be examined, including Coronation Hill, and they enable anybody to put information before that review committee. I have invited the Professional Officers' Association to put submissions to that review committee on behalf of its members. The documentation will be made available to the inquiry and to any other person who wants to debate it before that review committee. I chose not to enter into a public debate about the answers provided by the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority and the advice we received on those answers, because it might prejudice that inquiry.

The member for Stuart might regard that as unreasonable, but perhaps he should think about the interests of the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority. Does he want a trial by newspaper such as the one the opposition launched on the previous Chief Minister? I will not engage in that practice. I will put the matter before a review committee to have it dealt with properly and in a dispassionate manner in which all parties will have a right to put their arguments. A trial by newspaper is not my style. It is the style of the opposition and is typical of the gutter tactics that it has been trying to run in the Assembly today. It does that regularly because it is not game to debate policies. It has no policies and, therefore, it digs into personalities, conflicts and dirt. It has nothing else to run with. We know that we will have personal abuse and attacks because the opposition always avoids issues. It does not have an issue worth talking about in this Assembly which will not lose its votes in the Territory. It has nothing to offer the Territory except trouble. That is what it tries to engender all the time.

The speech by the member for Stuart tonight was designed to stir up trouble over the review, by creating doubt and dissension. If the member for

Stuart has a particular argument in respect of the activities and operation of the Sacred Sites Authority, then I invite him to make a submission to that review committee. I would like him to make submissions on how Aboriginal people from central Australia can properly consider a sacred site in Arnhem Land, an area in which they have no custodial rights nor, according to Aboriginal tradition, even the right to know of their existence. I would like the member to answer that question and tell me how it influences the deliberations of the Sacred Sites Authority.

Let me say that the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority recognises that problem. We were trying to arrive at a more acceptable solution, in line with Aboriginal tradition, for the proper identification and appropriate protection of sacred sites, and to take into account the interests of other people who may be adversely affected by sacred sites. It must be remembered that, if an area is declared a sacred site, no one is allowed to enter that area. That is basically what the legislation says. If that had a financial cost, should the Northern Territory government then proceed to acquire that land compulsorily to ensure that compensation was paid to the previous landowner? That is a simple issue that needs to be addressed and there are a multitude of those sorts of questions.

This review will examine all those matters and undertake a total review of the legislation. As well, it will examine specific situations such as Coronation Hill and the declaration of sacred sites in the corridor from McArthur River Mine to the coast. It will look also at the declaration of sacred sites in every place where professional barramundi fishermen locate their nets or, if that is not possible, at the location of their anchorages. These matters have been brought before this government. We are not saying whether these places are sacred sites or not. However, we want to be assured that sites are properly declared, that the interests of disaffected parties are properly considered, that there is no breach of Aboriginal custom and tradition, and that sites are appropriately declared and protected.

I do not believe the Aboriginal people are opposed to that. I really do not think they are opposed to the proper identification and protection of those sites. I am in favour of appropriate protection of sacred sites. I, for one, would like to get to the bottom of what has been going on and to ensure that we stop this crazy, ongoing blue by the opposition over sacred sites. Concerns are being expressed by people throughout the Northern Territory community. There is no point putting one's head in the sand. I would like to be able to satisfy and assure people that what is being done is being done properly, and that the Aboriginal people are not being used by other people. That is the intention of this review. I would like to undertake it in a proper and cooperative manner. If that fails, I am not afraid to invoke the Inquiries Act. I did not invoke the Inquiries Act because I did not believe it was necessary for a review of legislation and the functions of a statutory authority. That can be done on a cooperative basis, rather than by driving people into their bunkers with the misapprehension that they are under attack.

That was the basis of the Cabinet decision. In the end, Cabinet decided that this course of action was right and proper. As I have said, if people want to try to play games with the review, I will invoke the Inquiries Act. I say that loudly and clearly. I will go for every bit of information I can obtain through the Inquiries Act to ensure that this matter will be properly and appropriately finalised. But such an inquiry will only arise if people try to prevent proper access to information.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I would like to go over some of the points which the Chief Minister made. We expected to debate this issue today as a matter of public importance. A matter of public importance is something of grave concern to the community or individuals within the community, and therefore needs to be debated urgently. It is a motion of such importance that the business of this Assembly has to come to a standstill so that it can be debated immediately. This morning, when we had notice of this matter of public importance dropped on our desks, we started to prepare to debate it. In fact, the Leader of Government Business rang the opposition Whip, who denied that he knew anything about it. When we have an opposition as large as ours is in the Northern Territory, I guess it is easy for them to become confused, especially when there are 5 people heading in different directions. There is a lot of solidarity in the Labor Party. They speak to one another about different tissues. Even the Leader of the Opposition's old boss, the previous Leader of the Opposition, who obviously gave support for the member for Millner to become the new Leader of the Opposition, got it in the throat because the ...

Mr Bell: You can talk about solidarity.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The interjections of the member for MacDonnell are becoming exceedingly loud. He shall control himself for the remainder of the Treasurer's speech.

Mr COULTER: After the Leader of the Opposition had been given the kick-up and got the job, he turned around and supported the competitor to his old boss to get the nod for the Senate. They give a lot of support to their colleagues. It is not hard to understand why they are confused, Mr Deputy Speaker. Look at their federal counterparts. Just recently, the Territory was blessed by visits from 2 honourable senators, Senator Peter Walsh and Senator Gareth Evans. Senator Evans, the federal minister responsible for mining, made the front page of the NT News on Friday, 8 August under the heading 'Evans backs Hill Mining'. I quote: 'Mining at Coronation Hill in the proposed Kakadu stage 3 definitely would go ahead, federal Mines and Energy Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, said last night'.

Mr Ede: That is not an issue.

Mr COULTER: Mining at Coronation Hill is okay. Is that what the member is saying?

Mr Ede: I said that the Sacred Sites Authority had given the approval for exploration to go ahead.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister will be heard in silence.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I was about to address my question through the Chair. I understand that now we almost have it on public record - and no doubt the member for Stuart will make it quite clear - that he is not against mining at Coronation Hill. If that is what he said, let us see if he interjects and says yes or no.

Mr Ede: I did not say anything about that. I said the Sacred Sites ...

Mr COULTER: He is still interjecting, Mr Deputy Speaker, but I will read on regardless.

Recently, Senator Peter Walsh was in the Territory. We all know that he has given the Territory a bit of stick over a period of time, saying how he would depopulate it with a machine gun if necessary. The ABC News of Friday, 8 August said: 'The finance minister, Senator Walsh, speaking in Darwin today, echoed comments made yesterday by the Resources and Energy Minister, Senator Evans'. I will quote Senator Walsh verbatim: 'I do not believe that either the Territory or the Commonwealth can afford to leave bodies like Coronation Hill unmined'. The journalist asked, 'Regardless of other interests?' Senator Walsh answered: 'Well, that is my view. Yes. I mean there would have to be, of course, the normal environmental controls which would apply to mining in most parts of Australia'.

There we have 2 federal Labor politicians agreeing that Coronation Hill has to be mined. We still do not know where the Deputy Leader of the Opposition stands on this particular issue. I challenge him again to make public whether or not he believes that mining should proceed at Coronation Hill. I was at Oenpelli recently with the Chairman of the Northern Land Council and he said to me that, if it had been left to the council, we would have been mining at Coronation Hill by now. I wonder if the opposition spokesman would come out and support the Chairman of the Northern Land Council on that statement.

Mr Ede: I said: 'If you follow the due process of the law'.

Mr COULTER: 'If we follow the due process of law'. I take it that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is in favour of mining at Coronation Hill?

Mr Ede: With that proviso.

Mr COULTER: I am glad that has been clarified. Of course, 'the due process of law' may mean a lot of things.

As the minister responsible for mines and energy, it was brought to my attention that there were grave doubts about whether, in fact, Coronation Hill was the sacred Bula site, as purported by the Sacred Sites Authority. The Sacred Sites Authority has gone to a lot of trouble to describe just what Coronation Hill is. They produced a video which I think was called 'Shake Him My Country'. It was filmed at Coronation Hill. It was distributed nationally and taken to Canberra where it was shown to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and the Minister for Mines and Energy. Evidence was presented to me that Coronation Hill may not be the sacred site, as claimed by the Sacred Sites Authority.

Coronation Hill was mined in 1956. People were out there looking for uranium in those days. They kicked aside gold because they were looking for black gold, the uranium rock out in the South Alligator Valley. There are many photographs of bulldozers working in the area close to the Coronation Hill site. I became concerned, because people came to me and said that the Bula site was nowhere near Coronation Hill. One of the other things brought to my attention was that it is the largest sacred site claim, covering some 270 km². It was also brought to my attention that the maps were not consistent with one another. I noted too, with some concern, the dates on which the sacred sites were registered in the Coronation Hill area.

For the benefit of honourable members, I would like to give some background on Coronation Hill, because some of the matters brought before me concerned me greatly. I would like to hear from the opposition spokesman on this, and I am sure the mining industry would be very interested to hear about

the opposition's position in regard to mining, particularly as it relates to the development of Kakadu stage 3. Senator Evans is on record as saying that he believes that 35% of Kakadu stage 3 should be mined. I would like to know just where the opposition stands on that, and I would be very interested to hear of its support for its federal colleague's proposal to mine up to 35% of the South Alligator area. However, in the late 1960s and the early 1970s the Coronation Hill joint venture, originally known as the South Alligator joint venture, was formed to explore for gold and uranium in the South Alligator River region. During this period, the joint venture held much of the ground in the South Alligator River region under exploration licence, together with a number of granted mining tenements. Further applications were made for mining tenements but, because of a change in Commonwealth policy relating to - you guessed it - Aboriginal land rights, those tenements were not processed.

On the introduction of the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act, control of this land was given to the Territory. Subsequently, however, all of the land referred to as Kakadu National Park, including the proposed stage 2 and the Gimbat and Goodparla pastoral leases, was reacquired by the Commonwealth pursuant to section 70 of the Self-Government Act, for consideration as - you guessed it - a national park.

In 1982, the Commonwealth passed an amendment to the Self-Government Act to the effect that, on acquiring the land, the Commonwealth also acquired the minerals and the leases. The applications therefore pertain to land held by the Commonwealth. Now we have 2 Commonwealth ministers coming up to the Territory and saying 'Go ahead and mine it'. What more evidence do we need that these minerals cannot be locked up forever? Australia is on the brink of a recession, and we have platinum, palladium and 350 000 ozs of gold locked up in Coronation Hill but we cannot go ahead and mine it because, all of a sudden, it has become a sacred site. It was not a sacred site 50 years ago. Suddenly the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the shadow minister for mines and energy, is accusing me of some mismanagement or of seeking to drum up a fight.

Mr Ede: Mischief.

Mr COULTER: He has now watered it down to 'mischief'. I am being called mischievous. He called me 'pathetic' the other day. I said I was proud of it, because if I am pathetic in getting on with my work for the welfare of all Territorians, in line with the prayer we say here every morning, I am proud of being called it. However, he will not be here for too much longer, because the Aboriginal people will give him a message to take him away from this Assembly shortly, and he will treasure that message for a long time to come. They will say that, if he had been mischievous and pathetic, like the Minister for Mines and Energy, they might have re-elected him and put him back in the Legislative Assembly. Because of the way he is, he can just sit down.

The circumstances surrounding Coronation Hill were of grave concern to me, and I still have that concern. If I have been mischievous in what I have done, then so be it. But I will be proven right, just as the Chief Minister was proven right in what he said today. I will be proven right in the course of time. It may take a while, but I have time. On the other hand, the Labor opposition in the Northern Territory is fast running out of it. The statements, protocol and strategy that they have used in this Assembly are despicable. Today they used the standing orders in a way which was degrading to this Assembly, to bring on a matter of public importance that the opposition Whip did not even know about. Eventually, it boiled down to an adjournment debate after all. It was not going to be heard tomorrow. The

opposition's behaviour is despicable. It shows contempt for this Assembly and offends the very high regard I hold for this Assembly. The opposition has used the system. It has not had the courage to go ahead with its matter of public importance. Instead, it was watered down to an adjournment debate, an adjournment debate of very little substance, as the passage of time will prove.

Members opposite do not have the support of their federal colleague, the minister responsible for mines and energy and the man that has given us more stick than any other federal minister. It is funny that those 2 ministers have now come to the aid of the Northern Territory on this particular issue. When times get tough, the Northern Territory turns out to be right. We will provide a model in mining for the rest of Australia to follow. We will have a review of the Sacred Sites Authority, and we will prove to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the opposition spokesman on mines and energy, that the whole Coronation Hill issue had a very bad smell to it. It was not cyanide gas either. It was a smell that I believe was created by various individuals who were, in fact, mischievous.

The true and correct meaning of the word 'mischievous' will be driven home to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, in terms of electoral power, by the Aboriginal people whom he claims to represent. Out in the Granites and the Tanami Desert we are finding large quantities of gold. The mining companies would be very interested to hear of the position taken by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the electorate that he represents. We will see how much gold, and gold production, he will support within his electorate.

As I said before, the opposition has demonstrated its contempt for the standing orders of this Assembly by providing a matter of public importance that has progressed no further than an adjournment debate by the opposition spokesman. I have no more to say on it, Mr Speaker, but I have no doubt that we will hear a great deal more. I would like to know of any involvement that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has had in the issue of mining at Coronation Hill. I guess it will be told as time goes by.

Mr DONDAS (Lands): Mr Speaker, I am not going to take up too much of the Assembly's time, but I must support the comments of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister in regard to the matter of public importance that we thought we were to debate early today. In the 12 years I have been here, it is the first occasion that I remember when the opposition has signalled a discussion of a matter of public importance, withdrawn it during the morning, and then debated it during the adjournment. I find it very strange indeed after 12 years.

However, as the Deputy Chief Minister said, they are at sixes and sevens over there and they really do not know what is going on. It was particularly strange that the opposition Whip was unaware of the MPI. The left hand did not know what the right hand was doing.

My concern about the proposed MPI, which has become the adjournment debate, was that it would be an attempt by the opposition to derail the inquiry before it even had a chance to start. That is what I am worried about. We are debating a matter which is subject to an inquiry, as announced by the Chief Minister. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition has stated that the opposition welcomes 'any inquiry' into the operation of the Sacred Sites Authority. Today, he was not talking about just 'any inquiry'. He was talking about a judicial inquiry. The Chief Minister explained to him very adequately in this debate why the government decided to go for an inquiry with

3 people on it. It is important that we do it slowly. We are trying to do it right and, as the Chief Minister said, if a slower inquiry does not have the desired effect, then we still had the alternative of a judicial inquiry. I thought he explained that adequately.

I think that this debate has been brought on today to try to torpedo the efforts of the inquiry. We all know that the Sacred Sites Authority legislation needs to be reviewed. It is 8 years old. There have been several problems. We talk about Coronation Hill, and the McArthur River area. There was a problem with a sacred site in central Australia when a contractor apparently desecrated, inadvertently - if that is the word that I could use - the tail of the caterpillar. The Sacred Sites Authority took the matter to court and then withdrew it. If it was on such solid ground, why did it withdraw it? It is symptomatic of the confusion that has been caused in the Northern Territory. That is why this legislation needs to be reviewed, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition agrees to it.

More importantly, over the years the Aboriginal sacred sites legislation and the Aboriginal (Northern Territory) Land Rights Act have been put in place by people living outside this Northern Territory, who do not know what is happening here on a day-to-day basis.

The point that I rose to address was that made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in regard to the day-to-day operations of the Sacred Sites Authority. I have gone on the public record supporting the Minister for Mines and Energy, the Chief Minister, and other ministerial colleagues in initiating a review into the legislation as it stands.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition argued that the day-to-day operation of the Sacred Sites Authority was being suppressed, and he inferred that it was being suppressed by myself as the responsible minister. I deny that. It is absolutely not true. I believe that I have a very good working relationship with the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority. That would be very hard for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to disprove. In fact, it was only yesterday that I inspected the authority's office accommodation because, for the last couple of months, it has been trying to secure itself some new premises. I took the task to heart, both to ensure that I could support whatever decision was made, and to protect the public purse. There was an opportunity of using some of the space which the Northern Territory government was paying for in the building, so I inspected the property physically yesterday afternoon and found that it would not have been suitable for the Sacred Sites Authority. We also inspected the Sacred Sites Authority offices themselves, and found that they were not suitable for its operation. Consequently, I authorised the Director of the Sacred Sites Authority to use the office accommodation he had sorted out 6 weeks ago. Can the opposition tell me that that is trying to restrict the operations of the Sacred Sites Authority! No way, Mr Deputy Speaker.

However, we are worried about the level of concern in the community with regard to the authority's operation. The Chief Minister referred to this earlier when he asked how a person from central Australia, who is on the Sacred Sites Authority, can comment on particular sites of significance or sacred sites within other regions. You are dumbfounded. You did not know that? The Deputy Leader of the Opposition did not know that.

I will just give a hypothetical example. Imagine the Aboriginal members of the Sacred Sites Authority all sitting at a table discussing general business. Suddenly, a particular agenda item comes up. It relates to a

sacred site which happens to be in Arnhem Land. The other 6 Aboriginals on the Sacred Sites Authority, who come from central Australia and other parts of the Territory, almost close their eyes. They do not want to know anything about it. So what is left? The one person who is able to say yes, the director, finishes up making the decision. Everybody thinks it was made by the Sacred Sites Authority, but it was not. As we all know, according to Aboriginal law people cannot concern themselves with sacred sites in other peoples' country. If things like this are happening in the authority as it presently operates, maybe that is what the review should be looking at.

Another issue relates to our Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority legislation. It does not say that the chairman has necessarily to be an Aboriginal. All it says is that there must be 7 Aboriginals and 4 non-Aboriginals on the authority. When I first became the minister responsible for the Sacred Sites Authority, it had been operational for only a couple of months because it did not have a full complement of members. I took it upon myself to make sure that the authority became operational as quickly as possible. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition does not talk about that. He talks about how the minister responsible does not help in the day-to-day operation of the authority. What a load of nonsense! Everything that I could possibly do to assist the operation of the authority has been done, but I still make the point that I am not satisfied with the way it is operating, because of those particular reasons.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition talks about Coronation Hill and the first and second reports. Perhaps he can tell me how it is that, after 40 years, the real custodians did not even know where the real site was. Tell me how it is that, after 40 years, it has been left to an old mining prospector who has been in the Northern Territory for a long time, to identify where the real site is.

Mr Ede: That is absolute rubbish.

Mr DONDAS: He says it is rubbish, but the point that I am trying to make is that the discussion of a matter of public importance which the opposition planned to bring on this morning was an attempt to torpedo the government inquiry into the operation and legislation of the Sacred Sites Authority. At some time before 10 o'clock this morning, the members of the opposition decided to call it off because they knew they were going to have a few problems. They decided to let the Deputy Leader of the Opposition have a go in the adjournment. Well, he has certainly copped it. He has come to this place with half truths, and his speech was the same, almost word for word, as the article 'Ellis Responds', in the Katherine Advertiser.

I hope the debate this afternoon does not deter the inquiry into the enactment of legislation that is now 8 years old, because the Northern Territory has changed a lot. More importantly, I am concerned at the intent of the Commonwealth legislation that is to be introduced in the spring session of parliament. It will make our particular Sacred Sites Authority pale into insignificance.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. What I have to say this afternoon may not be of such oratorical interest as the subject covered by previous speakers in this adjournment debate. However, the matter that has been previously discussed may not be of gripping interest to my constituents. I am referring to the workings and dealings of the Sacred Sites Authority. However, in thinking about the subject a little and listening to the speakers, a certain matter was brought to mind relating to

the declaration of sacred sites in my electorate. It is a matter with which the current legislation does not deal.

I refer to a particular group of people who may have been of Aboriginal descent, who were living in a certain part of my electorate. They did not want other people coming nearby and disturbing them, so they put up a sign saying that there was a sacred site in the area. I knew for a fact that there was not a sacred site in the area. I also knew from old European inhabitants of the area that there had not been a sacred site to their knowledge. They were well past their 60s and had had a lot more to do with the full-blood Aboriginals of the area than I had. It was pretty obvious to the people who had lived there, and knew the area, that there was not a sacred site, and so it was proved subsequently. This sign was taken down and no sacred site was there. This just goes to show that the legislation was being used - I do not know whether one would say illegally or immorally - to declare a sacred site for the wrong purposes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I asked the honourable Minister for Mines and Energy a question regarding water release below the Darwin River Dam area. I asked about a draft policy put out by the Water Division of the Department of Transport and Works. I was pleased to hear the minister say several times that this was only a draft policy and it was open to comment by the people that it would affect, namely my constituents. They are quite interested to know that the Water Resources Division plans to restrict water flow from the Darwin River Dam at certain times of the year in the future.

I have had something to do with officers of the Water Division over the years. They are a pretty good crew of people. Most of their stable, leading lights have worked their way up through the ranks and they know the ropes very well and have developed sound relationships between field staff and the general public. Seldom, if ever, have I heard adverse public comment regarding the approach of the Water Division staff to the general public. As a result, I believe that comment on the current draft policy put out by the Water Division by the people it will affect - namely my constituents who live downstream from the Darwin River Dam - will be given consideration.

I will give an example of the good working relationship between the general public and officers of the division, although the informality enjoyed in previous years cannot occur these days because of certain legislative restrictions. Some years ago, a gentleman was engaged in farming full time near the old Darwin River Dam. Periodically, he suffered a water shortage in the flow downstream from the Darwin River. On this particular occasion, he rang up the senior Water Resources engineer and complained about the lack of water for his farm. The engineer said emphatically that he could not have any water, because it was not government policy but, at the end of the conversation, he suggested that this farmer contact another Water Resources officer lower in the echelon. The farmer rang this other person, who said something like: 'Why don't you get in touch with the supervisor out at the dam? Ask him to open the sluices, and you'll be right'. He did that, and he was. Unfortunately, the informality of those days has gone.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Control of Waters Act contains a definition of riparian rights, which is the right to pump by landholders who have creeks running through their properties or forming part of their boundaries. They have the right to pump adequate water for domestic uses for themselves, their families, their servants and their stock, and about 1 acre of irrigation. You might say that that should be enough for anybody, even people in the rural area on their 5-acre or 20-acre blocks.

With the development of the rural area, horticulture enterprises have started up in the Darwin River Dam area because of the good, arable soil there. I would hate to see these projects disadvantaged by lack of water at certain times of the year. Reading through the draft policy, I find inconsistencies which I cannot equate with easy reading. The introduction says: 'This draft policy is presented for release from Darwin River Dam so as to maintain flow in the Darwin River between the dam and Bynoe Road crossing. The policy is based on the need to maintain the pre-dam flow capability to equal or exceed evapo-transpiration potential'. The policy talks of pre-dam flow. Before the current Darwin River Dam was built there was not as great a number of people living out there and engaging in farming and horticulture enterprises as there is now. Whilst the division may be correct in considering pre-dam flow as against post-dam flow for scientific purposes, I do not think it is a very realistic approach to the subject. The draft says: 'It should be noted that the policy does not set out to specifically account for licensed and riparian user demand. Evapo-transpiration potential is the factor which sets the release policy'. It goes on to say: 'It would be unreasonable to operate a release policy which specifically sought to satisfy non-paying downstream users'. I find those 2 matters very difficult to swallow. I think it is public service jargon at its worst and demonstrates complete disregard for the public.

As a matter of interest, I do not believe that the comment about non-paying downstream users is relevant because it does not cost anything to obtain a licence to pump the Darwin River. Therefore, the reference to non-paying downstream users is not strictly applicable. However, I do not consider it realistic to not consider the people who take water from the Darwin River by licence and even those who take it without a licence. It is not realistic to use evapo-transpiration potential as the factor which sets the release policy, and to completely disregard the non-paying downstream users is a completely callous way of looking at the matter.

I have previously discussed water use with Transport and Works personnel, and they were most unsympathetic to people in my electorate. Many people have limited means and it takes them a while to become established and to earn enough money to put down a bore, which may cost anything between \$5000 to \$7000. People were in the habit of taking water from the mains pipe in the area. There were watering points at different locations. Anybody who has ever had to take water in 44-gallon drums or ships' tanks and cart it daily or weekly will know that it is not an easy job. You work hard to get water that way whether you have paid for it or not. I considered the matter at the time, and said in no uncertain terms that I thought it was a completely lousy way of looking at the situation, begrudging people the little bit of water they took.

Water flowed to waste along the Stuart Highway recently. That has happened in various parts of the Darwin urban area when sprinklers have been left on too long or when they work inefficiently and spray onto the roads instead of median strips. Admittedly, people in urban areas pay for that water, but they are much more wasteful of the resource than the people in the rural area. I have also seen considerable water wasted in Aboriginal towns and camps. When there is so much of what could be termed 'condoned' water wastage in urban areas and Aboriginal towns and camps, to complain that the people in the rural area are not paying for their water does not add up to a sensible estimation of the subject.

Mr Bell: That is outrageous, Noel. That is really outrageous.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: I am very pleased to see that the member for MacDonnell is now feeling fit enough to talk. All he could do earlier was tear up paper in a fit of childish pique.

Mr Bell: If you had to sit and listen to some of the drivel that you come out with, you would too.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for MacDonnell will withdraw that remark.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw it unreservedly.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH: As the minister said this morning, Mr Deputy Speaker, a copy of this draft policy has already been delivered to the office of the Litchfield Shire Council. Before the next shire council meeting, there will be a public meeting at which interested residents of the rural area will be able to air their views. Whilst I probably need a briefing to understand it completely, given the goodwill that has emanated from the Water Division in the past, I feel certain that this draft policy will not seriously disadvantage my constituents. If, after digesting it further, I feel that they will be disadvantaged, I will certainly make my views known to the minister.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Citizens of central Australia and readers of our local journal, the Centralian Advocate, were somewhat concerned to read, in the edition of Friday 18 July, the headline 'Alice Groceries - Most Expensive'. The claim was made in that article that Alice Springs shoppers were paying up to 60% more for their groceries than other Australian shoppers. The article went on to compare food prices in Alice Springs with those elsewhere in the country. The comparison was based on an article printed in the magazine of the Australian Consumers Association, Choice, which no doubt will be well known to many honourable members. To put it in simple terms, the Choice article contained a comparison based on a selected list of grocery items that were collected in capital cities around Australia. In addition to the capital cities, there was Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Bunbury, Darwin, Geelong and so on. The cheapest basket of food was found to be in Newcastle. The article made the point that that basket of shopping from Newcastle was considerable cheaper than a comparable basket of groceries in Alice Springs.

This being a matter of some concern to me and many people, I sought an opinion from the supermarkets. I have had an interesting response from both the major chains, Woolworths and Coles, and from some of the smaller local supermarkets. All of them are very reasoned responses. As I explained, I would hardly be doing my job as shadow minister with responsibility for central Australia were I not to take up issues like that. It is a matter of some concern to people in central Australia.

Members from central Australia may have noticed an article in the local paper in response to the banner headlines 'Alice Groceries - Most Expensive'. Mr Steve Kershaw said:

I understand you could not include fresh foods because Choice magazine did not use them, but a list without fresh foods does not really reflect the average family's consumption. I would like to make a 'meaningless comparison' which I am sure must help give a truer picture of a shopper's situation in Alice. My wife and I spent last week in Adelaide, where we bought salmon trout for \$4.60 per kilogram filleted or \$1.80 unfileted. Today, we found a leading

supermarket's price for salmon trout was \$12.75 filleted, on special. This is a 177% extra for us in Alice. The differences in the prices of other fish, meat, poultry and vegetables are equally questionable.

My reason for raising this matter in the adjournment debate today is that it is my intention to write to the Australian Consumers Association. This year's comparison of grocery prices, which was published in its June magazine, was its seventh. I think that Alice Springs, being the sort of centre it is, probably has some claim to be included in that particular survey. I think that effort needs to be made to ensure that people who live in the Centre pay a fair price for the added freight that is necessary to obtain these goods. As I have said, it is my intention to write to the Australian Consumers Association and request that it include Alice Springs in its next survey.

In passing, it will not be particularly newsworthy that, quite consistently over the last 5 years, prices in Darwin have been the highest of the centres. Whereas other centres have fluctuated, Darwin has consistently been the dearest. That will not be any surprise to people who have contributed to inquiries into those matters. In the previous Assembly, we had the Report on Freight and Related Costs.

Quite obviously, this is a very important issue for all of us in central Australia. Representing an electorate such as mine, I suppose I am even more aware of it, because prices in outback stores tend to be that much higher again than in the supermarkets in the main town centres in the Territory.

To turn to another subject, yesterday I asked the Minister for Lands whether the government had decided that, when a perpetual pastoral lease was granted, that lease should include pre-existing stock routes or stock reserves. The minister answered me in these terms:

My understanding at the moment is that a decision in relation to stock routes on pastoral leases has been held in abeyance until the federal minister introduces his legislation into the federal parliament, during these spring sessions of parliament. The Northern Territory government policy over the years has been to include stock routes within those pastoral leases where there has been a clear and unequivocal statement of their not being needed for anything else.

That is a fairly surprising answer. As somebody who, for a number of years now, has been deeply involved in some of the contentious issues of land administration in the Northern Territory and within my own electorate, I find that a blindingly simple answer. It is blindingly simple to the point that I suggest that perhaps the minister is deliberately obfuscating. Obviously, the highest profile issue in this matter relates to Aboriginal land needs. Quite clearly, many other issues have been of concern in relation to the competing needs for pastoral land. These include drought relief, the needs of the pastoral industry, and the need for continued creation of national parks. For example, at Tempe Downs, the needs of the mining industry, the pastoral industry and the tourist industry are all important competing interests.

I would just like to remind the minister of exactly what has gone on in relation to the alienation of stock routes and stock reserves. He would be aware that the Northern Territory land councils made claim to many stock routes and stock reserves because Aboriginal people with traditional ownership rights in the vicinity of some of those pastoral leases expressed interest in gaining excisions of some sort. That continues to be a long, hard, bloody battle and it is far from being resolved. It is a matter of concern to me

that this clearly major policy decision of the government, to allow the alienation of stock routes and stock reserves, has not been announced in any way. You would be aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, that in some cases there have been trade-offs over claims to stock routes between Aboriginal groups that are seeking living areas. It is particularly ironic that the Northern Territory government has agreed to alienate stock routes and stock reserves in this way, because I can remember the member for Braitling saying how important it was to retain stock routes and stock reserves because we never knew when they would be needed again for droving cattle. What I am asking is, if they are so very important, how can the minister alienate them in that way? I think that it is about time he came clean in that regard.

A third matter that I wanted to raise in this evening's adjournment debate relates to the retirement of Pastor Leo Kollleske and his wife from Areyonga. Leo and Lydia Kollleske retired in April this year, and I was fortunate enough to be present at their last service at Areyonga. It was a very moving occasion. Leo and Lydia served the Lutheran Church and the people at Areyonga very faithfully for 34 years, and for a number of those years we were close neighbours. It is with a degree of sadness that I speak tonight, and with a desire to place on the public record my best wishes to them in their retirement. They came to Areyonga in 1951, and during their 34 years there they saw many changes. Their last service was a very moving one, and I was particularly stirred by the fact that people came from all over central Australia, from hundreds of miles away, because they had heard that pastor and kungka were leaving. I had a great deal to do with them. I suppose I would be less than honest if I did not say that we did not always see eye to eye and we had our disagreements. However, I think that underneath it all, when somebody has spent 34 years as pastor in a community like that, and when one sees that person and his wife receiving the love and devotion of the Aboriginal people to whom they have dedicated their lives, one can only be moved deeply. I am sure they would appreciate my placing this event on the record. Leo Kollleske received an award of the Medal of the Order of Australia in recent years, and that was clearly a recognition of a life of devotion that was well spent.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot let the evening go by without taking up a point made by the member for MacDonnell during a debate at another time.

Mr Bell: Don't mind if I don't stop and listen to you, will you Rick?

Mr SETTER: I don't expect you to wait. You generally like to get your adjournment debates over very early and then shoot through leaving the rest of us here.

Mr BELL: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! As I have pointed out on a number of occasions during these sittings, standing orders require that the second person pronoun should be used only in reference to yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker. All comments should be directed through the Chair. I would appreciate your directing the member for Jingili in that regard.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I should comment, for the honourable member for MacDonnell's benefit, that he is sailing extremely close to the wind with his rather unbecoming and provocative words across the Chamber. I leave the matter there. There is no point of order.

Mr Bell: Ha, ha!

Mr SETTER: The member for MacDonnell considers himself somewhat of a linguist, particularly when it comes to ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member for MacDonnell will discontinue his interjections and personal comments across the Chamber.

Mr SETTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell considers himself somewhat of a linguist when it comes to Aboriginal languages and we often hear him waffle on

Mr Coulter: Not often in English.

Mr SETTER: Thank you, minister. I was to make exactly that comment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr SETTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, one of the other penchants that the member for MacDonnell has is in relation to Aboriginal history. We heard an example of that today when he referred to your electorate of Wagaman and told us that that was an Aboriginal name. We gleaned a little of the tribal history of that particular group. Of course, we heard about the Larrakeyah, which is the local tribe from this area. He referred also to the tribe of Jingili. We all know that quite a number of the electorates in the northern suburbs are named after Aboriginal tribes or skin groups.

It may surprise him to learn that I am well aware of the history of the Jingili tribe. In fact, I read all about it in the Turner Report. Currently, the Jingili tribe is in residence on the northern side of the township of Elliott. There are 2 Aboriginal communities in Elliott, 1 on the north side and 1 on the south. I am very pleased to say that the group which has the name of Jingili seems to have much better accommodation. I have passed through Elliott on a number of occasions.

I am well aware of the history of the word 'Jingili'. However, in commenting on the Jingili, he cast aspersions on the residents of Jingili electorate, which includes the suburbs of Jingili and Moil. I took umbrage at that, because I am well aware of the quality of the people who live in that electorate. In fact, it is my responsibility to look after and guard their best interests, and that is something I do with great enthusiasm. From day to day, I spend my time moving continually around the electorate looking after their interests. I am quite disappointed that the member for MacDonnell has left, because he may have learned something from my remarks.

In the electorate of Jingili, there are quite a number of very interesting places and activities. We have 3 schools, the Casuarina Secondary College, the Jingili Primary School and the Moil Primary School, and 2 pre-schools, all with their school councils and all working very actively in the community. The Casuarina Girl Guides operate from premises in Greenwood Street and you, Mr Deputy Speaker, would know quite a lot about that particular organisation. I understand that you have served as their president on more than 1 occasion and work very long and hard to support that group, as indeed do many other people throughout that area.

Apart from those community centres, we have one which attracts an enormous amount of interest, and I refer to the Marrara Hotel. It is a community meeting place. It is a place you frequent, as I do myself. Members of the media are often seen there, as are many other people from the northern

suburbs. It is one of the 2 hotels in the northern suburbs. It is a very popular meeting place and quite an asset to the community.

There is one other place of note in the electorate which I am afraid I cannot avoid mentioning. That is the cemetery. The Darwin Cemetery has been located in that area for many years now. I understand that its accommodation has just about been exhausted, and a new cemetery is to be provided in the rural area. It will not be very long before the Darwin Cemetery in the suburb of Jingili is completely full.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it may also interest you to know that many activities are conducted in the electorate. It is a very progressive electorate. Let me just run through a few of the things that I have been involved in personally. The Casuarina Secondary College is being upgraded. A new library is being built there, together with trade facilities, staff amenities and a ring road for the buses as they pass through. I understand that about \$2m will be spent on that school in this financial year. It will be a tremendous asset. Both the primary schools have applications in for upgrading and I understand there is a very good chance that quite extensive work will be carried out on them during the coming year. I have had a guarantee from the Minister for Youth, Sport and Recreation that \$20 000 will be expended in the Jingili Water Gardens, for the provision of 2 pieces of playground equipment. It has been needed there for many years. In the water gardens, we have rotundas for people to have their picnics and barbecues. Many families frequent that area but there has been no playground equipment, and I took the matter on board about 18 months ago. It has taken a while to reach this point but I am told that orders were placed about a month to 6 weeks ago and very shortly the Department of Transport and Works will install that equipment. It will really be a wonderful asset to that community.

I also understand that McMillans Road is to be duplicated between Bagot and Lee Point Roads. We all know that the far end of McMillans Road was widened during the last financial year. The next section will be done in this financial year and perhaps, later on, the middle section will be upgraded between those 2 sections. There is an enormous amount of traffic on that road each day, and the duplication of that road will indeed be a wonderful asset and assist people living in the area. Traffic lights are about to be installed by the Darwin City Council on the corner of Parer Drive and Lee Point Road. Mr Deputy Speaker, you are fully aware of the reasons for that installation. You and I, together with the then Minister for Transport and Works, were involved in public meetings at the Moil Primary School which were attended by many interested parents. They expressed their concern that children from Wulagi and Anula have to cross Lee Point Road, a 6-lane carriageway, in peak hour traffic, in order to attend school. There was only 1 very poorly-marked crossing, which the council repainted earlier this year. However, it has been decided to install those traffic lights. I spoke to an officer from the council earlier this week and was assured that tenders had closed and would be let within the next month. We can expect to see those lights operational by the end of the year. In the last 12 or 18 months, we have seen lights installed also at the junction of Lee Point and McMillans Roads. Prior to that, lights were installed at the junction of Rothdale and McMillans Roads. As you can appreciate, Mr Deputy Speaker, there is plenty of activity all the time. It is ongoing.

The Territory Tidy Towns Committee is extremely active in Jingili. Let me run through a few of the activities it has been involved in. A number of parks have been upgraded, including Wilson, Borella, Varney and Thornton. The Moil park was rotary hoed and grassed recently and there is some nice grass

growing there, even though it is a bit dead at the moment. However, it will regenerate during the wet season. The Darwin City Council has been good enough to put a rail fence all the way around that particular park. A small park adjacent to the Moil shopping centre was rotary hoed and grassed also, and new trees were planted. Nature strips have been planted along Jingili Terrace, Pickford Street, Sanders Street and Knowles Street in Jingili and Moil Crescent, Lanyon Terrace, Budgen Street and Scales Street in Moil. Quite a number of streets in both suburbs have been resealed over the last few months. Lines have been painted at intersections and sign posts erected. There is an awful lot happening in the electorate of Jingili. As I said earlier, I am very disappointed that the member for MacDonnell was not here to listen as I spoke about it.

I would like to pay tribute to the Territory Tidy Towns Committee. It has done considerable work, apart from the jobs that I mentioned earlier. Recently, it mowed nature strips which were badly in need of care and attention. Some people look after their nature strips, and keep them beautifully, but others leave them to grow wild. We have mown all those neglected nature strips, in particular those on the western side of Freshwater Road, which is a very long road. It forms the boundary to several 5-acre blocks which back onto Rapid Creek. This coming Saturday we will have a clean-up throughout the electorate. The Boy Scouts will be involved, along with quite a number of people from the electorate, and we will conduct a clean-up in preparation for the judging which will take place on 1 September. We are very keen to ensure that the Jingili electorate is improved and upgraded, so that it becomes the beautiful place that we know it can be. There is considerable community support, and I would like to take this opportunity to offer my thanks to all those people who volunteered, brought out their lawnmowers, spent their time, and assisted the committee to upgrade the electorate of Jingili.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

Mr Speaker Vale took the Chair at 10 am.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Statehood for the Northern Territory

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, a year ago in this Assembly, my predecessor as Chief Minister formally announced the Northern Territory's bid for equality within the Australian Commonwealth. The case then presented was undeniably strong and cogent. It was based on a number of premises. These were: the Territory's legitimate claim to statehood as the ultimate constitutional objective; the unacceptable disadvantages of the current constitutional situation; the maturing of the financial arrangements struck at self-government in 1978; and the explicit policy of the federal government to treat the Territory as a state from 1988. Developments since then have reinforced the validity of the case and, if anything, have strengthened my government's resolve to press ahead.

My own commitment to statehood has never wavered; I remain, as I noted in last year's debate, 'a strong supporter of moves ... towards the achievement of full constitutional, political and democratic rights for the citizens of the Northern Territory'. I am sure that this sentiment is shared by all members of this Assembly.

My government's approach to constitutional development for the Northern Territory has already been clearly articulated. In his address at the opening of the Third Session of the Assembly, the Administrator noted the continuing aspiration for 'full and equal status for Territorians ... at the earliest opportunity'. Constitutional and political equality, long denied to Territorians and long sought after, is the keystone and the prime objective of my government's policy. That theme of equality was expressed quite deliberately in my address-in-reply speech when I reaffirmed the commitment to statehood. My words then are worth repeating: 'Statehood is essential if we are to take our place as equal Australians; statehood alone will ensure that we have the same rights, privileges, responsibilities ... the same degree of self-determination ... (as) other Australians'. Thus, statehood, however worthy an attainment in its own right, is not simply an end. It is much more significant as a means to ensure that Territorians are no longer second-class citizens.

The Territory has long been preparing to take its place as an equal partner in the Australian Federation; the time has now arrived for it to do so. No longer is the Territory a backwater; it has become a focal point of northern development. The granting of statehood will more effectively allow Territorians to promote and manage development.

The last year has not been, as some media commentators have suggested, a wasted and barren time. Particularly since the CLP statehood conference in November, it has been used productively to set the necessary organisational infrastructure in place, to refine broad objectives and strategy and to produce detailed position papers. We are now confident that the case for statehood can be pursued vigorously, and with ultimate success.

In organisational terms, a tripartite structure has been provided. The existing Select Committee on Constitutional Development will be centrally concerned with the complex and demanding task of preparing the groundwork for the new state constitution. Overall administration of the statehood process will be handled by the Office of Constitutional Development in the Department of the Chief Minister.

The third arm is the Statehood Executive Group. Its role is to advise and assist myself, as Minister for Constitutional Development, to coordinate the total government approach, to provide necessary research and analysis and to support the activities of the select committee. As existing capacity and expertise have been utilised, this system is an effective and economical mobilisation of resources.

Two weeks ago, the Cabinet adopted 3 broad statehood objectives. They were based upon a considerable body of specific work undertaken by the executive group identifying the dimensions of inequality suffered by Territorians and analysing the current constitutional, legal and political disadvantages. The objectives are:

1. the attainment of a status which provides constitutional equality with other states and (the) people (of the Northern Territory) having the same constitutional rights, privileges, entitlements and responsibilities as the people of the existing states;
2. political representation in both houses of the federal parliament which will result in the people of the Territory enjoying the same political consideration as the people of the states; and
3. the settlement of secure financial arrangements with the Commonwealth as similar as possible as those which apply to the states particularly in respect of loan raising and revenue sharing.

Although these prescriptions are not new and have already been accepted as reasonable and necessary, their formal adoption does serve as a critical first milestone in what will be a long, complex and arduous journey. Each broad objective emphasises the commitment to full equality with the existing states. It is the government's firm intention, in so far as it is constitutionally possible, that equality should apply contemporaneously with the grant of statehood. No deviation from eventual equal treatment will be tolerated. We will not accept that the new state will be a second-class state or a 'Claytons' state', as some would wish to label it.

The first objective lays claim to constitutional equality with other states. At present, the Territory suffers from grievous disadvantages. I seek leave to table a paper entitled 'Northern Territory Constitutional Disadvantages' which summarises our constitutional detriments.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: The list is long, imposing and ominous; it deserves the closest of scrutiny by all Territorians. Noticeably absent in the Territory are the entrenched constitutional rights enjoyed by residents of the states.

In this regard, the capacity of the Commonwealth to saddle the Territory with legislation which it is unable to impose upon the states is particularly vexing. The most notable measure of that type is, of course, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. With statehood, land rights would be administered by either the Territory under its own state law, or a federal law relevant to all states. The Territory could not be singled out for discriminatory treatment; it would be protected generally by its partnership with other states and particularly by sections 51(ii.), 92, 99, and 117 of the Constitution. These

sections guarantee equal treatment in respect of taxation, trade and legal status of residents. Moreover, the Territory as a state would gain safeguards against discriminatory land acquisition made by the Commonwealth without consultation with the people of the Territory. Lack of such safeguards, which are available to the states, enabled the Commonwealth without compensation to excise or otherwise remove from Territory control the Ashmore-Cartier Islands, Kakadu, Ayers Rock and Aboriginal land. In the states, section 51(xxxi.) of the Constitution requires the Commonwealth to acquire land 'on just terms'.

I do not need to remind either this Assembly or the community of the detriment to economic development suffered by the Territory through such unilateral land acquisition. Even less acceptable are the limitations contained in that keystone of self-government, the Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act. As an ordinary statute, it can be amended or even repealed, entirely without reference to the Territory. Moreover, the Commonwealth, by mere regulation, can alter the powers and functions of the Territory government which affect our daily lives in matters such as housing, education and health. Our self-government is not guaranteed by the Australian Constitution, as a new state constitution undoubtedly would be. It contains legislative and executive controls on the Northern Territory government and upon this Assembly.

A further serious constitutional disadvantage, which is well known, is the retention by the Commonwealth of what are essentially state-type functions. Uranium, Aboriginal land and national parks are the prime examples. Not so well known is the position of the Administrator; unlike state governors, he is appointed by and may be removed by the Commonwealth. Also not so well known is the Commonwealth's power to determine a fundamental part of our electoral process, specifically who may vote as Territorians in federal elections. By implication and convention, the Constitution protects states from having other areas outside their jurisdiction incorporated into their electorates. This would avoid the cynical manipulation which occurred with the imposition on us of the Cocos and Christmas Island electors. They have no particular common interest with Northern Territorians and the Territory government has no direct relationship with them. Finally, the experience of the fringe benefits tax provides a dramatic contrast between the competence of the Territory and the states.

Whereas Queensland is able to challenge parts of the tax judicially, the Territory is denied that right by its continuing dependent constitutional position. Statehood would have given the Territory the standing to negotiate on this issue from a position of strength. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the Commonwealth not only can impose a tax upon the public property of the Northern Territory but, as I have already stated, it can also deprive the Territory of property without just compensation. Under the Constitution, the Commonwealth cannot treat the states in such a manner. Even if Queensland is successful in its challenge, the Territory will still have to bear the impost of the fringe benefit tax as it lacks the protection of section 51(ii.) and section 114 of the Constitution which prohibits Commonwealth taxation of state property.

Those rights, and the others specified in the tabled document, must be secured. Ultimately, they can only be guaranteed by the granting of statehood to the Northern Territory on constitutional conditions equal to other Australian states. That is our bid for constitutional equality; we want nothing more, nothing less.

I seek leave to table a further paper entitled 'Constitutional Equality with the States', which sets out our claims.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: Of most significance is the demand for local control over land and mineral and energy resources. That involves, among other things, the transfer of ownership of uranium, the control of national parks and the patriation of the Northern Territory Land Rights Act.

Control of land is fundamental. The broad position of my government is set out in a paper prepared by the Department of Law entitled 'Land Matters Upon Statehood' which again I seek leave to table.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: The new state lays claim to title of all land related to state-type purposes in the Territory, including land presently held by the Commonwealth or Commonwealth authorities. The transfer of the Land Rights Act - to the responsible people of the Northern Territory who are directly affected by its operation and away from those people who are remote from the Territory and for whom the issues are often of mere ideological and academic concern - is imperative.

In the tabled papers, policy options for patriation are outlined and they will form a basis for discussion with all Territorians, but particularly Aboriginal Territorians.

Patriated land rights will provide existing ownership guarantees. As a result of full consultation, it might also make provision for alternative tenure arrangements and provide flexibility which will enable traditional owners to have real control of their land with the ability to decide whether to exploit its economic potential consistent with their cultural values. I am sure that this approach will be favourably received.

The second objective refers to representation in the federal parliament. As members are aware, this is one of the thorniest problems to be addressed and one which has already provoked considerable, and often heated, debate. It is important that I spell out my government's approach in precise terms.

Let me first deal with the House of Representatives, the 'people's' chamber. Except for Tasmania which, as an original state, enjoys an entitlement of 5 members, representation is determined by the population quota. State representation is in broad conformity with population size. Any claim that the Northern Territory should be treated as generously as Tasmania in the very different context of the 1980s is quite unrealistic. We shall therefore not pursue that course; we shall abide by the constraints of the quota. However, I hasten to point out that, on becoming a state, the Territory, with its high relative population increase, would soon be entitled to a second member. Remaining a Territory would significantly delay the prospect of gaining an extra member.

Presently, the Territory, because of its smaller ratio of electors to population size - 48% as compared to about 60% in the states - is theoretically under-represented. Having recourse as a state to the quota based on population, and the advantage of achieving an additional member once half a quota has been achieved, will thus be beneficial.

In the case of the Senate, the 'states' house, the Territory is entitled to equal representation. No relationship between Senate representation and population size will be accepted. Since 1901, the principle of equality, regardless of geographic size and numbers of residents, has been fundamental. We see no reason, philosophic or expedient, to warrant breaching that principle in respect of new states. Our claim to equality is unequivocal, incontestable and will not be compromised.

However, we recognise, as a matter of political reality, that the achievement of immediate parity will not be easy. Although we will pursue that cause as earnestly and persistently as we can, we will not allow it to become an insurmountable obstacle, frustrating the receipt of the other worthwhile advantages of statehood. If we are forced to concede immediate equality, we will insist on eventual equality based upon an unadorned and legally-binding formula which includes a reasonable initial representation and a short time-frame to achieve equal numbers. No fanciful formulae, like the one which requires the Territory to have a population of about 2.5 million before we are allowed equal representation, will be countenanced. Without Senate equality, the Territory will never get the necessary clout in the federal parliament to advance the cause of northern development and the means to correct the gross imbalance between the less and the more populated parts of Australia.

The third objective concerns the financial implications of our bid for statehood. On this question, I will be as blunt as I can. There will be no - I repeat no - financial cost to Territorians. The Commonwealth has clearly indicated its intention to treat the Territory financially as a state in 1988. With or without statehood, the financial situation after 1988 will be the same. Our Treasury has carefully reviewed the impact of statehood and its investigations categorically support that assessment. Its considered views are contained in a further paper which I seek leave to table.

Leave granted.

Mr HATTON: Therefore, it makes no earthly sense to be burdened with the financial responsibilities of statehood without seeking the full range of equivalent rights and the full state-type capacity to develop the Territory and broaden our own revenue base. If we are to demonstrate that we are willing and capable of increasing the Territory's level of economic self-sufficiency and its financial independence, we must control all legitimate state-type functions.

I should not need to remind the Assembly of the inhibitions placed on the Territory in the mineral royalties area. Uranium provides the best example. The Department of Mines and Energy has calculated that, if our royalty regime had been applied to the 2 uranium producers since the Royalty Act came into operation in July 1982, we would have received at least an additional \$85m by the end of 1985.

Furthermore, in respect of Ranger, a study undertaken by an ANU Research Fellow has concluded that the Commonwealth will recover its total expenditures on Ranger-Jabiru to the end of 1985, during the company's first full year of tax liability. Afterwards, it would collect a significant net contribution of about \$50m per year. On the other hand, my government will receive almost no net benefit, as expenditure on services and regulation will account for nearly all direct and indirect revenue.

We surely have a legitimate claim for a much greater share of the fruits of our own resources! Nor should the considerable potential revenue denied us by the Territory's inability to control mineral exploration and production on a sizeable proportion of its land be forgotten. Our claim, to 'secure financial arrangements as similar as possible as those that apply to the states', will not force additional costs on the Territory taxpayer. Indeed, my government believes that there are far greater financial risks in remaining a mere Territory than in acquiring statehood. Statehood would provide us with protection flowing from the constitutional prohibition of preferences and discrimination between states and state residents, and also from the prohibition on Commonwealth taxes on state property. Thus, for example, the Commonwealth could not retrospectively recover moneys already paid as has happened in recent times to the Territory as a result of Grants Commission reviews. Significant also would be the benefit to a new state of a constitutional guarantee of freedom of trade and commerce. Moreover, statehood will equip the Territory with the means to protect the financial interests of Territorians, through full participation in the Premiers Conference, the financial agreement, the Loans Council and by the application of constitutional and statutory guarantees in the same way as the states.

What needs to be done in the period ahead? Obviously, a first priority is to secure the support of Territorians. That support is imperative if this bid for statehood is to be successful or even to be persevered with. Members will no doubt remember the findings of the opinion poll publicised earlier this year which indicated that the level of support for and knowledge of statehood was not particularly high. However, I am confident that there will be a groundswell of support once the issues are made clear. An analysis of that poll also shows that the Territory community is confused about the need for and the impact of statehood, particularly as it will affect financial arrangements. There is a majority conviction that the Territory will be worse off financially under statehood. That perception simply is not correct, as I have demonstrated earlier in this statement. Nor is the fear, which I have heard expressed by some spokesmen for Aboriginal interests, that statehood would necessarily be detrimental to Aboriginal landowners.

We recognise that support by Aboriginal Territorians is a key consideration and we will strive to overcome their concern. It would be idle to deny that relationships between the Territory government and the organised voice of Aborigines have sometimes been less than smooth. However, it should also be recognised that, in areas other than those related to land rights, relationships have been, and continue to be, usually strong and productive. My assurances on land rights included in this statement can only contribute to the diminution of concern and provide a catalyst for fruitful and cooperative discussions on statehood issues. In the end, we are all Territorians and, whatever our heritage, we all will benefit from statehood.

As parliamentarians and representatives of the people of the Northern Territory, we all have a responsibility to support this bid for statehood and actively promote it in the Territory community and throughout Australia. Our activities will be crucial in determining public attitudes on statehood; we have a very convincing case but our commitment in presenting it vigorously is essential.

For its part, the government will be providing over the next few months, full and informative material on the salient issues, comprehensive media exposure and a wide-ranging program of direct consultation. In the latter area, the select committee will also have an important role to play.

The new state constitution must be developed within the Territory and not imposed from outside by the Commonwealth. Moreover, it must be acceptable to and accepted by the majority of Territorians. To those ends, the constitution-making process will consist of 3 stages, all of which will involve wide participation by Territorians. First, the select committee will prepare a draft constitution which will then, as the second stage, be submitted for ratification to a convention representing a broad cross-section of community interests and opinions. The details of the composition and role of the convention are still to be finalised. Finally, it will be put before the Territory electorate in a referendum. No one, therefore, should doubt our allegiance to full and open consultation in the formulation of the constitutional centrepiece of our future state. It will be demonstrably the Northern Territory people's constitution.

The task of convincing politicians and political parties operating in federal and state jurisdictions will, I suspect, be formidable. But I am fortified both by the inherent strength of our case and by positive indications that the people of the states would welcome us as full partners in the Commonwealth.

I am today sending letters to the Prime Minister and state premiers communicating our intention to proceed with the bid for statehood and asking for meetings at the earliest possible opportunity. Soon after, I intend to initiate intergovernmental and inter-party negotiations, and a concerted effort to influence opinion interstate in our favour. As an interim measure, I shall press the Commonwealth as consistently and as hard as I can to amend the Self-Government Act and other relevant legislation, in order to place the Territory in a position of greater similarity to the states in respect of transferred powers and functions. By this phasing-in process, the later transition to statehood will be eased significantly.

I have been singularly encouraged by the degree of bipartisanship which has so far been demonstrated in this worthy cause and I am grateful for the broad support offered by the opposition in this Assembly. In itself, that attests to the validity of the statehood argument; it will also make the gaining of credibility and acceptability both in the Territory and outside more certain. Although I would delude myself if I supposed that there will be no differences of opinion and approach, I trust that, as far as possible, bipartisanship can be preserved. To that end, I undertake to keep the Leader of the Opposition fully informed of future developments.

Finally, let me reiterate what I said in June about the timing of statehood. Of course I believe that it should be achieved as quickly as possible but, because of the complexity of some of the issues and the need for comprehensive consultations and negotiations, I do not wish to set an inflexible timetable. It is much better to prepare the case well than to move precipitously. But I can assure the Assembly that the momentum we have developed in the recent past will be accelerated. The promotion and winning of statehood deserve nothing less than total commitment and endeavour from my government and this Assembly.

Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly take note of the statement.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the opposition welcomes this statement from the Chief Minister. We have consistently supported the view that the next logical constitutional development for the Northern Territory is statehood. Statehood, not for its own sake, but so that the people of the Northern Territory can take their place as citizens of Australia with rights and obligations equal to those of people living in the existing states.

In the opposition's view, this statement and this debate mark the first real step on the road to statehood - a road that we all know will be strewn with obstacles, large and small, both inside and outside the Territory. We have debated statehood previously in this Assembly, but I say that this is the first real step because, for the first time, we have had some indications of the hows and wheres of attaining statehood.

The Chief Minister's statement outlines 3 broad objectives which most people in the Northern Territory can agree with, and they are worth saying again:

1. the attainment of a status which provides constitutional equality with other states and (the) people (of the Northern Territory) having the same constitutional rights, privileges, entitlements and responsibilities as the people of the existing states;
2. political representation in both Houses of the federal parliament which will result in the people of the Territory enjoying the same political consideration as the people of the states; and
3. the settlement of secure financial arrangements with the commonwealth as similar as possible as those which apply to the states particularly in respect of loan raising and revenue sharing.

There probably should be a fourth as well:

Statehood should be achieved through the broad agreement of all groups in the community and not at the expense of the existing interests or the legitimate aspirations of any group.

I turn to the first broad objective - constitutional equality. An accompanying document to the Chief Minister's speech clearly reveals there are a number of areas of constitutional disadvantage at present. Some of them include:

1. The NT is presently established under an act of the federal parliament - the provisions of the Self-Government Act can be changed by the federal parliament but not by ourselves.
2. Legislation passed by this Assembly can be disallowed by the federal government, although it has never happened.
3. There are certain protections which only the states receive vis-a-vis their constitutional position:
 - (A) there can be no discrimination in Commonwealth tax laws between states, or within states;
 - (B) there must be free trade between the states;
 - (C) freedom of religion; and
 - (D) protection against any alteration of the constitution without approval of electors.
4. No constitutional guarantee of House of Representatives or Senate representation.

There are also a number of areas where the Commonwealth has powers in the NT that it does not have elsewhere. It is in the discussion of these powers that much of the spirited discussion on statehood will occur. The major areas are, of course, uranium mining, land rights, national parks and industrial relations. It should be said at the outset that there are many people who presently believe that all, or a combination of them, should remain with the Commonwealth. These views are held for a variety of reasons ranging from the fear of dramatic change if the NT government assumed control to the belief that the federal government is the appropriate level of government to administer these responsibilities.

The opposition supports the principle that full statehood means control over these matters, although it could well be decided, for example in industrial relations, that this control can be exercised indirectly through existing procedures. However, it is equally true to say that the behaviour of the NT government in these areas has made support of this principle more difficult for many people.

Clearly, one of the most vexed questions will be land rights. It needs to be said that we cannot expect any group of citizens of the prospective state to support statehood if they perceive themselves to be the big losers in any such move. Fortunately, this statement provides some reassurances to Aboriginal groups in that the government realises that mechanisms need to be developed to ensure the protection of Aboriginal interests in the new state. Obviously, detailed discussions will have to be held on this matter over an extended period of time. What is vital for the government is that the sentiments in the statement are matched by its actions on Aboriginal issues over the period from now to statehood. As serious negotiations commence, we should be aware that the whole of Australia will be vitally interested in this particular aspect of statehood negotiations. The timing of statehood, if not the event itself, could well be influenced by the way these negotiations are handled.

The second major objective is political representation in both houses of parliament which will result in the people of the Territory enjoying the same political consideration as the people of the states. The Chief Minister's statement deals with both the House of Representatives and the Senate. We support the Chief Minister's statement that it is not relevant in this day and age to rely on the Tasmanian model for the House of Representatives. Instead, we join with the Chief Minister and state that the guaranteed constitutional representation for the NT should be based on the existing quota arrangements.

In relation to the Senate, the Chief Minister has stated the Territory is entitled to equal representation. We agree. The opposition's firm position is that statehood means full representation in the Senate.

One should look to America when considering this matter. New states in America are guaranteed the same level of representation in the United States Congress as are other states. That is extremely important in terms of political clout, and that is what it is all about. Alaska, which had about 150 000 people when it achieved statehood in 1959, now has 2 Congressmen as does New York, which has a population of 40 million people.

A position of full representation in the Senate must be the basis on which negotiations commence with the Commonwealth and state governments. To start on any other basis is to sell Territorians short, and to reduce the political clout the NT will have in the Senate. Let us be under no misapprehension. The Senate is important to the NT as the states' house. It gives us, as a

full state, the best chance to vigorously argue the Territory's case, and argue for the NT as a rapidly expanding and exciting area.

The third objective deals with the settlement of secure financial arrangements as similar as possible to those of the states. In the statement, the Chief Minister says categorically that there will be no financial disadvantage to the NT in becoming a state. His basis for this is the Commonwealth's commitment to treat the Territory as a state from 1988. The Chief Minister further states that the Treasury view supports this. This is all very well but, for the benefit of all Territorians, obviously this has to be a matter of much more investigation.

Many Territorians have vivid memories of the promise Paul Everingham made before self-government - that self-government would only cost the average person a couple of beers a week. It has certainly cost more than that. The opposition does not believe the financial position is as clear-cut at this stage as the Chief Minister suggests.

The achievement of statehood by the Northern Territory would ensure almost inevitably that we become part of the state pool for the distribution of funds. This would mean that the current assessment practices for the NT used by the Grants Commission, which are tailored to the Territory's unique circumstances, would have to be replaced by the methods used for the states. It is possible that these methods may be less sympathetic to the special needs of the Territory, and the result could be a diminution in funds for the NT. I am not saying this will happen, but it is a possibility. The opposition will need much more information before it is prepared to be as categorical as the Chief Minister on the financial implications of statehood.

The statement spends some time outlining the procedures that will be followed in pursuing statehood. Firstly, there are 3 groups involved: this Assembly's select committee, the Office of Constitutional Development and the Statehood Executive Group. In our view, the select committee of this parliament has, as the Chief Minister says, the task of preparing the groundwork for the new state constitution. It is important that this select committee have this vital role if a bipartisan approach to statehood is to continue. It must be said that the government has adopted a somewhat cavalier attitude to this committee so far. The committee has met rarely and requests by members for information have been taken up and presented to other forums before being presented to the committee. That situation has to change if the best opportunity is to be provided for the development of a bipartisan approach.

In terms of the procedures to be followed, the Chief Minister has told us that a draft constitution will first be prepared by the select committee, verified by a constitutional commission and then put to a referendum. The opposition agrees with this procedure and believes it provides the opportunity for a thorough and comprehensive approach to statehood which will provide all Territorians with a number of opportunities, spread over a period of time, to voice their opinions.

It is important that, when we get to the referendum stage, no one be satisfied with a 50% plus 1 result. It is essential that the involvement of the community in this process be such that we enter the referendum process with the aim of obtaining as large a majority as possible. To aim for anything less is to sell the Territory short.

There is one area where the statement has possibly understated the difficulties: getting the agreement of the states. We should not forget that it was only a few years ago that the conservative governments of Queensland and Western Australia went all the way to the High Court to oppose Senate representation for the Northern Territory and the ACT. We should be aware that increasing NT representation in the Senate will weaken the representation of the states.

Another area where full statehood will affect the states is in the determination of referendums. The Constitution provides that, for a referendum to be passed, it has to be approved by a majority of states and a majority of voters in Australia. At present, this means 4 out of 6 states. Again, this may be perceived as a significant weakening of the power of the existing states.

Obviously, a bipartisan approach to the states on these and other difficult issues is the most likely route to success. It reinforces the need within the Territory for extensive consultation with all interest groups to provide the maximum opportunity for the development of a bipartisan approach.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, the opposition believes an important step has been taken today on the road to statehood. The step is taken with bipartisan support. If that bipartisan support is to be maintained, the opposition and the Territory community do not merely want to be informed of future developments, as the Chief Minister committed himself to doing. We want to be involved in future developments.

Debate adjourned.

PETITIONS

Bus Fares for Pensioners

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from 249 citizens of Darwin praying that the government reconsider its decision to charge pensioners bus fares. The petition does not bear the Clerk's certificate as the prayer is directed to the government rather than to the Legislative Assembly. 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 Darwin respectively sheweth their concern at the decision of the government to charge pensioners for bus travel on the Darwin Bus Service. Your petitioners humbly submit that these charges place a great burden on pensioners. For many pensioners, bus is the only means of transport. The introduction of fares will severely restrict the ability of many pensioners to travel within Darwin. Your petitioners humbly pray that the government reconsider its decision to charge pensioners bus fares and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

Tennant Creek Airport

Mr TUXWORTH (Barkly): Mr Speaker, I present a petition from the constituents of my electorate. Their plea is that the federal government reconsider its determination to close the Tennant Creek Airport to F28 aircraft, and that this Assembly make a plea to the federal government on their behalf. Mr Speaker, I move that the petition be read.

Motion agreed to; petition read:

To the honourable the Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly, the humble petition of citizens in the community of Tennant Creek and the electorate of Barkly respectively sheweth that the decision made by the Commonwealth government to withdraw the funding to upgrade the Tennant Creek Airport and the proposal by the federal government to cease operations of the F28 airline service is a retrograde step which would adversely affect the economy of Tennant Creek. Your petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that the Northern Territory government make strong representation to the Commonwealth government expressing the concern of the people of Tennant Creek who are being disadvantaged by the downgrading of airline services to their town, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

APPROPRIATION BILL 1986-87
(Serial 218)

Continued from 26 August 1986.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I will start with my only faint praise of the government in this whole speech. I want to thank the government for extending to the opposition the opportunity to reply to this budget in equivalent circumstances to the ones in which the budget was delivered. I think we have established a useful precedent this year and I hope that this procedure can be followed in future years.

It is with considerable anger and disappointment that I rise to respond to the Treasurer's first budget. That anger and disappointment stems from the fact that the budget is a deceptive document, deliberately designed to appear superficially attractive whilst hiding the real truth of the government's financial schemes. It is a series of documents tailored to conceal more than they reveal. There are 4 main bases to this attempt at deception. These constitute misleading assertions as to increases in government taxes and charges, rubbery revenue estimates, inadequate statements of expenditure growth which take no account of inflation, and contradictions between the budget speech and planned expenditure. I shall deal with each of these 4 deceptions in turn.

The Treasurer has played with the words 'no new or additional taxes' in a subtle semantic game to disguise the very significant rises in government taxes and charges that have already occurred before the budget. The government deliberately set out, months before the budget, to slug the ordinary Territorian with massive increases in electricity, water, sewerage, motor vehicle registrations, drivers' licences and bus fares. The budget is supposed to be an annual statement of the government's financial plans. If the government removes increases in taxes and charges from the budget process for some perceived political advantage, it merely diminishes the budget as the government's major statement of its financial plans. In any event, it will not reduce the impact of increased taxes and charges on ordinary Territorians, and old-age pensioners struggling to make ends meet know full well the effect of increased bus fares, regardless of whether the increases are announced in the budget or otherwise. It is a ploy that will not fool the ordinary Territorian, any more than the claim that taxes and charges are dramatically different, when in fact they both come out of the taxpayer's pocket.

From the government's own budget figures, it is anticipated that revenue will rise by 20% or \$44m in money terms. In real terms, this is a

10.7% increase. Of this amount of \$44m, \$13m will come directly from the taxpayer's pocket by way of an extra \$8m to be collected from essential water and sewerage charges, and \$5m extra from motor vehicle charges.

I referred earlier to rubbery revenue estimates, and the evidence of that is contained in the government's own budget papers. A welcome addition to the budget papers this year is the inclusion of an economic statement. It is only a pity that it has taken the government 9 years to make this small step towards providing a set of economically-sophisticated budget statements, rather than the rudimentary documents prepared at present.

In that economic statement, significant leading indicators of economic activity point to a greater downturn in the Northern Territory economy than that of Australia generally. I refer to: non-residential building activity - down 35%; residential building activity - down 21%; a decrease in motor vehicle registrations; rising unemployment; and, finally, slowing population growth. Yet, in the face of these indicators, the government is anticipating an increase in its revenue from increased economic activity. I suggest these revenue estimates will not be achieved without a mini-budget early in the New Year to raise taxes and charges once again.

A serious inadequacy of the budget statement lies in its presentation in dollar terms that do not take inflation into account. In last week's federal budget, we saw comprehensive statements which provided the financial data in dollar terms. Separate statements showed financial data adjusted to take account of inflation and per capita distribution. The importance of these alternative bases of presentation is that they allow a fair and reasonable comparison between the current year's budget and previous years' expenditures. It should be obvious even to the most economically-unsophisticated observer that, if \$100 was spent on a service one year and \$100 the next, when inflation is at 8%, the amount of money directed at that service will be reduced in real terms.

The simple fact of the consequences of inflation has either escaped the Treasurer's notice or he has used it to mislead. For example, in his budget speech he claimed that 'Department of Education expenditures are up 6.6% to \$156m'. The Treasurer used this claim to support his statement that services in essential areas such as education have been maintained. Let us have a look at this claim in some detail. The reality for the education vote is not a 6.6% growth rate; the reality is a decline in real terms of 1.7%. The situation becomes even worse if population growth is taken into account. It represents a decline in real terms of \$60 per head of population. That is the real truth, not a 6.6% increase, as reported by the Treasurer in his statement. In this context, it is noteworthy that the expensive university college that this government intends proceeding with will cost each Territorian \$80 next year.

The same sort of comparisons can readily be made for other areas of service delivery. In real terms, the per head of population expenditure on health is down by \$60, the per head of population expenditure on primary production is down by \$30, the Conservation Commission is down by \$10 per person, and the Department of Community Development expenditure is down by \$78 per person. In defence of his decision to cancel the \$2-for-\$1 subsidy to schools for the purchase of computer equipment, the Treasurer publicly stated that the Northern Territory government was well aware of the value of computer education and, indeed, the Northern Territory government was so advanced in computerisation that it was a model for other Australian governments. If this is the case, with all that computing power available to him, why can't he

produce budget figures on a per head of population basis after adjusting for inflation? The answer is that he wants to disguise the reduction in real levels of service to the people of the Northern Territory.

A further deceptive element of this budget is the Treasurer's statement that 'there is no longer scope for budget funds to be used to underwrite private developments, other than through the provisions of government services and infrastructure'. He says there is no longer scope, yet the budget contains an allocation of \$27m to support the Sheratons and Yulara. \$27m this year will be poured into what is becoming a bottomless pit. How much will it be next year? How much the year after? That wasted money typifies the critical difference between the CLP in government and the ALP. We would never have put the Northern Territory in the position of having an open-ended and ever-growing commitment to pour taxpayers' money into a sinkhole. It is no good saying that it happened long ago and that it is now water under the bridge. Unfortunately, that water is still flowing and still affecting this budget and will affect future budgets.

Let us look at the Alice Springs Sheraton. I will not attempt to detail the whole sorry saga of the Alice Springs Sheraton. It is sufficient to say that the bumbling ineptitude of the government's repeated failures to rescue this disaster from original error has this year reached a new low. The government this year has managed to reduce its loss by \$1.7m. A terrific achievement! It has managed to reduce the loss from \$5m to only \$3.3m in this budget. You would think that this was good news for the Territory, but how has this financial masterpiece been achieved? By the irresponsible expediency of investing yet another \$10m in buying part of a hotel whose major function is to lose money. When are the taxpayers going to get some relief from this constant drain on their money?

To return to the Treasurer's amazing statement, that 'there is no longer scope for budget funds to be used to underwrite private developments other than through the provision of government services and infrastructure', obviously, the government has changed its mind in the last 2 weeks, because that is when the \$10m was gazetted - within the last 2 to 3 weeks. Now, on top of that, we have the \$5.9m allocation of government money to the Darwin Sheraton. We asked questions yesterday in this Assembly about the government's future financial commitments to these projects and received no answers. It has reached a stage where the only way we can get to the bottom of this matter is for it to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee, and that is a matter that we will be hearing more about very shortly indeed.

The proposals for the university follow exactly the same pattern. First, the government spends \$6m acquiring properties and destroying houses on Myilly Point as an integral part of the 600-room hotel-casino proposal that has now been consigned to oblivion. Then comes the spur of the moment decision to site an expensive university college there. This is the fifth site identified as the university college site. Darwin is littered with signs proclaiming university college sites - a separate site for a separate university, apparently because other capital cities have separate universities, not because student numbers or projected enrolments justify a separate university costing \$12m to the taxpayers of the Northern Territory, \$80 per head this financial year.

An ALP government would have followed the sensible course of expanding degree courses at the Darwin Institute of Technology campus so that Territory matriculants could obtain a university-level education at an affordable price.

Mr Dale: What is that worth?

Mr SMITH: That is the second time in these sittings that we have had ministers of the Northern Territory government running down degree-level courses provided by the Darwin Institute of Technology. I think that is to their shame. We will certainly make sure on this side of the Assembly that the Darwin Institute of Technology people are made fully aware of their feelings and the feelings of the Minister for Education.

Mr Coulter: It will be nice to see you do something.

Mr SMITH: A university level education facility situated at the Darwin Institute of Technology campus could have gradually expanded as student numbers demanded and, in the interim, utilised the facilities at the Darwin Institute of Technology and so have avoided the duplication of expenditure. I am confident such an approach would have ensured that those students undertaking university level education would have been eligible for tertiary education allowances which, of course, facilitate students' access to education.

Instead, what does the CLP offer? A university with an uncertain future. A university whose students will not be eligible for tertiary allowance. A university whose opening will gamble on sufficient numbers of wealthy students actually arriving - a gamble that rivals the punt taken on hoards of high rollers turning up to justify the compulsory acquisition of the casino. We all know that that gamble did not work, but we are now in the throes of repeating it, with wealthy Asian students as a target rather than wealthy Asian gamblers.

The Northern Territory government has been unable to negotiate a satisfactory deal on the university with successive federal governments, both Labor and Liberal. The Northern Territory government's hamfisted approach to the university college is now costing Territorians much more than was necessary to provide an expanded range of tertiary education facilities for Territory youth.

Much has been made about how badly we have been treated by the federal government. All our financial difficulties are laid by this government at the door of those evil people, bent on harming the Northern Territory exclusively. This refusal to accept that the Territory has to share with the rest of Australia in some belt-tightening during a period of extreme financial stringency flies in the face of reality. The government's refusal to admit that its financial mismanagement over a period of years is a major contributing factor to the Territory's current situation is a reflection of its grip on reality. The Treasurer's response to a question asking what was in the budget for the 22% of the Territory's population below the poverty line was that it offers them a chance of hope - not hope itself, Mr Speaker, but just a chance. Yet another CLP gamble. I can offer the government and the people of the Northern Territory a red hot tip on a sure thing: it is no gamble that if John Howard were to lead this country, there would be no railway, no hope of an airport, and damn all for the Territory.

As a statement of the government's financial master plan, the budget is an inadequate document, probably designed as a stopgap until a mini-budget early in the New Year. As such, it does not merit further attention. It is in no way a master plan. It is merely an ad hoc response to the current economic environment. It has taxed and charged Territory families to the hilt, without imposing equal burdens on some of our more prominent corporate citizens.

The question then arises as to what the ALP would do in government. The first point is that we would never have got into the mess that past wishful thinking on the government's part led to. We are conscious that the main thrust of the budget should have been aimed at preventing any further downturn in the Territory economy. The alternative ALP proposals are directed to this end. Obviously, expanded tourism is an essential element in improving the health of the Territory's economy. The \$4m saved by the member for Arafura's successful efforts in ensuring that relocation and recruitment expenses are exempt from the fringe benefits tax should be allocated to the Tourist Commission budget.

Mr Coulter: What about barbecues at Kakadu?

Mr SMITH: Does that make you happy?

The current level of support for tourist promotion is some \$4m less than in previous years. Once you have established a presence in the tourist market, Mr Speaker, it is essential that you maintain a high profile in the extremely competitive race for the tourist dollar. The additional funds would also enable the Territory to be represented at Expo 88 in Brisbane, which will be one of the major attractions for businesses and visitors in 1988. For the life of me, I cannot understand why the Northern Territory will not be represented at Expo 88. The only possible reason is that the Tourist Commission does not have enough money.

Of course, we all know that the government burnt its fingers when it lost a couple of million dollars negotiating with some revolutionary new film projection method that was aimed at Brisbane Expo but, again, that is not the point. The problem with this government is that, when things go wrong, it does not look at the situation objectively. It withdraws and says: 'We will stop this; we will not enter into that area any more'. It will not come up with a meaningful way of doing things.

I say again that it is a great shame that the Northern Territory will not be represented at the Brisbane Expo because we all know that that will be the major event in 1988 and the event which the most people will attend. It will not only attract people from Australia but from all parts of the world and, under this government, the Northern Territory will not be represented. It is staggering, to say the least.

An appropriate level of taxation at the casinos, together with the savings possible in our university proposal, would have enabled the 5% rise in electricity charges to be absorbed. This would have provided relief to the beleaguered taxpayer and would have been one of the most effective ways of containing business costs at a time when that is the major concern of the business community.

Without actually correcting its mistakes, the present government has overreacted grossly to the consequences of its misguided development support in past years. Governments can support industry development intelligently in more ways than are represented by the government's present retreat to advertising and nothing more. The Labor Party believes there is a role for government-supported development projects and for assisting Territory businesses and entrepreneurs.

The key vehicle for the delivery of such government support under a Labor government is Territoricorp which will be an essential arm of the Territory Labor government's efforts to maximise growth and development in the Northern

Territory. Its aim is to work with private enterprise and to join with private-sector enterprises to make things happen for them and for the Northern Territory. To achieve this, and to avoid the mistakes of the NTDC, Territoricorp will be guided by 2 overriding principles: firstly, in assisting development projects or companies in the Territory, it will be expected to apply commercial guidelines; and, secondly, in its operations, it will be expected to create profits for redistribution to the Northern Territory government and, therefore, to all Territorians. These 2 principles will ensure that the errors of the past will be avoided.

In its activities, Territoricorp will be required to encourage the participation of Territorians in major development projects and in the growth of small and middle-sized Territory firms. The Project Development Division will be responsible for the encouragement of economic development in the Territory. The division will encourage and facilitate the start-up of new development projects. It will participate in capital raising for industry. This may occur in a number of ways: as co-underwriter or sub-underwriter, as seed and growth financier, and as a subscriber to new issues. The opposition does not resile from the view that there is a need for the government to take up the position of underwriter on occasion. What we do say is that, under Labor, commitments to particular projects will be known upfront when the deal is signed, and there will not be any hidden agendas. There will not be any sinkholes left, because we will be more competent managers of the Northern Territory economy.

Another way in which the Project Development Division will assist industry will be by taking up short-term equity positions to encourage the formation of new businesses and to allow existing companies to maximise growth opportunities.

The Export Division of Territoricorp will be responsible for the development of industry for export markets. Specifically, Excorp will be a semi-autonomous profit centre, within Territoricorp, which will have the expertise to secure significant export opportunities for Territory firms or other firms wishing to base themselves in the Territory. Excorp will be characterised by professional staff with experience in overseas marketing and with the ability to enter joint ventures through equity participation. Often, the development of efficient Territory firms or firms with significant innovations is hampered by lack of funds or advice.

The Small Business Enterprise Division will be charged for on a normal commercial basis, but the division will offer Territory firms the confidence that they are dealing with an adviser who is sympathetic to the needs of small business in the Territory. Many enterprise division clients will be redirected to existing sources of advice and finance. Normal advice to small business will continue to be provided through the Small Business Advisory Service.

In addition, an Industrial Supplies Office will be established. A Territory Industrial Supplies Office will be a cost-effective job creator. It will be a small, privately-managed body with the objective of maximising local industry involvement in major projects in the Territory. It will be basically an information exchange, which will match the requirements of developers with the capacity of local contractors and manufacturers. Its charter will be to ensure that when major developers set specifications and call tenders for project infrastructure, they are fully aware of the ability and capacity of local manufacturers and contractors to meet their requirements. This will ensure that certain types of contracts now let to companies outside the

Territory can be let to companies here. The ISO would be funded by the Territory government at a cost of about \$259 000. Its management would be offered to the Confederation of Industry which, in our discussions, has already expressed its support in principle for this proposal. There are already industrial supplies offices in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and that great free enterprise state, Queensland. The Territory ISO would be modelled on the success those offices in the states. Just to give you one example, last financial year in New South Wales, the ISO recorded 252 major project inquiries, representing \$256m worth of business. The significant feature of the Industrial Supplies Office is that it is a government-sponsored mechanism to facilitate the operation of markets. It will neither control nor direct.

It is accepted by the Labor Party that unnecessary business regulations and the burden of government paperwork imposes considerable compliance costs on business. An ALP government would move urgently to review existing business regulations, with a view to the elimination of unnecessary regulations and, where possible, the simplification of those deemed to be still necessary for the general community's welfare. This would be a low-cost measure to support business. Submissions and suggestions would be invited from the public, individual businesses and their representative organisations. As part of the process, we would ensure a streamlined approach to governmental approval for the introduction of new products and processes developed in the Northern Territory.

I might diverge from my script at this stage and ask the government to look at that matter seriously. There are a number of entrepreneurs in the Northern Territory who are coming up with many good ideas which result in the development of new products, but they are finding enormous problems in obtaining approval from government departments, particularly in the building area, so that their products and processes can be used in building in the Northern Territory. I realise that we have special requirements to ensure that new building materials and processes are safe because of our climatic circumstances, but there must be a simpler way, such as a one-stop approval covering all government departments, than exists at present. A large number of manufacturers are presently extremely frustrated at the treatment they receive from Northern Territory government departments when, having been entrepreneurial and innovative, they are frustrated in attempts to have their new processes and products approved.

Further business assistance would be provided by the automatic escalation of payroll tax thresholds in line with movements in average weekly earnings. An ALP government would also take steps to ensure that the maximum advantage would flow to the Territory economy from the implementation of the Dibb Report. We are in the process of seeing at first hand the impact of defence spending in the Katherine region, thanks to the \$60m being spent this year on the development of the Tindal Air Base by the federal government. We would establish a small temporary expert group, similar to the railway executive group, to liaise between business and the federal government to ensure the maximum contribution by Territory industry to the defence development of northern Australia. This group would be complementary to the ISO which, of course, would operate in relation to specific, identified projects.

It is imperative, if we are to get the full benefit of the Dibb recommendations, that we get moving on this particular matter now. One of the most useful things that the members opposite can do is talk to their colleagues at the federal level, particularly Hon Ian Sinclair, about the Dibb Report and its importance to the Northern Territory. Otherwise, he will have

half the troops that Dibb recommends to be stationed in the Northern Territory, sent to some base overseas. We all know that Ian Sinclair has disagreed with the findings of the Dibb Report and supports a forward defence concept. That is detrimental to the economic interests of the Northern Territory. The most significant thing this government could do is talk to the shadow defence minister and put our views quite strongly. It should also work at ensuring that we in the Territory obtain the maximum possible benefit from the infrastructure associated with moving further troops here.

For the sake of achieving value for the taxpayer's dollar and to promote competitiveness amongst Territory businesses, we would have a public and independent review of the whole system for tendering for government contracts. If there has ever been a saga of the government's incompetence, it is in relation to the Tender Board. We have had the last 3 Chief Ministers say that there is a need to review its processes of the Tender Board yet not one of them has been prepared to authorise an independent review. Such a move would enable people to make submissions and present themselves before the review board, while publication of its findings would allow everybody an opportunity to assess results. Until such an independent review is set up and reports, there will always be concern in the business sector at the tender processes of this government, and quite legitimate concerns too. I hope that this government will do something about setting up an independent review. Certainly, in government, we would.

In relation to the public service, an ALP government would move to establish more centralised administrative and personnel units to service a functional unit of departments. The current system of each department having its own administrative support staff precludes the possibility of achieving any economy of scale. Savings thus achieved could be applied to the maintenance of service delivery functions, particularly in health, education and community needs. We all know, Mr Speaker, that there has been a drop in the real income supplied to those service delivery areas.

We would also undertake a serious examination of the government's car fleet and the government's need for its car fleet. No longer, under a Labor government, would there be fleets of government cars whose prime purpose is merely to transport senior public servants to and from work. The Northern Territory government, with its plans to reduce the car fleet by 6%, has merely attacked the tip of the iceberg. There are quite clearly considerable extra savings to be made there.

In the light of the stringent economic conditions in which Australia and the Territory finds itself, there would be no commitment under Labor to some of the luxury items included in this budget. These are items which would be nice to have, but are not absolutely necessary, such as the \$450 000 shooting gallery. Such items would be readily deferred to allow for higher priority items, such as the abolition of school bus fares.

In conclusion, I make the 2 following points. Firstly, I have demonstrated the falsity of the CLP's claim to be either an honest or a responsible financial manager. Secondly, I have outlined an alternative strategy of economic management, based on sensible achievable aims which directly address the need to provide for growth in the Northern Territory economy in a coherent fashion.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I rise to say a few words about the budget which was introduced very well by the Territory's third Treasurer. I am indeed pleased to see that the economy of the Northern Territory, to the

extent that the Northern Territory government has control over it, is in good hands. I would like to comment on the points raised by the Leader of the Opposition, whom I gather gave the most comprehensive report on the budget that we will hear from the opposition. After all, he is its lead speaker and has made his speech 2 days after the budget was introduced. If the opposition has anything to offer, we should have heard it in that speech.

The Leader of the Opposition began by saying that the budget contained misleading assertions about the outcome of the financial affairs of the Territory in the forthcoming year, that revenue estimates were rubbery and that we misled people by increasing a number of charges in the past few months. The Leader of the Opposition did not explain how that situation is really different from previous years, or different from the practice of previous governments, be they federal or state.

The estimates in the budget document are prepared in the same manner as estimates have been prepared in the Territory's budget every year. They are arrived at through assessments by departments of what their revenue is likely to be in the forthcoming year. Those figures are reviewed and discussed by Treasury officers and then submitted to Cabinet. Why they should be more rubbery this year than in previous years, we do not really know. But everyone acknowledges that they are only estimates, nothing more. Members would know that all estimates are exactly that. Some are exceeded, as history shows, and some are achieved. The budget has the flexibility to allow for that. Obviously, that has to be the case.

The Leader of the Opposition shot his argument to pieces somewhat when he went crook about the fact that a number of increases in Territory charges were announced prior to the budget, therefore misleading people into believing that the budget is more favourable than it really is. However, he then turned around and said that pensioners, who have increased charges to pay for bus travel, know full well that they face an increase and the difficulties they will have with that increase, whether it is announced in the budget or otherwise. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that the budget is misleading people, and then say that people are awake up. If a charge goes up, a charge goes up. People do not care whether it is indicated on budget day, 2 months before or 6 months before. They know it is going to hit them in the pocket. That is very true. Therefore, he cannot say that the budget is misleading people in any way. Indeed, the Northern Territory government certainly has not established any precedent by raising charges prior to a budget. You only have to look at the federal government's actions over the course of a year to determine that we certainly have not broken any new ground. From time to time, there is good reason for governments to increase charges during a year. Governments may wish to impose taxation increases, because the timing of such introduction of such increases obviously has an enormous bearing on the amount of money which is received into the government's coffers. I do not recall the Leader of the Opposition making protests about the federal government's action in that very same regard.

He went on to give us a lesson about the effect of inflation on figures. Of course, if we quote a figure in today's terms, we all know that, if inflation is running at 8% per year, there will be 8% less value from every dollar spent. I do not know how the Treasurer was supposed to have hoodwinked all honourable members in this regard, and I do not think we needed a little classroom lesson on inflation. Members are well aware that the phrases used in financial debate in this country are many and varied. If a person is talking about real increases or decreases after allowing for inflation, the phrases 'real increase' and 'real decrease' are the ones used. For the Leader

of the Opposition to infer that the Treasurer is misleading members of this Assembly or the Territory community is an absolute nonsense.

He also made some play with per head of population figures. This surprised me, having regard to the views of the opposition in the past about such figures. You do a sum and convert an amount to a per head of population figure. Fancy picking an example like primary production, and arguing that its allocation represents a reduction in per head of population figures! I think it is nonsense to apply any per head of population criteria to an area such as primary production. His former leader made quite an issue in this Assembly a few months ago about the nonsensical use of per head of population figures when talking about finances in the Northern Territory. I do not agree that we should never use per head of population figures. There are occasions when such figures are very relevant. However, when calculating how much should be spent on primary production in the Northern Territory, you should forget about per head of population figures.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about the funds that are flowing to support the financial arrangements for the Sheraton Hotels in the Northern Territory. No doubt, we will hear more about this in a debate later today. He seemed to criticise the government's action in taking \$10m equity in the Alice Springs Sheraton. That surprised me a little because I have understood from past references by the ALP that, in supporting private enterprise where necessary, it is better to have some equity rather than to pour money down a hole, to use the words of the Leader of the Opposition. He said we are taking up an equity of \$10m in a hotel which is losing money. Of course the hotel will lose in its first years. Every major hotel in Australia seems to lose in its first years. That is when they need some support, and governments are usually the ones who step in. I think that when he speaks in the debate later today, he should at least be honest in one respect. He should clarify the many statements made by the ALP in this Assembly about how it supports the use of taxpayers' dollars to assist in the development of tourism infrastructure. If it disagrees with us on the method of doing this, it should indicate that. It seems to swing back and forth on this issue. On some occasions, it says that the use of any funds to prop up tourist projects is an absolute disaster for the Territory taxpayer and an irresponsible action by this government. It always concludes by saying that an ALP government would adopt the good socialist policy of propping up industries which it wants to promote and which are not viable on their own. It seems to have a couple of bob each way on almost every issue.

I thought the university proposal was interesting. He said that we wasted \$12m. The ALP's option is to resurrect and dust off its lean-to university proposal at the institute in the northern suburbs. Like the rest of its visions for the Northern Territory, its vision of a university is simply second rate. The Territory government has indeed bitten the bullet, to use the words of the Treasurer, on this particular issue. Proceeding with a university at this stage was a courageous step by the government and I am sure it is one that will pay off.

Mr Smith: And an expensive one.

Mr PERRON: It certainly is an expensive one. It will pay off handsomely in the Northern Territory in future years. I think credit should be given to the government for taking that decision at this time, when there could have been arguments put forward that we must wait. The government did not take that easy option.

The Leader of the Opposition reiterated what we have heard a number of times from members on his side of the Assembly: the Territory government should stop whingeing about being harshly treated by the federal government and understand that the Territory has to share in the burden of overcoming Australia's current financial plight, the plight that even the world's greatest Treasurer has been unable to prevent this country's sliding into.

I do not think that any of us object to the Territory being treated equally with the states who rely on Commonwealth funds for their support. What we object to is being more harshly treated. There are many words in Hansard about whether or not the Territory is being more harshly treated than its counterparts in the states. I do not need to go into the figures, which have been quoted before, but I found a new reference recently which, no doubt, was distributed to all members. It is the speech delivered at the ALP dinner on Thursday 7 August by the federal Minister for Finance. I would like to quote from 1 paragraph of that speech, which he made to the faithful rank and file. It is very relevant to the Territory's financial position and to an assessment of whether or not the Territory is being fairly treated in comparison with our Australian colleagues elsewhere. I quote Senator Walsh:

One of the running sores which the Hawke government inherited from its predecessor was the Northern Territory's funding arrangements. In the 4 years to 1983-84, Commonwealth payments to the Territory government grew at an annual rate of 7% real. That growth rate was not sustainable in the long term. In 132 years, it would have devoured the entire GDP of Australia. Sooner or later, it has to be stopped.

I would like to use the same argument to Senator Walsh and say that, if the Territory's population growth rate was maintained for 132 years, we would have the entire population of Australia living here, and then the GDP would belong here. Perhaps honourable members opposite could let us know if the good senator got away with those comments and others in that speech, or whether he was virtually tarred and feathered, as he probably should have been. The Territory is not objecting to sharing some of the plight that the country is in. What we object to is suffering a disproportionate share through a cut in the funds that we were entitled to. That is what has happened, as has been demonstrated over and over again.

I would touch on the matter of casino taxes which has often been raised by members opposite in financial debate about the Northern Territory. The Leader of the Opposition did not make as much play of this subject as I had expected him to. Then again, the opposition has pretty well flogged this issue to death out in the community in the period leading up to the budget. Perhaps it is as guilty as the Treasurer is of firing guns in advance. In almost every area of tight funding or cutback that has been hinted at or mooted over the past year or 2, the ALP has cried that it would pay for it by imposing full casino taxes or that it would introduce casino taxes and meet costs that way. It seems that we have a fishes-and-loaves trick there. Apparently, the ALP simply expects to go back to the same trough in the hope that it has filled up again. Recently, we heard that casino taxes should be used to subsidise electricity, but the Leader of the Opposition has changed his view more recently. Today, he advised us that money from elsewhere would pay for electricity. I will come to that in a minute.

During the period leading up to the budget, when there was announcement that 400 or 500 jobs might be pruned from the public service, he put out press releases saying: 'Do not do that. There is no need to put off any public

servants. They should be paid for by the casino taxes'. That demonstrates the opposition's mentality. Rather than look at whether there is room for a tightening of the public service in various areas, it says that we should not contemplate putting people off. It believes we should increase taxes instead of seeking a more efficient operation of the public service, which is what governments should be doing - although the federal government has sadly overlooked it.

We were told a few minutes ago that an ALP budget alternative would be to put \$4m more into the Tourist Commission. The Leader of the Opposition thinks that you can just throw money at the Tourist Commission and it will automatically get value for every dollar. In fact, for several years now, the Northern Territory government has taken a close interest in the Tourist Commission's budget. The Tourist Commission has been on a planned campaign of rapid escalation. In one year, it was given a budget allocation of \$14m. That was a one-off expenditure to open overseas offices and commence a series of new programs which would assist in promoting the Territory over a much longer period. That sort of funding is not required again, although the levels of financial support the Territory government is still giving to the Tourist Commission are very high by any standard in the country. Indeed, I urge honourable members to compare its funding with that given by the Queensland government to its tourist commission. Of course, Queensland is by far the leading Australian state in terms of tourist promotion, and all credit to it for that. However, in terms of the relative sizes of the 2 operations, our financial contribution is far greater.

The \$4m which the opposition believes should go into the Tourist Commission would come from savings brought about by changes to some provisions of the fringe benefits tax. We have heard various revelations about that lately. It was interesting that the first priority to be met, when the opposition found \$4m floating around, was tourism rather than education or health services. I thought the opposition's priorities might have been the other way around. Later, of course, the Leader of the Opposition told us that more money would be found for those services. However, the first priority was tourism. I am pleased to see that the opposition has a realistic view of the value of tourism for the Northern Territory. If it thinks the matter through a little, it will realise the value for the dollar that we are obtaining through the Yulara complex and the 2 Sheratons, propped as they are by taxpayers' dollars. It will understand what valuable resources they are for the Northern Territory.

The savings from scrapping the university and proceeding with the lean-to proposition at DIT would be used to fund NTEC deficits, or at least keep charges down, according to the Leader of the Opposition. I gather that he is implying that, under an ALP budget, there would be a direct contribution to NTEC from Consolidated Revenue. The opposition would not keep charges down by arranging loans for NTEC and trying to claw them back over the next 10 or 20 years, which is another option but not a very palatable one. However, it is an option when you cannot pass onto consumers the full costs of the electricity supply. We have an acknowledgement - and I am pleased that the opposition has been honest enough to make it - that the ALP would, for the first time in the Northern Territory, start funding the costs of electricity from Consolidated Revenue. If that is ever done, I believe it will be a very dangerous precedent. It would be enormously difficult for any government to withdraw from such a system as times get better. I think that it spells a big danger for the Northern Territory.

We heard a lot of words about the ALP initiative called Territoricorp. In theory, it sounds like a very admirable sort of body. I guess I would not take enormous issue with it, except that it would not have a great deal to do, because its principal function would be to work with private enterprise in the Northern Territory with a view to its promotion and encouragement. If, as the Leader of the Opposition said, Territoricorp would insist that enterprises operate along commercial guidelines and aim for profits, it would have to turn most enterprises away. If they were standing on their own commercially, they would not need government propping or guarantees. They would already be out in the big financial world, like most people in this country who have gone into business without any government support. I think that organisations like Territoricorp are really designed to do exactly what a former Chief Minister said the Territory Development Corporation used to do: assist the wobblies. That is what it has to do because, if it is not assisting the wobblies, there is no one else to assist.

Mr Smith: Go to Western Australia and have a look at what they are doing over there.

Mr PERRON: I was pleased to hear the ALP reiterate that, as far as new industry assistance is concerned, it would consider things like equity participation. I would not disagree with short-term equity participation for a second. Indeed, we just put \$10m into the Sheraton Hotel in Alice Springs and we propose to get that money back in due course when the hotel can be disposed of to other owners ...

Mr Smith: Next century?

Mr Finch: Do not be smart.

Mr PERRON: The time will no doubt be some years down the track. I do not know what the actual projections are at present, and it will depend to some degree on whether the world's greatest Treasurer can keep the country from sliding right into the black hole and disappearing. Assuming that he can, and we do make the grade, in a few years' time the Alice Springs Yulara will be worth much more than the loans that have been paid out on it, and the Territory government will get its funds back. I would consider that as a short-term equity position. In other words, in putting that money forward, the government has decided that it is not a permanent contribution to the hotel. It is there for as long as is necessary. If the Leader of the Opposition is proposing that the ALP's short-term equity injections will be limited to 12 or 18 months, please let us know. It would help people understand whether Territoricorp is really going to do anything at all or whether it will be a great big sham where nobody goes through its front door because it cannot offer any help. The opposition would also refine payroll tax thresholds and index them. That is an option anyone could put forward. It would cost the government revenue of course. However, it is put forward with an acknowledgement that it would cost revenue. Perhaps it would not be a great deal, I do not know. Other taxation incentives or concessions have not even been mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition.

His proposal to streamline the central administration of the public service is interesting. Here we have some difference between the Northern Territory government and the ALP. Whilst there is to be some move towards centralisation of administrative services under the Territory government, it has not taken the decision to remove higher level public servants from places like Alice Springs. They have been located there over the years to decentralise decision-making and administrative services, and having those

additional decision-makers on the spot has considerable benefit in terms of streamlining processes, the complaint system, and so on. People can deal more quickly with a local point of contact in the public service, without having to rush all the way to Darwin. I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition would go as far as having single typing pools for the whole of government. Perhaps at some future debate he will spell that out. He talks about our figures being rubbery. Even though they are spelt out in some detail, they are still rubbery. He was not able to give us any figures at all about the savings the opposition would make in the public service, financially or in terms of staff. He said that any savings would be applied to health and education. Our figures might be rubbery, but the opposition's are still sap in a tree. It has not even extracted the latex to make the rubber.

It would also review the government car fleet, where it sees massive waste. Perhaps there is and perhaps it is something that should be examined. Possibly, that is a matter that could be examined by the Public Accounts Committee. Perhaps I should not be promoting a committee of which I am a member, but I urge the government to consider that. I am not sure if there is any money to be saved there. The Leader of the Opposition obviously believes that there is a significant amount because it rated a mention in his response to the budget today.

Overall, the opposition must believe that the budget is fairly reasonable if that is the best contribution it can make through its leading speaker. By and large, it has not made any worthwhile criticism of the budget; it has only nibbled at the edges. Of course, anyone can do that. I support the budget.

Debate adjourned.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, in relation to a response from the Chief Minister, I wish to indicate again the circumstances under which I took up appointment with the Northern Territory Teachers Federation in 1974. I assumed the position of Acting Secretary of the Northern Territory Teachers Federation on 24 December 1974, which of course was the day Cyclone Tracy struck. The 2 events were completely coincidental. As I previously explained to this Assembly, the number of Teachers Federation members dropped dramatically in the Northern Territory, as a result of Cyclone Tracy, from something over 1000 to 200 or 300. The Teachers Federation successfully negotiated with the Director of Education at that time, Mr Jim Gallagher, for the appointment of the Secretary of the Teachers Federation on a basis, as the Chief Minister said, of two-thirds payment by the government and one-third payment by the Teachers Federation, for a period of 9 months. As I previously stated in this Assembly, the Teachers Federation at the time was extremely grateful for the understanding showed by the government in those difficult circumstances.

Mr Speaker, the only other thing that I would like to add is that I did not preserve promotion rights during the period I was on leave from the Department of Education because, unfortunately, I was a Band 1 teacher for all of that period and, under the system which then applied, Band 1 teachers could not apply for promotion. From September 1975, I became a member on leave without pay, fully paid in all respects by the Northern Territory Teachers Federation.

To conclude, there are 2 significant differences between my situation then and the situation we were talking about: there was no retrospective appointment on full benefits and there was no question of double dipping.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, as you know, it has not been a common occurrence, in the years that I have been in this Assembly, for me to take exception to actions of the Speaker, either in terms of the exercise of the powers of that office or in respect of you personally. I would simply wish to point out, Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect to you and this Assembly, the reason for my distress during question time. I suspected that there was something wrong when, as only 1 of the 2 opposition members in the Assembly at the beginning of question time, I still failed to get the call. Because I failed also to get the call at any time during question time yesterday, I suspected there was some silent protest being delivered to me from the Chair. Mr Speaker, can I simply say to you with the greatest respect, Sir ...

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): A point of order, Mr Speaker! If the honourable member is making an explanation in accordance with standing order 54, it does not seem to relate to a material part of a speech or to him being misquoted on the floor of this Assembly.

Mr SPEAKER: I do not believe there is a point of order. I believe the member for Arafura sought leave to make a personal explanation under standing order 57.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I would just point out to you the nub of the problem that I have. It is not a problem simply for me, but for every member of the Assembly if they are treated in a similar manner. Mr Speaker, as you know, I do have some respect for, and some knowledge of, standing orders. Jim Robertson and I, almost between the 2 of us, comprehensively drafted the set we have in front of us now - at least, we put our names to it after the Clerk had done it.

Mr Speaker, I put it to you, in all fairness and reasonableness, that the Chamber must be administered in a way in which members know precisely what it is they have done wrong. A reference to the Hansard record will show, Mr Speaker, that so far you have asked me to do absolutely nothing. I was not aware that I had made a sarcastic comment. I have certainly not been asked by you at any time to withdraw it. If I am asked to withdraw it, I will withdraw it. Mr Speaker, it is simply not good enough to arbitrarily send someone to Coventry without his knowledge, to not allow him to make the proper use of question time, which is the right of every member in this Assembly, without at least having the courtesy to advise that person that he or she is in some way in dispute with the Chair.

Mr Speaker, quite honestly, if it had not been for your statement from the Chair 5 minutes ago, after I had passed out all my questions to other members of the Assembly, I would never have known that I was in some sort of difficulty with the Chair.

The only thing that I have been asked to do this week was to withdraw a personal reference to a member of the government. I did so immediately and without reservation. The Hansard will show that I have not been asked by you to do anything else. Mr Speaker, with the greatest respect, I would suggest that a much fairer and far more reasonable way for this Chamber to be administered for the benefit of all members is that, if there is a problem between the Chair and a member which results in that member not being able to get the call and ask a question, that the member be advised formally from the Chair that some redress of that problem is required. Then the member can at

least know what in the hell he has done wrong and he can fix it. With the greatest respect, Sir, so that I can continue to use this Assembly as I should be able to, could you please advise me what it is you want me to do?

Mr SPEAKER: I propose responding to the honourable member for Arafura in writing at a later date.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr HANRAHAN (Leader of Government Business): Mr Speaker, I move that the Assembly, at its rising, adjourn until Tuesday 30 September 1986 at 10 am or at such other time and date set by Mr Speaker pursuant to sessional order.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Actual and Contingent Liabilities of NT Government

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I have received the following letter from the honourable member for Arafura:

Dear Mr Speaker,

I propose, under standing order 94, that the Assembly discuss this afternoon, as a definite matter of public importance, the failure of this government to provide adequate information to this Assembly regarding the actual and contingent liabilities in relation to hotels and other developments and the serious impact of these liabilities on the current and future budgets.

Yours sincerely,
Bob Collins,
Member for Arafura.

Is the honourable member supported? The honourable member for Arafura is supported.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, in response to an interjection from a government member a moment ago and in reference to a statement in the Northern Territory newspaper about matters of public importance, one of the honourable members opposite said, 'Here we go again'. The statement in the NT News said that matters of public importance were rare occasions which were indulged in only on matters of the gravest import. I point out to the Northern Territory News and to government members opposite, that MPIs are a daily occurrence in the federal parliament and in most other parliaments in Australia. There is an MPI on every sitting day of the week. But I do agree that 'Here we go again'.

Mr Coulter: Why did you withdraw your matter of public importance yesterday?

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am delighted to respond to that interjection. We withdrew our MPI yesterday because we heard this extraordinary story, close to the time we were due to sit, that some remarkable events were to take place and that the member for Barkly, with the complete support of the parliamentary CLP, was to make a statement prior to question time so that it could be broadcast, with the compliance of the government, all over the Northern Territory. We were told it would rubbish

the daylight out of the federal member and the administrative wing of the CLP. In response to that interjection, as I said in a statement that I issued this morning, if the Chief Minister, the Attorney-General, presumably the Cabinet, and the whole CLP want to help the parliamentary wing hold up the organisational wing of the CLP to public ridicule, I am prepared to help them at any time.

Mr Coulter: Well, why didn't you tell your Whip? He did not know.

Mr B. COLLINS: Do you want to interject again?

Mr Speaker, a year ago today, I stood in this Assembly to make a response to the budget and a statement from the then Chief Minister on his government's commitment to tourist development projects. As honourable members will recall, that budget was described on the front page of the Northern Territory News as a good news budget for Territorians. Within 24 hours, that was replaced with a headline proclaiming a financial crisis in the Northern Territory. This was because the then Chief Minister, the member for Barkly, had the temerity to walk into the Assembly the day after boasting of a balanced budget and admit that his government was facing considerable difficulties with its financial liabilities on major tourist development projects.

It was the first time, and it is to the former Chief Minister's credit, that any member of the government had admitted publicly that the government's open-ended guarantees on these projects represented a real and ongoing liability to the taxpayers of this Territory. We know that the situation is now getting out of hand completely. It was a situation this government had consistently denied before that, in and out of the Assembly, despite constant pressure from the opposition for 18 months.

Honourable members might recall that the then Chief Minister went on to blame his predecessor, the current federal Liberal member, Peat Marwick and Mitchell, Capel Court, City National, Price Waterhouse, the federal government, the airlines and, lastly, the tourists, for having the temerity not to come here. In fact, as I pointed out in response to that speech, it was a case of blaming everyone except himself. To a great degree, that particular position was justified.

Mr Speaker, unfortunately, little has changed since then. The only thing that has changed is that the real situation behind the scenes, which still no one is being told about, is getting much worse. The government is in no more control of its actual and contingent financial liabilities than it was this time last year. We are in a worse situation.

Mr Coulter: Rubbish.

Mr B. COLLINS: If you support the motion I am going to move, you will get the chance to demonstrate that to everyone in the Northern Territory for the first time.

Mr Speaker, the only difference on the government's side now is that it is getting deeper and deeper into the financial quagmire and we are getting less and less information, and these sittings have demonstrated that. We have attempted to get answers to an increasing range of questions about the government's ongoing debt burden. We have tried questions without notice, written questions, departmental briefings, MPIs and censure motions and still we have received no answers. This is despite repeated claims by the current

Chief Minister, his predecessor and his predecessor that all the cards would be laid on the table. What we were not told was that the cards would be laid on the table very slowly, one at a time. I would just like to speed that process up a little. In debating matters of public importance in this Assembly, there are normally 2 speakers from each side. I would just explain that this will be the only speech from this side, for the simple reason that the most significant thing that has happened since the last time I spoke on this matter is the creation of a Public Accounts Committee after 5 years of urging from the opposition. The purpose of this MPI is to act as a vehicle for a motion to be put to the Assembly - and I do trust it will be supported - that this matter be referred to the PAC. Having set up the PAC, there is no reason why government members should not support this motion. I foreshadow that, at the end of this debate, I will seek the leave of the Assembly to move a motion referring to the PAC a number of matters in respect of the contingent actual liabilities of the government. I am confident on this occasion, because the motion is carefully drafted and I do not imagine the government would be foolish enough ...

Mr Coulter: Do not be dangerous.

Mr B. COLLINS: Well, be it on your own head. Having established a Public Accounts Committee to deal with the last budget and future budgets in the Northern Territory, I do not imagine that the government would want to strangle it at birth by refusing to allow it to consider the most urgent and pressing matter in the financial affairs of the Northern Territory.

The Treasurer came into this Assembly earlier this week and presented his budget. We had been led to expect by the media that the budget would be accompanied by a statement from the Treasurer on the state of the Northern Territory's economy. What we got was a 28 page statement which mentioned nothing about the financial liabilities, actual or contingent, of this government. At the same time as the Treasurer was delivering his budget and his media handlers were doling out copies of the Economic Statement 1986-87, reporters around the Territory were gathering information on the sale of the Alice Springs Casino. Given that this government is the only administration that I know of which has used legislation as a threat to enable it to transfer \$50m worth of private property from one company to another, and still manage to lose \$14m on the deal, one could reasonably have expected a statement on this government's continuing liabilities in this area.

There was a small story in the weekend press which stated that the government had injected \$10m of taxpayers' money into the Alice Springs Sheraton. We were fobbed off with an absurd explanation as to why that had happened. Those of us that have been around this Chamber for some time will know this was simply a complete re-run of the Yulara Village problem. Soon after becoming Chief Minister and Treasurer, the member of Barkly was forced to admit to the Assembly that government statements in the Assembly about the blow-out in government subsidies to Yulara were absolutely out of kilter and, if it had not been for the injection of \$20m in a panic move by the government to prop up that development, those payments were going to escalate by more than \$14m a year. That is why we had \$20m pumped into Yulara last year as an emergency move. It was not predicted or planned by the government. We are now having a repeat of this, for the same reasons, with the Alice Springs Sheraton Hotel. Stories about buying \$20m worth of staff housing and sewerage pipes at Yulara were just as silly as this present con job about taking up \$10m equity in the Alice Springs Sheraton. The fact is, and the government knows it, that, despite statement after statement in and outside the Assembly, potential investors were falling over themselves to put money into the Alice

Springs Sheraton. The fact is that my predictions have come to pass. Not a single dollar of real risk capital has been attracted into that development. It has been funded with borrowed money and it is a completely debt-financed hotel, except for the \$10m of public money that has just been put in as another finger in the dyke before it breaks.

The interest bill on that loan is crippling. As far as the 180-day bank bill was concerned, it was a fact that the hotel would have required an occupancy rate of 120% per night at \$100 per room, just to pay the interest bill on the loan. I know that situation has improved, because permanent debt financing has been put in place and the interest rate has come down. However, it needs to come down even further. Anyone who buys a house will understand this. The interest rate was crippling the operations. The government could not find any genuine risk capital so it had to shovel in another \$10m of public money, trying to pass it off as buying into the hotel, the same con job it tried to pull with Yulara. We did not hear about that in the economic statement. The Treasurer has informed the Assembly in this budget speech that \$5.9m of taxpayers' money is to be ploughed into the Darwin Sheraton this year. There was not a word of explanation about why.

Millions of dollars of taxpayers' money has gone into the acquisition of houses and property on Myilly Point for a phantom casino-hotel development. The most significant thing about the government's decision to turn the hospital into a university was that it was the first public statement of the government's failure to attract that development to Myilly Point. That is the reason the hospital has been sitting there being vandalised for 3½ years. That is why it will cost another \$6m of taxpayers' money to repair those totally vandalised buildings, which were habitable when they were vacated. That is why the government, 2 days after I walked into that building with a couple of TV crews, made an instant decision to turn it into the university.

Let me just say, in passing, that one of the other stupid things about the decision to locate the university there is that it is an appalling misuse of extraordinarily valuable real estate because there is no doubt it is a prime development area. We have always said so. However, once the university gets in there and the dongas are in place and the students start looking for a place to kick a football, there will be reasonable demands for further land for an oval, and this and that. Universities have a habit of doing that. What a gross misuse of prime development land that would be! The decision is a stupid one. It was a panic decision. Have a look at the public record. The decision was made 48 hours after ABC and Channel 8 started running some graphic pictures of a totally vandalised and wrecked building which was in that condition because of government neglect. It was like that because the government was not prepared to come clean. It was not prepared to be honest during that 3½ years because, if it had used those buildings, it would have been a public admission that the much-vaunted development simply did not exist. It may ...

Mr Dondas: Wait.

Mr B. COLLINS: 'Wait', says the minister. I can remember him making a statement in this Assembly a year and a half ago to the effect that, in 6 weeks, he would be announcing whether it would be a 400-room or a 600-room hotel. Remember that, Nick?

Mr Coulter: Patience.

Mr B. COLLINS: Patience! Unfortunately, the budget has us bleeding from every extremity at the moment. Let me tell you the thing that frightens me most about the university. All honourable members know that I have been supporting it. I proposed it in 1981 for the first time, but I am terrified now. I know how universities operate and, with the contingent and actual liabilities we have, that university will bleed us to death next year. At this time, given the fiscal situation of the Northern Territory government, we simply cannot afford it. I know that the government and the Treasurer in particular knows that even better than I do. However, they will not tell us what they know.

There was some very interesting polling done by the Labor Party about 7 weeks ago. I dare say that the government has the same figures from its polls. You can laugh your heads off if you want to, but the most extraordinary result of our poll was that an overwhelming majority of people in the northern suburbs - 80% of them, in fact - thought the casino deal stank. They thought the government had grossly mishandled it. 67% said that, as a result of the government's bungling, they believed it had directly cost them seriously in extra taxes and charges, and they are right. They are not mugs in the northern suburbs. It will cost them even more in future because this fragile pack of cards, built principally by Paul Everingham, who, as Chief Minister, buffaloes and bamboozled and obviously blindfolded the rest of his Cabinet, who were not game to open their mouths to say 'quit' when all this extraordinary stuff was being put together, is now collapsing around their ears.

We want the facts. There has been one significant change in the political landscape since the former Chief Minister stood up in this Assembly and admitted that his government had created a huge financial problem for the Northern Territory. Who could forget that statement? That change was the establishment of a Public Accounts Committee, after 5 years of campaigning by the parliamentary wing of the Labor Party.

Mr Speaker, I foreshadowed at the beginning of my speech that I intend, at the conclusion of this debate, to seek leave to move a motion referring all these matters to the PAC. A proper investigation of these issues by the Public Accounts Committee is the only way Territorians will find out the precise budgetary situation of the Territory. Indeed, the purpose for which a PAC is set up anywhere is better to regulate a government's finances. As a practical politician, I have no argument with not making its operations retrospective. The terms of reference of the PAC, and the Treasurer knows it, apply absolutely to what is occurring at the moment with the Alice Springs Sheraton, the Darwin Sheraton, the Myilly Point development, the casino takeovers and everything else. The PAC is the proper body to look into these matters because of the way it can examine them in detail.

It is my belief, and I want to canvass this in a little more detail, that the total level of private investment risk capital in the Darwin Sheraton Hotel is a little over \$2m. The rest of it is considerable loan moneys, all of which are guaranteed by the Northern Territory government - that is, the Northern Territory taxpayer. This year, we have already had an announcement that, in addition to that, \$6m of public money will be ploughed into the Darwin Sheraton to plug a leak. I am sure that I will be proven correct in my estimate that, over the next 5 to 7 years, the amount of public money that will be required to follow that \$6m will be in the vicinity of \$30m.

What concerns me about that deal is this. We have a private developer who put up \$2m and borrowed the money to build the hotel, all guaranteed by the

Northern Territory government. I estimate that the Northern Territory government will give him at least \$30m over the next 5 or 6 years, and he will end up owning the hotel. Mr Speaker, we do support development. We do support the necessary involvement of government in providing infrastructure and seed money but, as I have said before - and privately this government knows it - the extent of the deals that were entered into, and I concede that it was before their time, is frightening. The deals were ridiculous and the Northern Territory ends up the loser. It is not surprising that almost 70% of the residents of the northern suburbs believe that these deals are costing them directly in extra taxes and charges.

What we are looking at is the casino revisited. We did \$14m cold on that deal.

Mr Coulter: It has gone up.

Mr B. COLLINS: I can refer the Treasurer to previous debates in the Assembly if he wants to canvass the makeup of that \$14m, because I am not going to do it in the next 3 minutes. As I said earlier, the last report I received on this issue was a statement from the former Chief Minister. The Northern Territory, like the rest of Australia, is in a fragile economic condition. It is a situation that requires tough solutions. Decisions cannot be taken or discussed by the community unless people are fully informed about the true financial situation of this government. Don't let anybody in the Northern Territory be conned by this shooting-gallery, swimming-pool budget that we have just had. There will be a mini-budget next year. I will bet money on it. And, when these contingent and actual liabilities of the government come home to roost, Territorians will find out that our financial situation is serious. Despite repeated promises to the Assembly by successive governments that the books would be opened, they remain firmly closed. All this Assembly has received is a confusing procession of statements containing the worst form of gobbledegook.

In reference to the first part of the matter of public importance before members of the Assembly, I will give one example of how it is justified. In terms of my claims that answers have never been provided, here is a response to a question we put to the government on actual and contingent liabilities:

More generally, I highlighted proposals to more closely integrate the affairs of the respective project owners and their staff, to consolidate the governmental interface with these projects, to work closely with the hotel operators to both reduce net cost and develop marketing, and to appoint a special panel of expert advisers to guide this activity, and I called for the support of the federal government in ameliorating those stated frustrations produced by their policies.

Mr Speaker, that is the best we have been able to obtain on this situation over the last 3 years. The issue is clear: the government has a hidden deficit of over \$200m.

Members interjecting.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, there is one easy and substantive way to demonstrate that this is wrong and that is to support the motion to refer this to the PAC.

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

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, we have all heard that speech before. The former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Arafura, has given that speech to the Assembly on many occasions. It has changed a little bit since Thursday 30 ...

Mr Smith: The figures have increased.

Mr COULTER: The Leader of the Opposition has something to say. I am glad he has something to say. He is the opposition's economic statesman, the economic adviser to the Labor Party. We were told today that, in this debate concerning grave financial implications, there was to be 1 opposition speaker and that was the member for Arafura. The debate is so important that the economic spokesman for the Labor Party will not even contribute to it.

Mr Smith: Wait until we get to the PAC part.

Mr COULTER: That is how important it is. He sits over there interjecting but he has nothing to contribute. That is to his credit because there is no economic cover-up in relation to these issues. Even the member for Arafura said on 30 August 1984: 'Having availed myself of a briefing with the Treasury, which I appreciated and found to be informative, I do not believe that, to this point in time, the government has over-extended itself in this area, but it certainly is possible for the government to do so in future'.

Mr B. Collins: Right.

Mr COULTER: Thus, he is right up to 1984.

Mr B. Collins: No.

Mr COULTER: That is what he said. He has changed his mind, which is not unusual. He has done an 180° turn again.

He continued: 'There are considerable financial risks as well as benefits in what the government has undertaken. It has probably gone about as far as it can go ...'.

He was right up until 30 August 1984 which is when the Sheratons were built at Yulara and Alice Springs. He has had a change of heart, and that is not unusual. He says that he cannot get hold of information and that the \$10m equity participation in the Sheraton has been a cover-up. In the Northern Territory Government Gazette of 19 August 1986, there is notice of the \$10m investment in Investnorth. On Wednesday 20 August, I issued a press release: 'The government has invested \$10m in redeemable preference shares in Investnorth Limited, the government-owned company which owns the Alice Springs Sheraton. Mr Coulter said that this would ensure the annual appropriation to the project would be reduced ...'.

That was a press release. This government is unashamedly proud of its seeding of an industry and tourism infrastructure that has provided 600 jobs for the Northern Territory. I have spoken about some of the other benefits of these projects. 600 jobs have been created in the 4 developments.

The Northern Territory government has a problem in providing the ALP with figures and worst-case, best-case scenarios because it is mischievous. The member for Stuart spoke about being mischievous. The problem is that the opposition always misleads, and figures can be misleading. The Labor Party opposite has a habit of misleading and being prophets of gloom and doom. It

does it very well. It knocks projects and later says that they were its idea. Does anybody remember the member for Arafura saying how he supported the pipeline and how it was a Labor Party initiative? Some months later, I quoted him as saying that it was a lunatic idea.

Mr B. Collins: I never said that.

Mr COULTER: He said that it was a lunatic idea. During the course of this debate, I will quote him the date and the page of Hansard where he said that.

I would not be surprised in 4 years time, if the member for Arafura makes it to Canberra, to hear that he has stood in the Senate telling everybody how he supported the seeding of the tourist industry in the Northern Territory by backing Yulara to the hilt. That would not surprise me.

Mr Ede: Can you just turn it down by about 100 decibels?

Mr COULTER: It is very hard to calm down, Mr Speaker, when we are trying to develop industry and realise the potential of the Northern Territory.

The member for Fannie Bay replied to criticism from the Leader of the Opposition today. Queensland, probably the largest tourist promotional state in Australia, spends \$15m annually on tourism. The Northern Territory will spend \$12m this year. If he likes to apply the per capita logic that he used in relation to primary production today, it would not take even him very long to work out what the Northern Territory is trying to achieve with the development of such magnificent tourist facilities. I give full credit to a previous Chief Minister, Paul Everingham, for taking risks to develop those facilities.

A stocktake of what has happened because of those developments is an interesting story indeed. Incidentally, and the Minister for Tourism will back me up, you cannot obtain a room at the Sheraton at the moment. It is virtually booked out and we are seriously considering how we might be able to provide extra accommodation at Yulara. That is the \$160m project that members opposite are knocking. It was a risk, but the future does not belong to the faint-hearted. If ever there was an exhibition of 6 faint-hearted men, it is those 6 members of the opposition who are sitting opposite us today.

The projects in Alice Springs and Darwin show that \$200m was injected into the Australian economy in 3 years, most of it directly into the Territory. \$60m was spent on direct wages alone. Consider the secondary effect this has had on commerce in the Territory. It could not have been timed better and it is one of the reasons the Territory has been shielded from much of the recession that is biting into the southern states.

It is interesting to look at the return to respective governments in taxation from this construction expenditure. The Commonwealth picked up \$30.5m: \$15.5m in group income tax, \$14.3m in sales tax and \$0.7m in customs and excise. The Territory has gained \$6.7m: \$3.9m in payroll tax and \$2.8m in stamp duty. If the member for Arafura wants figures, let him write these down and let us hear him dispute them. In all, a total of \$37.2m went into 2 treasuries.

The Territory has added 830 high-quality hotel rooms to its stock: 230 at the Sheraton Ayers Rock, 100 at the Four Seasons Ayers Rock, 250 at the Sheraton Alice Springs and 250 in Darwin. This translates into a total of

303 000 available room nights over a year, which is equivalent in 1986-87 to 182 000 occupied room nights, given an average occupancy rate of 60%. On that basis, the annual revenue brought into the Territory by those 4 hotels will be in the order of \$26.7m. It is estimated that an additional \$19m will be spent by these visitors to the Territory, if normal average length of stay patterns are considered and other accommodation venues are used. There are almost 600 employees servicing the 4 hotels. The total direct taxation payments every year to the Commonwealth will be \$5m, along with \$1m to the Territory on current costs. These are just the first-round effects of the start of this new cash flow. Airline frequencies are increasing; coach operators, hire-car franchise and taxis are benefiting; catering, fuel and maintenance businesses are all participating in the growth. In the financial sector, banking and insurance will continue to expand, while contractors maintaining electrical work, lifts, plumbing and so on will be advantaged with a larger base of activity to justify a constant pool of skilled tradesmen. Many small business operations will receive greater returns selling goods which interest this new market. Enhancement of these sectors generates employment for our young people.

We are proud of what has been achieved. We are making it clear that the Territory has not lost the initiative. We will not fall for the trap of talking ourselves into a second-rate status. We have achieved our aim in the face of steep obstacles placed in our way by the federal government, and in the face of nagging criticism from members opposite, members who belong to a political party which is dragging Australia to the brink of a 1930s-style recession. The people in the northern suburbs will have an opportunity to make a choice. They can go for a CLP government, with our philosophy, or they can go for a Labor Party government with a put-the-money-in-the-bank, sit-on-your-hands, get-inside-the-deep-freeze-and-close-the-lid philosophy. That is what we have opposite. The Leader of the Opposition told us to put the money in the bank. The bank would not have provided anywhere near the opportunity that has been provided by the sheer intestinal fortitude of the previous Chief Minister Paul Everingham, and I congratulate him for it. Look at some of the states. You cannot get any information out of the Victorian government. They have got really smart. They simply will not provide you with any information at all. Ask the member for Arafura to get some figures on Portland Cement from his Labor colleagues.

Mr B. Collins: I am not interested in Portland Cement.

Mr COULTER: He would not be interested. Go to Brian Burke in Western Australia and ask him about the Western Australian Diamond Trust.

Mr B. Collins: This is the Northern Territory parliament.

Mr COULTER: He is really on the ropes now. He is making any interjection he can grab hold of. Let him go to New South Wales and speak to his colleague, Mr 51%, who might be able to give him a few hints. Ask some questions about the New South Wales casino, Australia's largest casino. Or he can ask about the entertainment centre in Western Australia or the recently-financed Victorian lawn tennis courts. He could not care less about them. He might ask Mr Bannon about his contingent liabilities with the Hilton in South Australia. He will have 2 big red bruises on either side of his neck because Mr Bannon will throw him out. He will not provide that information. In the Northern Territory, we have provided that information. It is in the explanation to the Appropriation Bill. He speaks about the memorandum to the Appropriation Bill.

Mr B. Collins: It is no wonder the government is in trouble. You are a disgrace. Our boy Coulter. Talk about amateur-hour politics in the Northern Territory.

Mr COULTER: He talks about the economic statement which I delivered. I delivered a warts-and-all economic statement. It was nice to hear the Leader of the Opposition quoting from it. It was nice to hear John Louizou, his friend on the ABC, quoting from it as well. The statement does say that building is down in the Northern Territory by 21% and it does say that industrial building is down by 30%. I need a bit of prompt from the Leader of Opposition. I have just forgotten the exact figure. I think that it is 37%. The statement says all that; we have nothing to hide. We issued the economic statement because it was detailing just what the Northern Territory was really about.

I see the Leader of the Opposition taking notes. It looks like I might have shamed him into standing up and saying a few words. At least he is not going to take any notice of his previous boss, and that is good to see. 'Sit down, Terry. Stand up, Terry'. He is going to stand up and say something.

Mr B. Collins: Sit down, Barry.

Mr COULTER: Despite what the member for Arafura has said, the Leader of the Opposition is going to stand up and say something.

If he turns to the explanation to the Appropriation Bill and has a look at Budget Paper No 4, he will see outlined under 'Subdivisional Dissection of Capital Resources', the amount of money and all the contingent liabilities. The member for Arafura might not know about statement 6, but the Leader of the Opposition will be able to stand up and explain it in detail to him. However, in case he does not know, and there is a high risk of that, I will inform him what statement 6 is about. 'This statement lists all guarantees and contingent liabilities arising from every financial agreement guaranteed by the Northern Territory as at 30 June, together with the relevant acts under which such guarantees have been provided'. That will come out in November, after the books have been audited. The Northern Territory Treasury will look at those books, independent auditors will look at those books, and the Auditor-General will look at those books. In November, when that statement is issued, it will be brought to the attention of all members.

Mr Ede: Does it cover Abington?

Mr COULTER: It does. Abington is now Investcorp Management, as the member for Stuart would be well aware, because it was in the gazette. In the back of the book, Investnorth is written unashamedly because we are proud of what we have been able to do. We are very proud, and there has been no cover-up whatsoever. Try to obtain that sort of information from Labor governments anywhere in Australia. It is my information that, according to a report provided to the Northern Territory Treasury, we have been hailed for our frankness and for the comparatively large amount of information that is available for public scrutiny. I will say it again. In the Appropriation Bill and in statement 6, we have published quite readily the amount of contingent liabilities and guarantees. We do not have anything to hide.

The Alice Springs casino is sold. One of the early decisions of the Hatton government was that we would get rid of that casino. It was decided that the government would get out of the casinos to allow private industry to get on with the job. An announcement on the Darwin casino will be forthcoming

as well. In terms of the Alice Springs Sheraton, the government decided to become an equity participant, and I do not hear anybody opposite saying that that is a problem. I tried to draw the member for Stuart on his position on equity participation, but it was not clear what he meant by what he said. Perhaps I will move on and not confuse future generations of Northern Territorians about exactly what the member for Stuart did say. However, I believe that he said that he supports equity participation, which is what we are involved in.

The member for Arafura talked about injecting public money, and that type of thing. I would like to quote him again. I still do not have the quote where he said that the pipeline was a lunatic idea, but I will mail that to him. I might even have it blown up for him and he can put it on his Senate desk when he gets down there, to remind other honourable senators of exactly what he said.

On Wednesday 29 February 1984, he said:

In my electorate the federal government was proposing to spend \$70m of public money in a project which not only I supported but formally had no hesitation in saying, with some degree of pride, that I had a great deal to do with bringing together.

I agree with the member for Arafura. Just as he took pride in the expenditure of \$70m of public money in his electorate, we take great pride in spending huge amounts of money in the Northern Territory because we know, as I have outlined to honourable members, the permanent, full-time, meaningful employment opportunities that are created with such developments.

I wish I had brought along more quotes from the Leader of the Opposition so that I could allow all Northern Territorians to judge him on what he had to say. In fact, on 23 October 1984, when talking about investments of government money and underwriting, he said:

I am not saying that the government should not be doing that. I am not saying that there is no proper role for the government to back private enterprise in any area where perhaps normal banking institutions would not come if it was not for those guarantees.

And that was exactly the situation with Yulara.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I feel compelled to stand up and make another attempt to convince the world's loudest Treasurer that it is possible to debate in this Assembly without raising one's voice and, perhaps, to convince the Treasurer that, in fact, it is counterproductive to raise one's voice. The effect in the public view is that, the louder you raise your voice, the less substance there is in what you have to say. Of course, that is the situation with the Treasurer's contribution to this debate.

The position is, quite simply, that the opposition has never denied the right of this or other governments to underwrite tourist developments in the Northern Territory. Right from the very start, the opposition supported the Yulara project consistently and the efforts of the Northern Territory government to get it off the ground.

Mr Tuxworth: Not quite from the start.

Mr SMITH: Yes, right from the start, and I would defy anyone to demonstrate on the written record where we expressed anything but support for the establishment of the Yulara resort in the initial years.

We are not arguing with the government's right or ability to underwrite major projects in other areas if it thinks fit. We have said today, as we have said consistently, that there is a valuable role for a government to play in the underwriting of projects if it helps those projects get off the ground. Today's debate is not about that. It is about knowing the risks taken when those deals are entered into and, secondly, informing the rest of the Northern Territory of those risks at that time so that everybody knows what the Territory's long-term obligations are when we underwrite projects or get involved in financial assistance in some other way.

Let us start off with the Yulara project. We had a comprehensive set of documents presented to us in the very early days of the Yulara Resort deal. I think those documents were issued under the cover of the Conservation Commission. They mentioned practically everything except the details of the financial arrangements that the Northern Territory government entered into on that particular deal. We were in the dark about the financial arrangements. At the time, we were given assurances of the extent of the financial arrangements that the Northern Territory government was entering into and, from memory, there was a limit of perhaps \$7m or \$8m per year. Even at that stage, we did not raise any serious objection.

But, Mr Speaker, what happened last year? In the budget papers, we were faced suddenly with a situation where, because of the open-ended commitment this government had entered into, we were not looking at \$7m or \$8m but at an injection of \$20m to buy some of the assets there so that future annual payments could be kept to around \$7m or \$7.5m.

That was not the intention of this government at the beginning of that deal. That was not what the government said when it announced details of the deal and - this is the key to this whole debate - we do not know even now what the bottom line says in the Yulara deal. Despite questions asked in here, written questions and MPIs, despite pursuing every other avenue that is open to us, we have not been able to extract the information from this government. The same applies with the Alice Springs Sheraton. We heard, when the Alice Springs Sheraton was established, that some guarantee was being provided by the government. We heard last year that the Northern Territory government was within 14 days of closing off a deal for the private financing of the Alice Springs Sheraton. When that deadline passed, we heard that the Northern Territory government had arranged short-term finance for 30 days or perhaps 90 days to give itself more time to arrange private financing of the Alice Springs Sheraton project. At the end of that period, we again heard that the Northern Territory government had entered into more short-term financing arrangements to give itself more breathing space to find long-term investors who were prepared to take on the Alice Springs Sheraton. We now know that that has failed and we now know that, to save that deal, the Northern Territory government has had to put in a sum of \$10m on top of its annual payments of about \$3.3m this year. We still do not know what the bottom line is. We still do not know, despite all the questions that we have asked and all the MPIs that we have run, the basis of the deal in relation to the Alice Springs Sheraton proposal. It is time that we did.

The Northern Territory is not a private club being run for the benefit of the CLP. It is not the CLP's money or Carpentaria Pty Ltd's money that is being invested in these projects. It is the money of the taxpayers of the

Northern Territory. On this side of the Assembly, as representatives of taxpayers, we believe that we have an obligation to force this government to disclose details of the deals that have been entered into. We intend to pursue that, and that is why we will be moving for the matter to be referred to the Public Accounts Committee. That is why we expect the government to support the motion.

Let us turn to the question of the Darwin Sheraton which will receive \$5.9m this financial year. On good authority, we are advised that our total commitment to the Darwin Sheraton might be as much as \$32m over a 7 or 8 year period. I can only say it might be up to \$32m because, again, this government has failed to answer the questions we have asked in this Assembly on behalf of the taxpayers.

Let us look at the casinos. We know that we opted to forgo \$3m in gaming tax last year, and that we will forgo another \$3m to \$4m in gaming tax this year. We know that the Alice Springs casino has been sold. But have we heard any details from this government about the basis on which it has been sold or whether the Northern Territory government has been able to recoup any of the commitments that it has made to the casinos in the past? Of course not. That is not supposed to be a matter of legitimate public interest.

Mr Perron: After they have signed up.

Mr SMITH: I will provide you with a piece of information. The Alice Springs casino has been sold. It is obvious that you have not read the paper in the last few days. It would have been appropriate in these sittings for a full statement to have been made by this government on the terms and conditions under which that casino was sold because of the public interest in the matter, and because of the government's investment in the casinos over a period of years. But what do we get from this government, which thinks the taxpayers' money is its money and that it is not accountable for it? We get complete contempt, and that is the reason why we intend to pursue this matter through the Public Accounts Committee, whether the government agrees to do it today or whether it will be a long battle. Be assured that it will get there and, when it does, we might have a chance of getting to the bottom of this.

We have tried in every way possible to get the government to act responsibly and to reveal the extent of its contingent liabilities in the Northern Territory. This is a matter of deep concern because it is taxpayers' money. Millions of dollars are being expended from our budget each year, millions of dollars which cannot be spent on things like improving our schools and our health services. We need to know the exact extent of the contingent liabilities this government has committed itself to and those it intends to commit itself to in the future. If the government is not prepared to tell us, we will force it to do so through the the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr HANRAHAN (Tourism): Mr Speaker, as the minister responsible for tourism in the Northern Territory, and therefore responsible for all the good things that eventuate from liabilities against the Northern Territory government, I would like to say a few words to clarify some of the furphies and wild statements emanating from the other side. Before I do that, on behalf of the Treasurer, I want to read this transcript, because it is relevant to the member for Arafura. It comes from the Channel 6 News of Monday 16 April 1984. It pertains to the Channel Island Power-station, and it contains the words of the former Leader of the Opposition: 'It is an absolutely lunatic proposal the government is putting up and I cannot understand the justification for it'. I am quite happy for the member for

Arafura to have a look at that statement because it is attributed to him, and it is a transcript of the actual news item.

The member for Arafura began his speech on this MPI with some statements concerning headlines about the Northern Territory budget a year ago. Let me clarify some matters of which the member for Arafura is well aware. Unfortunately, some members who read reports on these issues are not aware of them. The heading under the headline saying 'Good News Budget' said 'an actual liability'. It said the actual liability of the Northern Territory was some ridiculous amount - \$200m or \$300m. That is absolute rubbish when referring to actual liabilities. What about the value of assets? If you say that the actual value of the Yulara complex is \$150m, is that your actual liability? Of course not. The property is insured against fire, earthquake, and so on. It is not an actual liability.

The same applies to many statements made by members opposite about occupancy rates and what would happen if no one walked in the door for 12 months. If that happens, the Northern Territory government, along with the rest of Australia, will have much more to worry about than contingent or actual liabilities.

These scaremongers on the other side of the Assembly belong in a field with the crows because they are from times past. They would not know how to think ahead and they would not know about forward planning because they have said nothing in this Assembly about what they would do. We have had 3 speeches today from the members opposite: 1 from the Leader of the Opposition, 1 from the member for Arafura and a second try from the Leader of the Opposition. They said nothing about what they would have done to create jobs and build infrastructure. They have not given a skerrick of information about an alternative proposal.

Let me deal with a couple of aspects of the motion. It refers to the 'failure of this government to provide adequate information to the Assembly regarding the actual and contingent liabilities in relation to hotels and other developments, and the serious impact of these liabilities on future budgets'. As far as 'other developments' are concerned, the Northern Territory government has always stated its policies and its liabilities, both contingent and actual, and has placed them before this Assembly. Statements have been made by the Treasury. Circumstances change, but we know that members opposite cannot accept change. For example, the annual report of the Northern Territory Development Corporation details all aspects relating to government policies on incentive, establishment, development loans etc. It is there in black and white, and so are the figures relating to the contingent liabilities in respect of major infrastructure in the Territory.

Let me digress a little. The Sheratons and the basic infrastructure at Yulara would never have been there if we had to rely on members opposite or, for that matter, the rest of Australia. The simple truth is that no one else in Australia would build them. No one else in Australia, be it a bank, a commercial enterprise or whatever, would build them. Many years ago, the Northern Territory government looked at its greatest asset - tourism. It knew full well what would happen in this country and the growth potential of that industry. Even today, no one else in Australia realises the full potential of tourism in the Northern Territory. It is a bit hard to visit the boardrooms of corporate structures in this country to beg for money to establish infrastructure because, if we had to rely on them, there would be nothing here. However, that is the policy of the members opposite.

Let us look at some real facts. The nature of the accommodation industry Australia-wide is such that it has a settling-in period. No amount of free publicity will fill a hotel from day 1. Therefore, if you apply that rule to any hotel in any capital city of Australia, you will find that it commences with an occupancy rate around 30% or 40%. Over a period of 7 to 8 years, it increases to maximum occupancy. I would like honourable members opposite to show me a 5-star hotel that is making a profit in its first 5 years of operation anywhere in Australia.

We have heard much from members of the opposition but absolutely nothing of substance. It is like being in the land of the never never and they want to keep it that way. I would like dearly for someone from the opposition to tell us how it would have done it. What would be there now other than sand dunes?

Contrary to the statements of the Leader of the Opposition, contingent liabilities are neither out of control nor rampant. They are known, quantified and managed. The contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory exist in the budget papers before this Assembly. Let us not mess around with this furphy and go over past ground again. The Leader of the Opposition paid us the courtesy this morning of telling us in his budget speech that there would be a motion relating to the Public Accounts Committee. We accept that. We are glad to deal with such a motion. Why are the opposition members using this place as a Star Chamber in which to purvey their absolutely nonsensical rubbish? They are saying that this government has not told them about its contingent liabilities. I can only say that they are absolutely stupid because they cannot read. Our contingent liabilities are known to them because they are published. What do they really want? Even they would not know.

A couple of facts in relation to the sale of casinos were mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. I should not have to reiterate, and we cannot get this through their thick heads, that delicate negotiations are taking place between the various trusts responsible for the casinos and possible purchasers. That is a matter for them. Does the opposition want to ruin those negotiations and create speculation? All they are doing is trying to hide the fact that, not once during the last 5 years, have they made any attempt to inform this Assembly about what they would have done to establish tourist infrastructure similar to that which exists in the Territory today. I would be more than pleased to find out how they would have planned for the future growth of the Territory. Would they have built only half of Yulara? Would they have had only half of the contingent liability? Today, Yulara is filled. What more can we do? Do they want us to write the contingent liability off the books.

The Northern Territory government and the residents of the Northern Territory are waiting to hear the alternative plans of members opposite. They simply do not have any plans. To their eternal discredit, they wish to use this Assembly as no more than a vehicle to cover their own inadequacies. The day will come where the vision mentioned by the Treasurer will stand in the Territory's history as a great deed. Personally, I am very proud of Yulara, the Sheraton Hotels and the future development planned in the Territory, particularly at Kings Canyon and Litchfield Park. Those sorts of development do not come to fruition without solid background work and forward planning. There has been no indication from members opposite in this Assembly of any proposals for Northern Territory tourism other than a very broad statement that they support industry infrastructure. How will they do that? By grabbing money off trees or by borrowing?

Mr Speaker, we talk of jobs, and 7500 jobs were created in the Northern Territory last year. Only 1000 of them were in the public sector and the rest were in the private enterprise sector. By planning ahead, as we did with the building of the Sheraton hotels and the Yulara development, we made room for the influx of overseas visitors. May I inform the honourable members opposite that there was an 80% increase last year in tourists from overseas. Tourism in the Northern Territory benefited to the tune of about \$39m from international visitors last year, but where would they have stayed if we had not had Yulara and the Sheratons? Domestic visitor numbers have increased from 600 000 to some 750 000 this year, but where would they have to stay without some forward planning and very solid incentives toward the development of tourist infrastructure in the Territory?

Mr B. Collins: This has nothing to do with the debate.

Mr HANRAHAN: The member for Arafura says that this has nothing to do with the debate, and that is exactly the point. They have nothing to say.

Mr B. Collins: Refer to the matter of public importance.

Mr HANRAHAN: He says 'refer to the matter of public importance' to which, I might add, he has yet to refer. This is no more than a joke because the member for Arafura could have achieved that goal by immediately moving a motion to refer the contingent and actual liabilities to the PAC. By doing otherwise, I think he has misused this Assembly and the intent and purpose of the Public Accounts Committee. At some future time when we are addressing that motion, I would like to refer him to the terms of reference for that committee.

I ask once more that members opposite enlighten the people of the Northern Territory, at some time, about how they would have achieved the tourism infrastructure that exists today to cater for the number of tourists who are visiting the Northern Territory.

MOTION

Reference of Actual and Contingent Liabilities to Public Accounts Committee

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that the following matter be referred to the Public Accounts Committee: the actual and contingent liabilities of the Northern Territory government, in particular, (a) the Yulara development; (b) the Alice Springs and Darwin Sheraton Hotels; (c) the Alice Springs and Darwin casinos; and (d) the proposed development on Myilly Point on and adjacent to the site of the old Darwin Hospital.

Mr Speaker, I will not delay the Assembly very long. I am sure that there will be a number of other speakers in this debate. The motion speaks for itself.

I want to make a few references to what has been an extremely irrelevant argument about things that the opposition said in the Assembly in 1984. The Leader of the Opposition canvassed this issue when he spoke, but I wish to do so again. The Yulara development and the hotel developments were supported by the opposition when first proposed. The reason was quite simple, and I have said this in the Assembly on a number of other occasions in respect of other matters. Not having the easy access to financial records that the Treasury and other government departments have, and clearly must have, we must rely on what we are told in here to assess the Territory's position. We supported the

government's involvement in those developments on the basis of what we now know as a litany of lies, half-truths and absolute fantasy. The litany of lies, half-truths and fantasy that the government engaged in over those 2 years is now well documented. Indeed, the Leader of the Opposition touched upon a few of the changing stories that we have been told over the years. It has been a real Animal Farm progression of CLP members leaping up in the middle of the night, rubbing out the blackboard, and putting new stuff up there to be presented to us next morning.

Mr Speaker, one significant thing has happened since ...

Mr Coulter: The Northern Territory's development.

Mr Manzie: 140 new jobs a week.

Mr B. COLLINS: There cannot be a circus without the clowns, I suppose.

Mr Speaker, one significant thing has happened since 1984 and that is that all these deals have fallen apart. I have no better evidence of that than the panic-driven statement that was made by the then Chief Minister shortly after he took office - and I said publicly at the time that I did not envy him ...

Mr Tuxworth: I was panicking then.

Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed, as he just interjected, he was panicking then. I know he was because of the mess he inherited when he took over. I am not surprised that he intends to call his memoirs about his time as Chief Minister '400 days of Damage Control' because we know, and he knows, although it will never be said in here, that that is exactly the position that the government is in at the moment. Quite a number of government members are running around desperately trying to plug up the leaks. They are trying to put the best possible face on it so that they can con everybody out there and in here into believing that everything is under control. That con job will come to a halt eventually because the evidence in front of us indicates that everything is not under control. All we need to do is refer to that extraordinary statement made by the member for Barkly when he took over as Chief Minister, because it comprehensively confirmed the fears the opposition had expressed over the previous 12 months.

Mr Perron: Why don't you get on with your motion?

Mr B. COLLINS: For the benefit of the member opposite, I have moved the motion and I am speaking to it.

Mr Speaker, the difficulty was that we - accurately, I am afraid - predicted that the government's estimates, announced to us in the Assembly, on which we had based our support, had fallen apart.

Mr Coulter: We lost \$200m - that was your story.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I cannot be blamed, and I am not prepared to accept the blame, for headlines that occasionally appear in the Northern Territory News. I am interested in a far more rational and careful examination of these issues. In fact, I am confident that the motion will be supported because the opposition's role on the Public Accounts Committee will be precisely the same role that we have played on all committees of this Assembly since this parliament has had a parliamentary opposition.

When a member of the opposition has found that he could not operate within the proper constraints of the committee system and the way it is meant to operate, as happened on one occasion, that member had enough honesty and integrity to resign from the committee and be replaced by another member. He did that because he felt that he could not operate in a way that constrained his activities as a shadow minister.

Mr Speaker, I really would like to get on with speaking to the motion ...

Mr Perron: Well, get on with it.

Mr B. COLLINS: ...if this constant barrage of nonsense from the other side would stop.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Arafura will be heard in silence.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has canvassed a number of matters that should be of concern to everyone. He talked about the continually changing story, the cards that are being laid on the table one at a time. We all know the inadequacy of the Treasury documents. It has been canvassed many times before. The Public Accounts Committee of this parliament is set up under similar terms of reference to those of other parliaments. They are set up in order to overcome that difficulty and to examine the accounts in further detail. As members opposite know, the PAC is able to call for persons and papers so that the real story behind these developments can come out. It should not have to come out through successive budgets, each grudgingly admitting that a new crisis has occurred and another \$10m of public money has had to be shovelled in to shore up another hole that suddenly appeared.

I would point to an absurdity in a statement made by the Treasurer which simply confirms our fears. He waved a press release which said that \$10m had been put into the Alice Springs Sheraton hotel, as so-called equity, to reduce the regular payments that the Northern Territory government has to make to shore up the operation. We have no argument with that. It is precisely what we said would occur. It is what happened with Yulara. The reality is, and the Treasurer did not need to confirm it, that the interest bill on the borrowings for the Alice Springs Sheraton is crippling. You do not need to be a financial whiz to work it out.

Mr Coulter: How much is it then?

Mr B. COLLINS: The Treasurer says: 'How much is it then?' He has condemned himself out of his own mouth once again because we asked that question and we are still waiting for an answer ...

Mr Coulter: We will get it

Mr B. COLLINS: ...from the man who was responsible and refused to accept that responsibility. The Treasurer of the Northern Territory will get it, he says. Well that is fine. In that case, I am confident at least of the Treasurer's support for this motion. Mr Speaker, information on questions about serious financial matters should not be provided in this Assembly by way of interjection during debate.

Mr Coulter: I just want to quote the statement.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will contain his comments until he wishes to respond.

Mr B. COLLINS: Indeed, the Treasurer will be able to respond in this debate in a minute. The fact is, and the Treasurer knows it, if he could just keep silent for 10 consecutive seconds, that the government has nothing whatever to fear from this motion. It simply gives the Public Accounts Committee a matter of some substance to consider instead of paper shuffling. It is a matter of serious concern to residents of the Northern Territory. I have no doubt that the CLP's own research will confirm what ours has: that these matters are of concern to ordinary men and women in the Northern Territory.

The government has responded to these concerns by constantly changing its story. We were told that we would be putting X million dollars into Yulara. We predicted that that would blow out. The member for Barkly had to come and tell us, 12 months after the story changed in 1984, that it had collapsed in a very spectacular fashion indeed. No one was conned by the silly argument that the \$20m was used to buy the 'non-profit-making components of the development'. The non-profit-making components of the development were the staff housing, normally a responsibility of the employer, and the sewerage pipes. We knew that the \$20m was a much-needed injection of liquid capital required to keep that development viable.

Mr Coulter: You would ...

Mr B. COLLINS: Perhaps I could have the Treasurer's attention for just a moment as I am directing these remarks to him. His behaviour really does him no credit. In response to the interjection from the Treasurer, can I just say to him that, had we seen the mess, we would not necessarily have opposed the injection of that \$20m.

Mr Coulter: How do you know it was a mess?

Mr B. COLLINS: Because your own mouth told us it was a mess. The member for Barkly gave us a statement that was shattering in its implications. Obviously the Treasurer never referred to it. The member for Barkly said that, if certain financial transactions had not occurred in respect of the casino takeover which involved throwing away about \$4m of public money, then 'the overseas operators would have walked out on the deal'. If the Treasurer would like to refer to Hansard, that is exactly what the member for Barkly, the then Chief Minister, said. It came as no surprise to me because I had privately learned in discussions with the Pratts and Aspinalls management, that that is what they would have done. I had given an undertaking of confidentiality, and I never breached that. I had to keep that information to myself, because they told me a long time before the Northern Territory government had the courage to admit it publicly. It was forced to admit it publicly after a change of government.

Had the Northern Territory government insisted on extracting the amount the takeover cost it, Pratts and Aspinalls would have walked out. They had done their figures. They had worked out exactly how much the market would bear in terms of how much they could pay for the casinos and still make a profit. They were not prepared to pay a cent more. I was told that in Atlantic City and in London a long time before the government admitted it to the public. It took the member for Barkly, as the new Chief Minister, to finally admit it to the Assembly. He said that the operators indeed were in the process of considering walking away from the deal. Indeed, I confirmed

what the then Chief Minister said: that, if public money had not been shoved in very quickly, they would have departed. We would have been left in the horrendous position of having kicked out the only domestic casino operator with the considerable expertise required to run casinos, and then having lost the whiz kids we brought in from overseas. We would have been left with 2 casinos that we did not want, did not need, and did not know how to run.

I have some sympathy for the former Chief Minister, the member for Barkly. It was a mess. We had been saying publicly for some time that we feared that. But it took a crisis, Mr Speaker. Not the then Treasurer, not the budget documents ...

Mr Coulter: Can I stop listening now. That is a lot of garbage. Talk about the future. I am sick of living in the past.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, I am attempting to address myself to the motion, which is in reference to the PAC.

Mr Coulter: Talk about it then. Do not talk about what you did on your holidays a year ago.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr B. COLLINS: The evidence is that this Assembly with all its procedures for questions on notice, questions without notice and budget documents, has never produced that information. The government, through one continuing crisis after another, was finally forced to make those dramatic adjustments.

Who can forget - just to give one other brief example - the creation of Investnorth. I have talked to the people who had to put it together in 14 days, so do not tell me that it was a rational business decision or proper business practice. I am not saying it did not have to be done. I knew it had to be done, but do not tell me it is proper business practice to create a company out of thin air 14 days before the builders had to be paid simply because, if they had not received their money on 12 September, there would have been some horrendous payments to be made to them after that day.

I do not doubt that Investnorth had to be created, but can these people on the other side honestly tell anyone that it was proper practice? The mechanics that had to fix the engine had to work 24 hours a day and burn a lot of midnight oil, shoving that little deal together in a panic, before the Alice Sheraton could be retrieved from the hands of the people who built it, who had to be paid. We all know this. It is pointless for the government to keep saying: 'You get all the answers. You supported it in 1984; what are you complaining about now?'

What of the statements that were made about the Alice Sheraton? The former Chief Minister is on the public record recently saying that Investnorth would be making no investment in the Alice Sheraton at all. It was a brilliant move. It would save the taxpayers zillions of dollars, and this company would not have to invest any capital in the Alice Springs Sheraton.

Mr Tuxworth: No, I did not.

Mr B. COLLINS: It is in the statement. Refer to Hansard if you doubt it, and let us not try to kid ourselves that Investnorth is not doing it from the public purse. Now, a short time after, we have a situation where it has had to plough in \$10m which was never contemplated - and the government cannot

deny it - at the time the original statements were made in here about likely financial exposure in terms of the Alice Springs Sheraton.

I confidently predict, and I need to know in reference to the motion, as the people need to know, that the potential exposure of public money in the Darwin Sheraton, over the time that the agreement is in place, could be in excess of \$30m. I would like to find out, not by reading Treasury documents which do not indicate this, whether or not the people of the Northern Territory are getting a fair return from their investment. The investor puts in \$2.4m and obtains a loan for the rest, guaranteed by the NT government. The Northern Territory, on behalf of the taxpayers, then ploughs in another \$32m over the next 5 or 6 years, and we end up with nothing when an investor takes over the hotel.

We are not opposing development. That is the same cracked-record response we get every time we want to take up matters concerning the financial management of the government. Let me tell members opposite, for their benefit if they have not done the research, that that theme is looking a little thin and a little frayed around the edges to the people of the Northern Territory. We know that. Those people like the Sheratons, as we do. They like Yulara and the Beaufort, as we do. They would simply like to know how much those facilities are costing them, and they still do not know that. The Public Accounts Committee of this parliament exists for that purpose.

Mr Speaker, I have just had placed in front of me an amendment to be moved to my motion by the Chief Minister. I agree with it completely. I am pleased to see it here. I apologise to the government because that is my mistake. I do not have any philosophical argument with this amendment. I simply neglected to add it myself, as perhaps I should have done.

The purpose of PACs is not to consider the appropriateness or otherwise of government decisions or policies.

Mr Hatton: Are you in support of the amendment?

Mr B. COLLINS: Yes. It is a good idea.

Mr Coulter: Shellshock!

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, could we finish this in some sort of order?

I have just picked up by way of facial grimaces and nods and so on from the other side of the Assembly that the government intends to support this motion with the amendment which we will support. There is no need, therefore, to canvass the issues further.

Mr HATTON (Chief Minister): Mr Speaker, I move the following amendment to the motion before the Assembly. At the end of the motion add:

2. In considering this reference, the Public Accounts Committee shall not consider the appropriateness or otherwise of government decisions or policies.

Mr Speaker, as the member for Arafura has just said, that is to clarify the role of the Public Accounts Committee. From the tenor of the previous debate on the matter of public importance and the introduction to member for Arafura's speech on the motion, we were concerned that the opposition might be trying to start something we had feared for some time. We have been concerned

that the Public Accounts Committee, instead of doing the job which the opposition has advocated for years, might become a Star Chamber, an arena for witch-hunts. I am pleased to hear from the member for Arafura that he recognised that this amendment to the motion is appropriate and proper to ensure that the Public Accounts Committee will examine and identify the situation. Clearly that is the role of the Public Accounts Committee and, quite frankly, the government has no objections to it.

We are frankly sick and tired of the carping, harping and carrying-on by the opposition members. So many times, the government has stood up and presented evidence and information to this Assembly on what is occurring with contingent and actual liabilities. Of course, 6 months later, under a barrage of questions launched at us, more information came out. As has been said ad nauseam in this Assembly, and I am sure the community is as sick of hearing it as we are of saying it, circumstances have changed. There have been changes in interest rates, dollar values and international exchange rates. Economic circumstances have evolved which have changed the effects and the costs on government, as a consequence of agreements reached in 1984 and earlier when circumstances were very different from today.

I would be glad, as I am sure every member on the government side of the Assembly would be, to have this matter laid to rest. Let us hope that, for once, the opposition will accept that all the information is before it. Honestly, we do not have anything to hide. We have poured our souls out in this Assembly so many times.

When my predecessor, the member for Barkly, was Chief Minister, he stood up before the Assembly courageously, as the member for Arafura said, and put before it a picture that could hardly be described as one that painted the government in glowing terms. We spelled out for the community our contingent liabilities at that time, and it led to a barrage of questions over 12 months from the opposition. That was because we tried to be honest.

Certainly, situations have changed and are still changing, because negotiations are still proceeding as we work towards minimising the effects of those liabilities and contingencies on the Northern Territory community. We do not apologise for doing that; it is part of our job. We would have been very happy to conclude it 6 months ago, but negotiations are 2-sided. Indeed, they are often multi-sided. The process of reaching agreement does not depend only on 1 party. We do not apologise for moving down that road. We are working to minimise the impact of changed circumstances on the contingent and actual liabilities of the Northern Territory, and our government will be quite pleased to see this matter put to bed once and for all, to stop the muckraking and innuendo that seems to surround every discussion of these matters. At the conclusion of my statement, I propose to move a motion that this amended motion be put.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I just want to say a couple of words on this amended motion, principally to relate it to the role of the PAC. If I could refresh honourable members' memories, I will quote the Hansard of Wednesday 17 April, when the then Leader of the Opposition was speaking about the Public Accounts Committee. He said:

I will point out again that the members of the government in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly have a completely wrong perception of how the committee system works and the benefits that can flow from it. It is not a political tool, Mr Speaker.

We have just been subjected here to about 1 hour of debate on an MPI and on a motion. We have had 1 hour of abuse, innuendo and gross distortion, dragging up every political argument that we have heard repeatedly over some years. The member for Arafura is sitting there like a little angel confessing, trying to have us believe that he is really interested only in getting at the facts. I think that he is after blood. That is what the member for Arafura is after. I do not think that he appreciates that politics really belong on the floor of the Chamber and that PACs do not survive if they try to handle matters which are properly dealt with on the floor of the Chamber. I do not think that he is interested in actual or contingent liabilities of the government. I do not think that he is interested in the many figures and statements on the subject of actual and contingent liabilities which are available today in the many documents tabled in this Assembly over the past couple of years, and those that will be available shortly in the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statements for the last financial year. He has shown himself today to be uninterested in all of those. They have been distorted ad nauseam here today, and he turns around and says that the committee system is not to be used for political purposes.

I support the motion. The matter will be referred to the PAC. I look forward to the PAC accepting the motion and dealing with it, but I really do think that the member for Arafura has quite a lot to learn. Either that, or he will be a very short-term member of the PAC, because he is not interested in contingent liabilities. He is after someone's blood and that is all he has been after for about 3 years. Today, he has simply reinforced it throughout the last hour of garbage that we have been subjected to.

Mr B. Collins: It is really nice being threatened by the Chairman of the PAC.

Mr PERRON: Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, the member for Fannie Bay has disgraced himself on a number of occasions whilst I have been a member of this Assembly and today is a further example. The member for Fannie Bay has never understood the workings of this parliament and the workings of parliamentary committees. He has always harboured the belief that, if you happen to be the government of the day, you are not accountable to anybody. You can take decisions involving other peoples' money and you do not have to account for it. What we have heard just now is a continuation of this idiosyncratic approach by the member for Fannie Bay to the matters of government in the Northern Territory. He has added to it by threatening the member for Arafura before the matter gets to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr McCarthy: He is not that sensitive.

Mr SMITH: It does not matter whether the member for Arafura is that sensitive or not. The point is that the member for Fannie Bay is not sensitive at all to the traditions of this parliament and to the traditions of parliamentary committees as they have been established for more than 100 years, traditions which we are finally coming to grips with in the Northern Territory.

It is a dark day for the Parliamentary Accounts Committee, when the chairman of the committee can, in this Assembly, threaten one of its members before the committee even considers this important issue. I would like to make it clear that members of this opposition will not be cowed in the way that they go about their task on the Parliamentary Accounts Committee or any

other committee of this parliament, by the threats of the member for Fannie Bay. We have already agreed in good faith because, if it is not explicit in the terms of reference of the Public Accounts Committee, it is certainly desirable, that the actions and decisions of the government are not to be considered by the committee. We have agreed, in good faith, to accept the amendment proposed by the Chief Minister. What do we get in return? A mouthful of abuse from the member for Fannie Bay. As I have said, it is a dark day for this Assembly. I am frankly appalled by the comments made by the member for Fannie Bay, and I now propose to sit down to allow the member for Arafura to have his response, before the member for Fannie Bay leaves.

Mr B. COLLINS (Arafura): Mr Speaker, the member for Fannie Bay was best summed up for me the other day in a comment made by the member for Nhulunbuy. After I left the Chamber after announcing my resignation as leader, on what was not one of my better days, I heard that the member for Fannie Bay had made a number of remarks about me. The comment made by the member for Nhulunbuy, upon hearing those comments was 'bitter to the last'. That is a fair description of the member for Fannie Bay. Can I say to the member for Fannie Bay, in respect of those comments, that I would have been profoundly disappointed in him if he had not made them.

The member for Fannie Bay has a very fundamental approach to parliament and to providing information in parliament. He enunciated this on more than one occasion by saying in answers to questions that were giving him a hard time: 'You wait until you get into government. You can find out the answers when you get there'. The member for Fannie Bay does not have a great deal of respect for the conventions of the Assembly. I must say that, now that he is chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, we can look forward to some productive meetings.

In respect of the member for Fannie Bay's threat to get me before I even start on the committee, I would say to him that he just is not good enough. I can remember him becoming extremely upset with me when I seemed to get him one day. I think the debate concerned how to doctor your own gully in 6 easy lessons. He stormed out of the Chamber with a huff and a puff and did not speak to me for 12 months after that, for which I was extremely grateful. The member for Fannie Bay and I go back a long way. Having said all that, it really does not do him any credit to be standing here, as chairman of what I would consider to be one of the more important committees of the Assembly, issuing threats against one of its members even before there has been an opportunity for the matters to be considered.

I can assure honourable members that I will be behaving on the Public Accounts Committee in precisely the same way as I have behaved on all the committees of this parliament. I have a particular interest in how small parliaments can operate effectively. Small parliaments around the world have many things in common in terms of discussing the problems arising from a small number of members and infrequent sitting days. In order to turn this into a working parliament, we cannot use the sittings of the Assembly. There simply are not enough days. The only effective way of turning this into a working parliament, which will greatly benefit the people of the Northern Territory that we are elected to serve, is to enhance, expand and use, to its fullest extent, the committee system provided by the Westminster system of parliament. We all know the limitations of debate in here. We all know that politics is the business of this Chamber. I must admit that I was rather amused by the member for Fannie Bay when he castigated me for being highly political, as indeed I was during this debate, and stated that this is the place for politics rather than the committees of the parliament. That is precisely the

point that I was making. I am pleased the government has supported this motion ...

Mr Coulter: Was there ever a doubt?

Mr B. COLLINS: I will not answer that one!

I have no difficulty with the amendment although I believe it is not necessary. It is inherent in the committee system of the parliament that committees do not canvass or consider the appropriateness of government policy. That is why I did not bother mentioning it in the motion. However, I have no difficulties in accepting it.

I can assure members of the Assembly that it will come as some relief to the citizens of the Northern Territory that this matter will be referred to the PAC because parliament is not an appropriate forum to examine matters in the detail that this requires. I think that the government will be doing everyone in the Northern Territory a favour. I have to place this on the record very carefully. Whilst I laud the aims of the former Everingham government in entering into those deals, they were not in the best interests of the Northern Territory. I make that comment in response to remarks made by the Treasurer. It is my considered view that those investments could and should have given a far better return to the people of the Northern Territory than they are getting at the moment. I know ...

Mr Perron: In the bright light of hindsight.

Mr B. COLLINS: It may be the bright light of hindsight as far as the government is concerned. I do not doubt that. However, the additional finances that were pumped into Yulara in a panic move, the additional finances that have just been pumped into the Alice Springs Sheraton in order to bring down the interest bill, were not hindsight on the part of the parliamentary Labor Party. Indeed, we predicted it.

Members interjecting.

Mr B. Collins: We all know why members opposite are screaming and carrying on like a bunch of 5-year-olds. It is because they know how serious the situation is with these deals.

Mr Manzie: You are like a bloody pre-schooler.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable Attorney-General will withdraw that remark.

Mr Manzie: I withdraw, Mr Speaker.

Mr B. COLLINS: Mr Speaker, it is time to conclude the debate. This is not because I do not want to canvass the other 4 issues that I want the Public Accounts Committee to consider. It is because of that interjection from the Attorney-General, and the disgraceful behaviour of other members in this Assembly over the last hour. In order to enhance and preserve the image of the Northern Territory government, it is time that this debate was terminated.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

TABLED PAPER
Annual Report and Financial Statements of TIO 1985-86

Mr HANRAHAN (Business, Technology and Communications): Mr Speaker, in accordance with section 33 of the Territory Insurance Act, I present the annual report and financial statements of the Territory Insurance Office 1985-86.

It is very pleasing to be able to announce to this Assembly a continuing improvement in the TIO's financial performance. The office made an overall profit of \$7.3m in 1985-86, compared with a profit of \$2.8m in the preceding year. This profit comprised \$1.5m on general insurance operations and \$5.7m under the motor accidents compensation scheme.

In general insurance, the office continued to experience the effects of run-off of now cancelled reinsurance treaties. However, these effects are now declining. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that it will be some years yet before the full effects of this business are worked out of the TIO's accounts. The profit recorded on general insurance has enabled the TIO to reduce its accumulated past losses on the general insurance fund from \$6.8m to \$5.2m.

A profit of \$5.7m was recorded by the Motor Accidents Compensation Scheme for 1985-86 compared with the loss of \$2.4m last year. An important reason for this continued improvement was the amendments that were made to the act in 1984. These had the effect of removing the right to sue at common law for pain and suffering sustained in motor vehicle accidents. I remind some members of the opposition that, at that time, they criticised this amendment and expressed doubts that it would actually make the scheme viable.

The chairman's report draws attention to the reduction in accumulated past losses from \$6.7m at the beginning of the year to an amount of \$993 000 at 30 June 1986. The results announced in this year's TIO report indicate that this government was right in the action it took in 1984 and indeed they are a vindication of the entire strategy adopted in 1979 to establish a no-fault scheme for the Territory. There is continued confidence that the scheme can be operated viably. However, we will need to continue to maintain a close watch on rates of contributions and levels of benefits. Only when there are genuine, underlying improvements in the viability of the scheme can we afford to provide more generous benefits. In fact, we believe there have been underlying improvements in the scheme's viability and, accordingly, the government has already moved to improve benefits.

Amendments now passed by the Assembly will result in increasing the levels of death benefits, benefits paid to surviving children and dependent parents, and will remove distinctions between benefits paid to males and females. Still further improvements are under examination and further amendments may occur later in 1986-87 to ensure that Territorians receive the benefit of the improvements of the scheme's profitability.

It is noted that the TIO continues to be a major investor in Territory development. Extensions to the TIO's Alice Springs office are complete, building at Palmerston is nearing completion and extensions to the TIO building in Katherine are to commence this year.

It is most pleasing to note the performance of the Territory Insurance Office for 1985-86. The board, management and staff of the office are to be congratulated. The results show that the recovery, begun in 1984-85, is being

sustained and will enable the TIO to continue to make a valuable contribution to Territory development. I move that the Assembly take note of the report.

Debate adjourned.

TABLED PAPER

Review of Financial Assistance to the Northern Territory

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I table a paper entitled Review of Financial Assistance Paid to the Northern Territory 1983-84, 1984-85.

Mr Speaker, as I foreshadowed in my budget speech, I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the current review by the Commonwealth Grants Commission of levels of financial assistance paid to the Northern Territory in 1983-84 and 1984-85. This is the article that I referred to in the budget speech. It is of concern that the Commonwealth has seen fit to alter its treatment of payments to the Northern Territory in its budget papers this year and, in particular, to devote 2 pages to the retrospective review of the Territory's funding while the matter is before the Grants Commission. I believe it is therefore of considerable importance that the Territory's position be placed on the public record.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Deputy Speaker, during the course of the previous debate, I quoted the member for Arafura as saying that the gas pipeline was 'a lunatic proposal' for the government. The member for Arafura denied that he had ever said that. If you check the Hansard tomorrow, I am sure that denial will be recorded in Hansard. I am sure the transcript I have available to me can be checked with Channel 6. It is of the 6.30 pm news on Monday 16 April 1984. I would like to read the transcript into Hansard for the public record. In fact, the honourable member for Arafura did say that the gas proposal was a lunatic idea.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I do not think the personal explanation so far complies with the requirements of standing orders. I suggest you raise it during the adjournment debate, Barry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the Treasurer make his point in relation to his personal statement. Otherwise perhaps he could do it in the adjournment debate. There is no point of order.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I did not want to go on the public record as misleading this Assembly. I was told, by way of interjection from the member for Arafura, that he did not say it. I have a transcript of that particular news broadcast. I wish to place it on the public record that the member for Arafura did in fact say what I said he said. The transcript is from the 6.30 pm news on Channel 6 on Monday 16 April 1984:

Mr Collins today attacked what he described as the government's dramatic change of plans on the source of power for Darwin's Channel Island Power-station. He told Mike Dalton that the natural gas option was damned by NTEC's own report.

Mr Collins: 'They are now talking about constructing a pipeline from Palm Valley to Darwin. Now, let me assure you that the information that I have got from the gas industry itself is that, apart from

being a ludicrous proposal in any case, that if they get the gas at the end of the pipeline for nothing, which of course is not going to happen, that if they get it at no cost, it will still not justify the expense of this proposal. The power-station has been sited on Channel Island specifically because the government has made a decision based on its own NTEC's recommendation, that coal should be the source. It has been located at Channel Island for that reason, for the port facilities, and I understand in fact that tenders have already been let for the construction of the port facilities to bring coal in. It is an absolutely lunatic proposal the government is putting up and I cannot understand the justification for it'.

NATIONAL TRUST (NORTHERN TERRITORY) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 217)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr DALE (Community Development): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The National Trust of Australia (Northern Territory) was established by legislation in 1976. At that time, the trust membership was divided into northern and southern regions, reflecting the predominance of the 2 main population centres of Darwin and Alice Springs. However, during recent years, the trust has increased its membership to over 650. Its activities and membership outside the main centres have also increased. For example, the trust has been very active in Borroloola, Pine Creek, Tennant Creek, Timber Creek and Katherine, managing historic properties in each of those centres. The Council of the National Trust feels that, with this geographical spread of activity, it is no longer appropriate to structure the Trust according to 2 regions. A system of branches currently exists within the trust as established by the rules. It is now appropriate for the branches to become the basis of the structure of the trust.

Mr Speaker, clauses 4, 5 and 6 provide for the replacement of regions and regional committees with branches and branch committees. Clause 7 constitutes the council of the trust to reflect the new structure based on branches rather than regions. The council will have at least 1 member of each branch and there is a maximum of 18 branches permitted. The previous requirement for alternation of the office of president of the trust and chairman of the council between the chairmen of the regional committees is replaced by an annual election by council members.

Clause 10 removes the rules of the trust as a schedule to the principal act. The inclusion of the schedule within the principal act results in a confusing situation since the rules as printed in the schedule may not reflect the actual rules of the trust at the current time. The removal of the schedule from the principal act does not affect the power of the trust to make or amend rules, nor of the Legislative Assembly to disallow rules or amendments. This provision simply allows the trust to ensure that no confusion exists about the state of the rules.

Mr Speaker, this bill will facilitate the efficient management of the trust as requested by its council, and will more accurately reflect the actual organisation of the trust. These changes will assist the National Trust in undertaking its very worthwhile role of managing a number of important heritage places within the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the Assembly.

Debate adjourned.

STATUTE LAW REVISION BILL
(Serial 216)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The Statute Law Revision Act 1985 not only carried out its traditional task of making minor corrections and improvements in the Territory's home-produced legislation, but also repealed, lock, stock and barrel, 871 acts and ordinances of the State of South Australia, which were technically in force here but which were of no practical effect.

The bill that I now move is similarly 2-pronged: it makes a small number of minor corrections and improvements, and these are so minor and so technical that it would seem inappropriate for me to offer detailed explanations at this stage. Also, it takes the shrugging off of South Australian legislation a stage further.

The 1985 operation left 95 South Australian acts still in force in the Territory, and these have been, or are being, closely examined. 2 of the 95 - an Arbitration Act of 1981 and an Insecticides Act of 1910 - have been repealed and replaced by Territory legislation. In schedule 3, this bill lists 26 further acts that are considered fit for repeal without replacement.

Mr Speaker, the 26 new candidates for repeal may be summarised as follows. 10 relate to friendly societies, which are not in business in the Territory. 15 are private acts of the last century which relate to bodies that the Statute Law Revision Committee is satisfied, after consultation with the Crown Solicitor in Adelaide, are now defunct. The odd man out is the Homing Pigeon Act 1905, which has been researched in detail by the committee and seems to serve no useful purpose today.

As in the past, because of the technical nature of the bill, I invite honourable members who have queries or need further explanations, to raise them or seek them from the Parliamentary Counsel who would be happy to assist. I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

FUTURES INDUSTRY (APPLICATION OF LAWS) BILL
(Serial 219)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of this bill is to implement the Northern Territory's obligation under the National Companies and Securities Scheme, to apply the Futures Industry Act 1986 of the Commonwealth to the Territory. As honourable members will recall, the Territory joined the National Companies and Securities Scheme on signature of the formal agreement on 28 January 1986.

Legislation to implement the Territory's initial legislative obligations commenced operation in the Territory on 1 July 1986, and there is now a mechanism to secure uniformity of laws and administration with respect to companies and securities throughout the Northern Territory, all states, and the Australian Capital Territory.

Following the unanimous approval by the Ministerial Council for Companies and Securities, which includes a representative of the Northern Territory, the Futures Industry Act 1986 was recently enacted by the Commonwealth parliament and proclaimed to commence operation on 1 July 1986. The act takes into account submissions from interested parties on 2 exposure draft Futures Industry Bills made public in 1984 and 1985.

The need for regulation of the futures industry within the context of the cooperative scheme has been recognised by the Committee of Inquiry into the Australian Financial System, the Campbell Committee, and the Sydney Futures Exchange. As honourable members may be aware, a futures contract is an agreement to either buy or sell a specified quantity and quality of a commodity at some definite time in the future at a fixed price.

Experience with the administration of the New South Wales Futures Market Act and the manner in which some non-members of the Sydney Futures Exchange promoted and conducted their business, and the failure of some futures brokers, indicated the need for Australia-wide legislation dealing with the licensing of brokers, conduct of business, and trading conducted through overseas futures exchanges and market manipulation. There were seen to be major deficiencies in the regulatory structure due to the existence of unregulated brokers, leading to inadequate levels of investor protection and also a lack of statutory provisions to support the anti-manipulative activities of the futures exchanges.

The Campbell Committee's report, which was strongly in favour of deregulation of the Australian financial system, recommended that futures exchanges should be subject to an approach to regulation comparable to that applying to stock exchanges; namely, a co-regulatory approach which essentially involves a framework under which the exchanges are responsible for enforcing requirements set out under the legislation although government authorities have responsibility for approving and requiring changes to the articles and business rules of exchanges. This is the approach that has been adopted in the futures industry legislation. That is why the legislation has been approved by all states and the Commonwealth, which increasingly accept the need for business deregulation.

The act provides for a scheme of regulation in the futures industry throughout Australia, and includes provisions concerning: the inspection and investigation of reports, records and books related to futures contracts; the constitution and functions of a futures consultative committee; the establishment of futures markets, futures exchanges, clearing houses and futures associations; licensing of futures brokers, futures brokers' representatives, futures advisers and futures advisers' representatives; the conduct of futures business; futures brokers' accounts of audit of books; the establishment and administration of fidelity funds; offences which include a prohibition of dealings by insiders in futures contracts relating to securities; futures market manipulation; false trading and market rigging; false or misleading statements; fraudulently inducing a person to deal in futures contracts; the dissemination of information about illegal transactions and fraud in connection with dealings in futures contracts; and fees payable to the Commissioner for Corporate Affairs, the National Companies and

Securities Commission and the Ministerial Council for Companies and Securities in connection with administration of the legislation.

The Commonwealth legislation is expressed to apply only in the ACT and, in the usual way under the cooperative scheme, will not apply in a state or the Northern Territory unless each jurisdiction enacts legislation to apply to Commonwealth legislation in that jurisdiction. I am advised that New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia have already enacted enabling legislation adopting the Commonwealth legislation, and that the other states intend to enact their legislation soon. Failure by a party to legislate within 6 months to apply legislation enacted by the Commonwealth under the scheme would be a breach of a party's obligation under the scheme, and provisions of the formal agreement could apply to terminate that party's membership of the scheme.

The bill therefore needs to commence operation in the Territory on or before 1 January 1987. Before the bill is enacted, it will need to be approved by a majority of the Ministerial Council for Companies and Securities which, as I said earlier, includes representatives of the Territory, all states and the Commonwealth. It is proposed to circulate the bill to all states and the Commonwealth for consideration prior to resumption of debate on the bill at the next sittings. As the bill mirrors the provisions in the equivalent legislation enacted or about to be enacted in the states, I do not expect any difficulties in obtaining the approval of the ministerial council. Despite the fact that the Northern Territory, like most states, does not have its own futures exchange, this legislation is still relevant to Territorians because futures tradings can be conducted by Territorians through futures brokers, futures brokers' representatives, futures advisers and futures advisers' representatives.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr DONDAS (Transport and Works)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 2 bills, the Water Supply and Sewerage Amendment Bill (Serial 213) and the Housing Amendment Bill (Serial 214) - (a) being presented and read a first time together and 1 motion being put in regard to, respectively, the second readings, the committee's report stages, the third readings of the bills together; and (b) the consideration of the bills separately in the committee of the whole.

Motion agreed to.

WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 213) HOUSING AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 214)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of these bills is to introduce into the Water Supply and Sewerage Acts specific provisions for a revised system of water billing and the introduction of multiple billing for water and sewerage services.

For a number of years, the water charge in the Territory has been formulated around the basic allowance of a set minimum charge and additional charges levied for consumption above this basic amount. It is also necessary to amend the Housing Act where this is inconsistent with the basis of the charges. Charges to apply from 1 July 1986 shall be based on actual consumption with no fixed basic charge allowance. Existing legislation was framed around the concept of a basic charge and does not allow for any significantly different approach. To implement the new water tariffs and to provide a greater flexibility in formulating future tariff changes, the bill amends the Water Supply and Sewerage Act to remove the constraints of mandatory inclusion of a basic water charge. The bill also provides for the introduction of multiple billing for water and sewerage services, which hitherto have been charged on an annual basis. The facility to spread annual water and sewerage charges over more than 1 account will result in a more equitable distribution of charges throughout the year for the consumer along with a more even cash flow for the government. It will also facilitate merging of the meter reading and billing functions when the reorganisation of Water Division takes place.

The amendment to the Housing Act is necessary to remove the need for separate billing of basic water to the Housing Commission, and additional water to the tenant. With the abolition of basic and additional charges, this section is no longer relevant. The Housing Commission tenancy agreement provides that the tenant is responsible for all lawfully levied water rates.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bills.

Debate adjourned.

TAXATION (ADMINISTRATION) AMENDMENT BILL (Serial 206)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Taxation (Administration) Act to exempt from duty those hiring arrangement covering on-site caravans in caravan parks. The exemption is effected by amending the definition of 'hiring arrangements' to exclude these specific transactions. These vans provide an alternative form of low-cost accommodation. They are caught by the present provision of the act because of the special nature of caravans. In recognition of the fact that caravans used in this manner have largely lost their mobile character and are used to provide much-needed, low-cost accommodation, the government proposes this amendment. While the amount of revenue raised from this particular area is not large, the amendment, by relieving the taxpayer of both charge and administrative costs, will assist in keeping this accommodation available at a reasonable cost. It also places residents of caravan parks on the same footing as persons who occupy other residential accommodation.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

PAY-ROLL TAX AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 207)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The purpose of the bill is to provide a positive measure of support for the Australian Traineeship Scheme introduced by the Commonwealth government in 1985-86. The bill excludes wages paid by employers to persons engaged under the scheme for liability or payroll tax. Members will appreciate the importance of such schemes to the development of skills in Territory youth. The government supports the scheme and offers this concession as a very real incentive to employers to participate.

The amendment to section 20A of the act is necessary to enable regulations to be made to provide the intended relief in a manner similar to that already accorded wages paid to apprentices.

I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

COAL AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 225)

Bill presented and read a first time.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, I move that the bill be now read a second time.

This seeks to remedy a problem of definition. There is no definition of 'coal' in the Coal Act. This is not a problem peculiar to the Northern Territory. It was, and still is in some cases, typical of Coal Acts elsewhere in Australia. There is a need to clarify the definition by legislation because a dispute has arisen concerning the exploitation of peat. One party is claiming rights under the Coal Act and another is claiming them under the Mining Act. The government has determined that an applicant granted a coal permit in 1983 for a specific purpose, exploring for peat, is entitled now to develop the deposit discovered under that permit. A later applicant granted an exploration licence has claimed a right to mine the same peat deposit. This legislation seeks to avoid the recurrence of this situation in the future.

Members may be aware that peat is composed of organic material and may be considered as a very early stage in the formation of coal. To date, it has been assumed that the Coal Act covered this substance. The government has received legal advice that peat is not a mineral for the purpose of the Mining Act, and that it may not be covered by the Coal Act unless the substance is defined to be coal within the meaning of the legislation. The government has decided to introduce the amendment to remove any uncertainty. The amending bill introduces a definition of coal which is comprehensive and will allow the exploitation of peat.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SILICOSIS AND TUBERCULOSIS (MINE-WORKERS AND PROSPECTORS) AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 227)

Bill presented and read a first time.

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

The Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-workers and Prospectors) Act first came into effect in 1966. The act provides a form of protection for mineworkers and prospectors against silicosis and tuberculosis. This is achieved through the act's requirement for persons working and residing in areas of silicosis risk to undergo medical examinations on a regular specified basis.

The act also provides for pre-employment medical examinations for persons wishing to work in areas which are considered areas of silicosis risk. However, in view of current medical findings, it is considered necessary that the frequency of the required medical examinations, which include annual x-rays, be reduced to minimise the possible radiation hazard to persons required to undergo such examinations. The bill will achieve this by providing the Chief Medical Officer with a discretionary power to determine the interval between these examinations. Such intervals will be set after careful examination of dust exposure levels currently being experienced by mineworkers.

Concern has been expressed in relation to those persons who are actually required to undergo examinations. Presently, a person either working or residing on or near a mine has been subject to the provisions for examination. This has meant that some people who are clearly not at risk have been required to have annual x-rays unnecessarily. The bill will rectify the situation by amending the definition of an area of silicosis risk to those areas declared as such under the Mines Safety Control Act. This will ensure that only those workers genuinely at risk will be required to be examined.

The definition of 'medical officer' is also amended. This amendment will allow the Chief Medical Officer to delegate his functions under the principal act to a medical practitioner who is not employed by the Northern Territory Public Service. This will enable him to utilise suitable qualified practitioners, when the appropriate expertise is not available from within the public service.

I believe that these amendments will upgrade the current Silicosis and Tuberculosis (Mine-Workers and Prospectors) Act to meet with the current changes in industrial health needs, and allow flexibility to the act which, until now, has proved to be restrictive.

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to honourable members.

Debate adjourned.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Mr COULTER (Treasurer)(by leave): Mr Speaker, I move that so much of standing orders be suspended as would prevent 5 bills, the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission Bill (Serial 226), the Liquor Amendment Bill (Serial 224), the Lotteries and Gaming Amendment Bill (Serial 223), the Totalisator Administration and Betting Amendment Bill (Serial 221) and the Racing and

Betting Amendment Bill (Serial 222), passing through all stages at this sitting.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, the opposition intends to oppose this motion for urgency on these bills. The principal reason for that is not because we have difficulty in understanding the bills in front of us. Indeed, the minister has offered me a briefing on the matter, although there is no need for a briefing. The bills are very clear in what they intend to do and they ably reflect the changes that the minister seeks.

We feel that, because of the consequences, particularly with the Liquor Commission and its responsibilities under the Liquor Act being incorporated with Racing and Gaming and the TAB, this will certainly affect the public perception of the role of the Liquor Commission. The consumption of alcohol is certainly a big problem for the Northern Territory and all of its residents. We believe the monitoring of the sale of liquor deserves the full attention of a single commission. However, in order to test public reaction on this matter, we believe these bills should not be given urgency, and that they should be left until the next sittings so that members of the public may assess the consequences and express their perceptions of what these changes will do. As I say, the very nature of the problem which liquor has caused in the Northern Territory definitely requires that these changes be considered more broadly and be given a more public airing.

Mr EDE (Stuart): I was expecting someone from the government to defend the seeking of urgency for this motion. It is quite incredible that the government is going to proceed with urgency on something as important as these bills. If members opposite would keep silent for a moment, I will explain to them that obviously they do not realise the importance of what they are doing here.

Mr Dale: They know not what they do, is that it?

Mr EDE: That is correct. You know not what you do. But, for you, that is a fairly standard condition.

Mr Speaker, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, there are many facets of these particular bills that need to be looked at. First of all, we have yet to find anything about the actual cost savings that the minister says will occur through the amalgamation of these 2 functions. We have not been provided with any evidence that functions will be carried out more effectively or more efficiently. We have simply received a bald statement. I know of no studies that have been done and certainly no results have been tabled in this Assembly. Neither do we know whether the amalgamation will perform the actual function of raising finances any more efficiently than before.

If it were simply a matter of finances, it might be possible, as an earlier interjector said, to trust the members opposite. I might be prepared, on the balance, to believe, *prima facie*, that the amalgamation of a number of functions into 1 function would save enough funds to justify ...

Mr FIRMIN: A point of order, Mr Speaker. The member for Stuart is not addressing the urgency motion. In my view, he is addressing the bills.

Mr SPEAKER: As long as the honourable member links his remarks to the proposed suspension of standing orders, he is in order.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I am seeking to demonstrate to this Assembly that the import of these bills is such that urgency should not apply. It is not a matter which can be effected in 1 sittings. It needs to go out to the people who will be affected by the amalgamation. As members of this Assembly, we need to place this legislation on the notice paper, as we do with the majority of the legislation that passes through this Assembly, to allow time for public comment from the various groups in the liquor industry in the racing and gaming industry, in the legal industry and from people involved with alcohol rehabilitation and so on.

By tying the various pieces of legislation together, we are changing the actual direction of the legislation as it existed. Previously, when the 2 bodies were separate, there was at least some hope that social factors could be taken into account. We all know that, as well as being good revenue raisers, gambling and alcohol both contribute very substantially to the social ills that exist in the Northern Territory. More than 50% of the people in our hospitals are there because of abuse of alcohol and alcohol-related trauma.

Mr Coulter: What are we aiming for? Prohibition?

Mr EDE: I will make that point in the actual debate.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Stuart is straying from the motion for a suspension of standing orders. His remarks must be relevant.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, I will make those points in the actual debate, but I would like to point out to the minister that it would be more appropriate, in terms of the democracy we hope to foster in our build-up towards statehood, that he treat the Assembly and the people of the Northern Territory with the dignity and consideration that they deserve. That can be achieved by allowing this legislation to lie on the table for a sufficient period of time for people to look at the various factors involved. We shall return here in a month's time, which I am very happy about, and that will allow enough time for people to discuss these issues. We can decide then whether we are to pass or reject this legislation.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I would like very briefly to place a few words on the record in the context of this seeking of urgency.

Mr Dondas: But suppose we do not hold that sittings?

Mr BELL: I reserve my major comments in relation to this bill for the second-reading debate, but in response to the interjection from the member for Casuarina ...

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will refer to the minister properly.

Mr BELL: He has so many portfolios that it is rather difficult. The Minister for Lands, Transport and Works ...

Mr SPEAKER: That will suffice.

Mr BELL: In response to the interjection from the minister, I would point out that this piece of legislation was introduced into this Assembly only yesterday. The opposition has had barely 24 hours to give it consideration. People in the community who may have strong feelings in relation to this legislation, as the opposition has, have had less than 24 hours to give it consideration.

Mr Firmin: You are not allowed to say that.

Mr BELL: I will instruct the member for Ludmilla about my concerns in that regard during the second-reading debate.

All I wish to do at this stage is to place on record my concern at what I perceive as a contempt for the legislative process, represented by the manner in which these bills have been put forward. I really wonder why, and I suspect the government of less than honourable motives, it needs to rush legislation through in this way.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, I rise to support the urgency motion. I think what has been said by the opposition members shows that they have not read the bills, have not listened to what has been said, and have not listened to the contents of the second-reading speech.

Members opposite obviously read the newspapers, and they would be aware that it was announced publicly on 14 July that the administrative arrangements were to be made in order that the Liquor Commission and racing, gaming and the lotteries were to be combined under one administrative umbrella.

This morning, the great pretender, the Leader of the Opposition, actually stated that if he ever came to power, he would be making changes to the public service so that all administration would be under 1 roof. However, as soon as this government announces, as we did 6 weeks ago, that we will make some changes to increase efficiency and spend less of the taxpayers' money in the area of public administration - to be exact, in the area of racing, gaming and liquor, where administrative functions are to be combined - we are greeted by this terrible outcry: 'Oh dear, oh horror! The government is trampling over the rights of the opposition and pushing things through the Assembly, and we do not know anything about it'. Mr Speaker, I think it is absolutely shameful that a few hours ago the Leader of the Opposition was talking about Labor Party ...

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): A point of order, Mr Speaker! The minister is straying from the subject under debate. Any reasonable assessment of the minister's speech would show that he is no longer speaking on the urgency of the motion.

Mr SPEAKER: The Attorney-General will direct his remarks to the proposed motion.

Mr MANZIE: As I was pointing out, Mr Speaker, urgency is required in order for this government to enact this legislation during these sittings so that we can put into practice a money-saving administrative process that was actually advocated by the Leader of the Opposition today.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): Mr Speaker, this is simply an administrative arrangement that was announced by the Chief Minister on 14 July. For the reasons that the opposition has spoken about, we are seeking urgency. It is vital to implement those administrative arrangements so that the actions affected by those arrangements, in particular those of the Liquor Commission, can be carried out according to the wishes of the Northern Territory government. It is of vital concern to the community that the Liquor Commission, the Racing and Gaming Commission and the TAB are administered as the government outlined in its administrative arrangements on 14 July. The Liquor Commission has to grant new licences to sell liquor, renew existing licences, grant special licences, hear objections, conduct investigations and

inspect licensed premises. We need the legislation in place so that we can carry out the administrative orders of 14 July. We need it for the very reasons that members opposite have argued today. This government is endeavouring to provide more effective and more efficient administrative services for Northern Territorians.

I object to the member for MacDonnell's assertion that we are rushing this through without any consultation with members opposite. In fact, I have had a very good working relationship with the shadow spokesman on racing and gaming, in particular when he was the opposition spokesman for community development. I can assure the member for MacDonnell that I have offered the services of officers of the relevant department to brief members.

Mr Ede: We know what it does.

Mr COULTER: We are not changing what it does. We are changing the way the administrative services are carried out. We are not making any changes to the Liquor Commission as such. I object to the matter of urgency not proceeding.

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 McCarthy
Mr Manzie
Mrs Padgham-Purich
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Setter
Mr Steele
Mr Tuxworth
Mr Vale

Mr Bell
Mr Ede
Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Leo
Mr Smith

Motion agreed to.

RACING GAMING AND LIQUOR COMMISSION BILL
(Serial 226)
LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 224)
LOTTERIES AND GAMING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 223)
TOTALISATOR ADMINISTRATION AND BETTING
AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 221)
RACING AND BETTING AMENDMENT BILL
(Serial 222)

Continued from 27 August 1986.

Mr LEO (Nhulunbuy): Mr Speaker, because of the passage of the previous motion, the opposition has no choice but to oppose these bills at this stage. The real concern we have with these matters is not that they are technically correct or incorrect. In fact, as I said, they do what they set out to do very well and very clearly. They establish a Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission. There are many people in the Northern Territory who have been concerned about the consequences of alcohol abuse for many years. While the Liquor Commission was attached to the Department of Health, there was a clear perception by those people that the social dynamics of alcohol abuse were being addressed by health and medical authorities. The Drug and Alcohol Unit travels around the Northern Territory and its role within the social life of the Northern Territory is profound. We all hope that, in the passage of time, it will be very successful.

When a very important aspect of the control of the consumption of alcohol is moved to the Treasury, the community will perceive that the only interest that the Northern Territory government has in liquor is the raising of taxes. What else can anybody believe when the functionaries who administer that act are moved from the Department of Health to the Treasury. There is very little else that one could conclude from that. If any member believes that the sole purpose of the Liquor Act is to raise finance for the Northern Territory government, he should agree with this wholeheartedly. However, I do not believe that that is the only role of the Liquor Commission. It is not about raising finances; it has a much more important social function. That important function is to try to control alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory.

Mr Speaker, you must agree that 24 hours is not a sufficient period to gauge the reaction of other community interests in this matter. However, we believe there will be a perception in the community that the Northern Territory government does not recognise that very onerous social responsibility inherent in the control measures of the Liquor Act, which the Liquor Commission is obliged to administer. In very precise terms, that is the opposition's sole objection to the passage of this legislation.

We believe that it is a very important matter. We would have been far happier had we been able to talk to people involved with this monstrous social problem in the Northern Territory. Unfortunately, we have not had the time to do that and that is why we must oppose the legislation.

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, I have not taken a close interest in this matter but, because there has been such objection to it by members opposite, I thought I would say a few words. My understanding is that, under the proposed arrangements, the responsibility for alcohol rehabilitation will remain with the Department of Health, and rightly so. I do not think that anyone would argue that that role should be undertaken by any other department.

The Liquor Commission has a social role inasmuch as it considers community views and objections in respect of particular applications for liquor licences. I do not see any reason whatsoever why the administrative structure indicated here cannot continue to give due consideration to matters placed before it, as it always has. Whether the Liquor Commission is responsible to the Liquor and Gaming Commission, as it will be, or responsible to the Minister for Health or the Treasurer seems to be quite irrelevant to the performance of its functions. Its functions are spelt out in legislation and people are appointed to do the job. It seems to me that members opposite are just nitpicking. We are talking basically about administrative arrangements

for statutory functions which will be vested in certain persons to carry out. To the extent that those responsibilities are not carried out well, I am sure that honourable members will raise them in the Assembly as they come to their attention from time to time. I support the bills.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, over the last few years, we have seen a gradual but increasing erosion of this government's commitment to sobriety in the Northern Territory. The administration of the Liquor Act has moved from the Department of Health to another department, and now it will go to Treasury. The various groups within the bureaucracy are allocated to the department which has the prime function. It is a matter of how you perceive the mix of those various functional groups. For example, Water Resources has moved around various departments over the years, according to how people perceived the mix of its functions. It has a community development function, it has a mines and energy function and it has a transport and works function. You place a mixed group like that in the department under the minister whom you see as having the prime administrative function for the group.

There are numerous other examples I could use. In another country, I recall that, at one time, local government came under a constitutional development group within what was the equivalent of our Chief Minister's Department. People saw the development of local government in that country as being an integral part of the development of the constitutional framework. We do not see it in that light. We see it as part of a community development process and, therefore, it is placed under the Department of Community Development.

What has happened is that the government has changed the slant on how it sees the Liquor Commission, by moving it from a body whose primary function is that of health, to Treasury, whose main function is related to revenue-raising. As I was saying earlier, I am yet to be convinced that combining the functions will improve cost-effectiveness and efficiency. I am prepared to accept that, but I am not prepared to accept that the social factors involved have been given sufficient weight in this decision.

There are enormous social and financial costs involved in the abuse of alcohol in our society. There are the same social and financial costs involved in gambling. We have always believed that the Liquor Commission's functions are to consider the social aspects of decisions about the number of liquor outlets, liquor trading hours and all the other matters related to the high consumption of alcohol. In combining the regulation of liquor with that of racing and gaming, there will be a particular prime function of the Liquor Commission. It is not likely that the balance will be weighted towards sobriety when the Liquor Commission is under the same umbrella as an authority which is responsible for racing and gaming.

As I have said before in this Assembly, when you bring groups together, you create a dynamic relationship between them. They tend to get together and pursue a particular direction. You should not place groups which have diametrically opposed reasons for existence in the same functional unit. You put them into a unit where they will be most compatible in terms of their reasons for existence. The amalgamation of these functions breaches that particular bureaucratic principle.

As I said earlier, alcohol abuse accounts for something like 50% of the total trauma-related inmates of hospitals in the southern region. I know about that very well. I have looked at the various legal and associated costs, and I am told that 80% to 90% of the people involved in criminal cases

have alcohol as the basic cause. There are additional costs for rehabilitation, and that was raised in question time this afternoon. To the extent that the costs of all these problems are increased by this bureaucratic reorganisation, the attempted cost-saving will be offset. I am not going to go on at great length about this because it is very obvious that the government is unable to understand a basic conceptual point in public administration. I find it very unfortunate that ...

Mr Palmer: You are making about as much sense as ...

Mr EDE: Philosophical knowledge of that particular area does not appear to exist on the frontbench or, apparently, on the backbench, judging by the last remark. I believe that it would do a power of good if the government had somebody with some philosophical understanding of bureaucratic principles to apprise them fully of the implications of their decisions before they leap in in such an ill-considered way.

Mr HARRIS (Health): What a load of nonsense! Anyone would think the government is not interested at all in the rehabilitation of people who have problems with alcohol. No one is denying that there are very real problems in relation to alcohol. Members opposite know as well as we do that there are massive problems in relation to alcohol consumption in the Northern Territory, particularly in some of the isolated communities. The government is trying to address those problems and this bill does not change that. The member for Nhulunbuy, the opposition spokesman on the Liquor Commission, said that he has not had enough time to consider this. The opposition has known since 14 July that administrative changes were to be made. There are no changes to the actual act itself. You still have to go through a process to obtain a licence. The Liquor Commission will still be responsible for making sure that those matters are looked after. The Northern Territory government and also the Commonwealth government are spending massive amounts of money in combating drug abuse. Take the national drug offensive, for example, which we support.

In my answer to the opposition's question this morning and in the address-in-reply debate, I spelt out clearly what was happening in relation to the rehabilitation of people with alcohol-related problems. We are moving in the direction of early intervention. At the moment, there are no statistics that can be substantiated, but we are trying to obtain those, to find out how and why people finish up in hospital. We are also aiming at detoxification, and getting people back into the community. Nothing will change in relation to the way things occur. The government places a very real emphasis on rehabilitation generally and will continue to do so.

It is about time that the opposition realised that you have to consider all people in the Northern Territory. You cannot deny the right to drink to people who are drinking and acting responsibly. Goodness me, if the opposition had its way, it would stop all Territorians drinking. You have to be responsible in your direction. We are responsible. The Liquor Act spells out very clearly what is required of the commission. It is constituted by responsible people who perform their duty in a responsible manner. The Department of Health is implementing processes to help people who have alcohol and drug-related problems. We will continue to make sure that those people receive care and close attention to try and bring them back into society. For the opposition to put forward the view that the government is not interested in rehabilitation is a complete nonsense.

Mr Speaker, I support these bills.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Deputy Speaker, at no stage in this debate or any of the deliberations of this Assembly has the opposition tried to suggest that the government is entirely disinterested in rehabilitation. Quite to the contrary, we have adopted a bipartisan approach in respect of any debates concerning alcohol abuse and its attendant problems. The comments of the Minister for Health were extravagant in the extreme and scarcely worthy of consideration. His outrageous suggestion that the opposition seeks to prevent everybody in the Northern Territory from drinking alcohol was probably the only aspect of this debate that is actually laughable. I, for one, will not agree with that and I do not propose to show anybody my tab from the lounge to establish why.

Mr Dale: What are you laughing for, Neil?

Mr BELL: I am laughing because it is, as I said, the only risible aspect of this debate.

Seriously, the guts of our position is that what the government is proposing is functionally illogical. The Deputy Leader of the Opposition explained exactly why. There is so little in common between these 2 functions that they do not bear association. In his second-reading speech, the Treasurer said:

The racing and liquor industries have some common denominators. They are both revenue generators for government, both require regulation to ensure the orderly and fair collection of this revenue, both require inspectorial services to protect the public's interest. The creation of 1 commission to perform these functions would enhance the administrative efficiency of the Territory government.

Let us just go over that again. The common denominators are: firstly, they are both revenue generators; secondly, they both require regulation; and, thirdly, they both require inspectorial services to protect the public's interest and the public's investment. Are we going to include that? Let me see, a slightly

Mr Coulter: A good idea, I am glad you are making some contribution to this. We didn't think of that, you know.

Mr BELL: Well, goodness me, I suppose we can expect it at the very next sittings of the Assembly.

Mr Coulter: Be quick or we'll do it at this one.

Mr BELL: We still have a couple of hours. They might shoot this one in on us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it really is quite a narrow sort of basis on which to collect together 2 particular areas. For example, are we to see the Housing Commission linked with the Sacred Sites Protection Authority because they have some dubious connection? I am sure that the Territory government could find one at some stage and I suppose that we will be treated to some kind of legislation that ties those 2 bodies together.

I would not be doing the right thing by my constituents if I did not raise my concerns about this matter. I have spoken in this Assembly on many occasions about grog problems in my electorate. I have spoken about the very real human distress that is caused to all sorts of people as a result of the

difficulties that are experienced because of alcohol abuse amongst a section of that community. This occurs basically because there is a race of people whose association with alcohol has been relatively recent and whose view of the world is so totally different from that of the majority of society.

To put the deliberations in our small patch into an historical perspective, it is worth while looking at why liquor consumption has been controlled in western countries. We experience a situation in the Northern Territory where there is considerable alcohol abuse which does not affect only the Aboriginal community, but perhaps affects it more strongly and more deleteriously than it does the white community. This is not without historical precedent by any means. I draw the attention of honourable members to the circumstances surrounding the gin palaces of London. They were consequent on the Enclosure Acts of the late 18th century which had considerable impact on London as a result of the heavy consumption of alcohol by the rural dispossessed of England who converged on what Cobbett and Lamb referred to as 'the Great Wen'. I think that we should bear in mind the historical perspective on liquor legislation occasionally, and realise why it happens.

I appreciate that the drug and alcohol services instituted by the Northern Territory government, to its credit, in various places around the Territory, are to stay in place and that this legislation will not affect them. But to suggest that the deliberations of the Liquor Commission with respect to liquor outlets - whether they be on-licences or off-licences - is quite clearly a matter of considerable interest in social terms, not just revenue-raising terms, to the people of the Northern Territory.

In the time I have been in this Assembly I have seen the Liquor Commission moved from the Department of Health, and that is where I believe it is most appropriately placed. I see the Treasurer turning round there. He might get a lesson from the member for Fannie Bay who was the Treasurer, I believe, at the time when responsibility for the Liquor Commission was transferred from the Department of Health to the Treasury. At that time, I believed that it was a retrograde step. I cannot recall to what extent it was opposed.

Mr COULTER (Treasurer): A point of order, Mr Speaker! The member for MacDonnell is not speaking to the issue before the Chair. We are talking about a change to the management structure of the TAB, the Liquor Commission and the Racing and Gaming Commission. The functional statement of the Liquor Commission is not changed in any way by the legislation before us, and members opposite have wasted far too much time on this issue already.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member shall contain his remarks to the legislation.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, may I speak to the point of order?

Mr Deputy Speaker, with respect, I appreciate that the Treasurer is a relative new boy in here, but the fact of the matter is

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The period of time that the minister has spent in this Assembly is irrelevant. I will allow the member to speak to the point of order only.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, it would appear that, in the 2½ years that the member for Berrimah, the honourable Treasurer, has been in this Assembly, he has failed to learn what a second-reading debate is about. A

second-reading debate is supposed to be a broad-ranging discussion of the principles of a particular bill. I believe that I have established already that the interconnection of functions and the functions themselves are quite relevant to this particular debate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for MacDonnell will resume his seat. I have heard sufficient of his remarks concerning the point of order. I shall rule that there is no point of order, but I would ask the member for MacDonnell to confine his remarks directly to the bill.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do appreciate your wisdom in that regard. Where was I, before I was so rudely interrupted? I was referring to the extent to which the functions of the Liquor Commission and the decisions taken by the Liquor Commission apply in respect of social circumstances in which alcohol is consumed in the Northern Territory. Those circumstances bear a very strong relationship to the problems of alcohol abuse.

Without commenting on the pros or cons of a particular case, can I just draw the minister's attention to the recent publicity and controversy about the takeaway licence for the Gap Hotel in Alice Springs? I see the member for Flynn raising his eyebrows. It is in his patch. I am not going to express opinions one way or the other because the issues have been canvassed elsewhere. I raise it only to attempt to educate the Treasurer to an understanding that the social implications of the decisions of the Liquor Commission are important and ...

Mr Coulter: They will not be affected by this legislation.

Mr BELL: I hear the Treasurer's interjection. I hear him say that they will not be affected. But the plain fact of the matter is that there is bound to be less interest in those particular functions of the Liquor Commission when they are connected in an administrative structure with the Racing and Gaming Commission on the basis of their revenue-raising capabilities. I cannot stress my concern strongly enough and, for that reason, I am opposing this administrative reorganisation.

Finally, I want to respond to comments made by both the Attorney-General and the Minister for Health. Both of them chastised opposition speakers, including myself, because we had not read a newspaper report on 14 July.

Mr Finch: Like you did not read these bills.

Mr BELL: I will pick up that interjection. The plain fact of the matter is that, given the workload required of opposition members in order to try to keep members of this government half-way honest, it is just not possible to read legislation that is presented one day and passed the next. That is why the opposition opposed urgency for these bills.

To return to the point that I was making about the newspaper reports, I find it absolutely extraordinary that 2 ministers of this government can argue that the opposition ought to be on the ball and read the newspapers. We do. But, what an extraordinary approach to legislation in this Assembly! The opposition is asked to pass legislation concerning major structural change in the public service on the basis of a newspaper report. I think that we could have expected better. There was no formal communication from the government stating that it would seek urgency for this particular reorganisation. I really wonder why. What is it covering up and what possible reason can it have for associating these organisations in this way?

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Deputy Speaker, that last effort by the member for MacDonnell was unbelievable. It was an insult to the intelligence of members of this Assembly. It was an insult to the intelligence of the electorate of the Northern Territory at large. We had 20 minutes of diatribe without one single fact brought forward. All I will say was that it was almost akin to assault occasioning grievous bodily harm, and my ears are still suffering.

I want to speak briefly in reply to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's remarks in relation to these bills. It was obvious to anybody in this Assembly who has read this proposed legislation that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has not read the bills. He does not realise that we are talking about 2 commissions. The composition of the Racing, Gaming and Liquor Commission is provided for in subclause 5(1) which states that the commission, appointed by the minister shall consist of:

- (a) the chairman who shall be an employee within the meaning of the Public Service Act;
- (b) the chairman within the meaning of the Totalisator Administration and Betting Act;
- (c) a legal practitioner who has had not less than 5 years experience as a solicitor or barrister in the Territory or in a State or other territory; and
- (d) 6 other members.

Subclause 5(3) says that, for the purposes of the commission exercising its powers and performing its functions under the Liquor Act, it shall be constituted by the chairman and a legal practitioner appointed under subsection (1)(c). Subclause 5(4) talks about its functions under the Lotteries and Gaming Act, and states that it shall be constituted by the Chairman within the meaning of the Totalisator Administration and Betting Act. In other words, we are talking about 2 separate commissions. That is the same as it was before this legislation was introduced. There will be no change whatsoever except in administration.

All the Deputy Leader of the Opposition talked about was health and the nexus between health and the Liquor Commission. No one argues about the fact that people are destroying their health by abusing liquor in the Northern Territory but, equally, it is ridiculous to argue that the Liquor Commission must be connected to the Department of Health. In the context of that argument, let me point out that our prisons are full of people who abuse liquor. Given that, why should we not connect our Liquor Commission to the Correctional Services Division? It does not make sense ...

Mr Bell: You probably would; it's senseless enough.

Mr MANZIE: I shall say one last thing. The member for MacDonnell might listen and possibly the Leader of the Opposition might give him a kick in the ankle at the same time. The Leader of the Opposition said this afternoon, in reply to the Treasurer's budget, and I am sure he is ruing his words, that the opposition would consolidate administration in the Northern Territory. It would bring all public servants under the 1 umbrella. It was even speculated that he might have 1 giant typing pool in the Northern Territory. He would bring it all under the 1 umbrella to save costs and things would work very well. Now the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the member for MacDonnell

are already tearing down his great contribution to this Assembly. I shall say no more.

Mr COULTER (Mines and Energy): Mr Speaker, normally I would rise to thank members for their contribution to the debate but it is sad for me that I have to say that it has been a very sorrowful day on this side of the Assembly. My colleagues would agree with me that, if the level of political acumen displayed by the Northern Territory Australian Labor Party only enables it to string out an argument for this long about something so simple, the Northern Territory would be in big trouble if it was ever able to get into power, which we all realise will never happen.. Even as an opposition, it is not viable and it does not deserve respect and admiration. Members opposite are not prepared to come up with decent arguments. They cannot read legislation or even a newspaper, let alone be aware of announcements made in terms of administration orders.

In particular, the opposition spokesman on racing and gaming should have been aware of the proposed administrative rearrangements on 15 July, which was the day after they were announced by the Chief Minister. I would have thought he would have some mechanism in place to keep himself informed, as the opposition spokesman on these particular issues. As the Attorney-General said, the Leader of the Opposition today spoke about a factory-floor approach to administrative services, and combining everything together. Yet here we are wasting the time of the Assembly on a simple administrative order.

The functional statement of the Liquor Commission does not change one bit as a consequence of these amendments. Section 32(1)(d) of the Liquor Act states that the commission shall have regard to the needs and wishes of the community. The commission hangs its hat on this section to consider the social and other consequences of the issue of new licenses. The commission also has the philosophy of encouraging consumption of liquor in the surroundings and circumstances which minimise individual and or community problems flowing from that consumption, and works closely with all industry groups, including the liquor industry, to achieve this. The overwhelming philosophy behind the granting of new licenses is to better standards currently existing in the community and to ensure that the needs and wishes of the community are best served by the granting of new licences and other relevant decisions. That is not changed one bit by this legislation.

We have had to sit and listen to argument after argument about something that does not exist. That is the standard of the contribution of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition told us today that he would amalgamate administrative services, and then his colleagues said they would not amalgamate even those areas where there could be real cost savings to government. If that is the standard of solidarity displayed by the opposition, then it is a sad day for Northern Territorians because what it means is that we do not have an effective opposition that can take the time to read legislation, listen to the radio and understand announcements that are delivered to Northern Territorians on a fairly regular basis.

We talked about contingent liabilities today, and I argued that the NT government is unashamed of its contingent liabilities and of the equity that it has put into development. I pointed out that the government makes announcements of this kind and that information is available to people through various means. But what is the sense? Members opposite do not read it. They do not understand what is going on. How can we have an effective opposition, and have any confidence in it as an opposition after the disgusting display we have witnessed here this afternoon?

We are talking about a simple administrative change. We are seeking urgency on the very grounds that are of concern to members opposite. We understand that the Liquor Commission is of vital importance to the Northern Territory and must carry out the administrative arrangements contained in its functional statement. We want to ensure that the administrative arrangements, as announced by the Chief Minister on July 14, are enacted as quickly as possible. We want to put the commission under the new administrative arrangements and ensure that the social concerns of members opposite are well catered for. They have not put 1 argument today that made any sense to any of my colleagues. They have simply wasted time.

They say that we do not sit long enough. How would you like to sit through such argument for another 3 hours or 3 days on a bill of this magnitude? They have really displayed themselves as an incompetent opposition that no longer deserves the trust and faith of the people who elected it. It must be very good for people in the electorates of Stuart and MacDonnell when their members leave for Darwin. That is why people want more sitting days. They want to get their members out of their hair so that they can get on with the job of developing the Northern Territory. One can only support them in that wish, although it is hard to see why the poor citizens of Darwin should be forced to have this type of rubbish put before them. Mr Speaker, in conclusion, the functional role of the Liquor Commission has not changed one iota. All we are trying to do is ...

Mr Bell: Sit down and shut up.

Mr COULTER: ...put in place an administrative arrangement.

Mr Bell: Put a sock in it.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member will withdraw that most unparliamentary remark.

Mr BELL: I made 2, Mr Deputy Speaker. I was not sure which one was offensive.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sure the honourable member has no doubt as to which remark I considered unparliamentary. If he has forgotten, it was the remark including the words 'shut up'.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, if I have given you offence ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Are you withdrawing unreservedly? The honourable member will withdraw his remarks unreservedly.

Mr BELL: I unreservedly withdraw.

Mr COULTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, one could not help but think that the member for MacDonnell was being provocative in order to be thrown out of the Assembly so that he would not have to sit here, because ...

Members interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The minister will be heard in silence.

Mr COULTER: We all know that the member for MacDonnell normally does not sit in this Assembly till such a late hour. He and his colleagues have held us up this afternoon on a trivial matter. They have not made any constructive

points. I would thank members on this side of the Assembly for their contributions. It is a very dark day, as the Leader of the Opposition said earlier, not only for my colleagues on this side of the Assembly, but for the people who elected the 6 members opposite.

Motion agreed to; bills read a second time.

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

Motion agreed to; bills read a third time.

MOTION

Proposed Resignation of Mr B. Collins as Leader of the Opposition

Mr PERRON (Fannie Bay): Mr Speaker, whilst listening to the honourable member for Arafura advising the Assembly of his decision to stand down from the opposition leadership and contest the Senate, I could not help thinking that we were only getting part of the story. On the ABC 7.30 Report last Tuesday night, he gave us a little more. I wonder why he saved it for TV rather than to say in the Assembly. The key word he used was 'circuit-breaker'. All the sickening self praise we heard last week was just a smokescreen. The real reason he is going out is because he has been pushed out. There was a belated realisation that, with him as leader, the ALP in the Territory was going nowhere.

During the member's speech, he advised that even his worst detractors had conceded that his application to public life and his commitment to the Territory's interests were total. I guess I would be classified as one of his worst detractors. I believe that his views on uranium mining, land rights and the financial responsibilities of the federal government to the Territory, are not in the Territory's interests. They are decidedly anti-Territorian, and I would like to place on record my complete rejection of his statement that his detractors would give him credit for, at least, acting in the Territory's interests.

Take uranium as an example. He stands up here and tells us it should be mined but also advertises loudly his personal belief that it should stay in the ground, adding quietly that in the interest of his constituents, who would like to see it mined for the dollars it will bring them, he will go forth and propose motions and speak for them. What sort of weight do you give to the words of a man who says he does not believe in what he is saying? He says that personally he believes that uranium is terrible and should be left in the ground, but then he says nobly that he will advocate that it be mined. That is the sort of doubletalk we get from the former Leader of the Opposition, when he is supposedly acting in the interests of the Northern Territory.

'Circuit-breaker' was the term he used to describe himself. It is an apt description. The amazing thing is that it has taken the ALP so long to realise that the former leader was a gross liability. It is only a matter of time before a politician who has become a professional loser has to go. It seemed that the larger the Assembly became, the smaller in number the opposition became. That was the indisputable sign of a professional loser, the man who led the party. The delay in moving him out was caused in part by concern that whoever took over from him as leader would be a political non-event. The member for Arafura's obnoxious manner and negative attitude would have ensured that his party stayed on the opposition benches forever.

There are 3 principal things for which the former leader will be remembered: firstly, his failure to produce promised goods; secondly, his blind faith in the Prime Minister; and, thirdly, his knocking of Territory projects. Since late in 1982, when his party smelled success at the federal level, the member has issued regular press releases on how he was off to Canberra to bring home the bacon on so many issues for Territorians. The Territory ALP was using its special connections to put the Territory case on our behalf. We were told that many times. After each ALP leaders' conference, we were told that the local boys were outstandingly successful. On one occasion, we were told that the ground rules for the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and the Territory had been settled. Everyone else thought that the Memorandum of Understanding had settled that matter already.

I would like to quote briefly from Hansard to demonstrate the sorts of statements he has made after returning from conferences in Canberra. I refer first to the Hansard of Wednesday 1 September 1982. As honourable members would be aware, that was a few months before the federal election in which the ALP came to power. I quote:

Mr Speaker, I went to Canberra to attend the ALP conference with one thing firmly fixed in my mind. We have currently a federal government which has substantially failed to deliver the goods and substantially failed to honour the promises that it made when it got into government.

He was talking about the coalition government, of course. He went on to say that he went to the ALP conference with the idea firmly in mind that the ALP could achieve office at the next federal election - which indeed it did. He said:

I went to Canberra determined to get from any potential Labor government the best deal that I could for the Northern Territory and I largely succeeded in doing that. In fact, I was more than pleased, particularly in the economic area such as sales tax on freight etc, that we were able to get into the platform of the Labor Party benefits to the Territory to the extent that we did.

On another occasion, he was off to Canberra to consolidate previous achievements. He was getting even stronger in telling Territorians that life would be fantastic under the ALP federal government because of the special connections of the Territory ALP. The achievements that would be consolidated were the abolition of sales tax on freight, the lowering of petrol prices in remote areas and the development of our rail, air and sea transport links. On the occasion of his November 1983 policy speech, the then Leader of the Opposition told Territorians: 'We needed some things from that government in Canberra and we went down and got them'. There was nothing ambiguous about that statement; he was talking about the railway, the airports and sales tax on freight. Kakadu tourist projects were added to the list in that campaign speech. It was said that ALP initiatives in Kakadu would create 1300 permanent jobs at a cost of \$70m. In February 1984, there was mention made in Hansard of the \$70m cost for the Kakadu projects. Of course, all of this was great stuff and probably Territorians lapped it up. There was one problem: none of it ever happened, not even the Kakadu projects which were to involve 1300 permanent jobs and \$70m.

We were not told about that prior to the federal election at which the ALP came into power. Its excuse was that the budget deficit was too big and,

therefore, it had to cancel all its promises to us. A year after it gained power, no such excuse was put forward. Where is it? Instead of the promised bacon, we have been getting the chop at every opportunity. With that record, it is just as well we did not send him south to fight for the loan funds we required to build the Channel Island Power-station. We would have lost that too.

The former Leader of the Opposition would have saved the Territory's budget funds if he had stayed at home. I have said in this Assembly that we needed his help in Canberra like a hole in the head. Probably he has not woken up to the fact yet that the Prime Minister will promise anything around election time, with as much intention of fulfilling his promises as he showed over the railway. The former Leader of the Opposition is not to be believed and, indeed, as far as Territory projects are concerned, neither is the Prime Minister. The former Leader of the Opposition will go down in the history books of the Territory as a man who could not deliver the goods.

I mentioned the blind faith that he has in the Prime Minister. That is just another of his downfalls. There are many irrational references on record, in Hansard and elsewhere, where the member for Arafura describes how this guru, who has become the Prime Minister, will save Australia. Members will recall the expression 'the sky will not fall in under Labor'. It is in Hansard. One particular reference to the Prime Minister adequately demonstrates the member for Arafura's infatuation with Bob Hawke. It is in Hansard of April 1985. He stated: 'Bob Hawke is the best Prime Minister Australia ever had, leading the best government Australia is ever likely to have'. Of course, that statement, referring to the future, is completely irrational, as any primary student would have to agree. But it does demonstrate the irrationality of the member for Arafura when it comes to anything to do with the current Prime Minister of Australia.

Where were the ALP's special connections in Canberra when it came to including the Territory in the relativities review that we screamed and kicked about? Unfair! Or when the memorandum was breached? Or when the NTEC subsidy was chopped by \$40m - twice! Or when superannuation arrangements were reversed - a fairly recent one. All of these things were to the severe detriment of the Northern Territory. Where were the inside contacts then? There was not a peep. He said: 'In relation to the memorandum, it is only an agreement between governments'. Speaking about the first electricity subsidy chop of \$40m, he said: 'Electricity consumers have nothing to complain about'.

The member for Arafura's record is riddled with political disasters. I would like to quote a few from a long list. These are the things he will be remembered for, not the things that he mentioned in his statement to the Assembly last Tuesday. He supported the AMIEU in the Mudginberri dispute. There were not too many Territorians with him on that one. He advocated that Territorians should pay for one-third of the cost of the Alice Springs to Darwin railway that was promised to them. There were not too many Territorians with him on that one. One-third of the cost was his alternative to the 60-40 idea that the federal government dropped around our necks. He described the Alice Springs to Darwin gas pipeline as a lunatic proposal. He has tried to get out of that in the Assembly today, but he will never get out of it. He admitted that he was embarrassed at the level of funds that the Territory received from the federal government. He supported the federal government's vesting of the title to Ayers Rock with Aborigines. These are the matters that the member for Arafura will go down in history for.

I would like to quote another little plum from Hansard, to demonstrate the member for Arafura's modesty. This particular debate took place on 12 June 1984. This statement is a classic and I take delight in putting it into Hansard once again. He said: 'Mr Speaker, in fact I am pleased to say that probably the most significant contribution that was ever made by a representative of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly at a CPA conference was, in fact, made by me in Zambia.' He has a bigger ego than Cassius Clay ever had. It is incredible. Is it any wonder that he has been forced to assume the inglorious title of 'circuit-breaker'? Of all the people who had to go, to alter the status quo, it was that Leader of the Opposition. He has had to admit it.

I cannot avoid expressing my dismay about one subject which the member for Arafura raised in his speech. He expressed no regret over his activities in relation to the Chamberlain case. I would like to record my dismay at his despicable references to the Territory's Solicitor General at that time. I will not say any more because I do not have to and it would be inappropriate. However, I can assure him that any credibility he may have had in certain quarters in the Northern Territory disappeared totally when he climbed into the gutter to attack the Territory's Solicitor General.

I close with the observation that, if anything uttered in this Chamber should ring in the ears of the member for Arafura as he leaves here, they will be the 2 words 'trusting fool', the words directed at him by the member for Gillen in 1979 following the exposure of the member for Arafura's unwitting role in the tabling in the Assembly of forged documents. It was another case of blind misplaced faith. The Territory would be better off without the member for Arafura.

Mr SMITH (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I have often wondered why the member for Fannie Bay is so bitter and twisted about the member for Arafura. Obviously, it is because the member for Arafura brought to the attention of this parliament, and pursued vigorously, the peculiar case of the member for Fannie Bay's involvement in Doctor's Gully. Of course, the member for Fannie Bay has never forgotten or forgiven the attempts made by the member for Arafura at that time to get to the bottom of what could be politely termed a very unsavoury situation indeed. Of course, if the member for Fannie Bay is remembered, in the years to come, for anything said here it will be the words of the member for Arafura - 'how he doctored his own gully.' There is certainly no getting away from that. If you mention the name of the member for Fannie Bay around Darwin the first response you get, every time, is 'Doctor's Gully'. Of course, the member for Arafura has tonight paid the price for his attempts to uncover what happened at that particular time, which resulted in such an advantage to the member for Fannie Bay.

That is enough of the negatives expressed by the member for Fannie Bay. I rise primarily to place on the record my appreciation of the job done by the member for Arafura during his years as opposition leader. As he said, he has been the opposition leader during very difficult circumstances for the Labor party in the Northern Territory. He was opposition leader for 5 years. He took over that role at a time when the party's fortunes were at an extremely low ebb indeed. The former opposition leader had resigned suddenly and unexpectedly. There was considerable dissension within the caucus, small as it was. He took over that role and he worked hard and long, and built up a degree of camaraderie and solidarity within the caucus which is very obvious today.

There is no doubt that, when the successor to Mr Walker writes a short history of the Legislative Assembly, the name of Bob Collins will play a very significant part indeed. Without doubt, he has been the outstanding parliamentary performer in this Assembly over the past 5 years. One or 2 others have come close. Unfortunately, they are not on this side of the Assembly. I recognise my own limitations. However, without doubt, he is the most outstanding parliamentary performer in this Assembly. I would go as far as to say that he is one of the most outstanding parliamentary performers anywhere in Australia. You do not have to look too far for evidence of his outstanding success in this parliament. If you read the debates that he has launched and see the results of some of those, they speak for themselves. The results of some of his contributions in this Assembly are sitting on the backbenches of this parliament at present - on the government backbenches. There is no doubt that he has played a significant role in determining the leadership of the government at present. There is no doubt either that, on very many occasions, through the force of his parliamentary performance, he has persuaded the government to take a line of action that it would not otherwise have taken, because it might have been able to get away with it.

I must stress to this Assembly that the decision to vacate the leadership of the Labor Party was one he took himself. Certainly, he was not pushed. He considered the circumstances. He considered the stresses and strains that the job had placed on him over 5 years. On his own he took the decision that he should step down and throw his hat into the ring for a seat in the Senate. It takes a man of considerable objectivity and force of personality to say: 'My time has come. I am not going to hang on until I am pushed out. I think that I can be of better use to the ALP in another capacity'. I respect him for that; it is not something that comes easily and it is not something that many people can do.

Mr Speaker, he was a big man in every sense. He has become a small man now, in a physical sense. He was big enough to take the top job and to do his best, unlike the member for Fannie Bay who decided that that was too hard. Instead of having the courage of the previous member for Araluen and getting out of the parliament altogether to allow someone else to make their mark, he sits comfortably on the backbench pulling in a handsome salary without contributing anything except negativism.

I am proud to say that I consider the member for Arafura to be a personal friend. I am proud to stand up and record this appreciation of the member for Arafura in this Assembly today.

Mr Finch: Why are you supporting Robertson then?

Mr SMITH: I conclude by responding to that interjection. I have stated consistently that the question of Senate preselection is an internal party matter and I am not making any public comment on it at all.

Mr Finch: Ted has been telling fibs again, has he? I can believe that, actually.

Mr SMITH: That is a matter that I will continue to pursue within the confines of the party despite the provocations of the member for Wagaman.

Mr D.W. COLLINS (Sadadeen): Mr Speaker, that speech reminded me of a little bit of Shakespeare: 'Et tu Brute'. I would remind the new Leader of the Opposition that the funeral oration in 'Julius Caesar' was delivered by Mark Antony, not Brutus. Brutus did the killing. Mark Antony was the one who gave the funeral oration.

I arise with a feeling of nostalgia tonight to speak on the resignation of the former Leader of the Opposition - the member for Arafura, and his explanation that he stepped down in order to seek Senate preselection. I have been in this Assembly for a little over 6 years now and the member for Arafura was Leader of the Opposition for nearly 5 of those years. When I came to this Assembly, former Chief Minister Everingham gave me a job. In essence, it was to get up Bob Collins' nose, although that is not quite the way he put it. I have found it one of the easiest jobs going. In fact, I seem to be able to do it without even trying.

Mr Bell: If it only affected Bob Collins, we wouldn't mind.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: If I have had extra effect, that pleases me no end.

I recall the incident of the giant pinholes, which I have described in this Assembly previously. One day, I was walking up the stairs in the Nelson Building. At the top of the stairs, where the Leader of the Opposition had his office, someone had pinned a poster on the wall showing Labor Party promises. He saw it and ripped it off the wall with great venom. Drawing pins flew everywhere. Then he ran into me. I found it somewhat amusing and I smiled, which upset him no end. We were treated to a marvellous tirade in the following afternoon's adjournment debate about these giant pinholes and the tremendous damage done to the Nelson Building.

I can sympathise with the former Leader of the Opposition because he did indeed go to Canberra and obtain all sorts of promises from Prime Minister Hawke. As we know, almost every one of those promises has been broken. He went down there believing in the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Robert Lee Hawke and, even at that stage, the promises were being broken one by one. I can appreciate his great annoyance at the way he was being treated.

Mind you, I have been the subject of verbal abuse from the member for Arafura. Only the other day, I was called a 'drongo' and was told that I am into X and R-rated videos. However, I have something to thank the member for: he has certainly toughened me up. When I first came to the Assembly and was attacked roundly by such people as the former member for Nightcliff, Ms Lawrie, and the member for Arafura, I used to take it a bit to heart. These days, I am afraid it is like water off a duck's back. I have come to realise that, when people call other people names, it generally indicates that they have lost their temper and are in a beaten position.

I give considerable credit to the former Leader of the Opposition. I believe he had a very difficult job to do and I believe he did it with all the cunning and guile of which he was capable. Personally, I believe it was a mistake to dump him. I do not believe this poppycock from the present Leader of the Opposition that the former leader went willingly. I did not have to go on a 60 km trip down the highway for somebody to tell me - and I know enough people in ALP circles - that he was roundly pushed. He was given an ultimatum to step down or resign. I know that he battled to obtain a promise of Senate preselection and all they would say to him was that he would have to get out there and fight for it. It is pretty common knowledge around the traps that he does not have the numbers for Senate preselection.

Mr Ede: You wait.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: We will wait on that matter. Politically, the gentleman has been knifed by his own party. I am grateful for the dissension in the ALP

because, though I may not have the support of the member for Fannie Bay on this, I believe that if the ALP had united behind Bob Collins as leader, it would have been a much greater force to be reckoned with and a real concern to the CLP. However, the poor fellow has had knives in his back for months and he has been hamstrung by his own crowd. That is fact. He has grown tired and weary of the way they have treated him. He has been assassinated.

He is a very capable debater, and none of us would deny that. He has a magnificent delivery, and a great imagination. He can make up a very plausible story. Like the old story of the loaves and fishes, he starts off with a small event and he builds and weaves it into a magic tale. I am not being totally derogatory of him there. I have a jealous admiration of him, because he is jolly good at taking something ever so small and conjuring up, in the imagination of his audience, the feeling that there is a great big thing behind it. He has a great talent for that, and if he ever gets out of political life and wants to find a way of making a quid, I suggest that he consider storytelling. I described him once as being better than Hans Christian Andersen. He took offence at that, but I recall it today with some nostalgia. I believe that he has a real talent.

The true story is that he was told that he would have to stand down willingly or be kicked out. He was not even given the promise of first position on the ALP Senate ticket, which would have guaranteed him a place in Canberra. I look now at the replacement for the member for Arafura, the member for Millner, who has been elevated now to that high position. Someone rudely said to me the other day, after seeing him on TV, 'Sad-eyed Smith with the hangdog expression'. They did not seem to think he would do the ALP much good. Certainly, if you are looking for a charismatic leader, you have chosen wrongly.

Mr Bell: That is pretty pungent stuff, Denis.

Mr D.W. COLLINS: I am glad you like it Neil.

It is generally understood around the traps, and this comes from ALP sources, that the present Leader of the Opposition is really just a caretaker for John Who. I believe that is another great mistake by the ALP. Before he can become leader, he has to get into this Assembly. Of course, he is up against our Uncle Nick, the Minister for Lands. He is an old campaigner and, as he put it so beautifully this morning, 'John Reeves says NT is overfunded'. That is a quote from the honourable gentleman. He has only to tell that to the electorate and John Reeves will not have a hope. It is just another mistake the ALP has made.

I would make the following wish for the member for Arafura. I wish him a speedy recovery from the knife wounds that have been inflicted upon him by his own party. I believe that history will demonstrate that the ALP has made a great mistake by getting rid of the member for Arafura as its leader, and that is something for which the CLP will be grateful for a long, long time.

Mr EDE (Stuart): Mr Speaker, I was not going to rise but I have been provoked. I thank the member for Sadadeen, who maintains that his main function is getting up people's noses. He claims that he is good at it. I will bear witness to the fact that there are thousands of people in his electorate who maintain that he is excellent at that particular duty. He has been getting up people's noses there for the last couple of years, as he continues to leave his electorate for more and more days each week to set up his country home at Ti Tree.

It is interesting to see who spoke in this debate from the other side. They were the losers. The member for Fannie Bay had to leave the frontbench, and I will come to him later. The member for Sadadeen spent many years here plotting and planning, and eventually reached the dizzy height of parliamentary Whip, only to be removed from that position subsequently. I must say I can understand why the government made that decision. For people of that stature to presume to get up and speak about the former Leader of the Opposition, the member for Arafura, is a matter for remorse. I would have thought that even those who did not always agree with the member for Arafura could, at least, have acknowledged his strengths.

I was reading the newspapers in Hobart during the recent national conference of the Labor party. He was referred to there, by one of the major metropolitan dailies, as one of the great Labor orators. I believe that to be true. I think that characterises our former leader more than any other appellation which could be placed upon him. However, as you know, he is a great parliamentarian. He has a knowledge of standing orders unsurpassed on this side of the Assembly, and which was rivalled only by that of the former member for Araluen. Something that he believed in, paid tribute to and attempted to instill into all of us was respect for the standing orders and for this Assembly.

I do not think that many people realise the number of hours that the member for Arafura puts in during a working week. Generally, if you were looking for him at a weekend, you would not ring up his home. You would ring up his office. He would be there until all hours of the night. During parliamentary sittings, it was not uncommon for him to work for 24 hour stints. The man is a prodigious worker. I have not been here long, but in that time he has demolished 2 leaders of the government and about 5 ministers, at last count. One of them was the former Treasurer, whose contribution to this debate was nothing more than snide backbiting. If you talk to the people of the Northern Territory, they may not agree with everything that the former Leader of the Opposition has said, but they do agree that he was a great leader of the Labor Party, and that he espoused the best interests of the Northern Territory. I believe that he has a great future serving the Territory, and I know that he will continue to work for that cause, as he did when he regained \$4m for the Territory recently as a result of his negotiations in Canberra on the fringe benefits tax. He will continue to work for the Territory and it is most likely that he will continue to demonstrate in another place, those qualities which make him great.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr HARRIS (Health): Mr Speaker, I wish to speak firstly on the relationship between Australia and the United States of America. The ANZUS Treaty is a thing of the past. New Zealand, by insisting on its nuclear-free stance, has put Australia and the United States in an intolerable position. I believe it has seriously weakened the security of the whole South Pacific region. Too many people in this country today tend to blame the United States for all our worries - people like Ted Robertson, who said that Australia should charge the Americans extra rent for Pine Gap, and use Pine Gap as a bartering point against the American government's wheat subsidy. Those sorts of comments are ridiculous!

Of course, we see the wheat subsidy issue as injurious to the Australian export market, and we think it wrong for one partner in an alliance to make moves which will damage the other partner. Sure, we should look to lobbying the Americans in relation to that particular issue. But there is no way that we can or should blame all our economic woes on the United States. I believe that it is impossible to combine national security and the economy, or to include Pine Gap and wheat subsidies in the same argument. It is just not on. We must divorce the debates.

The fact of life is that we in Australia, and particularly in the Northern Territory, need the strong support and protection of the United States of America, and so does New Zealand. Unfortunately, in its view that does not appear to be necessary. However, in military terms both Australia and New Zealand are very small countries. We cannot even begin to compare our military strengths with those of the United States and the Soviet Union. We should all wake up to ourselves in relation to that, and stop dreaming. We need to keep that relationship very strong, to make sure that the peace that we have at the present time is maintained, particularly in this International Year of Peace.

Australia needs America's friendship for reasons that should be obvious to all Territorians. We have thousands of miles of empty, undefended coastline, coastline that cannot be defended because our federal government refuses to allocate funds for proper defence purposes, or even an effective early warning system. The Northern Territory is the most vulnerable part of Australia. We can only hope that the federal government will implement the Dibb Report. It is a pity that that report has not been debated, but I guess that it will come up during the course of the next sittings. However, implementation of the recommendations in the Dibb Report would provide only the beginning of an adequate defence system and would not ensure the safety of this country from hostile invaders.

All Australians must be aware of the increased Soviet presence in South-east Asia. Take Vanuatu. We have the ridiculous situation of a federal Australian government pouring money into a country which responds by opening its arms to the Soviet Union. The money spent on the airport in Vanuatu was spent at the expense of the Northern Territory. To even suggest that the Soviet presence in Vanuatu does not pose a most serious threat to Australia, and to the north of Australia in particular, is ludicrous. It is just as ludicrous to argue that, by doing away with such installations as Pine Gap and declaring ourselves a nuclear free zone, we would automatically become safe from attack by an aggressive nation. In defence terms, weakness is no guarantee of safety. It is quite the reverse. It did not save Afghanistan, did it?

We must face the reality. We live in a nuclear age. Even the federal government has been forced into a position where it must accept that reality, although it has not done much for Mr Hawke's credibility to have to go against his party's policy and admit the necessity of exporting uranium to France. We need the protection of a powerful ally. I am sure that most Territorians agree with me. Twice this year, an alderman of the Darwin City Council, Alderman Jamie Robertson, has tried to turn Darwin into a nuclear free zone. Both times, in January and June, he failed miserably. In fact, on 26 June, his motion before the Darwin City Council was lost by 7 votes to 2, and I wonder who cast the other vote. It was a strong indication that Territorians can and do face the realities of the 1980s.

What we need is not a reduced American presence in the Territory, but a greater one, and not only for defence reasons. There would be tremendous economic benefits. Imagine the benefits that would accrue to every Territorian from an increased American presence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to give you some statistics. I am told by the United States Naval Attache in Canberra that an American frigate visiting Townsville 2 weeks ago bought a million litres of fuel at 40¢ per litre. Of course, following the budget, the fuel price has gone up by another 5¢. At almost every Australian port of call the United States Navy vessels expect to spend in the vicinity of \$200 000 on fuel. At every port they take on fresh provisions, huge quantities of vegetables, bread, eggs and, Mr Deputy Speaker, one of your favourite drinks - Coca Cola. Most frigates spend 3 days in a port, and on each of those days one-third of the ship's crew is out and about eating, drinking, buying gifts, and sightseeing. Statistics have indicated that the average American sailor spends approximately \$400 a day whilst on shore.

Since 1978 Darwin has been attracting an average of 1 US Navy frigate each year. The US Navy conducts 2 joint exercises a year with the Royal Australian Navy, and when the US Navy contingent is drawn from the fleet in the Indian Ocean, the fastest route to the east coast for these ships is via Darwin. I suggest that more should be done to encourage deployment of the Indian Ocean fleet in these exercises.

At the beginning of August the USS Whipple visited Darwin. I am told by the US Naval Attache in Canberra that reports on the visit were so favourable that the Territory can expect at least 1 more visit from a US frigate this year. The number may grow to 3 or 4. The ship's complement for each frigate is approximately 300 men, but what is to prevent the Territory from attracting larger vessels? We have the perfect deep water required, and the wonderful facilities of Darwin.

Let us consider the situation at Subic Bay in the Philippines where the US Navy maintains a forward-deployed base. Twice a year it is visited by an amphibious squadron with a crew of 5000 men, 4 times a year by a carrier with crew numbers between 5000 and 5500, and 4 times a year by a total carrier battle group of between 7 and 13 ships with total crew numbers between 10 000 and 13 000.

Perhaps it is too ambitious to suggest that the Territory could accommodate so many ships and people without undertaking drastic development programs, but we could certainly make a bid for bigger vessels and more frequent visits. The benefits would be enormous. We know that the Katherine River agricultural area is a virtual salad bowl that would be able to supply quantities of fresh food. The hotels, the shops, the service industries, retailers, wholesalers, everyone would benefit. It would be a boom time for the Territory. Before anyone accuses me of conjuring up a fairy tale, let me ask you to consider Hawaii and the island of Oahu. There are more local millionaires in Oahu than anywhere else in the United States.

Mr Speaker, I would like to comment on statements made recently by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the University College. He made those comments on Territory Extra on Wednesday morning. I am referring specifically to the establishment of a university college. He said:

We have consistently said, for example, on the university, that the appropriate place for the university is as an extension of the Darwin Institute of Technology.

I do not really know if the Leader of the Opposition is aware that he is looking to change the direction of tertiary education in Australia. He seems to be finding it very difficult to understand that particular point. It is in line with the wishes of the Commonwealth government, because it would love to see the 3 tiers of the tertiary system - advanced education, TAFE and the university sector - all under one roof. The idea may be okay, but it is not acceptable at present. The real problem is convincing academics that the change would work. Could you imagine TAFE with the University of Sydney? At present it is not on. There were enough problems combining colleges of advanced education and universities, although that did happen despite the concerns. We have a situation in Darwin where TAFE and advanced education are together. It is working reasonably well, but we could not have the 3 sectors together at this time.

This government has always argued that it does not want the Territory education system to be seen as a subject for experiments. Any qualification received here must have credibility and it must be accepted throughout Australia. The degrees that our students receive must be accepted beyond the Northern Territory. No one, at any stage, has queried the status of degrees at institutes of technology, particularly at the Darwin Institute of Technology. In fact, some of the degrees offered at institutes of technology have a higher status than those received at universities. The fact is that we need university undergraduate courses to be available in the Northern Territory. It is part of our growing-up process. We need people to service our industries and our professions and we are encouraging the sharing of facilities within the education sector. The sharing of resources was an important aspect in the establishment of secondary colleges. Their students may be using facilities at the Darwin Institute of Technology in the same way that people studying at the University College will perhaps be using those facilities.

The point that has not been understood by the Leader of the Opposition is that we are concerned to ensure the credibility of the degrees. That is why we have linked the University College to an established university - the University of Queensland. That is all we are trying to do. We want the opposition to support this. It talks about the cost of the university. It should forget about the cost and think about the credibility of the degrees. We want university undergraduate courses to be available here and we want the people who receive degrees to know that those degrees will be accepted anywhere in Australia. If we adopted the line that the opposition has suggested, there would be real problems in relation to credibility.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): There are a few subjects I have not had the opportunity to raise in question time or in debates during these sittings.

Firstly, Mr Speaker, you will recall the outrageous Willessee program at Ayers Rock early last year and the quite unworthy contribution that the now Chief Minister made to that particular program. He suggested that, with the movement of motels from the vicinity of Ayers Rock, the Mutitjulu community had caused problems in so far as rehabilitation of those areas was concerned. The subject matter of that particular program was quite outrageous. The Chief Minister has decided not to make any public apology for that but, no doubt, he and other honourable members will have seen that Mr Willessee and the people who produced his program have done so. In the Bulletin of 29 July, there was a statement by the Willessee show producers. The statement said:

On the 14 and 15 February 1985, we broadcast stories filmed at Uluru. In the course of compiling these stories, we filmed in the areas

around Ayers Rock, including the living area of the Mutitjulu community. We recognise the significance of the Rock to the members of the community and their duty and desire to do all things necessary to protect and preserve Uluru, its environment and the areas of cultural and spiritual significance in the vicinity. This duty includes restricting filming of and access to certain places. We recognise the community's right to privacy and to protect and preserve Uluru and we deeply regret the distress and inconvenience to the community caused by our presence and the programs in general.

I very much appreciate that gesture on the part of Mike Willessee and the producers of his show. It is a shame that the Chief Minister has not decided to make similar comments about his outrageous contribution to that particular program.

On a similar issue, I am rather surprised that there has been no reference in these sittings to the outrageous contribution to race relations made by the federal member, Paul Everingham, who can scarcely be described as honourable. I propose to read it into the Assembly record without comment. The comments were made during a program broadcast on 8DN on 25 June this year, in relation to comments made by Galarrwuy Yunupingu of the Northern Land Council. I understand that Galarrwuy Yunupingu had expressed some reservation, as he had every right to, about about what cause Aborigines might have to celebrate the bicentenary, which has been a subject of comment during these sittings. To his eternal shame, the federal member, Paul Everingham, had this to say:

If there had not been a 1788, Aboriginal people would still be bashing their daughters' skulls out on rocks when they decided they did not want to keep their daughter. They would still be having massive tribal fights amongst themselves, and they would be leading a life where, to keep body and soul together, some of them would be spending all day, 24 hours a day, chasing a lizard across the desert.

That was an outrageous comment, and it deserves ...

Mrs Padgham-Purich: True though.

Mr BELL: Do I hear a murmur of consent, a murmur of agreement? Do I hear from the member for Koolpinyah? She is nodding her head. Oh my word, I am sure she agrees with it.

Goodness me, I find it absolutely unbelievable that any member of this Assembly could do anything but utterly condemn those sorts of contributions to race relations in the Northern Territory. Just those remarks by themselves deserve some comment in the context of the deliberations of this Assembly.

Let me say this, Mr Deputy Speaker. We have had pious statements about statehood today. We have heard pious statements from the Chief Minister. I was just watching him on TV in the lounge. He was shown on the 7.30 Report telling how the government would be able to cope with land rights. In that case, he had better have a word with the federal member because, if that is the sort of remark that characterises the Country Liberal Party's attitude to Aboriginal people and their legitimate claim for recognition in Australia in 1986, 1987 and 1988, heavens above, statehood is a long, long way away.

A further matter that I was hoping to raise in question time with the Minister for Community Development was the Strehlow Collection. As I have said in debate in this Assembly on previous occasions, aspects of the Strehlow

Collection are of considerable interest to many of my constituents. The question I wanted to ask the minister concerned the extent to which the Northern Territory government is taking steps to assess traditional Aboriginal association with aspects of the collection.

I do not claim any great knowledge of the collection or what it may contain, but I have received representations from people who say that they have an interest in some parts of it because of the circumstances in which items were collected and the effluxion of time. I would be doing less than my job in representing the interests of my constituents if I were not to point out to the Minister for Community Development, and continue to point out to him, that people with traditional associations to that particular collection, or some parts of it, need to be recognised.

Here I hand out a bouquet, quite freely. The Northern Territory government and the minister's predecessor, the member for Berrimah, made a significant contribution by making certain arrangements for the collection. What I am saying is that the next step is for the Northern Territory government to bite the bullet and ask the hard question about how it is going to recognise Aboriginal associations.

A further matter I have not been able to have raised in these sittings is the question of the policy on signs on the Territory's highways. It was a matter of considerable concern that, when driving south from Alice Springs through those wonderful hills and some of the beautiful scenery in my electorate, I turned a corner and instead of seeing the customary vista of sandstone hills and mulga scrub, was suddenly confronted, slap bang in front of me, by a billboard measuring about 10' x 10', adjuring me to make use of the services of Territory Colour.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Territory what?

Mr BELL: Territory Colour. The principals of Territory Colour are, I am sure, honest entrepreneurs, and I wish them well in their enterprise. But I do have some concerns about unfettered bill-boarding around the Territory. Is it going to mean that, from Alice Springs to Kulgera, whenever I round a bend, I will be confronted with a billboard of such dimensions that the wonderful vistas of central Australia will be blotted out?

The general point I want to make is that there needs to be a bill-boarding policy, and I would appreciate the Minister for Lands taking this into consideration. Apart from being something that is dear to my own heart, I am aware that Mr Mark Savage, an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, has written to the minister in these terms:

'As one drives north from Ti Tree towards Tennant Creek, about 79 km north of the roadhouse one passes up a hill the flanks of which are covered with separate individual clumps of mature spinifex. The rocks forming the hill are rugged and a deep red. The features of the formation are enhanced and emphasised by the cutting through the crest of the hill. It is, in fact, an exceptional piece of central Australian scenery'.

Clearly, Mr Savage enjoys a similar response to the central Australian landscape as I do.

It is an exceptional piece of central Australian scenery, which should be a source of relief and interest on the journey along the

Stuart Highway. It is the type of scenery the Northern Territory government is exhorting the tourist to come and see. To make this beautiful aspect archetypally central Australian, it has been vandalised. In an act of moronic environmental desecration, an inappropriate advertising sign in an inappropriate location, made from an overturned derelict truck, has been placed against the top of the hill, giving rise to feelings of anger and disgust at the mindlessness of the act rather than appreciation of the surroundings. That people are capable of such actions is not particularly surprising. That they can get away with it is. I can only assume that you, as Minister for Lands and thus in control of stock routes, must have some powers to prevent this sort of unlicensed vandalism of the roadsides. I therefore ask that you exercise your powers to get this monstrosity removed and to ensure future control over the location, construction and style of roadside advertising in general.

I await the minister's response with interest. Quite seriously, we do need a billboard policy. I am sure that there would be a bipartisan approach to it. We do not want scenic places which visitors come to see, made offensive with inappropriate billboards.

I was hoping to have a little more time, but the adjournment debate is my only opportunity to raise these matters. I want to make my second award of the Peter Wilson prize for purity of expression. In this latest round of awards, there has been a large number of contenders from the government benches. I think it must attest to the opposition's purity of expression that there are no contenders from this side.

There was, for example, the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications and Tourism who, in his address-in-reply speech on 18 June suggested that the word 'incur', as in 'incur expenditure', should be pronounced 'incure'. I trust he will take that to heart, as he was one of the finalists. We had 2 further contestants, the member for Sadadeen and the Treasurer, with the use of that disgraceful, un-Australian preposition 'off of'. The member for Sadadeen referred to the member who had just 'taken himself off of the committee', on 27 March at 2.15 am. I suppose our all-night sitting could be an excuse for that. Similarly, we had the Treasurer referring to money that was 'off of its NTEC subsidy'. That was certainly a close contender. I will not keep anybody in suspense. There are several other contenders, but the result is a tie between the member for Ludmilla and the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications, who got 'criteria' wrong. This is a matter of concern to me, because 'criterion' is clearly disappearing from the language. On 13 June this year, the minister said: 'that criteria has never changed'. 'Criteria' is a plural and cannot precede the singular verb 'has'. Similarly, only yesterday the member for Ludmilla said: 'what the criteria is for the award of the RCTS licence'. So there you have it: the member for Ludmilla and the Minister for Business, Technology and Communications in a dead heat for the most recent award of the Peter Wilson prize for purity of expression.

Mr MCCARTHY (Primary Production): Mr Deputy Speaker, I want to comment briefly on the road sign policies of the Northern Territory government. I have been approached by a number of constituents who run businesses along the Stuart Highway, asking me to try to obtain permission for them to put up billboards and I have not been able to do so. The Department of Transport and Works said that if they put up billboards, it will pull them down again. It just will not give permission. I support that, because I do not like to see billboards everywhere.

That is not the reason I rise to speak tonight. I want to discuss a matter that has been concerning me more and more over the last few years, and I have realised recently that it is coming to a head. I am talking about the Territory buffalo industry. Buffalo were first introduced to the Top End in the mid-nineteenth century.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: It was 1828.

Mr McCARTHY: That is a little bit closer than I got. They are, of course, part of the picture of the Territory. It would be fair to say that they are almost as closely linked with the Territory, in the minds of many visitors, as Ayers Rock. It is popularly believed that the Top End is teeming with these none-too-graceful animals. I like them. I have a great deal of time for the old buff. The Top End was teeming with them until a few years ago, but that image is now fading to little more than a piece of popular folklore, which brings me to my point. We no longer have the numbers of buffalo that we once had. I can recall being told, when I first came to the Territory, that there were 300 000 buffalo in the Top End. I have no doubt that the figure was correct then. Recently, I asked the same question and was given the same answer. I do not believe it. I do not believe that there are anything like 300 000 buffalo left in the Top End of the Northern Territory.

The B-TEC program, which is essential for the long-term well-being of the cattle and buffalo industry, has been partly to blame for that. There is no doubt that the impact on cattle numbers generally, right throughout Australia, has been pretty significant under the B-TEC program. However, I think it is time some serious thought was given to the future of the buffalo industry. If that is not done, it will be on the rocks in a very short time. The government should - and of course will - continue to play its part, but it should be recognised by people involved in the industry or who wish to get involved in the buffalo industry, that it is up to them to see that it does not fail. This is, after all, a government that believes in the ability and the desire of private enterprise.

Private operators are still playing a major role, but there is a tendency currently to seek more and more support from government in ensuring that the industry is maintained. While I accept that the government has a role to play, it is incumbent upon the industry itself to make sure that it plays the major role.

Currently, 17 properties have herds of breeder buffalo behind wire in the Top End but, frankly, the scale of the operation is not big enough to ensure the long-term viability of the industry. Those 17 properties have a total herd of domesticated young females numbering about 8000. That is disputed by some who believe the figure is greater, but others believe it is less. Recently, I travelled around a number of the buffalo-breeding blocks and, while some were apparently doing reasonably well, others were obviously not.

The largest 2 individual herds have little more than 1000 head, although that is disputed also. Some of the others do not have much more than 100 or so. At least it can be said that those 17 properties are having a go. However, the unfortunate fact is that the combined size of the herd is nowhere near to enough to sustain the industry at a reasonable level into the future. Some people firmly hold the belief that we should wipe out buffalo because they desecrate the country and they are not native to Australia.

Mrs Padgham-Purich: Neither are cattle.

Mr McCARTHY: That is true.

I believe there is a great future for the buffalo industry, provided we get our act together. The great things achieved by the industry in the past 5 years give me some hope. Let us look at what the future demands.

Estimates carried out by the Department of Primary Production predict that the Territory will need a minimum herd of no less than 20 000 domesticated young females by 1990, as the B-TEC program nears its end. The department believes that the current herd could expand to a size of about 20 000 by 1990, given normal conditions. However, desired herd size can be achieved with an additional 600 breeders. With some organisation, this should not prove to be an impossible task.

The problem is that, even with the projected weaning rate of 60%, the herd of 20 000 will produce about 6000 female and 6000 male offspring yearly. With the move towards the younger, lighter animals, these figures mean that the industry, working from the minimum herd size of 20 000, would be unable to support 1 abattoir. An abattoir reliant on buffalo, and operating under these conditions, would have to depend heavily on a cattle kill to pay its way.

As much as it irks me to have to say it, at the current rate of progress, there is no way we are even going to reach the target of 20 000 by the desired date of 1990. The unfortunate reality is that there simply seems to be no sense of firm resolve among Territory operators to build up herd numbers to the necessary level by 1990. Simply, we lack a concerted game plan when it comes to buffalo domestication, and that is largely why I am speaking on this matter tonight.

I want operators to realise what the situation is and galvanise themselves into action. They will have to do it if they want the buffalo industry to survive. At the moment, there seems to be too strong a desire by operators to worry about the fast buck and let tomorrow take care of itself. We have been slaughtering between 25 000 and 30 000 buffalo a year for the past 5 years, largely because of the B-TEC program and destocking provisions. But, obviously, there is no way this will continue for much longer. It is numerically impossible. Our buffalo herds are not like the magic pudding; there has to be an end to it somewhere.

Sadly, the first signs of the beginning of the end are in sight. One of the contractors who recently won a contract in north-west Arnhem Land, in a program that was billed as the last big muster, has been in touch with me and has indicated that he is considering pulling out of that program because he cannot find buffalo in any quantity. He has had helicopters scouring the country and is picking up 100 head here and there. He was guaranteed that there would be 20 000 buffalo in the area. It was a verbal guarantee of course. Buffalo are notorious for following the water supply. Obviously, they come back into properties that are being cleared now. As the property is cleared, new cattle are moving in and they are picked up and sent off to the abattoir. This has been a fairly dry year and I can imagine that some areas will be fairly well depleted because of that.

It should be realised that north-west Arnhem Land, along with the Gimbat Goodparla pastoral leases, is regarded as one of the last sizeable reservoirs of feral buffalo in the Top End. These are the last areas from which we can draw sizeable numbers of young TB-free feral animals which will build up our herd size. I was very hopeful some weeks ago that we would find the necessary young female breeders out in that area. From the way things are looking now, that may not be so.

A decision about the future of the industry must be made soon or it will be too late. The size of the Territory's kill over recent years, along with the healthy export in live cattle, more than proves that the demand exists. We have created the market; let us not throw it away in a shortsighted attempt to make the fast dollar. In fact, the market is probably much bigger than our operators realise. We now export buffalo meat in reasonable quantities to Germany, Sweden and Taiwan. This meat is used largely for manufacturing purposes. Many a kilo of Top End buff meat has found its way into the stomachs of Germans. We all know that they love their sausage, and it is a very good ingredient for the German sausage. Although we have already identified overseas markets, it may pay us to look a little bit closer to home. Indications are that there could be a massive market sitting in our own backyard.

A recent visit to the Territory by Mr Peter Gowland of Priam Meats pointed to the potential of the Australian market. Mr Gowland's company is a wholesale distributor of venison and game meats with direct access to 20 000 restaurants. There is that magic figure again: we need 20 000 buffalo and we can put them in 20 000 restaurants. Mr Gowland is quite confident that a significant demand can be created in Australia for young buffalo as a speciality meat. He also believes there is a lot more potential to be squeezed from the overseas market than we have able to realise so far. Like venison, buffalo is relatively lean, and Mr Gowland is confident it could become widely accepted because of its novelty value.

I have been to a restaurant in Sydney where I was given what I was told was venison. When I inquired further, I was told it was buffalo. As a matter of interest, the Sheraton in Alice Springs has a couple of other Australian novelties. One that I tried recently was T-bone of kangaroo with witchetty grub sauce. It was excellent. It is now up to us to firmly identify the markets for this type of meat. Once we have the targets firmly in our sights, I am sure our operators will find renewed confidence in the potential of their product.

I might also issue a word of warning on our export trade in live buffalo. This is an area in which we have enjoyed great success, exemplified by the recently announced contract to ship 1500 buffalo to Cuba early next year. We have also established live export markets in Malaysia and Indonesia. However, I feel that we should tread rather warily in this area in coming years, if we want to maintain the long-term health of the buffalo industry. With a lack of caution in our live exports, we could destroy the potential markets in South-east Asia. The AMIEU is attempting to do this now. They say they are going to send merinos and semen overseas. It is just a ploy to stir people up and get them fighting, but I am certain it will try to do it. There is no doubt about the liking for buffalo meat amongst our northern neighbours. With increasing prosperity, the potential for the export of buffalo should increase. For that reason, we must monitor carefully our live export trade to the region. I feel confident that there is a worthwhile market for Territory buffalo meat, both manufactured and for table consumption, nationally and internationally. But the time has come for us to decide whether we want to think about those markets simply for today, or whether we want to adopt the more rational longer term approach.

We are almost at the point at which a decision about future directions must be made. I reiterate that we are heading for our downfall in the buffalo industry, unless we pull it into line very quickly. I only hope those in the industry can see what is looming and adopt what I consider the only sensible decision. That means pointing themselves down the longer but infinitely more

profitable of those 2 roads. If we opt for the longer journey, our buffalo industry will survive, but if we decide on the softer shorter route, the future looks bleak. I am certain that there are people in the industry who recognise that. However, because of shortage of finance they have been forced to go down the road of turning off more stock than they should. One station that I visited recently was domesticating buffalo. It was keeping most of its female breeding herd, including animals above and below the normal age for slaughter. The young calves were being looked after too, all in an effort to build up viable female numbers. I support that action.

Mrs PADGHAM-PURICH (Koolpinyah): Mr Deputy Speaker, this morning I asked the Chief Minister a question in his capacity as Minister for Police. It concerned future plans for the use of the Fred's Pass police office in my electorate. If it had been in a less noticeable position, it would not have been the cause of so much concern among constituents. It has been out of commission as a full-time police office for some time, as everybody in the rural area knows. Currently, it is used by mobile patrols as a comfort stop, for meal breaks, to write up case notes and so on. I do not have any disagreement with using it for these purposes and I do not think anybody else does either. However, it is not fully utilised. It consists of a building, a very well-built security fence and partly-planted grounds. None are used as efficiently as my constituents believe they should be.

Because of its very noticeable position on the edge of the Fred's Pass Reserve near the Sattler Airstrip at the 22 mile, it is seen by anybody who drives past on the Stuart Highway. My constituents have made suggestions about what it could be used for. Different ideas have been put forward by well-known community groups, but none of these has been taken up. Since December last year, when the Litchfield Shire was formed, the view has been put forward that perhaps this facility could be used in some way by Litchfield Shire officers. The Litchfield Shire Council does not conduct its business quite as the Palmerston City Council does. There are no mayor's or president's cars, no robes, no increases in meeting salaries and no Sheraton-style civic buildings. The people on the Litchfield Shire Council know the value of a dollar and they try to make their dollars go as far as possible. The Litchfield Shire Council meetings are held at Fred's Pass in a demountable, and in other parts of the electorate they are held in suitably placed local buildings. The Litchfield Shire office is the demountable building at Fred's Pass. The President's office is in a converted room in it and the public meetings are held on the verandah. This is indicative of the wish of shire councillors to use the money allotted to them for the running of the Litchfield Shire in the most advantageous way.

However, the increasing workload of the Shire Clerk and shire officers in relation to rating procedures and implementation of by-laws, necessitates increased office space, and the Litchfield Shire councillors have been looking at enlarging the headquarters. A demountable has been promised by the government, but we know that demountables do not come cheaply. I know that a demountable classroom has been promised to the Humpty Doo Primary School, because I visited there the other day to discuss it. If we are to believe the figures in the budget, this demountable will cost \$100 000. That includes its transportation to the site and some reconditioning after it is in situ. It is quite a large sum of money and that is what it would cost to supply another demountable to the Litchfield Shire.

The view put forward by the Litchfield Shire councillors and others in the rural area is a pretty obvious one. They believe that the Fred's Pass police office could be used for the purposes of administering the work of the

Litchfield Shire Council, if not by actual purchase, then perhaps under a leasing arrangement with conditions which would allow for the interests of the police to be served through maintenance and care of the grounds and so on. In this context it is worth mentioning that the current Litchfield president is a senior police officer. In this circumstance, I would like to believe that the suggestion put forward for the use of the Fred's Pass police office by the Litchfield Shire Council might receive favourable consideration from the NT Police Force. I am not saying that the police office would not need some alteration. It could be used by police when they travel in the rural area and by the council officers under certain conditions, perhaps a leasing arrangement.

Use of that office in that way would fit in with the government's perception of the straitened financial circumstances brought upon the Territory by our friends in the federal government. The budget presented by the Treasurer points to the fact that we must use all government assets to the maximum advantage. By using the old Fred's Pass police office in the way I have suggested, we would be doing that. People in the rural area have a philosophy that any assets they or the government have, should be used to the maximum advantage. I cannot see that such an arrangement would be detrimental in any way to police operations in the rural area, and I believe a good working relationship could be worked out with a little bit of thought.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for MacDonnell spoke about his disapproval of roadside hoardings advertising businesses. Whilst his definition of a hoarding may be an enormous billboard advertising various things, there is legislation on the statute books which concerns hoardings, or signs put up on road reserves. The erection of signs on private property is a matter for negotiation between the person who wants to erect the sign and the owner of the private property. I have mentioned my views about roadside signs before. Whilst I do not agree with putting up big roadside hoardings advertising things that do not have anything to do with the local area, I do defend the right of people to put up easily-read signs of a modest proportion to advertise nearby businesses. Many of my constituents in the rural area do this, and they have my complete support, provided these signs are erected in a safe way. I have had disagreements with the Roads Division of Transport and Works. I have talked extensively with its officers on this matter, and we have had to agree to disagree. I believe hoardings should be allowed on the road reserve, and they do not.

I was interested in remarks passed by the member for Arafura yesterday, regarding his 60 km drives down the track. I understand that he made these trips to meet members of the CLP, but that is a little unclear from his remarks. I am interested in those journeys, because they would have brought him into my electorate. I pride myself on keeping my ear to the ground and knowing what is happening in my electorate. He has intrigued me, especially in relation to the distance of his drives. I ask myself, did he have roadside meetings or were they trysts? I do not want to pry, but he did not make it clear whether they were meetings or trysts. As any member would know, there is a big difference between a meeting and a tryst. Were they meetings under gum trees or were they meetings in houses? The content of the member's remarks, coupled with other comments he made, is the stuff of Mills and Boon romances. I believe they deserve the same amount of intelligent note and attention.

Motion agreed to; the Assembly adjourned.

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